WRITINGS OF CHARLES FINNEY - VOLUME 1

by Charles Finney

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Charles Finney (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.

100 Chapters

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Chapter 2

01.01. CHRONOLOGY OF FINNEYS WRITINGS

TIMELINE A Chronology of the WORKS of Rev. Charles G. Finney

YEAR

TITLE OF PUBLICATION

LOCATION OF FINNEY

1835

Lectures on Revival of Religion

New York

1836

Sermons on Important Subjects

New York

1836

Lectures to Professing Christians Part 1

New York

1837

Lectures to Professing Christians Part 2

New York

1838-1862

Oberlin Evangelist , Official Publication of Oberlin College; Sermons, Lectures, Articles, Letters

Oberlin, Ohio

1840

Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures

Oberlin, Ohio

1846

Volume 2 of Systematic Theology

Oberlin, Ohio

1847

Volume 3 of Systematic Theology

1849-51

Penny Pulpit , Sermons preached and reported in England

England

1851

Systematic Theology , Revision and Combination of Vol 2,3

England

1860

Systematic Theology(Vol 1?) Unpublished manuscript

Oberlin

1868

Power From On High a series of sermons published in THE INDEPENDENT

1869

The Character, Claims and Practical Workings of Freemasonry

Oberlin, Ohio

1872,74,75

Unpublished Work on Pastoral Theology from Manuscript notes.

Oberlin, Ohio

1874

Outline of Lecture on Revival of Religion

Oberlin, Ohio

1876

MEMOIRS of Revivals in which Finney participated, edited by Fairchild, Pres of Oberlin, published after Finney's death (written c. 1868)

Oberlin

1878

Finney's 1851 Systematic Theology is edited and abridged by Pres. Fairchild, published after Finney's death. (known as the 1878 edition, most widely published.)

Oberlin

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01.02. FINNEYS GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The GOSPEL TRUTH

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AS DEFINED BY THE REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY Most but not all of these definitions are taken verbatim out of Finney's writings--Ed.

ARBITRARY: a choice of the will in the worst sense; that is, in the sense of having no regard to reason, or to the nature and relations of moral agents.

ATONEMENT: the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners. It is a covering of their sins by his sufferings.

CAUSE: the reason behind an effect or event.

CHOICE: the act of the will in selecting an object, the ground and reason of all physical acts.

CONDITION: a sine qua non, or that without which, something could not exist. Not a cause, yet a necessary element.

CONDITION OF OBLIGATION: A condition of obligation in any particular form is a sine qua non of obligation in that particular form. It is that, without which, obligation in that form could not exist, and yet is not the fundamental reason of the obligation, i.e. Moral agency and knowledge.

CONSCIENCE: the faculty or function of the intellect that recognizes the conformity or disconformity of the heart and life to the moral law as it lies revealed in the reason, and also awards praise to conformity, and blame to disconformity to that law. It also possesses a propelling or impulsive power, by which it urges the conformity, and denounces the nonconformity of will to moral law.

CONSCIOUSNESS is the faculty or function of self-knowledge. It is the faculty that recognizes our own existence, mental actions, and states, together with the attributes of liberty or necessity, belonging to those actions or states. "Consciousness is the mind in the act of knowing itself."

CONVERSION: see regeneration.

DEATH: as applied to the mind [heart] in the Scriptures is a state of entire sinfulness, of total depravity and alienation from God.

DESIRE: a phenomenon of the sensibility, the longing for or wanting what the mind perceives to be a good or desirable. The existence of constitutional desires are not sinful per se, their unlawful indulgence is.

DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE: Love, willing the good for its own sake; promoting good with no ulterior motive. Not uninterested, but without supreme self-interest.

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.

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.

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION: present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God.

EXECUTIVE CHOICE, VOLITIONS: efforts put forth to secure the end.

FAITH: It is an efficient state of mind, and therefore it must consist in the embracing of the truth by the heart or will. It is the will's closing in with the truths of the gospel. It is the soul's act of yielding itself up, or committing itself to the truths of the evangelical system. It is a trusting in Christ, a committing of the soul and the whole being to him, in his various offices and relations to men. It is a confiding in him, and in what is revealed of him, in his word and providence, and by his Spirit.

FIRST TRUTH: a truth universally and necessarily assumed by all moral agents, their speculations to the contrary, in any wise, not withstanding.

FORGIVENESS: Forgiveness implies previous condemnation, and consists in setting aside the execution of an incurred penalty.

FREE-WILL: the faculty or power of moral agents to choose, decide between objects of choice without force or of necessity.

GOSPEL: the good news that the Mercy of God will withhold the deserved penalty for sin, and the Grace of God will treat the sinner as if he had never sinned, in consideration of the death and resurrection of Christ on condition of faith and repentance in the sinner.

GOSPEL JUSTIFICATION: it consists in a governmental decree of pardon or amnesty--in arresting and setting aside the execution of the incurred penalty of law--in pardoning and restoring to favor those who have sinned, and those whom the law had pronounced guilty, and upon whom it had passed the sentence of eternal death, and rewarding them as if they had been righteous. Not to be regarded as a forensic or judicial proceeding. An act of grace, not law.

GOVERNMENT: the direction, guidance, control by, or in accordance with, rule or law. All government is, and must be, either moral or physical.

GRACE: the attribute of love disposed to give a blessing to a person who deserves opposite treatment.

GROUND: the reason for something, the cause, the consideration.

GROUND OF OBLIGATION: the consideration which creates or imposes obligation, the fundamental reason of the obligation, the intrinsic value of the object.

INTELLECT: the faculty which includes, among other functions, reason, conscience and self-consciousness.

INTENTION: choice.

LAW: A Rule of Action: it is applicable to every kind of action, whether of matter or of mind--whether intelligent or unintelligent--whether free or necessary action.

LAW OF LIBERTY: rule of action administered by motive and choice, moral law, not pre-determined.

LAW OF NECESSITY: a rule of action imposed by force, law of cause and effect, pre-determined.

LEGAL JUSTIFICATION: the pronouncement that the justified person is guiltless, or, in other words, that he has not violated the law, that he has done only what he had a legal right to do. An act of law, not grace. It cannot be possible that a sinner can be pronounced just in the eye of law; that he can be justified by deeds of law, or by the law at all.

LOVE: the commitment to promote the good of another for its own sake; disinterested benevolence.

MEANS: immediate objects or proximate ends of pursuit; actions taken to secure or promote the end chosen.

MORAL ACTION: strictly an act of the will only.

MORAL AGENCY consists in the possession of the powers, or faculties, and susceptibilities of a moral agent and is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free-will.

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.

MORAL GOVERNMENT: the declaration and administration of moral law. It is the government of free will by motives as distinguished from the government of substance by force.

MORAL GOVERNMENT, GROUNDS OF: Moral government is indispensable to the highest well-being of the universe of moral agents. The universe is dependent upon this as a means of securing the highest good. This dependence is a good and sufficient reason for the existence of moral government.

MORAL GOVERNMENT, END OF: to promote the highest good, or blessedness of the universe.

MORAL LAW: that rule to which moral agents ought to conform all their voluntary actions, and is enforced by sanctions equal to the value of the precept.

MORAL PERFECTION: conformity to moral obligation.

OBEDIENCE: the consent of the will to serve the dictates of another, either the demands of the sensibilities for gratification, or the demands of the reason to conform to moral law.

OBLIGATION: idea of obligation, or of oughtness, is an idea of the pure reason. It is a simple, rational conception, and, strictly speaking, does not admit of a definition, since there are no terms more simple by which it may be defined.

PARDON: setting aside the penalty due for transgression of law, an exercise of mercy by the executive, not the judge. Synonym: forgiveness.

PENALTY: that misery or pain due as a sanction for transgressing the law.

PERFECTION: conformity to what is intended or required.

PERFECTIONISM: See Sinless Perfection.

PERMANENT SANCTIFICATION: consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God.

PERSEVERANCE: that all who are at any time true saints of God, are preserved by his grace and Spirit through faith, in the sense that subsequently to regeneration, obedience is their rule, and disobedience only the exception; and that being thus kept, they will certainly be saved with an everlasting salvation.

PHYSICAL DEPRAVITY: is commonly and rightly called disease. It consists in a physical departure from the laws of health; a lapsed, or fallen state, in which healthy organic action is not sustained. When physical depravity is predicated of mind, it is intended that the powers of the mind, either in substance, or in consequence of their connection with, and dependence upon, the body, are in a diseased, lapsed, fallen, degenerate state, so that the healthy action of those powers is not sustained. Physical depravity, being depravity of substance as opposed to depravity of the actions of free-will, can have no moral character.

PHYSICAL GOVERNMENT: control, exercised by a law of necessity or force, as distinguished from the law of free will, or liberty.

PHYSICAL LAW: the order of sequence, in all the changes that occur under the law of necessity, whether in matter or mind. I mean all changes whether of state or action, that do not consist in the states or actions of free will.

PROXIMATE CHOICE: choice of means.

PUBLIC JUSTICE: consists in the promotion and protection of the public interests, by such legislation and such an administration of law, as is demanded by the highest good of the public.

REASON: the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation, to act in conformity with perceived moral relations. It is the faculty that postulates all the a priori truths of science whether mathematical, philosophical, theological, or logical.

REGENERATION: the same as the new birth. It is designed to express primarily and principally the thing done, that is, the making of a sinner holy, and expresses also the fact, that God’s agency induces the change. Throw out the idea of what is done, that is, the change of moral character in

the subject, and he would not be born again, he would not be regenerated, and it could not be truly said, in such a case, that God had regenerated him. Same as conversion.

REPENTANCE: a change of choice, purpose, intention, in conformity with the dictates of the intelligence. A turning from sin to holiness, or more strictly, from a state of consecration to self to a state of consecration to God, is and must be the turning, the change of mind, or the repentance that is required of all sinners.

REPROBATION: that certain individuals of mankind are, in the fixed purpose of God, cast away, rejected and finally lost.

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.

SANCTIFICATION: 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.

SELFISHNESS: the obedience of the will to the impulses of the sensibility. It is a spirit of self-gratification. The will seeks to gratify the desires and propensities, for the pleasure of the gratification. Self-gratification is sought as an end, and as the supreme end. It is preferred to the claims of God and the good of being.

SENSIBILITY: the faculty or susceptibility of feeling. All sensation, desire, emotion, passion, pain, pleasure, and in short, every kind and degree of feeling, as the term feeling is commonly used, is a phenomenon of this faculty.

SIN: a voluntary transgression of the moral law; a spirit of self-seeking, or a disposition to seek good to self, upon condition of its relations to self, and not impartially and disinterestedly.

SINLESS PERFECTION: [also called PERFECTIONISM] a theological view that holds that a believer can "arrive" at a state in which (1.) his walk in obedience and holiness is not dependant on the Grace of God, and that (2.) he no longer has the ability to sin. Finney rejected this view entirely.

TEMPTATION: the demand of the sensibilities for gratification, contrary to that end to which the heart is devoted.

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.

ULTIMATE CHOICE: the choice of an object for its own sake, or for its intrinsic value.

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.

WILL: "by will I mean the heart," the faculty or power of moral agents to choose. See choice.

WISDOM: the choice of the best ends, and in the use of the most appropriate means to accomplish the end chosen.

WONDERFUL: amazing, filled with wonder, astonishment.

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01.03. GUIDE TO FINNEY SERMONS BY SUBJECT

The GOSPEL TRUTH GUIDE TO SERMONS BY SUBJECT OF SERMONS AND LECTURES OF The REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY

God The Affections and Emotions of God

Glorifying God The Holy Spirit of Promise Grieving the Holy Spirit--no. 1 Grieving the Holy Spirit--no. 2 Revelation of God's Glory The Benevolence of God God Manifesting Himself to Moses On Becoming Acquainted With God Adorning the Doctrine of God Our Savior The Wonderful Love Of God God Under Obligation to do Right

Jesus Christ Christ Magnifying The Law Christ The Mediator Christ Our Advocate The Use And Prevalence Of Christ's Name Christ Appearing Among His People Looking To Jesus Christ's Yoke Is Easy Christ Our Advocate with The Father Christ Tempted, Suffering, and Able to Succor The Tempted Jesus Christ Doing Good The Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of True Christianity Jesus, A Savior from Sinning Putting on Christ Mediatorship of Christ Relations of Christ to the Believer On following Christ Dependence on Christ Christ The Husband Of The Church FAITH, TRUSTING GOD

Faith The Rest of Faith--no. 1 The Rest of Faith--no. 2

Unbelief--no. 1

Unbelief--no. 2 Trusting in God's Mercy Faith in its Relations to the Love of God Faith the Work of God The Foundation, Conditions, and Relations of Faith The Saviour Lifted up, and the Look of Faith

Living by Faith On Believing with The Heart Justification By Faith Sanctification By Faith Making God A Liar

Proving God The Rationality Of Faith

HOLINESS, SANCTIFICATION Sanctification--no. 1 Sanctification--no. 2 Sanctification--no. 3 Sanctification--no. 4 Sanctification--no. 5 Sanctification--no. 6 Sanctification--no. 7 Sanctification--no. 8 Sanctification--no. 9

Death to Sin

Way to Be Holy Victory over the World through Faith Death to Sin Through Christ Thanks for The Gospel Victory On Being Holy On Confessing and Being Cleansed From Sin Abiding In Christ and Not Sinning Holiness Essential To Salvation Purity Of Heart And Life Sanctification By Faith Christian Perfection Pt 1 Christian Perfection Pt 2 What Attainments Christians May Reasonably Expect to Make in This Life Temptations Must Be Put Away Jesus, A Savior from Sinning

PRAYER Thy Will Be Done Conditions of Prevailing Prayer pt.--1 Conditions of Prevailing Prayer pt.--2 Conditions of Prevailing Prayer pt.--3 Prayer for A Pure Heart Prayer and Labor for the Gathering of The Great Harvest The Primitive Prayer-Meeting On Prayer On Persevering Prayer for Others On Prayer for The Holy Spirit Acceptable Prayer The Reward of Fervent Prayer How To Prevail With God

TRUE AND FALSE True and False Religion True and False Peace True And False Repentance True And False Conversion

True Submission Legal and Gospel Experience A Single and an Evil Eye The True Service of God Nature of True Virtue What Men Highly Esteem, God Abhors False Professors

True Saints THE WICKED Hardness of Heart Afflictions of the Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted All Events Ruinous to the Sinner The Excuses of Sinners Condemn God The Sinner's Excuses Answered Pride of Heart Deceives God's Anger Against the Wicked The Self-Hardening Sinner's Doom God Not Pleased with the Death of the Wicked The Wicked Heart Set to do Evil All Things Conspire for Evil to The Sinner The Salvation of Sinners Impossible What Men Highly Esteem, God Abhors The Destruction of the Wicked The Wicked Stumbling in Their Darkness The Sinner's Natural Power and Moral Weakness The Wrath of God Against Those Who Withstand His Truth The Doom of Those Who Neglect The Great Salvation The Self-Righteous Sinner Doomed to Sorrow Wherefore Do The Wicked Live Hardness Of Heart Any One Form of Sin Persisted In Is Fatal To The Soul

Refuges Of Lies The Awful Ingratitude Of The Sinner The Sinner's Self-Destruction The Certain Doom Of The Impenitent Why Sinners Hate God God Cannot Please Sinners Copyright (c)1999, 2000. Gospel Truth Ministries

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01.04. MEMORIAL ADDRESS TO FINNEY

The GOSPEL TRUTH

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY Memorial Address DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF THE FINNEY MEMORIAL CHAPEL OBERLIN, JUNE 21, 1908 BY WILLIAM C. COCHRAN The Oldest Grandson of President Finney REVISED AND ANNOTATED BY THE AUTHOR PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

1908

PREFACE The Finney Memorial Chapel was erected and given to Oberlin College by Frederic Norton Finney, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, second son of Rev. Charles G. Finney, as a monument to his father. It stands upon the site where Mr. Finney's residence stood for over seventy years. The Chapel will seat 2000 people and affords standing room for 1000 more on special occasions, and it is to be used for all purposes to which a public auditorium is adapted. The architect who designed the Chapel and supervised its construction was Mr. Cass Gilbert, of New York City. The builder was George Feick, of Sandusky, Ohio. The Chapel was dedicated, with appropriate ceremonies, on Sunday, June 21, 1908. William C. Cochran, of Cincinnati, O., the oldest grandson of President Finney, was invited to deliver the Memorial Address. He was born in Mr. Finney's house, was a frequent visitor during his early youth, and was an inmate of the family from the fall of 1866 to the fall of 1869, during which time Mr. Finney was engaged in the preparation of his "Memoirs." He was urged to do this by friends in the East who sent out a stenographer to assist him in the work. He was assured that it was of the utmost importance to preserve the record of the wonderful revivals which attended his labors, for the instruction of posterity and the stimulus to like self-sacrificing labor on the part of others. The work was really distasteful to him and he dismissed the stenographer after a few months and destroyed a large part of her work, as it seemed to him to be akin to self-laudation and an attempt to claim the glory which belonged to God alone. His friends persisted and, a year later, another stenographer was employed, with whose assistance the Memoirs were completed, practically as they now appear in print. The effort to recall the past brought to mind many incidents of his early life, pleasant and otherwise, which he would tell the family and which they supposed would appear in his Memoirs. These were not published until after his death in 1875, and then it was discovered that he had eliminated almost everything which was not directly connected with his conversion and the religious work to which he dedicated his life. He may have thought such incidents too trivial to record and his purely personal history as of no consequence, but in this we believe he was mistaken.

It is impossible, in a public address of an hour's duration, to treat in detail of a life that was so long and so full of incident. The speaker determined to present some facts regarding Mr. Finney's early life which are not commonly known, but which throw a strong light on his character and his unconscious preparation for a life-work which was far from his thoughts as a young man, and to call attention to some of the more striking passages in his later life which illustrate his character and power. The text, as printed, embraces many interesting details which were necessarily

excluded from the address as delivered, and notes have been added which indicate the sources of information. Where no credit is given, the speaker relied on the "Memoirs," his own personal knowledge of the facts, or his recollection of things told him by Mr. Finney at the time he was preparing his Memoirs. Wherever it was possible the speaker verified his own recollection by consulting members of the family and early friends of Mr. Finney, public records and the published writings of contemporaries. It is a pleasure to rescue from oblivion such facts in regard to his early education and accomplishments as have been heretofore ignored, and to correct as far as possible the misunderstanding with regard to his culture and attainments which has arisen in some quarters. No narrow-minded, half-educated man could have accomplished what Mr. Finney did, under Providential guidance. The instrument chosen was well fitted for the work, both by nature and by training.

W. C. C.

CINCINNATI, OHIO, September 30,1908.

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY A recent author has announced, as the result of his investigations in the psychology of religion, that conversion is distinctly a phenomenon of adolescence; that the event occurs most often at the age of sixteen and immediately before and after that year; and that, if conversion has not occurred before twenty, the chances are small that it will ever be experienced. His conclusions are based on reports from 1265 individuals, whose average age was 30, and the oldest of whom was but 40. A large majority of them were students and alumni of a single denominational school. His basis seems hardly broad enough for safe generalization. Even if it can be considered a representative body of men and women, it speaks only of conditions prevailing in the last quarter century.

If it is a faithful picture of existing conditions, the church is in danger. If it be conceded that religion has no power to attract men of mature judgment, wide reading and experience, and cultivated habits of thought, the church will lose not only them, but many of the young converts, who will, sooner or later, come to believe that religion is a species of children’s disease and that manhood requires them to reject what, they find, other men are not expected to accept. Even if they persist in their faith and do not allow the defection of others to disturb their serenity, they will lack power to win over others from the ranks of the unconverted. How can a person, who has never considered the manifold arguments against "revealed religion," persuade one who has been carried away by them? How can one, who has never had a doubt, understand and help one who has been perplexed with doubts all his life? Doubt must be dispelled by evidence and by argument that takes into account the many and real difficulties which beset candid minds. The untested if "credo" of a child avails little.

It is my privilege, to-night, to speak of a conspicuous exception to the rule, if there be any such rule. The religion of Charles G. Finney had nothing to do with adolescence. He was not a product of the Sunday School. He never entered one until long after he was converted. He was not swept into the church on the tide of a great emotional revival. At the age of twenty-nine, Charles G. Finney was a splendid pagan--a young man rejoicing in his strength, proudly conscious of his physical and intellectual superiority to all around him. He had a magnificent physique. Standing six feet two in his stocking feet, he looked much taller than that, for he was very erect, very alert, full of life and energy, and walked with a quick, elastic step that made people instinctively turn and look

at him. Without an ounce of superfluous flesh he weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds. He could not remember that he had ever been sick a day in his life. He had been trained in nature's gymnasium--the forest, the clearing, the field. The young people had their athletic sports in those days, as well as now. Every Fourth of July, Training Day and Thanksgiving Day was a "field day," in which old and young engaged in the various sports, and champions of different towns and "cross-roads" strove for the mastery. Mr. Finney did his full share of the work and entered with zest into all such games and contests. Thousands of country boys did the same; there was nothing exceptional about his opportunities. What was exceptional was the use he made of them, his ambition to excel--even in the small affairs of life.

He brought to every task and every game--besides his athletic frame--keen intelligence, nervous energy and indomitable will. When he was twenty, he excelled every man and boy he met, in every species of toil, or sport. No man could throw him; no man could knock his hat off; no man could run faster, jump farther, leap higher, or throw a ball with greater force and precision. When his family moved to the shore of Henderson's Bay, near Sackett's Harbor, he added to his accomplishments rowing, swimming and sailing. He was a lover of nature and the "call of the wild" was strong in him. He hardly knew which he loved most--the depth of the forest, with its mysterious life and whisperings; or the solitude of the open lake with the great depths of sky above and water below and nothing between him and eternity, but the thin sides of a boat.

He had a large head, symmetrically developed and crowned with abundant light-brown hair, silky in texture and slightly curling. His nose was strongly aquiline. His eyes were large and blue, at times mild as an April sky, and at others, cold and penetrating as polished steel. At times they beamed with love and sympathy, at other times they became scrutinizing and inscrutable. One day, nothing escaped their attention; the next, they seemed to take note of nothing terrestrial. When in the full tide of his eloquence, they swept his audience like search lights, fascinating, compelling attention, yet producing strange, uneasy feelings. His complexion was fair, and readily flushed with every passing emotion. At Henderson, he taught school from his sixteenth to his twentieth year, two months in summer and three months in winter. It was like the ideal university--in one respect--anybody could study anything. There were no grades and no prescribed text-books. Each scholar brought such books as he possessed and the teacher did the rest. One who attended this school said of him:

"There was nothing which anyone else knew, that Mr. Finney didn't know, and there was nothing which anyone else could do that Mr. Finney could not do--and do a great deal better. He was the idol of his pupils. He joined in their sports before and after school, and although at first there were older and larger boys than he in the school, he could beat them at everything. He would lie down on the ground and let as many as could pile on top of him and try to hold him down. He would say, 'Are you ready?' Then he would make a quick turn, rise up and shake them all off, just as a lion might shake off a lot of puppies. In school, all was different. He was very dignified and kept perfect order. Should any boy attempt to create a disturbance, one flash of Mr. Finney's eye would quell the sinner at once. Oh, I tell you, they all loved and worshiped him, and all felt that some day he would be a great man." A young man, from sixteen to twenty, could hardly be employed better than in teaching a country school. It completes his own elementary education; gives him power to express clearly what he knows; awakens in him a consciousness of power over others and a knowledge of human nature. The effort to command the respect of others contributes to his own

dignity and self-respect. He must be careful in his speech and manners, so as not to offend or corrupt any of the little ones committed to his charge. Thus Mr. Finney grew to manhood, strong, self-respecting, helpful to others, clean of speech and correct in habits.

Mr. Finney was fitted for this work of teaching, by two years' schooling in the Hamilton Oneida Institute, at Clinton, New York, only a few miles from his father's farm in Oneida County. The principal of this school, at that time, was Seth Norton, a graduate of Yale College and a tutor there for two years before coming to Clinton. He was a fine classical scholar, an inspiring teacher and a lover of music. He composed hymns and anthems and was the village chorister. He discovered great possibilities in this tall, blue-eyed child of the woods, and seems to have given him unusual attention. He inspired him with an ambition to secure a classical education and evoked an intense love of music. He taught him to sing, to read music at sight, and to play on the violin and bass viol, or what we would call the violoncello. That instrument appealed powerfully to Mr. Finney's passionate nature. When he began to earn money by teaching, the first use he made of it was to buy a cello. Then he gave up much of his leisure to singing, to the mastery of his cello, and to a thorough understanding of harmony and composition. It was the day of "buckwheat notes" and "figured bass" and, without a master, he soon learned to invest an air with its appropriate chords and to write out the different parts for a chorus. He thus came into the very heart of music; to have a thorough appreciation of all that was good, and a proper contempt for all that was trivial. This deep understanding of, and loving interest in good music in after years secured for him the devoted attachment of such organists and composers as Lowell Mason, at Boston, and Thomas Hastings and William B. Bradbury at New York. They were glad to consult his wishes while conducting choirs in the places where he preached. I may be pardoned for dwelling at such length on his musical tastes and accomplishments, for they played an important part in shaping his subsequent career, and they contributed in no small degree to making Oberlin the musical centre that it is to-day.

He had a musical voice of phenomenal range, flexibility and power, and song was the natural expression of his healthy, joyous soul. But he was also intensely emotional and almost as sensitive to sympathetic appeals as his cello was to the vibrations of the strings. It was not an unusual thing for him, strong and vigorous as he was, to weep over his cello; and he resorted to it, in every hour of trouble, as to a bosom friend. To use his own expression, his "sensibility often overflowed." But this mood was exceptional. He was, normally, full of fun and endowed with a strong sense of humor. He loved to dance and was foremost in social meetings of every sort. He was saved from intemperance, profanity, and vileness--not by any religious scruples, for at this time he had none--but by his innate delicacy and refinement. In the summer of 1812 war was declared against Great Britain. It was not generally expected; in the North it was not desired. Sackett's Harbor, only a few miles from Mr. Finney's home, was made a naval base; a fort was erected and garrisoned by a few companies of soldiers; ships and naval stores were concentrated at that point and the construction of other ships of war was begun. Rumors of an invasion from Canada filled the air and the militia was called out. A company was formed at Henderson, out of persons exempt from military service, with Mark Hopkins as Captain. He tendered their services to the Governor of New York with the significant statement that they were opposed to the war, but would go to any place in the county for home defense

Notwithstanding this adverse sentiment of his neighbors, Mr. Finney went to Sackett's Harbor, among the first, to enlist in the Navy. There was fighting blood in his veins. When he got there all was confusion. There seemed to be no order, no discipline, no understanding of what was to be done, or how to do it. He was amazed at the incompetence displayed. The militia, freed from home restraints and not yet subjected to military discipline, were becoming demoralized. The streets were full of drunken men, cursing, quarreling and refusing to take orders from anybody. He heard more profanity and obscenity in that one day, than he had heard in all his life before. To cap the climax, he was accosted by an abandoned woman--a follower of the camp,--young, pretty and saucy. He looked at her in wonder and, when he comprehended the nature of her request, he was so overcome with pity for her degradation and lack of shame that his cheeks burned and before he could check it, he was shedding tears and sobbing violently. She, moved to shame by this extraordinary spectacle, wept too, and without another word they parted and Mr. Finney went back home to tell his cello of the awful things he had seen and heard that day.

He was willing to fight for his country--in a just cause. He was not willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of incompetence--especially for a cause which his most respected neighbors considered unjust. The threatened invasion was a fiasco; the scare was soon over; the militia returned to their homes and, in the fall of that year, he went to Warren, Connecticut, his native town, to prepare for Yale College in a high school which enjoyed a wide reputation. There, undisturbed by faint rumors of a war in which the people of New England took no interest, he passed two years in study. He supported himself by work on his uncle's farm, in summer, and teaching singing school, in winter. The young people came from miles around to attend this school, and the traditions of his fine singing are still well preserved in that vicinity. He developed a great reputation as a wit, an orator, and a poet. He was the editor of a school journal which was prepared in manuscript and passed from hand to hand. It abounded in local hits, and every foible of teacher, pastor, leading citizens, or pupils, was touched up in satirical vein. In 1814 Mr. Finney was prepared to enter Yale College and began to think of ways and means for going, but his teacher, himself a Yale graduate, advised him not to go, saying that he had already learned to study and think and did not need the recitations, that it was a waste of time to attend them, and that he could easily take the whole four years' course in two. This was verified by the actual experience of Horace Bushnell, who afterwards attended this same high school and then graduated from Yale College in two years. Forty years later Andrew D. White went through Yale, and complains, in his autobiography, that he learned nothing there, except what was in his books, and that he could have learned a great deal more, if he had not been obliged to waste three of the best hours of each day in attending recitations. Mr. Finney followed the advice of his teacher, went to New Jersey to teach school, and at the same time carried on his college studies, going back to Warren, at intervals, to review them with his teacher and to receive further suggestions and assistance. Thus he had mastered the whole college curriculum at the age of twenty-six. His knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Mathematics was as good as that of any graduate who had not pursued post-graduate courses; but one thing was lacking--he had not received a college diploma. No one has ever questioned the scholarship of Father Keep, John P. Cowles, or Henry Cowles, because they secured Yale diplomas. President Mahan secured one at Hamilton College, Dr. Morgan secured one at Williams, President Fairchild secured one at Oberlin. All these were accounted "learned men." If they had not received degrees, they might have been called ignorant men. That is the fate which has overtaken their associate, Mr. Finney, in these latter days. Men who never knew him have spoken of him as

though he were a fervid, but uneducated exhorter, and in a History of Presbyterianism in Central New York, I was startled to find him charged with "rashness" due to "imperfect education." It is news to the Alumni and ex-students of Oberlin College. It is news to the hundreds of thousands of men and women who heard him preach in this country and Great Britain. It affects us much as it would to hear Benjamin Franklin called an ignorant man, though his schooling ended at the age of ten; or William Cullen Bryant, though he did not get beyond the freshman year; or Joseph Henry, who graduated at an academy, like the Warren high school, and never went to a college.

We should remember that while colleges and professional schools afford facilities for acquiring an education, they have no monopoly. There were great lawyers before any of the existing law schools were founded, and great preachers and theologians before any of the seminaries came into existence. Great scientists, linguists, statesmen, and economists have grown up entirely outside of the schools. If a man will read, investigate and think, wherever he is, he will become educated. No man ever talked with Mr. Finney half an hour without being impressed with the great scope and variety of his learning. it seemed almost presumption to attempt to enlighten him on any subject. Yet, if a man values his reputation, it is not enough to secure an education; he must secure a diploma and become one of a body of alumni who habitually speak of their college and their fellow alumni as great. Mr. Finney has said, in his "Memoirs"

"I never possessed so much knowledge of the ancient languages as to think myself capable of independently criticising our English translation of the Bible."

It would be well, if some of our Bible critics were educated enough to say the same. Mr. Finney’s knowledge of the Greek Testament and Hebrew Bible was much more intimate and profound than that of most seminary graduates.

He had a peculiarly inquiring mind and everything in nature, books, or the affairs of men, interested him. He was not content with a mere smattering of information; it must be full and exact, or he professed ignorance. He was a master of the English language. His style was formed by general reading, but chiefly by studying Shakespeare, Blackstone, the decisions of such judges as Chancellors Kent and Livingston, and--after he had once made its acquaintance--the English Bible. His large library at Oberlin was lined from floor to ceiling with the best English literature-Histories, Biographies, Essays, Commentaries, Scientific and Philosophical Works--everything in fact except Fiction, and the numerous marginal notes in his handwriting showed that they were carefully and thoughtfully read. He dared not indulge in the reading of novels after he entered the ministry, although he had read Richardson, Fielding and De Foe before, and seized with avidity on the Waverly Novels as fast as they appeared. Whenever, in later life, he allowed himself to listen to the reading of a novel, his attention became rapt and he was easily moved to laughter or tears by the wit or pathos of such masters as Charles Reade, Thackeray and Dickens. But he felt and said that it was dissipation--an unwholesome strain upon the emotions. No resulting good could be accomplished and all stirring of the emotions which could not be followed up by appropriate action was as bad and weakening in its effects on the mind as alcoholic stimulants were on the will and body.

There are many solecisms in the published reports of his "Revival Lectures," but anyone who will turn to the prefaces will discover that Mr. Finney did not write these lectures. They were delivered ex tempore. Mr. Joshua Leavitt, publisher of The Evangelist, made notes in long hand and wrote

them out hurriedly from these notes and sent them to The Evangelist for publication. Mr. Finney never saw them until after they were in print. They were reprinted in book form from The Evangelist in April, 1835. Mr. Finney was painfully conscious of their imperfections; but, at the time they were published, he had many serious matters to occupy his thoughts--one of them being the question whether or not he should go to Oberlin--and he had no time to revise them carefully. Thus we have, in "Revival Lectures," perhaps half of Mr. Finney's thoughts, clothed in the language of another, except where certain passages were so striking as to fasten themselves in the mind of the reporter. I doubt if one ever heard an ungrammatical expression, or an imperfectly constructed sentence, come from Mr. Finney's lips. His "Memoirs" are a much more reliable exhibit of his English style, though these, too, were taken down from dictation, after he was 75 years old. In 1818, Mr. Finney settled down to the study of law at Adams, a lively little town near his paternal home. He read law diligently, became the law clerk of Judge Benjamin Wright, the most prominent lawyer and politician in that region, was admitted to practice, at the age of twenty-eight, and at once became active in the profession. When he first went to Adams he was asked to lead the choir, on account of his musical accomplishments, and he accepted. He organized the young people of the village into a chorus, taught them singing, and led them with his cello. They became warmly attached to him, as did all who were brought into contact with him. A year after Mr. Finney went to Adams, Rev. George W.Gale, a graduate of Princeton College and Seminary, was installed as pastor of the church. He was struck with the intelligence, high character, and remarkable influence of Mr. Finney, and made a confidant of him. On "blue Monday" he often sought him out and asked him what he thought of the sermon the day before. These sermons were always carefully written and left small excuse for criticism as English compositions, but Mr. Finney was painfully candid--he never did flatter anybody--and told him that he did not believe the people understood one-half of what was written and that many of his doctrines were contrary to reason. They had many arguments. Mr. Finney was fearless and unsparing in his criticism, and if Monday was "blue" before the interview, it must often have appeared black before they got through. Yet Mr. Finney was so manifestly serious and sincere, it was impossible to feel resentment. Mr. Gale did, however, feel deeply concerned at Mr. Finney's mental attitude, and he warned other young people not to talk with him, as he would surely lead them astray. When the session proposed, in 1821, to try to get up a revival in the church, Mr. Gale said it was of no use; that Mr. Finney's influence with the young people was so great that nothing could be done with them while he remained in Adams. He said that he had labored with Mr. Finney for two years and came nearer to making shipwreck of his own faith than to converting him. He said he found him very intelligent and very hardened and not at all impressed with the importance of religion. Other men about town would say, when approached on the subject of religion, "Well, there's Finney, he attends church all the time--why don't you convert him? If he becomes a Christian, I'll think there's something in it." Mr. Gale found himself in a heart breaking position--as many another young minister has--trying, without meeting his arguments, to convert a man who would reason, instead of accepting the doctrines of the church on authority. His health began to fail and he told them they had better call some one else, as he was not equal to the situation. Church people were filled with doubt and discouragement. The irreligious laughed and said, "Mr. Finney is too much for them. He is altogether too smart to be caught by such chaff." Some of this talk reached Mr. Finney's ears and ministered to his pride. On Sunday, October 7, 1821, Mr. Gale--sick in body and ill at ease--preached in a half hearted way. There was not the slightest change apparent in the manner

of that young man, whose blue eyes almost paralyzed him with their cold, critical searching.

Yet, on the following Thursday morning, excited people spread the news all over town, "Mr. Finney has been converted. Mr. Finney has been converted--" The news seemed too good to be true. Mr. Gale said he did not believe it, and one of the local skeptics said, "It is one of Finney's practical jokes. He is trying to see just what he can make people believe." That evening the church was crowded with people, without any appointment, eager to hear all about it, and Mr. Finney, himself, rose, without any preliminary exercises, or introduction, and related his experience, and the great revival in Adams began then and there.

There was absolutely nothing in the ministry at that time to attract an ambitious and self-seeking man. Religion was everywhere at a low ebb; the prominent professional and business men had little or nothing to do with it; clergymen were poorly paid and treated with scant respect; Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" and so-called "French Infidelity" had infected the masses; churches and church meetings seemed to be kept up for the exclusive benefit of a few superstitious women and goody-good children. Mr. Finney was proud, ambitious, accomplished and self-seeking, and on the high road to success in his chosen profession. The historian of Jefferson County, New York, speaking of the conversion of Mr. Finney, says:

"He had previously been a law student under Judge Benjamin Wright and evinced an ability and sagacity that would doubtless have made him eminent in that profession."

One of the younger set, who were devoted admirers and followers of Mr. Finney, said:

"When he abandoned the profession and decided to study for the ministry, we all felt that he had made an awful mistake. That if he had continued in the practice he was destined, in a very short time, to attain the highest position at the bar and in politics."

He was peculiarly fitted to succeed in the practice of law at a time when text-books were almost unknown, when the published reports could all be placed upon a single shelf; and when success depended upon close, logical reasoning from general principles. He, himself, has recorded that he loved his profession and that the stumbling block in the way of his earlier conversion, was the feeling that if he submitted, he would have to give up his practice and go into the ministry. Every judge and lawyer who heard Mr. Finney preach felt that a great lawyer was lost to the bar of New York, when Charles G. Finney united with the church at Adams. We have said that he was ambitious. The petty practice of a country town would not have contented him long. Either he would have moved to a larger city--Utica, Rochester, or Albany--and sought business of a higher type, or he would have gone into politics; and here, again, circumstances were such as to favor a successful career.

Political conditions were chaotic, old parties breaking up, new parties forming and elections turning on the popularity or unpopularity of a single man, or measure, or the eloquence of a particular speaker. The Federalist Party had lost its great leaders and its prestige. The real strife in New York politics was between factions of the Republican (Democratic) Party, and Federalists could not hope to succeed, except as they coalesced with one or the other of the factions of the dominant party. It was one of those crises in American history when the management of affairs seems to pass from the old leaders of a dying party to the young men of the opposite party, leaping over an entire generation. The "Revolutionary Statesmen" were being relegated to the rear

and young men of ability came rapidly to the front. For example, Silas Wright, three years younger than Mr. Finney, was admitted to the bar at Canton in the adjoining county of St. Lawrence, in 1819; was elected to the State Senate in 1823, to Congress in a district which embraced Jefferson County, in 1827; became Comptroller of State in 1829, United States Senator in 1833, and again in 1837, and Governor of the State in 1844. He became an influential member of the self-appointed clique, called the "Albany Regency," which, under the leadership of Van Buren, dominated the Republican (Democratic) Party and practically dictated all its nominations and appointments--one of the earliest and most efficient "machines" in politics.

Mr. Finney's opportunity lay in the opposition to this ruling "ring." The Federalists alone had no power to overthrow it; but a great many of the Democrats were dissatisfied and ready to unite with them, or other parties, to overthrow the "ring," whenever a promising issue could be raised, or a persuasive candidate could be found. Thurlow Weed, one of the ablest politicians the State has ever known, directed the opposition to the "Regency" and was on the lookout for strong men, or popular measures, about which to rally the scattered forces of the discontented. He scored his first great victory in 1824 when the "Regency," in mere wantonness of power, deposed De Witt Clinton from the Erie Canal Commission. The Erie Canal owed its inception and successful completion to De Witt Clinton, more than to any other man in the State, and the people of Central New York rose up in wrath, nominated him for Governor in a convention of what was called "The People's Party," at Utica, and elected him by an overwhelming majority. Judge Benjamin Wright, in whose office Mr. Finney studied law, was a shrewd politician and a warm personal friend of De Witt Clinton, who appointed him Canal Commissioner at one time and Surrogate of Jefferson County at a later time. Mr. Finney's sympathies would all have been with Clinton, and his mistreatment would have excited his indignation, as injustice and oppression always did. Jefferson County was debatable ground and had been for thirty years, no party having a record of continued success and majorities being very small. Mr. Finney would certainly have taken the stump for Clinton and shared in his triumph. Two results would inevitably have followed. He would have established a wide reputation as a powerful speaker, and that sleepless ambition, which drives the politician ever onward, would have taken full possession of him. He would have been "rewarded," as was the fashion in those days, by a political appointment, or, more likely, by a nomination and election to the State Senate. This was a position much sought after by young lawyers, for the Senate was then modeled somewhat after the English House of Lords and exercised judicial powers as a Court of Error and Appeal. Here he would have attracted the attention of Thurlow Weed, who would have found in him just the man he needed to head the opposition. Weed, himself, was no speaker. What would have followed may be judged from the career of William H. Seward, who first came into prominence in this campaign of 1824, and was, thereafter, zealously pushed forward by Weed. He was elected State Senator in 1830; nominated for Governor on the Anti-Masonic ticket in 1834; nominated and elected by the Whigs in 1838, and again in 1840; became United States Senator in 1849 and 1855, and a prominent candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1856 and 1860, and was appointed Secretary of State in 1861.

Mr. Finney, if in polities, would have had the advantage of Mr. Seward in every respect. He was nine years his senior in age, two years his senior at the bar, and his commanding figure and penetrating musical voice would have contrasted favorably with the diminutive stature and shrill voice of Seward. Seward says of himself:

"Earlier than I can remember I had a catarrhal affection, which had left my voice husky and incapable of free intonation. I had occasion throughout my college course to discover that I was unsuccessful in declamation." His biographer says of him:

"Seward had no special gift of voice, or presence. He was below the average height, with nothing commanding in his appearance, and his voice was harsh and shrill, but there was courage and earnestness about his campaign speeches . . . which made them most effective." As for courage and earnestness, Mr. Finney was more than a match for Seward and he would have been more consistent in his political action. His well-known convictions at each stage of political evolution, corresponded closely with Seward's, down to 1860, when the latter seemed disposed to surrender all the principles for which the Republicans had fought and won, in a vain effort to placate the South.

Loved, admired, respected, with a large and devoted following, if any man should have been satisfied with his prospects in life and could have got along without religion in this world, it was Charles G. Finney at the age of twenty-nine. His conversion resulted from thoughtful reading of the Bible, a copy of which he had bought shortly after beginning the study of the law--the first he had ever owned. He had read many books before--everything, in fact, he could find within a day's walk of places where he chanced to live--but this book was different. It was the only book that described God as having any interest in, or direct influence over the affairs of men, as asserting Divine authority and promising to reward or punish men according to their deserts. It kindled new thoughts in his active mind and he began to see in dim outline the great scheme of the moral universe. In a few months' time, he became convinced that the Bible was indeed the word of God; that no men could have written such a book without being Divinely inspired. He then studied it with the diligence that he had before given to the New York Statutes and Reports and to his legal text-books.

He had developed a well-rounded creed of his own, before he was oppressed with the feeling that it was time to act. Religion was simply a life of obedience to God. Conversion was simply a determination to lead that life. It involved a complete surrender of one's own plans and wishes. Anything short of this was persistence in disobedience, and disobedience was sin. Mr. Finney's life had been correct, judged by human standards, and he could only accuse himself of pride, wilfulness, and an indifference to religion which amounted to contempt of God. But these were real offenses.

He began to feel the need of pardon and forgiveness. Then arose the question of the terms of forgiveness. He indulged in secret prayer. And the more he read and prayed, the more convinced he became that he must get rid of his pride and ambition, must give up the profession which he loved, and the political prospects which glittered before him, and must atone for his previous indifference--by supreme devotion to the Master's service. Could he do it? What would people say? The very reiteration of these questions revealed to him the sinfulness of his heart, the proud and selfish spirit which had actuated him all along. Then followed that great emotional struggle, of which no man but himself was aware at the time, lasting three days and three nights, at the end of which he made a complete surrender, gave up everything for which he had planned and worked, and received the assurance that he was forgiven. The struggle was so severe and the joy of adoption so overwhelming, that he always remembered and often celebrated the day of this "new

birth," October 10, 1821. The keynote of his whole subsequent career is found in his remark to a client, next morning:

"I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead His cause, and you must go and get some one else to attend to your law suit. I cannot do it."

He refused all offers of business after that, because he did not dare trust himself in the excitement of a contested law suit. He began, at once, to work for the conversion of others. He called his choir together, confessed that he had been a stumbling block in the way of their conversion, asked for their forgiveness, related his experience, urged them to become Christians at once, and prayed with them; and all joined the church within a short time. One of these converts was a daughter of Judge Wright, who became the mother of Bishop Henry B. Whipple, of Minnesota. Can anyone estimate the far-reaching consequences of a single conversion? In a few days he went to Henderson, spoke to his parents and appointed a prayer and conference meeting at the Baptist church--then without a pastor--and a revival began there. Wherever he was known, the most powerful argument that could be used was the fact of his own conversion. If this intellectual skeptic, this promising lawyer and rising politician, this boon companion and social leader had become converted, there must be something in religion. Men’s attention was arrested, their thoughts were engaged, and they yielded to his arguments and prayers almost instantly. Long before Mr. Finney was licensed to preach, he had accomplished more in the way of converting souls than most ministers do in a life time. When he announced his intention to study for the ministry, the local Presbytery committed him to the care of Mr. Gale, and he pursued his studies under Mr. Gale’s direction and part of the time at his house. His theological education seems to have consisted largely in reading his Bible and disputing certain doctrines of the Old School Presbyterians. He accepted nothing on Mr. Gale’s say-so, and the fact that such and such views were held at Princeton made no impression upon him. He continued to reason, and to accept nothing that his reason did not commend, and poor Mr. Gale said again and again:

" Mr. Finney, if you continue to argue and reason, you will land in infidelity, just as many of the students at Princeton have done. You must accept some things on the faith of the great fathers of the church, and not be so opinionated." The fruit of this reliance on his own reasoning was seen in his absolute confidence in his conclusions. He not only rested on convictions so reached, but he believed that he could convince any man, who was honest and earnest, of the truth of his views. This was one secret of his tremendous power over adults.

After he was licensed to preach, wherever he went he sought out privately, or contrived to have brought before him, the men of character and intelligence who were indifferent, or openly opposed to religion, and reasoned with them. He would say:

"I have not come to find fault, I have been in the same position myself. I may be able to help you solve some of your difficulties. I think I have found the truth. Let us talk it over and see if you are mistaken, or whether I am all wrong." And he almost never failed, if the man was really a man of character, and had no secret vices. Among the first to be converted in Rome, Utica and Rochester were the Presidents of Infidel Clubs founded on Tom Paine’s "Age of Reason." If Tom Paine had been living, Mr. Finney would undoubtedly have sought him out and reasoned with him. In the midst of the revival at Adams, a leading preacher of the Universalist church appeared on the scene and, in rival meetings, deprecated the excitement among the young people, said that they

were needlessly alarmed, God's mercy was not limited, they ought not to go about making themselves and everyone else unhappy. No man need be scared into the Kingdom of Heaven; they would all get there in good time, &c., &c. The effect on the progress of the revival was paralyzing and the elders of the church urged Mr. Gale to make direct reply, but Mr. Gale was in ill health and really unfitted by his training to reason with an unbeliever. He asked Mr. Finney--who had just begun his "Study of Theology" to make some reply. Mr. Finney's action was characteristic. He got up before the people at prayer meeting and said: "I will hear this man. I will give due weight to his arguments. I will read my Bible. I will study and pray, and if you will come here one week from to-night, I will either convince you that he is wrong, or, I will become a Universalist myself." This was not bravado, but the sincere declaration of a man, who was willing to put everything to the test and accept any conclusion to which his examination led him. Mr. Gale was shocked at his temerity and all were a little fearful about the outcome; but one week from that night they came, the house was crowded, and he came and--it is needless to say--he did not become a Universalist. Starting with their fundamental doctrine, he said that Christ died, indeed, for all men, but it did not follow that all would be saved. There was no such thing as automatic salvation. it was not only contrary to Scripture, but was condemned by reason as absurd. A man must repent and do works meet for repentance, or he could never be classed with the righteous. The responsibility for success or failure was placed squarely on the individual, when once a way had been opened, &c. The decline of the Universalist church, which was strong at one time, was due, largely, to the undermining effect of its own commonly received doctrine. If all men are to be saved, anyhow, why go to the trouble and expense of keeping up churches? When the Bench and Bar of Rochester, New York, united in a written request to Mr. Finney to deliver a series of lectures for their especial benefit, he was warned that they were mostly Deists, and not particularly concerned about their soul's salvation; that they had all read Tom Paine and did not believe in the Bible; and that many of them signed just out of curiosity to hear what kind of an argument a lawyer could put up for religion. Mr. Finney accepted the challenge, took the Bible from its place on the pulpit and said he would not replace it, until they were convinced in their hearts that it ought to be there and that they needed it.

He took for the text of his first discourse, "Do We Know Anything?" and reasoned from the facts of common experience and the dictates of common sense for nine successive sessions, of two hours each. He awakened in every mind a conviction of sin; the certainty that an omniscient God must know and disapprove of it; the certainty that a just God would punish it, as an infraction of the moral law which was written in every heart; that we all saw sinners escaping just punishment in this world and, as lawyers, sometimes helped them to escape; that this brought contempt on the administration of justice here on earth, and that like contempt would be felt for God's government, unless we believed that somehow, somewhere, they would get their just deserts; that no one who believed in God at all could doubt his power to administer punishment and that it would be right to do so. The penalties for violating Nature's laws were inexorable and everlasting. They could derive no comfort from analogy, and common sense could not show them how to escape like consequences for a violation of the Moral Law. The sinner's case was hopeless and deservedly so. He searched their consciences. With his knowledge of human nature, he lifted the veil from long hidden faults and exposed their failings and corruption to themselves. If you won't obey God or the dictates of your own consciences now, why should you ever do so? Even if you make up your minds to do so from now henceforth, how are you going to atone for the sins already

committed? You can never make good even to your fellow-men, the losses you have inflicted upon them. Damages, as every lawyer knows, are poor reparation for sufferings inflicted by wilful misconduct. How, then, can you satisfy the demands of the moral Ruler of the Universe, to whom damages are as dust in the balance, an earthly expedient beneath contempt?

Then he took the Bible and they listened, with streaming eyes, as he read the tender passages of Scripture, revealing God's love and fatherly solicitude and the Gospel Plan of Salvation. "And that is the book," he said, "which you have removed from your shelves to make room for Tom Paine's shallow `Age of Reason'! How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" The effect was tremendous. Judge Gardiner, of the New York Court of Appeals, crept up the pulpit steps and said, "Mr. Finney I am convinced. Won't you pray for me by name and I will take the anxious seat." The lawyers rose en masse and crowded to the front and knelt down for prayers. Nearly every one was converted. Many of them gave up their profession and went into the ministry. The revival swept the whole community and spread from it as a centre in every direction. Oh, that we had that magnificent argument in permanent form! It could not be comprehended by children of sixteen, but it might continue to save men, as it did when originally delivered.

Mr. Finney never went into the pulpit without a determination to win his case. He wanted a verdict from every audience he faced, and if he did not get it, he felt that his sermon was wasted. He aimed at producing conviction, confession, repentance, restitution, submission, prayer for forgiveness, and self dedication, to God's service. Unless a man is convicted of sin, nothing can be done with him, because he feels no need of Salvation. Christ did not die for him. It was in his efforts to produce this necessary conviction that Mr. Finney displayed his wonderful knowledge of human nature and set up the most exalted standard of ethics.

"If you design to make an impression contrary to the naked truth--you lie."

"If, in managing an estate, you gain for your-self some advantage which you might have gained for the estate--you steal."

He said, in 1834, to an audience of New York business men:

"The reason there is not more pure piety in New York City is that almost every one is guilty of some form of dishonesty."

He struck at the present day evil of "Rebates" when, in 1834, he denounced at one and the same time the merchant who asked one price and would take another; and the customer who, when told the price of an article, immediately tried to get it for less. Both were trying to deceive and each was seeking to get an undue advantage of the other. The customer, who supposed he was getting goods for less than their true value, must also have supposed that other customers would have to pay more in order to make up for the loss. He therefore was willing to rob others that he himself might become rich. The Tappans, merchant princes, were so impressed with this argument that they adopted the one price plan and, strange to say, lost a large percentage of their customers, who insisted on buying their goods for less than they supposed any one else would have to pay.

He sounded the key note of civic reform when he preached to his congregation in the Broadway Tabernacle:

"Instead of voting for a man because he belongs to your party . . . You must find out whether he is honest and fit to be trusted . . . if you will give your vote only for honest men, the country will be obliged to have honest rulers. All parties will be compelled to put up honest men as candidates."

He would not preach the doctrine of "Imputed Sin," because he believed every man had quite enough sins of his own to atone for. His favorite recipe for the "uncou gude"[sic.?] was to have him write down any doubtful act he had ever been guilty of, then go to his neighbor against whom the fault was committed and make confession and restitution, then try to think of another and set it down. "Once you have begun," he adds, cheerfully, "you will be surprised to see how easy it is to remember others, and how little conceit you will have left."

He insisted on confession and restitution and would promise relief on no other terms.

"If you have defrauded anybody, send the money--the full amount--and the interest."

"If the individual you have injured is too far off for you to go and see him, sit down and write him a letter and confess the injury, pay the postage and put it into the mail immediately."

He had to be particular about the postage, for, in his day, letters could be sent at the expense of the person addressed.

"A man does not forsake his sins until he has made all the reparation in his power."

"If you think you can practice a little dishonesty and yet continue to enjoy the presence of God, you deceive yourselves."

He spoke of sins prevalent in the communities he visited, in the most direct and scathing terms. He called a spade, "a spade" and not "an agricultural implement compounded of wood and iron." An unrepentant sinner was a wretch, to be despised and condemned, and not a mere unfortunate, to be pitied and coddled.

Men often resented what they regarded as personal allusions, and threatened to chastise and even kill him; but there was something so majestic in his bearing, so earnest and sincere in his words and manner, that no one ever got near to him without being overcome. He never had a personal encounter after he entered the ministry. One man said:

"When I heard about what Finney said, I wanted to thrash him; when I saw him, I had my doubts as to whether I could; and when I heard him, he could do what he pleased with me. "

He was not content with mere "professions of faith." There must be newness of life. He cleaned up every community he visited--and so thoroughly, that they stayed clean for at least a generation afterwards.

What Dr. Bush says of the revival in Rochester might be said of every place in which he preached:

". . . The courts and the prisons bore witness to its blessed effects. There was a wonderful falling off in crime. The courts had little to do, and the jail was nearly empty for years afterwards." When Mr. Finney was licensed to preach, he first went to small towns in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, under the auspices of a Women’s Missionary Society. He preached in churches, school houses, barns--anywhere where he could gather an audience. As Dr. Bush said: The amount of

hard work for brain and muscle performed by that man in those six months was something prodigious."

He preached three times on Sundays and three or four times during the week, attended prayer and inquiry meetings, went from house to house talking and praying with the people, and was accessible to visitors at all hours of the day or night. His sermons averaged two hours in length and often extended to two and a half or three. Yet whether he preached in the back woods, or the cities of New York, or in the great city of London, his audience never seemed to weary, and it was a rare circumstance for any to go out. Such interest can only be awakened and kept up by an engaging personality, by the highest oratorical power, by ever varying the themes, and illustrations, and by presenting new thoughts, or old thoughts clothed in new and striking phraseology. The first half hour was usually didactic and expository. He defined words largely by stating what they did not mean, thus getting rid of popular misconceptions; then he proceeded to make practical application of the doctrine embodied in the text to the affairs of life, and to point out what sort of people it was intended to fit, and there were just such persons in nearly every audience. On one occasion he was describing the petty advantages trustees may secure at the expense of the beneficiaries, exchanging their own doubtful or worthless securities for valuable assets belonging to the estate, &c., and said: "If I were omniscient, as God is, I could doubtless name persons in this very audience who are guilty of just such practices." A respected citizen cried out: "Name me!" and sank down in an agony of shame and contrition. Mr. Finney said he knew of hundreds of just such cases, and thousands where the parties made no public confession, but made immediate restitution. In most of these cases, he had no actual knowledge of wrongdoing. He simply had--what he said all ministers should have to be effective--a thorough knowledge of human nature and the courage to denounce sin, though the sinner sat right before him. All this part of the sermon was clear, logical, and forcible, and delivered in the manner of the class-room, or court-room, rather than that of the pulpit or platform. Then he closed with "a few remarks" which might last half an hour, or an hour and a half--no one ever knew, or cared to know, for it was at this stage of the sermon that he summoned every power of imagination, feeling, gesture and facial expression to his aid, and his wonderful word-paintings thrilled his audience, and his appeals to the emotions were most effective. And it was here, all reports of his sermons completely fail. Mr. Finney never wrote but two sermons in his life and that was at the very outset of his career. He always preached ex tempore, because it was the most effective method and because he thought the time given to writing out and polishing up sermons might better be given to reading, prayer and meditation. He gave more thought to the substance of his discourse than would have been possible if he had attempted to reduce it to writing. "What would be thought of a lawyer," he used to say, "who should stand up before a jury and read an essay to them? He would lose his case!"

All that is left of his sermons--saving a few "skeletons" or outlines of his discourses prepared by himself--is what has filtered through the minds of non-professional reporters like Rev. Joshua R. Leavitt, Rev. Henry Cowles and Rev. Samuel D. Cochran. The style of each of these men impressed itself on Mr. Finney’s thought, in transmission, and it was impossible for them to convey all of his thought, much less his imagery and pathos. A professional stenographer was employed at one time to report his sermons in Niblo’s Theatre, New York City. He succeeded very well for fifteen or twenty minutes, but when Mr. Finney began to warm up, and his words began to glow with feeling, he forgot entirely what he was there for and sat, with idle pencil, in open-mouthed

astonishment. He could not be persuaded to try again.

Dr. Edwards Park said:

"Some of his rhetorical utterances were indescribable . . . but if every word of it were on the printed page, it would not be the identical sermon of the living preacher."

We can only refer to the impression made upon the minds of his auditors, and judge of the effort by the tremendous results.

Dr. Theodore Cuyler says:

"Charles G. Finney was the acknowledged king of American evangelists . . . His sermons were chain lightning, flashing conviction into the hearts of the stoutest skeptics and the links of his logic were so compact they defied resistance. Probably no minister in America ever numbered among his converts so many lawyers and men of culture."

Prof. Davenport says:

"No explanation of Finney's career would be at all sufficient which did not take into account the almost preternatural influence of suggestion which he exercised over men's minds. His power to compel individuals and audiences to his will and purposes was, it seems to me, the most extraordinary that appears in any evangelist."

" . . . So no explanation would be at all adequate which did not recognize his higher ethical and spiritual qualities and especially the possession of a very clear and vigorous mind."

Rev. Dr. Stanton, of Cincinnati, said:

" I have heard many of the great preachers of the day and I regard him as the greatest preacher I ever heard."

William E. Dodge, a New York business man, said:

"He was the most remarkable preacher that I have ever listened to. He would hold those audiences in Prince Street and the Tabernacle for an hour and a half or two hours and no one seemed to think that the time hung heavy."

Dr. Joseph P. Thompson, one of his successors in the pulpit of the Broadway Tabernacle, gives a most interesting account of the way Mr. Finney prepared his sermons, and analyzes his power as follows:

"Mr. Finney's method of preaching was peculiar. Gifted with fine powers of analysis which were early disciplined in the study of law, he has also the constructive faculty in a high degree; so that he can at once dissect an error, or sophism, analyze a complex feeling, motive, or action, and build a logical argument with cumulative force. With these he combines a vivid imagination and the power of graphic description. Nor, with the seeming sharpness and severity of his logic and the terrors which his fancy portrays, is he wanting in tenderness of feeling. His experimental knowledge of Divine truth is deep and thorough; and his knowledge of the workings of the human mind under that truth is extended and philosophical. Hence his preaching searches the conscience, convinces the judgment and stirs the will either to assent or to rebellion. His elocution,

though unstudied and sometimes inelegant, is strangely effective; and, in the proper mood of an assembly, a pause, a gesture, an emphasis, an inflection, an exclamation, will produce the highest oratorical effects. The conviction of sincerity attends his words; the force of an earnest mind goes with his logic."

He was unconsciously dramatic; never theatrical. One of the most impressive sermons I ever heard him deliver was on the text:

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies."

It was an exposition of merciless justice; of what guilty men had the right to expect; of the futility of the excuses men were prone to offer for evil courses; and of the terrors that would overtake them when judgment was at hand. Then, right before our eyes, he conjured up such a fearful storm of wind, rain and hail that I grew chilled through and through. I shivered and buttoned my coat up tight and I saw uneasiness and apprehension depicted on the faces of all around me.

I was never more astonished in my life than when I went outside and saw the world bathed in sunlight, the birds twittering, and all as calm and serene as a June day could ever be. And yet I have been told that I never heard Mr. Finney preach; that his powers were on the decline before I had come to years of understanding!

How he did it I cannot tell. No one can tell. He probably could not tell, himself. He just imagined the coming of an awful storm and then described what he imagined, and we saw and felt all that he imagined.

You can read Prof. Cowles, report of this very sermon; but you will not find in it a word that even suggests this part of the sermon. The sermon itself was an hour and a half long; you can read Prof. Cowles' report in fifteen minutes.

If you were to ask any man, who had heard Mr. Finney preach between the years 1824 and 1860, "What was the most impressive sermon you ever heard?" the chances are one hundred to one, he would name some one of Mr. Finney 's.

Dr. Edward Beecher says a sermon Mr. Finney preached in the Park Street Church, Boston, in 1831, was "the most impressive and powerful sermon I ever heard. No one can form any conception of the power of his appeal."

Dr. Edwards Park says the greatest sermon he ever heard was one preached by Mr. Finney in Andover, on the text, "The Wages of Sin is Death." Romans vi, 23.

"Every one of the men [sitting with him] was trembling with excitement."

General J. D. Cox has told me of the tremendous effect of a sermon preached from the same text in Niblo's Theatre in New York. But the greatest sermon he ever heard was one from the text, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Hebrews ii, 3. General Cox was a cool man, a brave man, not given to hysterics, and, like Mr. Finney, he would reason. Yet, at the close of that sermon, when sinners were invited to come forward and accept the proffered salvation, and the aisles were crowded, he went leaping down to the front, using the backs of the seats as

stepping stones. He believed then that if he remained in his seat one minute his soul would be lost. Various efforts have been made to define this power. Some writers call it "psychic influence"; some, the "power of Suggestion." Some say he had "personal magnetism"; others, a "high hypnotic potential." I call it a transcendent power of communicating thought, imagination and feeling. But none of these definitions help us to understand it, or acquire it. His success among the rude frontier settlers might be attributed to the reawakening of a Sense of decency in the hearts of men conscious of their coarseness and degradation. The people knew they were leading immoral lives and didn't need any argument to convince them of sin. All they needed was a cogent appeal to abandon it. But when Mr. Finney began preaching in the cities--Rome, Utica, Auburn, Troy, Rochester--he had an altogether different class to deal with, and his success was even more phenomenal. The revival in these places began at the top and worked downwards. The first to be converted were the educated men, leading citizens, respected judges, lawyers, doctors, bankers, merchants, manufacturers--and they constituted the prominent portion of his audiences to the end. The whole community was involved in serious thought and conversation, and the very atmosphere seemed charged with emotion. During twenty days spent in Rome there were five hundred conversions. "Nearly all the adult population of the town were brought into the church." In Utica and vicinity some fifteen hundred were added to the churches in a six weeks' campaign. In the Oneida Presbytery, alone, over three thousand conversions were reported as the result of his labors in the year 1826.

Then a strange thing happened. Christ said to His apostles: "They shall put you out of the synagogues." John 16:2. This was spoken of the Jews; but the Presbyterians took it upon themselves to fulfil the prophecy in the nineteenth century. As the news of these revivals spread, a powerful opposition was awakened. It seemed as though the thing most to be dreaded by all orthodox Presbyterians, was a sudden increase in church membership. Dr. Morgan has recorded that even he "was shocked with the rapidity with which converts were admitted to the churches." Dr. Lyman Beecher of Boston, Dr. N. W. Taylor of New Haven, and Dr. Asahel Nettleton, having no personal knowledge of the facts and misled by some very sensational reports of the meetings, began writing letters to the brethren, in New York State and elsewhere, warning them against Mr. Finney and his "new measures," advising them not to invite him to their pulpits, or to countenance his revivals. These letters were received, among others, by pastors with whom he had been working at Rome, Utica, Clinton, Auburn, and Troy, and were shown to him. The objectors were shining lights in the church, all of them successful revivalists of high repute. To a man of Mr. Finney's sensitiveness, this concerted movement to suppress him was a profound shock. For a time all seemed dark before him, and it seemed certain that he must give up preaching and go back to the practice of the law. He tried to think of all occasions for offense he had given, he wept and prayed, and the cello, long neglected, was again brought into requisition. At last he received the assurance that he need not give up, that if he would persevere, the way would be made plain before him, and opposition would cease. Mr. Finney's friends and coadjutors set to work in earnest and under the leadership of Dr. Beman, of Troy, secured a conference at New Lebanon, in July, 1827, to which Dr. Beecher, Dr. Nettleton, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Hawes of Hartford, President Humphreys of Amherst College, Justin Edwards of Andover, and other New England clergymen came, to talk matters over with the clergy of Auburn, Rome, --Utica, Clinton, and Troy. The conference lasted nine days. When the facts were presented, their minds were disabused, their prejudices largely dissipated, and all but Dr. Nettleton professed to be satisfied with the explanations made. On his

way home from this conference, Dr. Beecher is reported to have said, "We crossed the mountains expecting to meet a company of boys, but we found them to be full grown men."

Mr. Finney, himself, had very little to say, but the depth of his feeling, and the warmth of his gratitude to the men who stood by him in this extremity, may be judged from the fact that his oldest son, born three years later, was named Charles Beman after Dr. Beman of Troy, and his second son, the donor of this Chapel--born five years later--was named Frederic Norton after Dr. Norton of Clinton.

Although the New Lebanon Conference had tended thus to clear the atmosphere, the New York City pastors were still so prejudiced that none of them would invite Mr. Finney to his pulpit. Many of the laymen were anxious to hear him, and Anson G. Phelps determined that he should be heard in New York City. He hired a vacant church that could be had for three months, and sent for him, agreeing to pay all the expenses of carrying on the meetings. When the three months were out, Mr. Phelps purchased a Universalist Church in Prince Street near Broadway, and services were carried on there for several months. As there was no organized church, converts were instructed to unite with the church they had been accustomed to attend, or the one nearest to where they lived, and thus, as a result of his preaching, every Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Baptist Church in New York City reported accessions of from fifty to two hundred in 1830. They were received into churches which were opposed to revivals, and constituted a helpless minority, and Mr. Phelps, the Tappans and others, who were by this time interested, decided that they ought to be gathered into churches of their own, where their new zeal could have a chance to show itself and induce further growth. so the first Free Presbyterian Church was organized and put under the charge of Rev. Joel Parker, of Rochester, New York, and it prospered so greatly that a Second Free Presbyterian Church was organized and, in 1832, the Chatham Street Theatre was purchased and converted into a chapel on condition that Mr. Finney would become its pastor. In the meantime he had been having powerful revival meetings at Rochester, Auburn, Buffalo, Providence, and Boston. He commenced in April, 1832, and worked right through the summer, although New York City had a terrible visitation of the cholera and, he could count five hearses at a time drawn up at doors on the street where he lived. Finally, in the fall, he was stricken with the disease and could not preach again until the following spring. Then, although still weak, he began his labors with such power that five hundred members were added in a few weeks, and another and another colony was sent off to form new churches. In February, 1835, Lewis Tappan wrote to the English Commissioners who came to study the State of Religion in America, that as a result of this movement four churches had been organized in as many years, with a total membership of fifteen hundred and eighty-seven; that steps were being taken to organize two more, and that fifty-one young men belonging to these churches were studying for the ministry, and, he added:

"More than half the persons who are hopefully converted in these congregations unite with other churches, owing to various circumstances."

"Could suitable ministers be procured it would be no difficult thing for the membership of the Free Churches to organize many new churches every year." In the fall of 1833 Mr. Finney’s friends decided to build for him a large church with a seating capacity of twenty-five hundred and a total capacity of four thousand. He designed the structure himself. It was exactly one hundred feet square, with plain brick walls, located fifty feet from Broadway in the centre of a built-up block, so

that not a dollar should be wasted on external ornament. He cared more for acoustics than aesthetics. It had a deep gallery all around and a spacious platform about one-third of the way from the back to the front. Every listener was within eighty feet of the speaker. It was, when finished, the most perfect auditorium in New York City. As one of his successors said, "it was one in which the speaker could speak and the hearers hear, without effort." It cost $66,500. Under the rear gallery were arranged rooms for the pastor's study, and a large class-room where it was expected that he would give instruction to the young men who were preparing for the ministry. Services were held in it for the first time in April, 1835. Mr. Finney now had just what he wanted, a ___ ___ from which to lift the whole new world. It was not merely that New York was the largest city on the Continent and capable in itself of furnishing large and ever changing audiences--but it was the landing place of nearly all European emigrants--English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, German, Scandinavian; it was the place to which merchants, planters, and manufacturers went from all parts of the country, to trade and lay in their stocks of goods and supplies. They had to go to this great mart of commerce several times a year, because "commercial travellers" were then unknown. Where on earth could a man hope to exercise a greater influence? If he regarded fame--where could he find a better opportunity to achieve it? If he wished to prepare young men for the ministry, the class-room was ready, and fifty-one of his own converts were eager to begin their studies.

Now occurred what I must regard as the most extraordinary incident in this extraordinary life. Father Shipherd, having secured about the most undesirable tract of land to be found in Northern Ohio and founded a school in which labor and learning were to go hand in hand, having cleared about twenty acres, erected Oberlin Hall (a two-story frame building about thirty-five by forty feet), a saw mill and a few shanties, and having gotten together about a hundred students--only four of whom were far enough advanced to be called freshmen--went to New York City and asked Mr. Finney to leave his church and the great field opening before him and come out to Oberlin to be a Professor of Theology. Was there ever a more absurd proposition?

About the same time, a country clergyman in New England was invited to come out and become one of the professors. He declined the appointment, saying that a friend whose judgment he was bound to respect, had urged the greatest caution, since Oberlin was only an experiment, and further, "it was the offspring of a projector, who is a son of a projector whose projects have always failed." That was what might be called "the common sense answer" to such a proposition. But Mr. Shipherd had one of the elements of a successful projector, the nerve to ask for what he wanted. The New England clergyman had comparatively little to lose. Mr. Finney was asked to throw away the finest opportunity that any preacher of his day and generation ever had--not merely an opportunity to preach to large crowds and become famous--but an opportunity to do untold good. What other clergymen would have done, under like circumstances, may be judged from Dr. Cuyler's attitude--after the future of Oberlin was secure beyond a reasonable doubt. Mr. Finney, being eighty years old and unable longer to preach regularly, was trying. to find a man to fill the First Church pulpit. He wrote to Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, pleading with him to come.

"I think there is no more important field of ministerial labor in the world. 1 know that you have a great congregation in Brooklyn and are mightily prospered in your labors, but your flock does not contain a thousand students pursuing the higher branches of education from year to year. Surely your field in Brooklyn is not more important than mine was at the Broadway Tabernacle in New

York, nor can your people be more attached to you than mine were to me."

Dr. Cuyler writes, "the kind overture was promptly declined," and does not seem to think his decision requires any explanation, or apology. There were favorable considerations presented to him, that could not be presented to Mr. Finney. And yet, Mr. Finney left the Broadway Tabernacle, just one month after it was completed, and came to Oberlin. Dr. Charles E. Jefferson said, on the sixtieth Anniversary of the Broadway Tabernacle:

"What might have been the future under Mr. Finney's continued leadership we shall never know, for at the end of the first year, two visitors arrived from the West who carried him to Ohio, to become the head of a little school just organized at Oberlin." The last seven words of Dr. Jefferson express his opinion of the move. He was not even to be the head of the "little school!" In 1851 Dr. John Campbell of London, in bidding farewell to Mr. Finney, after nine months of continuous revival preaching, said:

"We cannot say that we are much gratified at the thought of Mr. Finney's returning to College duties and the general ministry of a rural charge. We do not consider that such is the place for the man; and we must be allowed to think that fifteen years ago a mistake was committed when he became located in the midst of academic bowers . . . He is made for the millions--his place is in the pulpit, rather than the professor's chair. He is a Heaven-born sovereign of the people. The people he loves; and the mass of the people all but idolize him."

These men probably voiced the sentiment of thousands of Mr. Finney's friends and admirers. Why did he go? I think the best answer which can be given to that question is, because he did not want to. That was the answer he gave to a friend who asked him why he went to Boston to preach, when he had remarked that the conditions were more discouraging there than in any large city which he visited. (Whenever he did what he did not want to do his labors were especially blessed.) It was so when he went to Rochester, after he and all the friends he consulted had concluded that he ought not to go there, because the outlook was so unfavorable. In the summer of 1834, Arthur Tappan had asked him to go out to Cincinnati and prepare a class of forty young men for the ministry, and offered to pay all the expenses. These young men had left Lane Seminary in a body, when the Trustees passed a resolution suppressing the discussion of Slavery, and were still holding together at Cumminsville, a suburb of Cincinnati. It was a splendid class, their average age was twenty-six, they were men of mature judgment, well grounded in classical studies and practiced in debate. Two-thirds of them were from New York State and New England, and a majority of them were Mr. Finney's own converts. Of course, he was interested in them and anxious to accommodate Mr. Tappan; but he said he could not leave his church, and made the sensible suggestion that as soon as his class-room in the Broadway Tabernacle was ready for use they should be brought on to New York and receive instruction there. He considered the matter as settled and went on to prepare and deliver that course of "Lectures on Revivals," which had such a wide circulation and influence. Then came Father Shipherd and Rev. Asa Mahan, who put themselves into communication with the Tappans and reopened the whole question. Mr. Finney did not want to leave his church and, with remarkable foresight, stated the hazards of the new enterprise and the objections to leaving his work in the city, to embark on what Dr. Leonard rightly calls a "tremendous venture." But all his demands were met and at last the question presented itself in this form: Dr. Mahan and Professor Morgan and at least forty students of Theology will go

to Oberlin if you go. The Tappans and their friends will provide salaries for eight professors and will pay $10,000 down for necessary buildings, and, in time, $80,000 more for endowment. You need not give up your church, you can spend your summers in Oberlin and your winters in New York, and the church will pay your expenses both going and coming. It is the one chance to establish a school in the West, where young men may be properly trained for the ministry and where all men may gain correct views of the great evil of slavery. Still more, Arthur Tappan privately pledged to Mr. Finney his entire income, then amounting to $100,000 a year--less what was necessary for his family--in support of the enterprise. If he refused to go, Oberlin would get nothing, the Lane Seminary students would scatter, and a great opportunity for doing good would be lost. When so presented, Mr. Finney feared that further opposition to the Oberlin plan might be due to a selfish regard for his own comfort, or advancement, and so--he went. If he had come to a different decision, you and I would not be here to-day. Our fellow alumni, occupying stations of usefulness all over the world, would not be where they are. President Fairchild, who never used extravagant language, wrote:

"If Charles G. Finney had not lived and labored Oberlin could not have existed."

"Without them" (the anti-slavery impulse and Charles G. Finney) "Oberlin could never have done the work which has fallen to it and probably could not have existed beyond a single decade."

Mr. Finney’s coming secured for Oberlin not merely the things promised, but the attention of the whole religious world. His reputation and wide acquaintance attracted hundreds--I may say thousands of students from New York, Pennsylvania, and New England long before the local field yielded its full crops. His converts and children of his converts flocked to Oberlin, and others, who knew him only by reputation, desired to have their children educated under his influence. For similar reasons England, Scotland, Wales and the West Indies contributed large numbers of students.

Mr. Finney insisted that one of the first eight professors should be a "Professor of Sacred Music," and that the best man who could be found should be appointed to carry it to its highest perfection. He tried to get Mason, Hastings, or Bradbury, but they were not altruistic enough to give up lucrative church and chorus appointments in the East; although, at his request, both Mason and Hastings came out at various times to give the Oberlin chorus special instruction and lead the Commencement music. And it was under George N. Allen, a pupil of Lowell Mason, that classical music and the great chorus became established features of Oberlin life and student culture. There is not to-day in all this broad land, one college which can boast of such a choir and furnish such music as the Musical Union of Oberlin. It is perhaps the greatest--certainly the most quickly appreciated--of the outward signs which distinguish Oberlin from other schools. But Mr. Finney had still to make a harder decision. In the summer of 1837 he was satisfied that he could not continue to be pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle and Professor of Theology at Oberlin. The work in New York suffered during his absence and he could not find an assistant pastor capable of keeping the church alive and active while he was away. The attempt to fill Mr. Finney’s shoes, six months in the year, might well appall any man. it was next to impossible for a man to develop an independent line of thought and action, while holding over, and hence his responsibility as an individual was weakened and the loyalty of his congregation was always a matter of doubt.

He must give up one or the other. Which should it be? While he was debating this question at Oberlin, the terrible panic Of 1837 struck the country, and nearly every merchant in New York City was forced into bankruptcy, including the Tappans and all of the subscribers to the $80,000 professorship fund. Oberlin was cut off from its source of supply and was in debt nearly $30,000 for new buildings and expenses incurred on the faith of the promised endowment. The Lane Seminary students had mostly graduated. He had done his full duty by them. Father Shipherd had gone off to found other institutions. The College enterprise was, to all appearance, a failure, and he was under no legal or moral obligation to, stay. Of course, the sensible thing to do was to go back to New York and devote himself exclusively to the interests of his church. He could find a ready support anywhere in the East. Let the College take care of itself! But he looked at the hard lot of Oberlin College and all the good people, old and young, who had come there, largely on his account, and again he chose the rough and thorny path and sent his resignation--to the Broadway Tabernacle. His cow died, and to buy another he sold his travelling trunk. He had come to stay. On Thanksgiving Day, 1837, he was at the end of his resources. He did not know where he could get funds to pay for another meal. He went to church and conducted Thanksgiving services for a congregation as hard pressed as himself; and all were lifted above the cares of this world. He says, naively, he enjoyed his own preaching that day as much as ever he did in his life, and then went home, to be met at the gate by a letter, wholly unexpected, from Josiah Chapin, of Providence, Rhode Island, enclosing a draft for $200 and a promise to pay his salary as professor as long as it might be needed. The prejudice against Oberlin was so great, on account of its anti-slavery principles, coeducation and reception of colored students, and the effect of the panic so universal and prostrating that relief could not be expected in this country. After much prayer and consideration, Father Keep and William Dawes were sent to England to try and raise funds to tide the College over its difficulties. Had they friends or personal acquaintances in England? Not one! What interest had England in Oberlin? At that time, absolutely none! Ohio was but a spot on their maps. No Englishman had ever heard of Oberlin. How, then, could these men expect to get a dollar for the College? They had two words to conjure with--Anti-Slavery and Charles G. Finney. England had just emancipated her slaves. The moral force which brought this about had not spent itself. Mr. Finney’s reputation preceded Keep and Dawes across the ocean. The "Revival Lectures," which he preached in 1834, had been reprinted in Great Britain and had an enormous circulation. One publisher alone reported a sale of eighty thousand copies. They were almost sure to find a copy of this book in the house of every minister and intelligent layman they called upon. They could say the author of this popular work, this great revivalist, was a professor and pastor at Oberlin; that he was influencing hundreds of young people every year, each of whom would in turn influence hundreds of others in all parts of the country, and that this whole cumulative influence was directed against slavery. And they could add that all this was in danger, unless they could get a little timely assistance--and they got $30,000 over and above all expenses.

Friends:--time will not permit me to speak further of this man. You are probably as well informed about his work here as Professor, President, Pastor and Guide, as I am, myself.

It is fitting that this Memorial should stand in Oberlin, on the site where he lived for forty years. It is fitting that it should take the form of a chapel, in which large numbers can be stirred to newness of life by good preaching and good music. And as long as this Chapel stands, let men remember that this servant of God based his faith on reason, addressed himself to adults, expected adults to be

converted, and was not disappointed. And as long as Oberlin stands, let her sons and daughters remember that he who was greatest among her founders accomplished most through THE SACRIFICE OF SELF.

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01.05. THE OBERLIN LYNCHING OF 1840

The GOSPEL TRUTH

The "OBERLIN LYNCHING" of 1840 BY CHARLES G. FINNEY

Among other curious circumstances that occurred, with which editors at the time made great show of opposition, but which finally reacted and resulted in our favor, I will relate the following: A young man from Kentucky, I think, came here to study; and while on probation, and before he was known to any considerable extent here, he laid a plan to seduce one of our young ladies. She was a very estimable, modest girl. The young man had, I believe, been a writing master, and could use his pen in a masterly manner. He wrote this young lady a letter, in which he drew a very vile picture with his pen; and couched the letter in such language, and gave it such shape, that it was calculated to produce the very worst effect upon her.

He requested that she should reply to A.B., I do not remember the directions that she was to give to the letter. She was of course very much shocked, and gave this letter to the lady principal, of the institution; and this lady showed it to her husband, who was one of the members of the faculty. Soon after he wrote another letter of the same character, with as loathesome a picture as could well be drawn -- I mean loathesome to a pure mind; and shaped altogether in such a manner as to lay before her the strongest temptation to bad conduct, and urged her again to reply and direct as he had before suggested. This letter immediately passed into the hand of the lady principal, and through her hands into the hands of the faculty. Of course this aroused the attention of the faculty, and they were on the lookout. We had a very trustworthy young man at the time as a Postmaster. After these two letters had been received, the subject was laid before the Postmaster, and of his own accord he undertook to ascertain from whom those letters came. I think he kept the letters that had been received by her that he might compare them with the hand writing of anything of the kind that should come through his hands again. Soon a letter directed to this young lady came into the post office. He saw that it was the same hand-writing, and opened the letter and found it to be another of those abominable epistles. That aroused to the utmost his indignation. I believe without consulting anyone he replied to the letter himself, as if he was the young lady to whom it had been addressed. He recognized the two former letters, and so shaped his answer that he wrote again. The Postmaster thus opened a correspondence with him. It soon resulted in an appointment to meet at a certain place in the village at a certain hour of the night, and then to go and spend the night together; the vile young man supposing that his correspondence was with the young lady herself, whereas she was entirely ignorant of what was transpiring between the postmaster and the young man.

We had at that time an energetic young man and woman who were under engagement to marry, and who had come here to first complete their education. They were in good reputation and possessed in a high degree the confidence of the community. To this young man the Postmaster and the few who were in the secret applied to assist in the detection of the villain who had spread this snare for a worthy young lady. The young man arranged with his affianced to play the part of

the young lady to whom the vile letters had been directed, so far as to secure his detection and arrest. She consented to go. In the meantime several of our most estimable young men had been consulted, and one of our youngest professors, and they agreed to go and arrest him and deal with him as wisdom should direct. The time for the appointed meeting arrived. . . The young man had taken his bed from the room, and carried it a little way out of the village, and spread it under the shelter of a large tree. . . the young men who were to arrest him, being aware of the whole plot, had secreted themselves a little way from where they were to leave the road and turn into the woods. He was armed with a pistol, and had in him the real southern spirit. When they arrived at the point where the young men were secreted, they surrounded. He undertook to use his pistol; but they seized it, and no one was hurt. After considerable conversation and praying, they concluded to whip him; and appointed one of their number, one of the most amiable young men to ply the lash. It tired his feelings exceedingly to do it; nevertheless he put on his back the assigned number of strokes with a rawhide, with which they had furnished themselves. They then let him go; he at the time, I believe, acknowledged the justice of the course they had pursued with him. The fact is, there was no law of the land that would take hold of him, and inflict any punishment at all upon him in this case; and these young men, I have no doubt, acting under a sense of duty, took the case in their own hands, and administered what they supposed to be a moderate and merited chastisement. As this school was on in which young men and women were associated together in all their studies, these young men supposed that an act of this kind should meet with decided public disapprobation; and thought that this young man should be made an example, to teach young men that if they come here and attempted to seduce any of our young ladies, what they might expect. However these young men had acted on their own responsibility, without consulting any body that they knew of out of their own circle. But when the father of the young man came to be acquainted with the facts, he was stirred up to irrepressible wrath. He came here in a very blustering and abusive spirit. He learned the facts, and could not justify his son, though he felt himself disgraced by the whipping which his son had received, rather than by the crime which he had committed; and therefore, instead of thanking us, as was really his duty, for administering this most merited chastisement upon his son, he took great pains to stir up the whole country against us for this deed. The public mind was at that time in a state favorable to seize hold of any such occurrence to put down Oberlin. The papers teemed with opposition to Oberlin, and the wrath of the press was greatly excited at the whipping; though so far as I heard, no words of reprobation fell upon the ears of the criminal or of any one else, for his crime. A great crime, it was assumed, had been committed in punishing him; but the crime that had most justly demanded this punishment, was left out of view. We, as usual, kept still, and kept about our business. When the court met at Elyria, the grand jury found bills of indictment against the young men that had been engaged in this thing. They subpoenaed many persons in Oberlin to come before them as witnesses, and in this way discovered, I believe, all the young men who had taken part in it save one. The first I knew, however, of this proceeding came to my ears by my being myself subpoenaed as a witness, before the grand jury. I went. I observed as I went in that the district attorney, who was with the grand jury, was a person I knew, and was an avowed skeptic. The foreman of the jury I had understood to be another; and indeed as I observed the grand jury I saw that they were made up very much of leaders of the opposition to Oberlin, and of men who were no less opposed to religion than to Oberlin -- that is, there were several of them, if I was not mistaken, who were skeptics. The District Judge, who presided over the court, was also a skeptic, and also one of the

side judges. This a majority of the court, and I think, a majority of the grand jury, were skeptics. The same was true of the Sheriff and the Deputy Sheriff, I think. At any rate I was informed that it was true of the Deputy sheriff, who was in attendance upon the Grand Jury. Of course, I found myself surrounded by not altogether a pleasant moral atmosphere. The foreman of the Grand Jury informed me of the object of my being sent for; and after administration of the usual oath told me whom they had indicted, and asked me if I knew of any other persons in Oberlin who had been connected with that affair. I replied that I did know of one, who, from his own confession to me as his pastor, I knew had been connected with it. But that he had gone out of the state; not that he had run away or gone away to escape prosecution; but he had gone home to his friends, and so far as I knew he expected to remain at home. The foreman then asked me what his name was. I replied that the young man was a member of the church of which I was pastor, and at the time of the occurrence was a member of my family; that after the occurrence, learning how the people felt here about the mistake they had made; his conscience troubled him, and that he then confessed to me his connection with the affair; and I then said, "I do not know as I ought to be called upon to testify in this case, and reveal the young man's name." However, I did not refuse to testify; I only made the remark, as nearly as I can recollect, as I have stated it. They did not urge me to give his name; indeed, they said no more, but very politely dismissed me. I left the room and went immediately to the hotel to get my horse and return home. But while waiting for my horse to be brought up, I learned from the conversation of those who were there that the Grand Jury had said, they "would serve until they had examined every man in Oberlin, if need be, to find out everyone who had had any connection with that affair.: I learned that the impression existed in Elyria, and in the minds of the Grand Jury themselves, that the people of Oberlin wished to cover the matter up, and were not willing to have the laws of the land executed. I observed as I rode home that there was a good deal of excitement in the minds of the people; and I made up my mind that I would return in the morning and go into open court and consult the judges in regard to my duty, and to the law upon that point. Accordingly the next morning, although very rainy and very muddy, it being late in the fall, I got on my horse and rode through the rain and mud to Elyria, and I went immediately into the court room, and found the court busily engaged in the trial of some cause that had excited a good deal of interest, and hence the court room was well filled with spectators.

I went to one of the gentlemen of the bar with whom I had some acquaintance, took him a little one side, and requested him to ask the court to give me a hearing for a few moments, as I had an important question to lay before them. He very deferentially and appropriately made the communication that I desired to the court. They immediately suspended business; and the presiding Judge remarked, that Professor Finney who was present had a communication to make to the court, and that business would be suspended for a few moments to hear what he had to say. I then told them what had happened the day before, before the Grand Jury; and the question that I had to present to them was, whether law or equity required me to give that young man's name to the Grand Jury. I then stated what I understood to be the law upon that subject. I said that men have conscience; and people may differ as they please in regard to many other questions, there could be no difference of opinion upon this, that all men and women have consciences, and that often very embarrassing cases of conscience arise in which advice is needed. That in such cases, as they must exist in every society and in every community, the public weal demanded that there should be some persons protected by the law from becoming public informers, to whom persons could go for advice. I said that I knew how this had been abused by the Roman Catholics in their

confessional, and how the law had been settled in regard to them. But insisted that although the law in this country does not recognize the union of church and state, yet it does recognize the pastoral relations; and it ought to protect this relation to the extent of protecting the community and also the pastor when he has been consulted in regards to cases of conscience where advice is needed. I enlarged upon this at discretion and occupied considerable time in stating my views and the reasons for them. Indeed, it might be said that I preached to the court and those that were present. I felt as if it was a good occasion. It represented our sentiments at Oberlin.

I told the court the reasons of my returning to Elyria, what I had heard at the public house the day before, and that I was satisfied they entirely misunderstood the Oberlin people. I assured the court that we were a law-abiding people; that we had not as a people approved of the course taken by the young men; and that we did not wish to shield them from the operation of criminal law, but were entirely willing that justice should take its course, and were disposed rather to aid in the administration of justice than to throw obstacles in the way. In short, I represented to them Oberlin views and feelings in the subject, and said that we merely desired that the young men would have a fair trial, and an opportunity to spread before the court, when they were tried for the provocation under which they had acted and the reasons for their conduct. The court did not seem at all weary of listening to what I had to say. The attention was universal, respectful and I thought solemn. I then said to the judges, "Now if your honors are of the opinion that it is my duty as a citizen to go and give the name of that young man to the Grand Jury I will do it immediately." I then sat down, and the presiding judge said, that they were very much obliged to me for returning and giving an expose of my views and of the whole subject. That the court entirely accorded with me in opinion, and said that they had had a false impression in regard to the opinions of Oberlin in this matter, and were very happy to be set right on this subject. That my statement had greatly relieved their minds and feelings, and the view that I had presented was one with which they unitedly agreed. He concluded by remarking that it was a question for the Grand Jury, and asked me if I was not willing to go and make the same statement in substance to the Grand Jury in the room below. I said that I should be glad to have an opportunity to do so, and I thought I observed that the court felt that it might do the Grand Jury good. I then proceeded to the Grand Jury room. I found them all present as the day before, the Deputy Sheriff and skeptic standing at the door in attendance upon the Grand Jury, the skeptical Prosecuting Attorney sitting by the table with the foreman of the Grand Jury and I observed as I did the day before, that so far as I knew the Grand Jury, there was a very large element of skepticism on religious subjects found among them. I then stated to them in substance what I had stated to the court above, what I had learned the day before of the state of feeling in the neighborhood, and of the jury itself; and that it was their determination to sit until they had examined every person in Oberlin, if need be, to find out all the persons that had been connected with that transaction. I then stated my views as I had done to the court, and gave them as nearly as I could the same view of the case throughout. I observed the same profound effect in the Grand Jury room that had been produced in the court. When I was through, the foreman after consulting a moment with the District Attorney, replied in substance as the court had done above. He expressed great satisfaction at my returning and giving them my views of the subject, as he agreed with me entirely in the view I had taken of my duty; and he expressed the opinion that the jury did not think it my duty to give the name of the young man, and that they did not require it. As I left the room, the Deputy Sheriff, who was standing inside, and had heard what had been said, followed me into the hall. He took hold of my arm with very manifest excitement and said: "Mr.

Finney, your coming back and saying what you have said [is] worth a thousand dollars." As I returned to the hotel after my horse, the court above had a recess for dinner. The presiding judge, who was then a stranger to me, introduced himself to me and said he was very happy to meet me, and expressed regret that they had so entirely misapprehended the views and feelings, and action of the people of Oberlin. He said: "We have been deceived respecting you there; and now I for one want to become better acquainted with you," and then added, "When I come out to hold court here again," naming the time, "may I not bring my wife and leave her at your house while I attend court here, that she may become acquainted with you, and that I myself may become acquainted with some of your people?" I most cordially invited him to come, and assured him that I would bring her, send him out every day to attend court, and bring him back to his wife in the evening. A few weeks after that I spent a few days in Cleveland in preaching to the people. This was his residence. I observed him in the congregation, and soon learned that he was very seriously weighing the question of his soul's salvation. I had protracted conversation with him, and found the state of his mind not only very interesting, but as I thought very hopeful. I urged him to immediately accept the Savior, his skepticism being to all appearance entirely gone. He received all I had to say with great tenderness, and renewed his promise to come out with his wife when he next held his court in Elyria. But before that time he was in his grave, so that I saw him no more. Before I left Elyria at the time that I have spoken of, I learned that the Grand Jury had adjourned sine die; that after my statement they were entirely satisfied that they had no reason to make any further inquiry, and having no other business before them they dissolved.

After this, there was a most remarkable change in the views and feelings of the leading men in the opposition in the region round about us. The next winter, for example, after this court one of the side judges, a democrat and as I had understood a skeptic, was a member of the legislature, in which a plot was on foot to try to take away our charter. This judge, who had been present at the time I have spoken of, stood as we were told, manfully and boldly in defence of Oberlin; and told them that the impressions that had gone abroad in respect to our views and our character as a school, were altogether erroneous. And as I understood, these remarks had a leading influence in diverting the legislature from their purpose.

Thus one event after another occurred that made the community around us better acquainted with us and with our views, until the prejudice was entirely done away. But what effect had the trial of the young men, and especially, how did the outrageous comments and denunciations of the press, far and near, have upon our school? Did it keep young ladies and gentlemen from coming here to school? No indeed! It was found that it had produced an entirely opposite effect. It was found that people reasoned thus. They had been afraid and much pains had been taken to make them afraid, of trusting their daughters in a school where young ladies and gentlemen recited in the same classes, ate in the same boarding hall, and were in all respects associated as they were here. It was, of course, regarded as an experiment, and by many as an experiment of a very questionable nature. But the result of all this bluster and opposition, especially in relation to this prosecution and the cause of it, was that the people reasoned in this way. Well, if there is such a public sentiment as this in Oberlin, if an attempt to seduce one of those young ladies brings upon the offender that kind of retribution, there is the very place for our daughters. We can send them there with more safety than anywhere else. If the young men of the college will themselves give a young man such a thorough castigation who attempts any such thing, such a public sentiment must be favorable to

chastity, and to the protection of our daughters when away from home. There was therefore, a continual increase of our students, and especially of females; and the relative number of ladies in our college seemed to increase from year to year.

Indeed, in the providence of God almost all the onsets that were made against us through the press and by other methods of attach, resulted in our favor. We kept still, and kept about our own business, and let the smoke and dust clear away in God’s own best time.

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01.06. THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF FINNEY

The GOSPEL TRUTH

THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF CHARLES G. FINNEY ROBERT S. FLETCHER

Oberlin College

Though there were several effective teachers in the old Oberlin Theological Department, it was for forty years after its founding essentially a one-man institution. The Lane Rebels came in 1835 on condition that Charles G. Finney should be their teacher, and latter students were attracted mainly by the prospect of studying under him. Professor James H. Fairchild and Henry E. Peck ably substituted for and supplanted him but nobody ever took his place or supplanted him. When Finney was away, as so often happened, the attendance fell off: when he returned, it climbed again.

Finney, as was natural for a self-educated man, believed that most formal education was too theoretical and cold. In his inaugural address as Professor of Theology in 1835 he attacked the usual education of ministers. "Their physical education was defective," he said. "It rendered them soft and effeminate. Their mental education was defective. Their studies, for the most part consisted in efforts of memory, while it (they) should consist in the disciplining of the mind and invigorating of the understanding - in teaching students to reason consecutively, - to think on their legs - to draw illustrations living from nature around them - and understand the law of God. . . . Their moral education was defective. They pursued such studies that the more they studied the more cold their religious affections must become, because their minds were employed upon topics that alienate them from God. 2 In view of Finney’s interest in "practical" training for the pastorate, of his dominant position in the seminary, and of his personal eccentricities, it was to be expected that his lectures on Pastoral Theology given in the Senior year would constitute one of the most distinctive and characteristic courses in Oberlin’s theological curriculum.

Three different sets of students’ notes on these lectures survive: One set taken in 1837, one in 1843 and one in 1857. Three of Finney’s own manuscript lecture outlines are in the Oberlin library. One is undated, but apparently belongs to the period of the Forties and Fifties. The other two are dated 1872 and 1875 respectively. The outline for 1875 is in script nearly an inch high, legible even to the failing eyes of an old man. Our sources then span most of the forty-one years’ history of the course. In 1837 it apparently consisted of only six lecture which were almost entirely devoted to manners and the relations of ministers with the opposite sex. It is understandable that Finney, the gentleman from New York City, should have been troubled by the uncouth manners of the farmer boys who attended Oberlin in that early period. Undoubtedly the talks on etiquette were called for. By 1843 the course had expanded to about twenty lectures and to include study habits, business habits, hints on the preparation and delivery of sermons and suggestions regarding pastoral visits. There appear to have been no major changes in content or treatment after 1843. At the beginning of the term, Finney told his students that pastoral theology embraced "the whole

field of Pastoral Office," and he differentiated sharply between the evangelist and the pastor. It was the province of the former, he declared, to "win souls to Christ & gather a flock" and of the latter to "feed, lead, superintend, & and watch over it." General theology, he defined as treating of "God, His attributes & relations," while pastoral theology was the practical study of the pastor's relations with his flock. The pastor and his flock had reciprocal duties, according to Finney. The Pastor must "demean himself (so) as to deserve the confidence of the People," "give himself wholly to the work" and "avoid every irrelevant engagement," "feed the flock with truth well digested," "warn them publicly and privately," "pray for & with them," and "bring everything into the light of the law of God." On the other hand, it was the duty of the people of his flock "to relieve him as far as possible from all that . . . is not his proper work," "to receive him as one called and sent of God as an ambassador from the court of heaven," "to attend his appointments," "to receive and obey the truth," "to cordially & boldly cooperate with him in forming & controlling publik sentiment in respect to every branch of morals," and "to illustrate the Gospel in their lives."

He submitted a list of qualifications for the ministry: "A living, ardent piety - not last year's piety - but living now" ("A deeply pious man," he said, "will do good though he have not good talents."), "age and manhood," sound education, "aptness to teach," ordination and "the call." Also he should have "an amiable temper," a "body not deformed," "a spirit of self-sacrifice," a "gift of personal conversation," moral courage, patience and perseverance, independence, "a mellow sensibility," strong faith, "deep spiritual discernment," and "common sense." His education should provide him with an understanding of logic, "a sound mental philosophy," "at least so much knowledge of language as to be accurate & perspicuous," "an outline at least of natural science," and a thorough grounding "in the fundamentals of both natural & revealed theology." He should posses "dignity of character" not as shown in "studied reserve," "anti-social carriage," "affected sanctity," or in officious "airs & Manners," but demonstrated in "such serious purity of conversation as to forbid all trifling in (his) presence," and such a compassionate earnestness of piety as shall force the impression that (he is) a serious & a holy man."

It was very important, he felt that a minister should be married to a good wife. "Marriage [is] the right of women & no man for slight cause should defraud them." "An unmarried minister is a peculiar temptation to the other sex." "Ministers need a wife more than other men." "When a man is tied up to a bad wife and cannot be divorced he had better get out of the ministry." In one lecture he suggested ten "Indispensable or important qualifications in a [minister's] wife:"

"1. Good health.

"2. A thorough and extensive education.

"3. Prepossessing appearance.

"4. Conversational powers.

"5. Discretion.

"6. She should be a leader of her sex.

"7. Gifted in prayer.

"8. A good house keeper.

"9. A good judgment in the qualities of articles to be bought.

"10. Economy." A minister's wife ought to have, said Finney, the "ability to keep a secret," a "spirit opposed to caste and aristocracy," and "unambiguous temper," a body not weakened "by tight lacing," and a "willingness to be poor." She must avoid "getting mixed up with neighborhood scandal," any "indulgence in dress," and "every appearance of fondness for the society of the gentlemen."

He opposed early engagements for various reasons, especially because they distracted the attention from study and from prayer and other religious exercises. As a young man approached his ordination, however, he should look about him for a suitable mate, gauging the available young women by the standard previously submitted. The neophyte was warned that after entering the ministry, whether married or not, he must be particularly careful about his relations with women. Gallantry must be avoided. "Show me a minister that is a Gallant among ladies & I will show you one who is doing little good." "Suffer not yourself to trifle with young ladies in conversation nor in any recognized way." "Beware how you write ladies; what is written is written." Finney recognized, however, that the minister must be at ease in the company of the opposite sex and not live as a recluse. It was on of the arguments in favor of co-education that the prospective pastor was thus prepared to take his place in the mixed society of his parish.

Apparently Mr. Finney did not object to the attendance of young lady visitors at these lectures. In 1840, James H. Fairchild, later President of Oberlin, but then a young "theolog," wrote to his future wife: "Mr. F. [inney] has just closed his pastoral Lectures. He gave us a half dozen or more on the subject of marriage & the qualifications necessary in the wife of a pastor, probably both for the benefit of those young men who have yet a choice to make & for the young ladies who were present at the lectures . . . . He spoke at some length on early engagements etc., said much that is true & some things that are not so true." 4

Finney's advice with regard to manners throws some light on the practices of the time and the region, as well as on his own attitude and on the status of the Oberlin theological students. Minister, he said, should always avoid levity and "all winking and roguishness," should be grave but not morose, dignified but not sanctimonious. "Where ministers hold out the idea that they are the great ones of the earth they create a false impression of religion." A minister should be polite and considerate, should "observe unusual personal kindness." In 1843 he told his students: "True politeness is nothing else than the practice of true benevolence," and, in 1857: "Good manners [are] benevolence acted out, bad manners, selfishness acted out." Ministers, of all people, he insisted, must avoid slovenliness, affection, effeminacy, coarseness and vulgarity, selfishness, impertinence, and a spirit of contradiction. They should beware of "band box manners" and of anything "foppish." They should not wear ruffles, rings, breast pins, beards and whiskers (This was in 1843, before he took to wearing them himself.), and they should not carry "gaudy pocket handkerchiefs." Evidently much more needed and occupying much more time in his talks were warnings against vulgarity and coarseness. They should not blow their noses with their fingers; they should not use a dirty handkerchief; they must not spit on the carpet; they must not put their feet and muddy boots on the sofa or on the door jambs, nor pull off their stockings before a family! He related the story of a young clergyman who "called on some ladies after walking some distance, took off his boots & hung his socks on the andirons the first thing," and told of another

ministerial acquaintance who "put his feet up in a window in a ladies parlor to enjoy the cool air!" He advised the embryo preachers to keep their nails cleaned and pared and their teeth clean. It was disgusting, he said, "in anxious meetings to be obliged to smell the breath of a filthy mouth." At table, he reminded them, they were not supposed to cut their meat with their pocket knives nor wipe their mouths on the table cloth! The minister, declared the teacher, must be the true shepherd of his flock. He ought to be the leader in his community in secular as well as ecclesiastical matters, and "He is not to admit for a moment that he is going out of his sphere" when he takes such leadership. "The legitimate field of Pastoral influence," said Finney, "is as extensive as the field of moral obligations & responsibility." It was desirable, of course, for the minister to be "acquainted with the principles of reform," though he ought not to be an "ultraist" fanatic. "The minister must have a natural adaptation to be a leader - he is to marshal the host of God's elect." He should visit his parishioners often and deal with them directly and frankly. He should not "go to get a dinner" but to transact the business of the Lord and rebuke them for their transgressions. Though the pastor ought to be straightforward, he ought, when possible, also to be tactful. "Be careful to find your people when they are not out of humour," Finney advised. "Never get all the family together when you want to talk to them. The devil often makes children cry, etc." "If possible visit the sick in the morning. Ask what kind of medicine they have been using so that you may not be deceived." "Don't assume that God is visiting them with judgments." "Don't appear unfeeling." "Always have respect for the state of the nervous system. . ." In their business affairs they were recommended to set a good example for others: "Be punctual in all business transactions." "Avoid trading horses." "Do not throw too much business upon your wife." "If you have a garden attend to it. If the weeds grow in it they will grow in your heart."

He gave detailed advice as to the conduct of religious services. The invocation should be solemn and short. The Scriptures should be read slowly, emphatically and "with unction." The Bible should be handled reverently. In announcing the hymns "name the place twice," "notice whether you are understood," and in reading the hymns be careful to "avoid nasal tones." His own prayers were likely to be long and emotional, and he advised the theologs: "Pray in the Spirit"; "If the Lord draws you near to Himself don't be too short"; "Be honest, earnest, childlike," but "Don't be tedious."

He urged careful preparation of all sermons. A minister should not study more than three or four hours a day, preferably in the morning after a light breakfast. The subjects should be timely and suited to the congregation. Illustrations should be drawn "from familiar circumstances and not from ancient history and monarchs." Though sermons need not be written out, an outline or skeleton was suggested. This was Finney's own practice. He opposed the reading of sermons and favored preaching from notes, because he said, it was more easily understood, more interesting, more instructive and more easily remembered. This was the Oberlin style of preaching throughout the early years. In delivery he advised that they be "animated but never vociferous" and "avoid studied gesticulations" and all stiff formality. Finally, they must put their whole soul into it. "Men are not cabbage heads," he told them. "You may [be] the most learned - yet you have God as one of your hearers. Preach so as to please God, for He is taking notes." In the theological classes as in all classes the meetings were opened by prayer; Finney had introduced the practice in Oberlin. With Finney this was far from a matter of form; often the keynote of the hour's lecture or discussion would be struck in the prayer. Sometimes, even, his deep personal piety lead him on and on until a large part or the whole of the recitation period had been consumed in divine supplication.

Undoubtedly the lectures were occasionally interrupted by general discussion. The tone of Finney's classes was always lively though always also fundamentally serious. The course quite clearly was fresh, realistic and stimulating, and must have contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the many young ministers who went out from Oberlin in those early days.

1. Paper read before the Society at Wooster, Ohio, June 25, 1941.

2. The Ohio Observer (Hudson, Ohio), July 9, 1835.

3. One set of student notes is privately owned. The remaining items are all in the Oberlin College Library.

4. James H. Fairchild to Mary Kellogg, August 25, 1840, Fairchild Manuscripts in the possession of James T. Fairchild, Bethlehem, Pa.

5. On the character of Finney's teaching see the comments of his former students in Reminiscences of Rev. Charles G. Finney (Oberlin, 1876), 87-88 et passim.

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02.00. AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AN

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY THE

REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY,

1792-1875

AUTHOR OF

"LECTURES ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION,"

"LECTURES TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS,"

ETC.

- - - -

1876.

PREFACE. THE author of the following narrative sufficiently explains its origin and purpose, in the introductory pages. He left the manuscript at the disposal of his family, having never decided, in his own mind, that it was desirable to publish it. Many of his friends, becoming aware of its existence, have urged its publication; and his children, yielding to the general demand, have presented the manuscript to Oberlin College for this purpose.

In giving it to the public, it is manifestly necessary to present it essentially as we find it. No liberties can be taken with it, to modify views or statements which may sometimes seem extreme or partial, or even to subdue a style, which, though rugged at times, is always dramatic and forcible. Few men have better earned the right to utter their own thoughts, in their own words. These thoughts and words are what the many friends of Mr. Finney will desire. The only changes that seemed allowable, were occasional omissions, to avoid unnecessary repetition, or too minute detail, or, at times, references that might seem too distinctly personal. The narrative is, in its very nature, personal, involving the experiences both of the author and of those with whom he had to do; and to these personal experiences it, in great part, owes its interest and its value. As the narrative presents the memories and heart-yearnings of a veteran pastor, with a passion for winning souls, it is hoped and believed that, in its personal references, it will not be regarded as having transcended the limits of Christian propriety. For the most part, the lapse of time sets aside all question.

Here and there perhaps, the statements in the narrative may seem inadequate, as involving only a partial view of facts. It will be remembered that such partial views belong to all personal observation and opinion, and each one will naturally supply the correction that seems to be

demanded.

J. H. F. OBERLIN COLLEGE, January, 1876.

Chapter 9

02.01. BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION

BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION.

IT has pleased God in some measure to connect my name and labors with an extensive movement of the church of Christ, regarded by some as a new era in its progress, especially in relation to revivals of religion. As this movement involved, to a considerable extent, the development of views of Christian doctrine which had not been common, and was brought about by changes in the means of carrying forward the work of evangelization, it was very natural that some misapprehension should prevail in regard to these modified statements of doctrine, and the use of these measures; and consequently that, to some extent, even good men should call in question the wisdom of these measures and the soundness of these theological statements; and that ungodly men should be irritated, and for a time should strenuously oppose these great movements.

I have spoken of myself as connected with these movements; but only as one of the many ministers and other servants of Christ, who have shared prominently in promoting them. I am aware that by a certain portion of the church I have been considered an innovator, both in regard to doctrine and measures; and that many have looked upon me as rather prominent, especially in assailing some of the old forms of theological thought and expression, and in stating the doctrines of the Gospel in many respects in new language.

I have been particularly importuned, for a number of years, by the friends of those revivals with which my name and labors have been connected, to write a history of them. As so much misapprehension has prevailed respecting them, it is thought that the truth of history demands a statement from myself of the doctrines that were preached, so far as I was concerned; of the measures used, and of the results of preaching those doctrines and the use of those measures.

My mind seems instinctively to recoil from saying so much of myself as I shall be obliged to do, if I speak honestly of those revivals and of my relation to them. For this reason I have declined, up to this time, to undertake such a work. Of late the trustees of Oberlin College have laid the matter before me, and urged me to undertake it. They, together with numerous other friends in this country and in England, have urged that it was due to the cause of Christ, that a better understanding should exist in the church than has hitherto existed, in regard especially to the revivals that occurred in central New York and elsewhere, from 1821 and onward for several years, because those revivals have been most misrepresented and opposed.

I approach the subject, I must say, with reluctance, for many reasons. I have kept no diary, and consequently must depend on my memory. It is true, that my memory is naturally very tenacious, and the events that I have witnessed in revivals of religion have made a very deep impression on my mind; and I remember, with great distinctness, many more than I shall have time to communicate. Everyone who has witnessed powerful revivals of religion is aware that many cases of conviction and conversion are daily occurring, of the greatest interest to the people in the midst

of whom they occur. Where all the facts and circumstances are known, a thrilling effect is often produced; and such cases are frequently so numerous that if all the highly interesting facts of even one extended revival, in a single locality, should be narrated, it would fill a large volume.

I do not propose to pursue this course in what I am about to write. I shall only sketch such an outline as will, upon the whole, give a tolerably clear idea of the type which these revivals took on; and shall only relate a few of the particular instances of conversion which occurred in different places.

I shall also endeavor to give such an account of the doctrines which were preached, and of the measures which were used, and shall mention such facts, in general, as will enable the church hereafter, partially at least, to estimate the power and purity of those great works of God.

But I hesitate to write a narrative of those revivals, because I have often been surprised to find how much my own remembrance of facts differs from the recollection of other persons who were in the midst of those scenes. Of course I must state the facts as I remember them. A great many of those events have been often referred to by myself in preaching, as illustrative of the truths that I was presenting to the people. I have been so often reminded of them, and have so often referred to them in all the years of my ministry, that I cannot but have strong confidence that I remember them substantially as they occurred. If I shall in any case misstate the facts, or if in any case my recollections shall differ widely from those of others, I trust that the church will believe that my statements are in entire accordance with my present remembrance of those facts. I am now (1867-68) seventy-five years old. Of course, I remember things that transpired many years ago more definitely than those of recent occurrence. In regard to the doctrines preached, so far as I was concerned, and the means used to promote the revivals, I think I cannot be mistaken.

To give any intelligible account of the part which I was called to act in those scenes, it is necessary that I should give a little history of the manner in which I came to adopt the doctrinal views which I have long held and preached, and which have been regarded by many persons as objectionable.

I must commence by giving a very brief account of my birth, and early circumstances and education, my conversion to Christ, my study of theology, and my entering upon the work of the ministry. I am not about to write an autobiography, let it be remembered; and shall enter no farther into a relation of the events of my own private life than shall seem necessary to give an intelligible account of the manner in which I was led, in relation to these great movements of the church.

I was born in Warren, Litchfield county, Connecticut, August 29, 1792. When I was about two years old, my father removed to Oneida county, New York, which was, at that time, to a great extent, a wilderness. No religious privileges were enjoyed by the people. Very few religious books were to be had. The new settlers, being mostly from New England, almost immediately established common schools; but they had among them very little intelligent preaching of the Gospel. I enjoyed the privileges of a common school, summer and winter, until I was fifteen or sixteen years old I believe; and advanced so far as to be supposed capable of teaching a common school myself, as common schools were then conducted.

My parents were neither of them professors of religion, and, I believe, among our neighbors there were very few religious people. I seldom heard a sermon, unless it was an occasional one from some traveling minister, or some miserable holding forth of an ignorant preacher who would

sometimes be found in that country. I recollect very well that the ignorance of the preachers that I heard was such, that the people would return from meeting and spend a considerable time in irrepressible laughter at the strange mistakes which had been made and the absurdities which had been advanced.

In the neighborhood of my father's residence we had just erected a meeting house and settled a ministry when my father was induced to remove again into the wilderness skirting the southern shore of Lake Ontario, a little south of Sacketts Harbor. Here again I lived for several years, enjoying no better religious privileges then I had in Oneida county.

When about twenty years old I returned to Connecticut, and from thence went to New Jersey, near New York city, and engaged in teaching. I taught and studied as best I could; and twice returned to New England and attended a high school for a season. While attending the high school I meditated going to Yale College. My preceptor was a graduate of Yale, but he advised me not to go. He said it would be a loss of time, as I could easily accomplish the whole curriculum of study pursued at that institution, in two years; whereas it would cost me four years to graduate. He presented such considerations as prevailed with me, and as it resulted, I failed to pursue my school education any farther at that time. However, afterward I acquired some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But I was never a classical scholar, and never possessed so much knowledge of the ancient languages as to think myself capable of independently criticizing our English translation of the Bible.

The teacher to whom I have referred, wished me to join him in conducting an academy in one of the Southern States. I was inclined to accept his proposal, with the design of pursuing and completing my studies under his instruction. But when I informed my parents, whom I had not seen for four years, of my contemplated movement south, they both came immediately after me, and prevailed on me to go home with them to Jefferson county, New York. After making them a visit, I concluded to enter, as a student, the law office of Squire W, at Adams, in that county. This was in 1818.

Up to this time I had never enjoyed what might be called religious privileges. I had never lived in a praying community, except during the periods when I was attending the high school in New England; and the religion in that place was of a type not at all calculated to arrest my attention. The preaching was by an aged clergyman, an excellent man, and greatly beloved and venerated by his people; but he read his sermons in a manner that left no impression whatever on my mind. He had a monotonous, humdrum way of reading what he had probably written many years before.

To give some idea of his preaching, let me say that his manuscript sermons were just large enough to put into a small Bible. I sat in the gallery, and observed that he placed his manuscript in the middle of his Bible, and inserted his fingers at the places where were to be found the passages of Scripture to be quoted in the reading of his sermon. This made it necessary to hold his Bible in both hands, and rendered all gesticulation with his hands impossible. As he proceeded he would read the passages of Scripture where his fingers were inserted, and thus liberate one finger after another until the fingers of both hands were read out of their places. When his fingers were all read out, he was near the close of the sermon. His reading was altogether unimpassioned and monotonous; and although the people attended very closely and reverentially to his reading, yet, I must confess, it was to me not much like preaching.

When we retired from meeting, I often heard the people speak well of his sermons; and sometimes they would wonder whether he had intended any allusion, in what he said, to what was occurring among them. It seemed to be always a matter of curiosity to know what he was aiming at, especially if there was anything more in his sermon than a dry discussion of doctrine. And this was really quite as good preaching as I had ever listened to in any place. But anyone can judge whether such preaching was calculated to instruct or interest a young man who neither knew nor cared anything about religion.

When I was teaching school in New Jersey, the preaching in the neighborhood was chiefly in German. I do not think I heard half a dozen sermons in English during my whole stay in New Jersey, which was about three years.

Thus when I went to Adams to study law, I was almost as ignorant of religion as a heathen. I had been brought up mostly in the woods. I had very little regard to the Sabbath, and had no definite knowledge of religious truth.

At Adams, for the first time, I sat statedly, for a length of time, under an educated ministry. Rev. George W. Gale, from Princeton, New Jersey, became, soon after I went there, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in that place. His preaching was of the old school type; that is, it was thoroughly Calvinistic; and whenever he came out with the doctrines, which he seldom did, he would preach what has been called hyper-Calvinism. He was, of course, regarded as highly orthodox; but I was not able to gain very much instruction from his preaching. As I sometimes told him, he seemed to me to begin in the middle of his discourse, and to assume many things which to my mind needed to be proved. He seemed to take it for granted that his hearers were theologians, and therefore that he might assume all the great and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. But I must say that I was rather perplexed than edified by his preaching.

I had never, until this time, lived where I could attend a stated prayer meeting. As one was held by the church near our office every week, I used to attend and listen to the prayers, as often as I could be excused from business at that hour.

In studying elementary law, I found the old authors frequently quoting the Scriptures, and referring especially to the Mosaic Institutes, as authority for many of the great principles of common law. This excited my curiosity so much that I went and purchased a Bible, the first I had ever owned; and whenever I found a reference by the law authors to the Bible, I turned to the passage and consulted it in its connection. This soon led to my taking a new interest in the Bible, and I read and meditated on it much more than I had ever done before in my life. However, much of it I did not understand.

Mr. Gale was in the habit of dropping in at our office frequently, and seemed anxious to know what impression his sermons had made on my mind. I used to converse with him freely; and I now think that I sometimes criticized his sermons unmercifully. I raised such objections against his positions as forced themselves upon my attention.

In conversing with him and asking him questions, I perceived that his own mind was, as I thought, mystified; and that he did not accurately define to himself what he meant by many of the important terms that he used. Indeed I found it impossible to attach any meaning to many of the terms which he used with great formality and frequency. What did he mean by repentance? Was it a mere

feeling of sorrow for sin? Was it altogether a passive state of mind, or did it involve a voluntary element? If it was a change of mind, in what respect was it a change of mind? What did he mean by the term regeneration? What did such language mean when applied to a spiritual change? What did he mean by faith? Was it merely an intellectual state? Was it merely a conviction, or persuasion, that the things stated in the Gospel were true? What did he mean by sanctification? Did it involve any physical change in the subject, or any physical influence on the part of God? I could not tell, nor did he seem to me to know himself, in what sense he used these and similar terms.

We had a great many interesting conversations; but they seemed rather to stimulate my own mind to inquiry, than to satisfy me in respect to the truth. But as I read my Bible and attended the prayer meetings, heard Mr. Gale preach, and conversed with him, with the elders of the church, and with others from time to time, I became very restless. A little consideration convinced me that I was by no means in a state of mind to go to heaven if I should die. It seemed to me that there must be something in religion that was of infinite importance; and it was soon settled with me, that if the soul was immortal I needed a great change in my inward state to be prepared for happiness in heaven. But still my mind was not made up as to the truth or falsehood of the Gospel and of the Christian religion. The question, however, was of too much importance to allow me to rest in any uncertainty on the subject.

I was particularly struck with the fact that the prayers that I had listened to, from week to week, were not, that I could see, answered. Indeed, I understood from their utterances in prayer, and from other remarks in their meetings, that those who offered them did not regard them as answered.

When I read my Bible I learned what Christ had said in regard to prayer, and answers to prayer. He had said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall he opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." I read also what Christ affirms, that God is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. I heard them pray continually for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and not often confess that they did not receive what they asked for.

They exhorted each other to wake up and be engaged, and to pray earnestly for a revival of religion, asserting that if they did their duty, prayed for the outpouring of the Spirit, and were in earnest, that the Spirit of God would be poured out, that they would have a revival of religion, and that the impenitent would be converted. But in their prayer and conference meetings they would continually confess, substantially, that they were making no progress in securing a revival of religion.

This inconsistency, the fact that they prayed so much and were not answered, was a sad stumbling block to me. I knew not what to make of it. It was a question in my mind whether I was to understand that these persons were not truly Christians, and therefore did not prevail with God; or did I misunderstand the promises and teachings of the Bible on this subject, or was I to conclude that the Bible was not true? There was something inexplicable to me; and it seemed, at one time, that it would almost drive me into skepticism. It seemed to me that the teachings of the Bible did not at all accord with the facts which were before my eyes.

On one occasion, when I was in one of the prayer meetings, I was asked if I did not desire that they should pray for me! I told them, no; because I did not see that God answered their prayers. I said, "I suppose I need to be prayed for, for I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see that it will do any good for you to pray for me; for you are continually asking, but you do not receive. You have been praying for a revival of religion ever since I have been in Adams, and yet you have it not. You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness." I recollect having used this expression at that time: "You have prayed enough since I have attended these meetings to have prayed the devil out of Adams, if there is any virtue in your prayers. But here you are praying on, and complaining still." I was quite in earnest in what I said, and not a little irritable, I think, in consequence of my being brought so continually face to face with religious truth; which was a new state of things to me.

But on farther reading of my Bible, it struck me that the reason why their prayers were not answered, was because they did not comply with the revealed conditions upon which God had promised to answer prayer; that they did not pray in faith, in the sense of expecting God to give them the things that they asked for.

This thought, for some time, lay in my mind as a confused questioning, rather than in any definite form that could be stated in words. However, this relieved me, so far as queries about the truth of the Gospel were concerned; and after struggling in that way for some two or three years, my mind became quite settled that whatever mystification there might be either in my own or in my pastor’s mind, or in the mind of the church, the Bible was, nevertheless, the true Word of God.

This being settled, I was brought face to face with the question whether I would accept Christ as presented in the Gospel, or pursue a worldly course of life. At this period, my mind, as I have since known, was so much impressed by the Holy Spirit, that I could not long leave this question unsettled; nor could I long hesitate between the two courses of life presented to me.

02.02. CONVERSION TO CHRIST

CONVERSION TO CHRIST.

ON a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821, I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God. But as I was very busy in the affairs of the office, I knew that without great firmness of purpose, I should never effectually attend to the subject. I therefore, then and there resolved, as far as possible, to avoid all business, and everything that would divert my attention, and to give myself wholly to the work of securing the salvation of my soul. I carried this resolution into execution as sternly and thoroughly as I could. I was, however, obliged to be a good deal in the office. But as the providence of God would have it, I was not much occupied either on Monday or Tuesday; and had opportunity to read my Bible and engage in prayer most of the time.

But I was very proud without knowing it. I had supposed that I had not much regard for the opinions of others, whether they thought this or that in regard to myself; and I had in fact been quite singular in attending prayer meetings, and in the degree of attention that I had paid to religion, while in Adams. In this respect I had not been so singular as to lead the church at times to think that I must be an anxious inquirer. But I found, when I came to face the question, that I was very unwilling to have anyone know that I was seeking the salvation of my soul. When I prayed I would only whisper my prayer, after having stopped the key hole to the door, lest someone should discover that I was engaged in prayer. Before that time I had my Bible lying on the table with the law books; and it never had occurred to me to be ashamed of being found reading it, any more than I should be ashamed of being found reading any of my other books.

But after I had addressed myself in earnest to the subject of my own salvation, I kept my Bible, as much as I could, out of sight. If I was reading it when anybody came in, I would throw my law books upon it, to create the impression that I had not had it in my hand. Instead of being outspoken and willing to talk with anybody and everybody on the subject as before, I found myself unwilling to converse with anybody. I did not want to see my minister, because I did not want to let him know how I felt, and I had no confidence that he would understand my case, and give me the direction that I needed. For the same reasons I avoided conversation with the elders of the church, or with any of the Christian people. I was ashamed to let them know how I felt, on the one hand; and on the other, I was afraid they would misdirect me. I felt myself shut up to the Bible.

During Monday and Tuesday my convictions increased; but still it seemed as if my heart grew harder. I could not shed a tear; I could not pray. I had no opportunity to pray above my breath; and frequently I felt, that if I could be alone where I could use my voice and let myself out, I should find relief in prayer. I was shy, and avoided, as much as I could, speaking to anybody on any subject. I endeavored, however, to do this in a way that would excite no suspicion, in any mind, that I was seeking the salvation of my soul.

Tuesday night I had become very nervous; and in the night a strange feeling came over me as if I was about to die. I knew that if I did I should sink down to hell; but I quieted myself as best I could until morning.

At an early hour I started for the office. But just before I arrived at the office, something seemed to confront me with questions like these: Indeed, it seemed as if the inquiry was within myself, as if an inward voice said to me, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

Just at this point the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me at the time. I think I then saw, as clearly as I ever have in my life, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that His work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ. Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of something to be accepted; and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and accept Christ. Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior.

Without being distinctly aware of it, I had stopped in the street right where the inward voice seemed to arrest me. How long I remained in that position I cannot say. But after this distinct revelation had stood for some little time before my mind, the question seemed to be put, "Will you accept it now, today?" I replied," Yes; I will accept it today, or I will die in the attempt."

North of the village, and over a hill, lay a piece of woods, in which I was in the almost daily habit of walking, more or less, when it was pleasant weather. It was now October, and the time was past for my frequent walks there. Nevertheless, instead of going to the office, I turned and bent my course toward the woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.

But still my pride must show itself. As I went over the hill, it occurred to me that someone might see me and suppose that I was going away to pray. Yet probably there was not a person on earth that would have suspected such a thing, had he seen me going. But so great was my pride, and so much was I possessed with the fear of man, that I recollect that I skulked along under the fence, till I got so far out of sight that no one from the village could see me. I then penetrated into the woods, I should think, a quarter of a mile, went over on the other side of the hill, and found a place where some large trees had fallen across each other, leaving an open place between. There I saw I could make a kind of closet. I crept into this place and knelt down for prayer. As I turned to go up into the woods, I recollect to have said, "I will give my heart to God, or I never will come down from there." I recollect repeating this as I went up: ;"I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

But when I attempted to pray I found that my heart would not pray. I had supposed that if I could only be where I could speak aloud, without being overheard, I could pray freely. But lo! when I came to try, I was dumb; that is, I had nothing to say to God; or at least I could say but a few words, and those without heart. In attempting to pray I would hear a rustling in the leaves, as I thought, and would stop and look up to see if somebody were not coming. This I did several times.

Finally I found myself verging fast to despair. I said to myself, "I cannot pray. My heart is dead to God, and will not pray." I then reproached myself for having promised to give my heart to God before I left the woods. When I came to try, I found I could not give my heart to God. My inward soul hung back, and there was no going out of my heart to God. I began to feel deeply that it was too late; that it must be that I was given up of God and was past hope.

The thought was pressing me of the rashness of my promise, that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt. It seemed to me as if that was binding upon my soul; and yet I was going to break my vow. A great sinking and discouragement came over me, and I felt almost too weak to stand upon my knees.

Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner I am, on my knees confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make my peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

Just at that point this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before; but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state. I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God’s veracity. Somehow I knew that that was a passage of Scripture, though I do not think I had ever read it. I knew that it was God’s word, and God’s voice, as it were, that spoke to me. I cried to Him, "Lord, I take Thee at Thy word. Now Thou knowest that I do search for Thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to Thee; and Thou hast promised to hear me."

That seemed to settle the question that I could then, that day, perform my vow. The Spirit seemed to lay stress upon that idea in the text, "When you search for me with all your heart." The question of when, that is of the present time, seemed to fall heavily into my heart. I told the Lord that I should take Him at his word; that He could not lie; and that therefore I was sure that He heard my prayer, and that He would be found of me.

He then gave my many other promises, both from the Old and the New Testament, especially some most precious promises respecting our Lord Jesus Christ. I never can, in words, make any human being understand how precious and true those promises appeared to me. I took them one after the other as infallible truth, the assertions of God who could not lie. They did not seem so much to fall into my intellect as into my heart, to be put within the grasp of the voluntary powers of my mind; and I seized hold of them, appropriated them, and fastened upon them with the grasp of a drowning man.

I continued thus to pray, and to receive and appropriate promises for a long time, I know not how long. I prayed till my mind became so full that, before I was aware of it, I was on my feet and tripping up the ascent toward the road. The question of my being converted, had not so much as arisen to my thought; but as I went up, brushing through the leaves and bushes, I recollect saying with emphasis, "If I am ever converted, I will preach the Gospel."

I soon reached the road that led to the village, and began to reflect upon what had passed; and I found that my mind had become most wonderfully quiet and peaceful. I said to myself, "What is this? I must have grieved the Holy Ghost entirely away. I have lost all my conviction. I have not a particle of concern about my soul; and it must be that the Spirit has left me." Why! thought I, I never was so far from being concerned about my own salvation in my life.

Then I remembered what I had said to God while I was on my knees, that I had said I would take Him at his word; and indeed I recollected a good many things that I had said, and concluded that it was no wonder that the Spirit had left me; that for such a sinner as I was to take hold of God's Word in that way, was presumption if not blasphemy. I concluded that in my excitement I had grieved the Holy Spirit, and perhaps committed the unpardonable sin.

I walked quietly toward the village; and so perfectly quiet was my mind that it seemed as if all nature listened. It was on the 10th of October, and a very pleasant day. I had gone into the woods immediately after an early breakfast; and when I returned to the village I found it was dinner time. Yet I had been wholly unconscious of the time that had passed; it appeared to me that I had been gone from the village but a short time.

But how was I to account for the quiet of my mind? I tried to recall my convictions, to get back again the load of sin under which I had been laboring. But all sense of sin, all consciousness of present sin or guilt, had departed from me. I said to myself, "What is this, that I cannot arouse any sense of guilt in my soul, as great a sinner as I am?" I tried in vain to make myself anxious about my present state. I was so quiet and peaceful that I tried to feel concerned about that, lest it should be a result of my having grieved the Spirit away. But take any view of it I would, I could not be anxious at all about my soul, and about my spiritual state. The repose of my mind was unspeakably great. I never can describe it in words. The thought of God was sweet to my mind, and the most profound spiritual tranquillity had taken full possession of me. This was a great mystery; but it did not distress or perplex me.

I went to my dinner, and found I had no appetite to eat. I then went to the office, and found that Squire W had gone to dinner. I took down my bass viol, and, as I was accustomed to do, began to play and sing some pieces of sacred music. But as soon as I began to sing those sacred words, I began to weep. It seemed as if my heart was all liquid; and my feelings were in such a state that I could not hear my own voice in singing without causing my sensibility to overflow. I wondered at this, and tried to suppress my tears, but could not. After trying in vain to suppress my tears, I put up my instrument and stopped singing.

After dinner we were engaged in removing our books and furniture to another office. We were very busy in this, and had but little conversation all the afternoon. My mind, however, remained in that profoundly tranquil state. There was a great sweetness and tenderness in my thoughts and feelings. Everything appeared to be going right, and nothing seemed to ruffle or disturb me in the

least.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again--that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still I would continue to pray.

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fireplace, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire W, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me goodnight and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, "I want to pour my whole soul out to God." The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw Him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that He stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to Him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed His feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched Him, that I recollect.

I must have continued in this state for a good while; but my mind was too much absorbed with the interview to recollect anything that I said. But I know, as soon as my mind became calm enough to break off from the interview, I returned to the front office, and found that the fire that I had made of large wood was nearly burned out. But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me." I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more;" yet I had no fear of death.

How long I continued in this state, with this baptism continuing to roll over me and go through me, I do not know. But I know it was late in the evening when a member of my choir--for I was the leader of the choir--came into the office to see me. He was a member of the church. He found me in this

state of loud weeping, and said to me, "Mr. Finney, what ails you?" I could make him no answer for some time. He then said, "Are you in pain?" I gathered myself up as best I could, and replied, "No, but so happy that I cannot live."

He turned and left the office, and in a few minutes returned with one of the elders of the church, whose shop was nearly across the way from our office. This elder was a very serious man; and in my presence had been very watchful, and I had scarcely ever seen him laugh. When he came in, I was very much in the state in which I was when the young man went out to call him. He asked me how I felt, and I began to tell him. Instead of saying anything, he fell into a most spasmodic laughter. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to keep from laughing from the very bottom of his heart.

There was a young man in the neighborhood who was preparing for college, with whom I had been very intimate. Our minister, as I afterward learned, had repeatedly talked with him on the subject of religion, and warned him against being misled by me. He informed him that I was a very careless young man about religion; and he thought that if he associated much with me his mind would be diverted, and he would not be converted.

After I was converted, and this young man was converted, he told me that he had said to Mr. Gale several times, when he had admonished him about associating so much with me, that my conversations had often affected him more, religiously, than his preaching. I had, indeed, let out my feelings a good deal to this young man.

But just at the time when I was giving an account of my feelings to this elder of the church, and to the other member who was with him, this young man came into the office. I was sitting with my back toward the door, and barely observed that he came in. He listened with astonishment to what I was saying, and the first I knew he partly fell upon the floor, and cried out in the greatest agony of mind, "Do pray for me!" The elder of the church and the other member knelt down and began to pray for him; and when they had prayed, I prayed for him myself. Soon after this they all retired and left me alone.

The question then arose in my mind, "Why did Elder B laugh so? Did he not think that I was under a delusion, or crazy?" This suggestion brought a kind of darkness over my mind; and I began to query with myself whether it was proper for me, such a sinner as I had been, to pray for that young man. A cloud seemed to shut in over me; I had no hold upon anything in which I could rest; and after a little while I retired to bed, not distressed in mind, but still at a loss to know what to make of my present state. Notwithstanding the baptism I had received, this temptation so obscured my view that I went to bed without feeling sure that my peace was made with God.

I soon fell asleep, but almost as soon awoke again on account of the great flow of the love of God that was in my heart. I was so filled with love that I could not sleep. Soon I fell asleep again, and awoke in the same manner. When I awoke, this temptation would return upon me, and the love that seemed to be in my heart would abate; but as soon as I was asleep, it was so warm within me that I would immediately awake. Thus I continued till, late at night, I obtained some sound repose.

When I awoke in the morning the sun had risen, and was pouring a clear light into my room. Words cannot express the impression that this sunlight made upon me. Instantly the baptism that I had received the night before, returned upon me in the same manner. I arose upon my knees in the

bed and wept aloud with joy, and remained for some time too much overwhelmed with the baptism of the Spirit to do anything but pour out my soul to God. It seemed as if this morning’s baptism was accompanied with a gentle reproof, and the Spirit seemed to say to me, "Will you doubt? Will you doubt?" I cried, "No! I will not doubt; I cannot doubt." He then cleared the subject up so much to my mind that it was in fact impossible for me to doubt that the Spirit of God had taken possession of my soul.

In this state I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience. That doctrine had never taken any such possession of my mind, that I had ever viewed it distinctly as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. Indeed, I did not know at all what it meant in the proper sense. But I could now see and understand what was meant by the passage, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I could see that the moment I believed, while up in the woods, all sense of condemnation had entirely dropped out of my mind; and that from that moment I could not feel a sense of guilt or condemnation by any effort that I could make. My sense of guilt was gone; my sins were gone; and I do not think I felt any more sense of guilt than if I never had sinned.

This was just the revelation that I needed. I felt myself justified by faith; and, so far as I could see, I was in a state in which I did not sin. Instead of feeling that I was sinning all the time, my heart was so full of love that it overflowed. My cup ran over with blessing and with love; and I could not feel that I was sinning against God. Nor could I recover the least sense of guilt for my past sins. Of this experience I said nothing that I recollect, at the time, to anybody; that is, of this experience of justification.

02.03. BEGINNING OF HIS WORK

BEGINNING OF HIS WORK.

THIS morning, of which I have just spoken, I went down into the office, and there I was having the renewal of these mighty waves of love and salvation flowing over me, when Squire W came into the office. I said a few words to him on the subject of his salvation. He looked at me with astonishment, but made no reply whatever, that I recollect. He dropped his head, and after standing a few minutes left the office. I thought no more of it then, but afterward found that the remark I made pierced him like a sword; and he did not recover from it till he was converted.

Soon after Mr. W had left the office, Deacon B came into the office and said to me, "Mr. Finney, do you recollect that my cause is to be tried at ten o’clock this morning? I suppose you are ready?" I had been retained to attend this suit as his attorney. I replied to him, "Deacon B, I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead His cause, and I cannot plead yours." He looked at me with astonishment, and said, "What do you mean?" I told him, in a few words, that I had enlisted in the cause of Christ; and then repeated that I had a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead His cause, and that he must go and get somebody else to attend his lawsuit; I could not do it. He dropped his head, and without making any reply, went out. A few moments later, in passing the window, I observed that Deacon B was standing in the road, seemingly lost in deep meditation. He went away, as I afterward learned, and immediately settled his suit. He then betook himself to prayer, and soon got into a much higher religious state than he had ever been in before.

I soon sallied forth from the office to converse with those whom I should meet about their souls. I had the impression, which has never left my mind, that God wanted me to preach the Gospel, and that I must begin immediately. I somehow seemed to know it. If you ask me how I knew it, I cannot tell how I knew it, any more that I can tell how I knew that was the love of God and the baptism of the Holy Ghost which I had received. I did somehow know it with a certainty that was past all possibility of doubt. And so I seemed to know that the Lord commissioned me to preach the Gospel.

When I was first convicted, the thought had occurred to my mind that if I was ever converted I should be obliged to leave my profession, of which I was very fond, and go to preaching the Gospel. This at first stumbled me. I thought I had taken too much pains, and spent too much time and study in my profession to think now of becoming a Christian, if by doing so I should be obliged to preach the Gospel. However, I at last came to the conclusion that I must submit that question to God; that I had never commenced the study of law from any regard to God, and that I had no right to make any conditions with Him; and I therefore had laid aside the thought of becoming a minister, until it was sprung in my mind, as I have related, on my way from my place of prayer in the woods.

But now after receiving these baptisms of the Spirit I was quite willing to preach the Gospel. Nay, I found that I was unwilling to do anything else. I had no longer any desire to practice law.

Everything in that direction was shut up, and had no longer any attractions for me at all. I had no disposition to make money. I had no hungering and thirsting after worldly pleasures and amusements in any direction. My whole mind was taken up with Jesus and His salvation; and the world seemed to me of very little consequence. Nothing, it seemed to me, could be put in competition with the worth of souls; and no labor, I thought, could be so sweet, and no employment so exalted, as that of holding up Christ to a dying world.

With this impression, as I said, I sallied forth to converse with any with whom I might meet. I first dropped in at the shop of a shoemaker, who was a pious man, and one of the most praying Christians, as I thought, in the church. I found him in conversation with a son of one of the elders of the church; and this young man was defending Universalism. Mr. W, the shoemaker, turned to me and said, "Mr. Finney, what do you think of the argument of this young man?"; and he then stated what he had been saying in defense of Universalism. The answer appeared to me so ready that in a moment I was enabled to blow his argument to the wind. The young man saw at once that his argument was gone; and he rose up without making any reply, and went suddenly out. But soon I observed, as I stood in the middle of the room, that the young man, instead of going along the street, had passed around the shop, had climbed over the fence, and was steering straight across the fields toward the woods. I thought no more of it until evening, when the young man came out, and appeared to be a bright convert, giving a relation of his experience. He went into the woods, and there, as he said, gave his heart to God.

I spoke with many persons that day, and I believe the Spirit of God made lasting impressions upon every one of them. I cannot remember one whom I spoke with, who was not soon after converted. Just at evening I called at the house of a friend, where a young man lived who was employed in distilling whiskey. The family had heard that I had become a Christian; and as they were about to sit down to tea, they urged me to sit down and take tea with them. The man of the house and his wife were both professors of religion. But a sister of the lady, who was present, was an unconverted girl; and this young man of whom I have spoken, a distant relative of the family, was a professed Universalist. He was rather an outspoken and talkative Universalist, and a young man of a good deal of energy of character.

I sat down with them to tea, and they requested me to ask a blessing. It was what I had never done; but I did not hesitate a moment, but commenced to ask the blessing of God as we sat around the table. I had scarcely more than begun before the state of these young people rose before my mind, and excited so much compassion that I burst into weeping, and was unable to proceed. Everyone around the table sat speechless for a short time, while I continued to weep. Directly, the young man moved back from the table and rushed out of the room. He fled to his room and locked himself in, and was not seen again till the next morning, when he came out expressing a blessed hope in Christ. He has been for many years an able minister of the Gospel.

In the course of the day, a good deal of excitement was created in the village by its being reported what the Lord had done for my soul. Some thought one thing, and some another. At evening, without any appointment having been made that I could learn, I observed that the people were going to the place where they usually held their conference and prayer meetings. My conversion had created a good deal of astonishment in the village. I afterward learned that some time before this, some members of the church had proposed, in a church meeting, to make me a particular

subject of prayer, and that Mr. Gale had discouraged them, saying that he did not believe I would ever be converted; that from conversing with me he had found that I was very much enlightened upon the subject of religion, and very much hardened. And furthermore, he said he was almost discouraged; that I led the choir, and taught the young people sacred music; and that they were so much under my influence that he did not believe that, while I remained in Adams, they would ever be converted.

I found after I was converted, that some of the wicked men in the place had hid behind me. One man in particular, a Mr. C, who had a pious wife, had repeatedly said to her, "If religion is true, why don't you convert Finney? If you Christians can convert Finney, I will believe in religion."

An old lawyer by the name of M, living in Adams, when he heard it rumored that day that I was converted, said that it was all a hoax; that I was simply trying to see what I could make Christian people believe.

However, with one consent the people seemed to rush to the place of worship. I went there myself. The minister was there, and nearly all the principal people in the village. No one seemed ready to open the meeting; but the house was packed to its utmost capacity. I did not wait for anybody, but arose and began by saying that I then knew that religion was from God. I went on and told such parts of my experience as it seemed important for me to tell. This Mr. C, who had promised his wife that if I was converted he would believe in religion, was present. Mr. M, the old lawyer, was also present. What the Lord enabled me to say seemed to take a wonderful hold upon the people. Mr. C got up, pressed through the crowd, and went home, leaving his hat. Mr. M also left and went home, saying I was crazy. "He is in earnest," said he, "there is no mistake; but he is deranged, that is clear."

As soon as I had done speaking, Mr. Gale, the minister, arose and made a confession. He said he believed he had been in the way of the church; and then confessed that he had discouraged the church when they had proposed to pray for me. He said also that when he had heard that day that I was converted, he had promptly said that he did not believe it. He said he had no faith. He spoke in a very humble manner.

I had never made a prayer in public. But soon after Mr. Gale was through speaking, he called on me to pray. I did so, and think I had a good deal of enlargement and liberty in prayer. We had a wonderful meeting that evening; and, from that day, we had a meeting every evening for a long time. The work spread on every side.

As I had been a leader among the young people, I immediately appointed a meeting for them, which they all attended--that is, all of the class with which I was acquainted. I gave up my time to labor for their conversion; and the Lord blessed every effort that was made, in a very wonderful manner. They were converted one after another, with great rapidity; and the work continued among them until but one of their number was left unconverted.

The work spread among all classes; and extended itself, not only through the village, but out of the village in every direction. My heart was so full that, for more than a week, I did not feel at all inclined to sleep or eat. I seemed literally to have meat to eat that the world knew nothing of. I did not feel the need of food, or of sleep. My mind was full of the love of God to overflowing. I went on in this way for a good many days, until I found that I must rest and sleep, or I should become

insane. From that point I was more cautious in my labors; and ate regularly, and slept as much as I could.

The Word of God had wonderful power; and I was every day surprised to find that the few words, spoken to an individual, would stick in his heart like an arrow.

After a short time I went down to Henderson, where my father lived, and visited him. He was an unconverted man; and only one of the family, my youngest brother, had ever made a profession of religion. My father met me at the gate and said, "How do you do, Charles?" I replied, "I am well, father, body and soul. But, father, you are an old man; all your children are grown up and have left your house; and I never heard a prayer in my father's house." Father dropped his head, and burst into tears, and replied, "I know it, Charles; come in and pray yourself."

We went in and engaged in prayer. My father and mother were greatly moved; and in a very short time thereafter they were both hopefully converted. I do not know but my mother had had a secret hope before; but if so, none of the family, I believe, ever knew it.

I remained in that neighborhood, I think, for two or three days, and conversed more or less with such people as I could meet with. I believe it was the next Monday night, they had a monthly concert of prayer in that town. There were there a Baptist church that had a minister, and a small Congregational church without a minister. The town was very much of a moral waste, however; and at this time religion was at a very low ebb.

My youngest brother attended this monthly concert of which I have spoken, and afterward gave me an account of it. The Baptists and Congregationalists were in the habit of holding a union monthly concert. But few attended, and therefore it was held at a private house. On this occasion they met, as usual, in the parlor of a private house. A few of the members of the Baptist church, and a few Congregationalists, were present.

The deacon of the Congregational church was a spare, feeble old man, by the name of M. He was quiet in his ways, and had a good reputation for piety; but seldom said much upon the subject. He was a good specimen of a New England deacon. He was present, and they called upon him to lead the meeting. He read a passage of Scripture according to their custom. They then sung a hymn, and Deacon M stood up behind his chair, and led in prayer. The other persons present, all of them professors of religion, and younger people, knelt down around the room.

My brother said that Deacon M began as usual in his prayer, in a low, feeble voice; but soon began to wax warm and to raise his voice, which became tremulous with emotion. He proceeded to pray with more and more earnestness, till soon he began to rise upon his toes and come down upon his heels; and then to rise upon his toes and drop upon his heels again, so that they could feel the jar in the room. He continued to raise his voice, and to rise upon his toes, and come down upon his heels more emphatically. And as the spirit of prayer led him onward he began to raise his chair together with his heels, and bring that down upon the floor; and soon he raised it a little higher, and brought it down with still more emphasis. He continued to do this, and grew more and more engaged, till he would bring the chair down as if he would break it to pieces.

In the meantime the brethren and sisters that were on their knees, began to groan, and sigh, and weep, and agonize in prayer. The deacon continued to struggle until he was about exhausted; and

when he ceased, my brother said that no one in the room could get off from his knees. They could only weep and confess, and all melt down before the Lord. From this meeting the work of the Lord spread forth in every direction all over the town. And thus it spread at that time from Adams as a center, throughout nearly all the towns in the county.

I have spoken of the conviction of Squire W in whose office I studied law. I have also said that when I was converted, it was in a grove where I went to pray. Very soon after my conversion, several other cases of conversion occurred that were reported to have taken place under similar circumstances; that is, persons went up into the grove to pray, and there made their peace with God.

When Squire W heard them tell their experience, one after the other, in our meetings, he thought that he had a parlor to pray in; and that he was not going up into the woods, to have the same story to tell that had been so often told. To this, it appeared, he strongly committed himself. Although this was a thing entirely immaterial in itself; yet it was a point on which his pride had become committed, and therefore he could not get into the kingdom of God.

I have found in my ministerial experience a great many cases of this kind; where upon some question, perhaps immaterial in itself, a sinner’s pride of heart would commit him. In all such cases the dispute must be yielded, or the sinner never will get into the kingdom of God. I have known persons to remain for weeks in great tribulation of mind, pressed by the Spirit; but they could make no progress till the point upon which they were committed was yielded. Mr. W was the first case of the kind that had ever come to my notice.

After he was converted, he said the question had frequently come up when he was in prayer; and that he had been made to see that it was pride that made him take that stand, and that kept him out of the kingdom of God. But still he was not willing to admit this, even to himself. He tried in every way to make himself believe, and to make God believe, that he was not proud. One night, he said, he prayed all night in his parlor that God would have mercy on him; but in the morning he felt more distressed than ever. He finally became enraged that God did not hear his prayer, and was tempted to kill himself. He was so tempted to use his penknife for that purpose, that he actually threw it as far as he could, that it might be lost, so that this temptation should not prevail. He said that, one night, on returning from meeting, he was so pressed with a sense of his pride, and with the fact that it prevented his going up into the woods to pray, that he was determined to make himself believe, and make God believe, that he was not proud; and he sought around for a mud puddle in which to kneel down, that he might demonstrate that it was not pride which kept him from going into the woods. Thus he continued to struggle for several weeks.

But one afternoon I was sitting in our office, and two of the elders of the church with me; when the young man that I had met at the shoemaker’s shop, came hastily into the office, and exclaimed as he came, "Squire W is converted!" and proceeded to say: "I went up into the woods to pray, and heard someone over in the valley shouting very loud. I went up to the brow of the hill, where I could look down, and I saw Squire W pacing to and fro, and singing as loud as he could sing; and every few moments he would stop and clap his hands with his full strength, and shout, ’I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!’ Then he would march and sing again; and then stop, and shout, and clap his hands." While the young man was telling us this, behold, Squire W appeared in sight, coming over the hill. As he came down to the foot of the hill we observed that he met Father

T, as we all called him, an aged Methodist brother. He rushed up to him, and took him right up in his arms. After setting him down, and conversing a moment, he came rapidly toward the office. When he came in, he was in a profuse perspiration--he was a heavy man, and he cried out, "I've got it! I've got it!" clapped his hands with all his might, and fell upon his knees and began to give thanks to God. He then gave us an account of what had been passing in his mind, and why he had not obtained a hope before. He said as soon as he gave up that point and went into the woods, his mind was relieved; and when he knelt down to pray, the Spirit of God came upon him and filled him with such unspeakable joy that it resulted in the scene which the young man witnessed. Of course from that time Squire W took a decided stand for God.

Toward spring the older members of the church began to abate in their zeal. I had been in the habit of rising early in the morning, and spending a season of prayer alone in the meeting house; and I finally succeeded in interesting a considerable number of brethren to meet me there in the morning for a prayer meeting. This was at a very early hour; and we were generally together long before it was light enough to see to read. I persuaded my minister to attend these morning meetings.

But soon they began to be remiss; whereupon I would get up in time to go around to their houses and wake them up. Many times I went round and round, and called the brethren that I thought would be most likely to attend, and we would have a precious season of prayer. But still the brethren, I found, attended with more and more reluctance; which fact greatly tried me.

One morning I had been around and called the brethren up, and when I returned to the meeting house but few of them had got there. Mr. Gale, my minister, was standing at the door of the church, and as I came up, all at once the glory of God shone upon and round about me, in a manner most marvelous. The day was just beginning to dawn. But all at once a light perfectly ineffable shone in my soul, that almost prostrated me to the ground. In this light it seemed as if I could see that all nature praised and worshipped God except man. This light seemed to be like the brightness of the sun in every direction. It was too intense for the eyes. I recollect casting my eyes down and breaking into a flood of tears, in view of the fact that mankind did not praise God. I think I knew something then, by actual experience, of that light that prostrated Paul on his way to Damascus. It was surely a light such as I could not have endured long.

When I burst out into such loud weeping, Mr. Gale said, "What is the matter, Brother Finney?" I could not tell him. I found that he had seen no light; and that he saw no reason why I should be in such a state of mind. I therefore said but little. I believe I merely replied, that I saw the glory of God; and that I could not endure to think of the manner in which He was treated by men. Indeed, it did not seem to me at the time that the vision of His glory which I had, was to be described in words. I wept it out; and the vision, if it may be so called, passed away and left my mind calm.

I used to have, when I was a young Christian, many seasons of communing with God which cannot be described in words. And not unfrequently those seasons would end in an impression by my mind like this: "Go, see that thou tell no man." I did not understand this at the time, and several times I paid no attention to this injunction; but tried to tell my Christian brethren what communications the Lord had made to me, or rather what seasons of communion I had with Him. But I soon found that it would not do to tell my brethren what was passing between the Lord and my soul. They could not understand it. They would look surprised, and sometimes, I thought,

incredulous; and I soon learned to keep quiet in regard to those divine manifestations, and say but little about them.

I used to spend a great deal of time in prayer; sometimes, I thought, literally praying without ceasing. I also found it very profitable, and felt very much inclined to hold frequent days of private fasting. On those days I would seek to be entirely alone with God, and would generally wander off into the woods, or get into the meeting house, or somewhere away entirely by myself.

Sometimes I would pursue a wrong course in fasting, and attempt to examine myself according to the ideas of self-examination then entertained by my minister and the church. I would try to look into my own heart, in the sense of examining my feelings; and would turn my attention particularly to my motives, and the state of my mind. When I pursued this course, I found invariably that the day would close without any perceptible advance being made. Afterwards I saw clearly why this was so. Turning my attention, as I did, from the Lord Jesus Christ, and looking into myself, examining my motives and feelings, my feelings all subsided of course. But whenever I fasted, and let the Spirit take His own course with me, and gave myself up to let Him lead and instruct me, I universally found it in the highest degree useful. I found I could not live without enjoying the presence of God; and if at any time a cloud came over me, I could not rest, I could not study, I could not attend to anything with the least satisfaction or benefit, until the medium was again cleared between my soul and God.

I had been very fond of my profession. But as I have said, when I was converted all was dark in that direction, and I had, no more, any pleasure in attending to law business. I had many very pressing invitations to conduct lawsuits, but I uniformly refused. I did not dare to trust myself in the excitement of a contested lawsuit; and furthermore, the business itself of conducting other peoples controversies, appeared odious and offensive to me.

The Lord taught me, in those early days of my Christian experience, many very important truths in regard to the spirit of prayer. Not long after I was converted, a woman with whom I had boarded, though I did not board with her at this time, was taken very sick. She was not a Christian, but her husband was a professor of religion. He came into our office one evening, being a brother of Squire W, and said to me, "My wife cannot live through the night." This seemed to plant an arrow, as it were, in my heart. It came upon me in the sense of a burden that crushed me, the nature of which I could not at all understand; but with it came an intense desire to pray for that woman. The burden was so great that I left the office almost immediately, and went up to the meeting house, to pray for her. There I struggled, but could not say much. I could only groan with groanings loud and deep.

I stayed a considerable time in the church, in this state of mind, but got no relief. I returned to the office; but could not sit still. I could only walk the room and agonize. I returned to the meeting house again, and went through the same process of struggling. For a long time I tried to get my prayer before the Lord; but somehow words could not express it. I could only groan and weep, without being able to express what I wanted in words. I returned to the office again, and still found I was unable to rest; and I returned a third time to the meeting house. At this time the Lord gave me power to prevail. I was enabled to roll the burden upon Him; and I obtained the assurance in my own mind that the woman would not die, and indeed that she would never die in her sins.

I returned to the office. My mind was perfectly quiet; and I soon left and retired to rest. Early the next morning the husband of this woman came into the office. I inquired how his wife was. He, smiling said, "She's alive, and to all appearance better this morning." I replied, "Brother W, she will not die with this sickness; you may rely upon it. And she will never die in her sins." I do not know how I was made sure of this; but it was in some way made plain to me, so that I had no doubt that she would recover. She did recover, and soon after obtained a hope in Christ.

At first I did not understand what this exercise of mind that I had passed through, was. But shortly after in relating it to a Christian brother he said to me, "Why, that was the travail of your soul." A few minutes conversation, and pointing me to certain scriptures, gave me to understand what it was.

Another experience which I had soon after this, illustrates the same truth. I have spoken of one young woman as belonging to the class of young people of my acquaintance, who remained unconverted. This attracted a good deal of attention; and there was considerable conversation among Christians about her case. She was naturally a charming girl, and very much enlightened on the subject of religion, but she remained in her sins.

One of the elders of the church and myself agreed to make her a daily subject of prayer, to continue to present her case at the throne of grace, morning, noon, and evening, until she was either converted, or should die, or we should be unable to keep our covenant. I found my mind greatly exercised about her; and more and more, as I continued to pray for her. I soon found, however, that the elder who had entered into this arrangement with me, was losing his spirit of prayer for her. But this did not discourage me. I continued to hold on with increasing importunity. I also availed myself of every opportunity to converse plainly and searchingly with her on the subject of her salvation.

After I had continued in this way for sometime, one evening I called to see her just as the sun was setting. As I came up to the door I heard a shriek from a female voice, and a scuffling and confusion inside the door; and stood and waited for the confusion to be over. The lady of the house soon came and opened the door, and held in her hand a portion of a book, which had evidently been torn in two. She was pale and very much agitated. She held out that portion of the book which she had in her hand, and said, "Mr. Finney, don't you think my sister has become a Universalist?" The book was a defense of Universalism. Her sister had detected her reading it in a private way, and tried to get it away from her; and it was the struggle to obtain that book which I had heard.

I received this information at the door; whereupon I declined to go in. It struck me very much in the same way as had the announcement that the sick woman, already mentioned, was about to die. It loaded me down with great agony. As I returned to my room, at some distance from that house, I felt almost as if I should stagger under the burden that was on my mind; and I struggled, and groaned, and agonized, but could not frame to present the case before God in words, but only in groans and tears.

It seemed to me that the discovery that that young woman, instead of being converted, was becoming a Universalist, so astounded me that I could not break through with my faith, and get hold of God in reference to her case. There seemed to be a darkness hanging over the question,

as if a cloud had risen up between me and God, in regard to prevailing for her salvation. But still the Spirit struggled within me with groanings that could not be uttered.

However, I was obliged to retire that night without having prevailed. But as soon as it was light I awoke; and the first thought that I had was to beseech the God of grace again for that young woman. I immediately arose and fell upon my knees. No sooner was I upon my knees than the darkness gave way, and the whole subject opened to my mind; and as soon as I plead for her God said to me, "Yes! yes!" If He had spoken with an audible voice, it would not have been more distinctly understood than was this word spoken within my soul. It instantly relieved all my solicitude. My mind became filled with the greatest peace and joy; and I felt a complete certainty that her salvation was secure.

I drew a false inference, however, in regard to the time; which indeed was not a thing particularly impressed upon my mind at the time of my prayer. Still I expected her to be converted immediately; but she was not. She remained in her sins for several months. In its proper place I shall have occasion to speak of her conversion. I felt disappointed, at the time, that she was not converted at once; and was somewhat staggered upon the question whether I had really prevailed with God in her behalf.

Soon after I was converted, the man with whom I had been boarding for some time, who was a magistrate, and one of the principal men in the place, was deeply convicted of sin. He had been elected a member of the legislature of the state. I was praying daily for him, and urging him to give his heart to God. His conviction became very deep; but still, from day to day, he deferred submission, and did not obtain a hope. My solicitude for him increased.

One afternoon several of his political friends had a protracted interview with him. On the evening of the same day I attempted again to carry his case to God; as the urgency in my mind for his conversion had become very great. In my prayer I had drawn very near to God. I do not remember ever to have been in more intimate communion with the Lord Jesus Christ than I was at that time. Indeed His presence was so real that I was bathed in tears of joy, and gratitude, and love; and in this state of mind I attempted to pray for this friend. But the moment I did so, my mouth was shut. I found it impossible to pray a word for him. The Lord seemed to say to me, "No; I will not hear." An anguish seized upon me; I thought at first it was a temptation. But the door was shut in my face. It seemed as if the Lord said to me, "Speak no more to me of that matter." It pained me beyond expression. I did not know what to make of it.

The next morning I saw him; and as soon as I brought up the question of submission to God, he said to me, "Mr. Finney, I shall have nothing more to do with it until I return from the legislature. I stand committed to my political friends to carry out certain measures in the legislature, that are incompatible with my first becoming a Christian; and I have promised that I will not attend to the subject until after I have returned from Albany."

From the moment of that exercise the evening before, I had no spirit of prayer for him at all. As soon as he told me what he had done, I understood it. I could see that his convictions were all gone, and that the Spirit of God had left him. From that time he grew more careless and hardened than ever.

When the time arrived he went to the legislature; and in the Spring he returned an almost insane Universalist. I say almost insane, because, instead of having formed his opinions from any evidence or course of argument, he told me this: He said, "I have come to that conclusion, not because I have found it taught in the Bible, but because such a doctrine is so opposed to the carnal mind. It is a doctrine so generally rejected and spoken against, as to prove that it is distasteful to the carnal, or unconverted mind." This was astonishing to me. But everything else that I could get out of him was as wild and absurd as this. He remained in his sins, finally fell into decay, and died at last, as I have been told, a dilapidated man, and in the full faith of his Universalism.

02.04. HIS DOCTRINAL EDUCATION

CHAPTER IV.

HIS DOCTRINAL EDUCATION AND OTHER EXPERIENCES AT ADAMS.

SOON after I was converted I called on my pastor, and had a long conversation with him on the atonement. He was a Princeton student, and of course held the limited view of the atonement--that it was made for the elect and available to none else. Our conversation lasted nearly half a day. He held that Jesus suffered for the elect the literal penalty of the divine law; that He suffered just what was due to each of the elect on the score of retributive justice. I objected that this was absurd; as in that case He suffered the equivalent of endless misery multiplied by the whole number of the elect. He insisted that this was true. He affirmed that Jesus literally paid the debt of the elect, and fully satisfied retributive justice. On the contrary it seemed to me that Jesus only satisfied public justice, and that that was all that the government of God could require.

I was however but a child in theology. I was but a novice in religion and in Biblical learning; but I thought he did not sustain his views from the Bible, and told him so. I had read nothing on the subject except my Bible; and what I had there found upon the subject, I had interpreted as I would have understood the same or like passage in a law book. I thought he had evidently interpreted those texts in conformity with an established theory of the atonement. I had never heard him preach the views he maintained in that discussion. I was surprised in view of his positions, and withstood them as best I could.

He was alarmed, I dare say, at what appeared to him to be my obstinacy. I thought that my Bible clearly taught that the atonement was made for all men. He limited it to a part. I could not accept this view, for I could not see that he fairly proved it from the Bible. His rules of interpretation did not meet my views. They were much less definite and intelligible than those to which I had been accustomed in my law studies. To the objections which I urged, he could make no satisfactory reply. I asked him if the Bible did not require all who hear the Gospel to repent, believe the Gospel, and be saved. He admitted that it did require all to believe, and be saved. But how could they believe and accept a salvation which was not provided for them?

We went over the whole field of debate between the old and new school divines, upon the subject of atonement, as my subsequent theological studies taught me. I do not recollect to have ever read a page upon the subject except what I had found in the Bible. I had never, to my recollection, heard a sermon or any discussion whatever upon the question.

This discussion was often renewed, and continued through my whole course of theological studies under him. He expressed concern lest I should not accept the orthodox faith. I believe he had the strongest conviction that I was truly converted; but he felt the greatest desire to keep me within the strict lines of Princeton theology.

He had it fixed in his mind that I should be a minister; and he took pains to inform me that if I did become a minister, the Lord would not bless my labors, and His Spirit would not bear witness to my preaching, unless I preached the truth. I believed this myself. But this was not to me a very strong argument in favor of his views; for he informed me, but not in connection with this conversation, that he did not know that he had ever been instrumental in converting a sinner.

I had never heard him preach particularly on the subject of the atonement; I think he feared to present his particular views to the people. His church, I am sure, did not embrace his view of a limited atonement.

After this we had frequent conversations, not only on the question of the atonement, but on various theological questions, of which I shall have occasion to speak more fully hereafter.

I have said that in the spring of the year the older members of the church began manifestly to decline in their engagedness and zeal for God. This greatly oppressed me, as it did also the young converts generally. About this time I read in a newspaper an article under the head of, "A Revival Revived." The substance of it was, that in a certain place there had been a revival during the winter; that in the spring it declined; and that upon earnest prayer being offered for the continued outpouring of the Spirit, the revival was powerfully revived. This article set me into a flood of weeping.

I was at that time boarding with Mr. Gale, and I took the article to him. I was so overcome with a sense of the divine goodness in hearing and answering prayer, and with a felt assurance that He would hear and answer prayer for the revival of His work in Adams, that I went through the house weeping aloud like a child. Mr. Gale seemed surprised at my feelings, and my expressed confidence that God would revive His work. The article made no such impression on him as it did on me.

At the next meeting of the young people, I proposed that we should observe a closet concert of prayer for the revival of God’s work; that we should pray at sunrise, at noon, and at sunset, in our closets, and continue this for one week; when we should come together again and see what farther was to be done. No other means were used for the revival of God’s work. But the spirit of prayer was immediately poured out wonderfully upon the young converts. Before the week was out I learned that some of them, when they would attempt to observe this season of prayer, would lose all their strength and be unable to rise to their feet, or even stand upon their knees in their closets; and that some would lie prostrate on the floor, and pray with unutterable groanings for the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit was poured out, and before the week ended all the meetings were thronged; and there was as much interest in religion, I think, as there had been at any time during the revival.

And here, I am sorry to say, a mistake was made, or, perhaps I should say, a sin committed, by some of the older members of the church, which resulted in great evil. As I afterward learned, a considerable number of the older people resisted this new movement among the young converts. They were jealous of it. They did not know what to make of it, and felt that the young converts were getting out of their place, in being so forward and so urgent upon the older members of the church. This state of mind finally grieved the Spirit of God. It was not long before alienations began to arise among these older members of the church, which finally resulted in great evil to those who

had allowed themselves to resist this latter revival.

The young people held out well. The converts, so far as I know, were almost universally sound, and have been thoroughly efficient Christians.

In the Spring of this year, 1822, I put myself under the care of the Presbytery as a candidate for the Gospel ministry. Some of the ministers urged me to go to Princeton to study theology, but I declined. When they asked me why I would not go to Princeton, I told them that my pecuniary circumstances forbade it. This was true; but they said they would see that my expenses were paid. Still I refused to go; and when urged to give them my reasons, I plainly told them that I would not put myself under such an influence as they had been under; that I was confident they had been wrongly educated, and they were not ministers that met my ideal of what a minister of Christ should be. I told them this reluctantly, but I could not honestly withhold it. They appointed my pastor to superintend my studies. He offered me the use of his library, and said he would give what attention I needed to my theological studies.

But my studies, so far as he was concerned as my teacher, were little else than controversy. He held to the old school doctrine of original sin, or that the human constitution was morally depraved. He held also, that men were utterly unable to comply with the terms of the Gospel, to repent, to believe, or to do anything that God required them to do; that while they were free to all evil, in the sense of being able to commit any amount of sin, yet they were not free to perform any good; that God had condemned men for their sinful nature; and for this, as well as for their transgressions, they deserved eternal death.

He held also that the influences of the Spirit of God on the minds of men were physical, acting directly upon the substance of the soul; that men were passive in regeneration; and in short he held all those doctrines that logically flow from the fact of a nature sinful in itself.

These doctrines I could not receive. I could not receive his views on the subject of atonement, regeneration, faith, repentance, the slavery of the will, or any of the kindred doctrines. But of these views he was quite tenacious; and he seemed sometimes not a little impatient because I did not receive them without question.

He used to insist that if I would reason on the subject, I should probably land in infidelity. And then he would remind me that some of the students who had been at Princeton had gone away infidels, because they would reason on the subject, and would not accept the Confession of Faith, and the teaching of the doctors at that school. He furthermore warned me repeatedly, and very feelingly, that as a minister I should never be useful unless I embraced the truth, meaning the truth as he believed and taught it.

I am sure I was quite willing to believe what I found taught in the Bible, and told him so. We used to have many protracted discussions; and I would often come from his study greatly depressed and discouraged, saying to myself, "I cannot embrace these views come what will. I cannot believe they are taught in the Bible." And several times I was on the point of giving up the study for the ministry altogether.

There was but one member of the church to whom I opened my mind freely on this subject; and that was Elder H, a very godly, praying man. He had been educated in Princeton views, and held

pretty strongly the higher doctrines of Calvinism. Nevertheless, as we had frequent and protracted conversations, he became satisfied that I was right; and he would call on me frequently to have seasons of prayer with me, to strengthen me in my studies, and in my discussions with Mr. Gale, and to decide me more and more firmly that, come what would, I would preach the Gospel.

Several times he fell in with me when I was in a state of great depression, after coming from Mr. Gale's study. At such times he would go with me to my room; and sometimes we would continue till a late hour at night crying to God for light and strength, and for faith to accept and do His perfect will. He lived more than three miles from the village; and frequently he has stayed with me till ten or eleven o'clock at night, and then walked home. The dear old man! I have reason to believe that he prayed for me daily as long as he lived.

After I got into the ministry and great opposition was raised to my preaching, I met Elder H at one time, and he alluded to the opposition, and said, "Oh! my soul is so burdened that I pray for you day and night. But I am sure that God will help. Go on," he said, "go on, Brother Finney; the Lord will give you deliverance."

One afternoon Mr. Gale and I had been conversing for a long time on the subject of the atonement, and the hour arrived for us to attend the conference meeting. We continued our conversation on that subject until we got into the house. As we were early, and very few persons had arrived, we continued our conversation. The people kept coming in; and they would sit down and listen with the greatest attention to what we were saying. Our discussion was very earnest, though I trust conducted in a Christian spirit. The people became more and more interested in hearing our discussion, and when we proposed to stop and commence our meeting, they earnestly begged us to proceed with our discussion and let that be our meeting. We did so; and spent the whole evening, I think very much to the satisfaction of those present, and I trust to their permanent edification.

After I had been studying theology for a few months, and Mr. Gale's health was such that he was unable to preach; a Universalist minister came in and began to promulgate his objectionable doctrines. The impenitent part of the community seemed very much disposed to hear him, and finally people became so interested that there was a large number that seemed to be shaken in their minds, in regard to the commonly received views of the Bible.

In this state of things, Mr. Gale, together with some of the elders of his church, desired me to address the people on the subject, and see if I could not reply to the arguments of the Universalist. The great effort of the Universalist was of course to show that sin did not deserve endless punishment. He inveighed against the doctrine of endless punishment as unjust, infinitely cruel and absurd. God was love; and how could a God of love punish men endlessly?

I arose in one of our evening meetings and said, "This Universalist preacher holds forth doctrines that are new to me, and I do not believe they are taught in the Bible. But I am going to examine the subject, and if I cannot show that his views are false, I will become a Universalist myself." I then appointed a meeting the next week, at which time I proposed to deliver a lecture in opposition to his views. The Christian people were rather startled at my boldness in saying that I would be a Universalist, if I could not prove that his doctrines were false. However, I felt sure that I could.

When the evening came for my lecture, the house was crowded. I took up the question of the justice of endless punishment, and discussed it through that and the next evening. There was general satisfaction with the presentation.

The Universalist himself found that the people were convinced that he was wrong, and then he took another tack. Mr. Gale, together with his school of theology, maintained that the atonement of Christ was the literal payment of the debt of the elect, a suffering of just what they deserved to suffer; so that the elect were saved upon principles of exact justice; Christ, so far as they were concerned, having fully answered the demands of the law. The Universalist seized upon this view, assuming that this was the real nature of the atonement. He had only to prove that the atonement was made for all men, and then he could show that all men would be saved; because the debt of all mankind had been literally paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, and Universalism would follow on the very ground of justice; for God could not justly punish those whose debt was paid.

I saw, and the people saw, those of them who understood Mr. Gale's position, that the Universalist had got him into a tight place. For it was easy to prove that the atonement was made for all mankind; and if the nature and value of the atonement were as Mr. Gale held, universal salvation was an inevitable result. This again carried the people away; and Mr. Gale sent for me and requested that I should go on and reply to him further. He said he understood that the question on the ground of law was settled; but now I must answer his argument upon the ground of the Gospel. I said to him, "Mr. Gale, I cannot do it without contradicting your views on that subject, and setting them all aside. With your views of the atonement he cannot be answered. For if you have the right view of the atonement, the people can easily see that the Bible proves that Christ died for all men, for the whole world of sinners; and therefore unless you will allow me to sweep your views of the atonement all away, I can say nothing to any purpose." "Well," said Mr. Gale, "it will never do to let the thing remain as it is. You may say what you please; only go on and answer him in your own way. If I find it necessary to preach on the subject of the atonement, I shall be obliged to contradict you." "Very well," said I, "let me but show my views, and I can answer the Universalist; and you may say to the people afterward what you please."

I then appointed to lecture on the Universalist's argument founded on the Gospel. I delivered two lectures upon the atonement. In these I think I fully succeeded in showing that the atonement did not consist in the literal payment of the debt of sinners, in the sense which the Universalist maintained; that it simply rendered the salvation of all men possible, and did not of itself lay God under obligation to save anybody; that it was not true that Christ suffered just what those for whom He died deserved to suffer; that no such thing as that was taught in the Bible, and no such thing was true; that, on the contrary, Christ died simply to remove an insurmountable obstacle out of the way of God's forgiving sinners, so as to render it possible for Him to proclaim a universal amnesty, inviting all men to repent, to believe in Christ, and to accept salvation; that instead of having satisfied retributive justice, and borne just what sinners deserve, Christ had only satisfied public justice, by honoring the law, both in His obedience and death, thus rendering it safe for God to pardon sin, to pardon the sins of any man and of all men who would repent and believe in Him. I maintained that Christ, in His atonement, merely did that which was necessary as a condition of the forgiveness of sin; and not that which canceled sin, in the sense of literally paying the indebtedness of sinners.

This answered the Universalist, and put a stop to any further proceedings or excitement on that subject. But what was very striking, these lectures secured the conversion of the young woman for whom, as I have said, such earnest and agonizing prayer had been offered. This was very astonishing to Mr. Gale; for the evidence was that the Spirit of God had blessed my views of the atonement. This, I think, staggered him considerably in regard to the correctness of his view. I could see, in conversing with him, that he felt very much surprised that this view of the atonement should be instrumental in converting that young woman.

After many such discussions with Mr. Gale in pursuing my theological studies, the presbytery was finally called together at Adams to examine me; and, if they could agree to do so, to license me to preach the Gospel. This was in March 1824. I expected a severe struggle with them in my examination; but I found them a good deal softened. The manifest blessing that had attended my conversations, and my teaching in prayer and conference meetings, and in these lectures of which I have spoken, rendered them, I think, more cautious than they would otherwise have been in getting into any controversy with me. In the course of my examination they avoided asking any such questions as would naturally bring my views into collision with theirs.

When they had examined me, they voted unanimously to license me to preach. Unexpectedly to myself they asked me if I received the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church. I had not examined it--that is, the large work containing the catechism and confession. This had made no part of my study. I replied that I received it for substance of doctrine, so far as I understood it. But I spoke in a way that plainly implied, I think, that I did not pretend to know much about it. However, I answered honestly, as I understood it at the time. They heard the trial sermons which I had written, on texts which had been given me by the presbytery; and went through with all the ordinary details of such an examination.

At this meeting of presbytery I first saw Rev. Daniel Nash, who is generally known as "Father Nash." He was a member of the presbytery. A large congregation was assembled to hear my examination. I got in a little late, and saw a man standing in the pulpit speaking to the people, as I supposed. He looked at me, I observed, as I came in; and was looking at others as they passed up the aisles.

As soon as I reached my seat and listened, I observed that he was praying. I was surprised to see him looking all over the house, as if he were talking to the people; while in fact he was praying to God. Of course it did not sound to me much like prayer; and he was at that time indeed in a very cold and backslidden state. I shall have occasion frequently to mention him hereafter.

The next Sabbath after I was licensed, I preached for Mr. Gale. When I came out of the pulpit he said to me, "Mr. Finney, I shall be very much ashamed to have it known, wherever you go, that you studied theology with me." This was so much like him, and like what he had repeatedly said to me, that I made little or no reply to it. I held down my head, and felt discouraged, and went my way.

He afterwards viewed this subject very differently; and told me that he blessed the Lord that in all our discussion, and in all he had said to me, he had not had the least influence to change my views. He very frankly confessed his error in the manner in which he had dealt with me; and said that if I had listened to him I should have been ruined as a minister.

The fact is that Mr. Gale's education for the ministry had been entirely defective. He had imbibed a set of opinions, both theological and practical, that were a straitjacket to him. He could accomplish very little or nothing if he carried out his own principles. I had the use of his library, and searched it thoroughly on all the questions of theology, which came up for examination; and the more I examined the books, the more was I dissatisfied.

I had been used to the close and logical reasonings of the judges, as I found them reported in our law works; but when I went to Mr. Gale's old school library, I found almost nothing proved to my satisfaction. I am sure it was not because I was opposed to the truth, but I was dissatisfied because the positions of these theological authors were unsound and not satisfactorily sustained. They often seemed to me to state one thing and prove another, and frequently fell short of logically proving anything.

I finally said to Mr. Gale, "If there is nothing better than I find in your library to sustain the great doctrines taught by our church, I must be an infidel." And I have always believed that had not the Lord led me to see the fallacy of those arguments, and to see the real truth as presented in the Scriptures; especially had He not so revealed Himself to me personally that I could not doubt the truth of the Christian religion, I should have been forced to be an infidel.

At first, being no theologian, my attitude in respect to his peculiar views was rather that of negation or denial, than that of opposing any positive view to his. I said, "Your positions are not proved." I often said, "They are unsusceptible of proof." So I thought then, and so I think now. But after all, he would insist upon it that I ought to defer to the opinions of the great and good men who, after much consultation and deliberation, had come to those conclusions; that it was unbecoming in me, a young man, bred to the profession of law, and having no theological education, to oppose my views to those of the great men and profound theologians, whose opinions I found in his library. He urged that if I persisted in having my intelligence satisfied, on those points, with argument, I should become an infidel. He believed that the decisions of the church ought to be respected by a young man like myself, and that I should surrender my own judgment to that of others of superior wisdom.

Now I could not deny that there was a good deal of force in this; but still I found myself utterly unable to accept doctrine on the ground of authority. If I tried to accept those doctrines as mere dogmas, I could not do it. I could not be honest in doing it; I could not respect myself in doing it. Often when I left Mr. Gale, I would go to my room and spend a long time on my knees over my Bible. Indeed I read my Bible on my knees a great deal during those days of conflict, beseeching the Lord to teach me His own mind on those points. I had nowhere to go but directly to the Bible, and to the philosophy or workings of my own mind, as revealed in consciousness.

My views took on a positive type but slowly. At first I found myself unable to receive his peculiar views; and then gradually formed views of my own in opposition to them, which appeared to me to be unequivocally taught in the Bible.

But not only were Mr. Gale's theological views such as to cripple his usefulness; his practical views were equally erroneous. Hence he prophesied, with respect to my views, every kind of evil. He assured me, that the Spirit of God would not approve and cooperate with my labors; that if I addressed men as I told him I intended to, they would not hear me; that if they came for a short

time, they would soon become offended, and my congregation would all fall off; that unless I wrote my sermons I should immediately become stale and uninteresting, and could not satisfy the people; and that I should divide and scatter instead of building up the congregation, wherever I preached. Indeed I found his views to be almost the reverse of those which I entertained, on all such practical questions relating to my duty as a minister.

I do not wonder, and did not at the time, that he was shocked at my views and purposes in relation to preaching the Gospel. With his education it could not be otherwise. He followed out his views with very little practical result. I pursued mine, and by the blessing of God the results were the opposite of those which he predicted. When this fact came out clearly, it completely upset his theological and practical ideas as a minister. This result, as I shall mention in its place, at first annihilated his hope as a Christian, and finally made him quite another man as a minister.

But there was another defect in Brother Gale's education, which I regarded as fundamental. If he had ever been converted to Christ, he had failed to receive that divine anointing of the Holy Ghost that would make him a power in the pulpit and in society, for the conversion of souls. He had fallen short of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is indispensable to ministerial success.

When Christ commissioned His apostles to go and preach, He told them to abide at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. This power, as everyone knows, was the baptism of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. This was an indispensable qualification for success in their ministry. I did not suppose then, nor do I now, that this baptism was simply the power to work miracles. The power to work miracles and the gift of tongues were given as signs to attest the reality of their divine commission. But the baptism itself was a divine purifying, an anointing, bestowing on them a divine illumination, filling them with faith, and love, with peace and power; so that their words were made sharp in the hearts of God's enemies, quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword. This is an indispensable qualification of a successful ministry; and I have often been surprised and pained that to this day so little stress is laid upon this qualification for preaching Christ to a sinful world. Without the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit, a man will never make much progress in preaching the Gospel. The fact is, unless he can preach the Gospel as an experience, present religion to mankind as a matter of consciousness, his speculations and theories will come far short of preaching the Gospel.

I have said that Mr. Gale afterward concluded that he had not been converted. That he was a sincere, good man, in the sense of honestly holding his opinions, I do not doubt. But he was sadly defective in his education, theologically, philosophically and practically; and so far as I could learn his spiritual state, he had not the peace of the Gospel, when I sat under his ministry.

Let not the reader, from anything that I have said, suppose that I did not love Mr. Gale, and highly respect him. I did both. He and I remained the firmest friends, so far as I know, to the day of his death. I have said what I have in relation to his views, because I think it applicable, I am afraid I must say, to many of the ministers even of the present day. I think that their practical views of preaching the Gospel, whatever their theological views may be, are very defective indeed; and that their want of unction, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, is a radical defect in their preparation for the ministry. I say not this censoriously; but still I would record it as a fact which has long been settled in my mind, and over which I have long had occasion to mourn. And as I have become more and more acquainted with the ministry in this and other countries, I am persuaded

that, with all their training, and discipline, and education, there is a lack in practical views of the best way of presenting the Gospel to men, and in adapting means to secure the end; and especially in their want of the power of the Holy Ghost.

I have spoken at considerable length of my protracted controversy with my theological teacher, Mr. Gale. Upon reflection I think that I should state a little more definitely some of the points upon which we had so much discussion. I could not receive that theological fiction of imputation. I will state, as nearly as I can, the exact ground that he maintained and insisted upon. First, he maintained that the guilt of Adam's first transgression is literally imputed to all his posterity; so that they are justly sentenced and exposed to eternal damnation for Adam's sin. Secondly, he maintained that we received from Adam, by natural generation, a nature wholly sinful, and morally corrupt in every faculty of soul and body; so that we are totally unable to perform any act acceptable to God, and are necessitated by our sinful nature to transgress His law, in every action of our lives. And this, he insisted, is the estate into which all men fell by the first sin of Adam. For this sinful nature, thus received from Adam by natural generation, all mankind are also sentenced to, and are deserving of, eternal damnation. Then, thirdly, in addition to this, he maintained that we are all justly condemned and sentenced to eternal damnation for our own unavoidable transgression of the law. Thus we find ourselves justly subject to a triple eternal damnation.

Then the second branch of this wonderful imputation is as follows: The sin of all the elect, both original and actual--that is, the guilt of Adam's sin, together with the guilt of their sinful nature, and also the guilt of their personal transgressions, are all literally imputed to Christ; and therefore the divine government regarded Him as an embodiment of all the sins and guilt of the elect, and treated Him accordingly; that is, the Father punished the Son precisely as much as all the elect deserved. Hence their debt being thus fully discharged by the punishment of Christ, they are saved upon principles of exact justice.

The third branch of this wonderful theological fiction is as follows: First, the obedience of Christ to the divine law is literally imputed to the elect; so that in Him they are regarded as having always perfectly obeyed the law. Secondly, His death for them is also imputed to the elect; so that in Him they are regarded as having fully suffered all that they deserve on account of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, and on account of their sinful nature, and also on account of all their personal transgressions. Thirdly, thus by their Surety the elect have first perfectly obeyed the law; and then they have by and in their Surety suffered the full penalty to which they were subject in consequence of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, and also the guilt of their sinful nature, with all their blameworthiness for their personal transgressions. Thus they have suffered in Christ, just as if they had not obeyed in Him. He, first, perfectly obeys for them, which obedience is strictly imputed to them, so that they are regarded by the government of God as having fully obeyed in their Surety; secondly, He has suffered for them the penalty of the law, just as if no obedience had been rendered; thirdly, after the law has been doubly satisfied, the elect are required to repent as if no satisfaction had been rendered; fourthly, payment in full having been rendered twice over, the discharge of the elect is claimed to be an act of infinite grace. Thus the elect are saved by grace on principles of justice, so that there is strictly no grace or mercy in our forgiveness, but the whole grace of our salvation is found in the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

It follows that the elect may demand their discharge on the score of strict justice. They need not pray for pardon or forgiveness; it is all a mistake to do so. This inference is my own; but it follows, as everyone can see, irresistibly, from what the Confession of Faith itself asserts, that the elect are saved on principles of exact and perfect justice.

I found it impossible to agree with Mr. Gale on these points. I could not but regard and treat this whole question of imputation as a theological fiction. Upon these points we had constant discussion, in some shape, during the whole course of my study.

I do not recollect that Mr. Gale ever insisted that the Confession of Faith taught these principles, as I learned that it did when I came to study it. I was not aware that the rules of the presbytery required them to ask a candidate if he accepted the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. As soon as I learned what were the unambiguous teachings of the Confession of Faith upon these points, I did not hesitate on all suitable occasions to declare my dissent from them. I repudiated and exposed them. Wherever I found that any class of persons were hidden behind these dogmas, I did not hesitate to demolish them, to the best of my ability.

I have not caricatured these positions of Mr. Gale, but have stated them, as nearly as I can, in the very language in which he would defend them, when I presented them to him in controversy. He did not pretend that they were rational, or that they would bear reasoning upon. Hence he insisted that my reasoning would lead me into infidelity. But I insisted that our reason was given us for the very purpose of enabling us to justify the ways of God; and that no such fiction of imputation could by any possibility be true.

Of course there were many other points that were so related to these as necessarily to come under discussion, upon which we had a good deal of controversy, but our controversy always turned upon this as the foundation. If man had a sinful nature, then regeneration must consist in a change of nature. If man’s nature was sinful, the influence of the Holy Spirit that must regenerate him, must be physical and not moral. If man had a sinful nature, there was no adaptation in the Gospel to change his nature, and consequently no connection, in religion, between means and end.

This Brother Gale sternly held; and consequently in his preaching he never seemed to expect, nor even to aim, at converting anybody, by any sermon that I ever heard him preach. And yet he was an able preacher as preaching was then estimated. The fact is, these dogmas were a perfect straitjacket to him. If he preached repentance, he must be sure before he sat down, to leave the impression on his people that they could not repent. If he called them to believe he must be sure to inform them that, until their nature was changed by the Holy Spirit, faith was impossible to them. And so his orthodoxy was a perfect snare to himself and to his hearers. I could not receive it. I did not so understand my Bible; nor could he make me see that it was taught in the Bible.

When I came to read the Confession of Faith, and saw the passages that were quoted to sustain these peculiar positions, I was absolutely ashamed of it. I could not feel any respect for a document that would undertake to impose on mankind such dogmas as those, sustained, for the most part, by passages of Scripture that were totally irrelevant; and not in a single instance sustained by passages which, in a court of law, would have been considered at all conclusive. But the presbytery, so far as I know, were all of one way of thinking at that time. They subsequently,

however, I believe, all gave in; and when Mr. Gale changed his views, I heard no more from any of the members of the presbytery in defense of those views.

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02.05. PREACHING AS A MISSIONARY

CHAPTER V.

PREACHING AS A MISSIONARY.

HAVING had no regular training for the ministry I did not expect or desire to labor in large towns or cities, or minister to cultivated congregations. I intended to go into the new settlements and preach in schoolhouses, and barns, and groves, as best I could. Accordingly, soon after being licensed to preach, for the sake of being introduced to the region where I proposed to labor, I took a commission, for six months, from a female missionary society located in Oneida county. I went into the northern part of Jefferson county, and began my labors at Evans' Mills, in the town of Le Ray.

At this place I found two churches, a small Congregational church without a minister, and a Baptist church with a minister. I presented my credentials to the deacons of the church. They were very glad to see me, and I soon began my labors. They had no meeting house; but the two churches worshipped alternately in a large stone schoolhouse, large enough, I believe, to accommodate all the children in the village. The Baptists occupied the house one Sabbath, and the Congregationalists the next; so that I could have the house but every other Sabbath, but could use it evenings as often as I pleased. I therefore divided my Sabbaths between Evans' Mills and Antwerp, a village some sixteen or eighteen miles still farther north.

I will relate first some facts that occurred at Evans' Mills, during that season; and then give a brief narrative of the occurrences at Antwerp. But as I preached alternately in these two places, these facts were occurring from week to week in one or the other of these localities. I began, as I said, to preach in the stone schoolhouse at Evans' Mills. The people were very much interested, and thronged the place to hear me preach. They extolled my preaching; and the little Congregational church became very much interested, and hopeful that they should be built up, and that there would be a revival. More or less convictions occurred under every sermon that I preached; but still no general conviction appeared upon the public mind.

I was very much dissatisfied with this state of things; and at one of my evening services, after having preached there two or three Sabbaths, and several evenings in the week, I told the people at the close of my sermon, that I had come there to secure the salvation of their souls; that my preaching, I knew, was highly complimented by them; but that, after all, I did not come there to please them but to bring them to repentance; that it mattered not to me how well they were pleased with my preaching, if after all they rejected my Master; that something was wrong, either in me or in them; that the kind of interest they manifested in my preaching was doing them no good; and that I could not spend my time with them unless they were going to receive the Gospel. I then, quoting the words of Abraham's servant, said to them, "Now will you deal kindly and truly with my master? If you will, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." I turned this question over, and pressed it upon them, and insisted upon it that I must know what course they proposed to pursue. If they did not purpose to become Christians, and enlist in

the service of the Savior, I wanted to know it that I might not labor with them in vain. I said to them, "You admit that what I preach is the Gospel. You profess to believe it. Now will you receive it? Do you mean to receive it, or do you intend to reject it? You must have some mind about it. And now I have a right to take it for granted, in as much as you admit that I have preached the truth, that you acknowledge your obligation at once to become Christians. This obligation you do not deny; but will you meet the obligation? Will you discharge it? Will you do what you admit you ought to do? If you will not, tell me; and if you will, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

After turning this over till I saw they understood it well, and looked greatly surprised at my manner of putting it, I then said to them, "Now I must know your minds, and I want that you who have made up your minds to become Christians, and will give your pledge to make your peace with God immediately, should rise up; but that, on the contrary, those of you who are resolved that you will not become Christians, and wish me so to understand, and wish Christ so to understand, should sit still." After making this plain, so that I knew that they understood it, I then said: "You who are now willing to pledge to me and to Christ, that you will immediately make your peace with God, please rise up. On the contrary, you that mean that I should understand that you are committed to remain in your present attitude, not to accept Christ--those of you that are of this mind, may sit still." They looked at one another and at me, and all sat still just as I expected.

After looking around upon them for a few moments, I said, "Then you are committed. You have taken your stand. You have rejected Christ and His Gospel; and ye are witnesses one against the other, and God is witness against you all. This is explicit and you may remember as long as you live, that you have thus publicly committed yourselves against the Savior, and said, 'We will not have this man, Christ Jesus, to reign over us.'" This is the purport of what I urged upon them, and as nearly in these words as I can recollect.

When I thus pressed them they began to look angry, and arose, en masse, and started for the door. When they began to move, I paused. As soon as I stopped speaking they turned to see why I did not go on. I said, "I am sorry for you; and will preach to you once more, the Lord willing, tomorrow night."

They all left the house except Deacon McC who was a deacon of the Baptist church in that place. I saw that the Congregationalists were confounded. They were few in number and very weak in faith. I presume that every member of both churches who was present, except Deacon McC, was taken aback, and concluded that the matter was all over--that by my imprudence I had dashed and ruined all hopeful appearances. Deacon McC came up and took me by the hand and smiling said, "Brother Finney, you have got them. They cannot rest under this, rely upon it. The brethren are all discouraged," said he; "but I am not. I believe you have done the very thing that needed to be done, and that we shall see the results." I thought so myself, of course. I intended to place them in a position which, upon reflection, would make them tremble in view of what they had done. But for that evening and the next day they were full of wrath. Deacon McC and myself agreed upon the spot, to spend the next day in fasting and prayer separately in the morning, and together in the afternoon. I learned in the course of the day that the people were threatening me--to ride me on a rail, to tar and feather me, and to give me a "walking paper," as they said. Some of them cursed me; and said that I had put them under oath, and made them swear that they would not serve God; that I had drawn them into a solemn and public pledge to reject Christ and His Gospel. This was

no more than I expected. In the afternoon Deacon McC and I went into a grove together, and spent the whole afternoon in prayer. Just at evening the Lord gave us great enlargement, and promise of victory. Both of us felt assured that we had prevailed with God; and that, that night, the power of God would be revealed among the people.

As the time came for meeting, we left the woods and went to the village. The people were already thronging to the place of worship; and those that had not already gone, seeing us go through the villages turned out of their stores and places of business, or threw down their ball clubs where they were playing upon the green, and packed the house to its utmost capacity.

I had not taken a thought with regard to what I should preach; indeed, this was common with me at that time. The Holy Spirit was upon me, and I felt confident that when the time came for action I should know what to preach. As soon as I found the house packed, so that no more could get in, I arose, and I think, without any formal introduction of singing, opened upon them with these words: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo to the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The Spirit of God came upon me with such power, that it was like opening a battery upon them. For more than an hour, and perhaps for an hour and a half, the Word of God came through me to them in a manner that I could see was carrying all before it. It was a fire and a hammer breaking the rock; and as the sword that was piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. I saw that a general conviction was spreading over the whole congregation. Many of them could not hold up their heads. I did not call that night for any reversal of the action they had taken the night before, nor for any committal of themselves in any way; but took it for granted, during the whole of the sermon, that they were committed against the Lord. Then I appointed another meeting, and dismissed the congregation.

As the people withdrew, I observed a woman in the arms of some of her friends, who were supporting her, in one part of the house; and I went to see what was the matter, supposing that she was in a fainting fit. But I soon found that she was not fainting, but that she could not speak. There was a look of the greatest anguish in her face, and she made me understand that she could not speak. I advised the women to take her home, and pray with her, and see what the Lord would do. They informed me that she was Miss G, sister of the well-known missionary, and that she was a member of the church in good standing, and had been for several years.

That evening, instead of going to my usual lodgings, I accepted an invitation, and went home with a family where I had not before stopped over night. Early in the morning I found that I had been sent for to the place where I was supposed to be, several times during the night, to visit families where there were persons under awful distress of mind. This led me to sally forth among the people, and everywhere I found a state of wonderful conviction of sin and alarm for their souls.

After lying in a speechless state about sixteen hours, Miss G’s mouth was opened, and a new song was given her. She was taken from the horrible pit of miry clay, and her feet were set upon a rock; and it was true that many saw it and feared. It occasioned a great searching among the members of the church. She declared that she had been entirely deceived; that for eight years she had been a member of the church, and thought she was a Christian, but, during the sermon the night before, she saw that she had never known the true God; and when His character arose before her mind as it was then presented, her hope perished, as she expressed it, like a moth. She

said, such a view of the holiness of God was presented, that like a great wave it swept her away from her standing, and annihilated her hope in a moment.

I found at this place a number of deists; some of them men of high standing in the community. One of them was a keeper of a hotel in the village; and others were respectable men, and of more than average intelligence. But they seemed banded together to resist the revival. When I ascertained exactly the ground they took, I preached a sermon to meet their wants; for on the Sabbath they would attend my preaching. I took this for my text: "Suffer me a little, and I will show you that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will bring my knowledge from afar, and I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." I went over the whole ground, so far as I understood their position; and God enabled me to sweep it clean. As soon as I had finished and dismissed the meeting, the hotel keeper, who was the leader among them, came frankly up to me, and taking me by the hand, said, "Mr. Finney, I am convinced. You have met and answered all my difficulties. Now I want you to go home with me, for I want to converse with you." I heard no more of their infidelity; and if I remember right, that class of men were nearly, or quite, all converted.

There was one old man in this place, who was not only an infidel, but a great railer at religion. He was very angry at the revival movement. I heard every day of his railing and blaspheming, but took no public notice of it. He refused altogether to attend meeting. But in the midst of his opposition, and when his excitement was great, while sitting one morning at the table, he suddenly fell out of his chair in a fit of apoplexy. A physician was immediately called, who, after a brief examination, told him that he could live but a very short time; and that if he had anything to say, he must say it at once. He had just strength and time, as I was informed, to stammer out, "Don't let Finney pray over my corpse." This was the last of his opposition in that place.

During that revival my attention was called to a sick woman in the community, who had been a member of a Baptist church, and was well-known in the place; but people had no confidence in her piety. She was fast failing with the consumption; and they begged me to call and see her. I went, and had a long conversation with her. She told me a dream which she had when she was a girl, which made her think that her sins were forgiven. Upon that she had settled down, and no argument could move her. I tried to persuade her, that there was no evidence of her conversion, in that dream. I told her plainly that her acquaintances affirmed that she had never lived a Christian life, and had never evinced a Christian temper; and I had come to try to persuade her to give up her false hope, and see if she would not now accept Jesus Christ that she might be saved. I dealt with her as kindly as I could, but did not fail to make her understand what I meant. But she took great offense; and after I went away complained that I tried to get away her hope and distress her mind; that I was cruel to try to distress a woman as sick as she was, in that way--to try to disturb the repose of her mind. She died not long afterward. But her death has often reminded me of Dr. Nelson's book called, "The Cause and Cure of Infidelity." When this woman came to be actually dying, her eyes were opened; and before she left the world she seemed to have such a glimpse of the character of God, and of what heaven was, and of the holiness required to dwell there, that she shrieked with agony, and exclaimed that she was going to hell. In this state, as I was informed, she died.

While at this place, one afternoon, a Christian brother called on me and wished me to visit his sister, who, as he informed me, was fast failing with consumption, and was a Universalist. Her

husband, he said, was a Universalist, and had led her into Universalism. He said he had not asked me to go and see her when her husband was at home, because he feared that he would abuse me; as he was determined that his wife's mind should not be disturbed on the question of universal salvation. I went, and found her not at all at rest in her views of Universalism; and during my conversation with her, she gave up these views entirely, and appeared to embrace the Gospel of Christ. I believe she held fast to this hope in Christ till she died. At evening her husband returned, and learned from herself what had taken place. He was greatly enraged, and swore he would "kill Finney." As I learned afterward, he armed himself with a loaded pistol, and that night went to meeting where I was to preach. Of this, however, I knew nothing at the time. The meeting that evening was in a schoolhouse out of the village. The house was very much packed, almost to suffocation. I went on to preach with all my might; and almost in the midst of my discourse I saw a powerful looking man, about in the middle of the house, fall from his seat. As he sunk down he groaned, and then cried or shrieked out, that he was sinking to hell. He repeated that several times. The people knew who he was, but he was a stranger to me. I think I had never seen him before.

Of course this created a great excitement. It broke up my preaching; and so great was his anguish that we spent the rest of our time in praying for him. When the meeting was dismissed his friends helped him home. The next morning I inquired for him; and found that he had spent a sleepless night, in great anguish of mind, and that at the early dawn he had gone forth, they knew not whither. He was not heard from till about ten o'clock in the morning. I was passing up the street, and saw him coming, apparently from a grove at some distance from the village. He was on the opposite side of the street when I first saw him, and coming toward me. When he recognized me, he came across the street to meet me. When he came near enough, I saw that his countenance was all in a glow. I said to him, "Good morning Mr. C." "Good morning," he replied. "And," said I, "how do you feel in your mind this morning?" "Oh, I do not know," he replied; "I have had an awfully distressed night. But I could not pray there in the house; and I thought if I could get alone, where I could pour out my voice with my heart, I could pray. In the morning I went into the woods; but when I got there," said he, "I found I could not pray. I thought I could give myself to God; but I could not. I tried, and tried, till I was discouraged," he continued. "Finally I saw that it was of no use; and I told the Lord that I found myself condemned and lost; that I had no heart to pray to Him, and no heart to repent; that I found I had hardened myself so much that I could not give my heart to Him, and therefore I must leave the whole question to Him. I was at His disposal, and could not object to His doing with me just as it seemed good in His eyes, for I had no claim to His favor at all. I left the question of my salvation or damnation wholly with the Lord." "Well, what followed?" I inquired. "Why," said he, "I found I had lost all my conviction. I got up and came away, and my mind was so still and quiet that I found the Spirit of God was grieved away, and I had lost my conviction. But," said he, "when I saw you my heart began to burn and grow hot within me; and instead of feeling as if I wanted to avoid you, I felt so drawn that I came across the street to see you." But I should have said that when he came near me, he leaped, and took me right up in his arms, and turned around once or twice, and then set me down. This preceded the conversation that I have just related. After a little further conversation I left him. He soon came into a state of mind that led him to indulge a hope. We heard no more of his opposition.

At this place I again saw Father Nash, the man who prayed with his eyes open, at the meeting of presbytery, when I was licensed. After he was at presbytery he was taken with inflamed eyes; and for several weeks was shut up in a dark room. He could neither read nor write, and, as I learned, gave himself up almost entirely to prayer. He had a terrible overhauling in his whole Christian experience; and as soon as he was able to see, with a double black veil before his face, he sallied forth to labor for souls.

When he came to Evans' Mills he was full of the power of prayer. He was another man altogether from what he had been at any former period of his Christian life. I found that he had a praying list, as he called it, of the names of persons whom he made subjects of prayer every day, and sometimes many times a day. And praying with him, and hearing him pray in meeting, I found that his gift of prayer was wonderful, and his faith almost miraculous.

There was a man by the name of D, who kept a low tavern in a corner of the village, whose house was the resort of all the opposers of the revival. The barroom was a place of blasphemy; and he was himself a most profane, ungodly; abusive man. He went railing about the streets respecting the revival; and would take particular pains to swear and blaspheme whenever he saw a Christian. One of the young converts lived almost across the way from him; and he told me that he meant to sell and move out of that neighborhood, because every time he was out of doors and D saw him, he would come out and swear, and curse, and say everything he could to wound his feelings. He had not, I think, been at any of our meetings. Of course he was ignorant of the great truths of religion, and despised the whole Christian enterprise.

Father Nash heard us speak of this Mr. D as a hard case; and immediately put his name upon his praying list. He remained in town a day or two, and went on his way, having in view another field of labor.

Not many days afterward, as we were holding an evening meeting with a very crowded house, who should come in but this notorious D? His entrance created a considerable movement in the congregation. People feared that he had come in to make a disturbance. The fear and abhorrence of him had become very general among Christians, I believe; so that when he came in, some of the people got up and retired. I knew his countenance, and kept my eye upon him; I very soon became satisfied that he had not come in to oppose, and that he was in great anguish of mind. He sat and writhed upon his seat, and was very uneasy. He soon arose, and tremblingly asked me if he might say a few words. I told him that he might. He then proceeded to make one of the most heart-broken confessions that I almost ever heard. His confession seemed to cover the whole ground of his treatment of God, and of his treatment of Christians, and of the revival, and of everything good.

This thoroughly broke up the fallow ground in many hearts. It was the most powerful means that could have been used, just then, to give an impetus to the work. D soon came out and professed a hope, abolished all the revelry and profanity of his barroom; and from that time, as long as I stayed there, and I know not how much longer, a prayer meeting was held in his barroom nearly every night.

02.06. REVIVAL AT EVANS MILLS

CHAPTER VI.

REVIVAL AT EVANS' MILLS AND ITS RESULTS.

A LITTLE way from the village of Evans' Mills, was a settlement of Germans, where there was a German church with several elders, and a considerable membership, but no minister, and no regular religious meetings. Once each year they were in the habit of having a minister come up from the Mohawk Valley, to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. He would catechise their children, and receive such of them as had made the required attainments in knowledge. This was the way in which they were made Christians. They were required to commit to memory the catechism, and to be able to answer certain doctrinal questions; whereupon they were admitted to full communion in the church. After receiving the communion they took it for granted that they were Christians, and that all was safe. This is the way in which that church had been organized and continued.

But mingling, as they did more or less, in the scenes that passed in the village, they requested me to go out there and preach. I consented; and the first time I preached I took this text: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The settlement turned out en masse; and the schoolhouse where they worshipped was filled to its utmost capacity. They could understand English well. I began by showing, what holiness is not. Under this head I took everything that they considered to be religion, and showed that it was not holiness at all. In the second place I showed what holiness is. I then showed, thirdly, what is intended by seeing the Lord; and then, why those that had no holiness could never see the Lord--why they could never be admitted to His presence, and be accepted of Him. I then concluded with such pointed remarks as were intended to make the subject go home. And it did go home by the power of the Holy Ghost. The sword of the Lord slew them on the right hand and on the left.

In a very few days it was found that the whole settlement was under conviction; elders of the church and all were in the greatest consternation, feeling that they had no holiness. At their request I appointed a meeting for inquiry, to give instruction to inquirers. This was in their harvest time. I held the meeting at one o'clock in the afternoon, and found the house literally packed. People had thrown down the implements with which they were gathering their harvest, and had come into the meeting. As many were assembled as could be packed in the house.

I took a position in the center of the house, as I could not move around among them; and asked them questions, and encouraged them to ask questions. They became very much interested, and were very free in asking questions, and in answering the questions which I asked them. I seldom ever attended a more interesting or profitable meeting than that.

I recollect that one woman came in late, and sat near the door. When I came to speak to her, I said, "You look unwell." "Yes," she replied, "I am very sick. I have been in bed until I came to meeting. But I cannot read; and I wanted to hear God's word so much that I got up and came to meeting." "How did you come?" I inquired. She replied, "I came on foot." "How far is it?" was the next inquiry. "We call it three miles," she said. On inquiry I found that she was under conviction of sin, and had a most remarkably clear apprehension of her character and position before God. She was soon after converted, and a remarkable convert she was. My wife said that she was one of the most remarkable women in prayer that she ever heard pray; and that she repeated more Scripture in her prayers than any person she ever heard.

I addressed another, a tall dignified looking woman, and asked her what was the state of her mind. She replied immediately that she had given her heart to God; and went on to say that the Lord had taught her to read, since she had learned how to pray. I asked her what she meant. She said she never could read, and never had known her letters. But when she gave her heart to God, she was greatly distressed that she could not read God's Word. "But I thought," she said, "that Jesus could teach me to read; and I asked Him if He would not please to teach me to read His Word." Said she, "I thought when I had prayed that I could read. The children have a Testament, and I went and got it; and I thought I could read what I had heard them read. But," said she, "I went over to the school madam, and asked her if I read right; and she said I did; and since then," said she, "I can read the Word of God for myself."

I said no more; but thought there must be some mistake about this, as the woman appeared to be quite in earnest, and quite intelligent in what she said. I took pains, afterwards to inquire of her neighbors about her. They gave her an excellent character; and they all affirmed that it had been notorious that she could not read a syllable until after she was converted. I leave this to speak for itself; there is no use in theorizing about it. Such, I think, were the undoubted facts.

But the revival among the Germans resulted in the conversion of the whole church, I believe, and of nearly the whole community of Germans. It was one of the most interesting revivals that I ever witnessed.

While I was laboring at this place, the presbytery were called together to ordain me, which they did. Both churches were so strengthened, and their numbers so greatly increased, that they soon went forward and built each of them a commodious stone meeting house, and I believe have had a healthy state of religion there since that time. I have not been there for many years.

I have only narrated some of the principal facts that I remember as connected with this revival. But I would farther say respecting it, that a wonderful spirit of prayer prevailed among Christians, and great unity of feeling. The little Congregational church, as soon as they saw the results of the next evening's preaching, recovered themselves; for they had been scattered, discouraged, and confounded the night before. They rallied and took hold of the work as best they could; and though a feeble and inefficient band, with one or two exceptions, still they grew in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, during that revival.

The German woman of whom I have spoken as being sick when she came to the meeting of inquiry, united with the Congregational church. I was present and received her to the church. A very affecting incident, I recollect, occurred at the time she gave a relation of her Christian

experience. There was a mother in Israel belonging to that church, by the name of S, a very godly woman, of ripe age, and piety. We had been sitting for a long time, and, hearing the narration of the experience of one after another who came forward as candidates for admission to the church. At length this German woman arose and related her experience. It was one of the most touching, childlike, interesting Christian experiences that I ever listened to. As she was going on with her narrative, I observed that old Mrs. S rose up from her place, and as the house was filled, crowded her way around as best she could. At first I supposed she was going out of doors. I was so occupied myself with the woman's narrative, that I was barely conscious of Mrs. S's moving in that direction. As soon as she came near to where the woman stood relating her experience, she stepped forward, and threw her arms around her neck and burst into tears, and said, "God bless you, my dear sister! God bless you!" The woman responded with all her heart; and such a scene as followed, so unpremeditated, so natural, so childlike, so overflowing with love--it melted the congregation on every side to tears. They wept on each other's necks. It was too moving a scene to be described in words.

The Baptist minister and I seldom met each other, though sometimes we were enabled to attend meeting together. He preached there but one half of the time, and I the other half; consequently I was generally away when he was there, and he was generally absent when I was there. He was a good man, and worked as best he could to promote the revival.

The doctrines preached were those which I have always preached as the Gospel of Christ. I insisted upon the voluntary total moral depravity of the unregenerate; and the unalterable necessity of a radical change of heart by the Holy Ghost, and by means of the truth.

I laid great stress upon prayer as an indispensable condition of promoting the revival. The atonement of Jesus Christ, His divinity, His divine mission, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His resurrection, repentance, faith, justification by faith, and all the kindred doctrines, were discussed as thoroughly as I was able, and pressed home, and were manifestly made efficacious by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The means used were simply preaching, prayer and conference meetings, much private prayer, much personal conversation, and meetings for the instruction of earnest inquirers. These, and no other means, were used for the promotion of that work. There was no appearance of fanaticism, no bad spirit, no divisions, no heresies, no schisms. Neither at that time, nor certainly so long as I was acquainted at that place, was there any result of that revival to be lamented, nor any feature of it that was of questionable effect.

I have spoken of cases of intensified opposition to this revival. One circumstance, I found, had prepared the people for this opposition, and had greatly embittered it. I found that region of country what, in the western phrase, would be called, a "burnt district." There had been, a few years previously, a wild excitement passing through that region, which they called a revival of religion, but which turned out to be spurious. I can give no account of it except what I heard from Christian people and others. It was reported as having been a very extravagant excitement; and resulted in a reaction so extensive and profound, as to leave the impression on many minds that religion was a mere delusion. A great many men seemed to be settled in that conviction. Taking what they had seen as a specimen of a revival of religion, they felt justified in opposing anything looking toward the promoting of a revival.

I found that it had left among Christian people some practices that were offensive, and calculated rather to excite ridicule than any serious conviction of the truth of religion. For example, in all their prayer meetings I found a custom prevailing like this: Every professor of religion felt it a duty to testify for Christ. They must "take up the cross," and say something in meeting. One would rise and say in substance: "I have a duty to perform which no one can perform for me. I arise to testify that religion is good; though I must confess that I do not enjoy it at present. I have nothing in particular to say, only to bear my testimony; and I hope you will all pray for me." This concluded, that person would sit down and another would rise and say, about to the same effect: "Religion is good; I do not enjoy it; I have nothing else to say, but I must do my duty. I hope you will all pray for me." Thus the time would be occupied, and the meeting would pass off with very little that was more interesting than such remarks as these. Of course the ungodly would make sport of this.

It was in fact ridiculous and repulsive. But the impression was so rooted in the public mind that this was the way to hold a prayer and conference meeting, and that it was the duty of every professor of religion, whenever an opportunity was afforded, to give such testimony for God, that I was obliged, for the purpose of getting rid of it, to hold no such meetings. I appointed every meeting, consequently, for preaching. When we were assembled, I would begin by singing, and then would pray myself. I would then call on one or two others to pray, naming them. Then I would name a text, and talk for awhile. Then, when I saw that an impression was made, I would stop and ask one or two to pray that the Lord might fasten that on their minds. I would then proceed with my talk, and after a little, stop again and ask some one or two to pray. Thus I would proceed, not throwing the meeting open at all for remarks on the part of the brethren and sisters. Then they would go away without being in bondage, feeling that they had neglected their duty in not bearing testimony for God. Thus most of our prayer meetings were not so in name. As they were appointed for preaching, it was not expected that they would be thrown open for everyone to speak; and in this way I was enabled to overcome that silly method of holding meetings, that created so much mirth and ridicule on the part of the ungodly.

After the revival took thorough hold in this place, and those things occurred that I have named, opposition entirely ceased so far as I could learn. I spent more than six months at this place and at Antwerp, laboring between the two places; and for the latter part of the time I heard nothing of open opposition.

I have spoken of the doctrines preached. I should add, that I was obliged to take much pains in giving instruction to inquirers. The practice had been, I believe, universal, to set anxious sinners to praying for a new heart, and to using means for their own conversion. The directions they received either assumed or implied that they were very willing to be Christians, and were taking much pains to persuade God to convert them. I tried to make them understand that God was using the means with them, and not they with Him; that God was willing, and they were unwilling; that God was ready, and they were not ready. In short, I tried to shut them up to present faith and repentance, as the thing which God required of them, present and instant submission to His will, present and instant acceptance of Christ. I tried to show them that all delay was only an evasion of present duty; that all praying for a new heart, was only trying to throw the responsibility of their conversion upon God; and that all efforts to do duty, while they did not give their hearts to God, were hypocritical and delusive.

During the whole six months that I labored in that region, I rode on horseback from town to town, and from settlement to settlement, in various directions, and preached the Gospel as I had opportunity. When I left Adams my health had run down a good deal. I had coughed blood; and at the time I was licensed, my friends thought that I could live but a short time. Mr. Gale charged me, when I left Adams, not to attempt to preach more than once a week, and then to be sure not to speak more than half an hour at a time. But instead of this, I visited from house to house, attended prayer meetings, and preached and labored every day, and almost every night, through the whole season. Before the six months were completed my health was entirely restored, my lungs were sound, and I could preach two hours, and two hours and a half, and longer, without feeling the least fatigue. I think my sermons generally averaged nearly or quite two hours. I preached out of doors; I preached in barns; I preached in schoolhouses; and a glorious revival spread all over that new region of country.

All through the earlier part of my ministry especially, I used to meet from ministers a great many rebuffs and reproofs, particularly in respect to my manner of preaching. I have said that Mr. Gale, when I preached for him immediately after I was licensed, told me that, he should be ashamed to have anyone know that I was a pupil of his. The fact is, their education had been so entirely different from mine, that they disapproved of my manner of preaching, very much. They would reprove me for illustrating my ideas by reference to the common affairs of men of different pursuits around me, as I was in the habit of doing. Among farmers and mechanics, and other classes of men, I borrowed my illustrations from their various occupations. I tried also to use such language as they would understand. I addressed them in the language of the common people. I sought to express all my ideas in few words, and in words that were in common use.

Before I was converted I had a different tendency. In writing and speaking, I had sometimes allowed myself to use ornate language. But when I came to preach the Gospel, my mind was so anxious to be thoroughly understood, that I studied in the most earnest manner, on the one hand to avoid what was vulgar, and on the other to express my thoughts with the greatest simplicity of language.

This was extremely contrary to the notions which at that time prevailed among ministers, and even yet prevail to a very great extent. In reference to my illustrations they would say, "Why don’t you illustrate from events of ancient history, and take a more dignified way of illustrating your ideas?" To this, of course, I replied, that if my illustrations brought forward anything that was new and striking, the illustration itself would rather occupy the minds of the people, than the truth which I wished to illustrate. And in respect to the simplicity of my language, I defended myself by saying, that my object was not to cultivate a style of oratory that should soar above the heads of the people, but to make myself understood; and that therefore I would use any language adapted to this end, and that did not involve coarseness or vulgarity.

About the time that I left Evans’ Mills our presbytery met, and I attended the meeting. I left the revival work at the particular request of some brethren, and went over to the presbytery. The brethren had heard of my manner of preaching, those of them who had not heard me preach. The presbytery met in the morning, and went on with the transaction of business; and after our recess for dinner, as we assembled in the afternoon, the mass of the people came together and filled the house. I had not the remotest thought of what was in the minds of the brethren of the presbytery. I

therefore took my seat in the crowd, and waited for the meeting of the presbytery to be opened.

As soon as the congregation was fairly assembled, one of the brethren arose and said: "The people have come together manifestly to hear preaching; and I move that Mr. Finney preach a sermon." This was seconded, and unanimously carried. I saw in a moment that it was the design of the brethren of the presbytery to put me on trial, that they might see if I could do as they had heard that I did--get up and preach on the spur of the moment, without any previous preparation. I made no apology or objection to preaching; for I must say that my heart was full of it, and that I wanted to preach. I arose and stepped into the aisle; and looking up to the pulpit, I saw that it was a high, small pulpit, up against the wall. I therefore stood in the aisle and named my text: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The Lord helped me to preach. I walked up and down the broad aisle; and the people were evidently interested and much moved.

But after the meeting one of the brethren stepped up to me and said: "Brother Finney, if you come up our way, I should like to have you preach in some of our school districts. I should not like to have you preach in our church. But we have got schoolhouses in some of the districts, away from the village. I should like to have you preach in some of those." I mention this to show what their ideas were of my method of preaching. But how completely they were in the dark in regard to the results of that method of addressing people! They used to complain that I let down the dignity of the pulpit; that I was a disgrace to the ministerial profession; that I talked like a lawyer at the bar; that I talked to the people in a colloquial manner; that I said "you," instead of preaching about sin and sinners, and saying "they;" that I said "hell," and with such an emphasis as often to shock the people; furthermore, that I urged the people with such vehemence, as if they might not have a moment to live; and sometimes they complained that I blamed the people too much. One doctor of divinity told me that he felt a great deal more like weeping over sinners, than blaming them. I replied to him that I did not wonder, if he believed that they had a sinful nature, and that sin was entailed upon them, and they could not help it.

After I had preached some time, and the Lord had everywhere added His blessing, I used to say to ministers, whenever they contended with me about my manner of preaching, and desired me to adopt their ideas and preach as they did, that I dared not make the change they desired. I said, "Show me a more excellent way. Show me the fruits of your ministry; and if they so far exceed mine as to give me evidence that you have found a more excellent way, I will adopt your views. But do you expect me to abandon my own views and practices, and adopt yours, when you yourselves cannot deny that, whatever errors I may have fallen into, or whatever imperfections there may be in my preaching, in style, and in everything else, yet the results justify my methods?" I would say to them: "I intend to improve all I can; but I never can adopt your manner of preaching the Gospel, until I have higher evidence that you are right and I am wrong."

They used to complain, oftentimes, that I was guilty of repetition in my preaching. I would take the same thought and turn it over and over, and illustrate it in various ways. I assured them that I thought it was necessary to do so, to make myself understood; and that I could not be persuaded to relinquish this practice by any of their arguments. Then they would say, you will not interest the educated part of your congregation. But facts soon silenced them on this point. They found that, under my preaching, judges, and lawyers, and educated men were converted by scores; whereas, under their methods, such a thing seldom occurred.

02.07. REMARKS UPON MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

CHAPTER VII.

REMARKS UPON MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

IN what I say upon this subject I hope my brethren will not impute to me any other motive than a kind and benevolent regard for their highest usefulness. I have always taken their criticisms kindly, and given them credit for benevolent intentions. Now I am an old man, and many of the results of my views and methods are known to the public. Is it out of place in me to speak freely to the ministry, upon this subject? In reply to their objections, I have sometimes told them what a judge of the supreme court remarked to me, upon this subject. "Ministers," said he, "do not exercise good sense in addressing the people. They are afraid of repetition. They use language not well understood by the common people. Their illustrations are not taken from the common pursuits of life. They write in too elaborated a style, and read without repetition, and are not understood by the people. Now," said he, "if lawyers should take such a course, they would ruin themselves and their cause. When I was at the bar," he added, "I used to take it for granted, when I had before me a jury of respectable men, that I should have to repeat over my main positions about as many times as there were persons in the jury-box. I learned that unless I did so, illustrated, and repeated, and turned the main points over, the main points of law and of evidence, I should lose my cause. Our object," he said, "in addressing a jury, is to get their minds settled before they leave the jury-box; not to make a speech in language but partially understood by them; not to let ourselves out in illustrations entirely above their apprehension; not to display our oratory, and then let them go. We are set on getting a verdict. Hence we are set upon being understood. We mean to convince them; and if they have doubts as to the law, we make them understand it, and rivet it in their minds. In short, we expect to get a verdict, and to get it upon the spot; so that when they go to their room, it will be found that they have understood us, and that they have been convinced by the facts and arguments. If we do not thus take pains to urge home every thought and every word, and every point, so as to lodge it in their convictions, we are sure to lose our cause. We must overcome their prejudices; we must overcome their ignorance; we must try to overcome even their interest, if they have any, against our client. Now," said he, "if ministers would do this, the effects of their preaching would be unspeakably different from what they are. They go into their study and write a sermon; they go into their pulpit and read it, and those that listen to it but poorly understand it. Many words used they will not understand, until they go home and consult their dictionaries. They do not address the people, expecting to convince them, and to get their verdict in favor of Christ, upon the spot. They seek no such object. They rather seem to aim at making fine literary productions, and displaying great eloquence and an ornate use of language." Of course I do not profess, at this distance of time, to give the exact language used by the judge; but I have given his remarks in substance, as made to me at the time.

I never entertained the least hard feeling toward my brethren for the roughness with which they often treated me. I knew that they were very anxious to have me do good; and really supposed

that I should do much more good, and much less evil, if I should adopt their views. But I was of a different opinion.

I could mention many facts illustrative of the views of ministers, and of the manner in which they sometimes treated me. When I was preaching in Philadelphia, for example, Dr. -- , the celebrated temperance lecturer from Connecticut, came there and heard me preach. He was indignant at the manner in which I "let down the dignity of the pulpit." His principal conversation, however, was with Mr. Patterson, with whom, at the time, I labored. He insisted upon it that I should not be allowed to preach till I had a ministerial education; that I should stop preaching and go to Princeton and learn theology, and get better views of the way in which the Gospel should be preached.

Let not anything I say on this subject leave the impression on any mind, that I thought either my views or my methods perfect, for I had no such thought. I was aware that I was but a child. I had not enjoyed the advantages of the higher schools of learning; and so conscious had I been all along that I lacked those qualifications that would make me acceptable, especially to ministers, and, I feared, to the people in large places, that I had never had any higher ambition or purpose than to go into the new settlements and places where they did not enjoy the Gospel. Indeed I was often surprised myself, in the first year of my preaching, to find it so edifying and acceptable to the most educated classes. This was more than I had expected, greatly more than my brethren had expected, and more than I had dared to hope myself. I always endeavored to improve in everything in which I discovered myself to be in error. But the longer I preached, the less reason had I to think that my error lay in the direction in which it was supposed to lie, by my brother ministers.

The more experience I had, the more I saw the results of my method of preaching, the more I conversed with all classes, high and low, educated and uneducated, the more was I confirmed in the fact that God had led me, had taught me, had given me right conceptions in regard to the best manner of winning souls. I say that God taught me; and I know it must have been so; for surely I never had obtained these notions from man. And I have often thought that I could say with perfect truth, as Paul said, that I was not taught the Gospel by man, but by the Spirit of Christ Himself. And I was taught it by the Spirit of the Lord in a manner so clear and forcible, that no argument of my ministerial brethren, with which I was plied so often and so long, had the least weight with me.

I mention this as a matter of duty. For I am still solemnly impressed with the conviction, that the schools are to a great extent spoiling the ministers. Ministers in these days have great facilities for obtaining information on all theological questions; and are vastly more learned, so far as theological, historical, and Biblical learning is concerned, than they perhaps ever have been in any age of the world. Yet with all their learning, they do not know how to use it. They are, after all, to a great extent, like David in Saul’s armor. A man can never learn to preach except by preaching.

But one great thing above all others ministers need, and that is singleness of eye. If they have a reputation to secure and to nurse, they will do but little good. Many years ago a beloved pastor of my acquaintance, left home for his health, and employed a young man, just from the seminary, to fill his pulpit while he was absent. This young man wrote and preached as splendid sermons as he could. The pastor’s wife finally ventured to say to him, "You are preaching over the heads of our people. They do not understand your language or your illustrations. You bring too much of your learning into the pulpit." He replied, "I am a young man. I am cultivating a style. I am aiming to

prepare myself for occupying a pulpit and surrounding myself with a cultivated congregation. I cannot descend to your people. I must cultivate an elevated style." I have had my thought and my eye upon this man ever since. I am not aware that he is yet dead; but I have never seen his name connected with any revival, amidst all the great revivals that we have had, from year to year, since that time; and I never expect to, unless his views are radically changed, and unless he addresses the people from an entirely different standpoint, and from entirely different motives.

I could name ministers who are yet alive, old men like myself, who were greatly ashamed of me when I first began to preach because I was so undignified in the pulpit, used such common language, addressed the people with such directness, and because I aimed not at all at ornament, or at supporting the dignity of the pulpit.

Dear brethren they were; and I always felt in the kindest manner toward them, and do not know that in a single instance I was ruffled or angry at what they said. I was from the very first aware that I should meet with this opposition; and that there was this wide gulf in our views, and would be in practice, between myself and other ministers. I seldom felt that I was one of them, or that they regarded me as really belonging to their fraternity. I was bred a lawyer. I came right forth from a law office to the pulpit, and talked to the people as I would have talked to a jury.

It was very common, as I learned, among ministers in my earlier years of preaching, to agree among themselves that if I were to succeed in the ministry, it would bring the schools into disrepute; and men would come to think it hardly worth while to support them with their funds, if a man could be accepted as a successful preacher without them. Now I never had a thought of undervaluing the education furnished by colleges or theological seminaries; though I did think, and think now, that in certain respects they are greatly mistaken in their modes of training their students. They do not encourage them to talk to the people, and accustom themselves to extemporaneous addresses to the people in the surrounding country, while pursuing their studies. Men cannot learn to preach by study without practice. The students should be encouraged to exercise, and prove, and improve, their gifts and calling of God, by going out into any places open to them, and holding Christ up to the people in earnest talks. They must thus learn to preach. Instead of this, the students are required to write what they call sermons, and present them for criticism; to preach, that is, read them to the class and the professor. Thus they play preaching. No man can preach in this manner. These so-called sermons will of course, under the criticism they receive, degenerate into literary essays. The people have no respect for such sermons, as sermons. This reading of elegant literary essays, is not to them preaching. It is gratifying to literary taste, but not spiritually edifying. It does not meet the wants of the soul. It is not calculated to win souls to Christ. The students are taught to cultivate a fine, elevated style of writing. As for real eloquence, that gushing, impressive, and persuasive oratory, that naturally flows from an educated man whose soul is on fire with his subject, and who is free to pour out his heart to a waiting and earnest people, they have none of it.

A reflecting mind will feel as if it were infinitely out of place to present in the pulpit to immortal souls, hanging upon the verge of everlasting death, such specimens of learning and rhetoric. They know that men do not do so on any subject where they are really in earnest. The captain of a fire company, when a city is on fire, does not read to his company an essay or exhibit a fine specimen of rhetoric, when he shouts to them and directs their movements. It is a question of urgency, and

he intends that every word shall be understood. He is entirely in earnest with them; and they feel that criticism would be out of place in regard to the language he uses.

So it always is when men are entirely in earnest. Their language is in point, direct and simple. Their sentences are short, cogent, powerful. The appeal is made directly for action; and hence all such discourses take effect. This is the reason why, formerly, the ignorant Methodist preachers, and the earnest Baptist preachers produced so much more effect than our most learned theologians and divines. They do so now. The impassioned utterance of a common exhorter will often move a congregation far beyond anything that those splendid exhibitions of rhetoric can effect. Great sermons lead the people to praise the preacher. Good preaching leads the people to praise the Savior.

Our theological schools would be of much greater value than they are, if they were much more practical. I heard a theological teacher read a sermon on the importance of extemporaneous preaching. His views on that subject were correct; but his practice entirely contradicted them. He seemed to have studied the subject, and to have attained to practical views of the highest importance. But yet I have never known one of his students, in practice, to adopt those views. I have understood that he says that if he were to begin his life anew as a preacher, he would practice according to his present views; and that he laments that his education was wrong in this respect, and consequently his practice has been wrong.

In our school at Oberlin our students have been led not by myself, I am bound to say, to think that they must write their sermons; and very few of them, notwithstanding all I could say to them, have the courage to launch out, and commit themselves to extemporaneous preaching. They have been told again and again: "You must not think to imitate Mr. Finney. You cannot be Finneys."

Ministers do not like to get up and talk to the people as best they can, and break themselves at once into the habit of talking to the people. They must preach; and if they must preach in the common acceptation of the term, they must write. Hence, according to that view, I have never preached. Indeed, people have often said to me: "Why, you do not preach? You talk to the people." A man in London went home from one of our meetings greatly convicted. He had been a skeptic; and his wife seeing him greatly excited, said to him, "Husband, have you been to hear Mr. Finney preach?" He replied: "I have been to Mr. Finney’s meeting. He don’t preach; he only explains what other people preach." This, in substance, I have heard over and over again. "Why!" they say, "anybody could preach as you do. You just talk to the people. You talk as if you were as much at home as if you sat in the parlor." Others have said: "Why, it don’t seem like preaching; but it seems as if Mr. Finney had taken me alone, and was conversing with me face to face."

Ministers generally avoid preaching what the people before them will understand as addressed particularly to them. They will preach to them about other people, and the sins of other people, instead of addressing them and saying, "You are guilty of these sins; and, The Lord requires this of you." They often preach about the Gospel instead of preaching the Gospel. They often preach about sinners instead of preaching to them. They studiously avoid being personal, in the sense of making the impression on anyone present that he is the man. Now I have thought it my duty to pursue a different course; and I always have pursued a different course. I have often said, "Do not think I am talking about anybody else; but I mean you, and you, and you."

Ministers told me at first that people would never endure this; but would get up and go out, and never come to hear me again. But this is all a mistake. Very much, in this as in everything else, depends on the spirit in which it is said. If the people see that it is said in the spirit of love, with a yearning desire to do them good; if they cannot call it an ebullition of personal animosity, but if they see, and cannot deny, that it is telling the truth in love; that it is coming right home to them to save them individually, there are very few that will continue to resent it. If at the time they feel pointed at and rebuked, nevertheless the conviction is upon them that they needed it, and it will surely ultimately do them great good.

I have often said to people, when I saw that they looked offended, "Now you resent this and you will go away and say that you will not come again; but you will. Your own convictions are on my side. You know that what I tell you is true; and that I tell it for your own good; and that you cannot continue to resent it." And I have always found this to be true.

My experience has been, that even in respect to personal popularity, honesty is the best policy in a minister; that if he means to maintain his hold upon the confidence, and respect, and affection of any people, he must be faithful to their souls. He must let them see that he is not courting them for any purpose of popularity, but that he is trying to save their souls. Men are not fools. They have no solid respect for a man that will go into the pulpit and preach smooth things. They cordially despise it in their inmost souls. And let no man think that he will gain permanent respect, that he will be permanently honored by his people, unless as an ambassador of Christ he deals faithfully with their souls.

The great argument in opposition to my views of preaching the Gospel was, that I should not give nearly so much instruction to the people, as I should if I wrote my sermons. They said I would not study; and consequently, although I might succeed as an evangelist, when I labored but a few weeks or months in a place, still it would never do for a pastor to preach extemporaneously.

Now I have the best of reasons for believing that preachers of written sermons do not give their people so much instruction as they think they do. The people do not remember their sermons. I have in multitudes of instances heard people complain I cannot carry home anything that I hear from the pulpit. They have said to me in hundreds of instances: "We always remember what we have heard you preach. We remember your text, and the manner in which you handled it; but written sermons we cannot remember."

I have been a pastor now for many years indeed, ever since 1832; and I have never heard any complaint that I did not instruct the people. I do not believe it is true that my people are not as well instructed, so far as pulpit instruction is concerned, as those people are who sit under the preaching of written sermons. It is true that a man may write his sermons without studying much; as it is true that he may preach extemporaneously without much study or thought. Many written sermons, that I have heard, manifested anything but profound, accurate thought.

My habit has always been to study the Gospel, and the best application of it, all the time. I do not confine myself to hours and days of writing my sermons; but my mind is always pondering the truths of the Gospel, and the best ways of using them. I go among the people and learn their wants. Then, in the light of the Holy Spirit, I take a subject that I think will meet their present necessities. I think intensely on it, and pray much over the subject on Sabbath morning, for

example, and get my mind full of it, and then go and pour it out to the people. Whereas one great difficulty with a written sermon is, that a man after he has written it, needs to think but little of the subject. He needs to pray but little. He perhaps reads over his manuscript Saturday evening, or Sabbath morning; but he does not feel the necessity of being powerfully anointed, that his mouth may be opened and filled with arguments, and that he may be enabled to preach out of a full heart. He is quite at ease. He has only to use his eyes and his voice, and he can preach, in his way. It may be a sermon that has been written for years; it may be a sermon that he has written, every word of it, within the week. But on Sabbath-day there is no freshness in it. It does not come necessarily new and fresh, and as an anointed message from God to his heart, and through his heart to the people.

I am prepared to say, most solemnly, that I think I have studied all the more for not having written my sermons. I have been obliged to make the subjects upon which I preached familiar to my thoughts, to fill my mind with them, and then go and talk them off to the people. I simply note the heads upon which I wish to dwell in the briefest possible manner and in language not a word of which I use, perhaps, in preaching. I simply jot down the order of my propositions, and the petitions which I propose to take; and in a word, sketch an outline of the remarks and inferences with which I conclude.

But unless men will try it, unless they will begin and talk to the people, as best they can, keeping their hearts full of truth and full of the Holy Ghost, they will never make extemporaneous preachers. I believe that half an hour's earnest talk to the people from week to week, if the talk be pointed, direct, earnest, logical, will really instruct them more than the two labored sermons that those who write, get off to their people on the Sabbath. I believe the people would remember more of what is said, be more interested in it, and would carry it away with them to be pondered, vastly more than they do what they get from the labored written sermons.

I have spoken of my method of preparing for the pulpit in more recent years. When I first began to preach, and for some twelve years of my earliest ministry, I wrote not a word; and was most commonly obliged to preach without any preparation whatever, except what I got in prayer. Oftentimes I went into the pulpit without knowing upon what text I should speak, or a word that I should say. I depended on the occasion and the Holy Spirit to suggest the text, and to open up the whole subject to my mind; and certainly in no part of my ministry have I preached with greater success and power. If I did not preach from inspiration, I don't know how I did preach. It was a common experience with me, and has been during all my ministerial life, that the subject would open up to my mind in a manner that was surprising to myself. It seemed that I could see with intuitive clearness just what I ought to say; and whole platoons of thoughts, words, and illustrations, came to me as fast as I could deliver them. When I first began to make skeletons, I made them after, and not before, I preached. It was to preserve the outline of the thought which had been given me, on occasions such as I have just mentioned. I found when the Spirit of God had given me a very clear view of a subject, I could not retain it, to be used on any other occasion, unless I jotted down an outline of the thoughts. But after all, I have never found myself able to use old skeletons in preaching, to any considerable extent, without remodeling them, and having a fresh and new view of the subject given me by the Holy Spirit. I almost always get my subjects on my knees in prayer; and it has been a common experience with me, upon receiving a subject from the Holy Spirit, to have it make so strong an impression on my mind as to make me tremble, so

that I could with difficulty write. When subjects are thus given me that seem to go through me, body and soul, I can in a few moments make out a skeleton that shall enable me to retain the view presented by the Spirit; and I find that such sermons always tell with great power upon the people.

Some of the most telling sermons that I have ever preached in Oberlin, I have thus received after the bell had rung for church; and I was obliged to go and pour them off from my full heart, without jotting down more than the briefest possible skeleton, and that sometimes not covering half the ground that I covered in my sermon.

I tell this, not boastfully, but because it is a fact, and to give the praise to God, and not to any talents of my own. Let no man think that those sermons which have been called so powerful, were productions of my own brain, or of my own heart, unassisted by the Holy Ghost. They were not mine, but from the Holy Spirit in me.

And let no man say that this is claiming a higher inspiration than is promised to ministers, or than ministers have a right to expect. For I believe that all ministers, called by Christ to preach the Gospel, ought to be, and may be, in such a sense inspired, as to preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. What else did Christ mean when He said, "Go and disciple all nations;--and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?" What did He mean when He said, speaking of the Holy Spirit--"He shall take of mine and show it unto you. He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you?" What did He mean when He said, "If any man believe in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, that they which believe on him should receive?" All ministers may be, and ought to be, so filled with the Holy Spirit that all who hear them shall be impressed with the conviction that God is in them of a truth.

02.08. REVIVAL AT ANTWERP

CHAPTER VIII.

REVIVAL AT ANTWERP.

I MUST now give some account of my labors, and their result, at Antwerp, a village north of Evans' mills.

I arrived there, the first time, in April, and found that no religious services, of any kind, were held in the town. The land in the township belonged to a Mr. P, a rich landholder residing in Ogdensburgh. To encourage the settlement of the township, he had built a brick meeting house. But the people had no mind to keep up public worship and therefore the meeting house was locked up, and the key was in the possession of a Mr. C, who kept the village hotel.

I very soon learned that there was a Presbyterian church in that place, consisting of but few members. They had, some years before, tried to keep up a meeting at the village, on Sabbath. But one of the elders who conducted their Sabbath meetings, lived about five miles out of the village, and was obliged, in approaching the village, to pass through a Universalist settlement. The Universalists had broken up the village meeting, by rendering it impossible for Deacon R, as they called him, to get through their settlement to meeting. They would even take off the wheels of his carriage; and finally they carried their opposition so far that he gave up attending meetings at the village; and all religious services at the village, and in the township, so far as I could learn, were relinquished.

I found Mrs. C, the landlady, a pious woman. There were two other pious women in the village, a Mrs. H, the wife of a merchant, and a Mrs. R, the wife of a physician. It was on Friday, if I remember right, that I arrived there. I called on those pious women and asked them if they would like to have a meeting. They said that they would, but they did not know that it would be possible. Mrs. H agreed to open her parlor that evening, for a meeting, if I could get anybody to attend. I went about and invited the people, and secured the attendance, I think, of some thirteen in her parlor. I preached to them; and then said, that, if I could get the use of the village school house, I would preach on Sabbath. I got the consent of the trustees; and the next day an appointment was circulated around among the people, for a meeting at the school house Sabbath morning.

In passing around the village I heard a vast amount of profanity. I thought I had never heard so much in any place that I had ever visited. It seemed as if the men, in playing ball upon the green, and in every business place that I stepped into, were all cursing and swearing and damning each other. I felt as if I had arrived upon the borders of hell. I had a kind of awful feeling, I recollect, as I passed around the village on Saturday. The very atmosphere seemed to me to be poison; and a kind of terror took possession of me.

I gave myself to prayer on Saturday, and finally urged my petition till this answer came: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt

thee. For I have much people in this city." This completely relieved me of all fear. I found, however, that the Christian people there were really afraid that something serious might happen, if religious meetings were again established in that place. I spent Saturday very much in prayer; but passed around the village enough to see that the appointment that had been given out for preaching at the schoolhouse, was making quite an excitement.

Sabbath morning I arose and left my lodgings in the hotel; and in order to get alone, where I could let out my voice as well as my heart, I went up into the woods at some distance from the village, and continued for a considerable time in prayer. However, I did not get relief, and went up a second time; but the load upon my mind increased, and I did not find relief. I went up a third time; and then the answer came. I found that it was time for meeting, and went immediately to the schoolhouse. I found it packed to its utmost capacity. I had my pocket Bible in my hand, and read to them this text: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." I cannot remember much that I said; but I know that the point on which my mind principally labored, was the treatment which God received in return for His love. The subject affected my own mind very much; and I preached and poured out my soul and my tears together.

I saw several of the men there from whom I had, the day before, heard the most awful profanity. I pointed them out in the meeting, and told what they said, how they called on God to damn each other. Indeed, I let loose my whole heart upon them. I told them they seemed to howl blasphemy about the streets like hell-hounds; and it seemed to me that I had arrived on the very verge of hell. Everybody knew that what I said was true, and they quailed under it. They did not appear offended; but the people wept about as much as I did myself. I think there were scarcely any dry eyes in the house.

Mr. C, the landlord, had refused to open the meeting house in the morning. But as soon as these first services closed, he arose and said to the people that he would open the meeting house in the afternoon.

The people scattered, and carried the information in every direction; and in the afternoon the meeting house was nearly as much crowded as the schoolhouse had been in the morning. Everybody was at meeting; and the Lord let me loose upon them in a wonderful manner. My preaching seemed to them to be something new. Indeed it seemed to myself as if I could rain hail and love upon them at the same time; or in other words, that I could rain upon them hail, in love. It seemed as if my love to God, in view of the abuse which they heaped upon Him, sharpened up my mind to the most intense agony. I felt like rebuking them with all my heart, and yet with a compassion which they could not mistake. I never knew that they accused me of severity; although I think I never spoke with more severity, perhaps, in my life.

But the labors of this day were effectual to the conviction of the great mass of the population. From that day, appoint a meeting when and where I would, anywhere round about, and the people would throng to hear. The work immediately commenced and went forward with great power. I preached twice in the village church on Sabbath, attended a prayer meeting at intermission, and generally preached somewhere, in a schoolhouse in the neighborhood, at five o’clock in the afternoon.

On the third Sabbath that I preached there, an aged man came to me as I was entering the pulpit, and asked me if I would not go and preach in a schoolhouse in his neighborhood, about three miles distant; saying that they had never had any services there. He wished me to come as soon as I could. I appointed the next day, Monday, at five o'clock in the afternoon. It was a warm day. I left my horse at the village, and thought I would walk down, so that I should have no trouble in calling along on the people, in the neighborhood of the schoolhouse. However, before I reached the place, having labored so hard on the Sabbath, I found myself very much exhausted, and sat down by the way and felt as if I could scarcely proceed. I blamed myself for not having taken my horse.

But at the appointed hour I found the schoolhouse full, and I could only get a standing-place near the open door. I read a hymn; and I cannot call it singing, for they seemed never to have had any church music in that place. However the people pretended to sing. But it amounted to about this: each one bawled in his own way. My ears had been cultivated by teaching church music; and their horrible discord distressed me so much that, at first, I thought I must go out. I finally put both hands over my ears, and held them with my full strength. But this did not shut out the discords. I stood it, however, until they were through; and then I cast myself down on my knees, almost in a state of desperation, and began to pray. The Lord opened the windows of heaven, and the spirit of prayer was poured out, and I let my whole heart out in prayer.

I had taken no thought with regard to a text upon which to preach; but waited to see the congregation. As soon as I had done praying, I arose from my knees and said: "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." I told them I did not recollect where that text was; but I told them very nearly where they would find it, and then went on to explain it. I told them that there was such a man as Abraham, and who he was; and that there was such a man as Lot, and who he was; their relations to each other; their separating from each other on account of differences between their herdmen; and that Abraham took the hill country, and Lot settled in the vale of Sodom. I then told them how exceedingly wicked Sodom became, and what abominable practices they fell into. I told them that the Lord decided to destroy Sodom, and visited Abraham, and informed him what He was about to do; that Abraham prayed to the Lord to spare Sodom, if He found so many righteous there; and the Lord promised to do so for their sakes; that then Abraham besought Him to save it for a certain less number, and the Lord said He would spare it for their sakes; that he kept on reducing the number, until he reduced the number of righteous persons to ten; and God promised him that, if He found ten righteous persons in the city, He would spare it. Abraham made no farther request, and Jehovah left him. But it was found that there was but one righteous person there, and that was Lot, Abraham's nephew. And the men said to Lot, "hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."

While I was relating these facts I observed the people looking as if they were angry. Many of the men were in their shirt sleeves; and they looked at each other and at me, as if they were ready to fall upon me and chastise me on the spot. I saw their strange and unaccountable looks, and could not understand what I was saying, that had offended them. However it seemed to me that their anger rose higher and higher, as I continued the narrative. As soon as I had finished the narrative, I turned upon them and said, that I understood that they had never had a religious meeting in that

place; and that therefore I had a right to take it for granted, and was compelled to take it for granted, that they were an ungodly people. I pressed that home upon them with more and more energy, with my heart full almost to bursting.

I had not spoken to them in this strain of direct application, I should think, more than a quarter of an hour, when all at once an awful solemnity seemed to settle down upon them; the congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cried for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them off their seats as fast as they fell. Indeed nearly the whole congregation were either on their knees or prostrate, I should think, in less than two minutes from this first shock that fell upon them. Every one prayed for himself, who was able to speak at all.

Of course I was obliged to stop preaching; for they no longer paid any attention. I saw the old man who had invited me there to preach, sitting about in the middle of the house, and looking around with utter amazement. I raised my voice almost to a scream, to make him hear, and pointing to him said, "Can't you pray?" He instantly fell upon his knees, and with a stentorian voice poured himself out to God; but he did not at all get the attention of the people. I then spoke as loud as I could, and tried to make them attend to me. I said to them, "You are not in hell yet; and now let me direct you to Christ." For a few moments I tried to hold forth the Gospel to them; but scarcely any of them paid any attention. My heart was so overflowing with joy at such a scene that I could hardly contain myself. It was with much difficulty that I refrained from shouting, and giving glory to God.

As soon as I could sufficiently control my feelings I turned to a young man who was close to me, and was engaged in praying for himself, laid my hand on his shoulder, thus getting his attention, and preached in his ear Jesus. As soon as I got his attention to the cross of Christ, he believed, was calm and quiet for a minute or two, and then broke out in praying for the others. I then turned to another, and took the same course with him, with the same result; and then another, and another.

In this way I kept on, until I found the time had arrived when I must leave them, and go and fulfill an appointment in the village. I told them this, and asked the old man who had invited me there, to remain and take charge of the meeting, while I went to my appointment. He did so. But there was too much interest, and there were too many wounded souls, to dismiss the meeting; and so it was held all night. In the morning there were still those there that could not get away; and they were carried to a private house in the neighborhood, to make room for the school. In the afternoon they sent for me to come down there, as they could not yet break up the meeting.

When I went down the second time, I got an explanation of the anger manifested by the congregation during the introduction of my sermon the day before. I learned that the place was called Sodom, but I knew it not; and that there was but one pious man in the place, and him they called Lot. This was the old man that invited me there. The people supposed that I had chosen my subject, and preached to them in that manner, because they were so wicked as to be called Sodom. This was a striking coincidence; but so far as I was concerned, it was altogether accidental.

I have not been in that place for many years. A few years since, I was laboring in Syracuse, in the state of New York. Two gentlemen called upon me one day; one an elderly man; the other not quite fifty years of age. The younger man introduced the older one to me as Deacon W, elder in his

church; saying that he had called on me to give a hundred dollars to Oberlin College. The older man in his turn introduced the younger, saying, "This is my minister, the Rev. Mr. Cross. He was converted under your ministry." Whereupon Mr. Cross said to me: "Do you remember preaching at such a time in Antwerp, and in such a part of the town, in the schoolhouse, in the afternoon, and that such a scene, [describing it], occurred there?" I said, "I remember it very well, and can never forget it while I remember anything." "Well," said he, "I was then but a young man, and was converted in that meeting." He has been many years a successful minister. Several of his children have obtained their education in our college in Oberlin. As nearly as I can learn, although that revival came upon them so suddenly, and was of such a powerful type, the converts were sound, and the work permanent and genuine. I never heard of any disastrous reaction as having taken place.

I have spoken of the Universalists having prevented Deacon R from attending religious meetings on Sabbath, in the village of Antwerp, by taking off the wheels of his carriage. When the revival got its full strength, Deacon R wanted me to go and preach in that neighborhood. Accordingly I made an appointment to preach on a certain afternoon, in their schoolhouse. When I arrived I found the schoolhouse filled, and Deacon R sitting near a window, by a stand with a Bible and hymn book on it. I sat down beside him, then arose and read a hymn, and they sung after a fashion. I then engaged in prayer, and had great access to the throne of grace. I then arose and took this text: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

I saw that Deacon R was very uneasy; and he soon got up and went and stood in the open door. As there were some boys near the door, I supposed, at the time, that he had gone to keep the boys still. But I afterward learned that it was through fear. He thought that if they set upon me, he would be where he could escape. From my text he concluded that I was going to deal very plainly with them; and he had been made quite nervous with the opposition which he had met with from them, and wanted to keep out of their reach. I proceeded to pour myself out upon them with all my might; and before I was through, there was a complete upturning of the very foundations of Universalism, I think, in that place. It was a scene that almost equaled that of which I have spoken, in Sodom. Thus the revival penetrated to every part of the town, and some of the neighboring towns shared in the blessing. The work was very precious in this place.

When we came to receive the converts, after a great number had been examined, and the day approached for their admission, I found that several of them had been brought up in Baptist families, and asked them if they would not prefer to be immersed. They said they had no choice; but their parents would prefer to have them immersed. I told them I had no objection to immersing them, if they thought it would please their friends better, and themselves as well. Accordingly, when Sabbath came, I arranged to baptize by immersion, during the intermission. We went down to a stream that runs through the place; and there I baptized, I should think, a dozen or more.

When the hour for afternoon services arrived, we went to the meeting house; and there I baptized a great number of persons by taking water in my hand and applying it to the forehead. The administration of the ordinance in the church was so manifestly owned and blessed of God, as to do much to satisfy the people that that mode of baptism was acceptable to him.

Among the converts was also a considerable number whose friends were Methodists. On Saturday I learned that some Methodist people were saying to the converts, "Mr. Finney is a

Presbyterian. He believes in the doctrine of election and predestination; but he has not preached it here. He dare not preach it, because if he should, the converts would not join his church." This determined me to preach on the doctrine of election, the Sabbath morning previous to their joining the church. I took my text, and went on to show, first, what the doctrine of election is not; secondly, what it is; thirdly, that it is a doctrine of the Bible; fourthly, that it is the doctrine of reason; fifthly, that to deny it, is to deny the very attributes of God; sixthly, that it opposes no obstacle in the way of the salvation of the non-elect; seventhly, that all men may be saved if they will; and lastly, that it is the only hope that anybody will be saved; and concluded with remarks.

The Lord made it exceedingly clear to my own mind, and so clear to the people, that, I believe, it convinced the Methodists themselves. I never heard a word said against it, or a word of dissatisfaction with the argument. While I was preaching, I observed a Methodist sister with whom I had become acquainted, and whom I regarded as an excellent Christian woman, weeping, as she sat near the pulpit stairs. I feared that I was hurting her feelings. After the close of the meetings she remained sitting and weeping; and I went to her and said to her, "Sister, I hope I have not injured your feelings." "No," said she, "you have not injured my feelings, Mr. Finney; but I have committed a sin. No longer ago than last night, my husband, who is an impenitent man, was arguing this very question with me; and maintaining, as best he could, the doctrine of election." Said she, "I resisted it, and told him that it was not true. And now, today, you have convinced me that it is true; and instead of forming any excuse for my husband, or anybody else, it is the only hope I can have that he will be saved, or anybody else." I heard no farther objection to the converts joining a church that believed in the doctrine of election.

There were a great many interesting cases of conversion in this place; and there were two very striking cases of instantaneous recovery from insanity during this revival. As I went into meeting in the afternoon of one Sabbath, I saw several ladies sitting in a pew, with a woman dressed in black who seemed to be in great distress of mind; and they were partly holding her, and preventing her from going out. As I came in, one of the ladies came to me and told me that she was an insane woman; that she had been a Methodist, but had, as she supposed, fallen from grace; which had led to despair, and finally to insanity. Her husband was an intemperate man, and lived several miles from the village; and he had brought her down and left her at meeting, and had himself gone to the tavern. I said a few words to her; but she replied that she must go; that she could not hear any praying, or preaching, or singing; that hell was her portion, and she could not endure anything that made her think of heaven.

I cautioned the ladies, privately, to keep her in her seat, if they could, without her disturbing the meeting. I then went into the pulpit and read a hymn. As soon as the singing began, she struggled hard to get out. But the ladies obstructed her passage; and kindly but persistently prevented her escape. After a few moments she became quiet; but seemed to avoid hearing or attending at all to the singing. I then prayed. For some little time I heard her struggling to get out; but before I had done she became quiet, and the congregation was still. The Lord gave me a great spirit of prayer, and a text; for I had no text settled upon before. I took my text from Hebrews: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

My object was to encourage faith, in ourselves, and in her; and in ourselves for her. When I began to pray, she at first made quite an effort to get out. But the ladies kindly resisted, and she finally sat

still, but held her head very low, and seemed determined not to attend to what I said. But as I proceeded she began gradually to raise her head, and to look at me from within her long black bonnet. She looked up more and more until she sat upright, and looked me in the face with intense earnestness. As I proceeded to urge the people to be bold in their faith, to launch out, and commit themselves with the utmost confidence to God, through the atoning sacrifice of our great High Priest, all at once she startled the congregation by uttering a loud shriek. She then cast herself almost from her seat, held her head very low, and I could see that she trembled very exceedingly. The ladies in the pew with her, partly supported her, and watched her with manifest prayerful interest and sympathy. As I proceeded she began to look up again, and soon sat upright, with face wonderfully changed, indicating triumphant joy and peace. There was such a glow upon her countenance as I have seldom seen in any human face. Her joy was so great that she could scarcely contain herself till meeting was over; and then she soon made everybody understand around her, that she was set at liberty. She glorified God, and rejoiced with amazing triumph. About two years after, I met with her, and found her still full of joy and peace.

The other case of recovery was that of a woman who had also fallen into despair and insanity. I was not present when she was restored; but was told that it was almost or quite instantaneous, by means of a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Revivals of religion are sometimes accused of making people mad. The fact is, men are naturally mad on the subject of religion; and revivals rather restore them, than make them mad.

During this revival, we heard much of opposition to it from Gouverneur, a town about twelve miles, I believe, farther north. We heard that the wicked threatened to come down and mob us, and break up our meetings. However, of course, we paid no attention to that; and I mention it here only because I shall have occasion soon to notice a revival there. Having received the converts, and having labored in Antwerp together with Evans' Mills, until the fall of the year, I sent and procured for them, a young man by the name of Denning, whom they settled as pastor. I then suspended my labors at Antwerp.

02.09. RETURN TO EVANS MILLS

CHAPTER IX.

RETURN TO EVANS' MILLS.

AT this time I was earnestly pressed to remain at Evans' Mills, and finally gave them encouragement that I would abide with them, at least one year. Being engaged to marry, I went from there to Whitestown, Oneida county, and was married in October, 1824. My wife had made preparations for housekeeping; and a day or two after our marriage I left her, and returned to Evans' Mills, to obtain conveyance to transport our goods to that place. I told her that she might expect me back in about a week.

The fall previous to this, I had preached a few times, in the evening, at a place called Perch River, still farther northwest from Evans' Mills about a dozen miles. I spent one Sabbath at Evans' Mills, and intended to return for my wife, about the middle of that week. But a messenger from Perch River came up that Sabbath, and said there had been a revival working its way slowly among the people ever since I preached there; and he begged me to go down and preach there, at least once more. I finally sent an appointment to be there Tuesday night. But I found the interest so deep that I stayed and preached Wednesday night, and Thursday night; and I finally gave up returning that week, for my wife, and continued to preach in that neighborhood.

The revival soon spread in the direction of Brownville, a considerable village several miles, I think, in a southwestern direction from that place. Finally, under the pressing invitation of the minister and church at Brownville, I went there and spent the winter, having written to my wife, that such were the circumstances that I must defer coming for her, until God seemed to open the way.

At Brownville there was a very interesting work. But still the church was in such a state that it was very difficult to get them into the work. I could not find much that seemed to me to be sound-hearted piety; and the policy of the minister was really such as to forbid anything like a general sweep of a revival. I labored there that winter with great pain, and had many serious obstacles to overcome. Sometimes I would find that the minister and his wife were away from our meetings, and would learn afterwards that they had stayed away to attend a party.

I was the guest at that place of a Mr. B, one of the elders of the church, and the most intimate and influential friend of the minister. One day as I came down from my room, and was going out to call on some inquirers, I met Mr. B in the hall; and he said to me, "Mr. Finney, what should you think of a man that was praying week after week for the Holy Spirit, and could get no answer?" I replied that I should think he was praying from false motives. "But from what motives," said he, "should a man pray? If he wants to be happy, is that a false motive?" I replied, "Satan might pray with as good a motive as that;" and then quoted the words of the Psalmist: "Uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." "See!" said I, "the Psalmist did not pray for the Holy Spirit that he might be happy, but that he might be useful, and that sinners might be converted to Christ." I said this and turned and went immediately out;

and he turned very short and went back to his room.

I remained out till dinner time; and when I returned, he met me, and immediately began to confess. "Mr. Finney," said he, "I owe you a confession. I was angry when you said that to me; and I must confess that I hoped I should never see you again. What you said," he continued, "forced the conviction upon me, that I never had been converted, that I never had had any higher motive than a mere selfish desire for my own happiness. I went away," said he, "after you left the house, and prayed to God to take my life. I could not endure to have it known that I had always been deceived. I have been most intimate with our minister. I have journeyed with him, and slept with him, and conversed with him, and have been more intimate with him than any other member of the church; and yet I saw that I had always been a deceived hypocrite. The mortification was intolerable; and," said he," I wanted to die, and prayed the Lord to take my life." However, he was all broken down then, and from that time became a new man.

That conversion did a great deal of good. I might relate many other interesting facts connected with this revival; but as there were so many things that pained me, in regard to the relation of the pastor to it, and especially of the pastor's wife, I will forbear.

Early in the spring, 1825, I left Brownville, with my horse and cutter, to go after my wife. I had been absent six months since our marriage; and as mails then were between us, we had seldom been able to exchange letters. I drove on some fifteen miles, and the roads were very slippery. My horse was smooth shod, and I found I must have his shoes reset. I stopped at Le Rayville, a small village about three miles south of Evans' Mills. While my horse was being shod, the people, finding that I was there, ran to me, and wanted to know if I would not preach, at one o'clock, in the schoolhouse; for they had no meeting house.

At one o'clock the house was packed; and while I preached, the Spirit of God came down with great power upon the people. So great and manifest was the outpouring of the Spirit, that in compliance with their earnest entreaty I concluded to spend the night there, and preach again in the evening. But the work increased more and more; and in the evening I appointed another meeting in the morning, and in the morning I appointed another in the evening; and soon I saw that I should not be able to go any farther after my wife. I told a brother that if he would take my horse and cutter and go after my wife, I would remain. He did so, and I went on preaching, from day to day, and from night to night; and there was a powerful revival.

I should have said that, while I was at Brownville, God revealed to me, all at once, in a most unexpected manner, the fact that he was going to pour out His Spirit at Gouverneur, and that I must go there and preach. Of the place I knew absolutely nothing, except that, in that town there was so much opposition manifested to the revival in Antwerp, the year before. I can never tell how, or why, the Spirit of God made that revelation to me. But I knew then, and I have no doubt now, that it was a direct revelation from God to me. I had not thought of the place, that I know of, for months; but in prayer the thing was all shown to me, as clear as light, that I must go and preach in Gouverneur, and that God would pour out His Spirit there.

Very soon after this, I saw one of the members of the church from Gouverneur, who was passing through Brownville. I told him what God had revealed to me. He stared at me as if he supposed that I was insane. But I charged him to go home, and tell the brethren what I said, that they might

prepare themselves for my coming, and for the outpouring of the Lord's Spirit. From him I learned that they had no minister; that there were two churches and two meeting houses, in the town, standing near together; that the Baptists had a minister, and the Presbyterians no minister; that an elderly minister lived there who had formerly been their pastor, but had been dismissed; and that they were having, in the Presbyterian church, no regular Sabbath services. From what he said, I gathered that religion was in a very low state; and he himself was as cold as an iceberg.

But now I return to my labors in Le Rayville. After laboring there a few weeks, the great mass of the inhabitants were converted; and among the rest Judge C, a man in point of influence, standing head and shoulders above all the people around him. My wife arrived, of course, a few days after I sent for her; and we accepted the invitation of Judge C and his wife, to become their guests. But after a few weeks, the people urged me to go and preach in a Baptist church in the town of Rutland, where Rutland joins Le Ray. I made an appointment to preach there one afternoon. The weather had become warm, and I walked over, through a pine grove, about three miles to their place of worship. I arrived early, and found the house open, but nobody there. I was warm from having walked so far, and went in and took my seat near the broad aisle, in the center of the house. Very soon people began to come in and take their seats here and there, scattered over the house. Soon the number increased so that they were coming continually. I sat still; and, being an entire stranger there, no person came in that I knew, and I presume that no person that came in knew me.

Presently a young woman came in, who had two or three tall plumes in her bonnet, and was rather gaily dressed. She was slender, tall, dignified, and decidedly handsome. I observed as soon as she came in, that she waved her head and gave a very graceful motion to her plumes. She came as it were sailing around, and up the broad aisle toward where I sat, mincing as she came, at every step, waving her great plumes most gracefully, looking around just enough to see the impression she was making. For such a place the whole thing was so peculiar that it struck me very much. She entered a slip directly behind me, in which, at the time, nobody was sitting. Thus we were near together but each occupying a separate slip. I turned partly around, and looked at her from head to foot. She saw that I was observing her critically, and looked a little abashed. In a low voice I said to her, very earnestly, "Did you come in here to divide the worship of God's house, to make people worship you, to get their attention away from God and His worship?" This made her writhe; and I followed her up, in a voice so low that nobody else heard me, but I made her hear me distinctly. She quailed under the rebuke, and could not hold up her head. She began to tremble, and when I had said enough to fasten the thought of her insufferable vanity on her mind, I arose and went into the pulpit. As soon as she saw me go into the pulpit, and that I was the minister that was about to preach, her agitation began to increase so much so as to attract the attention of those around her. The house was soon full, and I took a text and went on to preach.

The Spirit of the Lord was evidently poured out on the congregation; and at the close of the sermon, I did what I do not know I had ever done before, called upon any who would give their hearts to God, to come forward and take the front seat. The moment I made the call, this young woman was the first to arise. She burst out into the aisle, and came forward, like a person in a state of desperation. She seemed to have lost all sense of the presence of anybody but God. She came rushing forward to the front seats, until she finally fell in the aisle, and shrieked with agony. A large number arose in different parts of the house and came forward; and a goodly number

appeared to give their hearts to God upon the spot, and among them this young woman. On inquiry I found that she was rather the belle of the place; that she was an agreeable girl, but was regarded by everybody as very vain and dressy.

Many years afterwards, I saw a man who called my attention to that meeting. I inquired after this young woman. He informed me that he knew her well; that she still resided there, was married, and was a very useful woman; and had always, from that time, been a very earnest Christian.

I preached a few times at this place, and then the question of Gouverneur came up again; and God seemed to say to me, "Go to Gouverneur; the time has come." Brother Nash had come a few days before this, and was spending some time with me. At the time of this last call to Gouverneur, I had some two or three appointments ahead, in that part of Rutland. I said therefore to Brother Nash, "You must go to Gouverneur and see what is there, and come back and make your report."

He started the next morning, and after he had been gone two or three days, returned, saying, that he had found a good many professors of religion, under considerable exercise of mind, and that he was confident that there was a good deal of the Spirit of the Lord among the people; but that they were not aware what the state of things really was. I then informed the people where I was preaching, that I was called to Gouverneur, and could make no more appointments to preach in that place. I requested Brother Nash to return immediately, informing the people that they might expect me on a certain day that week.

02.10. REVIVAL AT GOUVERNEUR

CHAPTER X.

REVIVAL AT GOUVERNEUR.

Brother Nash accordingly returned the next day, and made the appointment as I desired. I had to ride nearly thirty miles, I believe, to reach the place. In the morning it rained very hard; but the rain abated in time for me to ride to Antwerp. While I was getting dinner at that place, the rain came on again, and literally poured, until quite late in the afternoon. It seemed in the morning before I started, and at noon, that I should not be able to reach my appointment. However, the rain abated again, in time for me to ride rapidly to Gouverneur. I found that the people had given up expecting me that day, in consequence of the great rain.

Before I reached the village, I met a Mr. S, one of the principal members of the church, returning from the church meeting to his house, which I had just passed. He stopped his carriage, and, addressing me, said, "Is this Mr. Finney?" After my reply in the affirmative, he said, "Please to go back to my house, for I shall insist on your being my guest. You are fatigued with the long ride and the roads are so bad, you will not have any meeting tonight." I replied that I must fulfill my appointment, and asked him if the church meeting had adjourned. He said it had not, when he left; and he thought it possible I might reach the village before they would dismiss.

I rode rapidly on, alighted at the meeting house door, and hurried in. Brother Nash stood in front of the pulpit, having just risen up to dismiss the meeting. On seeing me enter, he held up his hands, and waited till I came near the pulpit, and then he took me right in his arms. After thus embracing me, he introduced me to the congregation. In a word I informed them that I had come to fulfill my appointment; and, the Lord willing, I would preach at a certain hour which I named.

When the hour arrived, the house was filled. The people had heard enough, for and against me, to have their curiosity excited, and there was a general turning out. The Lord gave me a text, and I went into the pulpit and let my heart out to the people. The Word took powerful effect. That was very manifest to everybody, I think. I dismissed the meeting, and that night got some rest.

The village hotel was at that time kept by a Dr. S, an avowed Universalist. The next morning I went out, as usual, to call on the people, and converse with them about their souls, and found the village excited. After making a few calls, I dropped into a tailor’s shop, where I found a number of people discussing the subject of the sermon the night before.

Dr. S, at that time, I had never heard of; but I found him among the number at this tailor’s shop, and defending his Universalist sentiments. As I went in, the remarks that were made immediately opened the conversation; and Dr. S stepped forward, manifestly sustained by the whole influence of his comrades, to dispute the positions that I had advanced, and to maintain, as opposed to them, the doctrine of universal salvation. Somebody introduced him to me; and I said to him, "Doctor, I should be very happy to converse with you about your views; but if we are going to have

a conversation, we must first agree upon the method upon which we are going to discuss." I was too much used to discussing with Universalists, to expect any good to come from it, unless certain terms were agreed upon and adhered to, in the discussion. I proposed, therefore, first, that we should take up one point at a time, and discuss it till we had settled it, or had no more to say upon it, and then another, and another; confining ourselves the point immediately in debate; secondly, that we should not interrupt each other, but each one should be at liberty to give his views upon the point, without interruption; and thirdly, that there should be no cavilling or mere banter, but that we should observe candor and courtesy, and give to every argument due weight, on whichsoever side it was presented. I knew they were all of one way of thinking; and I could easily see that they were banded together, and had come together that morning, for the sake of sustaining each other in their views.

Having settled the preliminaries, we commenced the argument. It did not take long to demolish every position that he assumed. He really knew but little of the Bible. He had a way of disposing of the principal passages, as he remembered them, that are generally arrayed against the doctrine of Universalism. But, as Universalists always do, he dwelt mainly on the utter injustice of endless punishment.

I soon showed him, and those around him, that he had but slender ground to stand on, so far as the Bible was concerned; and he very soon took the position, that whatever the Bible said about it, endless punishment was unjust; and that therefore, if the Bible threatened men with endless punishment, it could not be true. This settled the question, so far as the Bible was concerned. In fact I could easily see that they were all skeptics, and would not at all give in because they saw that the Bible contradicted their views. I then closed in with him on the justice of endless punishment. I saw that his friends became agitated, and felt as if the foundations were giving away under them. Pretty soon one of them went out; and as I proceeded, another went out, and finally they all forsook him, seeing, as they must have done, one after the other, that he was utterly wrong.

He had been their leader; and God gave me thus an opportunity to use him entirely up, in the presence of his followers. When he had nothing more to say, I urged upon him with warmth, the question of immediate attention to salvation, and very kindly bid him good morning, and went away, feeling sure that I should soon hear from that conversation again.

The doctor’s wife was a Christian woman, and a member of the church. She told me a day or two after, that the Doctor came home from that conversation apparently greatly agitated, though she did not know where he had been. He would walk the room, and then sit down, but could not remain sitting. He would thus walk and sit alternately; and she could see in his countenance that he was greatly troubled. She said to him, "Doctor, what is the matter?" "Nothing," was his reply. But his agitation increased; and she inquired again, "Doctor, do tell me what is the matter." She suspected that he had somewhere fallen in with me; and she said to him, "Doctor, have you seen Mr. Finney this morning?" This brought him to a stand; and he burst into tears and exclaimed, "Yes! and he has turned my weapons on my own head!" His agony became intense; and as soon as the way was opened for him to speak out, he surrendered himself up to his convictions, and soon after expressed hope in Christ. In a few days his companions were brought in, one after the other, till I believe, the revival made a clean sweep of them.

I have said that there was a Baptist church, and a Presbyterian, each having a meeting house standing upon the green, not far apart; and that the Baptist church had a pastor, but the Presbyterian had none. As soon as the revival broke out, and attracted general attention, the Baptist brethren began to oppose it. They spoke against it, and used very objectionable means indeed to arrest its progress. This encouraged a set of young men to join hand in hand, to strengthen each other in opposition to the work. The Baptist church was quite influential; and the stand that they took greatly emboldened the opposition, and seemed to give it a peculiar bitterness and strength, as might be expected. Those young men seemed to stand like a bulwark in the way of the progress of the work.

In this state of things, Brother Nash and myself, after consultation, made up our minds that that thing must be overcome by prayer, and that it could not be reached in any other way. We therefore retired to a grove and gave ourselves up to prayer until we prevailed, and we felt confident that no power which earth or hell could interpose, would be allowed permanently to stop the revival.

The next Sabbath, after preaching morning and afternoon myself--for I did the preaching altogether, and Brother Nash gave himself up almost continually to prayer--we met at five o'clock in the church, for a prayer meeting. The meeting house was filled. Near the close of the meeting, Brother Nash arose, and addressed that company of young men who had joined hand in hand to resist the revival. I believe they were all there, and they sat braced up against the Spirit of God. It was too solemn for them really to make ridicule of what they heard and saw; and yet their brazen-facedness and stiff-neckedness were apparent to everybody.

Brother Nash addressed them very earnestly, and pointed out the guilt and danger of the course they were taking. Toward the close of his address, he waxed exceeding warm, and said to them, "Now, mark me, young men! God will break your ranks in less than one week, either by converting some of you, or by sending some of you to hell. He will do this as certainly as the Lord is my God!" He was standing where he brought his hand down on the top of the pew before him, so as to make it thoroughly jar. He sat immediately down, dropped his head, and groaned with pain.

The house was as still as death, and most of the people held down their heads. I could see that the young men were agitated. For myself, I regretted that Brother Nash had gone so far. He had committed himself, that God would either take the life of some of them, and send them to hell, or convert some of them, within a week. However on Tuesday morning of the same week, the leader of these young men came to me, in the greatest distress of mind. He was all prepared to submit; and as soon as I came to press him he broke down like a child, confessed, and manifestly gave himself to Christ. Then he said, "What shall I do, Mr. Finney?" I replied "Go immediately to all your young companions, and pray with them, and exhort them at once to turn to the Lord." He did so; and before the week was out, nearly if not all of that class of young men, were hoping in Christ.

There was a merchant living in the village by the name of S. He was a very amiable man, a gentleman, but a deist. His wife was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. She was his second wife; and his first had also been the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. He had thus married into two minister's families. His fathers-in-law had taken the greatest pains to secure his conversion to Christ. He was a reading, reflecting man. Both of his fathers-in-law were old school Presbyterians, and had put into his hands the class of books that presented their peculiar views. This had greatly stumbled him; and the more he had read, the more he was fixed in his convictions that the Bible

was a fable.

His wife urgently entreated me to come and converse with her husband. She informed me of his views, and of the pains that had been taken to lead him to embrace the Christian religion. But she said he was so firmly settled in his views, she did not know that any conversation could meet the case. Nevertheless, I promised to call and see him, and did so. His store was in the front part of the building in which they resided. She went into the store, and requested him to come in. He declined. He said it would do no good; that he had talked with ministers enough; that he knew just what I would say, beforehand, and he could not spend the time; beside, it was very repulsive to his feelings. She replied to him, "Mr. S, you have never been in the habit of treating ministers, who called to see you, in this way. I have invited Mr. Finney to call and see you, to have a conversation on the subject of religion; and I shall be greatly grieved and mortified, if you decline to see him."

He greatly respected and loved his wife; and she was indeed a gem of a woman. To oblige her, he consented to come in. Mrs. S introduced me to him, and left the room. I then said to him, "Mr. S, I have not come in here to have any dispute with you at all; but if you are willing to converse, it is possible that I may suggest something that may help you over some of your difficulties, in regard to the Christian religion, as I probably have felt them all myself." As I addressed him in great kindness, he immediately seemed to feel at home with me, and sat down near me and said, "Now, Mr. Finney, there is no need of our having a long conversation on this point. We are both of us so familiar with the arguments, on both sides, that I can state to you, in a very few minutes, just the objections to the Christian religion on which I rest, and which I find myself utterly unable to overcome. I suppose I know beforehand how you will answer them, and that the answer will be utterly unsatisfactory to me. But if you desire it, I will state them."

I begged him to do so; and he began, as nearly as I can recollect, in this way: "You and I agree in believing in the existence of God." "Yes." "Well, we agree that He is infinitely wise, and good, and powerful." "Yes." "We agree that He has, in our very creation, given us certain irresistible convictions of right and wrong, of justice and injustice." "Yes." "Well, we agree, then, that whatever contravenes our irresistible convictions of justice, cannot be from God." "Yes," I said. "What, according to our irresistible convictions, is neither wise nor good, cannot be from God." "Yes," I said, "we agree in that." "Well now," said he, "the Bible teaches us that God has created us with a sinful nature, or that we come into existence totally sinful and incapable of any good, and this in accordance with certain preestablished laws of which God is the author; that notwithstanding this sinful nature, which is utterly incapable of any good, God commands us to obey Him, and to be good, when to do so is utterly impossible to us; and He commands this on pain of eternal death."

I replied, "Mr. S, have you a Bible? Will you not turn to the passage that teaches this?" "Why, there is no need of that," he says; "you admit that the Bible teaches it." "No," I said, "I do not believe any such thing." "Then," he continued, "the Bible teaches that God has imputed Adam’s sin to all his posterity; that we inherit the guilt of that sin by nature, and are exposed to eternal damnation for the guilt of Adam’s sin. Now," said he, "I do not care who says it, or what book teaches such a thing, I know that such teaching cannot be from God. This is a direct contradiction of my irresistible convictions of right and justice." "Yes," I replied, "and so it is directly in contradiction of my own. But now," said I, "where is this taught in the Bible?"

He began to quote the catechism, as he had done before. "But," I replied, "that is catechism, not Bible." "Why," said he, "you are a Presbyterian minister, are you not? I thought the catechism was good authority for you." "No," I said; "we are talking about the Bible now--whether the Bible is true. Can you say that this is the doctrine of the Bible?" "Oh," he said, "if you are going to deny that it is taught in the Bible why, that is taking such ground as I never knew a Presbyterian minister to take." He then proceeded to say that the Bible commanded men to repent, but at the same time taught them that they could not repent; it commanded them to obey and believe, and yet at the same time taught them that this was impossible. I of course closed with him again, and asked him where these things were taught in the Bible. He quoted catechism; but I would not receive it.

He went on to say that the Bible taught also, that Christ died only for the elect; and yet it commanded all men everywhere, whether elect or non-elect, to believe, on pain of eternal death. "The fact is," said he, "the Bible, in its commands and teachings, contravenes my innate sense of justice at every step. I cannot, I will not receive it!" He became very positive and warm. But I said to him: "Mr. S, there is a mistake in this. These are not the teachings of the Bible. They are the traditions of men rather than the teachings of the Bible." "Well then," said he, "Mr. Finney, do tell me what you do believe!" This he said with a considerable degree of impatience. I said to him, "If you will give me a hearing for a few moments, I will tell you what I do believe." I then began and told him what my views of both the Law and the Gospel were. He was intelligent enough to understand me easily and quickly. In the course of an hour, I should think, I took him over the whole ground of his objections. He became intensely interested; and I saw that the views that I was presenting, were new to him.

When I came to dwell upon the atonement, and showed that it was made for all men, dwelt upon its nature, its design, its extent, and the freeness of salvation through Christ, I saw his feelings rise, till at last he put both hands over his face, threw his head forward upon his knees, and trembled all over with emotion. I saw that the blood rushed to his head, and that the tears began to flow freely. I rose quickly and left the room without saying another word. I saw that an arrow had transfixed him, and I expected him to be converted immediately. It turned out that he was converted before he left the room.

Very soon after, the meeting house bell tolled for a prayer and conference meeting. I went into the meeting and soon after the meeting commenced, Mr. and Mrs. S came in. His countenance showed that he had been greatly moved. The people looked around, and appeared surprised to see Mr. S come into a prayer meeting. He had always been in the habit of attending worship on the Sabbath, I believe; but to come into a prayer meeting, and that in the daytime, was something new. For his sake, I took up a good deal of the time, at that meeting, in remarks, to which he paid the utmost attention.

His wife afterward told me, that as he walked home when the prayer meeting was over, he said, "My dear, where has all my infidelity gone? I cannot recall it. I cannot make it look as if it had any sense in it. It appears to me as if it always had been perfect nonsense. And how I could ever have viewed the subject as I did, or respected my own arguments as I did, I cannot imagine. It seems to me," said he, "as if I had been called to pass judgment on some splendid piece of architecture, some magnificent temple; and that as soon as I came in view of one corner of the structure, I fell into disgust, and turned away and refused to inspect it farther. I condemned the whole, without at

all regarding its proportions. Just so I have treated the government of God." She said he had always been particularly bitter against the doctrine of endless punishment. But on this occasion, as they were walking home, he said that, for the manner in which he had treated God, he deserved endless damnation.

His conversion was very clear and decided. He warmly espoused the cause of Christ, and enlisted heartily in the promotion of the revival. He joined the church, and soon after became a deacon; and to the day of his death, as I have been told, was a very useful man.

After the conversion of Mr. S, and of that class of young men to whom I have alluded, I thought it was time, if possible, to put a stop to the opposition of the Baptist church and minister. I therefore had an interview first with a deacon of the Baptist church, who had been very bitter in his opposition; and said to him, "Now you have carried your opposition far enough. You must be satisfied that this is the work of God. I have made no allusion in public to your opposition, and I do not wish to do so, or to appear to know that there is any such thing; but you have gone far enough; and I shall feel it my duty, if you do not stop immediately, to take you in hand, and expose your opposition from the pulpit." Things had got into such a state that I was sure that both God and the public would sustain me in carrying out the measure that I proposed.

He confessed, and said that he was sorry; and promised that he would make confession, and that he would not oppose the work any more. He said that he had made a great mistake, and had been deceived; but that he also had been very wicked about it. He then went after his minister; and I had a long conversation with them together. The minister confessed that he had been all wrong; that he had been deceived, and had been wicked; and that his sectarian feeling had carried him too far. He hoped that I would forgive him, and prayed God to forgive him. I told him that I should take no notice whatever of the opposition of his church, provided they stopped it; which they promised to do.

But I then said to him, "Now a considerable number of the young people, whose parents belong to your church, have been converted." If I recollect right, as many as forty of their young people had been converted in that revival. "Now," said I, "if you go to proselyting, that will create a sectarian feeling in both churches, and will be worse than any opposition which you have offered." I said to him, "In spite of your opposition, the work has gone on; because the Presbyterian brethren have kept clear of a sectarian Spirit, and have had the spirit of prayer. But if you go to proselyting, it will destroy the spirit of prayer, and will stop the revival immediately." He knew it, he said; and therefore he would say nothing about receiving any of the converts, and would not open the doors of the church for their reception, until the revival was over; and then, without any proselyting, let the converts all join which church they pleased.

This was on Friday. The next day, Saturday, was the day for their monthly covenant meeting. When they had gathered, instead of keeping his word, he threw the doors of the church open and invited the converts to come forward and tell their experience and join the church. As many as could be persuaded to do so, told their experience; and the next day there was a great parade in baptizing them. The minister sent off immediately, and secured the help of one of the most proselyting Baptist ministers that I ever knew. He came in and began to preach and lecture on baptism.

They traversed the town for converts in every direction; and whenever they could find anyone to join, they would get up a procession, and march, and sing, and make a great parade in going to the water and baptizing them. This soon so grieved the Presbyterian church, as to destroy their spirit of prayer and faith, and the work came to a dead stand. For six weeks there was not a single conversion. All, both saints and sinners, were discussing the question of baptism.

There was a considerable number of men, and some of them prominent men, in the village, that had been under strong conviction, and appeared to be near conversion, who had been entirely diverted by this discussion of baptism; and indeed, this seemed to be the universal effect. Everybody could see that the revival had stopped; and that the Baptists, although they had opposed the revival from the beginning, were bent upon having all the converts join their church. However, I think that a majority of those converted, could not be persuaded to be immersed, although nothing had been said to them on the other side.

I finally said to the people on the Sabbath, "You see how it is that the work of conversion is suspended, and we do not know that a conversion has occurred now for six weeks; and you know the reason." I did not tell them, at all, how the pastor of the Baptist church had violated his word, nor did I allude to it; for I knew that it would do no good, but much hurt, to inform the people that he had been guilty of taking such a course. But I said to them, "Now I do not want to take up a Sabbath in preaching on this subject; but if you will come on Wednesday afternoon at one o’clock, and bring your Bibles, and your lead pencils to mark the passages, I will read to you all the passages in the Bible that relate to the mode of baptism; and I will give you as nearly as I understand them, the views of our Baptist brethren on all those passages, together with my own; and you shall judge for yourselves where the truth lies."

When Wednesday came, the house was crowded. I saw quite a number of the Baptist brethren present. I began and read, first in the Old Testament, and then in the New, all the passages that had any reference to the mode of baptism, so far as I knew. I gave the views that the Baptists had of those texts, and the reasons for their views. I then gave my own views, and my reasons for them. I saw that the impression was decided and good, and that no bad spirit prevailed; and the people appeared satisfied in regard to the mode of baptism. The Baptist brethren, so far as I know, were quite satisfied that I stated their views fairly, and as strongly as they could state them themselves, and also their reasons for them. Before I dismissed the meeting I said, "If you will come tomorrow, at the same hour, at one o’clock, I will read to you all the passages in the Bible that relate to the subjects of baptism, and pursue the same course as I have done today."

The next day the house was crowded, if possible, more than the day before. Quite a number of the principal Baptist brethren were present; and I observed the old elder, the great proselyter, sitting in the congregation. After going through with the introductory services, I arose and commenced my reading. At this point the elder arose and said, "Mr. Finney, I have an appointment, and cannot stay to hear your readings. But I shall wish to answer you; and how shall I know what course you take?" I replied to him: "Elder, I have before me a little skeleton, wherein I quote all the passages that I shall read, and note the order in which I discuss the subject. You can have my skeleton, if you please, and reply to it." He then went out, and, as I supposed, went away to attend his appointment.

I then took up the covenant made with Abraham; and read everything in the Old Testament that directly bore upon the question of the relation of families and of children, to that covenant. I gave the Baptist view of the passages that I read, together with my own with the reasons on both sides, as I had done the day before. I then took up the New Testament, and went through with all the passages in that, referring to the subject. The people waxed very mellow; and the tears flowed very freely when I held up that covenant, as still the covenant which God makes with parents and their household. The congregation was much moved and melted.

Just before I was through, the deacon of the Presbyterian church had occasion to go out, with a child that had sat with him during the long meeting. He told me afterwards that, as he went into the vestibule of the church, he found the old elder sitting there with the door ajar, and listening to what I was saying, and absolutely weeping himself.

When I was done, the people thronged around me on every side, and with tears thanked me for so full and satisfactory an exhibition of that subject. I should have said that the meeting was attended, not only by members of the church, but by the community generally. The question was intelligently settled, and soon the people ceased to talk about it. In the course of a few days the spirit of prayer returned, and the revival was revived and went on again with great power. Not long after, the ordinances were administered, and a large number of the converts united with the church.

I have already intimated that I was a guest of Mr. S. He had a very interesting family. He and his wife, called by everybody, "Aunt Lucy," had no children of their own; but they had, from time to time, through the yearnings of their hearts, adopted one child after another, until they had ten; and they were so nearly of an age that, at this time, his family was composed of himself, and Aunt Lucy, his wife, and ten young people, I think about equally divided, young men and young women. They were all soon converted, and their conversions were very striking. They were bright converts, and very intelligent young people; and a happier and more lovely family I never saw than they were when they were all converted.

But Aunt Lucy had been converted under other circumstances, when there was no revival; and she had never before seen the freshness, and strength, and joy of converts in a powerful revival. Their faith and love, their joy and peace, completely stumbled her. She began to think that she was never converted; and although she had given herself, heart and soul, to the promotion of the work, yet, right in the midst of it, she fell into despair, in spite of all that could be said or done. She concluded that she never had been converted, and of course that she never could be.

This introduced into the family a matter of great pain and concern. Her husband thought she would go deranged. The young people, who all regarded her as a mother, were filled with concern about her; and indeed the house was thrown into mourning. Mr. S gave up his time to converse and to pray with her, and to try to revive her hope. I had several conversations with her; but in the great light which the experience of those young converts, to which she was daily listening, threw around her, she could not be persuaded to believe, either that she ever was converted, or ever could be.

This state of things continued day after day, till I began myself to think that she would be deranged. The street on which they lived was a thickly settled street, almost a village, for some three miles in extent. The work had extended on that street until there was but one adult unconverted person left. He was a young man, by the name of B H, and he was almost frantic in

his opposition to the work. Almost the whole neighborhood gave themselves to prayer for this young man, and his case was in almost everybody's mouth.

One day I came in, and found Aunt Lucy taking on very much about this B H. "Oh dear!" she said; "what will become of him? Why, Mr. S, he will certainly lose his soul! What will become of him?" She seemed to be in the greatest agony, lest that young man should lose his soul. I listened to her for a few moments, and then looked gravely at her, and said: "Aunt Lucy, when you and B H die, God will have to make a partition in hell, and give you a room by yourself." She opened her large blue eyes, and looked at me with a reproving look. "Why, Mr. Finney!" said she. "Just so," I said. "Do you think God will be guilty of so great an impropriety, as to put you and B H in the same place? Here he is, raving against God; and you are almost insane in feeling the abuse which he heaps upon God, and with the fear that he is going to hell. Now can two such persons, in two such opposite states of mind, do you think, be sent to the same place?" I calmly met her reproving gaze, and looked her steadily in the face. In a few moments her features relaxed, and she smiled, the first time for many days. "It is just so, my dear," said Mr. S, "just so. How can you and B H go to the same place?" She laughed and said, "We cannot." From that moment her despair cleared up; and she came out clear, and as happy as any of the young converts. This B H was afterward converted.

About three-quarters of a mile from Mr. S's lived a Mr. M, who was a strong Universalist, and, for a considerable time, kept away from our meetings. One morning, Father Nash, who was at the time with me at Mr. S's, rose up, as his custom was, at a very early hour; and went back to a grove some fifty rods, perhaps, from the road, to have a season of prayer alone. It was before sunrise; and Brother Nash, as usual, became very much engaged in prayer. It was one of those clear mornings, on which it is possible to hear sounds a great distance. Mr. M had risen, and was out of doors at that early hour in the morning, and heard the voice of prayer. He listened, and could distinctly hear Father Nash's voice. He knew it was prayer, he afterward said; though he could not distinguish much that was said. He, however, said that he knew what it was, and who it was. And it lodged an arrow in his heart. He said it brought a sense of the reality of religion over him, such as he never had experienced before. The arrow was fastened. He found no relief, till he found it in believing in Jesus.

I do not know the number of those converted in that revival. It was a large farming town, settled by well-to-do inhabitants. The great majority of them, I am confident, were, in that revival, converted to Christ.

I have not been in that place for many years. But I have often heard from there; and have always understood that there has been a very healthful state of religion in that place, and that they have never had anything like a discussion on the subject of baptism since.

The doctrines preached in promoting that revival, were those that I have preached everywhere. The total moral, voluntary depravity of unregenerate man; the necessity of a radical change of heart, through the truth, by the agency of the Holy Ghost; the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His vicarious atonement, equal to the wants of all mankind; the gift, divinity and agency of the Holy Ghost: repentance, faith, justification by faith, sanctification by faith; persistence in holiness as a condition of salvation; indeed all the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, were stated and set forth with as much clearness, and point, and power, as were possible

to me under the circumstances. A great spirit of prayer prevailed; and after the discussion on baptism, a spirit of most interesting unity, brotherly love, and Christian fellowship prevailed. I never had occasion finally, to rebuke the opposition of the Baptist brethren publicly. In my readings on the subject of baptism, the Lord enabled me to maintain such a spirit that no controversy was started, and no controversial spirit prevailed. The discussion produced no evil result, but great good, and, so far as I could see, only good.

02.11. REVIVAL AT DE KALB

CHAPTER XI.

REVIVAL AT DE KALB.

FROM Gouverneur I went to De Kalb, another village still farther north, some sixteen miles, I think. Here were a Presbyterian church and minister; but the church was small, and the minister seemed not to have a very strong hold upon the people. However, I think he was decidedly a good man. I began to hold meetings in De Kalb, in different parts of the town. The village was small and the people were very much scattered. The country was new, and the roads were new and bad. But a revival commenced immediately, and went forward with a good deal of power, for a place where the inhabitants were so much scattered.

A few years before, there had been a revival there under the labors of the Methodists. It had been attended with a good deal of excitement; and many cases had occurred of, what the Methodists call, "Falling under the power of God." This the Presbyterians had resisted, and, in consequence, a bad state of feeling had arisen, between the Methodists and the Presbyterians; the Methodists accusing the Presbyterians of having opposed the revival among them because of these cases of falling. As nearly as I could learn, there was a good deal of truth in this, and the Presbyterians had been decidedly in error.

I had not preached long, before, one evening, just at the close of my sermon, I observed a man fall from his seat near the door; and the people gathered around him to take care of him. From what I saw, I was satisfied that it was a case of falling under the power of God, as the Methodists would express it, and supposed that it was a Methodist. I must say that I had a little fear that it might reproduce that state of division and alienation that had before existed. But on inquiry I learned that it was one of the principal members of the Presbyterian church, that had fallen. And it was remarkable that during this revival, there were several cases of this kind among the Presbyterians, and none among the Methodists. This led to such confessions and explanations among the members of the different churches, as to secure a state of great cordiality and good feeling among them.

While laboring at De Kalb, I first became acquainted with Mr. F, of Ogdensburgh. He heard of the revival in De Kalb, and came from Ogdensburgh, some sixteen miles, to see it. He was wealthy, and very benevolent. He proposed to employ me as his missionary, to work in the towns throughout that county, and he would pay me a salary. However, I declined to pledge myself to preach in any particular place, or to confine my labors within any given lines.

Mr. F spent several days with me, in visiting from house to house, and in attending our meetings. He had been educated in Philadelphia, an old school Presbyterian, and was himself an elder in the Presbyterian church in Ogdensburgh. On going away, he left a letter for me, containing three ten dollar bills. A few days later he came up again, and spent two or three days, and attended our meetings, and became very much interested in the work. When he went away he left another

letter, containing, as before, three ten dollar bills. Thus I found myself possessed of sixty dollars, with which I immediately purchased a buggy. Before this time, though I had a horse, I had no carriage; and my young wife and myself used to go a good deal on foot, to meeting.

The revival took a very strong hold of the church in this place; and among others, one of the elders of the church, by the name of B, was thoroughly broken up and broken down, and became quite another man. The impression deepened on the public mind from day to day.

One Saturday, just before evening, a German merchant tailor, from Ogdensburgh, by the name of F, called on me, and informed me that Squire F had sent him from Ogdensburgh, to take my measure for a suit of clothes. I had begun to need clothes, and had once, not long before, spoken to the Lord about it, that my clothes were getting shabby; but it had not occurred to me again. Mr. F, however, had observed it; and sent this man, who was a Roman Catholic, to take my measure. I asked him if he would not stay over the Sabbath, and take my measure Monday morning. I said, "It is too late for you to return tonight; and if I allow you to take my measure tonight, you will go home tomorrow." He admitted that he expected to do so. I said, "Then you shall not take it. If you will not stay till Monday morning, I will not be measured for a suit of clothes." He remained.

The same afternoon there were other arrivals from Ogdensburgh; and among them was an Elder S, who was a brother elder in the same church with Mr. F. Mr. S's son, an unconverted young man, came with him.

Elder S attended meeting in the morning, and at the intermission was invited by Elder B to go home with him, and get some refreshment. Elder B was full of the Holy Spirit; and on the way home he preached to Elder S, who was at the time very cold and backward in religion. Elder S was very much penetrated by his words.

Soon after they entered the house the table was spread, and they were invited to sit down and take some refreshment. As they drew around the table, Elder S said to Elder B, "How did you get this blessing?" Elder B replied, "I stopped lying to God." Said he, "All my Christian life I have been making pretenses, and asking God for things that I was not, on the whole, willing to have; and I had gone on and prayed as other people prayed, and often had been insincere, and really lied to God." He continued: "As soon as I made up my mind that I never would say anything to God in prayer, that I did not really mean, God answered me; and the Spirit came down, and I was filled with the Holy Ghost."

At this moment Mr. S, who had not commenced to eat, shoved his chair back from the table, and fell on his knees and began to confess how he had lied to God; and how he had played the hypocrite in his prayers, as well as in his life. The Holy Ghost fell upon him immediately, and filled him as full as he could hold.

In the afternoon the people had assembled for worship, and I was standing in the pulpit reading a hymn. I heard somebody talking very loud, and approaching the house, the door and windows being open. Directly two men came in. Elder B I knew; the other man was a stranger. As soon as he came in at the door, he lifted his eyes to me, came straight into the desk, and took me up in his arms: "God bless you!" said he "God bless you!" He then began and told me, and told the congregation, what the Lord had just done for his soul.

His countenance was all in a glow; and he was so changed in his appearance, that those that knew him were perfectly astonished at the change. His son who had not known of this change in his father, when he saw and heard him, rose up and was hastening out of the church. His father cried out, "Do not leave the house, my son; for I never loved you before." He went on to speak; and the power with which he spoke was perfectly astonishing. The people melted down on every side; and his son broke down almost immediately.

Very soon the Roman Catholic tailor, Mr. F, rose up, and said, "I must tell you what the Lord has done for my soul. I was brought up, a Roman Catholic; and I never dared to read my Bible. I was told that if I did, the devil would carry me off bodily. Sometimes when I dared to look into it, it seemed as if the devil was peering over my shoulder, and had come to carry me off. But," said he, "I see it is all a delusion." And he went on to tell what the Lord had done for him, just there on the spot--what views the Lord had given him of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. It was evident to everybody that he was converted.

This made a great impression on the congregation. I could not preach. The whole course of the meeting had taken on a type which the Lord had given it. I sat still, and saw the salvation of God. All that afternoon, conversions were multiplied in every part of the congregation. As they arose one after another, and told what the Lord had done, and was doing, for their souls, the impression increased; and so spontaneous a movement by the Holy Ghost, in convicting and converting sinners, I had scarcely ever seen.

The next day this Elder S returned to Ogdensburgh. But, as I understand he made many calls on the way, and conversed and prayed with many families; and thus the revival was extended to Ogdensburgh.

In the early part of October, the synod to which I belonged, met in Utica. I took my wife, and we went down to Utica to attend the synod, and to visit her father’s family living near Utica.

Mr. Gale, my theological teacher, had left Adams not long after I left it myself; and had removed to a farm in the town of Western Oneida county, where he was endeavoring to regain his health, and was employed in teaching some young men, who proposed to prepare themselves to preach the Gospel. I spent a few days at the synod at Utica, and then set out on my return to my former field of labor, in St. Lawrence county.

We had not gone more than a dozen miles when we met Mr. Gale in his carriage, on his way to Utica. He leaped from his carriage and said, "God bless you, Brother Finney! I was going down to the synod to see you. You must go home with me; I cannot be denied. I do not believe that I ever was converted; and I wrote the other day to Adams, to know where a letter would reach you, as I wanted to open my mind to you on the subject." He was so importunate that I consented; and we drove immediately to Western.

In reflecting upon what I have said of the revivals of religion, in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties, I am not quite sure that I have laid as much stress as I intended upon the manifest agency of the Holy Spirit, in those revivals. I wish it to be distinctly understood, in all that I shall say, in my narrative of the revivals that I have witnessed, that I always in my own mind, and practically, laid the utmost stress upon this fact, underlying, directing, and giving efficiency to the means, without which nothing would be accomplished.

I have said, more than once, that the spirit of prayer that prevailed in those revivals was a very marked feature of them. It was common for young converts to be greatly exercised in prayer; and in some instances, so much so, that they were constrained to pray whole nights, and until their bodily strength was quite exhausted, for the conversion of souls around them. There was a great pressure of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of Christians; and they seemed to bear about with them the burden of immortal souls. They manifested the greatest solemnity of mind, and the greatest watchfulness in all their words and actions. It was very common to find Christians, whenever they met in any place, instead of engaging in conversation, to fall on their knees in prayer.

Not only were prayer meetings greatly multiplied and fully attended, not only was there great solemnity in those meetings; but there was a mighty spirit of secret prayer. Christians prayed a great deal, many of them spending many hours in private prayer. It was also the case that two, or more, would take the promise: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," and make some particular person a subject of prayer; and it was wonderful to what an extent they prevailed. Answers to prayer were so manifestly multiplied on every side, that no one could escape the conviction that God was daily and hourly answering prayer.

If anything occurred that threatened to mar the work, if there was any appearance of any root of bitterness springing up, or any tendency to fanaticism or disorder, Christians would take the alarm, and give themselves to prayer that God would direct and control all things; and it was surprising to see, to what extent, and by what means, God would remove obstacles out of the way, in answer to prayer.

In regard to my own experience, I will say that unless I had the spirit of prayer I could do nothing. If even for a day or an hour I lost the spirit of grace and supplication, I found myself unable to preach with power and efficiency, or to win souls by personal conversation. In this respect my experience was what it has always been.

For several weeks before I left De Kalb to go to the synod, I was very strongly exercised in prayer, and had an experience that was somewhat new to me. I found myself so much exercised, and so borne down with the weight of immortal souls, that I was constrained to pray without ceasing. Some of my experiences, indeed, alarmed me. A spirit of importunity sometimes came upon me so that I would say to God that He had made a promise to answer prayer, and I could not, and would not, be denied. I felt so certain that He would hear me, and that faithfulness to His promises, and to Himself, rendered it impossible that He should not hear and answer, that frequently I found myself saying to Him, "I hope Thou dost not think that I can be denied. I come with Thy faithful promises in my hand, and I cannot be denied." I cannot tell how absurd unbelief looked to me, and how certain it was, in my mind, that God would answer prayer--those prayers that, from day to day, and from hour to hour, I found myself offering in such agony and faith. I had no idea of the shape the answer would take, the locality in which the prayers would be answered, or the exact time of the answer. My impression was that the answer was near, even at the door; and I felt myself strengthened in the divine life, put on the harness for a mighty conflict with the powers of darkness, and expected soon to see a far more powerful outpouring of the Spirit of God, in that new country where I had been laboring.

02.12. REVIVAL AT WESTERN

CHAPTER XII.

REVIVAL AT WESTERN.

I HAVE spoken of my turning aside to Western, as I was returning from the synod at Utica. At this place, commenced that series of revivals, afterward called the western revivals. So far as I know these revivals first attracted the notice, and excited the opposition of certain prominent ministers at the East, and raised the cry of "New Measures."

The churches in that region were mostly Presbyterian. There were in that county, however, three Congregational ministers who called themselves "The Oneida Association," who, at the time, published a pamphlet against those revivals. This much we knew; but as the pamphlet made no public impression that we could learn, no public notice, so far as I am aware, was ever taken of it. We thought it likely that that association had much to do with the opposition that was raised in the East. Their leader, Rev. William R. Weeks, as was well known, embraced and propagated the peculiar doctrines of Dr. Emmons, and insisted very much upon what he called "The divine efficiency scheme." His peculiar views on this subject naturally led him to be suspicious of whatever was not connected with those views, in preaching, and in the means that were used to promote a revival. He seemed to have little or no confidence in any conversions that did not bring men to embrace his views of divine efficiency and divine sovereignty; and as those of us who labored in those revivals had no sympathy with his views in that respect, it was very natural for him to have but little confidence in the genuineness of the revivals. But we never supposed that the whole of the opposition could have originated in representations made by any of the members of that association.

No public replies were made to the letters that found their way into the public prints, nor to anything that was published in opposition to the revivals. Those of us who were engaged in them, had our hands too full, and our hearts too full, to turn aside, to reply to letters, or reports, or publications, that so manifestly misrepresented the character of the work.

The fact that no answers were made at the time, left the public abroad, and without the range of those revivals, and where the facts were not known, to misapprehend their character. So much misapprehension came to exist, that it has been common for good men, in referring to those revivals, to assume, that although they were, upon the whole, revivals of religion; yet, that they were so conducted that great disorders were manifest in them, and that there was much to deplore in their results.

Now all this is an entire mistake. I shall relate as fairly as I can, the characteristics of these revivals, the measures that were used in promoting them, and disclose, to the best of my ability, their real character and results; understanding well, as I do, that there are multitudes of living witnesses, who can attest the truth of what I say, or if, in anything, I am mistaken, can correct me.

And now I will turn to Western, where these revivals commenced, in Oneida county. I have said, that Mr. Gale had settled upon a farm in Western; and was employing some young men, in helping to cultivate the farm, and was engaged in teaching them, and endeavoring to regain his health. I went directly to his house, and for several weeks was his guest. We arrived there Thursday, I think, and that afternoon there was a stated prayer meeting, in the schoolhouse, near the church. The church had no settled minister, and Mr. Gale was unable to preach; indeed, he did not go there to preach, but simply for his health. I believe they usually had a minister, only a part of the time; and for some time previously to my going there, I think, they had had no stated preaching at all, in the Presbyterian church. There were three elders in the church, and a few members; but the church was very small, and religion was at low water mark. There seemed to be no life, or courage, or enterprise, on the part of Christians; and nothing was doing to secure the conversion of sinners, or the sanctification of the church.

In the afternoon Mr. Gale invited me to go to the prayer meeting, and I went. They asked me to take the lead of the meeting; but I declined, expecting to be there only for that afternoon, and preferring rather to hear them pray and talk, than to take part in the meeting myself. The meeting was opened by one of the elders, who read a chapter in the Bible, then a hymn, which they sung. After this he made a long prayer, or perhaps I should say an exhortation, or gave a narrative--I hardly know what to call it. He told the Lord how many years they had been holding that prayer meeting weekly, and that no answer had been given to their prayers. He made such statements and confessions as greatly shocked me. After he had done, another elder took up the same theme. He read a hymn, and, after singing, engaged in a long prayer, in which he went over very nearly the same ground, making such statements as the first one had omitted. Then followed the third elder, in the same strain. By this time I could say with Paul, that my Spirit was stirred within me. They had got through and were about to dismiss the meeting. But one of the elders asked me if I would not make a remark, before they dismissed. I arose and took their statements and confessions for a text; and it seemed to me, at the time, that God inspired me to give them a terrible searching.

When I arose, I had no idea what I should say; but the Spirit of God came upon me, and I took up their prayers, and statements and confessions, and dissected them. I showed them up, and asked if it had been understood that that prayer meeting was a mock prayer meeting whether they had come together professedly to mock God, by implying that all the blame of what had been passing all this time, was to be ascribed to His sovereignty?

At first I observed that they all looked angry. Some of them afterward said, that they were on the point of getting up and going out. But I followed them up on the track of their prayers and confessions, until the elder, who was the principal man among them, and opened the meeting, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Brother Finney, it is all true!" He fell upon his knees and wept aloud. This was the signal for a general breaking down. Every man and woman went down upon their knees. There were probably not more than a dozen present; but they were the leading members in the church. They all wept, and confessed, and broke their hearts before God. This scene continued, I presume, for an hour; and a more thorough breaking down and confession I have seldom witnessed.

As soon as they recovered themselves somewhat, they besought me to remain and preach to them on the Sabbath. I regarded it as the voice of the Lord, and consented to do so. This was Thursday, at night. On Friday, my mind was greatly exercised. I went off frequently into the church, to engage in secret prayer, and had a mighty hold upon God. The news was circulated, and on Sabbath the church was full of hearers. I preached all day, and God came down with great power upon the people. It was manifest to everybody that the work of grace had begun. I made appointments to preach in different parts of the town, in schoolhouses, and at the center, during the week; and the work increased from day to day.

In the meantime, my own mind was much exercised in prayer; and I found that the spirit of prayer was prevailing, especially among the female members of the church. Mrs. B and Mrs. H, the wives of two of the elders of the church, I found, were, almost immediately, greatly exercised in prayer. Each of them had families of unconverted children; and they laid hold in prayer with an earnestness that, to me, gave promise that their families must be converted. Mrs. H, however, was a woman of very feeble health, and had not ventured out much, to any meeting, for a long time. But, as the day was pleasant, she was out at the prayer meeting to which I have alluded, and seemed to catch the inspiration of that meeting, and took it home with her.

It was the next week, I think, that I called in at Mr. H's, and found him pale and agitated. He said to me "Brother Finney, I think my wife will die. She is so exercised in her mind that she cannot rest day or night, but is given up entirely to prayer. She has been all the morning," said he, "in her room, groaning and struggling in prayer; and I am afraid it will entirely overcome her strength." Hearing my voice in the sitting room, she came out from her bedroom, and upon her face was a most heavenly glow. Her countenance was lighted up with a hope and a joy that were plainly from heaven. She exclaimed, "Brother Finney, the Lord has come! This work will spread over all this region! A cloud of mercy overhangs us all; and we shall see such a work of grace as we have never yet seen." Her husband looked surprised, confounded, and knew not what to say. It was new to him, but not to me. I had witnessed such scenes before, and believed that prayer had prevailed; nay, I felt sure of it in my own soul.

The work went on, spread, and prevailed, until it began to exhibit unmistakable indications of the direction in which the Spirit of God was leading from that place. The distance to home was nine miles, I believe. About half way, was a small village, called Elmer's Hill. There was a large schoolhouse, where I held a weekly lecture; and it soon became manifest that the work was spreading in the direction of Rome and Utica. There was a settlement northeast of Rome, about three miles, called Wright's settlement. Large numbers of persons came down to attend the meetings at Elmer's Hill, from Rome and from Wright's settlement; and the work soon began to take effect among them.

But I must relate a few of the incidents that occurred in the revival at Western. Mrs. B, to whom I have already alluded, had a large family of unconverted children. One of the sons was, I believe, a professor of religion, and lived at Utica; the rest of the family were at home. They were a very amiable family; and the eldest daughter, especially, had been manifestly regarded by the family as almost perfect. I went in several times to converse with her; but I found that the family were so tender of her feelings that I could not strip away her self-righteousness. She had evidently been made to believe that she was almost, if not quite, a Christian. Her life had been so irreproachable,

that it was very difficult to convict her of sin. The second daughter was also a very amiable girl; but she did not regard herself as worthy to be compared with the eldest, in respect to amiability and excellence of character.

One day when I was talking with S, the eldest, and trying to make her see herself as a great sinner, notwithstanding her morality, C, the second daughter said to me, "Mr. Finney I think that you are too hard upon S. If you should talk so to me, I should feel that I deserved it; but I don't think that she does." After being defeated several times in my attempts to secure the conviction and conversion of S, I made up my mind to bide my time, and improve some opportunity when I should find her away from home, or alone. It was not long before the opportunity came. I entered into conversation with her, and by God's help stripped the covering from her heart, and she was brought under powerful conviction for sin. The Spirit pursued her with mighty power. The family were surprised and greatly distressed for S; but God pushed the question home till, after a struggle of a few days, she broke thoroughly down, and came out into the kingdom, as beautiful a convert as, perhaps, I have ever seen. Her convictions were so thorough, that when she came out, she was strong in faith, clear in her apprehension of duty and of truth, and immediately became a host in her power for good among her friends and acquaintances.

In the meantime, C, the second daughter, became very much alarmed about herself, and very anxious for the salvation of her own soul. The mother seemed to be in real travail of soul day and night. I called in to see the family almost daily, and sometimes, two or three times a day. One of the children after another was converted; and we were expecting every day to see C come out a bright convert. But for some reason she lingered. It was plain the Spirit was resisted; and one day I called to see her, and found her in the sitting room alone. I asked her how she was getting on, and she replied, "Mr. Finney, I am losing my conviction. I do not feel nearly as much concerned about myself as I have done." Just at this moment, a door was opened, and Mrs. B came into the room, and I told her what C had said. It shocked her so that she groaned aloud, and fell prostrate on the floor. She was unable to rise; and she struggled and groaned out her prayers, in a manner that immediately indicated to me that C must be converted. She was unable to say much in words, but her groans and tears witnessed the extreme agony of her mind. As soon as this scene had occurred, the Spirit of God manifestly came upon C afresh. She fell upon her knees, and before she arose she broke down; and became to all appearance as thorough a convert as S was. The B children, sons and daughters, were all converted at that time, I believe, except the youngest, then a little child. One of the sons has preached the Gospel for many years.

Among other incidents, I recollect the case of a young woman, in a distant part of the town, who came to the meeting at the center almost every day. I had conversed with her several times, and found her deeply convicted, and, indeed, almost in despair. I was expecting to hear, from day to day, that she had been converted; but she remained stationary, or rather despair increased upon her. This led me to suspect that something was wrong at home. I asked her if her parents were Christians. She said they were members of the church. I asked her if they attended meetings. She said, "Yes, on the Sabbath. Do not your parents attend meetings at other times?" "No," was the reply. "Do you have family prayers at home?" "No sir," she said. "We used to have; but we have not had family prayers for a long time." This revealed to me the stumbling block, at once. I inquired when I could probably find her father and mother at home. She said, "almost any time," as they were seldom away from home. Feeling that it was infinitely dangerous to leave this case as it was,

I went the next morning to see the family.

This daughter was, I think, an only child; at any rate, she was the only child at home. I found her bowed down, dejected, and sunken in despair. I said to the mother, "The Spirit of the Lord is striving with your daughter." "Yes," she said, "I don't know but He is." I asked her if she was praying for her. She gave me an answer that led me to understand that she did not know what it was to pray for her. I inquired for her husband. She said that he was in the field at work. I asked her to call him in. He came, and as he came in I said to him, "Do you see the state that your daughter is in?" He replied that he thought she felt very bad. "And are you awake, and engaged in prayer for her?" His answer revealed the fact that if he was ever converted he was a miserable backslider, and had no hold upon God whatever. "And," said I, "you do not have family prayers." "No sir." "Now," said I, "I have seen your daughter, day after day, bowed down with conviction, and I have learned that the difficulty is here at home. You have shut up the kingdom of heaven against your daughter. You neither enter yourself, nor will you suffer her to enter. Your unbelief and worldly-mindedness prevent the conversion of your daughter, and will ruin your own soul. Now you must repent. I do not intend to leave this house until you and your wife repent, and get out of the way of your daughter. You must establish family prayer, and build up the altar that has fallen down. Now, my dear sir, will you get down here on your knees, you and your wife, and engage in prayer? And will you promise, that from this time you will do your duty, set up your family altar, and return to God?"

I was so earnest with them, that they both began to weep. My faith was so strong, that I did not trifle when I told them that I would not leave the house, until they would repent, and establish their family altar. I felt that the work must be done, and done then. I cast myself down upon my knees and began to pray; and they knelt down and wept sorely. I confessed for them as well as I could, and tried to lead them to God, and to prevail with God in their behalf. It was a moving scene. They both broke down their hearts, and confessed their sins; and before we rose from our knees the daughter got into liberty, and was manifestly converted. She arose rejoicing in Christ. Many answers to prayer, and many scenes of great interest were presented in this revival.

There was one passage of my own experience that, for the honor of God, I must not omit to relate in this connection. I had preached and prayed almost continually during the time that I had been at Mr. Gale's. As I was accustomed to use my voice in private prayer, for convenience sake, that I might not be heard, I had spread a buffalo robe on the hayloft; where I used to spend much of my time, when not abroad visiting, or engaged in preaching, in secret prayer to God. Mr. Gale had admonished me, several times, that, if I did not take care, I should go beyond my strength and break down. But the Spirit of prayer was upon me, and I would not resist Him; but gave Him scope, and let out my strength freely, in pouring my soul out to God. It was November, and the weather was becoming cold. Mr. Gale and I had been out visiting inquirers with his horse and buggy. We came home and went into the barn, and put out the horse. Instead of going into the house, I crept up into the hayloft to pour out my burdened song to God in prayer. I prayed until my burden left me. I was so far exhausted that I fell down, and lost myself in sleep. I must have fallen asleep almost instantly, I judge, from the fact that I had no recollection of any time elapsing, after the struggle in my soul was over. The first I knew, Mr. Gale came climbing up into the hayloft, and said, "Brother Finney, are you dead?" I awoke, and at first could give no account why I was there asleep, and could form no idea how long I had been there. But this I knew, that my mind was calm

and my faith unwavering. The work would go on, of that I felt assured.

I have already said that I was ordained to the ministry by a presbytery. This was years before the division of the Presbyterian church into what is known as the Old and New School Assemblies. The well known doctrine of natural and moral ability and inability, was held by the Presbyterian church, almost universally, in the region where I commenced my ministry. I must here repeat also that Mr. Gale, who, by direction of the presbytery, had attended somewhat to my theological studies, held firmly to the doctrine of the sinner's inability to obey God; and the subject as he presented it in his preaching, as was the case with most of the Presbyterian ministers of that day, left the impression upon the people that they must wait God's time. If they were elect, in due time the Spirit would convert them; if they were non-elect, nothing that they could do for themselves, or that anybody else could do for them, would ever savingly benefit them.

They held the doctrine that moral depravity was constitutional, and belonged to the very nature; that the will, though free to do evil, was utterly impotent to all good; that the work of the Holy Spirit in changing the heart, was a physical operation on the substance or essence of the soul; that the sinner was passive in regeneration, till the Holy Spirit had implanted a new principle in his nature, and that all efforts on his part vere utterly unavailing; that properly speaking there were no means of regeneration, this being a physical recreation of the soul by the direct agency of the Holy Ghost; that the atonement was limited to the elect, and that for the non-elect to be saved was an utter impossibility.

In my studies and controversies with Mr. Gale, I had maintained the opposite of this. I assumed that moral depravity is, and must be, a voluntary attitude of the mind; that it does, and must, consist in the committal of the will to the gratification of the desires, or as the Bible expresses it, of the lusts of the flesh, as opposed to that which the law of God requires. In consistency with this I maintained that the influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul of man is moral, that is persuasive; that Christ represented Him as a teacher; that His work is to convict and convert the sinner, by divine teaching and persuasion.

I held also that there are means of regeneration, and that the truths of the Bible are, in their nature, calculated to lead the sinner to abandon his wickedness and turn to God. I held also that there must be an adaptation of means to the end to be secured; that is, that the intelligence must be enlightened, the unreasonableness of moral depravity must be set before the sinner, and its wickedness and ill-desert clearly revealed to him; that when this was done the mission of Christ could be strongly presented, and could be understood by him; that taking this course with the sinner, had a tendency to convert him to Christ; and that when this was faithfully and prayerfully done, we had a right to expect the Holy Spirit to cooperate with us, giving effect to our feeble effort.

Furthermore, I held that the Holy Spirit operates in the preacher, clearly revealing these truths in their proper order to him, and enabling him to set them before the people, in such proportion, and in such order as is calculated to convert them. I understood then, as I do now, the charge and promise which Christ gave to the apostles and to the church, to be applicable in the present day: "Go and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

This I regarded as a charge committed to me, to all ministers, and to the church; with the express promise that when we go forth to this work, with a single eye, and with a prayerful heart, Christ will be with us by His Spirit, giving efficiency to our efforts to save souls. It appeared to me then, as it ever has since, that the great failure of the ministry and of the church, in promoting religion, consisted, in great measure, in the want of a suitable adaptation of means to that end. I had sat under Mr. Gale's preaching for years, and could never see any adaptation in his preaching to convert anybody. It did not appear to me as if that could have been his design. I found the same was true of all the sermons that I heard, anywhere. I had on one occasion spoken to Mr. Gale on this subject, and said to him, that of all the causes that were ever plead, the cause of religion, I thought, had the fewest able advocates; and that if advocates at the bar should pursue the same course in pleading the cause of their clients, that ministers do in pleading the cause of Christ with sinners, they would not gain a single case.

But at that time, Mr. Gale could not see it; for what connection was there between means and ends, upon his view of what regeneration consisted in, and the manner in which the Holy Spirit changed the heart?

As an illustration, soon after I began to preach, in the midst of a powerful revival, a young man from the theological seminary at Princeton, came into the place. The former pastor of the church, an elderly gentlemen, lived there, and had a great curiosity to hear this young man preach. The church had no pastor at the time; I therefore had the sole charge of the pulpit, and was conducting things according to my own discretion. He said he had known the young man before he went to college, and he desired very much to see what proficiency he had made; and wanted I should let him preach. I said I was afraid to set him to preach, lest he should mar the work, by not preaching that which was needed at the time. "Oh," said the old gentleman, "he will preach the truth; and there is no connection in religion, you know, between means and ends, and therefore there is no danger of his marring the work." I replied, "That is not my doctrine. I believe there is as much connection between means and ends in religion as in nature; and therefore cannot consent to let him preach."

I have often found it necessary to take substantially the same course in revivals of religion; and sometimes, by doing so, I have found that I gave offense; but I dared not do otherwise. In the midst of a revival of religion, and when souls needed peculiar instruction, adapted to their present condition and their present wants, I dared not put a stranger into the pulpit, where I had the charge, to preach any of his great sermons, and generally too, a sermon not at all adapted to the wants of the people. For this course I have frequently been accused of supposing that I could preach better than others. And I confess I did suppose that I could meet the wants of the people, better than those that knew less about them, or than those that would preach their old written sermons to them; and I supposed that Christ had put the work into my hands in such a sense, that I was under obligation to adapt means to ends, and not call upon others who knew little of the state of things, to attempt to instruct the people. I did in these cases just as I would be done by. I would not allow myself to go in, where another man was laboring to promote a revival, and suffer myself to be put in his place, when I knew little or nothing about the state of the people.

I have said that at Western I was the guest of Mr. Gale, and that he had come to the conclusion that he was never converted. He told me the progress of his mind; that he had firmly believed, as

he had so frequently urged upon me, that God would not bless my labors, because I would not preach what he regarded as the truths of the Gospel. But when he found that the Spirit of God did accompany my labors, it led him to the conclusion that he was wrong; and this led him to such an overhauling of his whole state of mind, and of his views as a preacher, as resulted in his coming to the conclusion that he had never been converted, and did not understand the Gospel himself. During the revival in Western, he attended nearly all the meetings; and before many weeks, he told me he had come into an entirely different state of mind in regard to his own soul, and had changed his views of the Gospel, and thought I was right. He said he thanked God that he had had no influence with me, to lead me to adopt his views; that I should have been ruined as a minister if he had prevailed. From this time he became a very efficient worker, so far as his health would permit, in the revival in that region of country.

The doctrine upon which I insisted, that the command to obey God implied the power to do so, created in some places considerable opposition at first. Denying also, as I did, that moral depravity is physical, or the depravity of the nature, and maintaining, as I did, that it is altogether voluntary, and therefore that the Spirit's influences are those of teaching, persuading, convicting, and, of course, a moral influence, I was regarded by many as teaching new and strange doctrines. Indeed, as late as 1832, when I was laboring in Boston for the first time, Dr. Beecher said that he never had heard the doctrine preached before, that the Spirit's influences are moral, as opposed to physical. Therefore, to a considerable extent, ministers and Christians regarded that doctrine as virtually a denial of the Spirit's influence altogether; and hence, although I ever insisted very much, and incessantly, upon the divine agency in conviction and regeneration, and in every Christian exercise; yet it was a long time before the cry ceased to be heard that I denied the agency of the Holy Ghost, in regeneration and conversion. It was said that I taught self-conversion, self-regeneration; and not unfrequently was I rebuked for addressing the sinner, as if the blame of his impenitence all belonged to himself, and for urging him to immediate submission. However, I persisted in this course, and it was seen by ministers and Christians that God owned it as His truth, and blessed it to the salvation of thousands of souls.

I have spoken of the meetings at Elmer's Hill, and have said that people from Rome and Wright's settlement began to come in large numbers; and that the manifest effect of the Word upon those that came, plainly indicated that the work was rapidly extending in that direction.

02.13. REVIVAL AT ROME

CHAPTER XIII.

REVIVAL AT ROME.

AT this time Rev. Moses Gillett, pastor of the Congregational Church in Rome, hearing what the Lord was doing in Western, came, in company with a Miss H, one of the prominent members of his church, to see the work that was going on. They were both greatly impressed with the work of God. I could see that the Spirit of God was stirring them up to the deepest foundations of their minds. After a few days, Mr. Gillett and Miss H came up again. Miss H was a very devout and earnest Christian girl. On their second coming up, Mr. Gillett said to me, "Brother Finney, it seems to me that I have a new Bible. I never before understood the promises as I do now; I never got hold of them before; I cannot rest," said he; "my mind is full of the subject, and the promises are new to me." This conversation, protracted as it was for some time, gave me to understand that the Lord was preparing him for a great work in his own congregation.

Soon after this, and when the revival was in its full strength at Western, Mr. Gillett persuaded me to exchange a day with him. I consented reluctantly.

On the Saturday before the day of our exchange, on my way to Rome, I greatly regretted that I had consented to the exchange. I felt that it would greatly mar the work in Western, because Mr. Gillett would preach some of his old sermons, which I knew very well could not be adapted to the state of things. However, the people were praying; and it would not stop the work, although it might retard it. I went to Rome and preached three times on the Sabbath. To me it was perfectly manifest that the Word took great effect. I could see during the day that many heads were down, and that a great number of them were bowed down with deep conviction for sin. I preached in the morning on the text: "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and followed it up with something in the same direction, in the afternoon and evening. I waited on Monday morning, till Mr. Gillett returned from Western. I told him what my impressions were in respect to the state of the people. He did not seem to realize that the work was beginning with such power as I supposed. But he wanted to call for inquirers, if there were any in the congregation, and wished me to be present at the meeting. I have said before, that the means that I had all along used, thus far, in promoting revivals, were much prayer, secret and social, public preaching, personal conversation, and visitation from house to house; and when inquirers became multiplied, I appointed meetings for them, and invited those that were inquiring to meet for instruction, suited to their necessities. These were the means and the only means, that I had thus far used, in attempting to secure the conversion of souls.

Mr. Gillett asked me to be present at the proposed meeting of inquiry. I told him I would; and that he might circulate information through the village, that there would be a meeting of inquiry, on Monday evening. I would go to Western, and return just at evening; it being understood that he was not to let the people know that he expected me to be present. The meeting was called at the house of one of his deacons. When we arrived, we found the large sitting room crowed to its

utmost capacity. Mr. Gillett looked around with surprise, and manifest agitation; for he found that the meeting was composed of many of the most intelligent and influential members of his congregation; and especially was largely composed of the prominent young men in the town. We spent a little while in attempting to converse with them; and I soon saw that the feeling was so deep, that there was danger of an outburst of feeling, that would be almost uncontrollable. I therefore said to Mr. Gillett, "It will not do to continue the meeting in this shape. I will make some remarks, such as they need, and then dismiss them."

Nothing had been said or done to create any excitement in the meeting. The feeling was all spontaneous. The work was with such power, that even a few words of conversation would make the stoutest men writhe on their seats, as if a sword had been thrust into their hearts. It would probably not be possible for one who had never witnessed such a scene, to realize what the force of the truth sometimes is, under the power of the Holy Ghost. It was indeed a sword, and a two-edged sword. The pain that it produced when searchingly presented in a few words of conversation, would create a distress that seemed unendurable.

Mr. Gillett became very much agitated. He turned pale; and with a good deal of excitement he said, "What shall we do? What shall we do?" I put my hand on his shoulder, and in a whisper said, "Keep quiet, keep quiet, Brother Gillett." I then addressed them in as gentle but plain a manner as I could; calling their attention at once to their only remedy, and assuring them that it was a present and all-sufficient remedy. I pointed them to Christ, as the Savior of the world; and kept on in this strain as long as they could well endure it, which, indeed, was but a few moments.

Mr. Gillett became so agitated that I stepped up to him, and taking him by the arm I said, "Let us pray." We knelt down in the middle of the room where we had been standing. I led in prayer, in a low, unimpassioned voice; but interceded with the Savior to interpose His blood, then and there, and to lead all these sinners to accept the salvation which He proffered, and to believe to the saving of their souls. The agitation deepened every moment; and as I could hear their sobs, and sighs, I closed my prayer and rose suddenly from my knees. They all arose, and I said, "Now please go home without speaking a word to each other. Try to keep silent, and do not break out into any boisterous manifestation of feeling; but go without saying a word, to your rooms."

At this moment a young man by the name of W, a clerk in Mr. H’s store, being one of the first young men in the place, so nearly fainted, that he fell upon some young men that stood near him; and they all of them partially swooned away, and fell together. This had well-nigh produced a loud shrieking; but I hushed them down, and said to the young men, "Please set that door wide open, and go out, and let all retire in silence." They did as I requested. They did not shriek; but they went out sobbing and sighing, and their sobs and sighs could be heard till they got out into the street.

This Mr. W, to whom I have alluded, kept silence till he entered the door where he lived; but he could contain himself any longer. He shut the door, fell upon the floor, and burst out into a loud wailing, in view of his awful condition: This brought the family around him, and scattered conviction among the whole of them.

I afterwards learned that similar scenes occurred in other families. Several, as it was afterwards ascertained, were converted at the meeting, and went home so full of joy, that they could hardly contain themselves.

The next morning, as soon as it was fairly day, people began to call at Mr. Gillett's, to have us go and visit members of their families, whom they represented as being under the greatest conviction. We took a hasty breakfast, and started out. As soon as we were in the streets, the people ran out from many houses, and begged us to go into their houses. As we could only visit but one place at a time, when we went into a house, the neighbors would rush in and fill the largest room. We would stay and give them instruction for a short time, and then go to another house, and the people would follow us.

We found a most extraordinary state of things. Convictions were so deep and universal, that we would sometimes go into a house, and find some in a kneeling posture, and some prostrate on the floor. We visited, and conversed, and prayed in this manner, from house to house, till noon. I then said to Mr. Gillett, "This will never do; we must have a meeting of inquiry. We cannot go from house to house, and we are not meeting the wants of the people at all." He agreed with me; but the question arose, where shall we have the meeting?

A Mr. F, a religious man, at that time kept a hotel, on the corner, at the center of the town. He had a large dining room; and Mr. Gitlett said, "I will step in and see if I cannot be allowed to appoint the meeting of inquiry in his dining room." Without difficulty he obtained consent, and then went immediately to the public schools, and gave notice that at one o'clock there would be a meeting of inquiry at Mr. F's dining room. We went home, and took our dinner, and started for the meeting. We saw people hurrying, and some of them actually running to the meeting. They were coming from every direction. By the time we were there, the room, though a large one, was crammed to its utmost capacity. Men, women, and children crowded the apartment.

This meeting was very much like the one we had had the night before. The feeling was overwhelming. Some men of the strongest nerves were so cut down by the remarks which were made, that they were unable to help themselves, and had to be taken home by their friends. This meeting lasted till nearly night. It resulted in a great number of hopeful conversions, and was the means of greatly extending the work on every side.

I preached that evening, and Mr. Gillett appointed a meeting for inquiry, the next morning, in the courthouse. This was a much larger room than the dining hall, though it was not so central. However, at the hour, the court house was crowded; and we spent a good part of the day in giving instruction, and the work went on with wonderful power. I preached again in the evening, and Mr. Gillett appointed a meeting of inquiry, the next morning, at the church; as no other room in the village was then large enough to hold the inquirers.

At evening, if I rightly remember the order of things; we undertook to hold a prayer and conference meeting in a large schoolhouse. But the meeting was hardly begun before the feeling deepened so much that, to prevent an undesirable outburst of overwhelming feeling, I proposed to Mr. Gillett that we should dismiss the meeting, and request the people to go in silence, and Christians to spend the evening in secret prayer, or in family prayer, as might seem most desirable. Sinners we exhorted not to sleep, until they gave their hearts to God. After this the work became so general that I preached every night, I think, for twenty nights in succession, and twice on the Sabbath. Our prayer meetings during this time were held in the church, in the daytime. The prayer meeting was held one part of the day, and a meeting for inquiry the other part. Every day, if I remember aright, after the work had thus commenced, we held a prayer meeting and a meeting for inquiry, with

preaching in the evening. There was a solemnity throughout the whole place, and an awe that made everybody feel that God was there.

Ministers came in from neighboring towns, and expressed great astonishment at what they saw and heard, as well they might. Conversions multiplied so rapidly, that we had no way of learning who were converted.

Therefore every evening, at the close of my sermon, I requested all who had been converted that day, to come forward and report themselves in front of the pulpit, that we might have a little conversation with them. We were every night surprised by the number and the class of persons that came forward.

At one of our morning prayer meetings, the lower part of the church was full. I arose and was making some remarks to the people, when an unconverted man, a merchant, came into the meeting. He came along till he found a seat in front of me, and near where I stood speaking. He had sat but a few moments, when he fell from his seat as if he had been shot. He writhed and groaned in a terrible manner. I stepped to the pew door, and saw that it was altogether an agony of mind.

A skeptical physician sat near him. He stepped out of his slip, and came and examined this man who was thus distressed. He felt his pulse, and examined the case for a few moments. He said nothing, but turned away, and leaned his head against a post that supported the gallery, and manifested great agitation.

He said afterward that he saw at once that it was distress of mind, and it took his skepticism entirely away. He was soon after hopefully converted. We engaged in prayer for the man who fell in the pew; and before he left the house, I believe, his anguish passed away, and he rejoiced in Christ.

Another physician, a very amiable man but a skeptic, had a little daughter and a praying wife. Little H, a girl perhaps eight or nine years old, was strongly convicted of sin, and her mother was greatly interested in her state of mind. But her father was, at first, quite indignant. He said to his wife, "The subject of religion is too high for me. I never could understand it. And do you tell me that that little child understands it so as to be intelligently convicted of sin? I do not believe it. I know better. I cannot endure it. It is fanaticism; it is madness." Nevertheless the mother of the child held fast in prayer. The doctor made these remarks, as I learned, with a good deal of spirit. Immediately he took his horse, and went several miles to see a patient. On his way, as he afterward remarked, that subject took possession of his mind in such a manner, that it was all opened to his understanding; and the whole plan of salvation by Christ was so clear to him that he saw that a child could understand it. He wondered that it had ever seemed so mysterious to him. He regretted exceedingly that he had said what he had to his wife about little H, and felt in haste to get home that he might take it back. He soon came home, another man; told his wife what had passed in his own mind; encouraged dear little H to come to Christ; and both father and daughter have since been earnest Christians, and have lived long and done much good.

But in this revival, as in others that I have known, God did some terrible things in righteousness. On one Sabbath while I was there, as we came out of the pulpit, and were about to leave the church, a man came in haste to Mr. Gillett and myself, and requested us to go to a certain place,

saying that a man had fallen down dead there. I was engaged in conversing with somebody, and Mr. Gillett went alone. When I was through with the conversation, I went to Mr. Gillett's house, and he soon returned and related this fact. Three men who had been opposing the work, had met that Sabbath-day, and spent the day in drinking and ridiculing the work. They went on in this way until one of them suddenly fell dead. When Mr. Gillett arrived at the house, and the circumstances were related to him, he said, "There--there is no doubt but that man has been stricken down by God, and has been sent to hell." His companions were speechless. They could say nothing; for it was evident to them that their conduct had brought upon him this awful stroke of divine indignation. As the work proceeded, it gathered in nearly the whole population. Nearly every one of the lawyers, merchants, and physicians, and almost all the principal men, and indeed, nearly all the adult population of the village, were brought in, especially those who belonged to Mr. Gillett's congregation. He said to me before I left, "So far as my congregation is concerned, the millennium is come already. My people are all converted. Of all my past labors I have not a sermon that is suited at all to my congregation, for they are all Christians." Mr. Gillett afterward reported that, during the twenty days that I spent at Rome, there were five hundred conversions in that town.

During the progress of this work, a good deal of excitement sprung up in Utica, and some there, were disposed to ridicule the work at Rome. Mr. E, who lived at Rome, was a very prominent citizen, and was regarded as standing at the head of society there, in point of wealth and intelligence. But he was skeptical; or, perhaps I should say, he held Unitarian views. He was a very moral and respectable man, and held his peculiar views unobtrusively, saying very little to anybody about them. The first Sabbath I preached there, Mr. H was present; and he was so astonished, as he afterwards told me, at my preaching, that he made up his mind that he would not go again. He went home and said to his family: "That man is mad, and I should not be surprised if he set the town on fire." He stayed away from the meeting for some two weeks. In the meantime the work became so great as to confound his skepticism, and he was in a state of great perplexity.

He was president of a bank in Utica, and used to go down to attend the weekly meeting of the directors. On one of these occasions, one of the directors began to rally him on the state of things in Rome, as if they were all running mad there. Mr. H remarked, "Gentlemen, say what you will, there is something very remarkable in the state of things in Rome. Certainly no human power or eloquence has produced what we see there. I cannot understand it. You say it will soon subside. No doubt the intensity of feeling that is now in Rome, must soon subside, or the people will become insane. But, gentlemen," said he, "there is no accounting for that state of feeling by any philosophy, unless there be something divine in it."

After Mr. H had stayed away from the meeting about two weeks, a few of us assembled one afternoon, to make him a special subject of prayer. The Lord gave us strong faith in praying for him; and we felt the conviction that the Lord was working in his soul. That evening he came to meeting. When he came into the house, Mr. Gillett whispered to me as he sat in the pulpit, and said, "Brother Finney, Mr. H has come. I hope you will not say anything that will offend him." "No," said I, "but I shall not spare him." In those days I was obliged to preach altogether without premeditation; for I had not an hour in a week, which I could take to arrange my thoughts beforehand.

I chose my subject and preached. The Word took a powerful hold; and as I hoped and intended, it took a powerful hold of Mr. H himself. I think it was that very night, when I requested, at the close of the meeting, all those who had been converted that day and evening to come forward and report themselves, Mr. H was one who came deliberately, solemnly forward, and reported himself as having given his heart to God. He appeared humble and penitent, and I have always supposed, was truly converted to Christ.

The state of things in the village, and in the neighborhood round about, was such that no one could come into the village, without feeling awe-stricken with the impression that God was there, in a peculiar and wonderful manner. As an illustration of this, I will relate an incident. The sheriff of the county resided in Utica. There were two courthouses in the county, one at Rome, and the other at Utica; consequently the sheriff, B by name, had much business at Rome. He afterwards told me that he had heard of the state of things at Rome; and he, together with others, had a good deal of laughing, in the hotel where he boarded, about what they had heard.

But one day it was necessary for him to go. to Rome. He said that he was glad to have business there; for he wanted to see for himself what it was that people talked so much about, and what the state of things really was in Rome. He drove on in his one horse sleigh, as he told me, without any particular impression upon his mind at all, until he crossed what was called the old canal, a place about a mile, I think, from the town. He said as soon as he crossed the old canal, a strange impression came over him, an awe so deep that he could not shake it off. He felt as if God pervaded the whole atmosphere. He said that this increased the whole way, till he came to the village. He stopped at Mr. F's hotel, and the hostler came out and took his horse. He observed, he said, that the hostler looked just as he himself felt, as if he were afraid to speak. He went into the house, and found the gentleman there with whom he had business. He said they were manifestly all so much impressed, they could hardly attend to business. He said that several times, in the course of the short time he was there, he had to rise from the table abruptly, and go to the window and look out, and try to divert his attention, to keep from weeping. He observed, he said, that everybody else appeared to feel just as he did. Such an awe, such a solemnity, such a state of things, he had never had any conception of before. He hastened through with his business, and returned to Utica; but, as he said, never to speak lightly of the work at Rome again. A few weeks later, at Utica, he was hopefully converted; the circumstances of which I shall relate in the proper place.

I have spoken of Wright's settlement, a village northeast of Rome, some two or three miles. The revival took powerful effect there, and converted the great mass of the inhabitants.

The means that were used at Rome, were such as I had used before, and no others; preaching, public, social, and private prayer, exhortations, and personal conversation. It is difficult to conceive so deep and universal a state of religious feeling, with no instance of disorder, or tumult, or fanaticism, or anything that was objectionable, as was witnessed at Rome. There are many of the converts of that revival, scattered all through the land, living to this day; and they can testify that in those meetings the greatest order and solemnity prevailed, and the utmost pains were taken to guard against everything that was to be deplored.

The Spirit's work was so spontaneous, so powerful and so overwhelming, as to render it necessary to exercise the greatest caution and wisdom, in conducting all the meetings, in order to

prevent an undesirable outburst of feeling, that soon would have exhausted the sensibility of the people, and brought about a reaction. But no reaction followed, as everybody knows who is acquainted with the facts. They kept up a sunrise prayer meeting for several months, and I believe for more that a year afterwards, at all seasons of the year, that was very fully attended, and was as full of interest as perhaps a prayer meeting could well be. The moral state of the people was so greatly changed, that Mr. Gillett often remarked that it did not seem like the same place. Whatever of sin was left, was obliged to hide its head. No open immorality could be tolerated there for a moment. I have given only a very faint outline of what passed at Rome. A faithful description of all the moving incidents that were crowded into that revival, would make a volume of itself.

I should say a few words in regard to the spirit of prayer which prevailed at Rome at this time. I think it was on the Saturday that I came down from Western to exchange with Mr. Gillett, that I met the church in the afternoon in a prayer meeting, in their house of worship. I endeavored to make them understand that God would immediately answer prayer, provided they fulfilled the conditions upon which he had promised to answer prayer; and especially if they believed, in the sense of expecting Him to answer their requests. I observed that the church were greatly interested in my remarks, and their countenances manifested an intense desire to see an answer to their prayers. Near the close of the meeting I recollect making this remark: "I really believe, if you will unite this afternoon in the prayer of faith to God, for the immediate outpouring of His Spirit, that you will receive an answer from heaven, sooner than you would get a message from Albany, by the quickest post that could be sent."

I said this with great emphasis, and felt it; and I observed that the people were startled with my expression of earnestness and faith in respect to an immediate answer to prayer. The fact is, I had so often seen this result in answer to prayer, that I made the remark without any misgiving. Nothing was said by any of the members of the church at the time; but I learned after the work had begun, that three or four members of the church called in at Mr. Gillett’s study, and felt so impressed with what had been said about speedy answers to prayer, that they determined to take God at His word, and see whether he would answer while they were yet speaking. One of them told me afterwards that they had wonderful faith given them by the Spirit of God, to pray for an immediate answer; and he added, "The answer did come quicker than we could have got an answer from Albany, by the quickest post we could have sent."

Indeed the town was full of prayer. Go where you would, you heard the voice of prayer. Pass along the street, and if two or three Christians happened to be together, they were praying. Wherever they met they prayed. Wherever there was a sinner unconverted, especially if he manifested any opposition, you would find some two or three brethren or sisters agreeing to make him a particular subject of prayer.

There was the wife of an officer in the United States army residing at Rome, the daughter of a prominent citizen of that place. This lady manifested a good deal of opposition to the work, and, as was reported, said some strong things against it; and this led to her being made a particular subject of prayer. This had come to my knowledge but a short time before the event occurred, which I am about to relate. I believe, in this case, some of the principal women made this lady a particular subject of prayer, as she was a person of prominent influence in the place. She was an educated lady, of great force of character, and of strong will; and of course she made her

opposition felt. But almost as soon as this was known, and the spirit of prayer was given for her in particular, the Spirit of God took her case in hand. One evening, almost immediately after I had heard of her case, and perhaps the evening of the very day that the facts came to my knowledge, after the meeting was dismissed, and the people had retired, Mr. Gillett and myself had remained to the very last, conversing with some persons who were deeply bowed down with conviction. As they went away, and we were about to retire, the sexton came hurriedly to us as we were going out, and said, "There is a lady in yonder pew that cannot get out; she is helpless. Will you not come and see her?" We returned, and lo! down in the pew, was this lady of whom I have spoken, perfectly overwhelmed with conviction. The pew had been full, and she had attempted to retire with the others that went out; but as she was the last to go out, she found herself unable to stand, and sunk down upon the floor, and did so without being noticed by those that preceded her. We had some conversation with her, and found that the Lord had stricken her with unutterable conviction of sin. After praying with her, and giving her the solemn charge to give her heart immediately to Christ, I left her; and Mr. Gillett, I believe, helped her home. It was but a few rods to her house. We afterwards learned, that when she got home she went into a chamber by herself and spent the night. It was a cold winter's night. She locked herself in, and spent the night alone. The next day she expressed hope in Christ, and so far as I have known, proved to be soundly converted.

I think I should mention also the conversion of Mrs. Gillett, during this revival. She was a sister of the missionary Mills, who was one of the young men whose zeal led to the organization of the American Board. She was a beautiful woman, considerably younger than her husband, and his second wife. She had been, before Mr. Gillett married her, under conviction for several weeks and had become almost deranged. She had the impression, if I recollect right, that she was not one of the elect, and that there was no salvation for her. Soon after the revival began in Rome, she was powerfully convicted again by the Spirit of the Lord.

She was a woman of refinement, and fond of dress; and as is very common, wore about her head and upon her person some trifling ornaments; nothing, however, that I should have thought of as being any stumbling block in her way, at all. Being her guest, I conversed repeatedly with her as her convictions increased; but it never occurred to me that her fondness for dress could stand in the way of her being converted to God. But as the work became so powerful, her distress became alarming; and Mr. Gillett, knowing what had formally occurred in her case, felt quite alarmed lest she should get into that state of despondency, in which she had been years before. She threw herself upon me for instruction. Every time I came into the house, almost, she would come to me and beg me to pray for her, and tell me that her distress was more than she could bear. She was evidently going fast to despair; but I could see that she was depending too much on me; therefore I tried to avoid her.

It went on thus, until one day I came into the house, and turned into the study. In a few moments, as usual, she was before me, begging me to pray for her, and complaining that there was no salvation for her. I got up abruptly and left her, without praying with her, and saying to her that it was of no use for me to pray for her, that she was depending upon my prayers. When I did so, she sunk down as if she would faint. I left her alone, notwithstanding, and went abruptly from the study to the parlor. In the course of a few moments she came rushing across the hall into the parlor, with her face all in a glow, exclaiming, "O Mr. Finney! I have found the Savior! I have found the Savior!

Don’t you think that it was the ornaments in my hair that stood in the way of my conversion? I have found when I prayed that they would come up before me; and I would be tempted, as I supposed, to give them up. But," said she, "I thought they were trifles, and that God did not care about such trifles. This was a temptation of Satan. But the ornaments that I wore, continually kept coming up before my mind, whenever I attempted to give my heart to God. When you abruptly left me," she said, "I was driven to desperation. I cast myself down, and, lo! these ornaments came up again; and I said, ’I will not have these things come up again, I will put them away from me forever.'" Said she, "I renounced them, and hated them as things standing in the way of my salvation. As soon as I promised to give them up, the Lord revealed Himself to my soul; and Oh!" said she, "I wonder I have never understood this before. This was really the great difficulty with me before, when I was under conviction, my fondness for dress; and I did not know it."

02.14. REVIVAL AT UTICA NEW YORK

CHAPTER XIV.

REVIVAL AT UTICA, NEW YORK.

WHEN I had been at Rome about twenty days, one of the elders of Mr. Aiken's church in Utica, a very prominent and a very useful man, died; and I went down to attend his funeral. Mr. Aiken conducted the funeral exercises; and I learned from him that the spirit of prayer was already manifest in his congregation, and in that city. He told me that one of his principal women had been so deeply exercised in her soul about the state of the church, and of the ungodly in that city, that she had prayed for two days and nights, almost incessantly, until her strength was quite overcome; that she had literal travail of soul, to such an extent that when her own strength was exhausted, she could not endure the burden of her mind, unless somebody was engaged in prayer with her, upon whose prayer she could lean--someone who could express her desires to God.

I understood this, and told Mr. Aiken that the work had already begun in her heart. He recognized it, of course; and wished me to commence labor with him and his people immediately. I soon did so, and, be sure, the work began at once. The Word took immediate effect, and the place became filled with the manifested influence of the Holy Spirit. Our meetings were crowded every night and the work spread and went on powerfully, especially in the two Presbyterian congregations; of one of which Mr. Aiken was pastor, and Mr. Brace of the other. I divided my labors between the two congregations.

Soon after I commenced in Utica, I observed to Mr. Aiken, that Mr. B, the sheriff of whom I have made mention, did not attend the meetings, as I saw. But a few evenings afterward, just as I was about to begin to preach, Mr. Aiken whispered to me that Mr. B had come in. He pointed him out to me, as he made his way up the aisle to his seat. I took my text, and proceeded to address the congregation. I had spoken but a few moments, when I observed Mr. B rise up in the slip, turn deliberately around, wrap his great coat about him, and kneel down. I observed that it excited the attention of those that sat near, who knew him, and produced a considerable sensation in that part of the house. The sheriff continued on his knees during the whole service. He then retired to his room at the hotel in which he boarded. He was a man, perhaps fifty years old, and unmarried.

He afterwards told me that his mind was greatly burdened when he went home, and brought up the subject to which he had been listening. I had pressed the congregation to accept Christ, just as he was presented in the Gospel. The question of the present acceptance of Christ, and the whole situation in regard to the sinner's relation to him, and his relation to the sinner, had been the subject of discourse. He said that he had treasured up in his mind the points that had been made, and that he presented them solemnly before himself, and said, "My soul, will you consent to this? Will you accept of Christ, and give up sin, and give up yourself? And will you do it now?" He said he had thrown himself, in the agony of his mind, upon his bed. He made this point with himself, and conjured his soul, to accept now, and here. Right there, he said, his distress left him so

suddenly that he fell asleep, and did not wake for several hours. When he did awake, he found his mind full of peace and rest in Christ; and from this moment he became an earnest worker for Christ among his acquaintances.

The hotel at which he boarded, was at that time kept by a Mr. S. The Spirit took powerful hold in that house. Mr. S himself was soon made a subject of prayer, and became converted; and a large number of his family and of his boarders. Indeed that largest hotel in the town became a center of spiritual influence, and many were converted there. The stages, as they passed through, stopped at the hotel; and so powerful was the impression in the community, that I heard of several cases of persons that just stopped for a meal, or to spend a night, being powerfully convicted and converted before they left the town. Indeed, both in this place and in Rome, it was a common remark that nobody could be in the town, or pass through it, without being aware of the presence of God; that a divine influence seemed to pervade the place, and the whole atmosphere to be instinct with a divine life.

A merchant from Lowville came to Utica, to do some business in his line. He stopped at the hotel where Mr. B boarded. He found the whole conversation in the town was such as greatly to annoy him, for he was an unconverted man. He was vexed, and said he could do no business there; it was all religion; and he resolved to go home. He could not go into a store, but religion was intruded upon him, and he could do no business with them. That evening he would go home.

These remarks had been made in the presence of some of the young converts who boarded at the hotel, and I think especially in the presence of Mr. B. As the stage was expected to leave late at night, he was observed to go to the bar, just before he retired, to pay his bill; saying that Mr. S would not probably be up when the stage passed through, and he wished therefore to settle his bill before he retired. Mr. S said that he observed, while he was settling his bill, that his mind was very much exercised, and he suggested to several of the gentleman boarders that they should make him a subject of prayer. They took him, I believe, to Mr. B's room, and conversed with him, and prayed with him and before the stage came, he was a converted man. And so concerned did he feel immediately about the people of his own place, that when the stage came he took passage, and went immediately home. As soon as he arrived at home, he told his family his experience, and called them together and prayed with them. As he was a very prominent citizen, and very outspoken, and everywhere proclaiming what the Lord had done for his soul, it immediately produced a very solemn impression in Lowville, and soon resulted in a great revival in that place.

It was in the midst of the revival in Utica, that we first heard of the opposition to those revivals, that was springing up in the East. Mr. Nettleton wrote some letters to Mr. Aiken, with whom I was laboring; in which it was manifest that he was very much mistaken with regard to the character of those revivals. Mr. Aiken showed me those letters; and they were handed around among the ministers in the neighborhood, as they were intended to be. Among them was one in which Mr. Nettleton stated fully what he regarded as objectionable in the conduct of these revivals; but as no such thing as he complained of were done in those revivals, or had been known at all, we took no other notice of the letters than to read them, and let them pass. Mr. Aiken, however, replied privately to one or two of them, assuring Mr. Nettleton that no such things were done. I do not recollect now whether Mr. Nettleton complained of the fact, that women would sometimes pray in the social meetings. It was true, however, that in a few instances women, and some very

prominent women, who were strongly pressed in spirit, would lead in prayer, in the social meetings which we held daily from house to house. No opposition, that I know of, was manifested to this, either at Utica or at Rome. I had no agency in introducing the practice among the people, and do not know whether it had existed there before or not. Indeed it was not a subject of much conversation or thought, so far as I know, in the neighborhood where it occurred.

I have already said that Mr. Weeks, who maintained the most offensive doctrines on the subject of divine efficiency, was known to be opposed to those revivals. For the information of those who may not know that any such doctrines were ever held, I would say, that Mr. Weeks, and those that agreed with him, held that both sin and holiness were produced in the mind by a direct act of almighty power; that God made men sinners or holy, at His sovereign discretion, but in both cases by a direct act of almighty power, an act as irresistible as that of creation itself; that in fact God was the only proper agent in the universe, and that all creatures acted only as they were moved and compelled to act, by His irresistible power; that every sin in the universe, both of men and of devils, was the result of a direct, irresistible act on the part of God. This they attempted to prove from the Bible.

Mr. Weeks' idea of conversion, or regeneration, was that God, who had made men sinners, brought them also, in regenerating them, to admit that He had a right to make them sinners, for His glory, and to send them to hell for the sins which He had directly created in them, or compelled them to commit, by the force of omnipotence. In conversion, that did not bring sinners to accept this view of the subject, he had no confidence. Those that have read Mr. Weeks' nine sermons on the subject, will see that I have not misrepresented his views. And as this view of Mr. Weeks, was embraced, to a considerable extent, by ministers and professors of religion in that region, his known opposition, together with that of some other ministers, greatly emboldened and increased the opposition of others.

The work, however, went on with great power, converting all classes, until Mr. Aiken reported the hopeful conversion of five hundred, in the course of a few weeks, most of them, I believe, belonging to his own congregation. Revivals were comparatively a new thing in that region; and the great mass of the people had not become convinced that they were the work of God. They were not awed by them, as they afterwards became. It seemed to be extensively the impression that those revivals would soon pass away, and would prove to have been but a mere excitement of animal feeling. I do not mean that those that were interested in the work, had any such idea.

One circumstance occurred, in the midst of that revival, that made a powerful impression. The Oneida presbytery met there, while the revival was going on in its full strength. Among others there was an aged clergyman, a stranger to me, who was very much annoyed by the heat and fervor of the revival. He found the public mind all absorbed on the subject of religion; that there was prayer and religious conversation everywhere, even in the stores and other public places. He had never seen a revival, and had never heard what he heard there. He was a Scotchman, and, I believe, had not been very long in this country.

On Friday afternoon, before presbytery adjourned, he arose and made a violent speech against the revival, as it was going on. What he said, greatly shocked and grieved the Christian people who were present. They felt like falling on their faces before God, and crying to Him to prevent what he had said from doing any mischief.

The presbytery adjourned just at evening. Some of the members went home, and others remained overnight. Christians gave themselves to prayer. There was a great crying to God that night, that He would counteract any evil influence that might result from that speech. The next morning, this man was found dead in his bed.

In the course of these revivals, persons from a distance, in almost every direction, hearing what the Lord was doing, or being attracted by curiosity and wonder at what they heard, came to see for themselves; and many of them were converted to Christ. Among these visitors, Dr. Garnet Judd, who soon after went to the Sandwich Islands as a missionary, and has been well-known to lovers of missions for many years, was one. He belonged to the congregation of Mr. Weeks, to whom I have referred. His father, old Dr. Judd, was an earnest Christian man. He came down to Utica and sympathized greatly with the revival.

About the same time a young woman, Miss F T, from some part of New England, came to Utica under the following circumstances: she was teaching a high school, in the neighborhood of Newburgh, New York. As much was said in the newspapers about the revival in Utica, Miss T, among others, became filled with wonder and astonishment, and with a desire to go and see for herself what it meant. She dismissed her school for ten days, and took the stage for Utica. As she passed through Genesee street to the hotel, she observed on one of the signs, the name of B T. She was an entire stranger in Utica, and did not know that she had an acquaintance or relative there. But after stopping a day or two at her hotel, and inquiring who B T was, she dropped him a note, saying that the daughter of a Mr. T, naming her father, was at the hotel, and would be pleased to see him. Mr. T waited upon her and found that she was a distant relative of his, and invited her immediately to his house. She accepted his invitation, and he being an earnest Christian man, immediately took her to all the meetings, and tried to interest her in religion. She was greatly surprised at all that she saw, and a good deal annoyed.

She was an energetic, highly cultivated, and proud young lady; and the manner in which people conversed with her, and pressed upon her the necessity of immediately giving her heart to God, very much disturbed her. The preaching which she heard, from night to night, took a deep hold upon her. The guilt of sinners was largely insisted upon; and their desert and danger of eternal damnation, were made prominent in what she heard. This aroused her opposition; but still the work of conviction went powerfully on in her heart.

In the meantime I had not seen her, to converse with her; but had heard from Mr. T of her state of mind. After writhing under the truth for a few days, she called at my lodging. She sat down upon the sofa in the parlor. I drew up my chair in front of her, and began to press her with the claims of God. She referred to my preaching that sinners deserved to be sent to an eternal hell; and said that she could not receive it, that she did not believe that God was such a being. I replied, "Nor do you yet understand what sin is, in its true nature and ill desert; if you did, you would not complain of God for sending the sinner to an eternal hell." I then spread out that subject before her in conversation, as plainly as I could. Much as she hated to believe it, still the conviction of its truth was becoming irresistible. I conversed in this strain for some time, until I saw that she was ready to sink under the ripened conviction; and then I turned and said a few words about the place which Jesus holds, and what is the real situation of things, in regard to the salvation of those who thus deserved to be damned.

Her countenance waxed pale, in a moment after she threw up her hands and shrieked, and then fell forward upon the arm of the sofa, and let her heart break. I think she had not wept at all before. Her eyes were dry, her countenance haggard and pale, her sensibility all locked up; but now the flood gates were opened, she let her whole gushing heart out before God. I had no occasion to say anymore to her. She soon arose and went to her own lodgings. She almost immediately gave up her school, offered herself as a foreign missionary, was married to a Mr. Gulick, and went out to the Sandwich Islands, I think, at the same time that Dr. Judd went out. Her history, as a missionary, is well known. She has been a very efficient missionary, and has raised several sons, who also are missionaries.

While making my home in Utica, I preached frequently in New Hartford, a village four miles south of Utica. There was a precious and powerful work of grace, a Mr. Coe being at the time pastor of the Presbyterian church. I preached also at Whitesboro, another beautiful village, four miles west of Utica; where also was a powerful revival. The pastor, Mr. John Frost, was a most efficient laborer in the work.

A circumstance occurred in this neighborhood, which I must not fail to notice. There was a cotton manufactory on the Oriskany creek, a little above Whitesboro, a place now called New York Mills. It was owned by a Mr. W, an unconverted man, but a gentleman of high standing and good morals. My brother-in-law, Mr. G A, was at that time superintendent of the factory. I was invited to go and preach at that place, and went up one evening, and preached in the village schoolhouse, which was large, and was crowded with hearers. The Word, I could see, took powerful effect among the people, especially among the young people who were at work in the factory.

The next morning, after breakfast, I went into the factory, to look through it. As I went through, I observed there was a good deal of agitation among those who were busy at their looms, and their mules, and other implements of work. On passing through one of the apartments, where a great number of young women were attending to their weaving, I observed a couple of them eyeing me, and speaking very earnestly to each other; and I could see that they were a good deal agitated, although they both laughed. I went slowly toward them. They saw me coming, and were evidently much excited. One of them was trying to mend a broken thread, and I observed that her hands trembled so that she could not mend it. I approached slowly, looking on each side at the machinery, as I passed; but observed that this girl grew more and more agitated, and could not proceed with her work. When I came within eight or ten feet of her, I looked solemnly at her. She observed it, and was quite overcome, and sunk down, and burst into tears. The impression caught almost like powder, and in a few moments nearly all in the room were in tears. This feeling spread through the factory. Mr. W, the owner of the establishment, was present, and seeing the state of things, he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill, and let the people attend to religion; for it is more important that our souls should be saved than that this factory run." The gate was immediately shut down, and the factory stopped; but where should we assemble? The superintendent suggested that the mule room was large; and, the mules being run up, we could assemble there. We did so, and a more powerful meeting I scarcely ever attended. It went on with great power. The building was large, and had many people in it, from the garret to the cellar. The revival went through the mill with astonishing power, and in the course of a few days nearly all in the mill were hopefully converted.

As much has been said about the hopeful conversion of Theodore D. Weld, at Utica, it may be well for me to give a correct report of the facts. He had an aunt, Mrs. C, living in Utica, who was a very praying, godly woman. He was the son of an eminent clergyman in New England, and his aunt thought he was a Christian. He used to lead her family in its worship. Before the commencement of the revival, he had become a member of Hamilton College, at Clinton. The work at Utica had attracted so much attention, that many persons from Clinton, and among the rest some of the professors of the college, had been down to Utica, and had reported what was doing there, and a good deal of excitement had resulted. Weld held a very prominent place among the students of Hamilton College, and had a very great influence. Hearing what was going on at Utica, he became very much excited, and his opposition was greatly aroused. He became quite outrageous in his expressions of opposition to the work, as I understood.

This fact became known in Utica; and his aunt, with whom he had boarded, became very anxious about him. To me he was an entire stranger. His aunt wrote him, and asked him to come home and spend a Sabbath, hear the preaching, and become interested in the work. He at first declined, but finally got some of the students together, and told them that he had made up his mind to go down to Utica; that he knew it must be fanaticism or enthusiasm; that he knew it would not move him, they would see that it would not. He came full of opposition, and his aunt soon learned that he did not intend to hear me preach. Mr. Aiken had usually occupied the pulpit in the morning, and I, in the afternoon and evening. His aunt learned that he intended to go to Mr. Aiken’s church in the morning, when he expected Mr. Aiken to preach; but that he would not go in the afternoon or evening, because he was determined not to hear me.

In view of this, Mr. Aiken suggested that I should preach in the morning. I consented, and we went to meeting. Mr. Aiken took the introductory exercises, as usual. Mrs. C came to meeting with her family, and among them Mr. Weld. She took pains to have him so seated in the slip that he could not well get out, without herself, and one or two other members of the family, stepping out before him; for she feared, as she said, that he would go out when he saw that I was going to preach. I knew that his influence among the young men of Utica was very great, and that his coming there would have a powerful influence to make them band together in opposition to the work. Mr. Aiken pointed him out to me, as he came in and took his seat.

After the introductory exercises, I arose and named this text: "One sinner destroyeth much good." I had never preached from it, or heard it preached from; but it came home with great power to my mind, and this fact decided the selection of the text. I began to preach, and to show in a great many instances, how one sinner might destroy much good, and how the influence of one man might destroy a great many souls. I suppose that I drew a pretty vivid picture of Weld, and of what his influence was, and what mischief he might do. Once or twice he made an effort to get out; but his aunt perceiving it, would throw herself forward, and lean on the slip in front, and engage in silent prayer, and he could not get out without arousing and annoying her; and therefore he remained in his seat till meeting was out.

The next day I called at a store in Genesee street, to converse with some people there, as it was my custom to go from place to place for conversation; and whom should I find there but Weld? He fell upon me very unceremoniously, and I should think, for nearly or quite an hour, talked to me in a most abusive manner. I had never heard anything like it. I got an opportunity to say but very little

to him myself, for his tongue ran incessantly. He was very gifted in language. It soon attracted the attention of all that were in the store and the news ran along the streets, and the clerks gathered in from the neighboring stores, and stood to hear what he had to say. All business ceased in the store, and all gave themselves up to listening to his vituperation. But finally I appealed to him and said, "Mr. Weld, are you the son of a minister of Christ, and is this the way for you to behave?" I said a few words in that direction, and I saw that it stung him; and throwing out something very severe, he immediately left the store.

I went out also, and returned to Mr. Aiken's, where for the time I was lodging. I had been there but a few moments when somebody called at the door, and as no servant was at hand I went to the door myself. And who should come in but Mr. Weld? He looked as if he would sink. He began immediately to make the most humble confession and apology for the manner in which he had treated me; and expressed himself in the strongest terms of self-condemnation. I took him kindly by the hand and had a little conversation with him, assured him that I had laid up nothing against him, and exhorted him earnestly, to give his heart to God. I believe I prayed with him before he went. He left, and I heard no more of him that day.

That evening I preached, I think, at New Hartford, and returned late in the evening. The next morning I heard that he went to his aunt's, greatly impressed and subdued. She asked him to pray in the family. He said that he was at first shocked at the idea. But his enmity arose so much, that he thought that that was one way in which he had not yet expressed his opposition, and therefore he would comply with her request. He knelt down, and began and went on with what his aunt intended should be a prayer; but from his own account of it, it was the most blasphemous strain of vituperation that could well be uttered. He kept on in a most wonderful way, until they all became convulsed with feeling and astonishment; and he kept on so long, that the light went out before he closed. His aunt attempted to converse with him, and to pray with him; but the opposition of his heart was terrible. She became frightened at the state of mind which he manifested. After praying with him, and entreating him to give his heart to God, she retired.

He went to his room; and walked his room by turns, and by turns he lay upon the floor. He continued the whole night in that terrible state of mind, angry, rebellious, and yet so convicted that he could scarcely live. Just at daylight, while walking back and forth in his room, he said, a pressure came upon him that crushed him down to the floor; and with it came a voice that seemed to command him to repent, to repent now. He said it broke him down to the floor, and there he lay, until, late in the morning, his aunt coming up, found him upon the floor calling himself a thousand fools; and to all human appearance, with his heart all broken to pieces.

The next night he rose in meeting, and asked if he might make confession. I answered, yes; and he made public confession before the whole congregation. He said it became him to remove the stumbling block which he had cast before the whole people; and he wanted opportunity to make the most public confession he could. He did make a very humble, earnest, broken-hearted confession.

From that time he became a very efficient helper in the work. He labored diligently; and being a powerful speaker, and much-gifted in prayer and labor, he was instrumental, for several years, in doing a great deal of good, and in the hopeful conversion of a great many souls. At length his health became enfeebled by his great labor. He was obliged to leave college, and he went on a

fishing excursion to the coast of Labrador. He returned, the same earnest laborer as before he went away, with health renewed. I found him, for a considerable time, an efficient helper, where I was attempting to labor.

I have said that no public replies were made to the things that found their way into print, in opposition to these revivals; that is, to nothing that was written by Dr. Beecher or Mr. Nettleton. I have also said, that a pamphlet was published by the ministers that composed the Oneida Association, in opposition to the work. To this, I believe, no public answer was given. I recollect that a Unitarian minister, residing at Trenton, in that county, published an abusive pamphlet, in which he greatly misrepresented the work, and made a personal attack upon myself. To this the Rev. Mr. Wetmore, one of the members of the Oneida Presbytery, published a reply.

This revival occurred in the winter and spring of 1826. When the converts had been received into the churches throughout the county, Rev. John Frost, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Whitesboro, published a pamphlet giving some account of the revival, and stated, if I remember right, that within the bounds of that presbytery, the converts numbered three thousand. I have no copy of any of these pamphlets. I have said that the work spread from Rome and Utica, as from a center, in every direction. Ministers came from a considerable distance, and spent more or less time in attending the meetings, and in various ways helping forward the work. I spread my own labors over as large a field as I could, and labored more or less throughout the bounds of the presbytery. I cannot now remember all the places where I spent more or less time. The pastors of all those churches sympathized deeply with the work; and like good and true men, laid themselves upon the altar, and did all they could to forward the great and glorious movement; and God gave them a rich reward.

The doctrines preached in these revivals were the same that have been already presented. Instead of telling sinners to use the means of grace and pray for a new heart, we called on them to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit, and pressed the duty of instant surrender to God. We told them the Spirit was striving with them to induce them now to give Him their hearts, now to believe, and to enter at once upon a life of devotion to Christ, of faith, and love, and Christian obedience. We taught them that while they were praying for the Holy Spirit, they were constantly resisting Him; and that if they would at once yield to their own convictions of duty, they would be Christians. We tried to show them that everything they did or said before they had submitted, believed, given their hearts to God, was all sin, was not that which God required them to do, but was simply deferring repentance and resisting the Holy Ghost.

Such teaching as this was of course opposed by many; nevertheless it was greatly blessed by the Spirit of God. Formerly it had been supposed necessary that a sinner should remain under conviction a long time; and it was not uncommon to hear old professors of religion, say that they were under conviction many months, or years, before they found relief; and they evidently had the impression that the longer they were under conviction, the greater was the evidence that they were truly converted. We taught the opposite of this. I insisted that if they remained long under conviction, they were in danger of becoming self-righteous, in the sense that they would think that they had prayed a great deal, and done a great deal to persuade God to save them; and that finally they would settle down with a false hope. We told them that under this protracted conviction, they were in danger of grieving the Spirit of God away, and when their distress of mind ceased, a

reaction would naturally take place; they would feel less distress, and perhaps obtain a degree of comfort, from which they were in danger of inferring that they were converted; that the bare thought that they were possibly converted, might create a degree of joy, which they might mistake for Christian joy and peace; and that this state of mind might still farther delude them, by being taken as evidence that they were converted.

We tried thoroughly to dispose of this false teaching. We insisted then, as I have ever done since, on immediate submission, as the only thing that God could accept at their hands; and that all delay, under any pretext whatever, was rebellion against God. It became very common under this teaching, for persons to be convicted and converted, in the course of a few hours, and sometimes in the course of a few minutes. Such sudden conversions were alarming to many good people; and of course they predicted that the converts would fall away, and prove not to be soundly converted. But the event proved, that among those sudden conversions, were some of the most influential Christians that ever have been known in that region of country; and this has been in accordance with my own experience, through all my ministry.

I have said that Mr. Aiken privately replied to some of Mr. Nettleton's and Dr. Beecher's letters. Some of Dr. Beecher's letters at the time, found their way into print; but no public notice was taken of them. Mr. Aiken's replies, which he sent through the mail, seemed to make no difference with the opposition of either Mr. Nettleton or Dr. Beecher. From a letter which Dr. Beecher wrote, about this time, to Dr. Taylor of New Haven, it appeared that someone had made the impression upon him, that the brethren engaged in promoting those revivals were untruthful. In that letter, he asserted that the spirit of lying was so predominant in those revivals, that the brethren engaged in promoting them, could not be at all believed. This letter of Dr. Beecher to Dr. Taylor, found its way into print. If it should be republished at this day, the people of the region where those revivals prevailed, would think it very strange that Dr. Beecher should, even in a private letter, ever have written such things, of the ministers and Christians engaged in promoting those great and wonderful revivals.

02.15. REVIVAL AT AUBURN IN 1826

CHAPTER XV.

REVIVAL AT AUBURN IN 1826.

DR. LANSING, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Auburn, came to Utica, to witness the revival there, and urged me to go out and labor for a time with him. In the summer of 1826, I complied with his request, and went there and labored with him for a season. Soon after I went to Auburn, I found that some of the professors in the theological seminary in that place, were taking an attitude hostile to the revival. I had before known that ministers east of Utica were, a considerable number of them, holding correspondence with reference to these revivals, and taking an attitude of hostility to them.

However, until I arrived at Auburn, I was not fully aware of the amount of opposition I was destined to meet, from the ministry; not the ministry in the region where I had labored; but from ministers where I had not labored, and who knew personally nothing of me, but were influenced by the false reports which they heard. But soon after I arrived at Auburn, I learned from various sources that a system of espionage was being carried on, that was destined to result, and intended to result, in an extensive union of ministers and churches to hedge me in, and prevent the spread of the revivals in connection with my labors.

About this time I was informed that Mr. Nettleton had said that I could go no farther East; that all the New England churches especially were closed against me. Mr. Nettleton came and made a stand at Albany; and a letter from Dr. Beecher fell into my possession, in which he exhorted Mr. Nettleton to make a manful stand against me and the revivals in central New York; promising that when the judicatures, as he called them, of New England met, they would all speak out, and sustain him in his opposition.

But for the present I must return to what passed at Auburn. My mind became, soon after I went there, very much impressed with the extensive working of that system of espionage of which I have spoken. Mr. Frost, of Whitesboro, had come to a knowledge of the facts to a considerable extent, and communicated them to me. I said nothing publicly, or as I recollect privately, to anybody on the subject; but gave myself to prayer. I looked to God with great earnestness day after day, to be directed; asking him to show me the path of duty, and give me grace to ride out the storm.

I shall never forget what a scene I passed through one day in my room at Dr. Lansing’s. The Lord showed me as in a vision what was before me. He drew so near to me, while I was engaged in prayer, that my flesh literally trembled on my bones. I shook from head to foot, under a full sense of the presence of God. At first, and for some time, it seemed more like being on the top of Sinai, amidst its full thundering, than in the presence of the cross of Christ.

Never in my life, that I recollect, was I so awed and humbled before God as then. Nevertheless, instead of feeling like fleeing, I seemed drawn nearer and nearer to God--seemed to draw nearer and nearer to that Presence that filled me with such unutterable awe and trembling. After a season of great humiliation before Him, there came a great lifting up. God assured me that He would be with me and uphold me; that no opposition should prevail against me; that I had nothing to do, in regard to all this matter, but to keep about my work, and wait for the salvation of God.

The sense of God's presence, and all that passed between God and my soul at that time, I can never describe. It led me to be perfectly trustful, perfectly calm, and to have nothing but the most perfectly kind feelings toward all the brethren that were misled, and were arraying themselves against me. I felt assured that all would come out right; that my true course was to leave everything to God, and to keep about my work; and as the storm gathered and the opposition increased, I never for one moment doubted how it would result. I was never disturbed by it, I never spent a waking hour in thinking of it; when to all outward appearance, it seemed as if all the churches of the land, except where I had labored, would unite to shut me out of their pulpits. This was indeed the avowed determination, as I understood, of the men that led in the opposition. They were so deceived that they thought there was no effectual way but to unite, and, as they expressed it, put him down. But God assured me that they could not put me down.

A passage in the twentieth chapter of Jeremiah was repeatedly set home upon me with great power. It reads thus: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me and I was deceived. [In the margin it reads, 'enticed.'] Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, and fear was on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But the Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible one; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail. They shall be greatly ashamed, for they shall not prosper; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. But O Lord of hosts that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I opened my cause." Jer 20:7-12.

I do not mean that this passage literally described my case, or expressed my feelings; but there was so much similarity in the case, that this passage was often a support to my soul. The Lord did not allow me to lay the opposition to heart; and I can truly say, so far as I can recollect, I never had an unkind feeling toward Mr. Nettleton or Dr. Beecher, or any leading opposer of the work, during the whole of their opposition.

I recollect having had a peculiar feeling of horror in respect to the pamphlet published, and the course taken by William R. Weeks, to whom I have made allusion. Those who are acquainted with the history of Mr. Weeks, recollect that soon after this, he began to write a book which he called "The Pilgrim's Progress in the Nineteenth Century." This was published in members, and finally bound up in a volume, with which many of the readers of this narrative may be familiar. He was a man of considerable talent, and I must hope a good man; but as I think much deluded in his

philosophy, and exceedingly out of the way in his theology. I do not mention him because I wish to say any evil of him, or of his book; but merely to say that he never ceased, so far as I can learn, to offer more or less opposition, direct and indirect, to revivals that did not favor his peculiar views. He took much pains, without naming him, to defend the course which Mr. Nettleton took, in putting himself at the head of the opposition to those revivals. But God has disposed of all that influence. I have heard nothing of it now for many years.

Notwithstanding the attitude that some of the professors at Auburn were taking, in connection with so many ministers abroad, the Lord soon revived His work in Auburn. Mr. Lansing had a large congregation, and a very intelligent one. The revival soon took effect among the people, and became powerful.

It was at that time that Dr. S of Auburn, who still resides there, was so greatly blessed in his soul, as to become quite another man. Dr. S was an elder in the Presbyterian church when I arrived there. He was a very timid and doting kind of Christian; and had but little Christian efficiency, because he had but little faith. He soon, however, became deeply convicted of sin; and descended into the depths of humiliation and distress, almost to despair. He continued in this state for weeks, until one night, in a prayer meeting, he was quite overcome with his feelings, and sunk down helpless on the floor. Then God opened his eyes to the reality of his salvation in Christ. This occurred just after I had left Auburn, and gone to Troy, New York, to labor. Dr. S soon followed me to Troy, and the first time I saw him there he exclaimed with an emphasis peculiarly his own, "Brother Finney, they have buried the Savior, but Christ is risen." He received such a wonderful baptism of the Holy Ghost, that he has been ever since the rejoicing and the wonder of God’s people.

Partly in consequence of the known disapproval of my labors on the part of many ministers, a good deal of opposition sprung up in Auburn; and a number of the leading men, in that large village, took strong ground against the work. But the Spirit of the Lord was among the people with great power.

I recollect that one Sabbath morning, while I was preaching, I was describing the manner in which some men would oppose their families, and if possible, prevent their being converted. I gave so vivid a description of a case of this kind, that I said, "Probably if I were acquainted with you, I could call some of you by name, who treat your families in this manner." At this instant a man cried out in the congregation, "Name me!" and then threw his head forward on the seat before him; and it was plain that he trembled with great emotion. It turned out that he was treating his family in this manner; and that morning had done the same things that I had named. He said, his crying out, "Name me!" was so spontaneous and irresistible that he could not help it. But I fear he was never converted to Christ.

There was a hatter, by the name of H, residing at this time in Auburn. His wife was a Christian woman; but he was a Universalist, and an opposer of the revival. He carried his opposition so far, as to forbid his wife attending our meetings; and, for several successive evenings, she remained at home. One night, as the warning bell rang for meeting, half an hour before the assembly met, Mrs. H was so much exercised in mind about her husband, that she retired for prayer, and spent the half hour in pouring out her soul to God. She told Him how her husband behaved, and that he would not let her attend meeting; and she drew very near to God.

As the bell was tolling for the people to assemble, she came out of her closet, as I learned, and found that her husband had come in from the shop; and, as she entered the sitting room, he asked her if she would not go to meeting; and said that if she would go, he would accompany her. He afterwards informed me that he had made up his mind to attend meeting that night, to see if he could not get something to justify his opposition to his wife; or at least, something to laugh about, and sustain him in ridiculing the whole work. When he proposed to accompany his wife, she was very much surprised, but prepared herself, and they came to meeting.

Of all this, I knew nothing at the time, of course. I had been visiting and laboring with inquirers the whole day, and had had no time whatever, to arrange my thoughts, or even settle upon a text. During the introductory services, a text occurred to my mind. It was the words of the man with the unclean spirit, who cried out, "Let us alone." I took those words and went on to preach, and endeavored to show up the conduct of those sinners that wanted to let be alone, that did not want to have anything to do with Christ.

The Lord gave me power to give a very vivid description of the course that class of men were pursuing. In the midst of my discourse, I observed a person fall from his seat near the broad aisle, who cried out in a most terrific manner. The congregation were very much shocked; and the outcry of the man was so great, that I stopped preaching and stood still. After a few moments, I requested the congregation to sit still, while I should go down and speak with the man. I found him to be this Mr. E, of whom I have been speaking. The Spirit of the Lord had so powerfully convicted him, that he was unable to sit on his seat. When I reached him, he had so far recovered his strength as to be on his knees, with his head on his wife’s lap. He was weeping aloud like a child confessing his sins, and accusing himself in a terrible manner. I said a few words to him, to which he seemed to pay but little attention. The Spirit of God had his attention so thoroughly, that I soon desisted from all efforts to make him attend to what I said. When I told the congregation who it was, they all knew him and his character; and it produced tears and sobs in every part of the house. I stood for some little time, to see if he would be quiet enough for me to go on with my sermon; but his loud weeping rendered it impossible. I can never forget the appearance of his wife, as she sat and held his face in her hands upon her lap. There appeared in her face a holy joy and triumph that words cannot express.

We had several prayers, and then I dismissed the meeting, and some persons helped Mr. H to his house. He immediately wished them to send for certain of his companions, with whom he had been in the habit of ridiculing the work of the Lord in that place. He could not rest until he had sent for a great number of them, and had made confession to them; which he did with a very broken heart.

He was so overcome that for two or three days he could not get about town, and continued to send for such men as he wished to see, that he might confess to them, and warn them to flee from the wrath to come. As soon as he was able to get about, he took hold of the work with the utmost humility and simplicity of character, but with great earnestness. Soon after, he was made an elder, or deacon, and he has ever since been a very exemplary and useful Christian. His conversion was so marked and so powerful, and the results were so manifest, that it did very much to silence opposition.

There were several wealthy men in the town who took offense at Dr. Lansing and myself, and the laborers in that revival; and after I left, they got together and formed a new congregation. Most of them were, at the time, unconverted men. Let the reader bear this in mind; for in its proper place, I shall have occasion to notice the results of this opposition and the formation of a new congregation, and the subsequent conversion of nearly every one of those opposers.

While at Auburn, I preached more or less in the neighboring churches round about; and the revival spread in various directions, to Cayuga, and to Skeneateles. This was in the summer and autumn of 1826.

Soon after my arrival at Auburn, a circumstance occurred, of so striking a character, that I must give a brief relation of it. My wife and myself were guests of Dr. Lansing, the pastor of the church. The church were much conformed to the world, and were accused by the unconverted of being leaders in dress, and fashion, and worldliness. As usual I directed my preaching to secure the reformation of the church, and to get them into a revival state. One Sabbath I had preached, as searchingly as I was able, to the church, in regard to their attitude before the world. The Word took deep hold of the people. At the close of my address, I called, as usual, upon the pastor to pray. He was much impressed with the sermon, and instead of immediately engaging in prayer, he made a short but very earnest address to the church, confirming what I had said to them. At this moment a man arose in the gallery, and said in a very deliberate and distinct manner, "Mr. Lansing, I do not believe that such remarks from you can do any good, while you wear a ruffled shirt and a gold ring, and while your wife and the ladies of your family sit, as they do, before the congregation, dressed as leaders in the fashions of the day." It seemed as if this would kill Dr. Lansing outright. He made no reply, but cast himself across the side of the pulpit, and wept like a child. The congregation was almost as much shocked and affected as himself. They almost universally dropped their heads upon the seat in front of them, and many of them wept on every side. With the exception of the sobs and sighs, the house was profoundly silent. I waited a few moments, and as Dr. Lansing did not move, I arose and offered a short prayer and dismissed the congregation.

I went home with the dear, wounded pastor, and when all the family were returned from church, he took the ring from his finger--it was a slender gold ring that could hardly attract notice--and said, his first wife, when upon her dying bed, took it from her finger, and placed it upon his, with a request that he should wear it for her sake. He had done so, without a thought of its being a stumbling block. Of his ruffles he said, he had worn them from his childhood, and did not think of them as anything improper. Indeed he could not remember when he began to wear them, and of course thought nothing about them. "But," said he, "if these things are an occasion of offense to any, I will not wear them." He was a precious Christian man, and an excellent pastor.

Almost immediately after this, the church were disposed to make to the world a public confession of their backsliding, and want of a Christian spirit. Accordingly a confession was drawn up, covering the whole ground. It was submitted to the church for their approval, and then read before the congregation. The church arose and stood, many of them weeping while the confession was read. From this point the work went forward, with greatly increased power.

The confession was evidently a heart work and no sham; and God most graciously and manifestly accepted it, and the mouths of gainsayers were shut. The fact is that, to a great extent, the churches and ministers were in a low state of grace, and those powerful revivals took them by

surprise. I did not much wonder then, nor have I since, that those wonderful works of God were not well understood and received by those who were not in a revival state.

There were a great many interesting conversions in Auburn and its vicinity, and also in all the neighboring towns, throughout that part of the state, as the work spread in every direction. In the Spring of 1831, I was again in Auburn and saw another powerful revival there. The circumstances were peculiar, and deeply interesting, and will be related in their appropriate place in this narrative.

02.16. REVIVAL AT TROY & NEW LEBANON

CHAPTER XVI.

REVIVAL AT TROY AND AT NEW LEBANON.

EARLY in the autumn of this year, 1826, I accepted an invitation from the Rev. Dr. Beman and his session, to labor with them in Troy, for the revival of religion. At Troy, I spent the fall and winter, and the revival was powerful in that city. I have already said that Mr. Nettleton had been sent by Dr. Beecher, as I understood, to Albany, to make a stand against the revivals that were spreading in central New York. I had had the greatest confidence in Mr. Nettleton, though I had never seen him. I had had the greatest desire to see him; so much so that I had frequently dreamed of visiting him, and obtaining information from him in regard to the best means of promoting a revival. I felt like sitting at his feet, almost as I would at the feet of an apostle, from what I had heard of his success in promoting revivals. At that time my confidence in him was so great that I think he could have led me, almost or quite, at his discretion.

Soon after my arrival at Troy, I went down to Albany to see him. He was the guest of a family with which I was acquainted. I spent part of an afternoon with him, and conversed with him in regard to his doctrinal views; especially of the views held by the Dutch and Presbyterian churches in regard to the nature of moral depravity. I found that he entirely agreed with me, so far as I had opportunity to converse with him, on all the points of theology upon which we conversed. Indeed there had been no complaint, by Dr. Beecher, or Mr. Nettleton, of our teaching in those revivals. They did not complain at all that we did not teach what they regarded as the true Gospel. What they complained of was something that they supposed was highly objectionable in the measures that we used.

Our conversation was brief, upon every point upon which we touched. I observed that he avoided the subject of promoting revivals. When I told him that I intended to remain in Albany, and hear him preach in the evening, he manifested uneasiness, and remarked that I must not be seen with him. Hence Judge C, who accompanied me from Troy, and who had been in college with Mr. Nettleton, went with me to the meeting, and we sat in the gallery together. I saw enough to satisfy me that I could expect no advice or instruction from him, and that he was there to take a stand against me. I soon found I was not mistaken.

Since writing the last paragraph, my attention has been called to a statement in the biography of Mr. Nettleton, to the effect that he tried in vain to change my views and practices in promoting revivals of religion. I cannot think that Mr. Nettleton ever authorized such a statement, for certainly he never attempted to do it. As I have said, at that time he could have molded me at discretion; but he said not a word to me about my manner of conducting revivals, nor did he ever write a word to me upon the subject. He kept me at arm’s length; and although, as I have said, we conversed on some points of theology then much discussed, it was plain that he was unwilling to say anything regarding revivals, and would not allow me to accompany him to meeting. This was the only time I saw him, until I met him in the convention at New Lebanon. At no time did Mr. Nettleton try to

correct my views in relation to revivals.

We soon began to feel, in Troy, the influence of Dr. Beecher's letters, over some of the leading members of Dr. Beman's church. This opposition increased, and was doubtless fomented by an outside influence, until finally it was determined to complain of Dr. Beman, and bring his case before the presbytery. This was done; and for several weeks the presbytery sat, and examined the charges against him.

In the meantime, I went on in my labors in the revival. Christian people continued praying mightily to God. I kept up preaching and praying incessantly, and the revival went on with increasing power; Dr. Beman, in the meantime, being under the necessity of giving almost his entire attention to his case before the presbytery. When the presbytery had examined the charges and specifications, I think they were nearly or quite unanimous in dismissing the whole subject, and justifying the course which he had taken. The charge was not for heresy nor were the specifications for heresy, I believe; but for things conjured up by the enemies of the revival, and by those who were misled by an outside influence.

In the midst of the revival it became necessary that I should leave Troy for a week or two, and visit my family at Whitesboro. While I was gone, Rev. Horatio Foote was invited by Dr. Beman to preach. I do not know how often he preached; but this I recollect, that he gave great offense to the already disaffected members of the church. He bore down upon them with the most searching discourses, as I learned. A few of them finally made up their minds to withdraw from the congregation. They did so, and established another congregation; but this was after I had left Troy, I do not recollect how long.

The failure of this effort to break Dr. Beman down, considerably discomfited the outside movement, in opposition to the revival. A great many very interesting incidents occurred during this revival, that I must pass in silence, lest they should appear to reflect too severely on the opposers of the work.

In this revival, as in those that had preceded, there was a very earnest spirit of prayer. We had a prayer meeting from house to house, daily, at eleven o'clock. At one of those meetings I recollect that a Mr. S, cashier of a bank in that city, was so pressed by the spirit of prayer, that when the meeting was dismissed he was unable to rise from his knees, as we had all just been kneeling in prayer. He remained upon his knees, and writhed and groaned in agony. He said, "Pray for Mr. --, president of the bank of which he was cashier. This president was a wealthy, unconverted man. When it was seen that his soul was in travail for that man, the praying people knelt down, and wrestled in prayer for his conversion. As soon as the mind of Mr. S was so relieved that he could go home, we all retired; and soon after the president of the bank, for whom we prayed, expressed hope in Christ. He had not before this, I believe, attended any of the meetings; and it was not known that he was concerned about his salvation. But prayer prevailed, and God soon took his case in hand.

The father of Judge C who was at Albany with me, was living with his son whose guest I was at the time. The old gentleman had been a judge in Vermont. He was remarkably correct in his outward life, a venerable man, whose house, in Vermont, had been the home of ministers who visited the place; and he was to all appearance quite satisfied with his amiable and self- righteous life. His

wife had told me of her anxiety for his conversion, and his son had repeatedly expressed fear that his father's self-righteousness would never be overcome, and that his natural amiability would ruin his soul.

One Sabbath morning, the Holy Spirit opened the case to my apprehension, and showed me how to reach it. In a few moments I had the whole subject in my mind. I went down stairs, and told the old lady and her son what I was about to do, and exhorted them to pray earnestly for him. I followed out the divine showing, and the Word took such powerful hold of him that he spent a sleepless night. His wife informed me that he had spent a night of anguish, that his self-righteousness was thoroughly annihilated, and that he was almost in despair. His son had told me that he had long prided himself, as being better than members of the church. He soon became clearly converted, and lived a Christian life to the end.

Before I left Troy, a young lady, a Miss S, from New Lebanon, in Columbia county, who was an only daughter of one of the deacons or elders of the church in New Lebanon, came to Troy, as I understood, to purchase a dress for a ball which she wished to attend. She had a young lady relative in Troy, who was numbered among the young converts, and was a zealous Christian. She invited Miss S to attend with her all the meetings. This aroused the enmity of her heart. She was very restive; but her cousin plead with her to stay from day to day, and to attend the meetings, until, before she left, she was thoroughly converted to Christ.

As soon as her eyes were opened, and her peace was made with God, she went immediately home, and began her labors for a revival in that place. Religion in New Lebanon was, at that time, in a very low state. The young people were nearly all unconverted; and the old members of the church were in a very cold and inefficient state. Miss S's father had become very formal; and for a long time religious matters had been in a great measure neglected in the place. They had an aged minister, a good man, I trust, but a man that did not seem to know how to perform revival work.

Miss S first began at home, and besought her father to give up his old prayer, as she expressed it, and wake up, and be engaged in religion. As she was a great favorite in the family, and especially with her father, her conversion and conversation greatly affected him. He was very soon aroused, and became quite another man, and felt deeply that they must have a revival of religion. The daughter went also to the house of her pastor, and began with a daughter of his who was in her sins. She was soon converted; and they two united in prayer for a revival of religion, and went to work, from house to house, in stirring up the people.

In the course of a week or two, there was so much interest excited that Miss S came out herself to Troy, to beg me to go there to preach. She was requested to do so by the pastor and by members of the church. I went out and preached. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out, and the revival soon went forward with great power. Very interesting incidents occurred almost every day. Striking conversions were multiplied, and a great and blessed change came over the religious aspect of the whole place.

Here we were out of the region poisoned by the influence of the opposition raised by Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton; consequently we heard but little of opposition at this place during the revival, especially from professors of religion. Everything seemed to go on harmoniously, so far as I know, in the church. They were soon led to feel that they greatly needed a revival, and seemed to be

very thankful that God had visited them. Most of the prominent men in the community were converted.

Among these was a Dr. W, who was said to be an infidel. He at first manifested a good deal of hostility to the revival, and declared that the people were mad. But he was made a particular subject of prayer by Miss S, and some others who laid hold upon his case, and who had great faith that, notwithstanding his fiery opposition, he would soon be converted. One Sunday morning he came to meeting, and I could see that those who felt for him were burdened. Their heads were down, and they were in a prayerful state during nearly the whole sermon. It was plain, however, before night, that the doctor's opposition began to give way. He listened through the day, and that night he spent in a deeply exercised state of mind. The next morning he called on me, subdued like a little child, and confessed that he had been all wrong. He was very frank in opening his heart, and declaring the change that had come over him. It was plain that he was another man; and from that day he took hold of the work and went forward with all his might.

There was also a Mr. T, a merchant, probably the most prominent and wealthy citizen of the town at that time, but a skeptic. I recollect one evening I preached on the text, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." He was present. He had been a very moral man, in the common acceptation of that term; and it had been very difficult to fasten anything upon his mind that would convict him of sin. His wife was a Christian woman, and the Lord had converted his daughter. The state of things in the town and in his family, had so far interested him, that he would come to meeting and hear what was said. The next day after this sermon on moral depravity, he confessed himself convinced. He told me it came home to him with resistless power. He saw it was all true, and assured me his mind was made up to serve the Lord the rest of his life.

I recollect also that John T. Avery, a noted evangelist, who has labored in many places for many years, was present at that meeting. His family lived in New Lebanon. He was born and brought up there; and was at this time a lad, perhaps fifteen or sixteen years of age. The next morning after that sermon was preached, he came to me, one of the most interesting youthful converts that I have ever seen. He began and told me what had been passing in his mind for several days; and then he added, "I was completely rolled up in the sermon, and it carried me right along. I could understand it. I gave up; I gave all to Christ." This he said in a manner not to be forgotten. But why should I multiply cases? I might spend hours in relating incidents, and the conversion of particular individuals. But I must not enter too much into particulars.

But I must mention a little incident, connected somewhat with the opposition that had been manifested at Troy. The presbytery of Columbia had a meeting, somewhere within its bounds, while I was at New Lebanon; and being informed that I was laboring in one of their churches, they appointed a committee to visit the place, and inquire into the state of things; for they had been led to believe, from Troy and other places, and from the opposition of Mr. Nettleton and the letters of Dr. Beecher, that my method of conducting revivals was so very objectionable, that it was the duty of presbytery to inquire into it. They appointed two of their number, as I afterward understood, to visit the place; and they attempted to do so. As I afterward learned, though I do not recollect to have heard it at the time, the news reached New Lebanon, of this action of the presbytery, and it was feared that it might create some division, and make some disturbance, if this committee came. Some of the most engaged Christians made this a particular subject of prayer; and for a day or two

before the time when they were expected, they prayed much that the Lord would overrule this thing, and not suffer it to divide the church, or introduce any element of discord. The committee were expected to be there on the Sabbath, and attend the meetings. But the day before, a violent snowstorm set in; and the snow fell so deep that they found it impossible to get through, were detained over the Sabbath, and on Monday, found their way back to their own congregations. Those brethren were the Rev. J B and the Rev. Mr. C. Mr. C was pastor of the Presbyterian church at Hudson, New York; and Mr. B was pastor of the Presbyterian church in Chatham, a village some fifteen or sixteen miles below Albany.

Soon after this, I received a letter from Mr. B, informing me that the presbytery had appointed him one of a committee to visit me, and make some inquiry in regard to my mode of conducting revivals, and inviting me to come and spend a Sabbath with him, and preach for him. I did so. As I understood afterward, his report to the presbytery was, that it was unnecessary and useless for them to take any farther action in the case; that the Lord was in the work, and they should take heed lest they be found fighting against God. I heard no more of opposition from that source. I have never doubted that the presbytery of Columbia were honestly alarmed at what they had heard. I have never called in question the propriety of the course which they took; and I ever admired their manifest honesty, in receiving testimony from proper sources. So far as I know, they thereafter sympathized with the work that was going on.

About this time, a proposition was made by somebody, I know not who, to hold a convention or consultation on the subject of conducting revivals.

Correspondence was entered into between the Western brethren who had been engaged in those revivals, and the Eastern brethren who had been opposing them. It was finally agreed to hold the convention on a certain day, I think in July, 1827, in New Lebanon, where I had been laboring. I had left New Lebanon, and had been spending a short time at the village of Little Falls, on the Mohawk, near Utica. Some very interesting incidents occurred there during my short stay; but nothing so marked as naturally to find a place in this narrative, as I was obliged to leave after a very short stay in that place, and return to New Lebanon to attend the convention.

It would seem that the design of this meeting has since been, by many, very much misunderstood. I find there is an impression in the public mind, that some complaint had been alleged against myself; and that this meeting was for the trial of myself, as complained of, before a council. But this was by no means the case. I had nothing to do with getting up the convention. Nor was I any more particularly concerned in its results, than any of the members that attended. The design was to get at the facts of those revivals that had been so much opposed, to consult in reference to them, compare views, and see if we could not come to a better understanding than had existed, between the Eastern opposers of the revivals, and the brethren who had been instrumental in promoting them.

I arrived in New Lebanon a day or two before the convention met. On the appointed day, the invited members arrived. They were not men that had been appointed by any ecclesiastical bodies; but they had been invited by the brethren most concerned, East and West, to come together for consultation. None of us were men representing any churches or ecclesiastical bodies whatever. We came together with no authority to act for the church, or any branch of it; but simply, as I have said, to consult, to compare views, to see if anything was wrong in fact; and if so, to

agree to correct what was wrong, on either side. For myself, I supposed that as soon as the brethren came together, and exchanged views, and the facts were understood, that the brethren from the East who had opposed the revivals, especially Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, would see their error, and that they had been misled; and that the thing would be disposed of; for I was certain that the things of which they complained in their letters, had no foundation in fact.

Of the brethren that composed this convention I can remember the following: from the East there were Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, Dr. Joel Hawes from Hartford, Dr. Dutton from New Haven, Dr. Humphrey, president of Amherst College, Rev. Justin Edwards of Andover, and a considerable number of other brethren whose names I do not recollect. From the West, that is from central New York where those revivals had been in progress, there were, Dr. Beman of Troy, Dr. Lansing of Auburn, Mr. Aiken of Utica, Mr. Frost of Whitesboro, Mr. Gillett of Rome, Mr. Coe of New Hartford, Mr. Gale of Western, Mr. Weeks of Paris Hill, and perhaps some others whose names I do not now recollect, and myself.

We soon discovered that some policy was on foot in organizing the convention, on the part of Dr. Beecher. However we regarded it not. The convention was organized, and I believe Dr. Humphrey presided as moderator. There was not the least unkindness of feeling, that I know of, existing among the members of the convention toward each other. It is true that the members from the West regarded with suspicion Mr. Weeks, as I have already intimated, as being the man who was responsible, in a considerable degree, for the misapprehension of the Eastern brethren. As soon as the convention was duly organized, and the business before us was stated and understood, the inquiry was raised by the brethren from the West in regard to the source whence Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton had received their information. We had been particularly solicitous to find out who it was that was misleading those brethren, and giving them such a view of the revivals, as to make them feel justified in the course they were taking. We wanted to know whence all this mysterious opposition had proceeded. We therefore raised the inquiry at once; and wished to know of those brethren from what source they had received their information, as touching those revivals. It was discovered at once that this was an embarrassing question.

I should have observed before, and now wish to be distinctly understood to say, that no opposition had been manifested by any of the ministers from the East, who attended the convention, except Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton. It was not difficult to see from the outset that Dr. Beecher felt himself committed, and that his reputation was at stake; that as his letters, some of them, had found their way into the public prints, he would be held responsible for them, should they not prove to have been called for. It was very plain that he and Mr. Nettleton were both very sensitive. It was also very apparent, that Dr. Beecher had secured the attendance of these most influential of the New England ministers, in order to sustain himself before the public, and justify himself in the course he had taken. As for Mr. Nettleton, Dr. Beecher had assured him that he would be sustained by New England; and that all the New England church judicatories would seek out in his favor, and sustain him.

When the question was raised as to the sources of the information, Dr. Beecher replied: "We have not come here to be catechised; and our spiritual dignity forbids us to answer any such questions." For myself I thought this was strange, that when such letters had been written and published as had appeared in opposition to those revivals; when such things had been affirmed as facts, which

were no facts at all; and when such a storm of opposition had been raised throughout the length and breadth of the land; and we had come together to consider the whole question, that we were not allowed to know the source from which their information had been obtained. But we found ourselves utterly unable to learn anything about it.

The convention sat several days; but as the facts came out in regard to the revivals, Mr. Nettleton became so very nervous that he was unable to attend several of our sessions. He plainly saw that he was losing ground, and that nothing could be ascertained that could justify the course that he was taking. This must have been very visible also to Dr. Beecher.

I should have said before, that when the question came up, how the facts were to be learned about those revivals, Dr. Beecher took the ground that the testimony of those brethren from the West, who had been engaged in promoting them, should not be received; that as we were, in a sense, parties to the question, and had been ourselves, the objects of his censure, it was like testifying in our own case; that we were therefore not admissible as witnesses, and the facts should not be received from us. But to this, the Brethren from the East would not listen for a moment. Dr. Humphrey very firmly remarked, that we were the best witnesses that could be produced; that we knew what we had done, and what had been done, in those revivals of religion; that we were therefore the most competent and the most credible witnesses; and that our statements were to be received without hesitation, by the convention. To this, so far as I know, there was a universal agreement, with the exception of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton.

This decision, however, it was very plain at the time, greatly affected both Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton. They saw that if the facts came out, from the brethren who had witnessed the revivals, who had been on the ground, and knew all about them, they might entirely overrule all the misapprehensions and all the misstatements that had been made and entertained upon the subject. Our meeting was very fraternal throughout; there was no sparring or bitterness manifested; but, with the exception of the two brethren whom I have named, Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, the brethren from the East appeared candid, and desirous to know the truth, and glad to learn the particulars of the Western revivals.

There were several points of discussion during the convention, especially one on the propriety of women taking any part in social meetings. Dr. Beecher brought up that objection, and argued it at length, insisting upon it, that the practice was unscriptural and inadmissible. To this Dr. Beman replied in a very short address, showing conclusively, that this practice was familiar to the apostles; and that in the eleventh chapter of Corinthians, the apostle called the attention of the church to the fact that Christian women had given a shock to Eastern ideas, by their practice of taking part, and praying in their religious meetings, without their veils. He showed clearly that the apostle did not complain of their taking part in the meeting, but of the fact that they did so, laying aside their veils; which had given a shock to the prevalent sentiment, and occasion of reproach to heathen opposers. The apostle did not reprove the practice of their praying, but simply admonished them to wear their veils when they did so. To this reply of Dr. Beman, no answer was made or attempted. It was manifestly too conclusive to admit of any refutation.

Near the close of the convention, Mr. Nettleton came in, manifestly very much agitated; and said that he would now give the convention to understand the reasons he had for the course he had taken. He had what he called a historical letter, in which he professed to give the reasons, and

state the facts, upon which he had founded his opposition. I was glad to hear the announcement that he wished to read this letter to the convention. A copy of it had been sent to Mr. Aiken, when I was laboring with him in Utica, and Mr. Aiken had given it to me. I had it in my possession at the convention, and should have called it up in due time, had not Mr. Nettleton done so.

He went on to read the letter. It was a statement, under distinct heads, of the things of which he complained; and which he had been informed, were practiced in those revivals, and especially by myself. It is evident that the letter was aimed at me particularly, though, perhaps, I was seldom mentioned in it, by name. Yet the things complained of were so presented, that there was no mistaking the design. The convention listened attentively to the whole letter, which was as long as a sermon. Mr. Nettleton then observed, that the convention had before them the facts upon which he had acted, and which he supposed had called for and justified his proceedings.

When he sat down I arose, and expressed my satisfaction that that letter had been read; and remarked that I had a copy of it, and should have read it in due time, if Mr. Nettleton had not done so. I then affirmed that so far as I was personally concerned, not one of those facts mentioned there, and complained of, was true. And I added, "All the brethren are here, with whom I have performed all these labors and they know whether I am chargeable with any of these things, in any of their congregations. If they know or believe that any of these things are true of me, let them say so now and here."

They all at once affirmed, either by expressly saying so, or by their manifest acquiescence, that they knew of no such thing. Mr. Weeks was present; and I expected, therefore, that if anything was said in reply to my explicit denial of all the facts charged in Mr. Nettleton's letter, with respect to myself, that it would come from Mr. Weeks. I supposed that if he had written to Dr. Beecher or Mr. Nettleton, affirming those facts, that he would feel called upon, then and there, to speak out, and justify what he had written. But he said not a word. No one there pretended to justify a single sentence in Mr. Nettleton's historical letter, that related to myself. This of course was astounding to Mr. Nettleton and Dr. Beecher. If any of their supposed facts had been received from Mr. Weeks, no doubt they expected him to speak out, and justify what he had written. But he said nothing intimating that he had any knowledge of any of the facts that Mr. Nettleton had presented in his letter. The reading of this letter, and what immediately followed, prepared the way for closing up the convention.

And now follow some things that I am sorry to be obliged to mention. Mr. Justin Edwards had been present during all the discussions; and had attended, I believe, all the sessions of the convention. He was a very intimate friend of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, and he must have seen clearly how the whole thing stood. At whose suggestion, I do not know, near the close of the convention, he brought in a string of resolutions, in which, from step to step, he resolved to disapprove of such, and such, and such measures in the promotion of revivals. He went over, in his resolutions, nearly, if not quite, every specification contained in Mr. Nettleton's historical letter, disapproving of all the things of which Mr. Nettleton had complained.

When he had read his resolutions, it was said immediately by several of the brethren from the West, "We approve of these resolutions, but what is their design? It is manifest that their design is to make the public impression that such things have been practiced; and that this convention, condemning those practices, condemns the brethren that have been engaged in those revivals;

and that this convention justifies, therefore, the opposition that has been made." Dr. Beecher insisted that the deign of the resolutions was entirely prospective; that nothing was asserted or implied with respect to the past, but that they were merely to serve as landmarks, and to let it be known that the convention disapproved of such things, if they ever should exist, with no implication whatever that any such things had been done.

It was immediately replied, that from the fact that such complaints had gone abroad, and it was publicly known that such charges had been made, it was evident that these resolutions were designed to sustain the brethren who had made the opposition, and to make the impression that such things had been done in those revivals, as were condemned in the resolutions. It was indeed perfectly plain that such was the meaning of those resolutions on the part of Mr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton.

The brethren from the West said, "Of course we shall vote for these resolutions. We believe in these things as much as you do; and we as much disapprove of the practices condemned in these resolutions as you do yourselves; therefore we cannot help voting for them. But we believe that they are intended to justify this opposition, to have a retrospective rather than a prospective application." However we passed the resolutions, I believe unanimously; and I recollect saying that, for my part, I was willing that these resolutions should go forth, and that all the facts should be left to the publication and adjudication of the solemn judgment. I then proposed that, before we dismissed, we should pass a resolution against lukewarmness in religion, and condemning it as strongly as any of the practices mentioned in the resolutions. Dr. Beecher declared that there was no danger of lukewarmness at all; whereupon the convention adjourned sine die.

How the publication of the whole proceedings was received by the public, I need not say. In the second volume of the biography of Dr. Beecher, page 101, I find the following note by the editor. He says, "A careful perusal of the minutes of this convention has satisfied us, that there was no radical difference of views between the Western brethren and those from New England, and that but for the influence of one individual, the same settlement might have been made there, which was afterward effected at Philadelphia." This is no doubt true. The fact is that had not Mr. Nettleton listened to false reports, and got committed against those revivals, no convention would have been held upon this subject, or thought of. It was all the more wonderful that he should have credited such reports since he had so often been made the subject of manifold misrepresentations. But he was nearly worn out, had become exceedingly nervous, and was of course fearful, and easily excited, and withal had the infirmity, attributed to him by Dr. Beecher in his biography, of never giving up his own will. I am sure that I say this with entirely kind feelings toward Mr. Nettleton. I never entertained or had any other.

After this convention, the reaction of public feeling was overwhelming. Late in the fall of the same year I met Mr. Nettleton in the city of New York. He told me he was there, to give his letters against the Western revivals to the public, in pamphlet form. I asked him if he would publish his historical letter which he read before the convention. He said he must publish his letters, to justify what he had done. I told him if he published that letter it would react against himself, as all who were acquainted with those revivals would see that he was acting without a valid reason. He replied that he should publish his letters, and would risk the reaction. He published several other letters, but that one he did not publish, so far as I could learn. If it had been true, the publication of it would

have made the impression that his opposition had been called for. But as it was not true, it was well for him that he did not publish it.

Here I must take a slight notice of some things I find in Dr. Beecher's biography, about which I think there must have been some misunderstanding. The biography represents him as having justified his opposition to those revivals--that is, to the manner in which they were conducted--until the day of his death; and as having maintained that the evils complained of were real and were corrected by the opposition. If this was his opinion after that convention, he must still have believed that the brethren who testified that no such things had been done, were a set of liars; and he must have wholly rejected our united testimony. But as he and Mr. Nettleton were exceedingly anxious to justify their opposition, if they still believed those statements in the historical letter to be true, why did they not publish it, and appeal to those who were on the ground and witnessed the revivals? Had the letter been true, its publication would have been their justification. If they still believed it true, why was it not published with Mr. Nettleton's other letters? That the developments made at that convention, had shaken the confidence of Dr. Beecher in the wisdom and justice of Mr. Nettleton's opposition, I had inferred from the fact that during my labors in Boston, a year and a half after the convention, and after Mr. Nettleton's letters were published, Dr. Beecher, speaking of that convention, remarked, that after that, he would not have had Mr. Nettleton come to Boston for a thousand dollars. Is it possible that, until his death, Dr. Beecher continued to believe that the pastors of those churches where those revivals occurred, were liars, and not to be believed in regard to facts which must have been within their personal knowledge?

I find in the biographies of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, much complaint of the bad spirit that prevailed in those revivals. Their mistake lies in their attributing a spirit of denunciation to the wrong side. I never heard the name of Dr. Beecher or Mr. Nettleton mentioned, during those revivals, in public, that I recollect, and certainly not censoriously. They were never, even in private conversation, spoken of, to my knowledge, with the least bitterness. The friends and promoters of those revivals were in a sweet, Christian spirit, and as far as possible from being denunciatory. If they had been in a denunciatory spirit, those blessed revivals could never have been promoted by them, and the revivals could never have turned out as gloriously as they did. No, the denunciation was on the side of the opposition. A quotation from Dr. Beecher's biography will illustrate the animus of the opposition. In the second volume, page 101, Dr. Beecher is represented as saying to me, at the convention at New Lebanon, "Finney, I know your plan, and you know I do; you mean to come to Connecticut, and carry a streak of fire to Boston. But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I'll meet you at the state line, and call out all the artillerymen, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I'll fight you there." I do not remember this; but, as Dr. Beecher does, let it illustrate the spirit of his opposition. The fact is, he was grossly deceived at every step. I had no design nor desire to go to Connecticut, nor to Boston. The above, and many other things which I find in his biography, show how completely he was deceived, and how utterly ignorant he was of the character, and motives, and doings, of those who had labored in those glorious revivals. I write these things with no pleasure. I find much in this biography that surprises me, and leads me to the conclusion that, by some mistake, Dr. Beecher has been misunderstood and misrepresented. But I pass by other matters.

After this convention I heard no more of the opposition of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton. Opposition in that form had spent itself. The results of the revivals were such as to shut the

mouths of gainsayers, and convince everybody that they were indeed pure and glorious revivals of religion, and as far from anything objectionable as any revivals that ever were witnessed in this world. Let any one read the Acts of the Apostles, and the record of the revivals of their day; and then read what they say, in their epistles, of the reaction, backsliding, and apostacies that followed. Then let them find out the truth respecting the glorious revivals of which I have been writing, their commencement, progress, and results, which have been more and more manifest for nearly forty years, and they cannot fail to see that these revivals were as truly from God as those.

Revivals should increase in purity and power, as intelligence increases. The converts in apostolic times were either Jews, with all their prejudice and ignorance, or degraded heathen. The art of printing had not been discovered. Copies of the Old Testament, and of the written word of God, were not to be had, except by the rich who were able to purchase manuscript copies. Christianity had no literature that was accessible to the masses. The means of instruction were not at hand. With so much darkness and ignorance, with so many false notions of religion, with so much to mislead and debase, and so few facilities for sustaining a religious reformation, it was not to be expected that revivals of religion should be pure and free from errors.

We have, and preach, the same Gospel that the apostles preached. We have every facility for guarding against error in doctrine and practice, and for securing a sound Gospel religion. The people among whom these great revivals prevailed, were an intelligent, cultivated people. They had not only the means of secular, but also of religious education, abounding in their midst. Nearly every church had an educated, able, and faithful pastor. These pastors were well able to judge of the soundness, and discretion of an evangelist, whose labors they wished to enjoy. They were well able to judge of the propriety of the measures employed. God set His seal to the doctrines that were preached, and to the means that were used to carry forward that great work, in a most striking and remarkable manner. The results are now found in all parts of the land. The converts of those revivals are still living, and laboring for Christ and for souls, in almost or quite every state in this Union. It is but just to say that they are among the most intelligent and useful Christians in this, or any other country.

As I have since labored extensively in this country, and in Great Britain, and no exceptions have been taken to my measures, it has been assumed and asserted that since the opposition made by Mr. Nettleton and Dr. Beecher, I have been reformed, and have given up the measures they complained of. This is an entire mistake. I have always and everywhere, used all the measures I used in those revivals and have often added other measures, whenever I have deemed it expedient. I have never seen the necessity of reformation in this respect. Were I to live my life over again, I think that, with the experience of more than forty years in revival labors, I should, under the same circumstances, use substantially the same measures that I did then.

And let me not be understood to take credit to myself. No indeed. It was no wisdom of my own that directed me. I was made to feel my ignorance and dependence, and led to look to God continually for His guidance. I had no doubt then, nor have I ever had, that God led me by His Spirit, to take the course I did. So clearly did He lead me from day to day, that I never did or could doubt that I was divinely directed.

That the brethren who opposed those revivals were good men, I do not doubt. That they were misled, and grossly and most injuriously deceived, I have just as little doubt. If they died under the

belief that they had just reasons for what they did, and wrote, and said, and that they corrected the evils of which they complained, they died grossly deceived in this respect. It is not for the safety of the church, the honor of revivals, or the glory of Christ, that posterity should believe that those evils existed, and were corrected, by such a spirit, and in such a manner as has been represented. I should have remained silent had not so marked an effort been made to perpetuate and confirm the delusion, that the opposition to those revivals was justifiable and successful. The fact is, it was neither.

I have no doubt that Dr. Beecher was led, by somebody, to believe that his opposition was called for. From his biography, it appears that at Philadelphia, the next spring after the convention, it was agreed by himself, Dr. Beman and others, to drop the subject and publish no more in regard to those revivals. The truth is, that all the controversy and all the publishing had been on the side of the opposition. Previously to the meeting at Philadelphia, Mr. Nettleton had published his letters, and I saw nothing farther in print upon the subject.

I was not a party to the agreement entered into at Philadelphia; nevertheless, had not Dr. Beecher's biography reopened this subject, with the manifest design to justify the course that he took, and rivet the impression upon the public mind, that in making that opposition to those revivals he performed a great and good work, I should not feel called upon to say, what I cannot now be justified in withholding. I write from personal knowledge, and to me it matters not who may have given to Dr. Beecher the supposed facts upon which he acted. Those asserted facts were no facts, as I stated before the convention; to which statement every brother with whom I had labored assented. This was proof, if anything can be proven by human testimony. This testimony, it would seem, Dr. Beecher did not believe, if his biographer has not misrepresented him. And what will the churches in Oneida county say to this? Will they, can they believe, that such men as Rev. Dr. Aiken, Rev. John Frost, Rev. Moses Gillett, Rev. Mr. Coe, and the other men from that county, who attended that convention, deliberately falsified upon a subject which was within their own personal knowledge? It matters not who Dr. Beecher's informants were; certainly none of the pastors where those revivals prevailed, ever gave him any information that justified his course; and no other men understood the matter as well as they did. I submit that, as the convention decided; they were the best possible witnesses of what was said and done in their own congregations; and their testimony was unanimous that no such things were done as were charged.

I had read the strong, and even terrible charges against the brethren who labored in those revivals, contained in Dr. Beecher's letter to Dr. Taylor, in which he states that his correspondence will justify what he was doing and writing against those brethren. When I learned that this matter was to be spread before the public in Dr. Beecher's biography, I hoped that, at last, we should get at the authors of those reports, through the publication of his correspondence. But I see nothing in his correspondence to justify his course. Are these charges to be virtually repeated and stereotyped, and the correspondence, by which they are said to be justified, concealed? If, as it seems, Dr. Beecher, until the day of his death, continued to reject our united testimony, may we not know by whose counter testimony ours is impeached? On page 103, of the second volume of Dr. Beecher's autobiography, we have the following: "In the spring of 1828, said Dr. Beecher in conversation on the subject, I found out that Mr. Finney's friends were laying their plans to make in impression on the general assembly, that held its session at Philadelphia, and to get one of their

men into Mr. Skinner’s place. Skinner’s church had just asked me to preach for them; and I wrote back that I would supply, if they wished, while the assembly was in session. That blocked somebody’s wheels. I stayed till the close, when Beman preached half a day. That defeated their plans. They failed." What this means I cannot say. In reading the above, and what follows to the end of the chapter, together with what I find elsewhere on this subject, in this biography, I stand amazed in view of the suspicions and delusions under which Dr. Beecher’s mind was laboring. If any of my friends were trying to get into Dr. Skinner’s pulpit which he had vacated, I have no recollection of ever having heard of it. I was, at that time, a minister in the Presbyterian church, and was preaching in Philadelphia when the assembly was in session and while Dr. Beecher was there. I was as ignorant as a child of all this management revealed in the biography. I shared none of the terrors and distractions, that seem to have so much distressed Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton. If any of my friends were sharing in the state of mind in which these brethren were, I knew it not.

The truthful record of my labors up to the time of the convention, and from that time onward, will show how little I knew or cared what Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton were saying or doing about me. I bless the Lord that I was kept from being diverted from my work by their opposition, and that I never gave myself any uneasiness about it. When at Auburn, as I have related, God had given me the assurance that He would overrule all opposition, without my turning aside to answer my opposers. This I never forgot. Under this divine assurance I went forward with a single eye, and a trustful spirit; and now when I read what agitations, suspicions, and misapprehensions possessed the minds of these brethren, I stand amazed at their delusion and consequent anxiety, respecting myself and my labors. At the very time that Dr. Beecher was in Philadelphia, managing with members of the general assembly, as related in his biography, I was laboring in that city, and had been for several months, in different churches, in the midst of a powerful revival of religion, perfectly ignorant of Dr. Beecher’s errand there. I cannot be too thankful that God kept me from being agitated, and changed in my spirit, or views of labor, by all the opposition of those days.

02.17. REVIVAL IN STEPHENTOWN

CHAPTER XVII.

REVIVAL IN STEPHENTOWN.

AFTER this convention, I remained a short time in New Lebanon. I do not think the convention injured the religious state of the people in that place. It would have done so, had any facts come out to justify the opposition which they knew had been made to the revivals that had been the subject of discussion. But, as it resulted, the church in New Lebanon were, I believe, edified and strengthened by what they knew of the convention. Indeed, everything had been conducted in a spirit tending to edify rather than stumble the people.

Soon after the adjournment of the convention, on the Sabbath, as I came out of the pulpit, a young lady by the name of S, from Stephentown, was introduced to me. She asked me if I could not go up to their town and preach. I replied, that my hands were full, and that I did not see that I could. I saw her utterance was choked with deep feeling; but as I had not time to converse with her then, I went to my lodging.

Afterward I made inquiry about Stephentown, a place north of, and adjoining New Lebanon. Many years before, a wealthy individual had died, and given to the Presbyterian church in that place, a fund, the interest of which was sufficient to support a pastor. Soon after this, a Mr. B, who had been a chaplain in the Revolutionary army, was settled there as pastor of the church. He remained until the church ran down, and he finally became an open infidel. This had produced a most disastrous influence in that town. He remained among them, openly hostile to the Christian religion.

After he had ceased to be pastor of the church, they had had one or two ministers settled. Nevertheless, the church declined, and the state of religion grew worse and worse; until, finally, they had left their meeting house, as so few attended meeting, and held their services on the Sabbath, in a small schoolhouse, which stood near the church.

The last minister they had had, affirmed that he stayed until not more than half-a-dozen people in the town would attend on the Sabbath; and although there was a fund for his support, and his salary was regularly paid, yet he could not think it his duty to spend his time in laboring in such a field. He had, therefore, been dismissed. No other denomination had taken possession of the field, so as to excite any public interest, and the whole town was a complete moral waste. Three elders of the Presbyterian church remained, and about twenty members. The only unmarried person in the church, was this Miss S, of whom I have spoken. Nearly the whole town was in a state of impenitence. It was a large, rich, farming town, with no considerable village in it.

On the next Sabbath, Miss S met me again, as I came out of the pulpit, and begged me to go up there and preach; and asked me if I knew anything of the state of things there. I informed her that I did; but I told her I did not know how I could go. She appeared greatly affected, too much so to

converse, for she could not control her feelings. These facts, with what I had heard, began to take hold of me; and my mind began to be profoundly stirred in respect to the state of things in Stephentown. I finally told her that if the elders of the church desired me to come, she might have a notice given out that I would come up, the Lord willing, and preach in their church, the next Sabbath at five o'clock in the afternoon. This would allow me to preach twice in New Lebanon, after which I could ride up to Stephentown and preach at five o'clock. This seemed to light up her countenance and lift the load from her heart. She went home and had the notice given.

Accordingly the next Sabbath, after preaching the second time, one of the young converts at New Lebanon offered to take me up to Stephentown in his carriage. When he came in his buggy to take me, I asked him, "Have you a steady horse?" Oh yes!" he replied, "perfectly so;" and smiling, asked, "What made you ask the question?" "Because," I replied, "if the Lord wants me to go to Stephentown, the devil will prevent it if he can; and if you have not a steady horse, he will try to make him kill me." He smiled, and we rode on; and, strange to tell, before we got there, that horse ran away twice, and came near killing us. His owner expressed the greatest astonishment, and said he had never known such a thing before.

However, in due time we arrived in safety at Mr. S's, the father of Miss S whom I have mentioned. He lived about half a mile from the church, in the direction of New Lebanon. As we went in, we met Maria--for that was her name--who tearfully, yet joyfully received us, and showed me to a room where I could be alone, as it was not quite time for meeting. Soon after I heard her praying in a room over my head. When it was time for meeting, we all went, and found a very large gathering. The congregation was solemn and attentive, but nothing very particular occurred that evening. I spent the night at Mr. S's, and this Maria seemed to be praying over my room nearly all night. I could hear her low, trembling voice, interrupted often by sobs and manifest weeping. I had made no appointment to come again; but before I left in the morning, she plead so hard, that I consented to have an appointment made for me for five o'clock the next Sabbath.

When I came up on the next Sabbath, nearly the same things occurred as before; but the congregation was more crowded; and as the house was old, for fear the galleries would break down, they had been strongly propped during the week. I could see a manifest increase of solemnity and interest, the second time I preached there. I then left an appointment to preach again. At the third service the Spirit of God was poured out on the congregation.

There was a Judge P, that lived in a small village in one part of the town, who had a large family of unconverted children. At the close of the service as I came out of the pulpit, Miss S stepped up to me, and pointed me to a pew--the house had then the old square pews--in which sat a young woman greatly overcome with her feelings. I went in to speak to her, and found her to be one of the daughters of this Judge P. Her convictions were very deep. I sat down by her and gave her instructions; and I think, before she left the house she was converted. She was a very intelligent, earnest young woman, and became a very useful Christian. She was afterwards the wife of the evangelist Underwood, who has been so well known in many of the churches, in New Jersey especially, and in New England. She and Miss S seemed immediately to unite their prayers. But I could not see as yet, much movement among the older members of the church. They stood in such relations to each other, that a good deal of repentance and confession had to pass among them, as a condition of their getting into the work.

The state of things in Stephentown, now demanded that I should leave New Lebanon, and take up my quarters there. I did so. The spirit of prayer in the meantime had come powerfully upon me, as had been the case for some time with Miss S. The praying power so manifestly spreading and increasing, the work soon took on a very powerful type; so much so that the Word of the Lord would cut the strongest men down, and render them entirely helpless. I could name many cases of this kind.

One of the first that I recollect was on Sabbath, when I was preaching on the text, "God is love." There was a man by the name of J, a man of strong nerves, and of considerable prominence as a farmer, in the town. He sat almost immediately before me, near the pulpit. The first that I observed was that he fell, and writhed in agony for a few moments; but afterwards became still, and nearly motionless, but entirely helpless. He remained in this state until the meeting was out, when he was taken home. He was very soon converted, and became an effective worker, in bringing his friends to Christ.

In the course of this revival, Zebulon R. Shipherd, a celebrated lawyer from Washington county, New York, being in attendance upon the court at Albany, and hearing of the revival at Stephentown, so disposed of his business as to come out and labor with me in the revival. He was an earnest Christian man, attended all the meetings, and enjoyed them greatly. He was there when the November elections occurred through the State. I looked forward to the election day with considerable solicitude, fearing that the excitement of that day would greatly retard the work. I exhorted Christians to watch and pray greatly, that the work might not be arrested by any excitement that should occur on that day.

On the evening of election day I preached. When I came out of the pulpit after preaching, Mr. Shipherd--who, by the way, was the father of Rev. J. J. Shipherd who afterward established Oberlin--beckoned to me from a pew where he sat, to come to him. It was a pew in the corner of the house, at the left hand of the pulpit. I went to him, and found one of the gentlemen who had sat at the table to receive votes during the day, so overcome with conviction of sin as to be unable to leave his seat. I went in and had some conversation with him, and prayed with him, and he was manifestly converted. A considerable portion of the congregation had, in the meantime, sat down. As I came out of the pew, and was about to retire, my attention was called to another pew, at the right hand side of the pulpit, where was another of those men that had been prominent at the election, and had been receiving votes, precisely in the same condition of mind. He was too much overpowered by the state of his feelings to leave the house. I went and conversed with him also; and, if I recollect, he was converted before he left the house. I mention these cases as specimens of the type of the work in that place.

I have mentioned the family of Mr. P as being large. I recollect there were sixteen members of that family, children and grandchildren, hopefully converted; all of whom I think, united with the church before I left. There was another family in the town by the name of M; which was also a large and very influential family, one of the most so of any in town. Most of the people lived scattered along on a street which, if I recollect right, was about five miles in length. On inquiry I found there was not a religious family on that whole street, and not a single house in which family prayer was maintained.

I made an appointment to preach in a schoolhouse, on that street, and when I arrived the house was very much crowded. I took for my text: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." The Lord gave me a very clear view of the subject, and I was enabled to bring out the truth effectively. I told them that I understood that there was not a praying family in that whole district. The fact is, the town was in an awful state. The influence of Mr. B, their former minister, now an infidel, had borne its legitimate fruit; and there was but very little conviction of the truth and reality of religion left, among the impenitent in that town. This meeting that I have spoken of, resulted in the conviction of nearly all that were present, I believe, at the meeting. The revival spread in that neighborhood; and I recollect that in this M family, there were seventeen hopeful conversions.

But there were several families in the town who were quite prominent in influence, who did not attend the meetings. It seemed that they were so much under the influence of Mr. B, that they were determined not to attend. However, in the midst of the revival, this Mr. B died a horrible death; and this put an end to his opposition.

I have said there were several families in town that did not attend meeting; and I could devise no means by which they could be induced to attend. The Miss S of New Lebanon, who was converted at Troy, heard that these families did not attend, and came up to Stephentown; and as her father was a man very well known and very much respected, she was received with respect and deference in any family that she wished to visit. She went and called on one of these families. I believe she was acquainted with their daughters, and induced them to accompany her to meeting. They soon became so interested that they needed no influence to persuade them to attend. She then went to another, with the same result, and to another; and finally, I believe, secured the attendance of all those families that had stayed away. These families were nearly or quite all converted before I left the town. Indeed nearly all the principal inhabitants of the town were gathered into the church, and the town was morally renovated. I have never been there since that time, which was in the fall of 1827. But I have often heard from there, and the revival produced permanent results. The converts turned out to be sound; and the church has maintained a good degree of spiritual vigor.

As elsewhere, the striking characteristics of this revival, were a mighty spirit of prevailing prayer; overwhelming conviction of sin; sudden and powerful conversions to Christ; great love and abounding joy of the converts, and their great earnestness, activity, and usefulness in their prayers and labors for others. This revival occurred in the town adjoining New Lebanon, and immediately after the Convention. The opposition had, at that convention, received its death-blow. I have seldom labored in a revival with greater comfort to myself, or with less opposition, than in Stephentown. At first the people chafed a little under the preaching, but with such power was it set home by the Holy Spirit, that I soon heard no more complaint.

02.18. REVIVALS AT WILMINGTON & PHILADELPHIA

CHAPTER XVIII.

REVIVALS AT WILMINGTON AND AT PHILADELPHIA.

WHILE I was laboring at New Lebanon, the preceding summer, Rev. Mr. Gilbert of Wilmington, Delaware, whose father resided in New Lebanon, came there on a visit. Mr. Gilbert was very old-school in his theological views, but a good and earnest man. His love of souls overruled all difficulty on nice questions of theological difference, between him and myself. He heard me preach in New Lebanon, and saw the results; and he was very earnest that I should come, and aid him in Wilmington.

As soon as I could see my way clear to leave Stephentown, therefore, I went to Wilmington, and engaged in labors with Mr. Gilbert. I soon found that his teaching had placed the church in a position that rendered it impossible to promote a revival among them, till their views could be corrected. They seemed to be afraid to make any effort, lest they should take the work out of the hands of God. They had the oldest of the old-school views of doctrine; and consequently their theory was that God would convert sinners in His own time; and that therefore to urge them to immediate repentance, and in short to attempt to promote a revival, was to attempt to make men Christians by human agency, and human strength, and thus to dishonor God by taking the work out of His hands. I observed also, that in their prayers there was no urgency for an immediate outpouring of the Spirit, and that this was all in accordance with the views in which they had been educated.

It was plain that nothing could be done, unless Mr. Gilbert’s view could be changed upon this subject. I therefore spent hours each day in conversing with him on his peculiar views. We talked the subject all over in a brotherly manner; and after laboring with him in this way for two or three weeks, I saw that his mind was prepared to have my own views brought before his people. The next Sabbath, I took for my text: "Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" I went thoroughly into the subject of the sinner’s responsibility; and showed what a new heart is not, and what it is. I preached about two hours; and did not sit down till I had gone as thoroughly over the whole subject, as very rapid speaking would enable me to do, in that length of time.

The congregation became intensely interested, and great numbers rose and stood on their feet, in every part of the house. The house was completely filled, and there were strange looks in the assembly. Some looked distressed and offended, others intensely interested. Not unfrequently, when I brought out strongly the contrast between my own views, and the views in which they had been instructed, some laughed, some wept, some were manifestly angry; but I do not recollect that anyone left the house. It was a strange excitement.

In the meantime, Mr. Gilbert moved himself from one end of the sofa to the other, in the pulpit behind me. I could hear him breathe and sigh, and could not help observing that he was himself in the greatest anxiety. However, I knew I had him, in his convictions, fast; but whether he would

make up his mind to withstand what would be said by his people, I did not know. But I was preaching to please the Lord, and not man. I thought that it might be the last time I should ever preach there; but purposed, at all events, to tell them the truth, and the whole truth, on that subject, whatever the result might be.

I endeavored to show that if man were as helpless as their views represented him to be, he was not to blame for his sins. If he had lost in Adam all power of obedience, so that obedience had become impossible to him, and that not by his own act or consent, but by the act of Adam, it was mere nonsense to say that he could be blamed for what he could not help. I had endeavored also to show that, in that case, the atonement was no grace, but really a debt due to mankind, on the part of God, for having placed them in a condition so deplorable and so unfortunate. Indeed, the Lord helped me to show up I think, with irresistible clearness the peculiar dogmas of old schoolism and their inevitable results.

When I was through, I did not call upon Mr. Gilbert to pray, for I dared not; but prayed myself that the Lord would set home the Word, make it understood, and give a candid mind to weigh what had been said, and to receive the truth, and to reject what might be erroneous. I then dismissed the assembly, and went down the pulpit stairs, Mr. Gilbert following me. The congregation withdrew very slowly, and many seemed to be standing and waiting for something, in almost every part of the house. The aisles were cleared pretty nearly; and the rest of the congregation seemed to remain in a waiting position, as if they supposed they should hear from Mr. Gilbert, upon what had been said. Mrs. Gilbert, however, went immediately out.

As I came down the pulpit stairs, I observed two ladies sitting on the left hand of the aisle through which we must pass, to whom I had been introduced, and who, I knew, were particular friends and supporters of Mr. Gilbert. I saw that they looked partly grieved, and partly offended, and greatly astonished. The first we reached, who was near the pulpit stairs, took hold of Mr. Gilbert as he was following behind me, and said to him, "Mr. Gilbert, what do you think of that?" She spoke in a loud whisper. He replied in the same manner, "It is worth five hundred dollars." That greatly gratified me, and affected me very much. She replied, "Then you have never preached the Gosepl." "Well," said he, "I am sorry to say I never have." We passed along, and then the other lady said to him about the same things, and received a similar reply. That was enough for me; I made my way to the door and went out. Those that had gone out were standing, many of them, in front of the house, discussing vehemently the things that had been said. As I passed along the streets going to Mr. Gilbert's, where I lodged, I found the streets full of excitement and discussion. The people were comparing views; and from the few words that escaped from those that did not observe me as I passed along, I saw that the impression was decidedly in favor of what had been said.

When I arrived at Mr. Gilbert's, his wife accosted me as soon as I entered, by saying, "Mr. Finney, how dared you preach any such thing in our pulpit?" I replied, "Mrs. Gilbert, I did not dare to preach anything else; it is the truth of God." She replied, "Well, it is true that God was in justice bound to make an atonement for mankind. I have always felt it, though I never dared say it. I believed that if the doctrine preached by Mr. Gilbert was true, God was under obligation, as a matter of justice, to make an atonement, and to save me from those circumstances in which it was impossible for me to help myself, and from a condemnation which I did not deserve."

Just at this moment Mr. Gilbert entered. "There," said I, "Brother Gilbert, you see the results of your preaching, here in your own family;" and then repeated to him what his wife had just said. He replied, "I have sometimes thought that my wife was one of the most pious women that I ever knew; and at other times I have thought that she had no religion at all." "Why!" I exclaimed, "she has always thought that God owed her, as a matter of justice, the salvation provided in Christ; how can she be a Christian?" This was all said, by each of us, with the greatest solemnity and earnestness. Upon my making the last remark, she got up and left the room. The house was very solemn; and for two days, I believe, I did not see her. She then came out clear, not only in the truth, but in the state of her own mind; having passed through a complete revolution of views and experience.

From this point the work went forward. The truth was worked out admirably by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Gilbert's views became greatly changed; and also his style of preaching, and manner of presenting the Gospel. So far as I know, until the day of his death, his views remained corrected, new school as opposed to the old school views which he had before maintained.

The effect of this sermon upon many of Mr. Gilbert's church members was very peculiar. I have spoken of the lady who asked him what he thought of it. She afterwards told me that she was so offended, to think that all her views of religion were so overthrown, that she promised herself she never would pray again. She had been in the habit of so far justifying herself because of her sinful nature, and had taken, in her own mind, such a opposition as Mrs. Gilbert had held, that my preaching on that subject had completely subverted her views, her religion, and all. She remained in this state of rebellion, if I recollect right, for some six weeks, before she would pray again. She then broke down, and became thoroughly changed in her views and religious experience. And this, I believe, was the case with a large number of that church.

In the meantime I had been induced to go up and preach for Mr. Patterson, at Philadelphia, twice each week. I went up on the steamboat and preached in the evening, and returned the next day and preached at Wilmington; thus alternating my evening services between Wilmington and Philadelphia. The distance was about forty miles. The Word took so much effect in Philadelphia as to convince me that it was my duty to leave Mr. Gilbert to carry on the work in Wilmington, while I gave my whole time to labor in Philadelphia.

Rev. James Patterson, with whom I first labored in Philadelphia, held the views of theology then held at Princeton, since known as the theology of the old school Presbyterians. But he was a godly man, and cared a great deal more for the salvation of souls, than for nice questions about ability and inability, or any of those points of doctrine upon which the old and new school Presbyterians differ. His wife held the New England views of theology; that is, she believed in a general, as opposed to a restricted atonement, and agreed with what was called New England orthodoxy, as distinguished from Princeton orthodoxy.

It will be remembered that at this time I belonged to the Presbyterian church myself. I had been licensed and ordained by a presbytery, composed mostly of men educated at Princeton. I have also said that when I was licensed to preach the Gospel, I was asked whether I received the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, as containing the substance of Christian doctrine. I replied that I did, so far as I understood it. But not expecting to be asked any such question, I had never examined it with any attention, and I think I had never read it through. But when I came to read the

Confession of Faith and ponder it, I saw that although I could receive it, as I now know multitudes of Presbyterians do, as containing the substance of Christian doctrine, yet there were several points upon which I could not put the same construction that was put on them at Princeton; and I accordingly, everywhere, gave the people to understand that I did not accept that construction; or if that was the true construction, then I entirely differed from the Confession of Faith. I suppose that Mr. Patterson understood this before I went to labor with him; as when I took that course in his pulpit he expressed no surprise. Indeed, he did not at all object to it.

The revival took such hold in his congregation as greatly to interest him; and as he saw that God was blessing the Word as I presented it, he stood firmly by me, and never, in any case, objected to anything that I advanced. Sometimes when we returned from meeting, Mrs. Patterson would smilingly remark, "Now you see Mr. Patterson, that Mr. Finney does not agree with you on those points upon which we have so often conversed." He would always, in the greatness of his Christian faith and love, reply, "Well, the Lord blesses it."

The interest became so great that our congregations were packed at every meeting. One day Mr. Patterson said to me, "Brother Finney, if the Presbyterian ministers in this city find out your views, and what you are preaching to the people, they will hunt you out of the city as they would a wolf." I replied, "I cannot help it. I can preach no other doctrine; and if they must drive me out of the city, let them do it, and take the responsibility. But I do not believe that they can get me out."

However, the ministers did not take the course that he predicted, by any means; but nearly all received me to their pulpits. When they learned what was going on at Mr. Patterson's church and that many of their own church members were greatly interested, they invited me to preach for them; and if I recollect right, I preached in all of the Presbyterian churches except that of Arch street.

Philadelphia was at that time a unit, almost, in regard to the views of theology held at Princeton. Dr. Skinner held to some extent, what have since been known as new school views; and differed enough from the tone of theology round about him, to be suspected as not altogether sound, according to the prevailing orthodoxy. I have ever regarded it as a most remarkable thing, that, so far as I know, my doctrinal views did not prove a stumbling block in that city; so was my orthodoxy openly called in question, by any of the ministers or churches. I preached in the Dutch church to Dr. Livingston's congregation; and I found that he sympathized with my views, and encouraged me, with all his influence, to go on and preach the preaching that the Lord had bidden me. I did not hesitate everywhere, and on all occasions, to present my own views of theology, and those which I had everywhere presented, to the churches.

Mr. Patterson was himself, I believe, greatly surprised that I met no open opposition from the ministers or churches, on account of my theological views. Indeed, I did not present them at all in a controversial way; but simply employed them in my instructions to saints; and sinners, in a way so natural as not, perhaps, to excite very much attention, except with discriminating theologians. But many things that I said were new to the people. For example, one night I preached on this text: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This was a sermon on the atonement, in which I took the view that I have always held, of its nature and of its universality; and stated, as strongly as I could, those points of difference between my own views and those that were held by limited

atonement theologians. This sermon attracted so much attention, and excited so much interest, that I was urged to preach on the same subject in other churches. The more I preached upon it, the more desirous people were to hear; and the excitement became so general, that I preached on that subject seven different evenings in succession, in as many different churches.

It would seem that the people had heard much said against what was called Hopkinsianism; the two great points of which were understood to be, that man ought to be willing to be damned for the glory of God, and that God was the author of sin. In preaching, I sometimes noticed these points, and took occasion to denounce Hopkinsianism; and said that they appeared to have too much of it in Philadelphia; that their great neglect in attending to the salvation of their souls looked very much as if they were willing to be damned; and that they must hold that God was the author of sin, for they maintained that their nature was sinful. This I turned over and over, and these two points I dwelt upon. I heard again and again that the people said, "Well, he is no Hopkinsian." Indeed, I felt it my duty to expose all the hiding places of sinners, and to hunt them out from under those peculiar views of orthodoxy, in which I found them entrenched. The revival spread, and took a powerful hold. All our meetings for preaching, for prayer, and for inquiry, were crowded. There were a great many more inquirers than we could well attend to. It was late in the fall when I took my lodgings in Philadelphia, and I continued to labor there without any intermission until the following August, 1828.

As in other places, there were some cases of very bitter opposition on the part of individuals. In one case, a man whose wife was very deeply convicted, was so enraged that he came in, and took his wife out of meeting by force. Another case I recollect as a very striking one, of a German whose name I cannot now recall. He was a tobacconist. He had a very amiable and intelligent wife; and was himself, as I afterwards found, when I became acquainted with him, an intelligent man. He was, however, a skeptic, and had no confidence in religion at all. His wife, however, came to our meetings, and became very much concerned about her soul; and after a severe struggle of many days, she was thoroughly converted. As she attended meetings frequently, and became very much interested, it soon attracted the attention of her husband, and he began to oppose her being a Christian. He had, as I learned, a hasty temper, and was a man of athletic frame, and of great resolution and fixedness of purpose. As his wife became more and more interested, his opposition increased, till finally he forbade her attending meetings any more.

She then called to see me, and asked my advice with regard to what course she should take. I told her that her first obligation was to God; that she was undoubtedly under obligation to obey His commands, even if they conflicted with the commands of her husband; and that, while I advised her to avoid giving him offense if she could, and do her duty to God, still in no case to omit, what she regarded as her duty to God, for the sake of complying with his wishes. I told her that, as he was an infidel, his opinions on religious subjects were not to be respected, and that she could not safely follow his advice. She was well aware of this. He was a man that paid no attention to religion at all, except to oppose it.

In accordance with my advice; she attended the meetings as she had opportunity, and received instructions; and she soon came into the liberty of the Gospel, had great faith and peace of mind, and enjoyed much of the presence of God. This highly displeased her husband; and he finally went so far as to threaten her life, if she went to meeting again. She had so frequently seen him

angry, that she had no confidence that he would fulfill his threat. She told him calmly that whatever it cost her, her mind was made up to do her duty to God; that she felt it her duty to avail herself of the opportunity to get the instruction she needed; and that she must attend those meetings, whenever she could do it without neglecting her duty to her family.

One Sabbath evening, when he found she was going to meeting, he renewed his threat that if she went he would take her life. She told me afterward that she had no thought that it was anything but a vain threat. She calmly replied to him that her duty was plain; that there was no reason why she should remain at home at that time, but simply to comply with his unreasonable wishes; and that to stay at home, under such circumstances; would be entirely inconsistent with her duty to God and to herself. She therefore went to meeting. When she returned from meeting, she found him in a great rage. As soon as she entered the door he locked it after her, and took out the key, and then drew a dagger and swore he would take her life. She ran upstairs. He caught a light to follow her. The servant girl blew out the light as he passed by her. This left them both in the dark. She ran up and through the rooms in the second story, found her way down into the kitchen, and then to the cellar. He could not follow her in the dark; and she got out of the cellar window, and went to a friend's house and spent the night.

Taking it for granted that he would be ashamed of his rage before morning, she went home early, and entered the house, and found things in the greatest disorder. He had broken some of the furniture, and acted like a man distracted. He again locked the door, as soon as she was fairly in the house; and drawing a dagger, he threw himself upon his knees and held up his hands, and took the most horrible oath that he would there take her life. She looked at him with astonishment and fled. She ran up stairs, but it was light, and he followed her. She ran from room to room, till finally, she entered the last, from which there was no escape. She turned around and faced him. She threw herself upon her knees, as he was about to strike her with his dagger, and lifted up her hands to heaven, and cried for mercy upon herself and upon him. At this point God arrested him. She said he looked at her for a moment, dropped his dagger, and fell upon the floor and cried for mercy himself. He then and there broke down confessed his sins to God and to her; and begged God, and begged her, to forgive him.

From that moment he was a wonderfully changed man. He became one of the most earnest Christian converts. He was greatly attached to myself; and some year or two after this, as he heard that I was to come to Philadelphia, in a certain steamboat, he was the first man in Philadelphia that met and greeted me. I received him and his wife into the church, before I left Philadelphia, and baptized their children. I have not seen or heard from them for many years.

But while there were individual cases of singular bitterness and opposition to religion, still I was not annoyed or hindered by anything like public opposition. The ministers received me kindly; and in no instance that I recollect, did they speak publicly, if indeed they did privately, against the work that was going on.

After preaching in Mr. Patterson's church for several months, and, more or less, in nearly all the Presbyterian churches in the city, it was thought best that I should take up a central position, and preach steadily in one place. In Race street there was a large German church, the pastor of which was a Mr. Helfenstein. The elders of the congregation, together with their pastor, requested me to occupy their pulpit. Their house was then, I think, the largest house of worship in the city. It was

always crowded; and it was said, it seated three thousand people, when the house was packed and the aisles were filled. There I preached statedly for many months. I had an opportunity to preach to a great many Sabbath-school teachers. Indeed it was said that the Sabbath-school teachers throughout the city generally attended my ministry.

About midsummer of 1829, I left for a short time, and visited my wife's parents in Oneida county, and then returned to Philadelphia, and labored there until about midwinter. I do not recollect exact dates, but think that in all, I labored in Philadelphia about a year and a half. In all this time there was no abatement of the revival, that I could see. The converts became numerous in every part of the city; but I never had any knowledge, nor could I form any estimate of their exact number. I never had labored anywhere where I was received more cordially; and where Christians, and especially converts, appeared better than they did there. There was no jar or schism among them, that I ever knew of; and I never heard of any disastrous influence resulting from that revival.

There were a great many interesting facts connected with this revival. I recollect that a young woman who was the daughter of a minister of the old school stamp, attended my ministry at Mr. Patterson's church, and became awfully convicted. Her convictions were so deep, that she finally fell into a most distressing despair. She told me she had been taught from her childhood by her father, that if she was one of the elect, she would be converted in due time; and that until she was converted, and her nature changed by the Spirit of God, she could do nothing for herself, but to read her Bible, and pray for a new heart.

When she was quite young she had been greatly convicted of sin, but had followed her father's instruction, had read her Bible, and prayed for a new heart, and thought that was all that was required of her. She waited to be converted, and thus for evidence that she was one of the elect. In the midst of her great struggle of soul on the subject of her salvation, something had come up relative to the question of marriage; and she promised God that she never would give her hand to any man till she was a Christian. When she made the promise, she said that she expected God would very soon convert her. But her convictions passed away. She was not converted; and still that promise to God was upon her soul, and she dared not break it.

When she was about eighteen years of age, a young man proposed to make her his wife. She approved, but as that vow was upon her, she could not consent to be married until she was a Christian. She said they greatly loved each other, and he urged her to be married without delay. But without telling him her real reason, she kept deferring it from time to time, for some five years, if I recollect right, waiting for God to convert her. Finally in riding one day, the young man was thrown from the carriage, and instantly killed. This aroused the enmity of her heart against God. She accused God of dealing hardly with her. She said that she had been waiting for Him to convert her, and had been faithful to her promise, not to get married until she was converted; that she had kept her lover for years waiting for her to get ready; and now, behold! God had cut him off, and she was still unconverted.

She had learned that the young man was a Universalist; and now she was greatly interested to believe that Universalism was true, and would not believe that God had sent him to hell; and if He had sent him to hell, she could not be reconciled to it at all. Thus she had been warring with God, for a considerable time, before she came to our meetings, supposing that the blame of her not being converted, was chargeable upon God, and not upon herself.

When she heard my preaching, and found that all her refuges of lies were torn away, and saw that she should have given her heart to God long before, and all would have been well; she saw that she herself had been entirely to blame, and that the instructions of her father on all those points had been entirely wrong; and remembering, as she did, how she had blamed God, and what a blasphemous attitude she had maintained before Him, she very naturally despaired of mercy. I reasoned with her, and tried to show her the long suffering of God, and encouraged her to hope, to believe, and to lay hold upon eternal life. But her sense of sin was so great, that she seemed unable to grasp the promise, and sunk down deeper and deeper into despair, from day to day.

After laboring with her a great deal, I became greatly distressed about her case. At the close of every meeting she would follow me home, with her despairing complaints, and would exhaust me by appeals to my sympathy and Christian compassion for her soul. After this state of things had continued for many weeks, one morning she called upon me in company with an aunt of hers, who had become greatly concerned about her, and who thought her on the very verge of a desperate insanity. I was myself of the opinion that it would result in that, if she would not believe. Catharine--for that was her name--came into my room in her usually despairing way; but with a look of wildness in her face that indicated a state of mind that was unendurable; and at the moment, I think it was the Spirit of God that suggested to my mind, to take an entirely different course with her from what I had ever taken.

I said to her, "Catharine, you profess to believe that God is good." "Oh yes!" she said, I believe that." "Well, you have often told me that His goodness forbids Him to have mercy on you--that your sins have been so great that it would be a dishonor to Him to forgive you and save you. You have often confessed to me that you believed that God would forgive you if He wisely could; but that your forgiveness would be an injury to Him, to His government, and to His universe, and therefore He cannot forgive you." "Yes," she said, "I believe that." I replied, "Then your difficulty is that you want God to sin, to act unwisely and injure Himself and the universe for the sake of saving you." She opened and set her large blue eyes upon me, and looked partly surprised and partly indignant. But I proceeded: "Yes! you are in great trouble and anguish of mind, because God will not do wrong, because He will persist in being good, whatever may become of you. You go about in the greatest distress of mind, because God will not be persuaded to violate His own sense of propriety and duty, and save you to His own injury, and that of the entire universe. You think yourself of more consequence than God and all the universe; and cannot be happy unless God makes Himself and everybody else unhappy, in making you happy."

I pressed this upon her. She looked with the utmost astonishment at me, and after a few moments she submitted. She seemed to be almost instantly subdued, like a little child. She said, "I accept it. Let God send me to hell, if He thinks that is the best thing to be done. I do not want Him to save me at His own expense, and at the expense of the universe. Let Him do what seemeth Him good." I got up instantly and left the room; and to get entirely away from her, I went out and got into a carriage and rode away. When I returned she had gone of course; but in the afternoon she and her aunt returned, to declare what God had done for her soul. She was filled with joy and peace, and became one of the most submissive, humble, beautiful converts that I have known.

Another young woman, I recollect, a very beautiful girl, perhaps twenty years old, called to see me under great conviction of sin. I asked her, among other things, if she was convinced that she had

been so wicked, that God might in justice send her to hell. She replied in the strongest language, "Yes! I deserve a thousand hells." She was gaily, and I think, richly dressed. I had a very thorough conversation with her, and she broke down in heart, and gave herself to Christ. She was a very humble, broken-hearted convert. I learned that she went home and gathered up a great many of her artificial flowers and ornaments, with which she had decked herself, and of which she was very vain, and passed through the room with them in her hands. They asked her what she was going to do with them. She said she was going to burn them up. Said she, "I will never wear them again." "Well," they said to her, "if you will not wear them, you can sell them; don't burn them." But she said, "If I sell them, somebody else will be as vain of them, as I have been myself; I will burn them up." And she actually put them into the fire. A few days after this she called on me, and said that she had, in passing through the market, I think that morning, observed a very richly dressed lady, in the market. Her compassions were so stirred, that she went up to her and asked if she might speak to her. The lady replied that she might. She said to her, "My dear madam, are you not proud of your dress, and are you not vain, and neglecting the salvation of your soul?" She said that she herself burst into tears as she said it, and told the lady a little of her own experience, how she had been attached to dress, and how it had well-nigh ruined her soul. "Now," said she, "you are a beautiful lady, and are finely dressed; are you not in the same state of mind that I was in myself?" She said the lady wept, and confessed that that had been her snare; and she was afraid that her love of dress and society would ruin her soul. She confessed that she had been neglecting the salvation of her soul, because she did not know how to break away from the circle in which she moved. The young lady wanted to know if I thought she had done wrong, in what she said to the lady. I told her, no! that I wished all Christians were as faithful as she; and that I hoped she would never cease to warn her own sex, against that which had so nearly ruined her own soul.

In the spring of 1829, when the Delaware was high, the lumber men came down with their rafts from the region of the high land, where they had been getting the lumber out, during the winter. At that time there was a large tract of country, along the northern region of Pennsylvania, called by many the lumber region, that extended up toward the head waters of the Delaware river. Many persons were engaged in getting out lumber there, summer and winter. Much of this lumber was floated down in the spring of the year, when the water was high, to Philadelphia. They would get out their lumber when the river was low; and when the snow went off, and the spring rains came on, they would throw it into the river and float it down to where they could build rafts, or otherwise embark it for the Philadelphia market.

Many of the lumber men were raising families in that region, and there was a large tract of country there unsettled and unoccupied, except by these lumber men. They had no schools, and at that time, had no churches or religious privileges at all. I knew a minister who told me he was born in that lumber region; and that when he was twenty years old, he had never attended a religious meeting, and did not know his alphabet.

These men that came down with lumber, attended our meetings, and quite a number of them were hopefully converted. They went back into the wilderness, and began to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and to tell the people around them what they had seen in Philadelphia, and to exhort them to attend to their salvation. Their efforts were immediately blessed, and the revival began to take hold, and to spread among those lumber men. It went on in a most powerful and remarkable manner. It spread to such an extent that in many cases persons would be convicted

and converted, who had not attended any meetings, and who were almost as ignorant as heathen. Men who were getting out lumber, and were living in little shanties alone, or where two or three or more were together, would be seized with such conviction that it would lead them to wander off and inquire what they should do; and they would be converted, and thus the revival spread. There was the greatest simplicity manifested by the converts.

An aged minister who had been somewhat acquainted with the state of things, related to me as an instance of what was going on there, the following fact. He said one man in a certain place, had a little shanty by himself where he slept nights, and was getting out his shingles during the day. He began to feel that he was a sinner, and his convictions increased upon him until he broke down, confessed his sins, and repented; and the Spirit of God revealed to him so much of the way of salvation, that he evidently knew the Savior. But he had never attended a prayer meeting, or heard a prayer, that he recollected, in his life. His feelings became such, that he finally felt constrained to go and tell some of his acquaintances, that were getting out lumber in another place, how he felt. But when he arrived, he found that they felt, a good many of them, just as he did; and that they were holding prayer meetings. He attended their prayer meetings, and heard them pray, and finally prayed himself; and this was the form of his prayer: "Lord you have got me down and I hope You will keep me down. And since You have had so good luck with me, I hope You will try other sinners."

I have said that this work began in the spring of 1829. In the spring of 1831, I was at Auburn again. Two or three men from this lumber region, came there to see me, and to inquire how they could get some ministers to go in there. They said that not less than five thousand people had been converted in that lumber region; that the revival had extended itself along for eighty miles, and there was not a single minister of the Gospel there.

I have never been in that region; but from all I have ever heard about it, I have regarded that as one of the most remarkable revivals that have occurred in this country. It was carried on almost independently of the ministry, among a class of people very ignorant, in regard to all ordinary instruction; and yet so clear and wonderful were the teachings of God, that I have always understood the revival was remarkably free from fanaticism, or wildness, or anything that was objectionable. I may have been misinformed in some respects, but report the matter as I have understood it. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The spark that was struck into the hearts of those few lumber men that came to Philadelphia, spread over that forest, and resulted in the salvation of a multitude of souls.

I found Mr. Patterson to be one of the truest and holiest men that I have ever labored with. His preaching was quite remarkable. He preached with great earnestness; but there was often no connection in what he said, and very little relation to his text. He has often said to me, "When I preach, I preach from Genesis to Revelation." He would take a text, and after making a few remarks upon it, or perhaps none at all, some other text would be suggested to him, upon which he would make some very pertinent and striking remarks, and then another text; and thus his sermons were made up of pithy and striking remarks upon a great number of texts, as they arose in his mind.

He was a tall man, of striking figure and powerful voice. He would preach with the tears rolling down his cheeks, and with an earnestness and pathos that were very striking. It was impossible to

hear him preach without being impressed with a sense of his intense earnestness and his great honesty. I only heard him preach occasionally; and when I first did so, was pained, thinking that such was the rambling nature of his preaching that it could not take effect. However, I found myself mistaken. I found that notwithstanding the rambling nature of his preaching, his great earnestness and unction fastened the truth on the hearts of his hearers; and I think I never heard him preach without finding that some persons were deeply convicted by what he said.

He always used to have a revival of religion every winter; and at the time when I labored with him, I think he told me he had had a revival for fourteen winters in succession. He had a praying people. When I was laboring with him I recollect that for two or three days, at one time, there seemed to be something in the way. The work seemed to be in a measure suspended; and I began to feel alarmed lest something had grieved the Holy Spirit. One evening at prayer meeting, while this state of things was becoming manifest, one of his elders arose and made a confession. He said, "Brethren, the Spirit of God has been grieved, and I have grieved Him. I have been in the habit," said he, "of praying for Brother Patterson, and for the preaching, on Saturday night, until midnight. This has been my habit for many years, to spend Saturday night, till midnight, in imploring the blessing of God upon the labors of the Sabbath. Last Saturday night," he continued, "I was fatigued, and omitted it. I thought the work was going on so pleasantly and so powerfully, that I might indulge myself, and go to bed without looking to God for a blessing on the labors of the Sabbath. On the Sabbath," said he, "I was impressed with the conviction that I had grieved the Spirit; and I saw that there was not the usual manifestation of the influence of the Spirit upon the congregation. I have felt convicted ever since; and have felt that it was my duty to make this public confession. I do not know," said he, "who beside myself has grieved the Spirit of God; but I am sure that I have done so."

I have spoken of Mr. Patterson’s orthodoxy. When I first began to labor with him, I felt considerably tried, in some instances, with what he would say to convicted sinners. For example: the first meeting for inquirers that we had, the number in attendance was very large. We spent some time in conversing with different persons, and moving around from place to place, giving instructions. The first I knew Mr. Patterson arose, and in a very excited manner, said, "My friends, you have turned your faces onward, and now I exhort you to press forward." He went on in an exhortation of a few moments, in which he made, distinctly, the impression that they were now in the right way; and that they had only to press forward as they were doing then and they would be saved. His remarks pained me exceedingly; for they seemed to me to tend to self-righteousness--to make the impression that they were doing very well, and that if they continued to do their duty, as they were then doing it, they would be saved.

This was not my view of their condition at all; and I felt pained to hear such instructions given, and perplexed with the question how I should counteract it. However, at the close of the meeting, when, according to my custom, I summed up the results of our conversation, and made an address to them, I alluded to what Mr. Patterson had said, and remarked that they must not misunderstand what he had said; that what he had said was true of those that had really turned to God, and set their faces Zionward, by giving their hearts to God. But they must not think of applying this to those of them who were convicted, but had not yet repented, believed, and given their hearts to God; that instead of their faces being turned Zionward, they were really turning their backs upon Christ; that they were still resisting the Holy Spirit; that they were still in the way to hell;

that every moment they resisted they were waxing worse; and that every moment they remained impenitent, without submission, repentance, and faith, they were increasing their condemnation. The Lord gave me a very clear view of the subject. Mr. Patterson listened with the greatest possible attention. I never shall forget with what earnestness he looked at me, and with what interest he saw the discriminations that I made.

I kept on in my address until I could see, and until I felt, that the impression made by what had been said, had not only been corrected, but that a great pressure was bearing upon them to submit immediately. I then called upon them to kneel down, and then and there commit themselves forever to the Lord, renouncing all their sins, and giving themselves up to the disposal of sovereign goodness, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I explained to them, as plainly as I could, the nature of the atonement, and the salvation presented in the Gospel. I then prayed with them, and have reason to believe that a great number of them were converted on the spot.

After this I never heard anything from Mr. Patterson that was at all objectionable, in giving instruction to inquiring sinners. Indeed, I found him remarkably teachable, and his mind open to just discriminations. He seemed particularly quick to get hold of those truths that needed to be presented to inquiring sinners; and I presume to the day of his death, he never again presented such a view of the subject as the one to which I have alluded. I respect and reverence his very name. He was a lovely Christian man, and a faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

02.19. REVIVAL AT READING

CHAPTER XIX.

REVIVAL AT READING.

AS I found myself in Philadelphia, in the heart of the Presbyterian church, and where Princeton views were almost universally embraced, I must say still more emphatically than I have done, if possible, that the greatest difficulty I met with in promoting revivals of religion, was the false instruction given to the people, and especially to inquiring sinners. Indeed, in all my ministerial life, in every place and country where I have labored, I have found this difficulty to a greater or less extent; and I am satisfied that multitudes are living in sin, who would immediately be converted if they were truly instructed. The foundation of the error of which I speak, is the dogma that human nature is sinful in itself; and that, therefore, sinners are entirely unable to become Christians. It is admitted, either expressly or virtually, that sinners may want to be Christians, and that they really do want to be Christians, and often try to be Christians, and yet somehow fail.

It had been the practice, and still is to some extent, when ministers were preaching repentance, and urging the people to repent, to save their orthodoxy by telling them that they could not repent, any more than they could make a world. But the sinner must be set to do something; and with all their orthodoxy, they could not bear to tell him that he had nothing to do. They must therefore, set him self-righteously to pray for a new heart. They would sometimes tell him to do his duty, to press forward in duty, to read his Bible, to use the means of grace; in short, they would tell him to do anything and everything, but the very thing which God commands him to do. God commands him to repent now, to believe now, to make to him a new heart now. But they were afraid to urge God’s claims in this form, because they were continually telling the sinner that he had no ability whatever to do these things.

As an illustration of what I have found in this and other countries, more or less, ever since I have been in the ministry, I will refer to a sermon that I heard from the Rev. Baptist Noel, in England, a good man, and orthodox in the common acceptation of the term. His text was: "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." In the first place he represented repentance not as a voluntary, but as an involuntary change, as consisting in sorrow for sin, a mere state of the sensibility. He then insisted upon its being the sinner’s duty to repent, and urged the claims of God upon him. But he was preaching to an orthodox congregation; and he must not, and did not, fail to remind them that they could not repent; that although God required it of them, still He knew that it was impossible for them to repent, only as He gave them repentance. "You ask, then," he said, "what you shall do. Go home," said he, in reply," and pray for repentance; and if it does not come, pray again for repentance; and still if it does not come, keep praying till it does come." Here he left them. The congregation was large, and the people very attentive; and I actually found it difficult to keep from screaming to the people, to repent, and not to think that they were doing their duty in merely praying for repentance.

Such instructions always pained me exceedingly; and much of my labor in the ministry has consisted in correcting these views, and in pressing the sinner immediately to do just what God commands him to do. When he has inquired of me, if the Spirit of God has nothing to do with it, I have said, "Yes; as a matter of fact you will not do it of yourself. But the Spirit of God is now striving with you to lead you to do just what He would have you do. He is striving to lead you to repentance, to lead you to believe; and is striving with you, not to secure the performance of mere outward acts, but to change your heart." The church, to a very great extent, have instructed sinners to begin on the outside in religion; and by what they have called an outward performance of duty, to secure an inward change of their will and affections.

But I have ever treated this as totally wrong, unorthodox, and in the highest degree dangerous. Almost innumerable instances have occurred, in which I have found the results of this teaching, of which I have complained, to be a misapprehension of duty on the part of sinners; and I think I may say I have found thousands of sinners, of all ages, who are living under this delusion, and would never think themselves called upon to do anything more than merely to pray for a new heart, live a moral life, read their Bibles, attend meeting, use the means of grace, and leave all the responsibility of their conversion and salvation with God.

From Philadelphia in the winter of 1829-30, I went to Reading, a city about forty miles west of Philadelphia. At this place an incident occurred, which I shall mention in its place, that was a striking illustration of the kind of teaching to which I have alluded, and of its natural results. In Reading there were several German churches, and one Presbyterian church. The pastor of the latter was the Rev. Dr. Greer. At his request, and that of the elders of the church, I went out to labor there for a time.

I soon found, however, that neither Dr. Greer, nor any of his people, had any just idea of what they needed, or what a revival really was. None of them had ever seen a revival, so far as I could learn. Besides, all revival efforts, for that winter, had been forestalled, by an arrangement to have a ball every alternate week, which was attended by many of the members of the church, one of the leading elders in Dr. Greer’s church being one of the managers. I could not learn that Dr. Greer had ever said anything against this. They had no preaching during the week, and I believe no religious meetings of any kind.

When I found what the state of things was, I thought it my duty to tell Dr. Greer that those balls would very soon be given up, or I should not be allowed to occupy his pulpit; that those balls, attended by his church members, and headed by one of his elders, would not long consist with my preaching. But he said, "Go on; take your own course." I did so; and preached three times on the Sabbath, and four times, I think, during the week, for about three weeks, before I said anything about any other meetings. We had no prayer meetings, I believe, for the reason that the lay members had never been in the habit of taking part in such meetings.

However, on the third Sabbath, I think, I gave notice that a meeting for inquiry would be held in the lecture room, in the basement of the church, on Monday evening. I stated as clearly as possible the object of the meeting, and mentioned the class of persons that I desired to attend; inviting those, and those only, that were seriously impressed with the state of their souls, and had made up their minds to attend immediately to the subject, and desired to receive instruction on the particular question of what they should do to be saved. Dr. Greer made no objection to this, as he

had left everything to my judgment. But I do not think he had an idea that many, if any, would attend such a meeting, under such an invitation; as to do so would be, to make an open acknowledgment that they were anxious for the salvation of their souls, and had made up their minds to attend to the subject at once.

Monday was rather a snowy, cold day. I think I observed that conviction was taking hold of the congregation; yet I felt doubtful how many would attend a meeting of inquirers. However, when evening came, I went to the meeting. Dr. Greer came in, and behold! the lecture room, a large one I think nearly as large as the body of the church above, was full; and on looking around Dr. Greer observed that most of the impenitent persons in his congregation were present; and among them, those who were regarded as the most respectable and influential.

He said nothing publicly. But he said to me, "I know nothing about such a meeting as this; take it into your own hands, and manage it in your own way." I opened the meeting by a short address, in which I explained to them what I wished; that is to have a few moments conversation with each of them, and to have them state to me frankly how they felt on the subject, what their convictions were, what their determinations were, what their difficulties were.

I told them that if they were sick and called a physician, he would wish to know their symptoms, and that they should tell him how they were, and how they had been. I said to them, "I cannot adapt instruction to your present state of mind, unless you reveal it to me. The thing, therefore, that I want, is that you reveal, in as few words as you can, your exact state of mind at the present time. I will now pass around among you, and give each of you an opportunity to say in the fewest words, what your state of mind is." Dr. Greer said not a word, but followed me around, and stood or sat by me and heard all that I had to say. He kept near me, for I spoke to each one in a low voice, so as not to be heard by others than those in the immediate vicinity. I found a great deal of conviction and feeling in the meeting. They were greatly pressed with conviction. Conviction had taken hold of all classes, the high and the low, the rich and the poor.

Dr. Greer was greatly moved. Though he said nothing, still it was evident to me that his interest was intense. To see his congregation in such a state as that, was what he had never had any conception of. I saw that with difficulty, at times, he controlled his emotions.

When I had spent as much time as was allowed me in personal conversation, I then went back to the desk, and gave them an address; in which, according to my custom, I summed up the results of what I had found that was interesting, in the communications that they had made to me. Avoiding all personalities, I took up the representative cases, and dissected, and corrected, and taught them. I tried to strip away their misapprehensions and mistakes, to correct the impression that they had, that they must simply use means and wait for God to convert them; and in an address of perhaps a half or three-quarters of an hour, I set before them the whole situation, as clearly as I possibly could. After praying with them I called on those that felt prepared to submit, and who were willing then and there to pledge themselves to live wholly to God, who were willing to commit themselves to the sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus, who were willing to give up all sin, and to renounce it forever, to kneel down, and while I prayed, to commit themselves to Christ, and inwardly to do what I exhorted them to do. I called on those only to kneel down, who were willing to do what God required of them, and what I presented before them. Dr. Greer looked very much surprised at the test I put, and the manner in which I pressed them to instant

submission.

As soon as I saw that they thoroughly understood me, I called on them to kneel, and knelt myself. Dr. Greer knelt by my side, but said nothing. I presented the case in prayer to God, and held right to the point of now submitting, believing, and consecrating themselves to God. There was an awful solemnity pervading the congregation, and the stillness of death, with the exception of my own voice in prayer, and the sobs, and sighs, and weeping that were heard more or less throughout the congregation.

After spreading the case before God we rose from our knees, and without saying anything farther I pronounced the blessing and dismissed them. Dr. Greer took me cordially by the hand, and smiling said, "I will see you in the morning." He went his way, and I went to my lodgings. At about eleven o'clock, I should judge, a messenger came running over to my lodgings, and called me, and said that Dr. Greer was dead. I inquired what it meant. He said he had just retired, and was taken with a fit of apoplexy, and died immediately. He was greatly respected and beloved by his people, and I am persuaded he deserved to be. He was a man of thorough education, and I trust of earnest piety. But his theological education had not at all fitted him for the work of the ministry, that is to win souls to Christ. He was besides rather a timid man. He did not like to face his people, and resist the encroachments of sin as he needed to do. His sudden death was a great shock, and became the subject of constant conversation throughout the town.

Although I found a goodly number had, to all human appearance, submitted at the meeting on Monday evening, still the death of Dr. Greer, under such extraordinary circumstances, proved a great diversion of the public mind for a week or more. But after his funeral was over, and the usual evening services got into their proper channel, the work took on a powerful type, and went forward in a most encouraging manner.

Many very interesting incidents occurred in this revival. I recollect on one very snowy night, when the snow had already fallen deep, and was drifting in a terrible manner under a fierce gale of wind, I was called up about midnight, to go and visit a man who, they informed me, was under such awful conviction that he could not live, unless something could be done for him. The man's name was B. He was a stalwart man, very muscular, a man of great force of will and strength of nerve, physically a fine specimen of humanity. His wife was a professor of religion; but he had cared for none of these things.

He had been at the meeting that evening, and the sermon had torn him to pieces. He went home in a terrible state of mind, his convictions and distress increasing till it overcame his bodily strength; and his family feared he would die. Although it was in the midst of such a terrific storm, they dispatched a messenger for me. We had to face the storm, and walked perhaps fifty or sixty rods. I heard his moanings, or rather howlings, before I got near the house. When I entered I found him sitting on the floor, his wife, I believe, supporting his head and what a look in his face! It was indescribable. Accustomed as I was to seeing persons under great convictions, I must confess that his appearance gave me a tremendous shock. He was writhing in agony, grinding his teeth, and literally gnawing his tongue for pain. He cried out to me, "Oh, Mr. Finney! I am lost! I am a lost soul!" I was greatly shocked and exclaimed, "If this is conviction, what is hell?" However, I recovered myself as soon as I could, and sat down by his side. At first he found it difficult to attend; but I soon led his thoughts to the way of salvation through Christ. I pressed the Savior upon his

attention and upon his acceptance. His burden was soon removed. He was persuaded to trust the Savior, and he came out free and joyful in hope.

Of course, from day to day, I had my hands, my head, and my heart entirely full. There was no pastor to help me, and the work spread on every hand. The elder of the church to whom I have alluded as being one of the managers of their stated balls soon broke down his heart before the Lord, and entered into the work; and, as a consequence, his family were soon converted. The revival made a thorough sweep in the families of those members of the church that entered into the work.

I said that in this place a circumstance occurred, that illustrated the influence of that old school teaching of which I have complained. Very early one morning a lawyer, belonging to one of the most respectable families in the town, called at my room, in the greatest agitation of mind. I saw he was a man of first-rate intelligence, and a gentleman; but I had nowhere seen him, to know him. He came in and introduced himself, and said he was a lost sinner--that he had made up his mind that there was no hope for him. He then informed me that when he was in Princeton College, he and two of his classmates became very anxious about their souls. They went together to Dr. Ashbel Green, who was then president of the college, and asked him what they should do to be saved. He said the doctor told them he was very glad to have them come and make the inquiry; and then told them to keep out of all bad company, to read their Bible statedly, and to pray God to give them a new heart. "Continue this," he said, "and press forward in duty; and the Spirit of God will convert you; or else He will leave you, and you will return back to your sins again." "Well, I inquired, how did it terminate?" "Oh," said he, "we did just as he told us to do. We kept out of bad company, and prayed that God would make us a new heart. But after a little while our convictions wore away, and we did not care to pray any longer. We lost all interest in the subject;" and then bursting into tears he said, "My two companions are in drunkard’s graves, and if I cannot repent I shall soon be in one myself." This remark led me to observe that he had indications of being a man that made too free use of ardent spirits. However, this was early in the morning; and he was entirely free from drink, and in terrible anxiety about his soul.

I tried to instruct him, and to show him the error that he had fallen into, under such instructions as he had received, and that he had resisted and grieved the Spirit, by waiting for God to do what He had commanded him to do. I tried to show him that, in the very nature of the case, God could not do for him what He required him to do. God required him to repent, and God could not repent for him; required him to believe, but God could not believe for him; God required him to submit, but could not submit for him. I then tried to make him understand the agency that the Spirit of God has in giving the sinner repentance and a new heart; that it is a divine persuasion; that the Spirit leads him to see his sins, urges him to give them up and to flee from the wrath to come. He presents to him the Savior, the atonement, the plan of salvation, and urges him to accept it.

I asked him if he did not feel this urgency upon himself, in these truths revealed in his own mind; and a call, now to submit, to believe, to make himself a new heart. "Oh yes!" he said, "Oh yes! I see and feel all this. But am I not given up of God? Is not my day of grace past?" I said to him, "No! It is plain the Spirit of God is still calling you, still urging you to repentance; you acknowledge that you feel this urgency in your own mind." He inquired, "Is this, then, what the Spirit of God is doing, to show me all this?" I assured him that it was; and that he was to understand this as a divine call,

and as evidence conclusive that he was not abandoned, and had not sinned away the day of grace, but that God was striving to save him still. I then asked him if he would respond to the call, if he would come to Jesus, if he would lay hold upon eternal life then and there.

He was an intelligent man, and the Spirit of God was upon and teaching him, and making him understand every word that I said. When I saw that the way was fully prepared, I called on him to kneel down and submit; and he did so, and to all human appearance, became a thorough convert right upon the spot. "Oh!" he afterwards said, "if Dr. Green had only told us this that you have told me, we should all have been converted immediately. But my friends and companions are lost; and what a wonder of mercy it is that I am saved!"

I recollect a very interesting incident in the case of a merchant in Reading, one branch of whose business was the making of whiskey. He had just been fitting up a very large distillery at a good deal of expense. He had constructed it with all the latest improvements, on a large scale, and was going deeply into the business. But as soon as he was converted, he gave up all thought of going any farther with that business. It was a spontaneous conclusion of his own mind. He said at once, "I shall have nothing to do with that. I shall tear my distillery down. I will neither work it, nor sell it to be worked."

His wife was a good woman, and a sister to Mr. B, whose conversion I have mentioned as occurring on that stormy night. The merchant's name was OB. The revival took a powerful hold in his family, and several of them were converted. I do not recollect now how many there were; but I think every impenitent person in his household was converted. His brother also, and his brother's wife, and, I know not how many, but quite a large circle of relatives were among the converts. But Mr. OB himself was in feeble health, and was rapidly passing away with the consumption. I visited him frequently, and found him full of joy.

We had been examining candidates for admission to the church, and a large number were to be admitted on a certain Sabbath. Among them were those members of his own family, and those relatives of his that had been converted. Sabbath morning came. It was soon found Mr. OB could not live through the day. He called his wife to his bedside and said to her, "My dear, I am going to spend the Sabbath in heaven. Let all the family go, and all the friends, and unite with the church below; and I will join the church above." Before meeting time he was dead. Friends were called in to lay him in his shroud; his family and relatives gathered around his corpse, and then turned away and came to meeting; and, as he had desired, united with the church militant, while he went to unite with the church triumphant.

Their pastor had but just gone before; and I think it was that morning, I had said to Mr. OB, "Give my love to Brother Greer, when you get to heaven." He smiled with holy joy and said to me, "Do you think I shall know him?" I said, "Yes, undoubtedly you will know him. Give him my love, and tell him the work is going on gloriously." "I will, I will," said he. His wife and family sat at the communion table, showing in their countenance mingled joy and sorrow. There was a kind of holy triumph manifested, as their attention was called to the fact that the husband, and father; and brother, and friend, was sitting that day at the table of Jesus on high, while they were gathered around His table on earth.

There was much that was moving and interesting in that revival, in a great many respects. It was among a population that had had no conception of revivals of religion. The German population supposed themselves to have been made Christians by baptism, and especially by receiving the communion. Nearly every one of them, if asked when they became Christians, would reply that they took their communion at such a time of Dr. M, or some other German divine. And when I asked them if they thought that was religion, they would say, yes, they supposed it was. Indeed that was the idea of Dr. M himself. In walking with him to the grave of Dr. Greer, on the occasion of his funeral, he told me he had made sixteen hundred Christians by baptism, and giving them the communion, since he had been pastor of that church. He seemed himself to have no other idea of becoming a Christian than simply to learn the catechism, and to be baptized and partake of the communion.

The revival had to encounter that view of things; and the influence was at first, almost altogether in that direction. It was held, as I was informed, and I have no doubt of it, that for them to begin to think of being religious, by being converted, and to establish family prayer, or to give themselves to secret prayer, was not only fanaticism, but was virtually saying that their ancestors had all gone to hell; for they had done no such thing. The German ministers would preach against all those things, as I was informed by those that heard them, and speak severely of those that forsook the ways of their fathers, and thought necessary to be converted, and to maintain family and secret prayer.

The great majorities, I think, of Dr. Greer’s congregation were converted in this revival. At first I had considerable difficulty in getting rid of the influence of the daily press. I think there were two or more daily newspapers published there at the time. I learned that the editors were drinking men; and were not infrequently carried home, on public occasions, in a state of intoxication. The people were a good deal under the influence of the daily press. I mean the German population particularly. These editors began to give the people religious advice, and to speak against the revival, and the preaching. This threw the people into a state of perplexity. It went on from day to day, and from week to week, till finally the state of things became such that I thought it my duty to notice it. I therefore went into the pulpit when the house was crowded, and took for my text: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." I then went on to show in what way sinners would fulfill the desires of the devil, pointing out a great many ways in which they would perform his dirty work, and do for him what he could not do for himself.

After I had got the subject well before the people, I applied it to the course pursued by the editors of those daily papers. I asked the people if they did not think that those editors were fulfilling the desires of the devil; if they did not believe the devil desired them to do just what they did? I then asked them if it was suitable and decent, for men of their character, to attempt to give religious instruction to the people? I told the people what I understood their character to be, and turned my hand upon them pretty heavily, that such men should attempt to instruct the people, in regard to their duties to God and their neighbors. I said, "If I had a family in the place I would not have such a paper in the house; I should fear to have it under my roof; I should consider it too filthy to be touched with my fingers, and would take the tongs and throw it into the street." In some way the papers got into the street the next morning, pretty plentifully, and I neither saw nor heard any more of their opposition.

I continued in Reading until late in the spring. There were many very striking conversions; and so far as I know, Dr. Greer's congregation was left entirely united, greatly encouraged and strengthened, and with large additions made to their number. I have never been in that place since.

From Reading I went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, at that time and until his death, the home of the late President Buchanan. The Presbyterian church at Lancaster had no pastor, and I found religion in a very low state. They had never had a revival of religion, and manifestly had no just conception of what it was, or of the appropriate means of securing it. I remained at Lancaster but a very short time. However the work of God was immediately revived, the Spirit of God being poured out almost at once upon the people. I was the guest of an aged gentleman by the name of K, who was one of the elders of the church, and indeed the leading man in the church.

A fact occurred in relation to him, while I was in his family, that revealed the real state of things in a religious point of view, in that church. A former pastor of the church had invited Mr. K to join the church and hold the office of elder. I should say that the facts I am about to communicate respecting this event, were related to me by himself. One Sabbath evening after hearing a couple of very searching sermons, the old gentleman could not sleep. He was so greatly exercised in his mind, that he could not endure it until morning. He called me up in the middle of the night, stated what his convictions were, and then said that he knew he had never been converted. He said that when he was requested to join the church and become an elder, he knew that he was not a converted man. But the subject was pressed upon him till he finally consulted Rev. Dr. C, an aged minister of a Presbyterian church not far from Lancaster. He stated to him the fact that he had never been converted, and yet that he was desired to join the church that he might become an elder. Dr. C, in view of all the circumstances, advised him to join and accept the office, which he did.

His convictions at the time I speak of, were very deep. I gave him such instructions as I thought he needed, pressed him to accept the Savior; and dealt with him just as I would with any other inquiring sinner. It was a very solemn time. He professed at the time to submit and accept the Savior. Of his subsequent history I know nothing. He was certainly a gentleman of high character, and never to my knowledge did anything outwardly, to disgrace the position which he held. Those who are acquainted with the state of the church of which Dr. C was pastor, in regard to the eldership at that time, will not wonder at the advice which he gave to Mr. K.

Among the incidents that occurred, during my short stay at Lancaster, I recall the following. One evening I preached on a subject that led me to insist upon the immediate acceptance of Christ. The house was very much crowded, literally packed. At the close of my sermon I made a strong appeal to the people to decide at once; and I think I called on those whose minds were made up, and who would then accept the Savior, to rise up, that we might know who they were, and that we might make them subjects of prayer. As I learned the next day; there were two men sitting near one of the doors of the church, one of whom was very much affected under the appeal that was made, and could not avoid manifesting very strong emotion, which was observed by his neighbor. However, the man did not rise up, nor give his heart to God. I had pressed the thought upon them, that might be the last opportunity that some of them would ever have, to meet and decide this question; that in so large a congregation it was not unlikely that there were those there who would

then decide their everlasting destiny, one way or the other. It was not unlikely that God would hold some of them to the decision that they then made.

After the meeting was dismissed, as I learned the next day, these two men went out together, and one said to the other, "I saw you felt very deeply under the appeals Mr. Finney made." "I did," he replied. "I never felt so before in my life; and especially when he reminded us that might be the last time we should ever have an opportunity to accept the offer of mercy." They went on conversing in this way, for some distance, and then separated, each one going to his own home. It was a dark night, and the one who had felt so deeply, and was so pressed with the conviction that he might then be rejecting his last offer, fell over the curbstone, and broke his neck. This was reported to me the next day.

I established prayer meetings in Lancaster, and insisted upon the elders of the church taking part in them. This they did at my earnest request, although, as I learned, they had never been accustomed to do it before. The interest seemed to increase from day to day, and hopeful conversions multiplied. I do not recollect now why I did not remain longer than I did; but I left at so early a period as not to be able to give anything like a detailed account of the work there.

02.20. REVIVALS AT COLUMBIA & NYC

CHAPTER XX.

REVIVALS IN COLUMBIA, AND IN NEW YORK CITY.

FROM Lancaster, about mid-summer, 1830, I returned to Oneida county, New York, and spent a short time at my father-in-law's. I think it was at that time, during my stay in Whitestown, that a circumstance occurred of great interest, and which I will relate. A messenger came from the town of Columbia, in Herkimer county, requesting me to go down and assist in a work of grace there, which was already commenced. Such representations were made to me as induced me to go. However, I did not expect to remain there, as I had other more pressing calls for labor. I went down, however, to see; and to lend such aid as I was able for a short time.

At Columbia was a large German church, the membership of which had been received, according to their custom, upon examination of their doctrinal knowledge, instead of their Christian experience. Consequently the church had been composed mostly, as I was informed, of unconverted persons. Both the church and congregation were large. Their pastor was a young man by the name of H. He was of German descent, and from Pennsylvania.

He gave me the following account of himself, and of the state of things in Columbia. He said he studied theology with a German doctor of divinity, at the place where he lived, who did not encourage experimental religion at all. He said that one of his fellow students was religiously inclined, and used to pray in his closet. Their teacher suspected this, and in some way came to a knowledge of the fact. He warned the young man against it, as a very dangerous practice, and said he would become insane if he persisted in it, and he should be blamed himself for allowing a student to take such a course. Mr. H said that he himself had no religion. He had joined the church in the common way, and had no thought that anything else was requisite, so far as piety was concerned, to become a minister. But his mother was a pious woman. She knew better, and was greatly distressed that a son of her's should enter the sacred ministry, who had never been converted. When he had received a call to the church in Columbia, and was about to leave home, his mother had a very serious talk with him, impressed upon him the fact of his responsibility, and said some things that bore powerfully upon his conscience. He said that this conversation of his mother he could not get rid of; that it bore upon his mind heavily, and his convictions of sin deepened until he was nearly in despair.

This continued for many months. He had no one to consult, and did not open his mind to anybody. But after a severe and protracted struggle he was converted, came into the light, saw where he was, and where he had been, and saw the condition of his church, and of all those churches which had admitted their members in the way in which he had been admitted. His wife was unconverted. He immediately gave himself to labor for her conversion, and, under God, he soon secured it. His soul was full of the subject; and he read his Bible, and prayed and preached with all his might. But he was a young convert, and had had no instruction such as he needed, and he felt at a loss what

to do. He rode about the town, and conversed with the elders of the church, and with the principal members, and satisfied himself that one or two of his leading elders, and several of his female members, knew what it was to be converted.

After much prayer and consideration, he made up his mind what to do. On the Sabbath he gave them notice that there would be a meeting of the church, on a certain day during the week, for the transaction of business, and wished all the church, especially, to be present. His own conversion, and preaching, and visiting, and conversing around the town had already created a good deal of excitement, so that religion came to be the common topic of conversation; and his call for a church meeting was responded to, so that, on the day appointed, the church were nearly all present.

He then addressed them in regard to the real state of the church, and the error they had fallen into in regard to the conditions on which members had been received. He made a speech to them, partly in German, and partly in English, so as to have all classes understand as far as he could; and after talking until they were a good deal moved, he proposed to disband the church and form a new one, insisting upon it that this was essential to the prosperity of religion. He had an understanding with those members of the church that he was satisfied were truly converted, that they should lead in voting for the disbanding of the church. The motion was put; whereupon the converted members arose as requested. They were very influential members, and the people looking around and seeing these on their feet, rose up, and finally they kept rising till the vote was nearly or quite unanimous. The pastor then said, There is now no church in Columbia; and we propose to form one of Christians, of people who have been converted.

He then, before the congregation, related his own experience, and called on his wife, and she did the same. Then the converted elders and members followed, one after another, as long as any could come forward, and relate a Christian experience. These, they proceeded to form into a church. He then said to the others, "Your church relations are dissolved. You are out in the world; and until you are converted, and in the church, you cannot have your children baptized, and you cannot partake of the ordinances of the church." This created a great panic; for according to their views, it was an awful thing not to partake of the sacrament, and not to have their children baptized; for this was the way in which they themselves had been made Christians.

Mr. H then labored with all his might. He visited, and preached, and prayed, and held meetings, and the interest increased. Thus the work had been going on for sometime, when he heard that I was in Oneida county, and sent the messenger for me. I found him a warm-hearted young convert. He listened to my preaching with almost irrepressible joy. I found the congregation large and interested; and so far as I could judge, the work was in a very prosperous, healthful state. That revival continued to spread until it reached and converted nearly all the inhabitants of the town. Galesburg, in Illinois, was settled by a colony from Columbia, who were nearly all converts, I believe, of the revival. The founder of the colony and of Knox College, located there, was Mr. Gale, my former pastor at Adams.

I have told facts, as I remember them, as related to me by Mr. H. I found his views evangelical, and his heart warm; and he was surrounded by a congregation as thoroughly interested in religion as could well be desired.

They would hang on my lips, as I held forth to them the Gospel of Christ, with an interest, an attention, and a patience, that was in the highest degree interesting and affecting. Mr. H himself, was like a little child, teachable, and humble, and earnest. That work continued for over a year, as I understood, spreading throughout that large and interesting population of farmers.

After I returned to Whitestown, I was invited to visit the city of New York. Anson G. Phelps, since well-known as a great contributor, by will, to the leading benevolent institutions of our country, hearing that I had not been invited to the pulpits of that city, hired a vacant church in Vandewater street, and sent me an urgent request to come there and preach. I did so, and there we had a powerful revival. I found Dr. Phelps very much engaged in the work, and not hesitating at any expense that was necessary to promote it. The church which he hired, could be had only for three months. Accordingly Mr. Phelps, before the three months were out, purchased a church in Prince street, near Broadway. This church had been built by the Universalists, and was sold to Mr. Phelps, who bought and paid for it himself. From Vandewater street, we went therefore, to Prince street, and there formed a church, mostly of persons that had been converted during our meetings in Vandewater street. I continued my labors in Prince street for some months, I think until quite the latter part of summer.

I was very much struck, during my labors there, with the piety of Mr. Phelps. While we continued at Vandewater street, myself and wife, with our only child, were guests in his family. I had observed that, while Mr. Phelps was a man literally loaded with business, somehow he preserved a highly spiritual frame of mind; and that he would come directly from his business to our prayer meetings, and enter into them with such spirit, as to show clearly that his mind was not absorbed in business, to the exclusion of spiritual things. As I watched him from day to day, I became more and more interested in his interior life, as it was manifested in his outward life. One night I had occasion to go downstairs, I should think about twelve or one o’clock at night, to get something for our little child. I supposed the family were all asleep, but to my surprise I found Mr. Phelps sitting by his fire, in his nightdress, and saw that I had broken in upon his secret devotions. I apologized by saying that I supposed he was in bed. He replied, "Brother Finney, I have a great deal of business pressing me during the day, and have but little time for secret devotion; and my custom is, after having a nap at night, to arise and have a season of communion with God." After his death, which occurred not many years ago, it was found that he had kept a journal during these hours in the night, comprising several transcript volumes. This journal revealed the secret workings of his mind, and the real progress of his interior life.

I never knew the number converted while I was in Prince and Vandewater streets; but it must have been large. There was one case of conversion that I must not omit to mention. A young woman visited me one day, under great conviction of sin. On conversing with her, I found that she had many things upon her conscience. She had been in the habit of pilfering, as she told me, from her very childhood. She was the daughter, and the only child, I think, of a widow lady; and she had been in the habit of taking from her schoolmates and others, handkerchiefs, and breastpins, and pencils, and whatever she had an opportunity to steal. She made confession respecting some of these things to me, and asked me what she should do about it. I told her she must go and return them, and make confession to those from whom she had taken them.

This of course greatly tried her; yet her convictions were so deep that she dare not keep them, and she began the work of making confession and restitution. But as she went forward with it, she continued to recall more and more instances of the kind, and kept visiting me frequently, and confessing to me her thefts of almost every kind of articles that a young woman could use. I asked her if her mother knew that she had these things. She said, yes; but that she had always told her mother that they were given her. She said to me on one occasion, "Mr. Finney, I suppose I have stolen a million of times. I find I have many things that I know I stole, but I cannot recollect from whom." I refused altogether to compromise with her, and insisted on her making restitution in every case, in which she could, by any means, recall the facts. From time to time she would come to me, and report what she had done. I asked her, what the people said when she returned the articles. She replied, "Some of them say that I am crazy; some of them say that I am a fool; and some of them are very much affected."

"Do they all forgive you?" I asked. "Oh yes!" said she, "they all forgive me; but some of them think that I had better not do as I am doing."

One day she informed me that she had a shawl which she had stolen from a daughter of Bishop Hobart, then Bishop of New York, whose residence was on St. John’s square, and near St. John’s church. As usual, I told her she must restore it. A few days after, she called and related to me the result. She said she folded up the shawl in a paper, and went with it, and rung the bell at the Bishop’s door; and when the servant can, she handed him the bundle, directed to the Bishop. She made no explanation, but turned immediately away, and ran around the corner into another street, lest someone should look out and see which way she went, and find out who she was. But after she got around the corner, her conscience smote her, and she said to herself, "I have not done this thing right. Somebody else may be suspected of having stolen the shawl, unless I make known to the Bishop who did it."

She turned around, went immediately back, and inquired if she could see the Bishop. Being informed that she could, she was conducted to his study. She then confessed to him, told him about the shawl, and all that had passed. "Well," said I, "and how did the Bishop receive you?" "Oh," said she, "when I told him, he wept, laid his hand on my head, and said he forgave me, and prayed God to forgive me." "And have you been at peace in your mind," said I, "about that transaction since?" "Oh yes!" said she. This process continued for weeks, and I think for months. This girl was going from place to place in all parts of the city, restoring things that she had stolen, and making confession. Sometimes her convictions would be so awful, that it seemed as if she would be deranged.

One morning she sent for me to come to her mother’s residence. I did so, and when I arrived I was introduced to her room, and found her with her hair hanging over her shoulders, and her clothes in disorder, walking the room in an agony of despair, and with a look that was frightful, because it indicated that she was well-nigh deranged. Said I, "My dear child, what is the matter?" She held in her hand, as she was walking, a little Testament. She turned to me and said, "Mr. Finney, I stole this Testament." I have stolen God’s word; and will God ever forgive me? I cannot recollect which of the girls it was that I stole it from. I stole it from one of my schoolmates, and it was so long ago that I had really forgotten that I had stolen it. It occurred to me this morning; and it seems to me that God can never forgive me for stealing His word." I assured her that there was no reason for

her despair. "But," said she, "what shall I do? I cannot remember where I got it." I told her, "Keep it as a constant remembrance of your former sins, and use it for the good you may now get from it."

"Oh," said she, "if I could only remember where I got it, I would instantly restore it." "Well," said I, "if you can ever recollect where you got it, make an instant restitution, either by restoring that, or giving another as good." "I will," said she.

All this process was exceedingly affecting to me; but as it proceeded, the state of mind that resulted from these transactions was truly wonderful. A depth of humility, a deep knowledge of herself and her own depravity, a brokenness of heart, and contrition of spirit, and finally, a faith, and joy, and love, and peace, like a river, succeeded; and she became one of the most delightful young Christians that I have known. When the time drew near that I expected to leave New York, I thought that someone in the church ought to be acquainted with her, who could watch over her. Up to this time, whatever had passed between us had been a secret, secretly kept to myself. But as I was about to leave, I narrated the fact to Mr. Phelps and the narration affected him greatly. He said, "Brother Finney, introduce me to her. I will be her friend; I will watch over her for her good." He did so, as I afterwards learned. I have not seen the young woman for many years, and I think not since I related the fact to Mr. Phelps. But when I returned from England the last time, in visiting one of Mr. Phelps' daughters, in the coupe of the conversation, this case was alluded to. I then inquired, "Did your father introduce you to that young woman?" "Oh yes!" she replied, "we all knew her;" meaning, as I supposed, all the daughters of the family. "Well, what do you know of her?" said I. "Oh," said she, "she is a very earnest Christian woman. She is married, and her husband is in business in this city. She is a member of the church, and lives in street," pointing to the place, not far from where we then were. I inquired, "Has she always maintained a consistent Christian character?" "Oh yes!" was the reply; "she is an excellent, praying woman." In some way, I have been informed, and I cannot recollect now the source of the information, that the woman said that she never had had a temptation to pilfer, from the time of her conversion; that she had never known what it was to have the desire to do so.

This revival prepared the way, in New York, for the organization of the Free Presbyterian churches in the city. Those churches were composed afterward, largely, of the converts of that revival. Many of them had belonged to the church in Prince street.

At this point of my narrative, in order to render intelligible many things that I shall have to say hereafter, I must give a little account of the circumstances connected with the conversion of Mr. Lewis Tappan, and his connection afterward with my own labors. This account I received from himself. His conversion occurred before I was personally acquainted with him, under the following circumstances: He was a Unitarian, and lived in Boston. His brother Arthur, then a very extensive dry goods merchant in New York, was orthodox, and an earnest Christian man. The revivals through central New York had created a good deal of excitement among the Unitarians; and their newspapers had a good deal to say against them. Especially were there strange stories in circulation about myself, representing me as a half-crazed fanatic. These stories had been related to Lewis Tappan by Mr. W, a leading Unitarian minister of Boston, and he believed them. They were credited by many of the Unitarians in New England, and throughout the State of New York.

While these stories were in circulation, Lewis Tappan visited his brother Arthur in New York, and they fell into conversation in regard to those revivals. Lewis called Arthur's attention to the strange

fanaticism connected with these revivals, especially to what was said of myself. He asserted that I gave out publicly that I was the Brigadier General of Jesus Christ. This, and like reports were in circulation, and Lewis insisted upon their truth. Arthur utterly discredited them and told Lewis that they were all nonsense and false, and that he ought not to believe any of them. Lewis, relying upon the statements of Mr. W, proposed to bet five hundred dollars that he could prove these reports to be true; especially the one already referred to. Arthur replied, "Lewis, you know that I do not bet; but I will tell you what I will do. If you can prove by credible testimony, that that is true, and that the reports about Mr. Finney are true, I will give you five hundred dollars. I make this offer to lead you to investigate. I want you to know that these stories are false, and that the source whence they come is utterly unreliable." Lewis, not doubting that he could bring the proof, inasmuch as these things had been so confidently asserted by the Unitarians, wrote to Rev. Mr. P, Unitarian ministry in Trenton Falls, New York, to whom Mr. W had referred him, and authorized him to expend five hundred dollars, if need be, in procuring sufficient testimony that the story was true; such testimony as would lead to the conviction of a party in a court of justice. Mr. P, accordingly, undertook to procure the testimony, but after great painstaking, was unable to furnish any, except what was contained in a small Universalist newspaper, printed in Buffalo, in which it had been asserted that Mr. Finney claimed that he was a Brigadier General of Jesus Christ. Nowhere could he get the least proof that the report was true. Many persons had heard, and believed, that I had said these things somewhere; but as he followed up the reports from town to town, by his correspondence, he could not learn that these things had been said, anywhere.

This in connection with other matters, he said, led him to reflect seriously upon the nature of the opposition, and upon the source whence it had come. Knowing as he did what stress had been laid upon these stories by the Unitarians, and the use they had made of them to oppose the revivals in New York and other places, his confidence in them was greatly shaken. Thus his prejudices against the revivals and orthodox people became softened. He was led to review the theological writings of the Orthodox and the Unitarians with great seriousness, and the result was that he embraced orthodox views. The mother of the Tappans was a very godly, praying woman. She had never had any sympathy with Unitarianism. She had lived a very praying life, and had left a strong impression upon her children.

As soon as Lewis Tappan was converted, he became as firm and zealous in his support of orthodox views and revivals of religion, as he had been in his opposition to them. About the time that I left New York, after my first labors there in Vandewater and Prince streets, Mr. Tappan and some other good brethren, became dissatisfied with the state of things in New York, and after much prayer and consideration, concluded to organize a new congregation, and introduce new measures for the conversion of men. They obtained a place to hold worship, and called the Rev. Joel Parker, who was then pastor of the Third Presbyterian church in Rochester, to come to their aid. Mr. Parker arrived in New York, and began his labors, I think about the time that I closed my labors in Prince street. The First Free Presbyterian church was formed in New York, about this time, and Mr. Parker became its pastor. They labored especially among that class of the population that had not been in the habit of attending meeting anywhere, and were very successful. They finally fitted up the upper story of some warehouses in Dey street, that would hold a good congregation, and there they continued their labors.

02.21. REVIVAL IN ROCHESTER 1830

CHAPTER XXI.

REVIVAL IN ROCHESTER, 1830.

LEAVING New York I spent a few weeks in Whitestown; and, as was common, being pressed to go in many directions, I was greatly at a loss what was my duty. But among others, an urgent invitation was received from the Third Presbyterian church in Rochester, of which Mr. Parker had been pastor, to go there and supply them for a season.

I inquired into the circumstances, and found that on several accounts it was a very unpromising field of labor. There were but three Presbyterian churches in Rochester. The Third church, that extended the invitation, had no minister, and religion was in a low state. The Second church, or the Brick Church, as it was called, had a pastor, an excellent man; but in regard to his preaching there was considerable division in the church, and he was restive and about to leave. There was a controversy existing between an elder of the Third church and the pastor of the First church, that was about to be tried before the presbytery. This and other matters had aroused unchristian feeling, to some extent, in both churches; and altogether it seemed a forbidding field of labor at that time. The friends at Rochester were exceedingly anxious to have me go there--I mean the members of the Third church. Being left without a pastor, they felt as if there was great danger that they would be scattered, and perhaps annihilated as a church, unless something could be done to revive religion among them.

With these pressing invitations before me, I felt, as I have often done, greatly perplexed. I remained at my father-in-law's, and considered the subject, until I felt that I must take hold and work somewhere. Accordingly we packed our trunks and went down to Utica, about seven miles distant, where I had many praying friends. We arrived there in the afternoon, and in the evening quite a number of the leading brethren, in whose prayers and wisdom I had a great deal of confidence, at my request met for consultation and prayer, in regard to my next field of labor. I laid all the facts before them in regard to Rochester; and so far as I was acquainted with them, the leading facts in respect to the other fields to which I was invited at that time. Rochester seemed to be the least inviting of them all.

After talking the matter all over, and having several seasons of prayer, interspersed with conversation, the brethren gave their opinions one after another, in relation to what they thought it wise for me to do. They were unanimous in the opinion that Rochester was too uninviting a field of labor, to be put at all in competition with New York, or Philadelphia, and some other fields to which I was then invited. They were firm in the conviction that I should go east from Utica, and not west. At the time, this was my own impression and conviction; and I retired from this meeting, as I supposed, settled not to go to Rochester, but to New York or Philadelphia. This was before railroads existed; and when we parted that evening I expected to take the canal boat, which was the most convenient way for a family to travel, and start in the morning for New York.

But after I retired to my lodging the question was presented to my mind under a different aspect. Something seemed to question me: "What are the reasons that deter you from going to Rochester?" I could readily enumerate them, but then the question returned: "Ah! but are these good reasons? Certainly you are needed at Rochester all the more because of these difficulties. Do you shun the field because there are so many things that need to be corrected, because there is so much that is wrong? But if all was right, you would not be needed." I soon came to the conclusion that we were all wrong; and that the reasons that had determined us against my going to Rochester, were the most cogent reasons for my going. I felt ashamed to shrink from undertaking the work because of its difficulties; and it was strongly impressed upon me, that the Lord would be with me, and that was my field. My mind became entirely decided, before I retired to rest, that Rochester was the place to which the Lord would have me go. I informed my wife of my decision; and accordingly, early in the morning, before the people were generally moving in the city, the packet boat came along, and we embarked and went westward instead of eastward.

The brethren in Utica were greatly surprised when they learned of this change in our destination, and awaited the result with a good deal of solicitude.

We arrived in Rochester early in the morning, and were invited to take up our lodgings for the time with Mr. Josiah Bissell, who was the leading elder in the Third church, and who was the person that had complained to the presbytery respecting Dr. Penny. On my arrival I met my cousin, Mr. S, in the street, who invited me to his house. He was an elder in the First church, and hearing that I was expected at Rochester, was very anxious to have his pastor, Dr. Penny, meet and converse with me, and be prepared to cooperate with me in my labors. I declined his kind invitation, informing him that I was to be the guest of Mr. Bissell. But he called on me again after breakfast, and informed me that he had arranged an interview between myself and Dr. Penny, at his house. I hastened to meet the doctor, and we had a cheering Christian interview. When I commenced my labors, Dr. Penny attended our meetings, and soon invited me to his pulpit. Mr. S exerted himself to bring about a good understanding between the pastors and churches and a great change soon manifested itself in the attitude and spiritual state of the churches.

There were very soon some very marked conversions. The wife of a prominent lawyer in that city, was one of the first converts. She was a woman of high standing, a lady of culture and extensive influence. Her conversion was a very marked one. The first that I saw her, a friend of her’s came with her to my room, and introduced her. The lady who introduced her was a Christian woman, who had found that she was very much exercised in her mind, and persuaded her to come and see me.

Mrs. M had been a gay worldly woman, and very fond of society. She afterward told me that when I first came there, she greatly regretted it, and feared there would be a revival; and a revival would greatly interfere with the pleasures and amusements that she had promised herself that winter. On conversing with her I found that the Spirit of the Lord was indeed dealing with her, in an unsparing manner. She was bowed down with great conviction of sin. After considerable conversation with her, I pressed her earnestly to renounce sin, and the world, and self, and everything for Christ. I saw that she was a very proud woman, and this struck me as rather the most marked feature of her character. At the conclusion of our conversation we knelt down to pray; and my mind being full of the subject of the pride of her heart, as it was manifested, I very soon introduced the text:

"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." I turned this subject over in prayer; and almost immediately I heard Mrs. M, as she was kneeling by my side, repeating that text: "Except ye be converted and become as little children as little children Except ye be converted and become as little children." I observed that her mind was taken with that, and the Spirit of God was pressing it upon her heart. I therefore continued to pray, holding that subject before her mind, and holding her up before God as needing that very thing, to be converted--to become as a little child.

I felt that the Lord was answering prayer. I felt sure that He was doing the very work that I asked Him to do. Her heart broke down, her sensibility gushed forth, and before we rose from our knees, she was indeed a little child. When I stopped praying, and opened my eyes and looked at her, her face was turned up toward heaven, and the tears streaming down; and she was in the attitude of praying that she might be made a little child. She rose up, became peaceful, settled into a joyous faith, and retired. From that moment she was outspoken in her religious convictions, and zealous for the conversion of her friends. Her conversion, of course, produced much excitement among that class of people to which she belonged.

I had never, I believe, except in rare instances, until I went to Rochester, used as a means of promoting revivals, what has since been called the anxious seat. I had sometimes asked persons in the congregation to stand up; but this I had not frequently done. However, in studying upon the subject, I had often felt the necessity of some measure that would bring sinners to a stand. From my own experience and observation I had found, that with the higher classes especially, the greatest obstacle to be overcome was their fear of being known as anxious inquirers. They were too proud to take any position that would reveal them to others as anxious for their souls.

I had found also that something was needed, to make the impression on them that they were expected at once to give up their hearts; something that would call them to act, and act as publicly before the world, as they had in their sins; something that would commit them publicly to the service of Christ. When I had called them simply to stand up in the public congregations I found that this had a very good effect; and so far as it went, it answered the purpose for which it was intended. But after all, I had felt for some time, that something more was necessary to bring them out from among the mass of the ungodly, to a public renunciation of their sinful ways, and a public committal of themselves to God.

At Rochester, if I recollect right, I first introduced this measure; This was years after the cry had been raised of new measures. A few days after the conversion of Mrs. M, I made a call, I think for the first time, upon all that class of persons whose convictions were so ripe that they were willing to renounce their sins and give themselves to God, to come forward to certain seats which I requested to be vacated, and offer themselves up to God, while we made them subjects of prayer. A much larger number came forward than I expected, and among them was another prominent lady; and several others of her acquaintance, and belonging to the same circle of society, came forward. This increased the interest among that class of people; and it was soon seen that the Lord was aiming at the conversion of the highest classes of society. My meetings soon became thronged with that class. The lawyers, physicians, merchants, and indeed all the most intelligent people, became more and more interested, and more and more easily influenced.

Very soon the work took effect, extensively, among the lawyers in that city. There has always been a large number of the leading lawyers of the state, resident at Rochester. The work soon got hold of numbers of these. They became very anxious, and came freely to our meetings of inquiry; and numbers of them came forward to the anxious seat, as it has since been called, and publicly gave their hearts to God. I recollect one evening after preaching, three of them followed me to my room, all of them deeply convicted; and all of them had been, I believe, on the anxious seat, but were not clear in their minds, and felt that they could not go home until they were convinced their peace was made with God. I conversed with them, and prayed with them; and I believe, before they left, they all found peace in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I should have said that very soon after the work commenced, the difficulties between Mr. Bissell and Dr. Penny were healed; and all the distractions and collisions that had existed there were adjusted; so that a spirit of universal kindness and fellowship pervaded all the churches.

On one occasion I had an appointment in the First church. There had been a military parade in the city that day. The militia had been called out, and I had feared that the excitement of the parade, might divert the attention of the people, and mar the work of the Lord. The house was filled in every part. Dr. Penny had introduced the services, and was engaged in the first prayer, when I heard something which I supposed to be the report of a gun, and the jingling of glass, as if a window had been broken. My thought was that some careless person from the military parade on the outside, had fired so near the window as to break a pane of glass. But before I had time to think again, Dr. Penny leaped from the pulpit almost over me, for I was kneeling by the sofa behind him. The pulpit was in the front of the church, between the two doors. The rear wall of the church stood upon the brink of the canal. The congregation, in a moment, fell into a perfect panic, and rushed for the doors and the windows, as if they were all distracted. One elderly woman held up a window in the rear of the church, where several, as I was informed, leaped out into the canal. The rush was terrific. Some jumped over the galleries into the aisles below; they ran over each other in the aisles.

I stood up in the pulpit, and not knowing what had happened, put up my hands, and cried at the top of my voice, "Be quiet! Be quiet!" Directly a couple of women rushing up into the pulpit, one on the one side, and the other on the other side, caught hold of me, in a state of distraction. Dr. Penny ran out into the streets, and they were getting out in every direction, as fast as possible. As I did not know that there was any danger, the scene looked so ludicrous to me, that I could scarcely refrain from laughing. They rushed over each other in the aisles, so that in several instances I observed men that had been crushed down, rising up and throwing off others that had rushed upon them. All at length got out.

Several were considerably hurt, but no one killed. But the house was strewn with all sorts of womens apparel. Bonnets, shawls, gloves, handkerchiefs, and parts of dresses, were scattered in every direction. The men had very generally gone out without their hats, I believe; and many persons had been seriously bruised in the awful rush.

I afterwards learned that the walls of the church had been settling for some time, the ground being very damp from its proximity to the canal. It had been spoken of, in the congregation, as not in a satisfactory state; and some were afraid that either the tower would fall, or the roof, or the walls of the building would come down. Of this I had heard nothing myself. The original alarm was created

by a timber from the roof, falling end downwards, and breaking through the ceiling, above the lamp in front of the organ.

On examining the house, it was found that the walls had spread in such a manner, that there was indeed danger of the roof falling in. The pressure that night in the gallery was so great as to spread the walls on each side, until there was real danger. At the time this occurred, I greatly feared, as I suppose others did, that the public attention would be diverted, and the work greatly hindered. But the Spirit of the Lord had taken hold of the work in earnest, and nothing seemed to stay it. The Brick church was thrown open to us, and from that time our meetings alternated between the Second and Third churches, the people of the First church and congregation attending as far as they could get into the house. The three churches, and indeed Christians of every denomination generally, seemed to make common cause, and went to work with a will, to pull sinners out of the fire. We were obliged to hold meetings almost continually. I preached nearly every night, and three times on the Sabbath. We held our meetings of inquiry, after the work took on such a powerful type, very frequently in the morning.

One morning I recollect we had been holding a meeting of inquiry, and a gentleman was present and was converted there, who was the son-in-law of a very praying, godly woman belonging to the Third church. She had been very anxious about him, and had been spending much time in prayer for him. When he returned from the meeting of inquiry, he was full of joy and peace and hope. She had been spending the time in earnest prayer that God would convert him at that meeting. As soon as she met him and he declared his conversion to her, and from his countenance she saw that it was really so, it overcame her, and she swooned away and fell dead.

There was at that time a high school in Rochester, presided over by a Mr. B, the son of A B, then pastor of the church at Brighton, near Rochester. Mr. B was a skeptic, but was at the head of a very large and flourishing school. As the school was made up of both sexes, a Miss A was his assistant and associate in the school, at that time. Miss A was a Christian woman. The students attended the religious services, and many of them soon became deeply anxious about their souls. One morning Mr. B found that his classes could not recite. When he came to have them before him, they were so anxious about their souls that they wept, and he saw that they were in such a state, that it very much confounded him. He called his associate, Miss A, and told her that the young people were so exercised about their souls that they could not recite; and asked if they had not better send for Mr. Finney to give them instruction. She afterwards informed me of this, and said that she was very glad to have him make the inquiry, and most cordially advised him to send for me. He did so, and the revival took tremendous hold of that school. Mr. B himself was soon hopefully converted, and nearly every person in the school. A few years since, Miss A informed me that more than forty persons, that were then converted in that school, had become ministers. That was a fact that I had not known before. She named many of them to me at the time. A large number of them had become foreign missionaries.

After remaining a few weeks at Josiah Bissell’s, we took lodgings in a more central position, at the house of Mr. B, a lawyer of the city, who was a professedly Christian man. His wife’s sister was with them, and was an impenitent girl. She was a young woman of fine appearance, an exquisite singer, and a cultivated lady; and, as we soon learned, was engaged in marriage to a man, who was then judge of the supreme court of the state. He was a very proud man, and resisted the

anxious seat, and spoke against it. He was absent a good deal from the city, in holding court, and was not that winter converted. A large number of the lawyers, however, were converted; and the young lady to whom he was engaged was converted. I mention this because the Judge afterwards married her; which no doubt led to his own conversion in a revival which occurred some ten years later, the leading particulars of which I shall mention in another part of my narrative.

This revival made a great change in the moral state and subsequent history of Rochester. The great majority of the leading men and women in the city, were converted. A great number of very striking incidents occurred, that I shall not soon forget. One day the lady who first visited me and whose conversion I have mentioned, called on me in company with a friend of hers with whom she wished me to converse. I did so, but found her to all appearance very much hardened, and rather disposed to trifle with the subject. Her husband was a merchant, and they were persons of high standing in the community. When I pressed her to attend to the subject, she said she would not do it, because her husband would not attend to it, and she was not going to leave him. I asked her if she was willing to be lost because her husband would not attend to it; and if it was not folly to neglect her soul because he did his. She replied very promptly, "If he goes to hell, I want to go. I want to go where he does. I do not want to be separated from him, at any rate." It seemed that I could make very little, if any, impression upon her. But from night to night I had been making appeals to the congregation, and calling forward those that were prepared to give their hearts to God; and large numbers were converted every evening.

As I learned afterwards, when this woman went home, her husband said to her, "My dear, I mean to go forward tonight, and give my heart to God." "What!" said she; "I have today told Mr. Finney that I would not become a Christian, or have anything to do with it; that you did not become a Christian, and I would not; and that if you went to hell, I should go with you." "Well," said he, "I do not mean to go to hell. I have made up my mind to go forward tonight, and give my heart to Christ." "Well," said she, "then I will not go to meeting, I do not want to see it. And if you have a mind after all, to become a Christian, you may; I won't." When the time came, he went to meeting alone. The pulpit was between the doors, in the front of the church. The house was a good deal crowded; but he finally got a seat near one of the aisles, in quite the back path of the church. At the close of the meeting, as I had done at other times, I called for those that were anxious and whose minds were made up, to come forward, and take certain seats and occupy a certain space about the pulpit, where we could commend them to God in prayer. It afterward appeared that the wife herself had come to the meeting, had passed up the other aisle, and taken a seat almost opposite him, in the extreme part of the house. When I made the call, he started immediately. She was watching, and as soon as she saw him on his feet, and making his way along the crowded aisle, she also started down the other aisle, and they met in front of the pulpit, and knelt down together as subjects of prayer.

A large number obtained hope on the spot; but this husband and wife did not. They went home, too proud to say much to each other about what they had done, and spent a very restless night. The next day, about ten o'clock, he called to see me, and was shown into my room. My wife occupied a front room on the second floor; and I a room in the rear on the same floor. While I was conversing with him, the servant informed me that a lady was waiting in Mrs. Finney's room to see me. I excused myself for a few moments, and requested him to wait, while I went in to see her. I found that it was the woman who but the day before had been so stubborn, and the wife of the

man who was then in my room. Neither of them knew that the other had called to see me. I conversed with her, and found that she was on the very verge of submitting to Christ. I had learned that he was also, to all appearance, in the same state. I then returned to him and said, "I am going to pray with a lady in Mrs. Finney's room, and we will go in there, if you please, and all join in prayer, together." He followed me, and found his own wife. They looked at each other with surprise, but we were both greatly affected, each to find the other there. We knelt down to pray. I had not proceeded far in prayer before she began to weep, and to pray audibly for her husband. I stopped and listened, and found that she had lost all concern for herself, and was struggling in an agony of prayer for his conversion. His heart seemed to break and give way, and just at this time the bell rang for our dinner. I thought it would be well to leave them together alone. I therefore touched my wife, and we rose silently and went down to dinner, leaving them in prayer. We took a hasty dinner and returned, and found them as mellow, and as humble, and as loving as could be desired.

I have not said much, as yet, of the spirit of prayer that prevailed in this revival, which I must not omit to mention. When I was on my way to Rochester, as we passed through a village, some thirty miles east of Rochester, a brother minister whom I knew, seeing me on the canalboat, jumped aboard to have a little conversation with me, intending to ride but a little way and return. He, however, became interested in conversation, and upon finding where I was going, he made up his mind to keep on and go with me to Rochester. We had been there but a few days when this minister became so convicted that he could not help weeping aloud, at one time, as he passed along the street. The Lord gave him a powerful spirit of prayer, and his heart was broken. As he and I prayed much together, I was struck with his faith in regard to what the Lord was going to do there. I recollect he would say, "Lord, I do not know how it is; but I seem to know that Thou art going to do a great work in this city." The spirit of prayer was poured out powerfully, so much so, that some persons stayed away from the public services to pray, being unable to restrain their feelings under preaching.

And here I must introduce the name of a man, whom I shall have occasion to mention frequently, Mr. Abel Clary. He was the son of a very excellent man, and an elder of the church where I was converted. He was converted in the same revival in which I was. He had been licensed to preach; but his spirit of prayer was such, he was so burdened with the souls of men, that he was not able to preach much, his whole time and strength being given to prayer. The burden of his soul would frequently be so great that he was unable to stand, and he would writhe and groan in agony. I was well acquainted with him, and knew something of the wonderful spirit of prayer that was upon him. He was a very silent man, as almost all are who have that powerful spirit of prayer.

The first I knew of his being at Rochester, a gentleman who lived about a mile west of the city, called on me one day, and asked me if I knew a Mr. Abel Clary, a minister. I told him that I knew him well. "Well," said he, "he is at my house, and has been there for some time, and I don't know what to think of him." I said, "I have not seen him at any of our meetings." "No," he replied, "he cannot go to meeting," he said. "He prays nearly all the time, day and night, and in such an agony of mind that I do not know what to make of it. Sometimes he cannot even stand on his knees, but will lie prostrate on the floor, and groan and pray in a manner that quite astonishes me." I said to the brother, "I understand it; please keep still. It will all come out right; he will surely prevail."

I knew at the time a considerable number of men who were exercised in the same way. A Deacon P, of Camden, Oneida county; a Deacon T, of Rodman, Jefferson county; a Deacon B, of Adams, in the same country; this Mr. Clary, and many others among the men, and a large number of women, partook of the same spirit, and spent a great part of their time in prayer. Father Nash, as we called him, who in several of my fields of labor came to me and aided me, was another of those men that had such a powerful spirit of prevailing prayer. This Mr. Clary continued in Rochester as long as I did, and did not leave it until after I had left. He never, that I could learn, appeared in public, but gave himself wholly to prayer.

I have said that the moral aspect of things was greatly changed by this revival. It was a young city, full of thrift and enterprise, and full of sin. The inhabitants were intelligent and enterprising, in the highest degree; but as the revival swept through the town, and converted the great mass of the most influential people, both men and women, the change in the order, sobriety, and morality of the city was wonderful.

At a subsequent period, which I shall mention in its place, I was conversing with a lawyer, who was converted at this revival of who I have been speaking, and who soon after had been made district attorney of the city. His business was to superintend the prosecution of criminals. From his position he was made thoroughly acquainted with the history of crime in that city. In speaking of the revival in which he was converted, he said to me, many years afterward: "I have been examining the records of the criminal courts, and I find this striking fact, that whereas our city has increased since that revival, threefold, there are not one-third as many prosecutions for crime, as there had been up to that time. This is, "he said," the wonderful influence that revival had upon the community. Indeed by the power of that revival, public sentiment has been molded. The public affairs of the city have been, in a great measure in the hands of Christian men; and the controlling influences in the community have been on the side of Christ."

Among other conversions I must not forget to mention that of Mr. P, a prominent citizen of that place, a bookseller. Mr. P was an infidel; not an atheist, but a disbeliever in the divine authority of the Bible. He was a reader and a thinker, a man of keen, shrewd mind, strong will, and most decided character. He was, I believe, a man of good outward morals, and a gentleman highly respected. He came to my room early one morning, and said to me, "Mr. Finney, there is a great movement here on the subject of religion, but I am a skeptic, and I want you to prove to me that the Bible is true." The Lord enabled me at once to discern his state of mind, so far as to decide the course I should take with him. I said to him, "Do you believe in the existence of God?" "O yes!" he said, I am not an atheist. "Well, do you believe that you have treated God as you ought? Have you respected His authority? Have you loved Him? Have you done that which you thought would please Him, and with the design to please Him? Don’t you admit that you ought to love Him, and ought to worship Him, and ought to obey Him, according to the best light you have?" "O yes!" he said, I admit all this. "But have you done so?" I asked. "Why, no," he answered, "I cannot say that I have." "Well then," I replied, "why should I give you farther information, and farther light, if you will not do your duty and obey the light you already have? Now," said I, "when you will make up your mind to live up to your convictions, to obey God according to the best light you have; when you will make up your mind to repent of your neglect thus far, and to please God just as well as you know how, the rest of your life, I will try to show you that the Bible is from God. Until then it is of no use for me to do any such thing." I did not sit down, and I think had not asked him to sit down. He

replied, "I do not know but that is fair;" and retired.

I heard no more of him until the next morning. Soon after I arose, he came to my room again; and as soon as he entered, he clapped his hands and said, "Mr. Finney, God has wrought a miracle! I went down to the store," he continued, "after I left your room, thinking of what you had said; and I made up my mind that I would repent of what I knew was wrong in my relations to God, and that hereafter I would live according to the best light I had. And when I made up my mind to this," said he, "my feelings so overcame me that I fell; and I do not know but I should have died, if it had not been for Mr. -- , who was with me in the store." From this time he has been, as all who know him are aware, a praying, earnest Christian man. For many years he has been one of the trustees of Oberlin College, has stood by us through all our trials, and has aided us with his means and his whole influence.

During this great revival, persons wrote letters from Rochester, to their friends abroad, giving an account of the work, which were read in different churches throughout several states, and were instrumental in producing great revivals of religion. Many persons came in from abroad to witness the great work of God, and were converted. I recollect that a physician was so attracted by what he heard of the work that he came from Newark, New Jersey, to Rochester, to see what the Lord was doing, and was himself converted there. He was a man of talents and high culture, and has been for years an ardent Christian laborer for immortal souls.

One evening, I recollect, when I made a call for the anxious to come forward and submit, a man of influence in a neighboring town came forward himself, and several members of his family, and gave themselves to God. Indeed, the work spread like waves in every direction. I preached in as many places round about, as I had time and strength to do, while my main labors were in Rochester. I went to Canandaigua and preached several times. There the Word took effect, and many were converted. The pastor, Rev. Ansel Eddy, entered heartily into the work. A former pastor, an elderly man, an Englishmen by birth, also did what he could to forward the work. Wherever I went, the Word of God took immediate effect; and it seemed only necessary to present the law of God, and the claims of Christ, in such relations and proportions as were calculated to secure the conversion of men, and they would be converted by scores.

The greatness of the work at Rochester, at that time, attracted so much of the attention of ministers and Christians throughout the State of New York, throughout New England, and in many parts of the United States, that the very fame of it was an efficient instrument in the hands of the Spirit of God in promoting the greatest revival of religion throughout the land, that this country had then ever witnessed. Years after this, in conversing with Dr. Beecher about this powerful revival and its results, he remarked: "That was the greatest work of God, and the greatest revival of religion, that the world has ever seen, in so short a time. One hundred thousand," he remarked, "were reported as having connected themselves with churches, as the results of that great revival. This," he said, "is unparalleled in the history of the church, and of the progress of religion." He spoke of this having been done in one year; and said that in no year during the Christian era, had we any account of so great a revival of religion.

From the time of the New Lebanon convention, of which I have spoken, open and public opposition to revivals of religion was less and less manifested, and especially did I meet with much less personal opposition than I had met with before. It gradually but greatly subsided. At Rochester

I felt nothing of it. Indeed the waters of salvation had risen so high, revivals had become so powerful and extensive, and people had time to become acquainted with them and their results, in such measure, that men were afraid to oppose them as they had done. Ministers had come to understand them better, and the most ungodly sinners had been convinced that they were indeed the work of God. So manifestly were the great mass of the conversions sound, the converts really regenerated and made new creatures, so thoroughly were individuals and whole communities reformed, and so permanent and unquestionable were the results, that the conviction became nearly universal, that they were the work of God.

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02.22. REVIVALS IN AUBURN BUFFALO PROVIDENCE BOSTON

CHAPTER XXII.

REVIVAL IN AUBURN, BUFFALO, PROVIDENCE AND BOSTON.

DURING the latter part of the time that I was at Rochester, my health was poor. I was overdone; and some of the leading physicians, I learned, had made up their minds that I never would preach any more. My labors in Rochester at that time, had continued through six months; and near their close, Rev. Dr. Wisner, of Ithaca, came down and spent some time, witnessing and helping forward the work. In the meantime, I was invited to many fields; and among others I was urged by Dr. Nott, president of Union College, at Schenectady, to go and labor with him, and if possible secure the conversion of his numerous students. I made up my mind to comply with his request.

In company with Dr. Wisner and Josiah Bissell, I started in the stage, in the spring of the year 1831, when the going was exceedingly bad. I left my wife and children for the time at Rochester; as the traveling was too dangerous, and the journey too fatiguing for them. When we arrived at Geneva, Dr. Wisner insisted on my going home with him, to rest awhile. I declined, and said I must keep about my work. He pressed me very hard to go; and finally told me that the physicians in Rochester had told him to take me home with him, for I was going to die; that I would never labor anymore in revivals, for I had the consumption, and could live but a little while. I replied that I had been told this before, but that it was a mistake; that the doctors did not understand my case; that I was only fatigued, and a little rest would bring me up.

Dr. Wisner finally gave up his importunity, and I passed on in the stage to Auburn. The going was so very bad, that sometimes we could not get on more than two miles an hour, and we had been two or three days in going from Rochester to Auburn. As I had many dear friends in Auburn, and was very much fatigued, I made up my mind to stop there, and rest till the next stage. I had paid my fare quite through to Schenectady; but could stop over, if I chose, for one or more days. I stopped at the house of Mr. T S, a son of Chief-Justice S. He was an earnest Christian man, and a very dear friend of mine; consequently I went to his house, instead of stopping at the hotel, and concluded to rest there till the next stage.

In the morning, after sleeping quietly at Mr. S's, I had risen, and was preparing to take the stage, which was to arrive in the early part of the day, when a gentleman came in with the request for me to remain--a request in writing, signed by that large number of influential men, of whom I have spoken before, as resisting the revival in that place in 1826. These men had set themselves against the revival, on the former occasion, and carried their opposition so far as to break from Dr. Lansing's congregation, and form a new one. In the meantime, Dr. Lansing had been called to another field of labor; and Rev. Josiah Hopkins, of Vermont, was settled as pastor of the First church. The paper to which I have alluded, contained an earnest appeal to me to stop and labor for their salvation, signed by a long list of unconverted men, most of them among the most prominent citizens in the city. This was very striking to me. In this paper they alluded to the

opposition they had formerly made to my labors, and besought me to overlook it, and stop and preach the Gospel to them.

This request did not come from the pastor, nor from his church, but from those who had formerly led in the opposition to the work. But the pastor and the members of his church pressed me with all their influence, to remain and preach, and comply with the request of these men. They appeared as much surprised as I was myself, at the change in the attitude of those men. I went to my room, and spread the subject before God, and soon made up my mind what to do. I told the pastor and his elders that I was very much fatigued, and nearly worn out; but that upon certain conditions I would remain. I would preach twice upon the Sabbath, and two evenings during the week; but that they should take all the rest of the labor upon their own hands; that they must not expect me to attend any other meetings than those at which I preached; and that they must take upon themselves the labor of instructing inquirers, and conducting the prayer and other meetings. I knew that they understood how to labor with sinners, and could well trust them to perform that part of the work. I furthermore stipulated that neither they nor their people should visit me, except in extreme cases, at my lodgings; for that I must have my days, Sundays excepted, that I might rest, and also my evenings, except those when I preached. There were three preaching services on the Sabbath, one of which was filled by Mr. Hopkins. I preached in the morning and evening, I think, of each Sabbath, and he in the afternoon.

The Word took immediate effect. On the first or second Sabbath evening that I preached, I saw that the Word was taking such powerful hold that at the close I called for those whose minds were made up, to come forward, publicly renounce their sins, and give themselves to Christ. Much to my own surprise, and very much to the surprise of the pastor and many members of the church, the first man that I observed as coming forward and leading the way, was the man that had led, and exerted more influence than any other one man, in the opposition to the former revival. He came forward promptly, followed by a large number of the persons who had signed that paper; and that evening there was such a demonstration made, as to produce a general interest throughout the place.

I have spoken of Mr. Clary as the praying man, who was at Rochester. He had a brother, a physician, living in Auburn. I think it was the second Sabbath that I was at Auburn at this time, I observed in the congregation the solemn face of this Mr. Clary. He looked as if he was borne down with an agony of prayer. Being well acquainted with him, and knowing the great gift of God that was upon him, the spirit of prayer, I was very glad to see him there. He sat in the pew with his brother, the Doctor, who was also a professor of religion, but who knew nothing by experience, I should think, of his Brother Abel’s great power with God.

At intermission, as soon as I came down from the pulpit, Mr. Clary, with his brother, met me at the pulpit stairs, and the Doctor invited me to go home with him and spend the intermission and get some refreshments. I did so.

After arriving at his house we were soon summoned to the dinner table. We gathered about the table, and Dr. Clary turned to his brother and said, "Brother Abel, will you ask a blessing?" Brother Abel bowed his head and began, audibly, to ask a blessing. He had uttered but a sentence or two when he broke instantly down, moved suddenly back from the table, and fled to his chamber. The Doctor supposed he had been taken suddenly ill, and rose up and followed him. In a few moments

he came down and said, "Mr. Finney, Brother Abel wants to see you." Said I, "What ails him?" Said he, "I do not know; but he says you know. He appears in great distress, but I think it is the state of his mind." I understood it in a moment, and went to his room. He lay groaning upon the bed, the Spirit making intercession for him, and in him, with groanings that could not be uttered. I had hardly entered the room, when he made out to say; "Pray, Brother Finney." I knelt down and helped him in prayer, by leading his soul out for the conversion of sinners. I continued to pray until his distress passed away, and then I returned to the dinner table.

I understood that this was the voice of God. I saw the Spirit of prayer was upon him, and I felt His influence upon myself, and took it for granted that the work would move on powerfully. It did so. I believe, but am not quite sure, that every one of those men that signed that paper, making a long list of names, was converted during that revival. But a few years since, Dr. S, of Auburn, wrote to me to know if I had preserved that paper, wishing, as he said, to ascertain whether every one of the men that signed it, was not at that time converted. The paper has been mislaid; and although it is probably among my numerous papers and letters, and may sometime be found, yet I could not, at the time, answer his inquiry.

I stayed, at this time, at Auburn, six Sabbaths, preaching, as I have said, twice on the Sabbath, and twice during the week, and leaving all the rest of the labor for the pastor and members of the church. Here, as at Rochester, there was, at this time, little or no open opposition. Ministers and Christians took hold of the work, and everybody that had a mind to work found enough to do, and good success in labor.

The pastor told me afterward, that he found that in the six weeks that I was there, five hundred souls had been converted. The means that were used, were the same that had been used at Rochester. This revival seemed to be only a wave of divine power, reaching Auburn from the center at Rochester, whence such a mighty influence had gone out over the length and breadth of the land.

Near the close of my labor here, a messenger arrived from Buffalo, with an earnest request that I should visit that city. The revival in Rochester had prepared the way in Auburn, as in every other place round about, and had also prepared the way in Buffalo. At Buffalo, the messenger informed me, the work had begun, and a few souls had been hopefully converted; but they felt that other means needed to be used, and they urged me so hard, that from Auburn I turned back through Rochester to Buffalo. I spent but about one month, I think, at Buffalo; during which time a large number of persons were hopefully converted.

The work at Buffalo, as at Auburn and Rochester, took effect very generally among the more influential classes. Rev. Dr. Lord, then a lawyer, was converted at that time, I think; also Mr. H, the father of Rev. Dr. H, of Buffalo. There were many circumstances connected with his conversion, that I have never forgotten. He was one of the most wealthy and influential men in Buffalo, and a man of outwardly good morals, fair character, and high standing as a citizen, but an impenitent sinner. His wife was a Christian woman, and had long been praying for him, and hoping that he would be converted. But when I began to preach there, and insisted that the sinner’s "cannot" is his "will not", that the difficulty to be overcome was the voluntary wickedness of sinners, and that they were wholly unwilling to be Christians, Mr. H rebelled very decidedly against such teaching. He insisted upon it that it was false in his case; for he was conscious of being willing to be a

Christian, and that he had long been willing.

As his wife informed me of the position that he occupied, I did not spare him; but from day to day, I hunted him from his refuges, and answered all his objections, and met all his excuses. He became more and more excited. He was a man of strong will; and he declared that he did not, and would not, believe such teaching. He said so much in opposition to the teaching, as to draw around him some men with whom he had no sympathy at all, except in their opposition to the work. But I did not hesitate to press him in every sermon, in one shape or another, with his unwillingness to be a Christian.

After his conversion, he told me that he was shocked and ashamed, when he found that some scoffers had taken refuge behind him. One evening, he said, he sat directly across the aisle from a notorious scoffer. He said that repeatedly while I was preaching, this man, with whom he had no sympathy at all on other subjects, would look toward him and smile, and give great indications of his fellowship with Mr. H's opposition to the revival. He said that on discovering this, his heart rose up with indignation; and he said to himself, "I am not going to be in sympathy with that class of men; I will have nothing to do with them."

However, that very night, at the close of my sermon, I pressed the consciences of sinners so hard, and made so strong an appeal to them to give up their voluntary opposition and come to Christ, that he could not contain himself. As soon as meeting was out, altogether contrary to his custom, he began to resist, and to speak against what had been said, before he got out of the house. The aisles were full, and people were crowding around him on every side. Indeed he made some profane expression, as his wife informed me, which very much disturbed her, as she felt that by his opposition he was very likely to grieve the Spirit of God away, and lose his soul.

That night he could not sleep. His mind was so exercised that he rose as soon as there was any light, left his house and went off to a considerable distance, where there was then a grove, near a place where he had some waterworks which he called the hydraulics. There in the grove he knelt down to pray. He said he had felt, during the night, as if he must get away by himself, so that he could speak aloud and let out his voice and his heart, as he was pressed beyond endurance with the sense of his sins, and with the necessity of immediately making his peace with God. But to his surprise and mortification, when he knelt down and attempted to pray, he found that his heart would not pray. He had no words; he had no desires that he could express in words. He said that it appeared to him that his heart was as hard as marble, and that he had not the least feeling on the subject. He stood upon his knees disappointed and confounded, and found that if he opened his mouth to pray, he had nothing in the form of prayer that he could sincerely utter.

In this state it occurred to him that he could say the Lord's prayer. So he began, "Our Father which art in heaven." He said as soon as he uttered the words, he was convicted of his hypocrisy in calling God his Father. When he added the petition, "Hallowed be thy name," he said it almost shocked him. He saw that he was not sincere, that his words did not at all express the state of his mind. He did not care to have God's name hallowed. Then he uttered the next petition, "Thy kingdom come." Upon this, he said, he almost choked. He saw that he did not want the kingdom of God to come; that it was hypocritical in him to say so, and that he could not say it, as really expressing the sincere desire of his heart. And then came the petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." He said his heart rose up against that, and he could not say it. Here he

was brought face to face with the will of God. He had been told from day to day that he was opposed to this will; that he was not willing to accept it; that it was his voluntary opposition to God, to His law, and His will, that was the only obstacle in the way of his conversion. This consideration he had resisted and fought with desperation. But here on his knees, with the Lord's prayer in his mouth, he was brought face to face with that question; and he saw with perfect clearness that what he had been told, was true: that he was not willing that God's will should be done; and that he did not do it himself, because he would not.

Here the whole question of his rebellion, in its nature and its extent, was brought so strongly before him, that he saw it would cost him a mighty struggle, to give up that voluntary opposition to God. And then, he said, he gathered up all the strength of his will and cried aloud, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." He said he was perfectly conscious that his will went with his words; that he accepted the will of God, and the whole will of God; that he made a full surrender to God, and accepted Christ just as He was offered in the Gospel. He gave up his sins, and embraced the will of God as his universal rule of life. The language of his heart was, "Lord, do with me as seemeth thee good. Let thy will be done with me, and with all creatures on earth, as it is done in heaven." He said he prayed freely, as soon as his will surrendered; and his heart poured itself out like a flood. His rebellion all passed away, his feelings subsided into a great calm, and a sweet peace seemed to fill all his soul.

He rose from his knees and went to his house, and told his anxious wife, who had been praying for him so earnestly, what the Lord had done for his soul; and confessed that he had been all wrong in his opposition, and entirely deceived as it respected his willingness to be a Christian. From that time he became an earnest laborer for the promotion of the work of God. His subsequent life attested the reality of the change, and he lived and died a useful, Christian man. From Buffalo I went, in June, I think, to my father-in-law's, in Whitestown. I spent a part of the summer in journeying for recreation, and for the restoration of my health and strength.

Early in the autumn of 1831, I accepted an invitation to hold what was then called a protracted meeting, or a series of meetings, in Providence. I labored mostly in the church of which Rev. Dr. Wilson was at that time pastor. I think I remained there about three weeks, holding meetings every evening, and preaching three times on the Sabbath. The Lord poured out His Spirit immediately upon the people, and the work of grace commenced and went forward in a most interesting manner. However, my stay was too short to secure so general a work of grace in that place, as occurred afterwards in 1842, when I spent some two months there; the particulars of which I shall relate in its proper connection.

There were many interesting conversions at that time; and several of the men who have had a leading Christian influence in that city, from that time to the present day, were converted. This was also true of the women; many very interesting cases of conversion among them occurred. I remember with great distinctness the conversion of one young lady, which I will in brief relate. I had observed in the congregation, on the Sabbath, a young woman of great personal beauty, sitting in a pew with a young man who I afterwards learned was her brother. She had a very intellectual, and a very earnest look, and seemed to listen to every word I said, with the utmost attention and seriousness.

I was the guest of Mr. Josiah Chapin; and in going from the church with him to his own house, I observed this young brother and sister going up the same street. I pointed them out to Mr. Chapin, and asked him who they were. He informed me that they were a Mr. and a Miss A, brother and sister, and remarked that she was considered the most beautiful girl in Providence. I asked him if she was a professor of religion; and he said, no. I told him I thought her very seriously impressed, and asked him if he did not think it would be well for me to call and see her. He spoke discouragingly in regard to that, and thought it would be a waste of time, and that possibly I might not be cordially received. He thought that she was a girl so much caressed and flattered, and that her surroundings were such, that she probably entertained but little serious thought in regard to the salvation of her soul. But he was mistaken; and I was right in supposing that the Spirit of the Lord was striving with her.

I did not call upon her; but a few days after this, she called to see me. I knew her at once, and inquired of her in regard to the state of her soul. She was very thoroughly awakened; but her real convictions of sin, were not ripened into that state that I wished to see and which I thought was necessary, before she could be really brought intelligently to accept the righteousness of Christ. I therefore spent an hour or two, for her call was considerably protracted, in trying to show her the depravity of her heart. She at first recoiled from my searching questions. But her convictions seemed to ripen as I conversed with her; and she became more and more profoundly serious.

When I had said to her what I thought was necessary to secure a ripened and thorough conviction, under the influence of the Spirit of God, she got up with a manifest feeling of dissatisfaction, and left me. I was confident the Spirit of God had so thoroughly taken hold of her case, that what I had said to her would not be shaken off, but on the contrary that it would work the conviction that I sought to produce.

Two or three days afterwards she called on me again. I could see at once that she was greatly bowed down in her spirit. As soon as she came in she sat down, and threw her heart open to me. With the utmost candor she said to me, "Mr. Finney, I thought when I was here before, that your questions and treatment of me were pretty severe. But," said she, "I see now that I am all that you represented me to be. Indeed," said she, "had it not been for my pride and regard for my reputation, I should have been as wicked a girl as there is in Providence. I can see," said she, "clearly that my life has been restrained by pride, and a regard to my reputation, and not from any regard to God, or His law or Gospel. I can see that God has made use of my pride and ambition, to restrain me from disgraceful iniquities. I have been petted and flattered, and have stood upon my dignity; and have maintained my reputation, from purely selfish motives." She went on spontaneously, and owned up, and showed that her convictions were thorough and permanent. She did not appear to be excited, but calm, and in the highest degree rational, in everything that she said. It was evident, however, that she had a fervent nature, a strong will, and an uncommonly well-balanced and cultivated intellect.

After conversing with her for some time, and giving her as thorough instruction as I could, we bowed before the Lord in prayer; and she, to all human appearance, gave herself unreservedly to Christ. She was in a state of mind, at this time, that seemed to render it easy for her to renounce the world. She has always been a very interesting Christian. Not many years after her conversion, she was married to a wealthy gentleman in the city of New York. For several years I had no direct

correspondence with her. Her husband took her into a circle of society with which I had no particular acquaintance; and, until after he died, I did not renew my acquaintance with her. Since then I have had much Christian correspondence with her, and have never ceased to be greatly interested in her religious life. I mention this case, because I have ever regarded it as a wonderful triumph of the grace of God over the fascinations of the world. The grace of God was too strong for the world, even in a case like this, in which every worldly fascination was surrounding her.

While I was at Providence, the question of my going to Boston was agitated by the ministers and deacons of the several Congregational churches of that city. I was not myself aware of what they were doing there; but Dr. Wisner, then pastor of the Old South church, came over to Providence and attended our meetings. I afterward learned that he was sent over by the ministers, to spy out the land and bring back a report. I had several conversations with him, and he manifested an almost enthusiastic interest in what he saw and heard in Providence. About the time he was there, some very striking conversions took place.

The work at Providence was of a peculiarly searching character, as it respected professors of religion. Old hopes were terribly shaken, and there was a great shaking among the dry bones in the different churches. So terribly was a deacon of one of the churches searched on one occasion, that he said to me, as I came out of the pulpit, "Mr. Finney, I do not believe there are ten real Christians in Providence. We are all wrong," said he; "we have been deceived." Dr. Wisner, I believe, was thoroughly convinced that the work was genuine, and for the time, extensive; and that there was no indication of influences or results that were to be deplored.

After Dr. Wisner returned to Boston, I soon received a request from the Congregational ministers and churches, to go to that city and labor. Dr. Lyman Beecher was at that time pastor of the Bowdoin street church; his son, Edward Beecher, was either pastor or stated supply at Park street; a Mr. Green was pastor of the Essex street church, but had gone to Europe for his health, and that church was without any stated supply at the time. Dr. Fay was pastor of the Congregational church in Charlestown; and Dr. Jenks was pastor of the Congregational church in Green street. I do not recollect who were the pastors of the other churches at the time.

I began my labors by preaching around in the different churches on the Sabbath, and on week evenings I preached in Park street. I soon saw that the Word of God was taking effect, and that the interest was increasing from day to day. But I perceived also that there needed to be a great searching among professed Christians. I could not learn that there was among them anything like the spirit of prayer that had prevailed in the revivals at the West and in New York City. There seemed to be a peculiar type of religion there, not exhibiting that freedom and strength of faith which I had been in the habit of seeing in New York.

I therefore began to preach some searching sermons to Christians. Indeed I gave out on the Sabbath, that I would preach a series of sermons to Christians, in Park street, on certain evenings of the week. But I soon found that these sermons were not at all palatable to the Christians of Boston. It was something they never had been used to, and the attendance at Park street became less and less, especially on those evenings when I preached to professed Christians. This was new to me. I had never before seen professed Christians shrink back, as they did at that time in Boston, from searching sermons. But I heard, again and again, of speeches like these: "What will the Unitarians say, if such things are true of us who are orthodox? If Mr. Finney preaches to us in

this way, the Unitarians will triumph over us, and say, that at least the orthodox are no better Christians than Unitarians." It was evident that they somewhat resented my plain dealing, and that my searching sermons astonished, and even offended, very many of them. However, as the work went forward, this state of things changed greatly; and after a few weeks they would listen to searching preaching, and came to appreciate it.

I found in Boston, as I had everywhere else, that there was a method of dealing with inquiring sinners, that was very trying to me. I used sometimes to hold meetings of inquiry with Dr. Beecher, in the basement of his church. One evening when there was a large attendance, and a feeling of great searching and solemnity among the inquirers, at the close, as was my custom, I made an address in which I tried to point out to them exactly what the Lord required of them. My object was to bring them to renounce themselves and their all, and give themselves and all they possessed to Christ. I tried to show them that they were not their own, but were bought with a price; and pointed out to them the sense in which they were expected to forsake all that they had, and deliver everything to Christ as belonging to Him.

I made this point as clear as I possibly could, and saw that the impression upon the inquirers seemed to be very deep. I was about to call on them to kneel down, while we presented them to God in prayer; when Dr. Beecher arose, and said to them, "You need not be afraid to give up all to Christ, your property and all, for He will give it right back to you." Without making any just discriminations at all, as to the sense in which they were to give up their possessions, and the sense in which the Lord would allow them to retain them, he simply exhorted them not to be afraid to give up all, as they had been urged to do, as the Lord would give it right back to them. I saw that he was making a false impression, and I felt in an agony. I saw that his language was calculated to make an impression, the direct opposite of the truth.

After he had finished his remarks, as wisely and carefully as I could, I led them to see that, in the sense of which God required them to give up their possessions, he would never give them back, and they must not entertain such a thought. I tried to say what I said, in such a way as not to appear to contradict Dr. Beecher, but yet thoroughly to correct the impression that I saw he had made. I told them that the Lord did not require them to relinquish all their possessions, to quit their business, and houses, and possessions, and never to have possession of them again; but He did require them to renounce the ownership of them, to understand and realize that these things were not their’s, but the Lord’s; that His claim was absolute, and His property in themselves and in everything else, so entirely above the right of every other being in the universe, that what He required of them was to use themselves and everything else as belonging to Him; and never to think that they had a right to use their time, their strength, their substance, their influence, or anything else which they possessed, as if it were their own, and not the Lord’s.

Dr. Beecher made no objection to what I said, either at the time, or ever, so far as I know; and it is not probable that he intended anything inconsistent with this, in what he said. Yet his language was calculated to make the impression that God would restore their possessions to them, in the sense in which they had relinquished them, and given them up to Him.

The members of the orthodox churches of Boston, at this time, generally, I believe, received my views of doctrine without question. I know that Dr. Beecher did; for he told me that he had never seen a man with whose theological views he so entirely accorded, as he did with mine. There was

one point of my orthodoxy, however, to which many of them at the time objected. There was a Mr. Rand, who published, I think, a periodical in Boston at that time, who wrote an earnest article against my views on the subject of the divine agency in regeneration. I preached that the divine agency was that of teaching and persuasion, that the influence was a moral, and not a physical one. President Edwards had held the contrary; and Mr. Rand held with President Edwards, that the divine agency exercised in regeneration, was a physical one; that it produced a change of nature, instead of a change in the voluntary attitude and preference of the soul. Mr. Rand regarded my views on this subject as quite out of the way.

There were some other points of doctrine upon which he dwelt in a critical manner; such, for example, as my views of the voluntary nature of moral depravity, and the sinner's activity in regeneration.

Dr. Wisner wrote a reply, and justified my views, with the exception of those that I maintained on the persuasive or moral influence of the Holy Spirit. He was not then prepared to take the ground, against President Edwards, and the general orthodox view of New England, that the Spirit's agency was not physical, but only moral. Dr. Woods, of Andover, also published an article in one of the periodicals, I believe the one published at Andover, under this title: "The Holy Ghost the author of regeneration." This was, I think, the title; at any rate the design was to prove that regeneration was the work of God. He quoted of course, that class of scriptures that assert the divine agency, in the work of changing the heart.

To this, I made no reply in writing; but in my preaching I said that was only a half truth; that the Bible just as plainly asserts that regeneration is the work of man; and I quoted those passages that affirm it. Paul said to one of the churches, that he had begotten them, that is regenerated them; for the same word is used as in other passages, where regeneration is ascribed to God. It is easy, therefore, to show that God has an agency in regeneration, and that His agency is that of teaching or persuasion. It is also easy to show that the subject has an agency; that the acts of repentance, faith, and love are his own; and that the Spirit persuades him to put forth these acts, by presenting to him the truth. As the truth is the instrument, the Holy Spirit must be one of the agents; and a preacher, or some human, intelligent agent, generally, also cooperates in the work. There was nothing at all unchristian, that I recollect, in any of the discussions that we had, at that time; nothing that grieved the Spirit or produced any unkind feelings among the brethren.

After I had spent some weeks, in preaching about in the different congregations, I consented to supply Mr. Green's church in Essex street statedly, for a time. I therefore concentrated my labors upon that field. We had a blessed work of grace; and a large number of persons were converted in different parts of the city.

I had become fatigued, as I had labored about ten years as an evangelist, without anything more than a few days or weeks of rest, during the whole period. The ministerial brethren were true men, had taken hold of the work as well as they knew how, and labored faithfully and efficiently in securing good results.

By this time, a second free church had been formed in New York City. Mr. Joel Parker's church, the first free church, had grown so large, that a colony had gone off, and formed a second church; to which Rev. Mr. Barrows, of late years professor at Andover, had been preaching. Some earnest

brethren wrote to me from New York, proposing to lease a theater, and fit it up for a church, upon condition that I would come there and preach. They proposed to get what was called the Chatham street theater, in the heart of the most irreligious population of New York. It was owned by men who were very willing to have it transformed into a church. At this time we had three children, and I could not well take my family with me, while laboring as an evangelist. My strength, too, had become a good deal exhausted; and on praying and looking the matter over, I concluded that I would accept the call from the Second Free church, and labor, for a time at least, in New York.

02.23. LABORS IN NYC IN 1832 & ONWARD

CHAPTER XXIII.

LABORS IN NEW YORK CITY IN 1832, AND ONWARD.

MR. LEWIS TAPPAN, with other Christian brethren, leased the Chatham street theatre, and fitted it up for a church, and as a suitable place to accommodate the various charitable societies, in holding their anniversaries. They called me, and I accepted the pastorate of the second Free Presbyterian church. I left Boston in April, 1832, and commenced labors in that theatre, at that time. The Spirit of the Lord was immediately poured out upon us, and we had an extensive revival that spring and summer.

About midsummer the cholera appeared in New York, for the first time. The panic became great, and a great many Christian people fled into the country. The cholera was very severe in the city that summer, more so than it ever has been since; and it was especially fatal in the part of the city where I resided. I recollect counting, from the door of our house, five hearses drawn up at the same time, at different doors within sight. I remained in New York until quite the latter part of summer, not being willing to leave the city while the mortality was so great. But I found that the influence was undermining my health, and in the latter part of summer I went into the country, for two or three weeks. On my return, I was installed as pastor of the church. During the installation services, I was taken ill; and soon after I got home, it was plain that I was seized with the cholera. The gentleman at the next door, was seized about the same time, and before morning he was dead. The means used for my recovery, gave my system a terrible shock from which it took me long to recover. However, toward spring I was able to preach again. I invited two ministerial brethren to help me in holding a series of meetings. We preached in turn for two or three weeks, but very little was accomplished. I saw that it was not the way to promote a revival there, and I drew the meeting, in that form, to a close.

On the next Sabbath, I made appointments to preach every evening during the week and a revival immediately commenced, and became very powerful. I continued to preach for twenty evenings in succession, beside preaching on the Sabbath. My health was not yet vigorous, and after preaching twenty evenings, I suspended that form of my labors. The converts known to us numbered five hundred, and our church became so large, that very soon a colony was sent off to form another church; and a suitable building was erected for that purpose, on the corner of Madison and Catharine streets.

The work continued to go forward, in a very interesting manner. We held meetings of inquiry once or twice a week, and sometimes oftener, and found that every week, a goodly number of conversions was reported. The church were a praying, working people. They were thoroughly united, were well trained in regard to labors for the conversion of sinners, and were a most devoted and efficient church of Christ. They would go out into the highways and hedges, and bring people to hear preaching, whenever they were called upon to do so. Both men and women would

undertake this work. When we wished to give notice of any extra meetings, little slips of paper, on which was printed an invitation to attend the services, would be carried from house to house, in every direction, by the members of the church; especially in that part of the city in which Chatham street chapel, as we called it, was located. By the distribution of these slips, and by oral invitations, the house could be filled, any evening in the week. Our ladies were not afraid to go and gather in all classes, from the neighborhood round about. It was something new to have religious services in that theatre, instead of such scenes as had formerly been enacted there.

There were three rooms, connected with the front part of the theatre, long, large rooms, which were fitted up for prayer meetings, and for a lecture room. These rooms had been used for very different purposes, while the main building was occupied as a theatre. But, when fitted up for our purpose, they were exceedingly convenient. There were three tiers of galleries; and those rooms were connected with the galleries respectively, one above the other.

I instructed my church members to scatter themselves over the whole house, and to keep their eyes open, in regard to any that were seriously affected under preaching, and if possible, to detain them after preaching, for conversation and prayer. They were true to their teaching, and were on the lookout at every meeting to see, with whom the Word of God was taking effect; and they had faith enough to dismiss their fears, and to speak to any whom they saw to be affected by the Word. In this way the conversion of a great many souls was secured. They would invite them into those rooms, and there we could converse and pray with them, and thus gather up the results of every sermon.

A case which I this moment recollect, will illustrate the manner in which the members would work. The firm of Naylor and Company, who were at that time the great cutlery manufacturers in Sheffield, England, had a house in New York, and a partner by the name of H. Mr. H was a worldly man, had traveled a great deal, and had resided in several of the principal cities of Europe. One of the clerks of that establishment had come to our meetings and been converted, and felt very anxious for the conversion of Mr. H. The young man, for some time, hesitated about asking him to attend our meetings, but he finally ventured to do so; and in compliance with his earnest entreaty, Mr. H came one evening to meeting.

As it happened, he sat near the broad aisle, over against where Mr. Tappan sat. Mr. Tappan saw that, during the sermon, he manifested a good deal of emotion; and seemed uneasy at times, as if he were on the point of going out. Mr. H afterwards acknowledged to me, that he was several times on the point of leaving, because he was so affected by the sermon. But he remained till the blessing was pronounced. Mr. Tappan kept his eye upon him, and as soon as the blessing was pronounced, introduced himself as Mr. Tappan, a partner of Arthur Tappan and Company, a firm well known to everybody in New York.

I have heard Mr. H himself relate the facts, with great emotion. He said that Mr. Tappan stepped up to him, and took him gently by the button of his coat, and spoke very kindly to him, and asked him if he would not remain for prayer and conversation. He tried to excuse himself and to get away; but Mr. Tappan was so gentlemanly and so kind, that he could not even get away from him. He was importunate, and, as Mr. H expressed it, "He held fast to my button, so that," said he, "an ounce weight at my button was the means of saving my soul." The people retired, and Mr. H among others, was persuaded to remain. According to our custom we had a thorough

conversation; and Mr. H was either then, or very soon after, hopefully converted.

When I first went to Chatham street chapel, I informed the brethren that I did not wish to fill up the house with Christians from other churches as my object was to gather from the world. I wanted to secure the conversion of the ungodly, to the utmost possible extent. We therefore gave ourselves to labor for that class of persons, and by the blessing of God, with good success. Conversions were multiplied so much, that our church would soon become so large, that we would send off a colony; and when I left New York, I think, we had seven free churches, whose members were laboring with all their might to secure the salvation of souls. They were supported mostly by collections, that were taken up from Sabbath to Sabbath. If at any time there was a deficiency in the treasury, there were a number of brethren of property, who would at once supply the deficiency from their own purses; so that we never had the least difficulty in meeting the pecuniary demands.

A more harmonious, prayerful, and efficient people, I never knew, than were the members of those free churches. They were not among the rich, although there were several men of property belonging to them. In general they were gathered from the middle and lower classes of the people. This was what we aimed to accomplish, to preach the Gospel especially to the poor.

When I first went to New York, I had made up my mind on the question of slavery, and was exceedingly anxious to arouse public attention to the subject. I did not, however, turn aside to make it a hobby, or divert the attention of the people from the work of converting souls. Nevertheless, in my prayers and preaching, I so often alluded to slavery, and denounced it, that a considerable excitement came to exist among the people.

While I was laboring at Chatham street chapel, some events occurred connected with the presbytery, that led to the formation of a Congregational church, and to my becoming its pastor. A member came to us from one of the old churches; and we were soon informed that, before he came, he had committed an offense for which he needed to be disciplined. I supposed that, since he had been recommended to us as a member of another church in good standing, and since the offense had been committed before he left that church, that it belonged to them to discipline him. The question was brought before the Third Presbytery of New York, to which I then belonged, and they decided that he was under our jurisdiction, and that it belonged to us to take the case in hand, and discipline him. We did so.

But soon another case occurred, in which a woman came from one of the churches, and united with us, and we found that she had been guilty of an offense, before she came to us, which called for discipline. In accordance with the ruling of the presbytery in the other case, we went forward and excommunicated her. She appealed from the decision of the session, to the presbytery; and they decided that the offense was not committed under our jurisdiction, and ruled in a manner directly opposite to their former ruling. I expostulated, and told them that I did not know how to act; that the two cases were precisely similar, and that their rulings in the two cases were entirely inconsistent, and opposed to each other. Dr. Cox replied that they would not be governed by their own precedent, or by any other precedent; and talked so warmly, and pressed the case so hard, that the presbytery went with him.

Soon after this, the question came up of building the Tabernacle in Broadway. The men that built it, and the leading members who formed the church there, built it with the understanding that I

should be its pastor, and they formed a Congregational church. I then took my dismission from the presbytery, and became pastor of that Congregational church.

But I should have said that in January, 1834, I was obliged to leave on account of my health, and take a sea voyage. I went up the Mediterranean, therefore, in a small brig, in the midst of winter. We had a very stormy passage. My stateroom was small, and I was on the whole, very uncomfortable; and the voyage did not much improve my health. I spent some weeks at Malta, and also in Sicily. I was gone about six months. On my return, I found that there was a great excitement in New York. The members of my church, together with other abolitionists in New York, had held a meeting on the fourth of July, and had an address on the subject of slaveholding. A mob was stirred up, and this was the beginning of that series of mobs that spread in many directions, whenever and wherever there was an anti-slavery gathering, or a voice lifted up against the abominable institution of slavery.

However, I went forward in my labors in Chatham street. The work of God immediately revived and went forward with great interest, numbers being converted at almost or quite every meeting. I continued to labor thus in Chatham street, and the church continued to flourish, and to extend its influence and its labors, in every direction, until the Tabernacle in Broadway was completed.

The plan of the interior of that house was my own. I had observed the defects of churches in regard to sound; and was sure that I could give the plan of a church, in which I could easily speak to a much larger congregation than any house would hold, that I had ever seen. An architect was consulted, and I gave him my plan. But he objected to it, that it would not appear well, and feared that it would injure his reputation, to build a church with such an interior as that. I told him that if he would not build it on that plan, he was not the man to superintend its construction at all. It was finally built in accordance with my ideas; and it was a most commodious, and comfortable place to speak in.

In this connection I must relate the origin of the New York Evangelist. When I first went to the city of New York, and before I went there, the New York Observer, in the hands of Mr. Morse, had gone into the controversy originating in Mr. Nettleton’s opposition to the revivals in central New York. The Observer had sustained Mr. Nettleton’s course, and refused to publish anything on the other side. The writings of Mr. Nettleton and his friends, Mr. Morse would publish in the Observer; but if any reply was made, by any of the friends of those revivals, he would not publish it. In this state of things, our friends had no organ through which they could communicate with the public to correct misapprehensions.

Judge Jonas Platt, of the supreme court, was then living in New York, and was a friend of mine. His son and daughter had been hopefully converted in the revival at Utica. Considerable effort was made, by the friends of those revivals, to get a hearing on the question in debate, but all in vain. Judge Platt found one day, pasted on the inside of the cover of one of his old law books, a letter written by one of the pastors in New York, against Whitefield, at the time he was in this country. That letter of the New York pastor struck Judge Platt, as so strongly resembling the opposition made by Mr. Nettleton, that he sent it to the New York Observer, and wished it to be published as a literary curiosity, it having been written nearly a hundred years before. Mr. Morse refused to publish it, assigning as a reason, that the people would regard it as applying to the opposition of Mr. Nettleton.

At length, some of the friends of the revivals in New York, assembled and talked the matter over, of establishing a new paper that should deal fairly with those questions. They finally commenced the enterprise. I assisted them in getting out the first number, in which I invited ministers and laymen to consider, and discuss several questions in theology, and also questions relating to the best means of promoting revivals of religion.

The first editor of the paper was a Mr. Saxton, a young man who had formerly labored a good deal with Mr. Nettleton, but who strongly disapproved of the course he had been taking, in opposing what he then called the western revivals. This young man continued in the editorial chair about a year, and discussed, with considerable ability, many of the questions that had been proposed for discussion. The paper changed editors two or three times, perhaps, in the course of as many years; and finally Rev. Joshua Leavitt was called, and accepted the editorial chair. He, as everybody knows, was an able editor. The paper soon went into extensive circulation, and proved itself a medium through which the friends of revivals, as they then existed, could communicate their thoughts to the public.

I have spoken of the building of the Tabernacle, and of the excitement in New York on the subject of slavery. When the Tabernacle was in the process of completion, its walls being up, and the roof on, a story was set in circulation that it was going to be an amalgamation church, in which colored and white people were to be compelled to sit promiscuously, over the house. Such was the state of the public mind in New York, at that time, that this report created a great excitement, and somebody set the building on fire. The firemen were in such a state of mind that they refused to put it out, and left the interior and roof to be consumed. However the gentlemen who had undertaken to build it, went forward and completed it.

As the excitement increased on the subject of slavery, Mr. Leavitt espoused the cause of the slave, and advocated it in the New York Evangelist. I watched the discussion with a good deal of attention and anxiety, and when I was about to leave, on the sea voyage to which I have referred, I admonished Mr. Leavitt to be careful and not go too fast, in the discussion of the anti-slavery question, lest he should destroy his paper. On my homeward passage my mind became exceedingly exercised on the question of revivals. I feared that they would decline throughout the country. I feared that the opposition that had been made to them, had grieved the Holy Spirit. My own health, it appeared to me, had nearly or quite broken down; and I knew of no other evangelist that would take the field, and aid pastors in revival work. This view of the subject distressed me so much that one day I found myself unable to rest. My soul was in an utter agony. I spent almost the entire day in prayer in my stateroom, or walking the deck in intense agony, in view of the state of things. In fact I felt crushed with the burden that was on my soul. There was no one on board to whom I could open my mind, or say a word.

It was the spirit of prayer that was upon me; that which I had often before experienced in kind, but perhaps never before to such a degree, for so long a time. I besought the Lord to go on with His work, and to provide Himself with such instrumentalities as were necessary. It was a long summer day, in the early part of July. After a day of unspeakable wrestling and agony in my soul, just at night, the subject cleared up to my mind. The Spirit led me to believe that all would come out right, and that God had yet a work for me to do; that I might be at rest; that the Lord would go forward with His work and give me strength to take any part in it that He desired. But I had not the least

idea what the course of His providence would be.

On arriving at New York I found, as I have said, the mob excitement, on the subject of slavery, very intense. I remained but a day or two in New York, and went into the country, to the place where my family were spending the summer. On my return to New York, in the fall, Mr. Leavitt came to me and said, "Brother Finney, I have ruined the Evangelist. I have not been as prudent as you cautioned me to be, and I have gone so far ahead of public intelligence and feeling on the subject, that my subscription list is rapidly failing; and we shall not be able to continue its publication beyond the first of January, unless you can do something to bring the paper back to public favor again." I told him my health was such that I did not know what I could do; but I would make it a subject of prayer. He said if I could write a series of articles on revivals, he had no doubt it would restore the paper immediately to public favor. After considering it a day or two, I proposed to preach a course of lectures to my people, on revivals of religion, which he might report for his paper. He caught at this at once. Said he, "That is the very thing;" and in the next number of his paper he advertised the course of lectures. This had the effect he desired, and he soon after told me that the subscription list was very rapidly increasing; and, stretching out his long arms, he said, "I have as many new subscribers every day, as would fill my arms with papers, to supply them each a single number." He had told me before, that his subscription list had fallen off at the rate of sixty a day. But now he said it was increasing more rapidly than it ever had decreased.

I began the course of lectures immediately, and continued them through the winter, preaching one each week. Mr. Leavitt could not write shorthand, but would sit and take notes, abridging what he wrote, in such a way that he could understand it himself; and then the next day he would sit down and fill out his notes, and send them to the press. I did not see what he had reported, until I saw it published in his paper. I did not myself write the lectures, of course; they were wholly extemporaneous. I did not make up my mind, from time to time, what the next lecture should be, until I saw his report of my last. Then I could see what was the next question that would naturally need discussion. Brother Leavitt’s reports were meager, as it respects the matter contained in the lectures. The lectures averaged, if I remember right, not less than an hour and three quarters, in their delivery. But all that he could catch and report, could be read, probably in thirty minutes.

These lectures were afterward published in a book, and called, "Finney’s Lectures on Revivals." Twelve thousand copies of them were sold, as fast as they could be printed. And here, for the glory of Christ, I would say, that they have been reprinted in England and France; they were translated into Welsh; and on the continent were translated into French and, I believe, into German; and were very extensively circulated throughout Europe, and the colonies of Great Britain. They were, I presume, to be found wherever the English language is spoken. After they had been printed in Welsh, the Congregational ministers of the Principality of Wales, at one of their public meetings, appointed a committee to inform me of the great revival that had resulted from the translation of those lectures into the Welsh language. This they did by letter. One publisher in London informed me, that his father had published eighty thousand volumes of them. These revival lectures, meager as was the report of them, and feeble as they were in themselves, have been instrumental, as I have learned, in promoting revivals in England, and Scotland, and Wales, on the continent in various places, in Canada East and West, in Nova Scotia, and in some of the islands of the sea.

In England and Scotland, I have often been refreshed by meeting with ministers and laymen, in great numbers, that had been converted, directly or indirectly, through the instrumentality of those lectures. I recollect the last time that I was abroad, one evening, three very prominent ministers of the Gospel introduced themselves to me, after the sermon, and said that when they were in college they got hold of my revival lectures, which had resulted in their becoming ministers. I found persons in England, in all the different denominations, who had not only read those revival lectures, but had been greatly blessed in reading them. When they were first published in the New York Evangelist, the reading of them resulted in revivals of religion, in multitudes of places throughout this country.

But this was not of man's wisdom. Let the reader remember that long day of agony and prayer at sea, that God would do something to forward the work of revivals, and enable me, if He desired to do it, to take such a course as to help forward the work. I felt certain then that my prayers would be answered; and I have regarded all that I have since been able to accomplish, as, in a very important sense, an answer to the prayers of that day. The spirit of prayer came upon me as a sovereign grace, bestowed upon me without the least merit, and in despite of all my sinfulness. He pressed my soul in prayer, until I was enabled to prevail; and through infinite riches of grace in Christ Jesus, I have been many years witnessing the wonderful results of that day of wrestling with God. In answer to that day's agony, He has continued to give me the spirit of prayer.

Soon after I returned to New York, I commenced my labors in the Tabernacle. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, and we had a precious revival, as long as I continued to be pastor of that church. While in New York, I had many applications from young men, to take them as students in theology. I, however, had too much on my hands, to undertake such a work. But the brethren who built the Tabernacle had this in view; and prepared a room under the choir, which we expected to use for prayer meetings, but more especially for a theological lecture room. The number of applications had been so large, that I had made up my mind to deliver a course of theological lectures in that room each year, and let such students as chose, attend them gratuitously.

But about this time, and before I had opened my lectures in New York, the breaking up at Lane Seminary took place, on account of the prohibition by the trustees, of the discussion of the question of slavery among the students. When this occurred, Mr. Arthur Tappan proposed to me, that if I would go to some point in Ohio, and take rooms where I could gather those young men, and give them my views in theology, and prepare them for the work of preaching throughout the West, he would be at the entire expense of the undertaking. He was very earnest in this proposal. But I did not know how to leave New York; and I did not see how I could accomplish the wishes of Mr. Tappan, although I strongly sympathized with him in regard to helping those young men. They were most of them converts in those great revivals, in which I had taken more or less part.

While this subject was under consideration, I think, in January, 1835, Rev. John Jay Shipherd, of Oberlin, and Rev. Asa Mahan, of Cincinnati, arrived in New York, to persuade me to go to Oberlin, as professor of theology. Mr. Mahan had been one of the trustees of Lane Seminary--the only one, I think, that had resisted the prohibition of free discussion. Mr. Shipherd had founded a colony, and organized a school at Oberlin, about a year before this time, and had obtained a charter broad enough for a university. Mr. Mahan had never been in Oberlin. The trees had been removed from

the college square, some dwelling-houses and one college building had been erected, and about a hundred pupils had been gathered, in the preparatory or academic department of the institution.

The proposal they laid before me was, to come on, and take those students that had left Lane Seminary, and teach them theology. These students had themselves proposed to go to Oberlin, in case I would accept the call. This proposal met the views of Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and many of the friends of the slave, who sympathized with Mr. Tappan, in his wish to have those young men instructed, and brought into the ministry. We had several consultations on the subject. The brethren in New York who were interested in the question, offered, if I would go and spend half of each year in Oberlin, to endow the institution, so far as the professorships were concerned, and to do it immediately.

I had understood that the trustees of Lane Seminary had acted over the heads of the faculty; and, in the absence of several of them, had passed the obnoxious resolution that had caused the students to leave. I said, therefore, to Mr. Shipherd, that I would not go at any rate, unless two points were conceded by the trustees. One was, that they should never interfere with the internal regulation of the school, but should leave that entirely to the discretion of the faculty. The other was, that we should be allowed to receive colored people on the same conditions that we did white people; that there should be no discrimination made on account of color.

When these conditions were forwarded to Oberlin, the trustees were called together, and after a great struggle to overcome their own prejudices, and the prejudices of the community, they passed resolutions complying with the conditions proposed. This difficulty being removed, the friends in New York were called together, to see what they could do about endowing the institution. In the course of an hour or two, they had a subscription filled for the endowment of eight professorships; as many, it was supposed, as the institution would need for several years.

But after this endowment fund was subscribed, I felt a great difficulty in giving up that admirable place for preaching the Gospel, where such crowds were gathered within the sound of my voice. I felt, too, assured that in this new enterprise, we should have great opposition from many sources. I therefore told Arthur Tappan that my mind did not feel at rest upon the subject; that we should meet with great opposition because of our anti-slavery principles; and that we could expect to get but very scanty funds to put up our buildings, and to procure all the requisite apparatus of a college; that therefore I did not see my way clear, after all, to commit myself, unless something could be done that should guarantee us the funds that were indispensable.

Arthur Tappan’s heart was as large as all New York, and I might say, as large as the world. When I laid the case thus before him, he said, "Brother Finney, my own income averages about a hundred thousand dollars a year. Now if you will go to Oberlin, take hold of that work, and go on, and see that the buildings are put up, and a library and everything provided, I will pledge you my entire income, except what I need to provide for my family, till you are beyond pecuniary want." Having perfect confidence in brother Tappan I said, "That will do. Thus far the difficulties are out of the way."

But still there was a great difficulty in leaving my church in New York. I had never thought of having my labors at Oberlin interfere with my revival labors and preaching. It was therefore agreed between myself and the church, that I should spend my winters in New York, and my summers at

Oberlin; and that the church would be at the expense of my going and coming.

When this was arranged, I took my family, and arrived in Oberlin at the beginning of summer, 1835

02.24. EARLY LABORS IN OBERLIN

CHAPTER XXIV.

EARLY LABORS IN OBERLIN.

THE students from Lane Seminary came to Oberlin, and the trustees put up barracks, in which they were lodged, and other students thronged to us from every direction. After I was engaged to come, the brethren at Oberlin wrote, requesting me to bring a large tent, to hold meetings in; as there was no room in the place, large enough to accommodate the people. I made this request known to some of my brethren, who told me to go and get a tent made, and they would furnish the money. I went and engaged the tent, and they handed me the money to pay for it. It was a circular tent, a hundred feet in diameter, furnished with all the equipment for putting it up. At the top of the center pole which supported the tent, was a streamer, upon which was written in very large characters, "Holiness to the Lord." This tent was of great service to us. When the weather would permit, we spread it upon the square every Sabbath, and held public services in it; and several of our earliest commencements were held in it. It was used, to some extent also, for holding protracted meetings in the region round about, where there were no churches large enough to meet the necessities.

I have spoken of the promise of Arthur Tappan to supply us with funds, to the extent of his whole income, till we were beyond pecuniary want. Upon this understanding with him, I entered upon the work. But it was farther understood between us, that his pledge should not be known to the trustees, lest they should fail to make due efforts, as he desired, not merely to collect funds, but to make the wants and objects of the institution known throughout the land. In accordance with this understanding, the work here was pushed as fast as it could well be, considering that we were in the heart of a great forest, and in a location, at that time in many respects undesirable.

We had only fairly entered upon the work of putting up our buildings, and had arranged to need a large amount of money, when the great commercial crash prostrated Mr. Tappan, and nearly all the men who had subscribed for the fund for the support of the faculty. The commercial crash went over the country, and prostrated the great mass of wealthy men. It left us, not only without funds for the support of the faculty, but thirty thousand dollars in debt; without any prospect, that we could see, of obtaining funds from the friends of the college in this country. Mr. Tappan wrote me at this time, acknowledging expressly the promise he had made me, and expressing the deepest regret that he was prostrated, and wholly unable to fulfill his pledge. Our necessities were then great, and to human view it would seem that the college must be a failure.

The great mass of the people of Ohio were utterly opposed to our enterprise, because of its abolition character. The towns around us were hostile to our movement, and in some places threats were made to come and tear down our buildings. A democratic legislature was, in the meantime, endeavoring to get some hold of us, that would enable them to abrogate our charter. In this state of things there was, of course, a great crying to God among the people here.

In the meantime, my revival lectures had been very extensively circulated in England; and we were aware that the British public would strongly sympathize with us, if they knew our objects, our prospects, and our condition. We therefore sent an agency to England, composed of Rev. John Keep and Mr. William Dawes, having obtained for them letters of recommendation, and expressions of confidence in our enterprise, from some of the leading anti-slavery men of the country. They went to England, and laid our objects and our wants before the British public. They generously responded, and gave us six thousand pounds sterling. This very nearly canceled our indebtedness.

Our friends, scattered throughout the northern states, who were abolitionists and friends of revivals, generously aided us to the extent of their ability. But we had to struggle with poverty and many trials, for a course of years. Sometimes we did not know, from day to day, how we were to be provided for. But with the blessing of God we helped ourselves, as best we could.

At one time, I saw no means of providing for my family through the winter. Thanksgiving day came, and found us so poor that I had been obliged to sell my traveling trunk, which I had used in my evangelistic labors, to supply the place of a cow which I had lost. I rose on the morning of Thanksgiving, and spread our necessities before the Lord. I finally concluded by saying that, if help did not come, I should assume that it was best that it should not; and would be entirely satisfied with any course that the Lord would see it wise to take. I went and preached, and enjoyed my own preaching as well, I think, as I ever did. I had a blessed day to my own soul; and I could see that the people enjoyed it exceedingly.

After the meeting, I was detained a little while in conversation with some brethren, and my wife returned home. When I reached the gate, she was standing in the open door, with a letter in her hand. As I approached she smilingly said, "The answer has come, my dear;" and handed me the letter containing a check from Mr. Josiah Chapin of Providence, for two hundred dollars. He had been here the previous summer, with his wife. I had said nothing about my wants at all, as I never was in the habit of mentioning them to anybody. But in the letter containing the check, he said he had learned that the endowment fund had failed, and that I was in want of help. He intimated that I might expect more, from time to time. He continued to send me six hundred dollars a year, for several years; and on this I managed to live.

I should have said that, agreeably to my arrangement in New York, I spent my summers at Oberlin, and my winters at New York, for two or three years. We had a blessed reviving, whenever I returned to preach there. We also had a revival here continually. Very few students came here then without being converted. But my health soon became such that I found, I must relinquish one of these fields of labor. But the interests connected with the college, seemed to forbid utterly that I should leave it. I therefore took a dismission from my church in New York, and the winter months which I was to have spent in New York, I spent in laboring, in various places, to promote revivals of religion.

The lectures on revivals of religion were preached while I was still pastor of the Presbyterian church in Chatham street chapel. The two following winters, I gave lectures to Christians in the Broadway Tabernacle which were also reported by Mr. Leavitt, and published in the New York Evangelist. These also have been printed in a volume in this country and in Europe. Those sermons to Christians were very much the result of a searching that was going on in my own mind.

I mean that the Spirit of God was showing me many things, in regard to the question of sanctification, that led me to preach those sermons to Christians.

Many Christians regarded those lectures as rather an exhibition of the Law, than of the Gospel. But I did not, and do not, so regard them. For me the Law and Gospel have but one rule of life; and every violation of the spirit of the Law, is also a violation of the spirit of the Gospel. But I have long been satisfied that the higher forms of Christian experience are attained only as a result of a terribly searching application of God's Law to the human conscience and heart. The result of my labors up to that time had shown me more clearly than I had known before, the great weakness of Christians, and that the older members of the church, as a general thing, were making very little progress in grace. I found that they would fall back from a revival state, even sooner than young converts. It had been so in the revival in which I myself was converted. I saw clearly that this was owing to their early teaching; that is, to the views which they had been led to entertain, when they were young converts.

I was also led into a state of great dissatisfaction with my own want of stability in faith and love. To be candid, and tell the truth, I must say, to the praise of God's grace, He did not suffer me to backslide, to anything like the same extent, to which manifestly many Christians did backslide. But I often felt myself weak in the presence of temptation; and needed frequently to hold days of fasting and prayer, and to spend much time in overhauling my own religious life, in order to retain that communion with God, and that hold upon the divine strength, that would enable me efficiently to labor for the promotion of revivals of religion.

In looking at the state of the Christian church, as it had been revealed to me in my revival labors, I was led earnestly to inquire whether there was not something higher and more enduring than the Christian church was aware of; whether there were not promises, and means provided in the Gospel, for the establishment of Christians in altogether a higher form of Christian life. I had known somewhat of the view of sanctification entertained by our Methodist brethren. But as their idea of sanctification seemed to me to relate almost altogether to states of the sensibility, I could not receive their teaching. However, I gave myself earnestly to search the Scriptures, and to read whatever came to hand upon the subject, until my mind was satisfied that an altogether higher and more stable form of Christian life was attainable, and was the privilege of all Christians.

This led me to preach in the Broadway Tabernacle, two sermons on Christian perfection. Those sermons are now included in the volume of lectures preached to Christians. In those sermons I defined what Christian perfection is, and endeavored to show that it is attainable in this life, and the sense in which it is attainable. But about this time, the question of Christian perfection, in the antinomian sense of the term, came to be agitated a good deal at New Haven, at Albany, and somewhat in New York City. I examined these views, as published in the periodical entitled "The Perfectionist." But I could not accept them. Yet I was satisfied that the doctrine of sanctification in this life, and entire sanctification, in the sense that it was the privilege of Christians to live without known sin, was a doctrine taught in the Bible, and that abundant means were provided for the securing of that attainment.

The last winter that I spent in New York, the Lord was pleased to visit my soul with a great refreshing. After a season of great searching of heart, He brought me, as He has often done, into a large place, and gave me much of that divine sweetness in my soul, of which President Edwards

speaks as attained in his own experience. That winter I had a thorough breaking up; so much so that sometimes, for a considerable period, I could not refrain from loud weeping in view of my own sins, and of the love of God in Christ. Such seasons were frequent that winter, and resulted in the great renewal of my spiritual strength, and enlargement of my views in regard to the privileges of Christians, and the abundance of the grace of God.

It is well known that my views on the question of sanctification have been the subject of a good deal of criticism. To be faithful to history, I must say some things that I would otherwise pass by in silence. Oberlin College was established by Mr. Shipherd, very much against the feelings and wishes of the men most concerned in building up Western Reserve College, at Hudson. Mr. Shipherd once informed me that the principal financial agent of that college, asserted to him that he would do all he could to put this college down. As soon as they heard, at Hudson, that I had received a call to Oberlin, as professor of theology, the trustees elected me as professor of pastoral theology and sacred eloquence, at Western Reserve College; so that I held the two invitations at the same time. I did not, in writing, commit myself to either, but came on to survey the ground, and then decide upon the path of duty.

That spring, the general assembly of the Presbyterian church held their meeting at Pittsburgh. When I arrived at Cleveland, I was informed that two of the professors from Hudson, had been waiting at Cleveland for my arrival, designing to have me go first, at any rate, to Hudson. But I had been delayed on Lake Erie by adverse winds; and the brethren who had been waiting for me at Cleveland, had gone to be at the opening of the general assembly; and had left word with a brother, to see me immediately on my arrival, and by all means to get me to go to Hudson. But in Cleveland I found a letter awaiting me, from Arthur Tappan, of New York. He had in some way become acquainted with the fact, that strong efforts were making to induce me to go to Hudson, rather than to Oberlin.

The college at Hudson, at that time, had its buildings and apparatus, reputation and influence, and was already an established college. Oberlin had nothing. It had no permanent buildings, and was composed of a little colony settled in the woods; and just beginning to put up their own houses, and clear away the immense forest, and make a place for a college. It had, to be sure, its charter, and perhaps a hundred students on the ground; but everything was still to be done. This letter of brother Tappan was written to put me on my guard against supposing that I could be instrumental in securing, at Hudson, what we desired to secure at Oberlin.

I left my family at Cleveland, hired a horse and buggy, and came out to Oberlin, without going to Hudson. I thought at least that I would see Oberlin first. When I arrived at Elyria, I found some old acquaintances there, whom I had known in central New York. They informed me that the trustees of Western Reserve College thought that, if they could secure my presence at Hudson, it would, at least in a great measure, defeat Oberlin; and that at Hudson there was an old school influence, of sufficient power to compel me to fall in with their views and course of action. This was in precise accordance with the information which I had received from Mr. Tappan.

I came to Oberlin, and saw that there was nothing to prevent the building up of a college, on the principles that seemed to me, not only to lie at the foundation of all success in establishing a college here at the West; but on principles of reform, such as I knew were dear to the hearts of those who had undertaken the support and building up of Oberlin College. The brethren that were

here on the ground, were heartily in favor of building up a school on radical principles of reform. I therefore wrote to the trustees of Hudson, declining to accept their invitation, and took up my abode at Oberlin. I had nothing ill to say of Hudson, and I knew no ill of it.

After a year or two, the cry of antinomian perfectionism was heard, and this charge brought against us. Letters were written, and ecclesiastical bodies were visited, and much pains taken to represent our views here, as entirely heretical. Such representations were made to ecclesiastical bodies, throughout the length and breadth of the land, as to lead many of them to pass resolutions, warning the churches against the influence of Oberlin theology. There seemed to be a general union of ministerial influence against us. We understood very well here, what had set this on foot, and by what means all this excitement was raised. But we said nothing. We had no controversy with those Brethren that, we were aware, were taking pains to raise such a powerful public sentiment against us. I may not enter into particulars; but suffice it to say, that the weapons that were thus formed against us, reacted most disastrously upon those who used them, until at length there was a change of nearly all the members of the board of trustees and the faculty, at Hudson, and the general management of the college fell into other hands.

I scarcely ever heard anything said at Oberlin, at that time, against Hudson, or at any time. We kept about our own business, and felt that in respect to opposition from that quarter, our strength was to sit still; and we were not mistaken. We felt confident that it was not God's plan to suffer such opposition to prevail. I wish to be distinctly understood, that I am not at all aware that any of the present leaders and managers of that college, have sympathized with what was at that time done, or that they so much as know the course that was then taken.

The ministers, far and near, carried their opposition to a great extreme. At that time a convention was called to meet at Cleveland, to consider the subject of Western education, and the support of Western colleges. The call had been so worded that we went out from Oberlin, expecting to take part in the proceedings of the convention. When we arrived there, we found Dr. Beecher on the ground; and soon saw that a course of proceedings was on foot, to shut out Oberlin brethren, and those that sympathized with Oberlin, from the convention. I was therefore not allowed a seat in the convention as a member; yet I attended several of its sessions. I recollect hearing it distinctly said, by one of the ministers from the neighborhood, who was there, that he regarded Oberlin doctrines and influence as worse than those of Roman Catholicism.

That speech was a representative one, and seemed to be about the view that was entertained by that body. I do not mean by all of them, by any means. Some who had been educated in theology at Oberlin, were so related to the churches and the convention, that they were admitted to seats, having come there from different parts of the country. These were very outspoken upon the principles and practices of Oberlin, so far as they were called in question. The object of the convention evidently was, to hedge in Oberlin on every side, and crush us, by a public sentiment that would refuse us all support. But let me be distinctly understood to say, that I do not in the least degree blame the members of that convention, or but very few of them; for I knew that they had been misled, and were acting under an entire misapprehension of the facts. Dr. Lyman Beecher was the leading spirit in that convention.

The policy that we pursued was to let opposition alone. We kept about our own business, and always had as many students as we knew what to do with. Our hands were always full of labor,

and we were always greatly encouraged in our efforts.

A few years after the meeting of this convention, one of the leading ministers who was there, came and spent a day or two at our house. He said to me among other things: "Brother Finney, Oberlin is to us a great wonder." Said he, "I have, for many years been connected with a college as one of its professors. College life and principles, and the conditions upon which colleges are built up, are very familiar to me. We have always thought," said he, "that colleges could not exist unless they were patronized by the ministry. We knew that young men who were about to go to college, would generally consult their pastors, in regard to what colleges they should select, and be guided by their judgment. Now," said he, "the ministers almost universally arrayed themselves against Oberlin. They were deceived by the cry of antinomian perfectionism, and in respect to your views of reform; and ecclesiastical bodies united, far and near, Congregational, and Presbyterian, and of all denominations. They warned their churches against you, they discouraged young men universally from coming to Oberlin, and still the Lord has built you up. You have been supported with funds, better than almost any college in the West; you have had by far more students, and the blessing of God has been upon you, so that your success has been wonderful. Now," said he, "this is a perfect anomaly in the history of colleges. The opposers of Oberlin have been unfounded, and God has stood by you, and sustained you, through all this opposition, so that you have hardly felt it."

It is difficult now for people to realize the opposition that we met with, when we first established this college. As an illustration of it, and as a representative case, I will relate a laughable fact that occurred about the time of which I am speaking. I had occasion to go to Akron, to preach on the Sabbath. I went with a horse and buggy. On my way, beyond the village of Medina, I observed, in the road before me, a woman walking with a little bundle in her hand. As I drew near her, I observed she was an elderly woman, nicely dressed, but walking, as I thought, with some difficulty, on account of her age. As I came up to her I reined up my horse, and asked her, how far she was going on that road. She told me; and I then asked if she would accept a seat in my buggy, and ride. "Oh," she replied, "I should be very thankful for a ride, for I find I have undertaken too long a walk." I helped her into my buggy, and drove on. I found her a very intelligent lady, and very free and homelike in her conversation.

After riding for some distance, she said, "May I ask to whom I am indebted for this ride?" I told her who I was. She then inquired from whence I came. I told her I was from Oberlin. This announcement startled her. She made a motion as if she would sit as far from me as she could; and turning and looking earnestly at me, she said, "From Oberlin! why," said she, "our minister said he would just as soon send a son to state prison as to Oberlin!" Of course I smiled and soothed the old lady’s fears, if she had any; and made her understand she was in no danger from me. I relate this simply as an illustration of the spirit that prevailed very extensively when this college was first established. Misrepresentations and misapprehensions abounded on every side; and these misapprehensions extended into almost every corner of the United States.

However there was a great number of laymen, and no inconsiderable number of ministers, on the whole, in different parts of the country, who had no confidence in this opposition; who sympathized with our aims, our views, our efforts, and who stood firmly by us through thick and thin; and knowing, as they did, the straitness to which, for the time, we were reduced because of this

opposition, they gave their money and their influence freely to help us forward.

I have spoken of Mr. Chapin, of Providence, as having for several years, sent me six hundred dollars a year, on which to support my family. When he had done it as long as he thought it his duty, which he did, indeed, until financial difficulties rendered it inconvenient for him longer to do so; Mr. Willard Sears of Boston took his place, and for several years suffered me to draw on him for the same amount, annually, that Mr. Chapin had paid. In the meantime, efforts were constantly made to sustain the other members of the faculty; and by the grace of God we rode out the gale. After a few years the panic, in a measure, subsided.

President Mahan, Professor Cowles, Professor Morgan, and myself, published on the subject of sanctification. We established a periodical, The Oberlin Evangelist, and afterwards, The Oberlin Quarterly, in which we disabused the public, in a great measure, in regard to what our real views were. In 1846, I published two volumes on Systematic Theology; and in this work I discussed the subject of entire sanctification, more at large. After this work was published, it was reviewed by a committee of the Presbytery of Troy, New York. Then Dr. Hodge of Princeton, published, in the Biblical Repertory, a lengthy criticism upon my theology. This was from the old school standpoint. Then Dr. Duffield, of the New School Presbyterian church, living at Detroit, reviewed me, professedly from the new school standpoint, though his review was far enough from consistent new- schoolism. To these different reviews, as they appeared, I published replies; and for many years past, so far as I am aware, no disposition has been shown to impugn our orthodoxy.

I have thus far narrated the principal facts connected with the establishment and struggles of the school at Oberlin, so far as I have been concerned with them. And being the professor of theology, the theological opposition was directed, of course, principally toward myself; which has led me, of necessity, to speak more freely of my relations to it all, than I otherwise should have done. But let me not be misunderstood. I am not contending that the brethren who thus opposed, were wicked in their opposition. No doubt the great mass of them were really misled, and acted according to their views of right, as they then understood it.

I must say, for the honor of the grace of God, that none of the opposition that we met with, ruffled our spirits here, or disturbed us, in such a sense as to provoke us into a spirit of controversy or ill feeling. We were well aware of the pains that had been taken to lead to these misapprehensions, and could easily understand how it was, that we were opposed in the spirit and manner in which we were assailed.

During these years of smoke and dust, of misapprehension and opposition from without, the Lord was blessing us richly within. We not only prospered in our own souls here, as a church, but we had a continuous revival, or were, in what might properly be regarded as a revival state. Our students were converted by scores; and the Lord overshadowed us continually with the cloud of His mercy. Gales of divine influence swept over us from year to year, producing abundantly the fruits of the Spirit love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

I have always attributed our success in this good work entirely to the grace of God. It was no wisdom or goodness of our own that has achieved this success. Nothing but continued divine influence, pervading the community, sustained us under our trials, and kept us in an attitude of

mind in which we could be efficient in the work we had undertaken. We have always felt that if the Lord withheld His Spirit, no outward circumstances could make us truly prosperous.

We have had trials among ourselves. Frequent subjects of public discussion have come up; and we have sometimes spent days, and even weeks, in discussing great questions of duty and expediency, on which we have not thought alike. But these questions have none of them permanently divided us. Our principle has been to accord to each other the right of private judgment. We have generally come to a substantial agreement on subjects upon which we had differed; and when we have found ourselves unable to see alike, the minority have submitted themselves to the judgment of the majority, and the idea of rending the church to pieces, because in some things we could not see alike, has never been entertained by us. We have to a very great extent preserved the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; and perhaps no community has existed for such a length of time, and passed through such trials and changes as we have, that has on the whole maintained a greater spirit of harmony, Christian forbearance, and brotherly love.

When the question of entire sanctification first came up here for public discussion, and when the subject first attracted the general attention of the church, we were in the midst of a powerful revival. When the revival was going on hopefully, one day President Mahan had been preaching a searching discourse. I observed in the course of his preaching that he had left one point untouched, that appeared to me of great importance in that connection. He would often ask me, when he closed his sermon, if I had any remarks to make, and thus he did on this occasion. I arose and pressed the point that he had omitted. It was the distinction between desire and will. From the course of thought he had presented, and from the attitude in which I saw that the congregation was at the time, I saw, or thought I saw, that the pressing of that distinction, just at that point, upon the people, would throw much light upon the question whether they were really Christians or not, whether they were really consecrated persons, or whether they merely had desires without being in fact willing to obey God.

When this distinction was made clear, just in that connection, I recollect the Holy Spirit fell upon the congregation in a most remarkable manner. A large number of persons dropped down their heads, and some groaned so that they could be heard throughout the house. It cut up the false hopes of deceived professors on every side. Several arose on the spot, and said that they had been deceived, and that they could see wherein; and this was carried to such an extent as greatly astonished me, and indeed produced a general feeling of astonishment, I think, in the congregation.

The work went on with power; and old professors obtained new hopes, or were reconverted, in such numbers, that a very great and important change came over the whole community. President Mahan had been greatly blessed, among others, with some of our professors. He came manifestly into an entirely new form of Christian experience, at that time.

In a meeting a few days after this, one of our theological students arose, and put the inquiry, whether the Gospel did not provide for Christians, all the conditions of an established faith, and hope, and love; whether there was not something better and higher than Christians had generally experienced; in short, whether sanctification was not attainable in this life; that is, sanctification in such a sense that Christians could have unbroken peace, and not come into condemnation, or have the feeling of condemnation or a consciousness of sin. Brother Mahan immediately

answered, "Yes." What occurred at this meeting, brought the question of sanctification prominently before us, as a practical question. We had no theories on the subject, no philosophy to maintain, but simply took it up as a Bible question.

In this form it existed among us, as an experimental truth, which we did not attempt to reduce to a theological formula; nor did we attempt to explain its philosophy, until years afterwards. But the discussion of this question was a great blessing to us, and to a great number of our students, who are now scattered in various parts of the country, or have gone abroad as missionaries to different parts of the world.

02.25. LABORS IN BOSTON & PROVIDENCE

CHAPTER XXV.

LABORS IN BOSTON AND PROVIDENCE.

BEFORE I return to my revival record, in order to give some idea of the relation of things, I must dwell a little more upon the progress of the anti-slavery, or abolition movement, not only at Oberlin, but elsewhere, as connected with my own labors. I have spoken of the state of public feeling, on this subject, all around us, and have mentioned that even the legislature of the state, at that time democratic, endeavored to find some pretext for repealing our charter, because of our anti-slavery sentiments and action. It was at first reported on every side of us, that we intended to encourage marriage between colored and white students, and even to compel them to intermarry; and that our object was to introduce a universal system of miscegenation. A little fact will illustrate the feeling that existed among many people in the neighborhood. I had occasion to ride out a few miles, soon after we came, and called upon a farmer on some errand. He looked very sullen and suspicious, when he found who I was, and from whence I came; and intimated to me that he did not want to have anything to do with the people of Oberlin; that our object was to introduce amalgamation of the races, and compel the white and colored students to intermarry; that we also intended to bring about the union of church and state, and that our ideas and projects were altogether revolutionary and abominable. He was quite in earnest about this. But the thing was so ridiculous, that I knew that if I attempted a serious answer, I should laugh him in the face.

We had reason, at an early day, for apprehension that a mob from a neighboring town would come and destroy our buildings. But we had not been here long, before circumstances occurred that created a reaction in the public mind. This place became one of the points on the underground railroad, as it has since been called, where escaped slaves, on their way to Canada, would take refuge for a day or two, until the way was open for them to proceed. Several cases occurred in which these fugitives were pursued by slave holders; and a hue and cry was raised, not only in this neighborhood, but in the neighboring towns, by their attempting to carry the slaves back into slavery. Slave catchers found no practical sympathy among the people; and scenes like these soon aroused public feeling in the towns around about, and began to produce a reaction. It set the farmers and people around us, to study more particularly into our aims and views, and our school soon became known and appreciated; and it has resulted in a state of universal confidence and good feeling, between Oberlin and the surrounding region.

In the meantime, the excitement on the subject of slavery was greatly agitating the Eastern cities, as well as the West and the South. Our friend, Mr. Willard Sears, of Boston, was braving a tempest of opposition there. And in order to open the way for a free discussion on that subject in Boston, and for the establishment of religious worship, where a pulpit should be open to the free discussion of all great questions of reform, he had purchased the Marlborough hotel on Washington street, and had connected with it a large chapel for public worship, and for reform meetings, that could not find an entrance anywhere else. This he had done at great expense. In

1842, I was strongly urged to go and occupy the Marlborough chapel, and preach for a few months. I went and began my labors, and preached with all my might for two months. The Spirit of the Lord was immediately poured out, and there was a general agitation among the dry bones. I was visited at my room almost constantly, during every day of the week, by inquirers from all parts of the city, and many were obtaining hopes from day to day.

At this time Elder Knapp, the well known Baptist revivalist, was laboring in Providence, but under much opposition. He was invited by the Baptist brethren at Boston to come and labor there. He therefore left Providence and came to Boston. At the same time, Mr. Josiah Chapin and many others, were insisting very strongly upon my coming and holding meetings in Providence. I felt very much indebted to Mr. Chapin for what he had done for Oberlin, and for myself personally. It was a great trial for me to leave Boston, at this time. However, after seeing brother Knapp and informing him of the state of things, I left and went to Providence. This was the time of the great revival in Boston. It prevailed wonderfully, especially among the Baptists, and more or less throughout the city. The Baptist ministers took hold with Brother Knapp, and many Congregational brethren were greatly blessed, and the work was very extensive.

In the meantime, I commenced my labors in Providence. The work began almost immediately, and the interest visibly increased from day to day. There were many striking cases of conversion; among them was an elderly gentleman whose name I do not recollect. His father had been a Judge of the supreme court in Massachusetts, if I mistake not, many years before. This old gentleman lived not far from the church where I was holding my meetings, in High street. After the work had gone on for some time, I observed a very venerable looking gentleman come into meeting, who paid very strict attention to the preaching. My friend, Mr. Chapin, immediately noticed him; and informed me who he was, and what his religious views were. He said he had never been in the habit of attending religious meetings; and he expressed a very great interest in the man, and in the fact that he had been drawn out to meeting. I observed that he continued, night after night, to come; and could easily perceive, as I thought, that his mind was very much agitated, and deeply interested on the question of religion.

One evening as I came to the close of my sermon, this venerable looking man rose up, and asked if he might address a few words to the people. I replied in the affirmative. He then spoke in substance as follows: "My friends and neighbors, you are probably surprised to see me attend these meetings. You have known my skeptical views, and that I have not been in the habit of attending religious meetings, for a long time. But hearing of the state of things in this congregation, I came in here; and I wish to have my friends and neighbors know that I believe that the preaching we are hearing, from night to night, is the Gospel. I have altered my mind," said he. "I believe this is the truth, and the true way of salvation. I say this," he added, "that you may understand my real motive for coming here; that it is not to criticize and find fault, but to attend to the great question of salvation, and to encourage others to attend to it." He said this with much emotion, and sat down.

There was a very large Sabbath school room in the basement of the church. The number of inquirers had become too large, and the congregation too much crowded, to call the inquirers forward, as I had done in some places; and I therefore requested them to go down, after the blessing was pronounced, to the lecture room below. The room was nearly as large as the whole audience room of the church, and would seat nearly as many, aside from the gallery. The work

increased, and spread in every part of the city, until the number of inquirers became so great, together with the young converts, who were always ready to go below with them, as nearly or quite to fill that large room. From night to night, after preaching, that room would be filled with rejoicing young converts, and trembling, inquiring sinners. This state of things continued for two months. I was then, as I thought, completely tired out; having labored incessantly for four months, two in Boston, and two in Providence. Beside, the time of year had come, or nearly come, for opening of our spring term in Oberlin. I therefore took my leave of Providence, and started for home.

There was one circumstance which occurred in Boston, that I think it my duty to relate. A Unitarian woman had been converted in Boston, who was an acquaintance of the Rev. Dr. C. Hearing of her conversion, Dr. C, as she informed me, sent for her to visit him, as he was in feeble health, and could not well call on her. She complied with his request, and he wished her to tell him the exercises of her mind, and her Christian experience, and the circumstances of her conversion. She did so, and the doctor manifested a great interest in her change of mind; and inquired of her if she had anything that I had written and published, that he could read. She told him that she had a little work of mine, which had been published, on the subject of sanctification. He borrowed it, and told her that he would read it; and if she would call again in a week, he should be happy to have farther conversation with her. At the close of the week, she returned for her book, and the doctor said, "I am very much interested in this book, and in the views that are here set forth. I understand," said he, "that the orthodox object to this view of sanctification, as it is presented by Mr. Finney; but I cannot see, if Christ is divine and truly God, why this view should be objected to; nor can I see any inconsistency, in holding this as a part of the orthodox faith. Yet I should like to see Mr. Finney. Cannot you persuade him to call on me? for I cannot go and see him." She called at my lodgings; but I had left Boston for Providence. After an absence of two months, I was again in Boston, and this lady called immediately to see me, and gave me the information which I have related. But he had then gone into the country, on account of his health. I greatly regretted not having an opportunity to see him. But he died shortly after, and of his subsequent religious history I know nothing. Nor can I vouch for the truth of what this lady said. She was manifestly honest in her communication; and I had no doubt that every word she told me was true. But she was a stranger to me, and I cannot recollect her name at this distance of time. The next time I met Dr. Beecher, Dr. C’s name was mentioned, and I related to him this fact. The tears started in his eyes, in a moment, and he said with much emotion, "I guess he has gone to heaven!"

02.26. REVIVAL IN ROCHESTER IN 1842

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REVIVAL IN ROCHESTER IN 1842.

AFTER resting a day or two in Boston, I left for home. Being very weary with labor and travel, I called on a friend at Rochester, to take a day's rest before proceeding farther. As soon as it was known that I was in Rochester, Judge G called on me, and with much earnestness, requested me to stop and preach. Some of the ministers also, insisted upon my stopping, and preaching for them. I informed them that I was worn out, and the time had come for me to be at home. However, they were very urgent, and especially one of the ministers, whose wife was one of my spiritual daughters, the Sarah B, of whom I have spoken, as having been converted in Western. I finally consented to stop, and preach a sermon or two, and did so. But this brought upon me a more importunate invitation, to remain and hold a series of meetings. I decided to remain and, though wearied, went on with the work.

Mr. George S. Boardman was pastor of what was then called, the Bethel, or Washington street church; and Mr. Shaw, of the Second or Brick church. Mr. Shaw was very anxious to unite with Mr. Boardman, and have the meetings at their churches alternately. Mr. Boardman was indisposed to take this course, saying that his congregation was weak, and needed the concentration of my labors at that point. I regretted this; but still I could not overrule it, and went on with my labors at the Bethel, or Washington street church. Soon after, Dr. Shaw secured the labors of Rev. Jedediah Burchard in his church, and undertook a protracted effort there.

In the meantime, Judge G had united with other members of the bar, in a written request to me, to preach a course of sermons to lawyers, adapted to their ways of thinking. Judge G was then one of the judges of the court of appeals in the state, and held a very high place in the estimation of the whole profession. I consented to deliver the course of lectures. I was aware of the half-skeptical state of mind in which those members of the bar were, many of them at least, who were still unconverted. There was still left in the city, a goodly number of pious lawyers, who had been converted in the revival of 1830 and 31.

I began my course of lectures to lawyers, by asking this question: Do we know anything? and followed up the inquiry by lecturing, evening after evening. My congregation became very select. Brother Burchard's meetings opened an interesting place for one class of the community, and made more room for the lawyers, and those especially attracted by my course of lectures, in the house where I was preaching. It was completely filled, every night. As I proceeded in my lectures, from night to night, I observed the interest constantly deepening.

As Judge G's wife was a particular friend of mine, I had occasion to see him not unfrequently, and was very sure that the Word was getting a strong hold of him. He remarked to me after I had delivered several lectures, "Mr. Finney, you have cleared the ground to my satisfaction, thus far; but when you come to the question of the endless punishment of the wicked, you will slip up; you

will fail to convince us on that question." I replied, "Wait and see, Judge." This hint made me the more careful, when I came to that point, to discuss it with all thoroughness. The next day I met him, and he volunteered the remark at once, "Mr. Finney, I am convinced. Your dealing with that subject was a success; nothing can be said against it." The manner in which he said this, indicated that the subject had not merely convinced his intellect, but had deeply impressed him.

I was going on from night to night, but had not thought my somewhat new and select audience yet prepared for me to call for any decision, on the part of inquirers. But I had arrived at a point where I thought it was time to draw the net ashore. I had been carefully laying it around the whole mass of lawyers, and hedging them in, as I supposed, by a train of reasoning that they could not resist. I was aware that lawyers are accustomed to listen to argument, to feel the weight of a logically presented truth; and had no doubt that the great majority of them were thoroughly convinced, as far as I had gone; consequently I had prepared a discourse, which I intended should bring them to the point, and if it appeared to take effect, I intended to call on them to commit themselves.

Judge G, at the time I was there before, when his wife was converted, had opposed the anxious seat. I expected he would do so again, as I knew he had strongly committed himself, in what he had said, against the use of the anxious seat. When I came to preach the sermon of which I have spoken, I observed that Judge G was not in the seat he had usually occupied; and on looking around I could not see him anywhere among the members of the bar or the judges. I felt concerned about this, for I had prepared myself with reference to his case. I knew his influence was great, and that if he would take a decided stand, it would have a very great influence upon all the legal profession in the city. However I soon observed that he had come into the gallery, and had found a seat just at the head of the gallery stairs, where he sat wrapped in his cloak. I went on with my discourse; but near the close of what I designed to say, I observed that Judge G had gone from his seat. I felt distressed, for I concluded that, as it was cold where he sat, and perhaps there was some confusion, it being near the head of the stairs, he had gone home; and hence that the sermon which I had prepared with my eye upon him, had failed of its effect.

From the basement room of the church, there was a narrow stairway into the audience room above, coming up just by the side of, and partly behind, the pulpit. Just as I was drawing my sermon to a close, and with my heart almost sinking with the fear that I was to fail, in what I had hoped to secure that night, I felt someone pulling at the skirt of my coat. I looked around, and there was Judge G. He had gone down through the basement room, and up those narrow stairs, and crept up the pulpit steps, far enough to reach me, and pull me by the coat. When I turned around to him, and beheld him with great surprise, he said to me, "Mr. Finney, won’t you pray for me by name and I will take the anxious seat." I had said nothing about an anxious seat at all. The congregation had observed this movement on the part of Judge G, as he came up on the pulpit stairs; and when I announced to them what he said, it produced a wonderful shock. There was a great gush of feeling, in every part of the house. Many held down their heads and wept; others seemed to be engaged in earnest prayer. He crowded around in front of the pulpit, and knelt immediately down. The lawyers arose almost en masse, and crowded into the aisles, and filled the open space in front, wherever they could get a place to kneel. The movement had begun without my requesting it; but I then publicly invited any, who were prepared to renounce their sins, and give their hearts to God, and to accept Christ and His salvation, to come forward, into the aisles, or wherever they could, and kneel down. There was a mighty movement. We prayed, and then I

dismissed the meeting.

As I had been preaching every night, and could not give up an evening to a meeting of inquiry, I appointed a meeting for the instruction of inquirers, the next day at two o'clock, in the basement of the church. When I went, I was surprised to find the room nearly full, and that the audience was composed almost exclusively of the more prominent citizens. This meeting I continued from day to day, having an opportunity to converse freely, with great numbers; and they were as teachable as children. I never attended a more interesting and affecting meeting of inquiry, I think, than that. A large number of the lawyers were converted, Judge G, I might say, at their head; as he had taken the lead in coming out on the side of Christ.

I remained there, at that time, two months. The revival became wonderfully interesting and powerful, and resulted in the conversion of great numbers. It took a powerful hold in one of the Episcopal churches, St. Luke's, of which Dr. Whitehouse, the present bishop of Illinois, was pastor. When I was in Reading, Pa., several years before, Dr. Whitehouse was preaching to an Episcopal congregation in that city; and, as one of his most intelligent ladies informed me, was greatly blessed in his soul, in that revival. When I came to Rochester, in 1830, he was the pastor of St. Luke's; and, as I was informed, encouraged his people to attend our meetings, and I was told that many of them, were at that time, converted. So also in this revival, in 1842, I was informed that he encouraged his people, and advised them to attend the meetings. He was himself a very successful pastor, and had great influence in Rochester. I have been informed that in this revival, in 1842, not less than seventy, and those almost all among the principal people of his congregation, were converted, and confirmed in his church.

One striking incident I must mention. I had insisted much, in my instructions, upon entire consecration to God, giving up all to him, body, and soul, and possessions, and everything, to be forever thereafter used for his glory, as a condition of acceptance with God. As was my custom in revivals, I made this as prominent as I well could. One day as I went into meeting, one of the lawyers with whom I had formed some acquaintance and who had been in deep anxiety of mind, I found waiting at the door of the church. As I went in, he took out of his pocket a paper, and handed me, remarking, "I deliver this to you as the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." I put it in my pocket until after meeting. On examining it, I found it to be a quit-claim deed, made out in regular order, and executed ready for delivery, in which he quit-claimed to the Lord Jesus Christ, all ownership of himself, and of everything he possessed. The deed was in due form, with all the peculiarities and formalities of such conveyances. I think I have it still among my papers. He appeared to be in solemn earnest, and so far as I could see, was entirely intelligent in what he did. But I must not go farther into particulars.

As it regards the means used in this revival, I would say, that the doctrines preached were those that I always preached, everywhere. The moral government of God was made prominent; and the necessity of an unqualified and universal acceptance of God's will, as a rule of life; the acceptance by faith, of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, and in all His official relations and work; and the sanctification of the soul through or by the truth, these and kindred doctrines were dwelt upon as time would permit, and as the necessities of the people seemed to require.

The measures were simply preaching the Gospel, and abundant prayer, in private, in social circles, and in public prayer meetings; much stress being always laid upon prayer as an essential

means of promoting the revival. Sinners were not encouraged to expect the Holy Ghost to convert them, while they were passive; and never told to wait God's time, but were taught, unequivocally, that their first and immediate duty was, to submit themselves to God, to renounce their own will, their own way, and themselves, and instantly to deliver up all that they were, and all that they had, to their rightful owner, the Lord Jesus Christ. They were taught here, as everywhere in those revivals, that the only obstacle in the way was their own stubborn will; that God was trying to gain their unqualified consent to give up their sins, and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their righteousness and salvation. The point was frequently urged upon them to give their consent; and they were told that the only difficulty was, to get their own honest and earnest consent to the terms upon which Christ would save them, and the lowest terms upon which they possibly could be saved.

Meetings of inquiry were held, for the purpose of adapting instruction to those who were in different stages of conviction; and after conversing with them, as long as I had time and strength, I was in the habit of summing up at last, and taking up representative cases, and meeting all their objections, answering all their questions, correcting their errors, and pursuing such a course of remark, as was calculated to strip them of every excuse, and bring them face to face with the great question of present, unqualified, universal acceptance of the will of God in Christ Jesus. Faith in God, and God in Christ, was ever made prominent. They were informed that this faith is not a mere intellectual assent, but is the consent or trust of the heart, a voluntary, intelligent trust in God, as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of the justice of endless punishment was fully insisted upon; and not only its justice, but the certainty that sinners will be endlessly punished, if they die in their sins, was strongly held forth. On all these points the Gospel was so presented as to give forth no uncertain sound. This was at least my constant aim, and the aim of all who gave instructions. The nature of the sinner's dependence upon divine influence, was explained, and enforced, and made prominent. Sinners were taught that, without the divine teaching and influence, it is certain, from their depraved state, that they never would be reconciled to God; and yet that their want of reconciliation was simply their own hardness of heart, or the stubbornness of their own wills, so that their dependence upon the Spirit of God is no excuse for their not being Christians at once. These points that I have noticed, and others which logically flow from them, were held forth in every aspect, so far as time would permit.

Sinners were never taught, in those revivals, that they needed to expect conversion, in answer to their own prayers. They were told that if they regarded iniquity in their hearts, the Lord would not hear them; and that while they remained impenitent, they did regard iniquity in their hearts. I do not mean that they were exhorted not to pray. They were informed that God required them to pray, but to pray in faith, to pray in the spirit of repentance; and that when they asked God to forgive them, they were to commit themselves unalterably to His will. They were taught, expressly, that mere impenitent and unbelieving prayer, is an abomination to God; but that if they were truly disposed to offer acceptable prayer to God, they could do it; for that there was nothing but their own obstinacy in the way of their offering acceptable prayer at once. They were never left to think that they could do their duty in any respect, could perform any duty whatever, unless they gave their hearts to God. To repent, to believe, to submit, as inward acts of the mind, were the first duties to be performed; and until these were performed, no outward act whatever was doing their duty. That for

them to pray for a new heart, while they did not give themselves up to God, was to tempt God; that to pray for forgiveness until they truly repented, was to insult God, and to ask Him to do what He had no right to do; that to pray in unbelief, was to charge God with lying, instead of doing their duty; and that all their unbelief was nothing but a blasphemous charging of God with lying. In short, pains were taken to shut the sinner up to accepting Christ, His whole will, atonement, official work and official relations, cordially, and with fixed purpose of heart, renouncing all sin, all excuse-making, all unbelief, all hardness of heart, and every wicked thing, in heart, and life, here, and now, and forever.

I have always been particularly interested in the salvation of lawyers, and of all men of the legal profession. To that profession I was myself educated. I understood pretty well their habits of reading and thinking, and knew that they were more certainly controlled by argument, by evidence, and by logical statements, than any other class of men. I have always found, wherever I have labored, that when the Gospel was properly presented, they were the most accessible class of men; and I believe it is true that, in proportion to their relative number, in any community, more have been converted, than of any other class. I have been particularly struck with this, in the manner in which a clear presentation of the Law and of the Gospel of God, will carry the intelligence of judges, men who are in the habit of sitting and hearing testimony, and weighing arguments on both sides. I have never, to my recollection, seen a case, in which judges were not convinced of the truth of the Gospel, where they have attended meetings, in the revivals which I have witnessed. I have often been very much affected, in conversing with members of the legal profession, by the manner in which they would consent to propositions, to which persons of ill-disciplined minds would have objected.

There was one of the judges of the court of appeals, living in Rochester, who seemed to be possessed of a chronic skepticism. He was a reader and a thinker, a man of great refinement, and of great intellectual honesty. His wife, having experienced religion under my ministry, was a particular friend of mine. I have had very thorough conversation with that man. He always freely confessed to me that the arguments were conclusive, and that his intellect was worried, by the preaching and the conversation. He said to me, "Mr. Finney, you always in your public discourses carry me right along with you; but while I assent to the truth of all that you say, I do not feel right; somehow my heart does not respond." He was one of the loveliest of unconverted men, and it was both a grief and a pleasure to converse with him. His candor and intelligence made conversation with him, on religious subjects, a great pleasure; but his chronic unbelief rendered it exceedingly painful. I have conversed with him more than once, when his whole mind seemed to be agitated to its lowest depths. And yet, so far as I know, he has never been converted. His praying and idolized wife has gone to her grave. His only child, a son, was drowned before his eyes. After these calamities had befallen him, I wrote him a letter, referring to some conversations I had with him, and trying to win him to a source from which he could get consolation. He replied in all kindness; but dwelling upon his loss, he said, there could be no consolation that could meet a case like that. He was truly blind to all the consolation he could find in Christ. He could not conceive how he could ever accept this dispensation, and be happy. He has lived in Rochester, through one great revival after another; and although his mouth was shut, so that he had no excuse to make, and no refuge to which he could betake himself, still so far as I know, he has mysteriously remained in unbelief. I have mentioned his case, as an illustration of the manner in which the intelligence of the

legal profession can be carried, by the force of truth. When I come to speak of the next revival in Rochester, in which I had a share, I shall have occasion to mention other instances that will illustrate the same point.

Several of the lawyers that were at this time converted in Rochester, gave up their profession and went into the ministry. Among these was one of Chancellor W's sons, at that time a young lawyer in Rochester, and who appeared at the time to be soundly converted. For some reason, with which I am not acquainted, he went to Europe and to Rome, and finally became a Roman Catholic priest. He has been for years laboring zealously to promote revivals of religion among them, holding protracted meetings; and, as he told me himself, when I met him in England, trying to accomplish in the Roman Catholic church what I was endeavoring to accomplish in the Protestant church. Mr. W seems to be an earnest minister of Christ, given up, heart and soul, to the salvation of Roman Catholics. How far he agrees with all their views, I cannot say. When I was in England, he was there, and sought me out, and came very affectionately to see me; and we had just as pleasant an interview, so far as I know, as we should have had, if we had both been Protestants. He said nothing of his peculiar views, but only that he was laboring among the Roman Catholics, to promote revivals of religion. Many ministers have been the fruits of the great revivals in Rochester.

It was a fact that often greatly interested me, when laboring in that city, that lawyers would come to my room, when they were pressed hard, and were on the point of submission, for conversation and light, on some point which they did not clearly apprehend; and I observed, again and again, that when those points were cleared up, they were ready at once to submit. Indeed, as a general thing, they take a more intelligent view of the whole plan of salvation, than any other class of men to whom I have ever preached, or with whom I have ever conversed.

Very many physicians have also been converted, in the great revivals which I have witnessed. I think their studies incline them to skepticism, or to a form of materialism. Yet they are intelligent; and if the Gospel is thoroughly set before them, stripped of those peculiar features which are embodied in hyper-Calvinism, they are easily convinced, and as readily converted, as any other class of the people. Their studies, as a general thing, have not prepared them so readily to apprehend the moral government of God, as those of the legal profession. But still I have found them open to conviction, and by no means a difficult class of persons to deal with, upon the great question of salvation.

I have everywhere found, that the peculiarities of hyper-Calvinism have been a great stumbling block, both of the church and of the world. A nature sinful in itself, a total inability to accept Christ, and to obey God, condemnation to eternal death for the sin of Adam, and for a sinful nature, and all the kindred and resultant dogmas of that peculiar school, have been the stumbling block of believers and the ruin of sinners.

Universalism, Unitarianism, and indeed all forms of fundamental error, have given way and fallen out of sight in the presence of great revivals. I have learned, again and again, that a man needs only to be thoroughly convicted of sin by the Holy Ghost, to give up at once and forever, and gladly give up, Universalism and Unitarianism. When I speak of the next great revival in Rochester, I shall have occasion to speak more fully of the manner in which skeptics, if a right course is taken with them, are sometimes shut up to condemnation, by their own irresistible convictions; so that they will rejoice to find a door of mercy opened through the revelations that are made in the

Scriptures. But this I leave to be introduced in the proper order.

02.27. ANOTHER WINTER IN BOSTON

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANOTHER WINTER IN BOSTON.

IN the fall of 1843, I was called again to Boston. At my last visit there, it was the time of the greatest excitement in Boston, on the subject of the second advent of Christ. Mr. Miller, who was at the head of the movement, was there lecturing, and was holding daily Bible classes, in which he was giving instruction, and inculcating his peculiar views; and his teaching led to intense excitement, involving much that was wild and irrational. I attended Mr. Miller's Bible class once or twice; after which I invited him to my room, and tried to convince him that he was in error. I called his attention to the construction which he put on the prophecies; and, as I thought, showed him that he was entirely mistaken, in some of his fundamental views. He replied, that I had adopted a course of investigation that would detect his errors, if he had any. I tried to show him that his fundamental error was already detected.

The last time that I had attended his Bible class, he was inculcating the doctrine that Christ would come personally, and destroy his enemies, in 1843. He gave what he called an exposition of the prophecy of Daniel, on the subject. He said, the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that rolled down and destroyed the image there spoken of, was Christ. When he came to my room I called his attention to the fact, that the prophet affirmed expressly that the stone was not Christ, but the kingdom of God; and that the prophet there represented the church, or the kingdom of God, as demolishing the image. This was so plain, that Mr. Miller was obliged to acknowledge that was indeed a fact; and that it was not Christ that was going to destroy those nations, but the kingdom of God. I then asked him if he supposed that the kingdom of God would destroy those nations, in the sense in which he taught that they would be destroyed, with the sword, or with making war upon them? He said, no, he could not believe that. I then inquired, "Is it not the overthrow of the governments that is intended, instead of the destruction of the people? And is not this to be done, by the influence of the church of God, in enlightening their minds by the Gospel? And if this is the meaning, where is the foundation for your teaching, that, at a certain time, Christ is coming in person to destroy all the peoples of the earth?" I said to him, "Now this is fundamental to your teaching. This is the great point to which you call attention in your classes; and here is a manifest error, the very words of the prophet teaching the direct opposite to what you teach." But it was vain to reason with him, and his followers, at that time. Believing, as they most certainly did, that the advent of Christ was at hand, it was no wonder that they were too wild with excitement, to be reasoned with to any purpose.

When I arrived there, in the fall of 1843, I found that particular form of excitement had blown over; but many forms of error prevailed among the people. Indeed I have found that to be true of Boston, of which Dr. Beecher assured me, the first winter that I labored there. He said to me, "Mr. Finney, you cannot labor here as you do anywhere else. You have got to pursue a different course of instruction, and begin at the foundation; for Unitarianism is a system of denials, and under its

teaching, the foundations of Christianity are fallen away. You cannot take anything for granted; for the Unitarians and the Universalists have destroyed the foundations, and the people are all afloat. The masses have no settled opinions, and every 'lo here,' or 'lo there,' finds a hearing; and almost any conceivable form of error may get a footing."

I have since found this to be true, to a greater extent than in any other field, in which I have ever labored. The mass of the people in Boston, are more unsettled in their religious convictions, than in any other place that I have ever labored in, notwithstanding their intelligence; for they are surely a very intelligent people, on all questions but that of religion. It is extremely difficult to make religious truths lodge in their minds, because the influence of Unitarian teaching has been, to lead them to call in question all the principal doctrines of the Bible. Their system is one of denials. Their theology is negative. They deny almost everything, and affirm almost nothing. In such a field, error finds the ears of the people open; and the most irrational views, on religious subjects, come to be held by a great many people.

I began my labors in the Marlborough chapel at this time, and found there a very singular state of things. A church had been formed, composed greatly of radicals; and most of the members held extreme views, on various subjects. They had come out from other orthodox churches, and united in a church of their own, at Marlborough chapel. They were staunch, and many of them consistent, reformers, They were good people; but I cannot say that they were a united people. Their extreme views seemed to be an element of mutual repellence among them. Some of them were extreme non-resistance, and held it to be wrong to use any physical force, or any physical means whatever, even in controlling their own children. Everything must be done by moral suasion. Upon the whole, however, they were a praying, earnest, Christian people. I found no particular difficulty in getting along with them; but at that time the Miller excitement, and various other causes, had been operating to beget a good deal of confusion among them. They were not at all in a prosperous state, as a church.

A young man by the name of S had risen up among them, who professed to be a prophet. I had many conversations with him, and tried to convince him that he was all wrong; and I labored with his followers, to try to make them see that he was wrong. However, I found it impossible to do anything with him, or with them, until he finally committed himself on several points, and predicted that certain things would happen, at certain dates. One was that his father would die on a certain day. I then said to him: "Now we shall prove you. Now the truthfulness of your pretensions will be tested. If these things that you predict come to pass, and come to pass, as you say they will, at certain times, then we shall have reason to believe that you are a prophet. But if they do not come to pass, it will prove that you are deceived." This he could not deny. As the good providence of God would have it, these predictions related to events, but a few weeks from the time the predictions were uttered. He had staked his reputation as a prophet, upon the truth of these predictions, and awaited their fulfillment. Of course they every one of them failed, and he failed with them; I never heard anything more of his predictions. But he had confused a good many minds, and really neutralized their efforts; and I am not aware that those who were his followers, ever regained their former influence as Christians.

During this winter, the Lord gave my own soul a very thorough overhauling, and a fresh baptism of His Spirit. I boarded at the Marlborough hotel, and my study and bedroom were in one corner of

the chapel building. My mind was greatly drawn out in prayer, for a long time; as indeed it always has been, when I have labored in Boston. I have been favored there, uniformly, with a great deal of the spirit of prayer. But this winter, in particular, my mind was exceedingly exercised on the question of personal holiness; and in respect to the state of the church, their want of power with God; the weakness of the orthodox churches in Boston, the weakness of their faith, and their want of power in the midst of such a community. The fact that they were making little or no progress in overcoming the errors of the city, greatly affected my mind.

I gave myself to a great deal of prayer. After my evening services, I would retire as early as I well could; but rose at four o'clock in the morning, because I could sleep no longer, and immediately went to the study, and engaged in prayer. And so deeply was my mind exercised, and so absorbed in prayer, that I frequently continued from the time I arose, at four o'clock, till the gong called to breakfast, at eight o'clock. My days were spent, so far as I could get time, in searching the Scriptures. I read nothing else, all that winter, but my Bible; and a great deal of it seemed new to me. Again the Lord took me, as it were, from Genesis to Revelation. He led me to see the connection of things, the promises, threatenings, the prophecies and their fulfillment; and indeed, the whole Scripture seemed to me all ablaze with light, and not only light, but it seemed as if God's Word was instinct with the very life of God.

After praying in this way for weeks and months, one morning while I was engaged in prayer, the thought occurred to me, what if, after all this divine teaching, my will is not carried, and this teaching takes effect only in my sensibility? May it not be that my sensibility is affected, by these revelations from reading the Bible, and that my heart is not really subdued by them? At this point several passages of scripture occurred to me, much as this: "Line must be upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, that they might go and fall backward, and be snared and taken." The thought that I might be deceiving myself, when it first occurred to me, stung me almost like an adder. It created a pang that I cannot describe. The passages of Scripture that occurred to me, in that direction, for a few moments greatly increased my distress. But directly I was enabled to fall back upon the perfect will of God. I said to the Lord, that if He saw it was wise and best, and that His honor demanded that I should be left to be deluded, and go down to hell, I accepted His will, and I said to Him, "Do with me as seemeth Thee good."

Just before this occurrence, I had a great struggle to consecrate myself to God, in a higher sense than I had ever before seen to be my duty, or conceived as possible. I had often before, laid my family all upon the altar of God, and left them to be disposed of at His discretion. But at this time that I now speak of, I had had a great struggle about giving up my wife to the will of God. She was in very feeble health, and it was very evident that she could not live long. I had never before seen so clearly, what was implied in laying her, and all that I possessed, upon the altar of God; and for hours I struggled upon my knees, to give her up unqualifiedly to the will of God. But I found myself unable to do it. I was so shocked and surprised at this, that I perspired profusely with agony. I struggled and prayed until I was exhausted, and found myself entirely unable to give her altogether up to God's will, in such a way as to make no objection to His disposing of her just as He pleased.

This troubled me much. I wrote to my wife, telling her what a struggle I had, and the concern that I had felt at not being willing to commit her, without reserve, to the perfect will of God. This was but

a very short time before I had this temptation, as it now seems to me to have been, of which I have spoken, when those passages of Scripture came up distressingly to my mind, and when the bitterness, almost of death seemed, for a few moments, to possess me, at the thought that my religion might be of the sensibility only, and that God's teaching might have taken effect only in my feeling. But as I said, I was enabled, after struggling for a few moments with this discouragement and bitterness, which I have since attributed to a fiery dart of Satan, to fall back, in a deeper sense than I had ever done before upon the infinitely blessed and perfect will of God. I then told the Lord that I had such confidence in Him, that I felt perfectly willing, to give myself, my wife and my family, all to be disposed of according to His own wisdom.

I then had a deeper view of what was implied in consecration to God, than ever before. I spent a long time upon my knees, in considering the matter all over, and giving up everything to the will of God; the interests of the church, the progress of religion, the conversion of the world, and the salvation or damnation of my own soul, as the will of God might decide. Indeed I recollect, that I went so far as to say to the Lord, with all my heart, that He might do anything with me or mine, to which His blessed will could consent; that I had such perfect confidence in His goodness and love, as to believe that He could consent to do nothing, to which I could object. I felt a kind of holy boldness, in telling Him to do with me just as seemed to Him good; that He could not do anything that was not perfectly wise and good; and therefore, I had the best of grounds for accepting whatever He could consel it to, in respect to me and mine. So deep and perfect a resting in the will of God, I had never before known.

What has appeared strange to me is this, that I could not get hold of my former hope; nor could I recollect, with any freshness, any of the former seasons of communion and divine assurance that I had experienced. I may say that I gave up my hope, and rested everything upon a new foundation. I mean, I gave up my hope from any past experience, and recollect telling the Lord, that I did not know whether He intended to save me or not. Nor did I feel concerned to know. I was willing to abide the event. I said that if I found that He kept me, and worked in me by His Spirit, and was preparing me for heaven, working holiness and eternal life in my soul, I should take it for granted that He intended to save me; that if, on the other hand, I found myself empty of divine strength and light and love, I should conclude that He saw it wise and expedient to send me to hell; and that in either event I would accept His will. My mind settled into a perfect stillness.

This was early in the morning; and through the whole of that day, I seemed to be in a state of perfect rest, body and soul. The question frequently arose in my mind, during the day, "Do you still adhere to your consecration, and abide in the will of God?" I said without hesitation, "Yes, I take nothing back. I have no reason for taking anything back; I went no farther in pledges and professions than was reasonable. I have no reason for taking anything back; I do not want to take anything back." The thought that I might be lost, did not distress me. Indeed, think as I might, during that whole day, I could not find in my mind the least fear, the least disturbing emotion. Nothing troubled me. I was neither elated nor depressed; I was neither, as I could see, joyful or sorrowful. My confidence in God was perfect, my acceptance of His will was perfect, and my mind was as calm as heaven.

Just at evening, the question arose in my mind, "What if God should send me to hell, what then?" "Why, I would not object to it." "But can He send a person to hell," was the next inquiry, "who

accepts His will, in the sense in which you do?" This inquiry was no sooner raised in my mind than settled. I said, "No, it is impossible. Hell could be no hell to me, if I accepted God's perfect will." This sprung a vein of joy in my mind, that kept developing more and more, for weeks and months, and indeed I may say, for years. For years my mind was too fall of joy to feel much exercised with anxiety on any subject. My prayer that had been so fervent, and protracted during so long a period, seemed all to run out into, "Thy will be done." It seemed as if my desires were all met. What I had been praying for, for myself, I had received in a way that I least expected. "Holiness to the Lord" seemed to be inscribed on all the exercises of my mind. I had such strong faith that God would accomplish all His perfect will, that I could not be careful about anything. The great anxieties about which my mind had been exercised, during my seasons of agonizing prayer, seemed to be set aside; so that for a long time, when I went to God, to commune with Him as I did very, very frequently I would fall on my knees, and find it impossible to ask for anything, with any earnestness, except that His will might be done in earth as it is done in heaven. My prayers were swallowed up in that; and I often found myself smiling, as it were, in the face of God, and saying that I did not want anything. I was very sure that He would accomplish all His wise and good pleasure; and with that my soul was entirely satisfied.

Here I lost that great struggle in which I had been engaged, for so long a time, and began to preach to the congregation, in accordance with this, my new and enlarged experience. There was a considerable number in the church, and that attended my preaching, who understood me; and they saw from my preaching what had been, and what was, passing in my mind. I presume the people were more sensible than I was myself, of the great change in my manner of preaching. Of course, my mind was too full of the subject to preach anything except a full and present salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At this time it seemed as if my soul was wedded to Christ, in a sense in which I had never had any thought or conception of before. The language of the Song of Solomon, was as natural to me as my breath. I thought I could understand well the state of mind he was in, when he wrote that song; and concluded then, as I have ever thought since, that song was unwritten by him, after he had been reclaimed from his great backsliding. I not only had all the freshness of my first love, but a vast accession to it. Indeed the Lord lifted me so much above anything that I had experienced before, and taught me so much of the meaning of the Bible, of Christ's relations, and power, and willingness, that I often found myself saying to Him, "I had not known or conceived that any such thing was true." I then realized what is meant by the saying, "that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." He did at that time teach me, indefinitely above all that I had ever asked or thought. I had no conception of the length and breadth, and height and depth, and efficiency of his grace.

It seemed then to me that that passage, "My grace is sufficient for thee," meant so much, that it was wonderful I had never understood it before. I found myself exclaiming, "Wonderful! Wonderful! Wonderful!" as these revelations were made to me. I could understand then what was meant by the prophet when he said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." I spent nearly all the remaining part of the winter, till I was obliged to return home, in instructing the people in regard to the fullness there is in Christ. But I found that I preached over the heads of the majority of the people. They did not understand me. There was, indeed, a goodly number that did; and they were wonderfully blessed in their souls,

and made more progress in the divine life, as I have reason to believe, than in all their lives before.

But the little church that was formed there was not composed of materials that could, to any considerable extent, work healthfully and efficiently together. The outside opposition to them was great. The mass even of professors of religion in the city, did not sympathize with them at all. The people of the churches generally were in no state to receive my views of sanctification; and although there were individuals in nearly all the churches, who were deeply interested and greatly blessed, yet as a general thing, the testimony that I bore was unintelligible to them.

Some of them could see where I was. One evening I recollect that Deacon P and Deacon S, after hearing my preaching, and seeing the effect upon the congregation, came up to me, after I came out of the pulpit, and said, "Why, you are a great way ahead of us in this city, and a great way ahead of our ministers. How can we get our ministers to come and hear these truths?" I replied, "I do not know. But I wish they could see things as I do; for it does seem to me infinitely important that there should be a higher standard of holiness in Boston." They seemed exceedingly anxious to have those truths laid before the people in general. They were good men, as the Boston people well know; but what pains they really took, to get their ministers and people to attend, I cannot say.

I labored that winter mostly for a revival of religion among Christians. The Lord prepared me to do so, by the great work He wrought in my own soul. Although I had much of the divine life working within me; yet, as I said, so far did what I experienced that winter, exceed all that I had before experienced, that at times I could not realize that I had ever before been truly in communion with God.

To be sure I had been, often and for a long time; and this I knew when I reflected upon it, and remembered through what I had so often passed. It appeared to me, that winter, that probably when we get to heaven, our views and joys, and holy exercises, will so far surpass anything that we have ever experienced in this life, that we shall be hardly able to recognize the fact that we had any religion, while in this world. I had in fact oftentimes experienced inexpressible joys, and very deep communion with God; but all this had fallen so into the shade, under my enlarged experience, that frequently I would tell the Lord that I had never before had any conception of the wonderful things revealed in His blessed Gospel, and the wonderful grace there is in Christ Jesus. This language, I knew when I reflected upon it, was comparative; but still all my former experiences, for the time, seemed to be sealed up, and almost lost sight of.

As the great excitement of that season subsided, and my mind became more calm, I saw more clearly the different steps of my Christian experience, and came to recognize the connection of things, as all wrought by God from beginning to end. But since then I have never had those great struggles, and long protracted seasons of agonizing prayer, that I had often experienced. It is quite another thing to prevail with God, in my own experience, from what it was before. I can come to God with more calmness, because with more perfect confidence. He enables me now to rest in Him, and let everything sink into His perfect will, with much more readiness, than ever before the experience of that winter.

I have felt since then a religious freedom, a religious buoyancy and delight in God, and in His Word, a steadiness of faith, a Christian liberty and overflowing love; this I had only experienced, I may say, occasionally before. I do not mean that such exercises had been rare to me before; for

they had been frequent and often repeated, but never abiding as they have been since. My bondage seemed to be, at that time, entirely broken; and since then, I have had the freedom of a child with a loving parent. It seems to me that I can find God within me, in such a sense, that I can rest upon Him and be quiet, lay my heart in his Hand, and nestle down in His perfect will, and have no carefulness or anxiety.

I speak of these exercises as habitual, since that period, but I cannot affirm that they have been altogether unbroken; for in 1860, during a period of sickness, I had a season of great depression, and wonderful humiliation. But the Lord brought me out of it, into an established peace and rest.

A few years after this season of refreshing, that beloved wife, of whom I have spoken, died. This was to me a great affliction. However, I did not feel any murmuring, or the least resistance to the will of God. I gave her up to God, without any resistance whatever, that I can recollect. But it was to me a great sorrow. The night after she died, I was lying in my room alone, and some Christian friends were sitting up in the parlor, and watching out the night. I had been asleep for a little while, and as I awoke, the thought of my bereavement flashed over my mind with such power! My wife was gone! I should never hear her speak again, nor see her face! Her children were motherless! What should I do? My brain seemed to reel, as if my mind would swing from its pivot. I rose instantly from my bed, exclaiming, I shall be deranged if I cannot rest in God The Lord soon calmed my mind, for that night; but still, at times, seasons of sorrow would come over me, that were almost overwhelming.

One day I was upon my knees, communing with God upon the subject, and all at once he seemed to say to me, "You loved your wife?" "Yes," I said. "Well, did you love her for her own sake, or for your sake? Did you love her, or yourself? If you loved her for her own sake, why do you sorrow that she is with Me? Should not her happiness with Me, make you rejoice instead of mourn, if you loved her for her own sake? Did you love her," He seemed to say to me, "for My sake? If you loved her for My sake, surely you would not grieve that she is with Me. Why do you think of your loss, and lay so much stress upon that, instead of thinking of her gain? Can you be sorrowful, when she is so joyful and happy? If you loved her for her own sake, would you not rejoice in her joy, and be happy in her happiness?"

I can never describe the feelings that came over me, when I seemed to be thus addressed. It produced an instantaneous change in the whole state of my mind. From that moment, sorrow, on account of my loss, was gone forever. I no longer thought of my wife as dead, but as alive, and in the midst of the glories of heaven. My faith was, at this time, so strong and my mind so enlightened, that it seemed as if I could enter into the very state of mind in which she was, in heaven; and if there is any such thing as communing with an absent spirit, or with one who is in heaven, I seemed to commune with her. Not that I ever supposed she was present in such a sense that I communed personally with her. But it seemed as if I knew what her state of mind was there, what profound, unbroken rest, in the perfect will of God. I could see that was heaven; and I experienced it in my own soul. I have never to this day, lost the blessing of these views. They frequently recur to me, as the very state of mind in which the inhabitants of heaven are, and I can see why they are in such a state of blessedness.

My wife had died in a heavenly frame of mind. Her rest in God was so perfect, that it seemed to me that, in leaving this world, she only entered into a fuller apprehension of the love and

faithfulness of God, so as to confirm and perfect forever, her trust in God, and her union with His will. These are experiences in which I have lived, a great deal, since that time. But in preaching, I have found that nowhere can I preach those truths, on which my own soul delights to live, and be understood, except it be by a very small number. I have never found that more than a very few, even of my own people, appreciate and receive those views of God and Christ, and the fullness of His free salvation, upon which my own soul still delights to feed. Everywhere, I am obliged to come down to where the people are, in order to make them understand me; and in every place where I have preached, for many years, I have found the churches in so low a state, as to be utterly incapable of apprehending and appreciating, what I regard as the most precious truths of the whole Gospel.

When preaching to impenitent sinners, I am obliged, of course, to go back to first principles. In my own experience, I have so long passed these outposts and first principles, that I cannot live upon those truths. I, however, have to preach them to the impenitent, to secure their conversion. When I preach the Gospel, I can preach the atonement, conversion, and many of the prominent views of the Gospel, that are appreciated and accepted, by those who are young in the religious life; and by those also, who have been long in the church of God, and have made very little advancement in the knowledge of Christ. But it is only now and then, that I find it really profitable to the people of God, to pour out to them the fullness that my own soul sees in Christ. In this place, there is a larger number of persons, by far, that understand me, and devour that class of truths, than I have found elsewhere; but even here, the majority of professors of religion, do not understandingly embrace those truths. They do not object, they do not oppose; and so far as they understand, they are convinced. But as a matter of experience, they are ignorant of the power of the highest and most precious truths of the Gospel of salvation, in Christ Jesus.

I said that this winter in Boston, was spent mostly in preaching to professed Christians, and that many of them were greatly blessed in their souls. I felt very confident that, unless the foundations could be relayed in some sense, and that unless the Christians in Boston took on a higher type of Christian living, they never could prevail against Unitarianism. I knew that the orthodox ministers had been preaching orthodoxy, as opposed to Unitarianism, for many years; and that all that could be accomplished by discussion, had been accomplished. But I felt that what Unitarians needed, was to see Christians live out the pure Gospel of Christ. They needed to hear them say, and prove what they said by their lives, that Jesus Christ was a divine Savior, and able to save them from all sin. Their professions of faith in Christ, did not accord with their experiences. They could not say that they found Christ in their experience, what they preached Him to be. There is needed the testimony of God’s living witnesses, the testimony of experience, to convince the Unitarians; and mere reasonings and arguments, however conclusive, will never overcome their errors and their prejudices.

The orthodox churches there, are too formal; they are in bondage to certain ways; they are afraid of measures, afraid to launch forth in all freedom, in the use of means to save souls. They have always seemed to me, to be in bondage in their prayers, in so much that what I call the spirit of prayer, I have seldom witnessed in Boston. The ministers and deacons of the churches, though good men, are afraid of what the Unitarians will say, if, in their measures to promote religion, they launch out in such a way as to wake the people up. Everything must be done in a certain way. The Holy Spirit is grieved by their yielding to such a bondage.

I have labored in Boston in five powerful revivals of religion; and I must express it as my sincere conviction, that the greatest difficulty in the way of overcoming Unitarianism, and all the forms of error there, is the timidity of Christians and churches. Knowing, as they do, that they are constantly exposed to the criticisms of the Unitarians, they have become over-cautious. Their faith has been depressed. And I do fear that the prevalence of Unitarianism and Universalism there, has kept them back from preaching, and holding forth the danger of the impenitent, as President Edwards presented it. The doctrine of endless punishment, the necessity of entire sanctification, or the giving up of all sin, as a condition of salvation; indeed the doctrines that are calculated to arouse men, are not, I fear, held forth with that frequency and power, that are indispensable to the salvation of that city.

The little church at the Marlborough chapel, were very desirous that I should become their pastor; and I left Boston, and came home, with this question before my mind. Afterward Brother Sears came on, with a formal call in his pocket, to persuade me to go and take up my abode there. But when he arrived in Oberlin, and consulted the brethren here, about the propriety of my going, they so much discouraged him, that he did not lay the question before me at all.

02.28. FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND.

HAVING had repeated and urgent invitations to visit England, and labor for the promotion of revivals in that country, I embarked with my wife [Mr. Finney had married, as his second wife, Mrs. Elizabeth F. Atkinson, of Rochester], in the autumn of 1849, and after a stormy passage, we arrived at Southampton, early in November. There we met the pastor of the church in Houghton, a village situated midway between the market towns of Huntington and Saint Ives. A Mr. Potto Brown, a very benevolent man, of whom I shall have occasion to speak frequently, had sent Mr. James Harcourt, his pastor, to meet us at Southhampton.

Mr. Potto Brown was, by parentage and education, a Quaker. He and a partner were engaged in the milling business, and belonged to a congregation of Independents, in Saint Ives. They became greatly affected in view of the state of things in their neighborhood. The Church, as it is called in England, seemed to them to be effecting very little for the salvation of souls. There were no schools, outside of the church schools, for the education of the poor; and the mass of the people were greatly neglected. After much prayer and consultation with each other, they agreed to adopt measures for the education of the children, in the village where they lived, and in the villages around them, and to extend this influence as far as they could. They also agreed to apply their means, to the best advantage, in establishing worship, and in building up churches independent of the Establishment.

Not long after this enterprise was commenced, Mr. Brown’s partner died. His wife, I believe, had died before him; and his partner committed his family, consisting of several sons and daughters, to the fraternal care of Mr. Brown, who committed them to the training of a judicious widow lady, in a neighboring village. Mr. Brown’s partner, at his death, begged him not to neglect the work which they had projected; but to pursue it with vigor and singleness of eye. Mr. Brown’s heart was in the work. His partner left a large property to his children. Mr. Brown himself had but two children, sons. He was a man of simple habits, and expended but little money upon himself, or his family. He employed a school teacher, in the village where he resided, and built a chapel there for public worship. They called a man to labor there as a minister, who held hyper-Calvinistic views; and consequently he labored year after year, with no results, such as met the expectations of Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown had frequent conversations with his minister, about the want of good results. He was paying his salary, and laying out his money in various ways, to promote religion, by means of Sabbath schools, and teachers, and laborers; but few or none were converted. He laid this matter before his minister so frequently, that he finally replied, "Mr. Brown, am I God, that I can convert souls? I preach to them the Gospel, and God does not convert them; am I to blame?" Mr. Brown replied, "Whether you are God or no God, we must have conversions. The people must be

converted." So this minister was dismissed. Rev. James Harcourt was employed. Mr. Harcourt was an open-communion Baptist, a talented man, a rousing preacher, and an earnest laborer for souls. Under his preaching, conversions began to appear, and the world went on hopefully. Their little church increased in numbers and in faith; and the heaven was extending gradually, but perceptibly, on every side.

They soon extended their operations to neighboring villages, with good results. But still they did not know how to promote revivals of religion. The children of his partner, who had been left under his charge, had grown up to be young men and women, and were not converted. There were three daughters and three sons, a fine family, with abundance of property; but they were unconverted. Mr. Brown had a large number of very interesting and influential friends, in that country, for whose salvation he felt a very deep interest. He was also very anxious about the children of his deceased partner, that they might be converted. For the education of his sons he had employed a teacher in his family; and a considerable number of young men, of respectable families, from neighboring towns, had studied with his sons. This little family school, to which the young men who were sons of his friends, in various parts of the county, had been invited, had created a strong bond of interest between Mr. Brown and these families. Mr. Harcourt's labors, for some reason, did not reach these families. He was successful among the poorer and lower classes, was zealous and devoted, and preached the Gospel. As Mr. Brown said, he was a powerful minister of Jesus Christ. But still he wanted experience, to reach the class of persons that Mr. Brown had more particularly on his own heart. These brethren frequently talked the matter over, and inquired how they could reach that class of persons, and draw them to Christ. Mr. Harcourt said that he had done all that he could, and that something else must be done, or he did not see that this class of persons would be reached at all.

He had read my revival lectures, and he finally suggested to Mr. Brown, the propriety of writing to me, to see if I could not come and labor with them. This led to my receiving a very earnest request from Mr. Brown, to visit them. He conversed also with many other people, and with some ministers; which lead to my receiving divers letters, of pressing invitations to visit England.

At first, these letters made but little impression upon me, for I did not see how I could go to England. At length the way seemed to open for me to leave home, at least for a season; and as I have said, in the autumn of 1849, my wife and myself went to England. When we arrived there, and had rested a few days, I began my labors in the village chapel. I soon found that Mr. Brown was altogether a remarkable man. Although brought up a Quaker, he was entirely catholic in his views, and was laboring, in an independent way, directly for the salvation of the people around him. He had wealth, and his property was constantly and rapidly increasing. His history has reminded me many times of the proverb: "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." For religious purposes, he would spend his money like a prince, and the more he spent, the more he had to spend.

While we were there, he threw his house open morning, noon, and evening, and invited his friends, far and near, to come and pay him a visit. They came in great numbers, so that his table was surrounded, at nearly every meal, with divers persons who had been invited in, that I might have conversation with them, and that they might attend our meetings.

A revival immediately commenced, and spread among the people. The children of his partner were soon interested in religion, and converted to Christ. The work spread among those that came from the neighboring villages. They heard and gladly received the Word. And so extensive and thorough was the work, among Mr. Brown's particular friends, whose conversion he had been longing and praying for, that before I left, he said that every one of them was converted, that the Lord had not left one of them out, for whom he had felt anxiety, and for whose conversion he had been praying.

The conversion of this large number of persons, scattered over the country, made a very favorable impression where they were known. The house of worship at Houghton was small, but it was packed at every meeting; and the devotedness and engagedness of Mr. Brown and his wife, were most interesting and affecting. There seemed to be no bounds to their hospitality. Their schoolmaster was a religious man, and would run in every day, and almost every meal, and sit down with us, to enjoy the conversation. Gentlemen would come in, from neighboring towns, from a distance of many miles, early enough to be there at breakfast. The young men who had been educated with his sons, were invited, and came; and I believe every one of them was converted. Thus his largest desires in regard to them, were fulfilled; and very much more among the masses was done, than he had expected. Mr. Harcourt, had at that time several preaching places, beside Houghton, in the neighboring villages. The savor of this work at Houghton, continued for years. Mr. Harcourt informed me, that he preached in a praying atmosphere, and with a meeting state of feeling around him, as long as he remained in Houghton.

I did not remain long in Houghton at this time--several weeks, however. Among the brethren who had written, urging me to come to England, was a Mr. Roe, a Baptist minister of Birmingham. As soon as he was informed that I was in England, he came to Houghton, and spent several days, attending the meetings and witnessing the results.

About the middle of December we left Houghton, and went to Birmingham, to labor in the congregation of Mr. Roe. Here, soon after our arrival, we were introduced to Rev. John Angell James, who was the principal dissenting minister in Birmingham. He was a good, and a great man, and wielded a very extensive influence in that city, and indeed throughout England.

When my revival lectures were first published in England, Mr. James wrote an introduction to them, highly commending them. But when I arrived in Birmingham, I was informed that, after Mr. James had publicly recommended them, in meetings of ministers, and by his pen, he had been informed, by men belonging to certain circles on this side of the Atlantic, that those revivals that had occurred, under my ministry especially, had turned out very disastrously; and that to such an extent had these representations been made to him, that he had taken back what he had said publicly, in favor of those revival lectures.

However, when he saw me in Birmingham, he called the Independent ministers to a breakfast at his house, and requested me to attend. This is the common way of doing things in England. When we assembled at his house, after breakfast was concluded, he said to his ministerial brethren, that he had been impressed that they were falling greatly short of accomplishing the end of their ministry; that they were too well satisfied to have the people attend meeting, pay the minister's salary, keep up the Sabbath school, and move on with an outward prosperity; while the conversions, in most of the churches, were very few, and after all, the people were going to

destruction. I was told by Mr. Roe, with whom I was at that time commencing my labors, that there were, in Mr. James own congregation, not less than fifteen hundred impenitent sinners. At the breakfast at Mr. James, he expressed himself very warmly, and said that something must be done.

Finally the ministers agreed upon holding meetings, as soon as I could comply with their request, in the different Independent churches, in succession. But for some weeks, I confined my labors to Mr. Roe's congregation, and there was a powerful revival, such a movement as they had never seen. The revival swept through the congregation with great power, and a very large proportion of the impenitent were turned to Christ. Mr. Roe entered heart and soul into the work. I found him a good and true man. He was not at all sectarian, or prejudiced in his views; but he opened his heart to divine influence, and poured out himself in labors for souls, like a man in earnest. Day after day he would sit in the vestry of his church, and converse with inquirers, as they came to visit him, and direct them to Christ. His time was almost entirely taken up with this work, for many days. His church was, at that time, one of the few close-communion churches in England, as nearly all the Baptists in England were open-communionists.

After the number of conversions had become large, the church began to examine converts for admission. They examined a large number, and were about to hold a communion. I preached in the morning, and they were to hold their communion in the afternoon. When the morning service was closed, Mr. Roe requested the church to remain for a few moments. My wife and myself retired after the morning service, and went to our lodgings at Mr. Roe's, where we were guests. After a little time, Mr. Roe came home, and entered our room with a smile upon his face, saying, "What do you think our church have done?" I could not tell; for really it had not occurred to me to raise the inquiry, what they were going to do, when they were requested to stay. He replied, "They have voted unanimously to invite you and Mrs. Finney to our communion, this afternoon." Their close communion was more than they could sustain, on such an occasion as that. However, on reflection, we concluded that we had better not accept their invitation, lest they had taken the vote under a pressure, that might create some reaction and regret among them afterwards; and as we were really fatigued, we excused ourselves, and remained at home.

As I had to preach again in the evening, I was glad to have the rest. I soon accepted the invitations of the ministers, to labor in their several pulpits. The congregations were everywhere crowded; a great interest was excited; and the numbers that would gather into the vestries after preaching, under an invitation for inquirers, was large. Their largest vestries would be packed with inquirers, whenever a call was made to resort thither for instruction. As to mean, I used the same there that I had done in this country. Preaching, prayer, conversation, and meetings of inquiry, were the means used.

But I soon found that Mr. James was receiving letters from various quarters, warning him against the influence of my labors. He had acquaintances on this side of the Atlantic; and some of them, as I understood him, had written him letters, warning him against my influence. Besides, from various parts of his own county, the same pressure was made upon him. He was very frank with me, and told me how the matter stood; and I was as frank with him. I said to him, "Brother James, your responsibility is great. I am aware that your influence is great; and these letters show both your influence and your responsibility, in regard to these labors. You are led to think that I am heretical in my views. You hear my preaching, whenever I preach; and you know whether I preach

the Gospel or not."

I had taken with me my two published volumes of Systematic Theology. I said to him, "Have you heard me preach anything that is not Gospel?" He said, "No, not anything at all." "Well," said I, "Now I have my Systematic Theology, which I teach to my classes at home, and which I everywhere preach; and I want you to read it." He was very earnest to do so. I soon saw that there was a very venerable looking gentleman with him, from evening to evening, at our meetings. They would attend meeting together; and when I called for inquirers, they would go in, and stand where they could get a place, and hear all that was said. Who this venerable gentleman was, I was not aware. For several nights in succession, they came in this way; but Mr. James did not introduce me to the person that was with him, nor come near, to speak with me, at those meetings.

After things had gone on in this way, for a week or two, Mr. James and his venerable friend called at our lodgings. He introduced me to Dr. Redford, informing me, at the same time, that he was one of their most prominent theologians; that he had more confidence in Dr. Redford's theological acumen, than he had in his own; and that he had requested him to visit Birmingham, attend the meetings, and especially to unite with him in reading my Theology. He said they had been reading it, from day to day; and Dr. Redford would like to have some conversation with me, on certain points of theology. We conversed very freely on all the questions to which Dr. Redford wished to call my attention; and Dr. Redford said, very frankly, "Brother James, I see no reason for regarding Mr. Finney, in any respect, as unsound. He has his own way of stating theological propositions; but I cannot see that he differs, on any essential point, from us."

They had with them a little manual, prepared by the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in which was found a brief statement of their theological views. They read to me certain portions of this manual; and in my turn, I questioned them. I heard their explanations, and was satisfied there was a substantial agreement between us.

Dr. Redford remained some time longer at Birmingham. He then went home, and, with my consent, took with him my Systematic Theology; and said he would read it carefully through, and then write to me his views respecting it. I observed that he was indeed at home in theology, was a scholar and a Christian, and a thoroughly educated theologian. I was, therefore, more than willing to have him criticize my theology, that if there was anything that needed to be retracted or amended, he might point it out. I requested him to do so, thoroughly and frankly. He took it home, gave himself up to a thorough examination of it, and read the volumes patiently and critically through. I then received a letter from him, expressing his strong approbation of my theological views, saying there were a few points upon which he would like to make some inquiries; and he wished me, as soon as I could get away from Birmingham, to come and preach for him.

I continued in Birmingham, I think, about three months. There were a great many interesting conversions in that city; and yet the ministers were not then prepared to commit themselves heartily to the use of the necessary means, to spread the revival universally over the city.

There was one case of so interesting a character, that I will call attention to it. I suppose it is generally known in this country, that Unitarianism in England, was first developed and promulgated in Birmingham. That was the home of old Dr. Priestley, who was one of the principal, if not one of the first Unitarian ministers in England. His congregation I found still in existence, in

Birmingham. One evening before I left Birmingham, I preached on this text: "Ye stiff- necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." I dwelt first upon the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost. I then endeavored to show in how many ways, and on how many points, men resist the divine teaching; that when convinced by the Holy Spirit, they still persist in taking their own course; and that in all such cases they are resisting the Holy Spirit. The Lord gave me liberty that night, to preach a very searching discourse. My object was to show, that while men are pleading their dependence on the Holy Spirit, they are constantly resisting Him.

I found in Birmingham, as I did everywhere in England, that the greatest stress was laid upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. But I nowhere found any clear discrimination between a physical influence of the Spirit, exerted directly upon the soul itself, and that moral, persuasive influence, which He in fact exerts over the minds of men. Consequently I found it frequently necessary, to call the attention of the people to the work in which the Holy Spirit is really engaged, to explain to them the express teachings of Christ upon this subject: and thus to lead them to see that they were not to wait for a physical influence, but to give themselves up to His persuasive influence, and obey his teachings. This was the object of my discourse that evening.

After I arrived at our quarters, a lady who was present at the meeting, and who came into the family where we were guests, remarked that she observed a Unitarian minister present in the congregation. I remarked that that must have sounded strangely in the ears of a Unitarian. She replied, she hoped it would do him good. Not long after this, and when I was laboring in London, I received a letter from this minister, giving an account of the great change wrought in his religious experience, by means of that sermon. This letter I give, as follows:

"August 16, 1850. Rev. and dear Sir: Learning, from the Banner, that you are about to take your departure from England, I feel it would be somewhat ungrateful, if I allow you to go, without expressing the obligation I am conscious of being under to you, for the benefit I received from a sermon of yours, preached in Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham. I think it was the last sermon you preached, and was on resisting the Holy Spirit; but I have never been able to find the text. Indeed, in the interest of the points that most concerned me, I thought no more about the text, for two or three days after. In order that you may understand the benefit I received from the sermon, it is necessary that I should recount, briefly, my peculiar position at the time.

I was educated at one of our dissenting colleges, for the ministry among the Independents. I entered upon the ministry, and continued to exercise it about seven years. During that time, I gradually underwent a great change in my theological views. The change was produced, I think, partly by philosophical speculations, and partly in the deterioration that had taken place in my spiritual condition. I would say with deepest sorrow, my piety never recovered the tone it lost in my passage through college. I attribute all my sorrows principally to this. My speculations led me, without ever having read Dr. William’s book on divine sovereignty and equity, to adopt fundamentally his views. The reading of his book, fully perfected my system. Sin is a defect, rising out of the necessary defectibility of a creature, when unsupplied with the grace of God. The fall of man, therefore, expresses nothing but the inevitable original imperfection of the human race. The great end of God’s moral government, is to correct this imperfection by education, and revelation, and to ultimately perfect man’s condition. I had already, and long previously, adopted Dr. Jenkyn’s views of spiritual influence.

Under the guidance of such principles, you will understand, without my explaining how, sin became a mere misfortune, temporarily permitted; or rather a necessary evil, to be remedied by infinite wisdom and goodness; how eternal punishment became a cruelty, not for one moment to be thought of, in the dispensation of a good being, and how the atonement became a perfect absurdity, founded upon unphilosophical views of sin. I became thoroughly Unitarian, and in the beginning of the year 1848, I professed my Unitarianism, and became minister of a church. The tendencies of my mind, however, were fortunately too logical, for me long to be able to rest in Unitarianism. I pushed my conclusions to simple deism, and then found they must go still farther. For this I was not prepared. My whole soul started back in horror. I reviewed my principles. A revolution took place in my whole system of philosophy. The doctrine of responsibility was restored to me, in its most strict and literal sense, and with it a deep consciousness of sin. I need not enter into minute details, with reference to my struggles and mental sufferings.

About two weeks before I heard you, I saw clearly I must some day or the other, readopt the evangelical system. I never had doubted it was the system of the Bible. I became Unitarian, upon purely rationalistic grounds. But now I found I must accept the Bible, or perish in darkness. You may imagine the agonies of spirit I had to endure. On the one hand were convictions, becoming stronger every day, the sense of sin, and the need of Christ, obtaining a firmer hold over my heart, and the miserable condition of withholding the truth I knew, from the people looking up to me for instruction. On the other hand, if I professed myself, I instantly, in the sight of all parties, especially with that great majority having no sympathy with such struggles, ruined my character, by my apparent fickleness, and threw myself, my wife and children upon the world. I could not make up my mind to this alternative. I had resolved to wait, gradually to prepare the peoples' minds for the change, and by exercising a more rigid economy, for some months, to make provision for our temporal wants, during the period of transition. In this state of mind I heard your sermon. You will recollect it, and easily comprehend the effect it produced. I felt the truth of your arguments. Your appeals came home irresistibly to my heart, and that night, on my way home, I vowed before God, come what would, I would at once consecrate myself afresh to that Savior, whose blood I had so recently learned to value, and whose value I had done so much to dishonor.

The result is, through the kind influence of Mr. --- , I have lately become the minister of the church in this town. The peace of mind I now enjoy, does indeed surpass all understanding. I never before found such an absorbing pleasure, in the work of the ministry. I enter fully into the significance of what Paul says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." I cannot tell you therefore, with how many feelings of gratitude, your name will be associated in my soul. I bless God for the kind providence that brought me to hear you. It seems to me now, more than probable, had I not heard you, my newly awakened religious life would soon have been destroyed, by continued resistance to my deep convictions. My conscience would again have become hardened, and I should have died in my sins. Through the grace of God, I shall trace up to you, any usefulness God may hereafter crown my labors with, and I feel it would be unjust to withhold from you, the knowledge of this fruit of your labors. May God, of his infinite mercy and grace, grant you a long life of even greater usefulness, than He has yet blessed you with, will be the constant prayer of

Dear Sir, Yours very truly, ---"

When I received this letter, I was laboring with Rev. John Campbell in the old Tabernacle of Whitefield in London. I handed it to him to read. He read it over with manifestly deep emotion, and then exclaimed "There, that is worth coming to England for!"

From Birmingham I went to Worcester, I think about the middle of March, to labor with Dr. Redford. I have said that he had read my Systematic Theology, and had written to me that he wished to have some conversation with me, on certain points. I had with me, my replies to the various criticisms which had been published, and these I handed to Dr. Redford. He read them through, and then called on me and said, "Those replies have cleared up all the questions on which I wished to converse; therefore I am fully satisfied that you are right." After that, in no instance, that I recollect, did he make a criticism upon any part of my Theology. Those who have seen the English edition of that work, are aware that he wrote a preface to it, in which he commended it to the Christian public.

At the time I refer to, when he had read through my replies to those revenues, he expressed a strong desire that the work should be immediately published in England; and said that he thought the work was greatly needed there, and would do great good. His opinion had great weight in England, upon theological questions. Dr. Campbell, I remember, affirmed in his newspaper, that Dr. Redford was the greatest theologian in Europe. I remained in Worcester several weeks, and preached for Dr. Redford, and also for a Baptist congregation in that city. There were many very striking conversions; and the work was interesting indeed.

Some wealthy gentlemen in Worcester, laid before me a proposition to this effect. They proposed to erect a movable tabernacle, or house of worship; one that could be taken down and transported from place to place upon the railway, and, at slight expense, set up again, with all its seats, and all the furniture of a house of worship. They proposed to build it, one hundred and fifty feet square, with seats so constructed as to provide for five or six thousand people. They said if I would consent to use it, and preach in it from place to place, as circumstances might demand, for six months, they would be at the expense of building it. But on consulting the ministers at that place, they advised me not to do it. They thought it would be more useful for me to occupy the pulpits, in the already established congregations, in different parts of England, than to go through England preaching in an independent way, such as was proposed by those gentlemen.

As I had reason to believe the ministers generally would disapprove of a course then so novel, I declined to pledge myself to occupy it. I have since thought that I probably made a mistake; for when I came to be acquainted with the congregations, and places of public worship, of the Independent churches, I found them generally so small, so badly ventilated, so situated, so hedged in and circumscribed by the Church--I mean, of course, the Establishment--that it has since appeared to me doubtful whether I was right; as I have been of opinion that I could, upon the whole, have accomplished much greater good in England, by carrying as it were, my own place of worship with me, going where I pleased, and providing for the gathering of the masses, irrespective of denominations. If my strength were now as it was then, I should be strongly inclined to visit England again, and try an experiment of that kind. Dr. Redford was greatly affected by the work in Worcester; and at the May anniversaries in London, he addressed the Congregational union of England and Wales, and gave a very interesting account of this work. I attended those May meetings, being about to commence labor with Dr. John Campbell, in London.

Dr. Campbell was a successor of Whitefield, and was pastor of the church at the Tabernacle in Finsbury, London, and also of the Tottenham Court Road chapel. These chapels are both in London, and about three miles apart. They were built for Mr. Whitefield, and occupied by him for years.

Dr. Campbell was also at that time editor of the British Banner, the Christian Witness, and of one or two other periodicals. His voice was such that he did not preach, but gave his time to the editing of those papers. He lived in the parsonage in which Whitefield resided, and used the same library, I believe, that Whitefield had used. Whitefield's portrait hung in his study in the Tabernacle. The savor of his name was still there; yet I must say that the spirit that had been upon him, was not very apparent in the church, at the time I went there. I said that Dr. Campbell did not preach. He still held the pastorate, resided in the parsonage, and drew the salary; but he supplied his pulpit by employing, for a few weeks at a time, the most popular ministers that could be employed, to preach to his people. I began my labors there early in May. Those who are acquainted with the workings of such a constant change in the ministry, as they had at the Tabernacle, would not expect religion in the church, to be in a flourishing condition.

Dr. Campbell's house of worship was large. It was compactly seated, and could accommodate full three thousand persons. A friend of mine took particular pains to ascertain which would hold the greatest number of people, the Tabernacle in Moorfields or Finsbury, or the great Exeter Hall, of which everybody has heard. It was ascertained that the Tabernacle would seat some hundreds more than Exeter Hall.

02.29. LABORS IN THE TABERNACLE, LONDON

CHAPTER XXIX.

LABORS IN THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS, LONDON.

(Note from WStS: Please look at the chart on the bottom of this page to find listed the sermons Mr. Finney preached during this time in London. The collection is called "Sermons from the Penny Pulpit.")

I HAD accepted Dr. Campbell's cordial invitation to supply his pulpit for a time, and accordingly, after the May meetings I put in, in earnest, for a revival; though I said no such thing to Dr. Campbell, or anybody else, for some weeks. I preached a course of sermons designed to convict the people of sin, as deeply and as universally as possible. I saw from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from evening to evening, that the Word was taking great effect. On Sabbath day, I preached morning and evening; and I also preached on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. On Monday evening, we had a general prayer meeting in the Tabernacle. At each of those meetings I addressed the people on the subject of prayer. Our congregations were very large; and always on Sabbath, and Sabbath evenings, the house was crowded.

Religion had so declined throughout London, at that time, that very few weekly sermons were preached; and I recollect that Dr. Campbell said to me once, that he believed I preached to more people, during the week evenings, than all the rest of the ministers in London together. I have said that Dr. Campbell had the salary belonging to the pastor, in his congregation. But this salary, he did not use for himself, at least more than a part of it; because he supplied the pulpit at his own expense, while he performed such parochial duties, as it was possible for him to perform, under such a pressure of editorial labors. I found Dr. Campbell to be an earnest, but a very belligerent, man. He was always given to controversy. To use an American expression, he was given to pitching into everybody and everything that did not correspond with his views. In this way he did a great deal of good; and occasionally, I fear, some harm.

After preaching for several weeks, in the manner that I have described, I knew that it was time to call for inquirers. But Dr. Campbell, I perceived, had no such idea in his mind. Indeed he had not sat where he could witness what was going on in the congregation, as I could from the pulpit; and if he had done, he probably would not have understood it. The practice in that church, was to hold a communion service, every alternate Sabbath evening. On these occasions they would have a short sermon, then dismiss the congregation; and all would retire, except those that had tickets for the communion service, who would remain while that ordinance was celebrated.

On the Sabbath morning to which I have referred, I said to Dr. Campbell, "You have a communion service tonight, and I must have a meeting of inquiry at the same time. Have you any room, anywhere on the premises, to which I can invite inquirers after preaching?" He hesitated, and expressed doubts whether there were any that would attend such a meeting as that. However, as I pressed the matter upon him, he replied, "Yes, there is the infant school room, to which you might

invite them." I inquired how many persons it could accommodate. He replied, "From twenty to thirty, or perhaps forty." "Oh," I said, "that is not half large enough. Have you not a larger room?" At this he expressed astonishment; and inquired if I thought that there was interest enough in the congregation, to warrant any such invitation as I had intended to give. I told him there were hundreds of inquirers in the congregation. But at this he laughed, and said it was impossible. I asked him if he had not a larger room. "Why yes," he said, "there is the British schoolroom. But that will hold fifteen or sixteen hundred; of course you don't want that." "Yes," said I, "that is the very room. Where is it?" "Oh," said he, "surely you will not venture to appoint a meeting there. Not half as many would attend, I presume, as could get into the infant schoolroom." Said he, "Mr. Finney, remember you are in England, and in London; and that you are not acquainted with our people. You might get people to attend such a meeting, under such a call as you propose to make, in America; but you will not get people to attend here. Remember that our evening service is out, before the sun is down, at this time of year. And do you suppose that in the midst of London, under an invitation to those that are seeking the salvation of their souls, and are anxious on that subject, that they will single themselves out, right in the daytime, and under such a call as that, publicly given, to attend such a meeting as that?" I replied to him, "Dr. Campbell, I know what the state of the people is, better than you do. The Gospel is as well adapted to the English people as to the American people; and I have no fears at all, that the pride of the people will prevent their responding to such a call, any more than it would the people in America."

I asked him to tell me where that room was; and so to specify it, that I could point it out to the people, and make the appeal that I intended to make. After a good deal of discussion, the doctor reluctantly consented; but told me expressly, that I must take the responsibility on myself, that he would not share it. I replied that I expected to take the responsibility, and was prepared to do so. He then gave me particular directions about the place, which was but a little distance from the Tabernacle. The people had to pass up Cowper street toward City road, a few rods, and turn through a narrow passage, to the British schoolroom building. We then went to meeting; and I preached in the morning, and again at evening; that is, at six o'clock, if I recollect the hour. I preached a short sermon, and then informed the people what I desired. I called upon all who were anxious for their souls, and who were then disposed, immediately, to make their peace with God, to attend a meeting for instruction, adapted to their state of mind. I was very particular, in regard to the class of persons invited. I said, "Professors of religion are not invited to attend this meeting. There is to be a communion service here; let them remain here. Careless sinners are not invited to this meeting. Those, and those only, are expected to attend, who are not Christians, but who are anxious for the salvation of their souls, and wish instruction given them directly, upon the question of their present duty to God." This I repeated, so as not to be misunderstood. Dr. Campbell listened with great attention; and I presume he expected, since I had restricted my appeal to such a class, that very few, if any, would attend. I was determined not to have the mass of the people go into that room; and furthermore, that those who did go, should go with the express understanding, that they were inquiring sinners. I was particular on this point; not only for the sake of the results of the meeting, but to convince Dr. Campbell that his view of the subject was a mistaken one. I felt entirely confident, that there was a great amount of conviction in the congregation, and that hundreds were prepared to respond to such a call, at once. I was perfectly confident that I was not premature, in making such a call. I therefore proceeded very particularly to point out the class of persons whom I wished to attend, and the manner in which they would find the place. I then

dismissed the meeting, and the congregation retired.

Dr. Campbell nervously and anxiously looked out of the window, to see which way the congregation went; and to his great astonishment, Cowper street was perfectly crowded with people, pressing up to get into the British schoolroom. I passed out, and went up with the crowd and waited at the entrance, till the multitude went in. When I entered, I found the room packed. Dr. Campbell's impression was, that there were not less than fifteen or sixteen hundred present. It was a large room, seated with forms or benches, such as are often used in schoolrooms.

There was near the entrance a platform, on which the speakers stood, whenever they had public meetings, which was of frequent occurrence. I soon discovered that the congregation were pressed with conviction, in such a manner that great care needed to be taken, to prevent an explosion of irrepressible feeling. It was but a very short time before Dr. Campbell came in himself. Observing such a crowd gather, he was full of anxiety to be present; and consequently hastened through with his communion services, and came into the meeting of inquiry. He looked amazed at the crowd present, and especially at the amount of feeling manifested. I addressed them for a short time, on the question of immediate duty; and endeavored, as I always do, to make them understand that God required of them then to yield themselves entirely to His will, to ground their weapons of rebellion, make their submission to Him as their rightful sovereign, and accept Jesus as their only Redeemer.

I had been in England long enough to feel the necessity of being very particular, in giving them such instructions as would do away their idea of waiting God's time. London is, and long has been, cursed with hyper-Calvinistic preaching. I therefore aimed my remarks at the subversion of those ideas, in which I supposed many of them had been educated; for but few persons present, I supposed, belonged properly to Dr. Campbell's congregation. Indeed, he had himself told me that the congregation which he saw from day to day, was new to him; that the masses who were thronging there were as much unknown to him as they were to me. I tried therefore in my instructions, to guard them on the one hand against hyper-Calvinism, and on the other against that low Arminianism in which I supposed many of them had been educated.

I then, after I had laid the Gospel net thoroughly around them, prepared to draw it ashore. As I was about to ask them to kneel down, and commit themselves entirely and forever to Christ, a man cried out in the midst of the congregation, in the greatest distress of mind, that he had sinned away his day of grace. I saw that there was danger of an uproar, and I hushed it down as best I could, and called on the people to kneel down; but to keep so quiet, if possible, that they could hear every word of the prayer that I was about to offer. They did, by a manifest effort, keep so still as to hear what was said, although there was a great sobbing and weeping in every part of the house.

I then dismissed the meeting. After this I held similar meetings, with similar results, frequently on Sabbath evening, while I remained with that congregation, which was in all nine months. The interest rose and extended so far, that the inquirers could not be accommodated in that large British schoolroom; and frequently when I saw that the impression on the congregation was very general and deep, after giving them suitable instructions, and bringing them face to face with the question of unqualified and present surrender of all to Christ, I would call on those that were prepared in mind to do this, to stand up in their places, while we offered them to God in prayer. The aisles in that house were so narrow and so packed, that it was impossible to use what is

called the anxious seat, or for people to move about at all in the congregation.

Frequently when I made these calls, for people to arise and offer themselves while we offered them in prayer, many hundreds would arise; and on some occasions, if the house seated as many as was supposed, not less than two thousand people sometimes arose, when an appeal was made. Indeed it would appear from the pulpit as if nearly the whole congregation arose. And yet I did not call upon church members, but simply upon inquirers to stand up and commit themselves to God.

In the midst of the work, a circumstance occurred which will illustrate the extent of the religious interest connected with that congregation at that time. The circumstance to which I allude was this: The dissenters in England had been for a good while endeavoring to persuade the government to have more respect in their action, than they were wont to do, to the dissenting interest in that country. But they had always been answered in a way that implied that the dissenting interest was small, as compared with that of the established church. So much had been said on this subject that the government determined to take measures to ascertain the relative strength of the two parties, that is, of the dissenters and the church of England. On a certain Saturday night, without any previous warning or notice whatever, that should lead the people anywhere to understand or even suspect the movement, a message was secretly sent to every place of worship in the kingdom, requesting that individuals should be selected to stand at the doors of all the churches, and chapels, and places of worship in the whole kingdom, on the next Sabbath morning, to take the census of all that entered houses of worship of every denomination. Such a notice was sent to Dr. Campbell; but I did not know it till afterward. In obedience to directions, he placed men at every door of the Tabernacle, with instructions to count every person that went in, during the morning service. This was done, as I understood, throughout the whole of Great Britain. In this way they ascertained the relative strength of the two parties; in other words, which had the most worshippers on Sabbath, the dissenters or the established church. I believe this census proved that the dissenters were in a majority. But however this may be, Dr. Campbell told me that the men stationed at the doors of the Tabernacle, reported several thousands more than could at any one time get into the house. This arose from the fact that multitudes entered the doors, and finding no place to sit or stand, would give place to others. The interest was so great, that a place of worship that would hold many thousands, would have been just as full as the Tabernacle.

Whence they all came, Dr. Campbell did not know, and no one could tell; but that hundreds and thousands of them were converted, there is no reason to doubt. Indeed, I saw and conversed with vast numbers, and labored in this way to the full limit of my strength.

On Saturday evening, inquirers and converts would come to the study for conversation. Great numbers came every week, and conversions multiplied. People came, as I learned, from every part of the city. Many people walked several miles every Sabbath to attend the meetings. Soon I began to be accosted in the streets, in different parts of the city, by people who knew me, and had been greatly blessed in attending our meetings. Indeed, the Word of God was blessed, greatly blessed in London at that time.

One day Dr. Campbell requested me to go in, and make a few remarks to the scholars in the British schoolroom. I did so, and began by asking them what they proposed to do with their education, and dwelt upon their responsibility in that respect. I tried to show them how much good

they might do, and how great a blessing their education would be to them and to the world, if they used it aright, and what a great curse it would be to them and to the world, if they used it selfishly. The address was short; but that point was strongly urged upon them. Dr. Campbell afterward remarked to me, that a goodly number, I forget now how many, had been received to the church, who were at that time awakened, and led to seek the salvation of their souls. He mentioned it as a remarkable fact, because, he said, he had no expectation that such a result would follow.

The fact is, that the ministers in England, as well as in this country, had lost sight, in a great measure, of the necessity of pressing present obligations home upon the consciences of the people. "Why," said Dr. Campbell, when he told me of this, "I don't understand it. You did not say anything but what anybody else might have said just as well." "Yes," I replied, "they might have said it; but would they have said it? Would they have made as direct and pointed an appeal to the consciences of those young people, as I did?" This is the difficulty. Ministers talk about sinners; and do not make the impression that God commands them, now to repent; and thus they throw their ministry away.

Indeed I seldom hear a sermon that seems to be constructed with the intention of bringing sinners at once, face to face with their present duty to God. You would scarcely get the idea from the sermons that are heard, either in this country or in England, that ministers expect or intend, to be instrumental in converting, at the time, anybody in the house.

A fact was related to me some time ago, that will illustrate what I have just said. Two young men who were acquaintances, but had very different views of preaching the Gospel, were settled over congregations, at no great distance from each other. One of them had a powerful revival in his congregation, and the other had none. One was having continual accessions to his church, and the other none. They met one day, and he who had no accession to his church, inquired of his brother the cause of the difference between them; and asked if he might take one of his sermons and preach it to his people, and see if it had any different effect from his own. The arrangement was made; and he preached the borrowed sermon to his people. It was a sermon, though written, yet constructed for the purpose of bringing sinners face to face with their duty to God. At the close of the service he saw that many were very much affected, and remained in their seats weeping. He therefore made a profound apology, saying he hoped he had not hurt their feelings, for he did not intend it.

My own mind was greatly exercised, in view of the moral desolation of that vast city of London. The places of worship in the city, as I learned, were sufficient to accommodate only a small part of the inhabitants. But I was greatly interested in a movement that sprang up among the Episcopalians. Numbers of their ministers came in, and attended our meetings. One of the rectors, a Mr. Allen, became very much engaged, and made up his mind that he would try to promote a revival in his own great parish. As he afterward informed me, he went around and established twenty prayer meetings in his parish, at different points. He went to preaching with all his might, directly to the people. The Lord greatly blessed his labors, and before I left, he informed me that not less than fifteen hundred persons had been hopefully converted in his parish. Several other Episcopal ministers were greatly stirred up, and quickened in their souls, and went to holding protracted or continuous services. When I left London, there were four or five different Episcopal churches that were holding daily meetings, and making efforts to promote a revival. In every

instance, I believe, they were greatly blessed and refreshed. It was ten years before I visited London again to labor; and I was told that the work had never ceased; that it had been going on, and enlarging its borders, and spreading in different directions. I found many of the converts, the second time I visited there, laboring in different parts of London in various ways, and with great success.

I have said my mind was greatly exercised about the state of London. I was scarcely ever more drawn out in prayer for any city or place than I was for London. Sometimes, when I prayed, in public especially, it seemed, with the multitudes before me, as if I could not stop praying; and that the spirit of prayer would almost draw me out of myself, in pleadings for the people, and for the city at large. I had hardly more than arrived in England, before I began to receive multitudes of invitations to preach, for the purpose of taking up collections for different objects: to pay the pastor's salary, to help pay for a chapel, or to raise money for the Sabbath school, or for some such object. And had I complied with their requests, I could have done nothing else. But I declined to go, in answer to any such call. I told them I had not come to England, to get money for myself or for them. My object was to win souls to Christ.

After I had preached for Dr. Campbell about four months and a half, I became very hoarse; and my wife's health also became much affected by the climate, and by our intense labors. And here I must commence more particularly, a recital of what God did by her.

Up to this time she had attended and taken part only in meetings for women; and those were so new a thing in England that she had done but little thus far in that way. But while we were at Dr. Campbell's, a request was made that she would attend a tea-meeting of poor women, without education and without religion. Tea-meetings, as they are called, are held in England, to bring together people for any special object. Such a meeting was called by some of the benevolent Christian gentlemen and ladies, and my wife was urgently requested to attend it. She consented, having no thought that gentlemen would remain in the meeting, while she made her address. However, when she got there, she found the place crowded; and, in addition to the women, a considerable number of gentlemen, who were greatly interested in the results of the meeting. She waited a little, expecting that they would retire. But as they remained, and expected her to take charge of the meeting, she arose, and, I believe, apologized for being called to speak in public, informing them that she had never been in the habit of doing so. She had then been my wife but a little more than a year, and had never been abroad with me to labor in revivals, until we went to England. She made an address at this meeting, as she informed me after she came to our lodgings, of about three-quarters of an hour in length, and with very manifest good results. The poor women present seemed to be greatly moved and interested; and when she had done speaking, some of the gentlemen present arose, and expressed their great satisfaction at what they had heard. They said they had had prejudices against women speaking in public; but they could see no objection to it under such circumstances, and they saw that it was manifestly calculated to do great good. They therefore requested her to attend other similar meetings, which she did. When she returned, she told me what she had done, and said that she did not know but it would excite the prejudices of the people of England, and perhaps do more harm than good. I feared this myself, and so expressed myself to her. Yet I believe I did not advise her to keep still, and not attend any more such meetings; but after more consideration I encouraged it. From that time she became more and more accustomed, while we remained in England, to that kind of labor;

and after we returned home, she continued to labor with her own sex wherever we went. Upon this I shall have occasion to enlarge, when I speak of the revivals in which she bore a very prominent part.

There were a great number of most interesting cases of conversion in London at that time, from almost all classes of society. I preached a great deal on confession and restitution; the results of which were truly wonderful. Almost every form of crime was thus searched out and confessed. Hundreds, and I believe thousands of pounds sterling were paid over to make restitution.

Everyone acquainted with London is aware that from early in November till the next March, the city is very gloomy, and has a miserable atmosphere either to breathe or to speak in. We went there early in May. In September my friend Brown, of Houghton, called on us, and seeing the state of health that we were both in, he said, "This will never do. You must go to France, or somewhere on the continent where they cannot understand your language; for there is no rest for you in England as long as you are able to speak at all." After talking the matter over, we concluded to take his advice, and go for a little while to France. He handed me fifty pounds sterling, to meet our expenses. We went to Paris, and various other places in France. We sedulously avoided making any acquaintances, and kept ourselves as quiet as possible. The influence of the change of climate upon my wife’s health, was very marked. She recovered her full tone of strength very rapidly. I gradually got over my hoarseness; and after an absence of about six weeks, we returned to our labors in the Tabernacle, where we continued to labor till early in the next April, when we left for home. I left England with great reluctance. But the prosperity of our college seemed to require that I should return. We had become greatly interested in the people of England, and desired very much to remain there, and protract our labors. We sailed in a large packet ship, the Southampton, from London. On the day that we sailed, a multitude of people who had been interested in our labors, gathered upon the wharf. A great majority of them were young converts. The ship had to wait for the tide, and for several hours there was a vast crowd of people in the open space around the ship, waiting to see us off. Tearing away from such a multitude of loving hearts, completely overcame the strength of my wife. As soon as the ship was clear of the dock, she retired to our stateroom. I remained upon the deck and watched the waving of handkerchiefs, until we were swept down the river, out of sight. Thus closed our labors in England, on our first visit there.

02.30. LABORS IN HARTFORD & SYRACUSE

CHAPTER XXX.

LABORS IN HARTFORD AND IN SYRACUSE.

WE arrived at Oberlin in May, 1851, and after the usual labors of the summer, we left in the autumn for New York City, expecting to spend the winter, as I had been invited to do, in labor in Rev. Dr. Thompson's church, in the old Broadway Tabernacle. But after preaching there a short time, I found so many hindrances in the way of our work, especially the liability to the interruption of our evening services, by the practice of letting the Tabernacle for public lectures, that I despaired of success in the effort to promote a general revival. I therefore left, and accepted an invitation to go to Hartford, and hold a series of meetings. I was invited by Rev. William W. Patton, who was then pastor of one of the Congregational churches of that city.

Very soon after I began my labors there, a powerful revival influence was manifested among the people. But there was at this time an unhappy state of disagreement existing between Dr. Hawes and Dr. Bushnell. The orthodoxy of Dr. Bushnell, as is well-known, had been called in question. Dr. Hawes was himself of the opinion that Dr. Bushnell's views were highly objectionable. However, both Dr. Hawes and Dr. Bushnell attended our meetings, and manifested a great interest in the work, which they saw had fairly begun. They invited me to preach in their churches, which I did. Still the lay brethren through the city felt as if the disagreement among the ministers was a stumbling block in the way; and there was a considerable urgency expressed to have the ministers come more fraternally together, and take a united stand before the people, to promote the work. The people generally did not sympathize with Dr. Hawes strong views, in regard to the orthodoxy of Dr. Bushnell. Being informed of this, I had a fraternal conversation with Dr. Hawes and told him that he was in a false position, and that the people felt tried with his laying so great stress upon what he called the errors of Dr. Bushnell, and that they very generally, I believed, did not justify him in the position that he occupied. Dr. Hawes was a good man, and manifestly felt his responsibility in this matter very deeply.

One evening I had been preaching, I think, for Brother Patton, and the three congregational ministers were present. After meeting they followed me to my lodgings, and Dr. Hawes said, "Brother Finney, we are satisfied that the Spirit of the Lord is poured out here; and now, what can we as ministers do to promote this work?" I told them freely what I thought; that a great responsibility rested upon them, and it seemed to me that it was for them to say, whether the work should become general throughout the city or not; that if they could reconcile their differences, and come out before the churches, and be united and take hold of the work, a great obstacle would be removed; and that I thought we might expect the work to spread rapidly on every hand. They saw their position; Dr. Hawes and Dr. Bushnell came to an understanding to lay aside their difficulties, and go on and promote the work. I should say here, that I believe Brother Patton had never sympathized with the strong views held by Dr. Hawes; and I should also say, that Dr. Bushnell himself did not seem to have any controversy with Dr. Hawes; and the obstacle to be removed

from before the public seemed to be, mostly, in the unwillingness of Dr. Hawes, cordially to cooperate with the other ministers, in the work.

Dr. Hawes was too good a man to persist in anything that would prevent his doing whatever he could consistently do, to promote the work. Therefore from that time we seemed to work together, with a good measure of cordiality. The work spread into all the congregations, and went on very hopefully, for a number of weeks. But there was one peculiarity about that work that I have never forgotten. I believe every Sabbath that I was in that city, it stormed furiously. Such a succession of stormy Sabbaths I almost never witnessed. However, our meetings were fully attended; and for a place like Hartford the work became powerful and extensive.

Those who are acquainted with Hartford know how fastidious and precise the people are in regard to all they do. They were afraid of any measures other than prayer meetings, and preaching meetings, and meetings for inquiry. In other words it was out of the question to call on sinners to come forward, and break away from the fear of man, and give themselves publicly to God. Dr. Hawes was especially very much afraid of any such measures. Consequently I could do no such thing there. Indeed, Dr. Hawes was so much afraid of measures, that I recollect, one night, in attending a meeting of inquiry in his vestry, the number of inquirers present was large; and at the close I called on those that were willing to give themselves up to God, to kneel down. This startled Dr. Hawes; and he remarked before they knelt down that none were requested to do so unless they did it cheerfully, of their own accord. They did kneel down, and we prayed with them. Dr. Hawes remarked to me, as the inquirers rose and were dismissed: "I have always felt the necessity of some such measure, but have been afraid to use it. I have always seen," said he, "that something was needed to bring persons to a stand, and to induce them to act on their present convictions; but I have not had courage to propose anything of the kind." I said to him that I had found some such measure indispensable, to bring sinners to the point of submission.

In this revival there was a great deal of praying. The young converts especially, gave themselves to very much prayer. One evening, as I learned, one of the young converts after the evening services, invited another to go home with him, and they would hold a season of prayer together. The Lord was with them, and the next evening they invited others, and the next evening more still, until the meeting became so large that they were obliged to divide it. These meetings were held after the preaching service. The second meeting soon became too large for the room, and that again was divided. And I understood that these meetings multiplied, until the young converts were almost universally in the habit of holding meetings for prayer, in different places, after the preaching service. Finally to these meetings they invited inquirers, and such as wished to be prayed for. This led to quite an organized effort, among the converts, for the salvation of souls.

A very interesting state of things sprung up at this time in the public schools. As I was informed, ministers had agreed that they would not visit the public schools, and make any religious efforts there, because it excited jealousy on the part of different denominations. One morning a large number of lads, as I was told, when they came together, were so affected that they could not study, and asked their teacher to pray for them. He was not a professor of religion, and sent for one of the pastors, informing him of the state of things, and requesting him to come and hold some religious service with them. But he declined, saying that there was an understanding among the pastors that they would not go to the public schools, to hold any religious services. He sent for

another, and another, as I was informed; but they told him he must pray for the scholars himself. This brought a severe pressure upon him. But it resulted, I believe, in his giving his own heart to God, and in his taking measures for the conversion of the school. I understood there was a goodly number of the scholars, in the various common schools, that were converted at that time.

Everyone acquainted with the city of Hartford knows that its inhabitants are a very intelligent people, that all classes are educated, and that there is, perhaps, no city in the world where education of so high an order is so general as it is in Hartford. When the converts came to be received, some six hundred, I believe, united with their churches. Dr. Hawes said to me before I left, "What shall we do with these young converts? If we should form them into a church by themselves, they would make admirable workers for the salvation of souls. If, however, we receive them to our churches, where we have so many elderly men and women, who are always expected to take the lead in everything, their modesty will make them fall in behind these staid Christian men and women; and they will live as they have lived, and be inefficient as they have been." However, as I understood, the young converts, of both sexes, formed themselves into a kind of city missionary society, and organized for the purpose of making direct efforts to convert souls throughout the city. Such efforts as this, for instance, were made by numbers of them. One of the principal young ladies, perhaps as well-known and as much respected as any lady in the city, undertook to reclaim, and if possible save, a class of young men who belonged to prominent and wealthy families, but had fallen into bad habits, and into moral delay, and had lost the respect of the people.

The position and character of this young lady rendered it possible and proper for her to make such an effort, without creating a suspicion of any impropriety on her part. She sought an opportunity to converse with this class of young men; and, as I understood, brought them together for religious conversation and prayer, and was very successful in reclaiming numbers of them. If I have been rightly informed, the converts of that revival were a great power in that city for good; and many of them remain there still, and are very active in promoting religion.

Mrs. Finney established prayer meetings for ladies, which were held in the vestry of the churches. These meetings were largely attended, and became very interesting. The ladies were entirely united, and very much in earnest, and became a principal power, under God, in promoting his work there.

We left there about the first of April, and went to the city of New York on our way home. There I preached a few times for Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, in Brooklyn; and there was a growing and deepening religious influence among the people, when I arrived, and when I left. But I preached but a few times, because my health gave way, and I was obliged to desist. We came home, and went on with our labors here as usual, with the almost uniform result of a great degree of religious influence among our students, and extending more or less generally to the inhabitants.

The next winter we left Oberlin at the usual season, and started East to occupy a field of labor to which we had been invited. While we were in Hartford, the previous winter, we had a very pressing invitation to go to the city of Syracuse to labor. The minister of the Congregational church came down to Hartford, to persuade me, if possible, to return with him. I could not see it my duty to go at that time, and thought no more about it. But on our way East at this time, we met this minister at Rochester. He was not then the pastor of the Congregational church in the city of Syracuse. But

he felt so much interest for them, that he finally induced me to promise him that I would stop there, and spend at least one Sabbath. We did so, and found the little church very much discouraged. Their number was small. The church was mostly composed of persons of very radical views, in regard to all the great questions of reform. The Presbyterian churches, and the other churches generally, did not sympathize at all with them, and it seemed as if the Congregational church must become extinct.

I preached one Sabbath, and learned so much about the state of things as to be induced to remain another Sabbath. Soon I began to perceive a movement among the dry bones. Some of the leading members of the Congregational church began to make confession to each other, and public confession of their wanderings from God, and of other things that had created prejudice against them in the city. This conciliated the people around them, and they began to come in, and soon their house of worship was too narrow to hold the people; and although I had not expected to stay more than one Sabbath, I could not see my way clear to leave, and I kept on from Sabbath to Sabbath. The interest continued to increase and to spread. The Lord removed the obstacles, and brought Christian people nearer together.

The Presbyterian churches were thrown open to our meetings, and conversions were multiplied on every side. However, as in some other cases, I directed my preaching very much to the Christian people. There had been very little sympathy existing between them; and a great work was needed among professors of religion, before the way could be prepared outside of the churches. Thus I continued to labor in the different churches, until the Second Presbyterian church was left without a pastor; after which we concentrated our meetings there in a great measure, and held on throughout the winter.

Here again Mrs. Finney established her ladies' meetings with great success. She generally held them in the lecture room of the first Presbyterian church, I think, a commodious and convenient room for such meetings. A great many very interesting facts occurred in her meetings that winter. Christians of different denominations seemed to flow together, after awhile, and all the difficulties that had existed among them seemed to be done away. The Presbyterian and the Congregational churches were all without pastors while I was there, and hence none of them opened their doors to receive the converts. I was very willing that this should be so, as I knew that there was great danger, if they began to receive the converts, that jealousies would spring up and mar the work.

As we were about to leave in the spring, I gave out notice from the pulpit, on my own responsibility, that on the next Sabbath we should hold a communion service, to which all Christians, who truly loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and gave evidence of it in their lives, were invited. That was one of the most interesting communion seasons I ever witnessed. The church was filled with communicants. Two very aged ministers, Fathers Waldo and Brainard, attended and helped at the communion service. There was a great melting in the congregation; and a more loving and joyful communion of the people of God, I think I never saw anywhere.

After I left, the churches all secured pastors. I have been informed that that revival resulted in great and permanent good. The Congregational church built them a larger house of worship; and have been, I believe, ever since a healthy church and congregation. The Presbyterian churches, and I believe the Baptist churches, were much strengthened in faith and increased in numbers.

The work was very deep there among a great many professors of religion. One very striking fact occurred which I will mention. There was a lady by the name of C, the Christian wife of an unconverted husband. She was a lady of great refinement, and beauty of character and person. Her husband was a merchant, a man of good moral character. She attended our meetings, and became very much convicted for a deeper work of grace in her soul. She called on me one day, in a state of very anxious inquiry. I had a few moments conversation with her, and directed her attention especially to the necessity of a thorough and universal consecration of herself and of her all to Christ. I told her that when she had done this, she must believe for the sealing of the Holy Spirit. She had heard the doctrine of sanctification preached, and it had greatly interested her; and her inquiry was how she should obtain it. I gave her the brief direction which I have mentioned, and she got up hastily and left me. Such a pressure was upon her mind, that she seemed in haste to lay hold of the fullness there was in Christ. I do not think she was in my room more than five or ten minutes, and she left me like a person who has some pressing business on hand. In the afternoon she returned as full of the Holy Spirit, to all human appearance, as she could be. She said she hurried home from my room in the morning, and went immediately to her chamber, and cast herself down before God, and made a thorough consecration of herself and of her all to Him. She said she had clearer apprehensions by far of what was meant by that, than she had ever had before; and she made a full and complete resignation of herself and everything into the hands of Christ. Her mind became at once entirely calm, and she felt that she began to receive of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In a very short time she seemed to be lifted up above herself, and her joy was so great that she could hardly refrain from shouting.

I had some conversation with her, and saw that she was in danger of being over excited. I said as much as I dared to say, to put her on her guard against this, and she went home.

A few days afterwards her husband called on me one morning with his sleigh, and asked me to take a ride with him. I did so, and found that his object was to talk with me about his wife. He said that she was brought up among the Friends, and when he married her, he thought she was one of the most perfect women that he ever knew. But finally, he said, she became converted and then he observed a greater change in her than he thought was possible; for he thought her as perfectly moral in her outward life before as she could be. Nevertheless, the change in her spirit and bearing, at the time of her conversion, was so manifest, he said, that no one could doubt it. "Since then," he said, "I have thought her almost or quite perfect." But, said he, "now she has manifestly passed through a greater change than ever. I see it in everything," said he. "There is such a spirit in her, such a change, such an energy in her religion, and such a fullness of joy and peace and love!" He inquired, "What shall I make of it? How am I to understand this? Do such changes really take place in Christian people?"

I explained it to him as best I could. I tried to make him understand what she was by her education as a Quaker, and what her conversion had done for her; and then told him that this was a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit, that had so greatly changed her at that time. She has since passed away to heaven; but the savor of that anointing of the Holy Spirit remained with her, as I have been informed, to the day of her death.

There is one circumstance that I have often heard Mrs. Finney relate, that occurred in her meetings, that is worth notice here. Her ladies' meetings were composed of the more intelligent

ladies in the different churches. Many of them were probably fastidious. But there was an elderly and uneducated old woman that attended their meetings, and that used to speak, sometimes, apparently to the annoyance of the ladies. Somehow she had the impression that it was her duty to speak at every meeting; and sometimes she would get up and complain of the Lord, that He laid it upon her to speak in meeting, while so many ladies of education were allowed to attend and take no part. She wondered why it was that God made it her duty to speak; while these fine ladies, who could speak so much to edification, were allowed to attend and "have no cross," as she expressed it, "to take up." She seemed always to speak in a whining and complaining manner. The part that she felt it her duty to take in every meeting, a good deal annoyed and discouraged my wife. She saw that it did not interest the ladies; and it seemed to her rather an element of disturbance.

But after things had gone on in this way for some time, one day this same old woman arose in meeting, and a new spirit was upon her. As soon as she opened her mouth it was apparent to everybody that a great change had come over her. She had come to the meeting full of the Holy Ghost, and she poured out her fresh experience, to the astonishment of all. The ladies were greatly interested in what the old woman said: and she went forward with an earnestness in relating what the Lord had done for her, that carried conviction to every mind. All turned and leaned toward her, to hear every word that she said, the tears began to flow, and a great movement of the Spirit seemed to be visible at once throughout the meeting. Such a remarkable change wrought immense good, and the old woman became a favorite. After that they expected to hear from her; and were greatly delighted from meeting to meeting to hear her tell what the Lord had done, and was doing for her soul.

I found in Syracuse a Christian woman whom they called Mother Austin, a woman of most remarkable faith. She was poor, and entirely dependent upon the charity of the people for subsistence. She was an uneducated woman, and had been brought up manifestly in a family of very little cultivation. But she had such faith as to secure the confidence of all who knew her. The conviction seemed to be universal among both Christians and unbelievers, that mother Austin was a saint. I do not think I ever witnessed greater faith in its simplicity than was manifested by that woman. A great many facts were related to me respecting her, that showed her trust in God, and in what a remarkable manner God provided for her wants from day to day. She said to me on one occasion, "Brother Finney, it is impossible for me to suffer for any of the necessaries of life, because God has said to me, 'Trust in the Lord and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.'" She related to me many facts in her history, and many facts were related to me by others, illustrative of the power of her faith.

She said, one Saturday evening a friend of hers, but an impenitent man, called to see her; and after conversing awhile he offered her, as he went away, a five dollar bill. She said that she felt an inward admonition not to take it. She felt that it would be an act of self-righteousness on the part of that man, and might do him more harm than it would do her good. She therefore declined to take it, and he went away. She said she had just wood and food enough in the house to last over the Sabbath, and that was all; and she had no means whatever of obtaining any more. But still she was not at all afraid to trust God, in such circumstances, as she had done for so many years.

On the Sabbath day there came a violent snowstorm. On Monday morning the snow was several feet deep, and the streets were blocked up so that there was no getting out without clearing the

way. She had a young son that lived with her, the two composing the whole family. They arose in the morning and found themselves snowed in, on every side. They made out to muster fuel enough for a little fire, and soon the boy began to inquire what they should have for breakfast. She said, "I do not know, my son; but the Lord will provide." She looked out, and nobody could pass the streets. The lad began to weep bitterly, and concluded that they should freeze and starve to death. However, she said she went on and made such preparations as she could, to provide for breakfast, if any should come. I think she said she set her table, and made arrangements for her breakfast, believing that some would come in due season. Very soon she heard a loud talking in the streets, and went to the window to see what it was, and beheld a man in a single sleigh, and some men with him shoveling the snow so that the horse could get through. Up they came to her door, and behold! they had brought her a plenty of fuel and provision, everything to make her comfortable for several days. But time would fail me to tell the instances in which she was helped in a manner as striking as this. Indeed, it was notorious through the city, so far as I could learn, that Mother Austin’s faith was like a bank; and that she never suffered for want of the necessaries of life, because she drew on God.

I never knew the number of converts at that time in Syracuse. Indeed I was never in the habit of ascertaining the number of hopeful converts.

02.31. LABORS IN WESTERN & ROME 1854-1855

CHAPTER XXXI.

LABORS IN WESTERN AND IN ROME, 1854-5.

THE next winter, at Christmas time, we went again to Western, Oneida county, where as I have already related, I commenced my labors in the autumn of 1825. The people were at this time again without a minister; and we spent several weeks there in very interesting labor, and with very marked results.

Among the striking things that occurred in the revival this time, I will mention the case of one young man. He was the son of pious parents, and had long been made the subject of prayer. His parents were prominent members of the church. Indeed, his father was one of the elders of the church; and his mother was a godly, praying woman. When I commenced my labors there, to the great surprise and grief of his parents, and of the Christian people generally, he became exceedingly bitter against the preaching, and the meetings generally, and all that was done for the promotion of the revival. He committed himself with all the strength of his will against it; and affirmed, as I was told, that neither Finney nor hell could convert him. He said many very hateful and profane things, until his parents were deeply grieved; but I am not aware that he had ever been suspected of any outward immorality.

But the Word of God pressed him from day to day, till he could stand it no longer. He came one morning to my room. His appearance was truly startling. I cannot describe it. I seldom ever saw a person whose mind had made such an impression upon his countenance. He appeared to be almost insane; and he trembled in such a manner that when he was seated, the furniture of the room was sensibly jarred by his trembling. I observed, when I took his hand, that it was very cold. His lips were blue; and his whole appearance was quite alarming. The fact is, he had stood out against his convictions as long as he could endure it. When he sat down, I said to him, "My dear young man, what is the matter with you?" "Oh," said he, "I have committed the unpardonable sin." I replied, "What makes you say so?" "Oh, said he, "I know that I have; and I did it on purpose."

He then related this fact of himself. Said he, "Several years ago a book was put into my hands called, "The pirates own book." I read it, and it produced a most extraordinary effect upon my mind. It inspired me with a kind of terrible and infernal ambition to be the greatest pirate that ever lived. I made up my mind to be at the head of all the highway robbers, and bandits, and pirates whose history was ever written. But," said he, "my religious education was in my way. The teaching and prayers of my parents seemed to rise up before me, so that I could not go forward. But I had heard that it was possible to give the Spirit of God away, and to quench His influence so that one would feel it no more. I had read also that it was possible to sear my conscience, so that would not trouble me; and after my resolution was taken, my first business was to get rid of my religious convictions, so as to be able to go on and perpetrate all manner of robberies and murders, without any compunction of conscience. I therefore set myself deliberately to blaspheme

the Holy Ghost." He then told me in what manner he did this, and what he said to the Holy Ghost; but it was too blasphemous to repeat.

He continued: "I then felt that it must be that the Spirit of God would leave me, and that my conscience would no more trouble me. After a little while I made up my mind that I would commit some crime, and see how it would affect me. There was a schoolhouse across the way from our house; and one evening I went and set it on fire. I then went to my room, and to bed. Soon, however, the fire was discovered. I arose, and mingled with the crowd that gathered to put it out; but all efforts were in vain, and it burnt to the ground." To burn a building in that way, was a state-prison offense. He was aware of this. I asked him if he had gone farther in the commission of crime. He replied, "No." And I think he added, that he did not find his conscience at rest about it, as he had expected. I asked him if he had ever been suspected of having burnt it. He replied that he did not know that he had; but that other young men had been suspected, and talked about. I asked him what he proposed to do about it. He replied that he was going to the trustees to confess it; and he asked me if I would not accompany him.

I went with him to one of the trustees, who lived near; and the young man asked me if I would not tell him the facts. I did so. The trustee was a good man, and a great friend of the parents of this young man. The announcement affected him deeply. The young man stood speechless before him. After conversing with the trustee for a little while, I said, "We will go and see the other trustees." The gentleman replied, "No, you need not go; I will see them myself, and tell them the whole story." He assured the young man that he himself would freely forgive him; and he presumed that the other trustees, and the people in the town, would forgive him, and not subject him or his parents to any expense about it.

I then returned to my room, and the young man went home. Still he was not at rest. As I was going to meeting in the evening, he met me at the door and said, "I must make a public confession. Several young men have been suspected of this thing; and I want the people to know that I did it, and that I had no accomplice, that nobody but God and myself knew it." And he added: "Mr. Finney, won’t you tell the people? I will be present, and say anything that may be necessary to say, if anybody should ask any questions; but I do not feel as it I could open my mouth. You can tell them all about it."

When the people were assembled, I arose and related to them the facts. The family was so well known, and so much beloved in the community, that the statement made a great impression. The people sobbed and wept all over the congregation. After he had made this full confession he obtained peace. Of his religious history since I know not much. I have recently learned, however, that he retained his hold upon Christ, and did not seem to backslide. He went into the army during the rebellion, and was slain at the battle of Fort Fisher.

In giving my narrative of revivals thus far, I have passed over a great number of cases of crime, committed by persons who came to me for advice, and told me the facts. In many instances in these revivals, restitution, sometimes to the amount of many thousands of dollars, was made by those whose consciences troubled them, either because they had obtained the money directly by fraud, or by some selfish overreaching in their business relations.

The winter that I first spent in Boston, resulted in making a great many such revelations. I had preached there one Sabbath in the morning upon this text: "Whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper;" and in the afternoon on the remainder of the verse: "But who so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy." I recollect that the results of those two sermons were most extraordinary. For weeks afterwards, persons of almost all ages, and of both sexes, came to me for spiritual advice, disclosing to me the fact that they had committed various frauds, and sins of almost every description. Some young men had defrauded their employers in business; and some women had stolen watches, and almost every article of female apparel. Indeed, it seemed as if the Word of the Lord was sent home with such power at that time in that city, as to uncover a very den of wickedness. It would certainly take me hours to mention the crimes that came to my personal knowledge through the confessions of those that had perpetrated them. But in every instance the persons seemed to be thoroughly penitent, and were willing to make restitution to the utmost of their ability.

But to return from this digression, to Western. The revival was of a very interesting character; and there was a goodly number of souls born to God. The conversion of one young lady there I remember with a good deal of interest. She was teaching the village school. Her father was, I believe, a skeptic; and as I understood, she was an only daughter, and a great favorite with her father. He was a man, if I was rightly informed, of considerable influence in the town, but did not at all attend our meetings. He lived on a farm away from the village. Indeed the village is very small, and the inhabitants are scattered through the valley of the Mohawk, and over the hills on each side; so that the great mass of inhabitants have to come a considerable distance to meeting.

I had heard that this young woman did not attend our meetings much, and that she manifested considerable opposition to the work. In passing the schoolhouse one day I stepped in to speak with her. At first she appeared surprised to see me come in. I had never been introduced to her, and should not have known her, if I had not found her in that place. She knew me, however, and at first appeared as if she recoiled from my presence. I took her very kindly by the hand, and told her that I had dropped in to speak with her about her soul. "My child," I said, "how is it with you? Have you given your heart to God?" This I said while I held her hand. Her head fell, and she made no effort to withdraw her hand. I saw in a moment that a subduing influence came over her, and so deep and remarkable an influence, that I felt almost assured that she would submit to God right on the spot.

The most that I expected when I went in, was to have a few words with her that I hoped might set her to thinking, and to appoint a time to converse with her more at large. But the impression was at once so manifest, and she seemed to break down in her heart so readily, that with a few sentences quietly and softly spoken to her, she seemed to give up her opposition, and to be in readiness to lay hold on the Lord Jesus Christ. I then asked her if I should say a few words to the scholars; and she said, yes, she wished I would. I did so, and then asked her if I should present herself and her scholars to God in prayer. She said she wished I would, and became very deeply affected in the presence of the school. We engaged in prayer, and it was a very solemn, melting time. The young lady from that time seemed to be subdued, and to have passed from death unto life. She did not live long before she passed, I trust, to heaven.

These two seasons of my being in Western were about thirty years apart. Another generation had come to live in that place from that which lived there in the first revival in which I labored there. I found, however, a few of the old members there. But the congregation was mostly new, and composed principally of younger people who had grown up after the first revival.

As in the case of the first revival, so in this, the people in Rome heard what was passing in Western, and came up in considerable numbers to attend our meetings. This led after a few weeks, to my going down and spending some time in Rome.

The state of religion in Western has, I believe, been very much improved since this last revival. The ordinances of the Gospel have been maintained, and I believe considerable progress has been made in the right direction.

The B's have all gone from Western, with the exception of one son and his family. That large and interesting family have melted away; but one of them being left in Western, one in Utica, and one son who was converted in the first revival there, and who has for many years been a minister, and pastor of the first Presbyterian church in Watertown, New York.

When I was at Rome the first time, and for many years after, the church was Congregational. But a few years before I was there the last time, they had settled a Presbyterian minister, a young man, and he felt that the church ought to be Presbyterian instead of Congregational. He proposed and recommended this to the church, and succeeded in bringing it about; but to the great dissatisfaction of a large number of influential persons in the church. This created a very undesirable state of things in Rome; and when I arrived there from Western I was, for the first time, made acquainted with that very serious division of feeling in the church. Their pastor had lost the confidence and affection of a considerable number of very influential members of his church.

When I learned the state of things, I felt confident that but little could be done to promote a general revival, unless that difficulty could be healed. But it had been talked over so much, and the persons first concerned in it had so committed themselves, that I labored in vain to bring about a reconciliation. It was not a thing to preach about; but in private conversation I tried to pluck up that root of bitterness. I found the parties did not view the facts alike. I kept preaching, however; and the Spirit of the Lord was poured out, conversions were occurring very frequently, and I trust great good was done.

But after endeavoring in vain to secure a union of feeling and effort such as God would approve, I made up my mind to leave them. I have heard since that some of the disaffected members of the church went and joined the church in Western, leaving the church in Rome altogether. I presume the pastor did what he deemed to be his duty in that controversy, but the consequent divisions were exceedingly painful to me, as I felt a peculiar interest in that church.

02.32. REVIVAL IN ROCHESTER 1855

CHAPTER XXXII.

REVIVAL IN ROCHESTER IN 1855.

IN the autumn of 1855, we were called again to the city of Rochester to labor for souls. At first I had no mind to go, but a messenger arrived with a pressing request, bearing the signatures of a large number of persons, both professors of religion and non-professors. After much deliberation and prayer I consented. We commenced our labors there, and it was very soon apparent that the Spirit of God was working among the people. Some Christians in that place, and especially the brother who came after me, had been praying most earnestly all summer for the outpouring of the Spirit there. A few souls had been wrestling with God until they felt that they were on the eve of a great revival.

When I stated my objections to going to labor in Rochester again, the brother who came after me set that all aside by saying, "The Lord is going to send you to Rochester, and you will go to Rochester this winter, and we shall have a great revival." I made up my mind with much hesitancy after all. But when I arrived there, I was soon convinced that it was of God. I began preaching in the different churches. The first Presbyterian church in that city was Old School, and they did not open their doors to our meeting. But the Congregational church, and the two other Presbyterian churches with their pastors, took hold of the work and entered into it with spirit and success. The Baptist churches also entered into the work at this time; and the Methodist churches labored in their own way, to extend the work. We held daily noon prayer meetings, which were largely attended, and in which a most excellent spirit prevailed.

Soon after I commenced my labors there, a request was sent to me, signed by the members of the bar and several judges--two judges of the court of appeals, and I believe one or two judges of the supreme court who resided there--asking me to preach again a course of lectures to lawyers, on the moral government of God. I complied with their request. I began my course to lawyers this time by preaching first on the text: "Commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God." I began by remarking that the text assumed that every man has a conscience. I then gave a definition of conscience, and proceeded to show what every man’s conscience does truly affirm; that every man knows himself to be a sinner against God; that therefore he knows that God must condemn him as a sinner; and that every man knows that his own conscience condemns him as a sinner. I was aware that among the lawyers were some skeptics. Indeed one of them had a few months before declared that he would never again attend a Christian meeting, that he did not believe in the Christian religion, and he would not appear to do so; that it placed him in a false position, and his mind was made up to pay no more respect to the institutions of Christianity.

I shaped my lectures from evening to evening, with the design to convince the lawyers that, if the Bible was not true, there was no hope for them. I endeavored to show that they could not infer that God would forgive them because He was good, for His goodness might prevent His forgiving

them. It might not on the whole be wise and good to pardon such a world of sinners as we know ourselves to be; that left without the Bible to throw light upon that question, it was impossible for human reason to come to the conclusion that sinners could be saved. Admitting that God was infinitely benevolent, we could not infer from that, that any sinner could be forgiven; but must infer from it, on the contrary, that impenitent sinners could not be forgiven. I endeavored to clear the way so as to shut them up to the Bible as revealing the only rational way in which they could expect salvation.

At the close of my first lecture, I heard that the lawyer to whom I have referred, who had said he would never attend another Christian meeting, remarked to a friend as he went home, that he had been mistaken, that he was satisfied there was more in Christianity than he had supposed, and he did not see any way to escape the argument to which he had listened; and furthermore that he should attend all those lectures, and make up his mind in view of the facts and arguments that should be presented.

I continued to press this point upon their attention, until I felt that they were effectually shut up to Christ, and the revelations made in the Gospel, as their only hope. But as yet, I had not presented Christ, but left them shut up under the law, condemned by their own consciences, and sentenced to eternal death. This, as I expected, effectually prepared the way for a cordial reception of the blessed Gospel. When I came to bring out the Gospel as revealing the only possible or conceivable way of salvation for sinners, they gave way, as they had done under a former course of lectures, in former years. They began to break down, and a large proportion of them were hopefully converted.

What was quite remarkable in the three revivals that I have witnessed in Rochester, they all commenced and made their first progress among the higher classes of society. This was very favorable to the general spread of the work, and to the overcoming of opposition.

There were many very striking cases of conversion in this revival, as in the revival that preceded it. The work spread and excited so much interest, that it became the general topic of conversation throughout the city and the surrounding region of country. Merchants arranged to have their clerks attend, a part of them one day, and a part the next day. The work became so general throughout the city that in all places of public resort, in stores and public houses, in banks, in the street and in public conveyances, and everywhere, the work of salvation that was going on was the absorbing topic.

Men that had stood out in the former revivals, many of them bowed to Christ in this. Some men who had been open Sabbath-breakers, others that had been openly profane, indeed, all classes of persons, from the highest to the lowest, from the richest to the poorest, were visited by the power of this revival and brought to Christ. I continued there throughout the winter, the revival increasing continually, to the last. Rev. Dr. Anderson, president of the University, engaged in the work with great cordiality, and, as I understood, a large number of the students in the University were converted at that time. The pastors of the two Baptist churches took hold of the effort, and I preached several times in their churches.

Mrs. Finney was well acquainted in Rochester, having lived there for many years, and having witnessed the two great revivals in which I had labored, that preceded this. She took an absorbing

interest in this revival, and labored, as usual, with great zeal and success. As on former occasions, I found the people of Rochester, like the noble Bereans, ready to hear the Word with all readiness of mind, and to search the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of the ladies in Rochester exerted their utmost influence to bring all classes to meeting and to Christ. Some of them would visit the stores and places of business, and use all their influence to secure the attendance, at our meetings, of the persons engaged in these establishments. Many men connected with the operations of the railroad were converted, and finally, much of the Sabbath business of the roads was suspended, because of the great religious movement in the city and among those employed upon the roads.

The blessed work of grace extended and increased until it seemed as if the whole city would be converted. As in the former revivals, the work spread from this center to the surrounding towns and villages. It has been quite remarkable that revivals in Rochester have had so great an influence upon other cities and villages far and near.

The means used to promote this revival were the same as had been used in each of the preceding great revivals. The same doctrines were preached. The same measures were used, with results in all respects similar to what had been realized in the former revivals. There was manifested, as there had previously been, an earnest and candid attention to the Word preached; a most intelligent inquiry after the truth as it really is taught in the Bible. I never preached anywhere with more pleasure that in Rochester. They are a highly intelligent people, and have ever manifested a candor, an earnestness, and an appreciation of the truth excelling anything I have seen, on so large a scale, in any other place. I have labored in other cities where the people were even more highly educated than in Rochester. But in those cities the views and habits of the people were more stereotyped; the people were more fastidious, more afraid of measures than in Rochester. In New England I have found a high degree of general education, but a timidity, a stiffness, a formality, and a stereotyped way of doing things, that has rendered it impossible for the Holy Spirit to work with freedom and power.

When I was laboring in Hartford I was visited by a minister from central New York who had witnessed the glorious revivals in that region. He attended our meetings and observed the type and progress of the work there. I said nothing to him of the formality of our prayer meetings, or of the timidity of the people in the use of measures, but he remarked to me, "Why, Brother Finney, your hands are tied, you are hedged in by their fears and by the stereotyped way of doing everything. They have even put the Holy Ghost into a strait jacket." This was strong, and to some may appear irreverent and profane, but he intended no such thing. He was a godly, earnest, humble minister of Jesus Christ, and expressed just what he saw and felt, and just what I saw and felt, that the Holy Spirit was restrained greatly in His work by the fears and the self-wisdom of the people. Indeed I must say, I do not think the people of New England can at all appreciate the restraints which they impose on the Holy Spirit, in working out the salvation of souls. Nor can they appreciate the power and purity of the revivals in those places where these fears, prejudices, restraints, and self-wisdom do not exist.

In an intelligent, educated community, great freedom may be given in the use of means, without danger of disorder.

Indeed wrong ideas of what constitutes disorder, are very prevalent. Most churches call anything disorder to which they have not been accustomed. Their stereotyped ways are God's order in their view, and whatever differs from these is disorder and shocks their ideas of propriety. But in fact nothing is disorder that simply meets the necessities of the people. In religion as in everything else, good sense and a sound discretion will, from time to time, judiciously adapt means to ends. The measures needed will be naturally suggested to those who witness the state of things, and if prayerfully and cautiously used, let great freedom be given to the influences of the Holy Spirit in all hearts.

02.33. REVIVALS IN BOSTON IN 1856-1858

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REVIVALS IN BOSTON IN 1856-57-58.

THE next autumn we accepted an invitation to labor again in Boston. We began our labors at Park street, and the Spirit of God immediately manifested His willingness to save souls. The first sermon that I preached was directed to the searching of the church; for I always began by trying to stir up a thorough and pervading interest among professors of religion; to secure the reclaiming of those that were backslidden, and search out those that were self-deceived, and if possible bring them to Christ.

After the congregation was dismissed, and the pastor was standing with me in the pulpit, he said to me, "Brother Finney, I wish to have you understand that I need to have this preaching as much as any member of this church. I have been very much dissatisfied with my religious state for a long time; and have sent for you on my own account, and for the sake of my own soul, as well as for the sake of the souls of the people." We had at different times protracted and very interesting conversations. He seemed thoroughly to give his heart to God. And one evening at a prayer and conference meeting, as I understood, he related to the people his experience, and told them that he had been that day converted.

This of course produced a very deep impression upon the church and congregation, and upon the city quite extensively. Some of the pastors thought that it was injudicious for him to make a thing of that kind so public. But I did not regard it in that light. It manifestly was the best means he could use for the salvation of his people, and highly calculated to produce among professors of religion generally a very great searching of heart.

The work was quite extensive that winter in Boston, and many very striking cases of conversion occurred. We labored there until spring, and then thought it necessary to return to our labors at home. But it was very manifest that the work in that city was by no means done; and we left with the promise that, the Lord willing, we would return and labor there the next winter. Accordingly the next autumn we returned to Boston.

In the meantime one of the pastors of the city, who had been in Europe the previous winter, had been writing some articles, which were published in the Congregationalist, opposing our return there. He regarded my theology, especially on the subject of sanctification, as unsound. This opposition produced an effect, and we felt at once that there was a jar among the Christian people. Some of the leading members of his church, who the winter before had entered heart and soul into the work, stood aloof and did not come near our meetings; and it was evident that his whole influence, which was considerable at that time in the city, was against the work. This made some of his good people very sad.

This winter of 1857-58 will be remembered as the time when a great revival prevailed throughout all the Northern states. It swept over the land with such power, that for a time it was estimated that not less than fifty thousand conversions occurred in a single week. This revival had some very peculiarly interesting features. It was carried on to a large extent through lay influence, so much so as almost to throw the ministers into the shade. There had been a daily prayer meeting observed in Boston for several years; and in the autumn previous to the great outburst, the daily prayer meeting had been established in Fulton street, New York, which has been continued to this day. Indeed, daily prayer meetings were established throughout the length and breadth of the Northern states. I recollect in one of our prayer meetings in Boston that winter, a gentleman arose and said, "I am from Omaha, in Nebraska. On my journey east I have found a continuous prayer meeting all the way. We call it," said he, "about two thousand miles from Omaha to Boston; and here was a prayer meeting about two thousand miles in extent."

In Boston we had to struggle, as I have intimated, against this divisive influence, which set the religious interest a good deal back from where we had left it the spring before. However, the work continued steadily to increase, in the midst of these unfavorable conditions. It was evident that the Lord intended to make a general sweep in Boston. Finally it was suggested that a businessmen's prayer meeting should be established, at twelve o'clock, in the chapel of the Old South church, which was very central for business men. The Christian friend, whose guests we were, secured the use of the room, and advertised the meeting. But whether such a meeting would succeed in Boston at that time, was considered doubtful. However, this brother called the meeting; and to the surprise of almost everybody the place was not only crowded, but multitudes could not get in at all. This meeting was continued, day after day, with wonderful results. The place was, from the first, too strait for them, and other daily meetings were established in other parts of the city.

Mrs. Finney held ladies' meetings daily at the large vestry of Park street. These meetings became so crowded, that the ladies would fill the room, and then stand about the door on the outside, as far as they could hear on every side.

One of our daily prayer meetings was held at Park street church, which would be full whenever it was open for prayer; and this was the case with many other meetings in different parts of the city. The population, large as it was, seemed to be moved throughout. The revival became too general to keep any account at all of the number of conversions, or to allow of any estimate being made that would approximate the truth. All classes of people were inquiring everywhere. Many of the Unitarians became greatly interested, and attended our meetings in large numbers.

This revival is of so recent date that I need not enlarge upon it, because it became almost universal throughout the Northern states. A divine influence seemed to pervade the whole land. Slavery seemed to shut it out from the South. The people there were in such a state of irritation, of vexation, and of committal to their peculiar institution, which had come to be assailed on every side, that the Spirit of God seemed to be grieved away from them. There seemed to be no place found for Him in the hearts of the Southern people at that time. It was estimated that during this revival not less than five hundred thousand souls were converted in this country.

As I have said, it was carried on very much through the instrumentality of prayer meetings, personal visitation and conversation, by the distribution of tracts, and by the energetic efforts of the laity, men and women. Ministers nowhere opposed it that I am aware of. I believe they universally

sympathized with it. But there was such a general confidence in the prevalence of prayer, that the people very extensively seemed to prefer meetings for prayer to meetings for preaching. The general impression seemed to be, "We have had instruction until we are hardened; it is time for us to pray." The answers to prayer were constant, and so striking as to arrest the attention of the people generally throughout the land. It was evident that in answer to prayer the windows of heaven were opened and the Spirit of God poured out like a flood. The New York Tribune at that time published several extras, filled with accounts of the progress of the revival in different parts of the United States.

I have said there were some very striking instances of conversion in this revival in Boston. One day I received an anonymous letter, from a lady, asking my advice in regard to the state of her soul. Usually I took no notice whatever of anonymous letters. But the handwriting, the manifest talent displayed in the letter, together with the unmistakable earnestness of the writer, led me to give it unwonted attention. She concluded by requesting me to answer it, and direct it to Mrs. M, and leave it with the sexton of the church where I was to preach that night, and she should get it. I was at this time preaching around from evening to evening in different churches. I replied to this anonymous letter, that I could not give her the advice which she sought, because I was not well enough acquainted with her history, or with the real state of her mind. But I would venture to call her attention to one fact, which was very apparent, not only in her letter but also in the fact of her not putting her name to it, that she was a very proud woman; and that fact she needed thoroughly to consider.

I left my reply with the sexton, as she requested, and the next morning a lady called to see me. As soon as she came in, she informed me that she was the lady that wrote that anonymous letter; and she had called to tell me that I was mistaken in thinking that she was proud. She said that she was far enough from that; but she was a member of the Episcopal church, and did not want to disgrace her church by revealing the fact that she was not converted. I replied, "It is church pride, then, that kept you from revealing your name." This touched her so deeply that she arose, and in a manifest excitement left the room. I expected to see her no more; but that evening I found her, after preaching, among the inquirers in the vestry. In passing around I observed this lady. She was manifestly a woman of intelligence and education, and I could perceive that she belonged to cultivated society. But as yet I did not know her name; for our conversation that morning had not lasted more than a minute or two, before she left the room as I have related. As I observed her in passing around, I remarked to her quietly, "And you here?" "Yes," she replied, and dropped her head as if she felt deeply. I had a few words of kind conversation with her, and it passed for that evening.

In these inquiry meetings I always urged the necessity of immediate submission to Christ, and brought them face to face with that duty; and I then called on such as were prepared to commit themselves unalterably to Christ, to kneel down. I observed when I made this call, that she was among the first that made a movement to kneel. The next morning she called on me again at an early hour. As soon as we were alone, she opened her mind to me and said, "I see, Mr. Finney, that I have been very proud. I have come to tell you who I am, and to give you such facts in regard to my history, that you may know what to say to me." She was, as I had supposed, a women in high life, the wife of a wealthy gentleman, who was himself a skeptic. She has made a profession of religion, but was unconverted. She was very frank in this interview, and threw her mind open to

instruction very cordially; and either at that time or immediately after, she expressed hope in Christ, and became a very earnest Christian. She is a remarkable writer, and could more nearly report my sermons, without shorthand, than any person I ever knew. She used to come and sit and write my sermons with a rapidity and an accuracy that were quite astonishing. She sent copies of her notes to a great many of her friends, and exerted herself to the utmost to secure the conversion of her friends in Boston and elsewhere. With this lady I have had much correspondence. She has always manifested that same earnestness in religion, that she did at that time. She has always some good work in hand; and is an earnest laborer for the poor, and for all classes that need her instruction, her sympathy, and her help. She has passed through many mental struggles, surrounded as she is by such temptations to worldliness. But I trust that she has been, and will be, an ornament to the church of Christ.

The revival extended from Boston to Charlestown and Chelsea. In short it spread on every side. I preached in East Boston and Charlestown; and for a considerable time in Chelsea, where the revival became very general and precious. We continued to labor in Boston that winter, until it was time for us to return to our labors at home in the spring. When we left, the work was in its full strength without any apparent abatement at all.

The church and ministry in this country had become so extensively engaged in promoting the revival, and such was the blessing of God attending the exertions of laymen as well as of ministers, that I made up my mind to return and spend another season in England, and see if the same influence would not pervade that country.

02.34. SECOND VISIT TO ENGLAND

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SECOND VISIT TO ENGLAND.

WE sailed for Liverpool in the steamer Persia, in December, 1858. Our friend Brown came to Liverpool to meet us, to induce us to labor in Houghton for a season, before we committed ourselves to any other field. Immediately on our arrival, I received a great number of letters from different parts of England, expressing great joy at our return and inviting us to come and labor in many different fields. However I spent several weeks laboring in Houghton and Saint Ives, where we saw precious revivals. In Saint Ives they had never had a revival before. In Houghton we had labored during our first visit to England, and saw a very interesting work of grace.

At this time we found at Saint Ives a very singular state of things. There was but one Independent church, the pastor of which had been there a good many years, but had not succeeded in doing much as a minister. He was a mysterious sort of man. He was very fond of wine and a great opposer of total abstinence. We held our meetings in a hall which would accommodate more people, by far, than the Congregational church. I sometimes preached, however, in the church; but it was a less desirable place to preach in than the hall, as it was a very small and incommodious house.

The revival took powerful effect there, notwithstanding the position of the minister. He stood firmly against it until the interest became so great that he left the town, and was absent, I know not where, for several weeks. Since that time the converts of the revival, together with my friend Brown, and some of the older members of the church, have put up a fine chapel, and the religious condition of the place has been exceedingly different from what it ever had been before.

Mr. Harcourt, the former pastor at Houghton, had proved himself a very successful minister, and had been called to London, to Borough Road chapel. Here I found him on my second visit to England. He had been awaiting, with anxiety, our return to England; and as soon as he heard we were there, he used most strenuous efforts to secure our labors with him in London. The church over which he presided in London, had been torn to pieces by most ultra and fanatical views on the subject of temperance. They had a lovely pastor, whose heart had been almost broken by their feuds upon that subject, and he had finally left the church in utter discouragement. Their deacons had been compelled to resign, and the church was in a sad state of disorganization. Brother Harcourt informed me that unless the church could be converted, he was satisfied he never could succeed in doing much in that field.

As soon as we could leave Saint Ives we went to London, to see what could be done in his church and congregation. We found them, as he had represented, in so demoralized a state that it seemed questionable whether the church could ever be resuscitated and built up. However we went to work, my wife among the ladies of the congregation, and I went to preaching, and searching them, to the utmost of my strength. It was very soon perceptible that the Spirit of God

was poured out, and that the church were very generally in a state of great conviction. The work deepened and spread till it reached, I believe, every household belonging to that congregation. All the old members of the church were so searched that they made confession one to another, and settled their difficulties; and Mr. Harcourt told me, before I left, that his church was entirely a new church; that the blessing of God had been universal among them so that all their old animosities were healed; and that he had the greatest comfort in them. Indeed the work in that church was really most wonderful. I directed my labors, for several weeks, to the church itself. Mr. Harcourt had been praying for them, and laboring with them, till he was almost discouraged; but the blessing at last came, in such fullness, as to meet the longings of his heart. His people were reconverted and cemented together in love, and they learned to take hold of the work themselves.

Some years after my return to this country, Mr. Harcourt came over and made us a visit. This was a little while after the death of my dear wife. He then told me that the work had continued in his church up to that time, that his people felt that if there were not more or less conversions every week, something was entirely wrong. They were frightened if the work was not perceptibly and constantly going forward. He said they stood by him, and he felt every Sabbath as if he was in the midst of a praying atmosphere. Indeed his report of the results of that revival up to the time of his leaving, was deeply interesting. Considering what the church had been, and what it was after the revival, it is no wonder that Mr. Harcourt's heart was as full as it could hold, of thanksgiving to God, for such a blessing.

In this place, as had been the case before at Dr. Campbell's, there were great revelations made of iniquity that had been covered up for a long time, among professors of religion. These cases were frequently brought to my notice by persons coming to me to ask for advice. Not only did professors of religion come, but numbers that had never made a profession of religion, who became terribly convicted of sin.

Soon after I began my labors at this time in London, a Dr. Tregelles, a distinguished literary man and professed theologian, wrote to Dr. Campbell, calling his attention to what he regarded as a great error in my theology. In treating upon the conditions of salvation, I had said in my Systematic Theology, that the atonement of Christ was one of the conditions. I said that God's infinite love was the foundation or source from which the whole movement sprung, but that the conditions upon which we could be saved, were the atonement of Christ, faith, and repentance. To this statement Dr. Tregelles took great exceptions.

Strange to tell, instead of going to my theology, and seeing just what I did say, Dr. Campbell took it up in his paper and agreed with Dr. Tregelles, and wrote several articles in opposition to what he supposed to be my views. They, both of them, strangely misunderstood my position, and got up in England, at this time, a good deal of opposition to my labors. Dr. Campbell, it appeared, after all, had no doubt of my orthodoxy. Dr. Redford insisted that my statement of the matter was right, and that any other statement was far from being right. However, I paid no attention, publicly, to Dr. Campbell's strictures on the subject. He afterwards wrote me a letter, which I have now in my possession, subscribing fully to my orthodoxy and to my views; but saying that, unfortunately, I made discriminations in my theology that common people did not understand. The fact is, a great many people understood them better than the Doctor did himself.

He had been educated in Scotland, and was, after the straitest sect, a Scotch theologian; consequently my new school statements of doctrine puzzled him, and it took him some time to understand them. I found when I first arrived in England that their theology was to a very great extent dogmatic, in the sense that it rested on authority. They had their Thirty-nine Articles in the Established church, and their Westminster Confession of faith; and these they regarded as authority. They were not at all in the habit of trying to prove the positions taken in these standards, as they were called; but dealt them out as dogmas. When I began to preach they were surprised that I reasoned with the people. Dr. Campbell did not approve it, and insisted that it would do no good. But the people felt otherwise; and it was not uncommon for me to receive such intelligence as this, that my reasonings had convinced them of what they had always doubted; and that my preaching was logical instead of dogmatic, and therefore met the wants of the people.

I had myself, before I was converted, felt greatly the want of instruction and logical preaching from the pulpit. This experience always had a great influence upon my own preaching. I knew how thinking men felt when a minister took for granted the very things that needed proof. I therefore used to take great pains to meet the wants of persons who were in this state of mind. I knew what my difficulties had been, and therefore I endeavored to meet the intellectual wants of my hearers.

I told Dr. Campbell this; but at first he had no faith that the people would understand me and appreciate my reasonings. But when he came to receive the converts, and to converse personally with them, he confessed to me again and again his surprise that they had so well understood my reasonings. "Why," he would say, "they are theologians." He was very frank, and confessed to me how erroneous his views had been upon that subject.

After I had finished my labors at Borough Road chapel, we left London and rested a few weeks at Houghton. Such was the state of my health that I thought I must return home. But Dr. F, an excellent Christian man living in Huntington, urged us very much to go to his house and finish our rest, and let him do what he could for me as a physician. We accepted his invitation and went to his house. He had a family of eight children, all unconverted. The oldest son was also a physician. He was a young man of remarkable talents, but a thorough skeptic. He had embraced Comte’s philosophy, and had settled down in extreme views of atheism, or I should say of nihilism. He seemed not to believe anything. He was a very affectionate son; but his skepticism had deeply wounded his father, and for his conversion he had come to feel an unutterable longing.

After remaining at the Doctor’s two or three weeks, without medicine, my health became such that I began to preach. There never had been a revival in Huntington, and they really had no conception of what a revival would be. I occupied what they called Temperance Hall, the only large hall in the town. It was immediately filled, and the Spirit of the Lord was soon poured out upon the people. I soon found opportunity to converse with young Dr. F. I drew him out into some long walks, and entered fully into an investigation of his views; and finally, under God, succeeded in bringing him to a perfect standstill. He saw that all his philosophy was vain. At this time I preached one Sabbath evening on the text: "The hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding places. Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." I spent my strength in searching out the refuges of lies, and exposing them; and concluded with a picture of the hailstorm, and the descending torrent of rain that swept away what the hail had not demolished. The impression on the congregation was at the

time very deep. That night young Dr. F could not sleep. His father went to his room, and found him in the greatest consternation and agony of mind. At length he became calm, and to all appearance passed from death unto life. The prayers of the father and the mother for their children were heard. The revival went through their family, and converted every one of them. It was a joyful house, and one of the most lovely families that I ever had the privilege of residing in. We remained at their house while we continued our labors in Huntington.

The revival took a very general hold of the church, and of professors of religion in that town, and spread extensively among the unconverted; and greatly changed the religious aspect of the town. There was then no Congregational church there. There were two or three churches of the Establishment, one Methodist, and one Baptist, at that time in Huntington. Since then the converts of that revival, together with Mr. Brown and his son, and those Christians that were blest in the revival, have united and built, as I understand, a commodious chapel at Huntington, as they did at St. Ives.

Mr. Brown had pushed his work of evangelization with such energy, that when I arrived in England the second time, I found that he had seven churches in as many different villages in his neighborhood, and was employing preachers, and teachers, and laborers, to the number of twenty. His means of doing good have fully kept pace with his princely outlays for souls. When I first arrived in England, he was running a hired flouring mill, with ten pairs of stones; the second time I was there, in addition to this, he was running a mill which he had built at Saint Ives, at an expense of twenty thousand pounds sterling, with sixteen pairs of stones. He afterward built, at Huntington, another mill of the same capacity. Thus God poured into his coffers as fast as he poured out into the treasury of the Lord.

From Huntington we returned to London, and labored for several weeks in the northeastern part of the city, in several chapels occupied by a branch of the Methodist church. One of the places of worship was in Spitalsfield, the house having been originally built, I think, by the Huguenots. It was a commodious place of worship, and we had a glorious work of grace there, which continued till late in the summer.

02.35. LABORS IN SCOTLAND & ENGLAND

CHAPTER XXXV.

LABORS IN SCOTLAND AND IN ENGLAND.

WHILE I was at this time in London, I was invited very urgently to visit Edinburgh in Scotland; and about the middle of August we left London and took passage by steam up the coast, through the German ocean, to Edinburgh. I had been urged to go there by the Rev. Dr. Kirk, of Edinburgh, who belonged to that portion of the church in Scotland called the Evangelical Union church. Their leading theologian was a Mr. Morrison, who presided over a theological school at Glasgow. I found Mr. Kirk an earnest man, and a great lover of revival work. This Evangelical Union, or E. U. church, as they called it, had grown out of a revival effort made in Scotland at the time of the first publication of my revival lectures in that country. A considerable number of Scotch ministers, and a much larger number of laymen, had been greatly stirred up, and had made many successful revival efforts; but had expended their strength very much in controversy upon the hyper-Calvinistic views maintained by the Scotch Presbyterians.

I remained three months in Edinburgh, preaching mostly in Mr. Kirk's church, which was one of the largest places of worship in Edinburgh. We had a very interesting revival in that place, and many souls were converted. Church members were greatly blessed, and Mr. Kirk's hands were full, day and night, of labors among inquirers. But I soon found that he was surrounded by a wall of prejudice. The Presbyterian churches were strongly opposed to this E. U. branch of the church; and I found myself hedged in, as it respected openings for labor in other churches.

Mr. Kirk was at that time not only pastor, but also professor in a theological school in Glasgow, and in addition, was editor of the Christian News, which was published at Glasgow. In that paper, from time to time, he represented my theological views, as identical with the views of their theological seminary and of their church. But on some points I found that I very considerably differed from them. Their views of faith as a mere intellectual state I could not receive. They explained away, in a manner to me utterly unintelligible, the doctrine of election; and on sundry points I found I did not agree with them. However Mr. Kirk insisted that he entirely accepted my views as he heard me preach them, and that they were the views of the E. U. church. Thus insisting that my views were identical with theirs, without intending it, he shut the doors of the other pulpits against me, and doubtless kept multitudes of persons who otherwise would have come and heard me, from our meetings.

Mrs. Finney's labors in this place were greatly blessed. Mrs. Kirk, the wife of the pastor, was a very earnest Christian lady; and she took hold with my wife, with all her might. They established a ladies' prayer meeting, which is continued to this day, reports of which have been made from year to year in the Christian News; and Mrs. Kirk has published a small volume, giving an account of the establishment and progress of that meeting. The answers to prayer that were vouchsafed there were wonderful. Requests have been sent from various parts of Scotland to them, to pray for

various places, and persons, and objects. The history of that meeting has been one of uncommon encouragement. From that sprung up similar meetings in various parts of Scotland; and these have put the women of Scotland very much in a new position, in regard to personal efforts in revivals of religion.

After remaining in Edinburgh three months, and seeing there a blessed work of grace, we accepted an invitation to go to Aberdeen; and in November we found ourselves in that city, which is near the northern extremity of Scotland. We were invited there by a Mr. Ferguson, also a minister of the E. U. church, and an intimate friend of Mr. Kirk. He had been very much irritated, and was at the time we arrived there, with the opposition that he met from the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. His congregation was still more closely hedged in by prejudice than Mr. Kirk's. He was an earnest Christian man, but had been chafed exceedingly by the opposition which had enclosed him like a wall. At first I could not get a hearing except with his own people; and I became a good deal discouraged, and so did Brother Ferguson himself.

At the time of this discouragement, Mr. Davison, a Congregational minister of Bolton, in Lancashire, wrote me a very pressing letter to come and labor with him. The state of things was so discouraging at Aberdeen that I gave him encouragement that I would go. But, in the meantime, the interest greatly increased in Aberdeen, and other ministers and churches began to feel the influence of what was going on there. The Congregational minister invited me to preach in his church for a Sabbath, which I did. A Mr. Brown, in one of the Presbyterian churches, also invited me to preach; but, at the time, my hands were too full to accept his invitation, though I intended to preach for him at another time. Before this, I should have said, that the work in Mr. Ferguson's congregation had begun, and was getting into a very interesting state. Numbers had been converted, and a very interesting change was manifestly coming over his congregation and over that city. But in the meantime, I had so committed myself to go to Bolton that I found I must go; and we left Aberdeen just before the Christmas holidays and went to Bolton.

While I was with Mr. Ferguson at Aberdeen, I was urged by his son, who was settled over one of the E. U. churches in Glasgow, to labor with him for a season. This had been urged upon me before I left Edinburgh. But I was unwilling to continue my labors longer with that denomination. Not that they were not good men, and earnest workers for God; but their controversies had brought them into such relations to the surrounding churches, as to shut me out from all sympathy and cooperation, except with those of their peculiar views. I had been accustomed, in this country, to labor freely with Presbyterians and Congregationalists; and I desired greatly to get a hearing among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of Scotland. But in laboring with the E. U. churches, I found myself in a false position. What had been said in the Christian News, and the fact that I was laboring in that denomination, led to the inference that I agreed with them in their peculiar views, while in fact I did not.

I thought it not my duty to continue any longer in this false position. I declined, therefore, to go to Glasgow. Although I regarded the brother who invited me, as one of the best of men, and his church as a godly, praying people; yet there were other godly, praying people in Glasgow, and a great many more of them than could be found in the E. U. church. I felt uneasy, as being in a position to misrepresent myself. Although I had the strongest affection for those brethren, so far as I became acquainted with them; yet I felt that in confining my labors to that denomination I was

greatly restricting my own usefulness. We therefore left Aberdeen and went by rail to Bolton, where we arrived on Christmas Eve, 1859.

Bolton is a city of about thirty thousand inhabitants, lying a few miles from Manchester. It is in the heart of the great manufacturing district of England. It lies within the circle of that immense population, that spreads itself out from Manchester, as a center, in every direction. It is estimated that at least three millions of people live within a compass of sixty miles around about Manchester.

In this place the work of the Lord commenced immediately. We were received as guests by Mr. J B. He belonged to the Methodist denomination; was a man of sterling piety, very uncertain in his views and feelings. The next evening after we arrived, he invited in a few friends for religious conversation and prayer; and among them a lady, who had been for some time in an inquiring state of mind. After we had had a little conversation we concluded to have a season of prayer. My wife knelt near this lady of whom I have spoken, and during prayer she observed that she was much asserted. As we rose from our knees, Mrs. Finney took her by the hand, and then beckoned to me across the room to come and speak with her. The lady had been brought up, as I afterwards learned, a Quakeress; but had married a man who was a Methodist. She had been for a long time uneasy about the state of her soul; but had never been brought face to face with the question of present, instantaneous submission.

I responded to the call of my wife, and went across the room and spoke with her. I saw in a moment that her distress of mind was profound. I therefore asked her if she would see me a little time, for personal conversation. She readily complied, and we crossed the hall into another room; and then I brought her face to face, at once, with the question of instant submission, and acceptance of Christ. I asked her if she would then and there renounce herself, and everything else, and give her heart to Christ. She replied, "I must do it sometime; and I may as well do it now." We knelt immediately down; and so far as human knowledge can go, she did truly submit to God. After she had submitted we returned to the parlor; and the scene between herself and her husband was very affecting. As soon as she came into the room he saw such a change manifested in her countenance, that they seemed spontaneously to clasp each other in their arms, and knelt down before the Lord.

We were scarcely seated before the son of Mr. B came into the parlor, announcing that one of the servants was deeply moved. In a very short time, that one also gave evidence of submission to Christ. Then I learned that another was weeping in the kitchen, and went immediately to her; and after a little conversation and instruction, she too appeared to give her heart to God. Thus the work had begun. Mrs. B herself had been in a doubting and discouraged state of mind for years; and she, too, appeared to melt down, and get into a different state of mind almost immediately. The report of what the Lord was doing, was soon spread abroad; and people came in daily, and almost hourly, for conversation. The first week of January had been appointed to be observed as a week of prayer, as it has been since from year to year; and the different denominations agreed to hold Union meetings during the week.

Our first meeting was in the chapel occupied by Mr. Davison, who had sent for me to come to Bolton. He was an Independent, what we in this country call a Congregationalist. His chapel was filled the first night. The meeting was opened by a Methodist minister, who prayed with great fervency, and with a liberty that plainly indicated to me that the Spirit of God was upon the

congregation, and that we should have a powerful meeting. I was invited to follow him with some remarks. I did so, and occupied a little space in speaking upon the subject of prayer. I tried to impress upon them as a fact, that prayer would be immediately answered, if they took the stumbling blocks out of the way, and offered the prayer of faith. The word seemed to thrill through the hearts of Christians. Indeed I have seldom addressed congregations upon any subject that seemed to produce a more powerful and salutary effect, than the subject of prayer. I find it so everywhere. Praying people are immediately stirred up by it, to lay hold of God for a blessing. They were in this place. That was a powerful meeting.

Through the whole of that week the spirit of prayer seemed to be increasing, and our meetings had greater and greater power. About the third or fourth day of our meetings, I should think, it fell to the turn of a Mr. Best, also a Congregational minister at Bolton, to have the meeting in his chapel. There, for the first time, I called for inquirers. After addressing the congregation for some time, in a strain calculated to lead to that point, I called for inquirers, and his vestry was thronged with them. We had an impressive meeting with them; and many of them, I trust, submitted to God.

There was a temperance hall in the city, which would accommodate more people than any of the chapels. After this week of prayer, the brethren secured the hall for preaching; and I began to preach there twice on the Sabbath, and four evenings in the week. Soon the interest became very general. The hall would be crowded every night, so that not another person could get so much as within the door. The Spirit of God was poured out copiously.

I then recommended to the brethren to canvass the whole city; to go two and two, and visit every house; and if permitted, to pray in every house in the city. They immediately and courageously rallied to perform this work. They got great numbers of bills, and tracts, and posters, and all sorts of invitations printed, and began the work of canvassing. The Congregationalists and Methodists took hold of the work with great earnestness.

The Methodists are very strong in Bolton, and always have been since the day of Wesley. It was one of Wesley’s favorite fields of labor; and they have always had there an able ministry, and strong churches. Their influence was far in the ascendancy there, over all other religious denominations. I found among them both ministers and laymen, who were most excellent and earnest laborers for Christ. But the Congregationalists too entered into the work, with great spirit and energy; and, while I remained there, at least, all sectarianism seemed to be buried. They gave the town a thorough canvassing; and the canvassers met once or twice a week to make their reports, and to consider farther arrangements for pushing the work. It was very common to see a Methodist and a Congregationalist, hand in hand, and heart in heart, going from house to house, with tracts, and praying wherever they were permitted, in every house, and warning men to flee from the wrath to come, and urging them to come to Christ.

Of course in such a state of things as this, the work would spread rapidly among the unconverted. All classes of persons, high and low, rich and poor, male and female, became interested. I was in the habit, every evening I preached, of calling upon inquirers to come forward and take seats in front of the stand. Great numbers would come forward, crowding as best they could through the dense masses that filled every nook and corner of the house. The hall was not only large on its ground floor, but had a gallery, which was always thronged. After the inquirers had come forward, we engaged in a prayer meeting, having several prayers in succession while the inquirers knelt

before the Lord.

The Methodist brethren were very much engaged, and for some time were quite noisy and demonstrative in their prayers, when sinners came forward. For some time I said nothing about this, lest I should throw them off and lead them to grieve the Spirit. I saw that their impression was, that the greater the excitement, the more rapidly would the work go forward. They therefore would pound the benches, pray exceedingly loud, and sometimes more than one at a time. I was aware that this distracted the inquirers, and prevented their becoming truly converted; and although the number of inquirers was great and constantly increasing, yet conversions did not multiply as fast as I had been in the habit of seeing them, even where the number of inquirers was much less.

After letting things pass on so for two or three weeks, until the Methodist brethren had become acquainted with me, and I with them, one evening upon calling the inquirers forward, I suggested that we should take a different course. I told them that I thought the inquirers needed more opportunity to think than they had when there was so much noise; that they needed instruction, and needed to be led by one voice in prayer, and that there should not be any confusion, or anything bordering on it, if we expected them to listen and become intelligently converted. I asked them if they would not try for a short time to follow my advice in that respect, and see what the result would be. They did so; and at first I could see that they were a little in bondage when they attempted to pray, and a little discouraged, because it so crossed their ideas of what constituted powerful meetings. However they soon seemed to recover from this, because I think they were convinced that although there was less apparent excitement in our prayer meetings, yet there were many more converted from evening to evening.

The fame of this work spread abroad, and soon persons began to come in large members from Manchester to Bolton to attend our meetings; and this, as was always the case, created a considerable excitement in that city, and a desire to have me come thither as soon as I could. However I remained in Bolton I think about three months, perhaps more. The work became so powerful that it broke in upon all classes, and every description of persons.

Brother B had an extensive cotton mill in Bolton, and employed a great many hands, men and women. I went with him down to his mill once or twice, and held meetings with his operatives. The first time we went we had a powerful meeting. I remained with them till I was much fatigued, and then returned home, leaving Brother B still to pray with, and instruct them. When he came home he reported that not less than sixty appeared clearly to be converted that evening, among his own hands. These meetings were continued till nearly all his hands expressed hope in Christ.

There were a great many very striking cases of conviction and conversion at the time. Although I kept cool myself, and endeavored to keep the people in an attitude in which they would listen to instruction, and would act understandingly in everything they did; still in some instances, persons for a few days were too much excited for the healthy action of their minds, though I do not recollect any case of real insanity.

One night as I was standing on the platform and preaching, a man in the congregation rose up and crowded his way up to the platform, and said to the congregation, "I have committed a robbery." He began to make a confession, interrupting me as I was preaching. I saw that he was overexcited; and brother Davison who sat on the platform stepped up and whispered to him, and

took him down into a sideroom and conversed with him. He found that he had committed a crime for which he was liable to be transported. He gave him advice, and I heard no more of it that evening. Afterwards the facts came more fully to my knowledge. But in a few days the man obtained a hope.

One evening I preached on confession and restitution, and it created a most tremendous movement among business men. One man told me the next day that he had been and made restitution, I think, of fifteen hundred pounds, in a case where he thought he had not acted upon the principle of loving his neighbor as himself. The consciences of men under such circumstances are exceedingly tender. The gentleman to whom I have just referred, told me that a dear friend of his had died and left him to settle his estate. He had done so, and simply received what the law gave him for his labor and expense. But he said that in hearing that sermon, it occurred to him that as a friend and a Christian brother, he could better afford to settle that estate without charging anything, than the family could afford to allow him the legal fees. The Spirit of God that was upon him led him to feel it so keenly, that he immediately went and refunded the money.

There was a case in Rochester, in New York, that I have forgotten to mention, but that may just as well be mentioned in this place, of the same kind. An extremely tender conscience led a man to see and feel keenly on the subject of acting on the principle of loving our neighbor as ourselves, and doing to others as we would that they should do to so. A man of considerable property was converted in one of the revivals in Rochester, in which I labored, who had been transacting some business for a widow lady in a village not far distant from Rochester. The business consisted in the transfer of some real estate, for which he had been paid for his services some fifteen or sixteen hundred dollars. As soon as he was converted he thought of this case; and upon reflection he thought he had not done by that widow lady and those fatherless children, as he would wish another to do by his widow and fatherless children, should he die. He therefore went over to see her, and stated to her his view of the subject as it lay before his mind. She replied that she did not see it in that light at all; that she had considered herself very much obliged to him indeed, that he had transacted her business in such a way as to make for her all she could ask or expect. She declined, therefore, to receive the money which he offered to refund.

After thinking of it a little he told her that he was dissatisfied, and wished that she would call in some of her most trustworthy neighbors, and they would state the question to them. She did so, called in some Christian friends, men of business; and they laid the whole matter before them. They said that the affair was a business transaction, and it was evident that he had transacted the business to the acceptance of the family and to their advantage; and they saw no reason why he should refund the money. He heard what they had to say; but before he left the town he called on the lady again and said, "My mind is not at ease. If I should die and leave my wife a widow and children fatherless, and a friend of mine should transact such a piece of business for them, I should feel as if he might do it gratuitously, inasmuch as it was for a widow and fatherless children." Said he, "I cannot take any other view of it than this. Whereupon he laid the money upon her table, and left."

Another case occurs to me now, which illustrates the manner in which the Spirit of God will work in the minds of men, when their hearts are open to His influence. In preaching in one of the large cities on a certain occasion, I was dwelling upon the dishonesties of business, and the

overreaching plans of men; and how they justify themselves in violations of the Golden Rule. Before I was through with my discourse, a gentleman arose in the middle of the house and asked me if he might propose a question. He then supposed a case; and after he had stated it, asked me if that case would come under the rule that I had propounded. I said, "Yes, I think that it clearly would." He sat down and said no more; but I afterwards learned that he went away and made restitution to the amount of thirty thousand dollars. I could relate great numbers of instances in which persons have been led to act in the same manner, under the powerfully searching influences of the Spirit of God.

But to return from this digression; the work went on and spread in Bolton until one of the ministers who had been engaged in directing the movement of canvassing the town, said publicly that they found that the revival had reached every family in the city; and that every family had been visited.

If we had any place of worship large enough, we should probably have had ten thousand persons in the congregations from evening to evening. All we could do was to fill the hall as full as it could be crowded, and then use such other means as we could to reach the multitudes in other places of worship.

I recollect a striking case of conversion among the great millowners there. I had been told of one of them that was a very miserly man. He had a great thirst for riches, and had been spoken of as being a very hopeless case. The revival had reached a large number of that class of men; but this man had seemed to stand out, and his worldly-mindedness and his miserly spirit had seemed to eat him up. But contrary to my expectations, and to the expectations of others, he in his turn called on me. I invited him to my room, and had a very serious conversation with him. He acknowledged to me that he had been a great miser; and that he had once said to God, that if He would give him another hundred thousand pounds, he would be willing to be eternally damned. I was very much shocked at this; but could see clearly that he was terribly convicted of the sinfulness of that state of mind.

I then repeated to him a part of the sixth chapter of Matthew, where Christ warns men against laying up treasure on earth, and recommends them to lay up treasure in heaven. I finally came to that verse: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He leaned toward me, and appeared to be as much interested as if it were all new to him. When I repeated to him this verse, he said to me, with the utmost earnestness, "Do you believe that?" I said, "Be sure I believe it. It is the Word of God." "Well then," said he, "I'll go it;" and sprang upon his feet in the utmost excitement. "If that is true," said he, "I will give up all to Christ at once." We knelt immediately down, and I presented his case to God in prayer; and he seemed to break down like a child. From that time he appeared to be a very different man. His miserly feelings all seemed to melt away. He took hold of that work like a man in earnest, and went and hired, at his own cost, a city missionary, and set him to work to win souls to Christ.

At this place, also, Mrs. Finney's meetings were very largely attended. She held them, as she always did, in the daytime; and sometimes I was informed that at her meeting of ladies, Temperance Hall would be nearly full. The Christian ladies of different denominations took hold with her and encouraged her; and great good, I trust, was done through the instrumentality of those ladies' meetings.

My wife and myself were both of us a good deal exhausted by these labors. But in April we went to Manchester. In Manchester the Congregational interest, as I was informed, rather predominates over that of other denominations. As is well-known, the manufacturing districts have a stronger democratic element than other parts of England. Congregationalism, therefore, is more prevalent in Manchester than in any other city that I visited. I had not been long there, however, before I saw that there was a great lack of mutual confidence among the brethren. I could see that there was a jar among the leaders; and frequently, to my grief, I heard expressions that indicated a want of real heart-union in the work. This I was soon convinced was a great difficulty to be overcome; and that if it could not be overcome, the work could never be as general there as it had been in Bolton. There soon was manifest a dissatisfaction with some of the men who had been selected to engineer the work, and provide for carrying on the general movement.

This grieved the Spirit and crippled the work. And although from the very first the Spirit of God attended the Word; yet the work never so thoroughly overcame the sectarian feeling and disagreements of the brethren generally, that it could spread over the city in the way it had done at Bolton. When I went to that city I expected that the Methodist and Congregational brethren would work harmoniously together, as they had at Bolton; but in this I found myself mistaken. Not only was there a want of cordiality and sympathy between the Methodists and Congregationalists; but also a great lack of confidence and sympathy among the Congregationalists themselves. However, our meetings were very interesting, and great numbers of inquirers were found on every side; and whenever a meeting was appointed for inquirers, large numbers would attend. Still what I longed to see was a general overflowing of the Spirit’s influences in Manchester, as we had witnessed in Bolton. The difficulty was, there was not a good spirit manifested at that time, by the leading men in the movement. I did not learn the cause--perhaps it was something in myself. But although I am sure that large numbers of persons were converted, for I saw and conversed with a great number myself that were powerfully convicted, and to all appearance converted; yet the barriers did not break down so as to give the Word of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord, free course among the people.

When we came away, a meeting was called for those who had been particularly blessed during those meetings; and the number in attendance was, I believe, very much larger than was expected by the ministers themselves. I am confident that they were surprised at the numbers present, and at the spirit of the meeting. Indeed I do not think that any of the ministers there were aware of the extent of the work, for they did not generally attend our meetings. They did not follow them from place to place, and were seldom seen in the meetings of inquiry. We continued in Manchester till about the first of August; and the revival continued to increase and spread up to that time.

But the strength of both myself and my wife had become exhausted, and some of the leading brethren proposed to us to suspend our labors, and go down into Wales and rest a few weeks, and then return to Manchester and resume our labors. What they proposed was, to secure a large hall, and thus to go on with our meetings in an independent way. They thought, and I thought myself, that we should secure a greater amount of good in that way than by laboring with any particular congregation. Denominational lines are much more strongly marked in that country than they are in this. It is very difficult to get people of the church of England to attend a dissenting place of worship. The Methodists will not generally and freely attend worship with other denominations. Indeed, the same is true of all denominations in England, and in Scotland. Sectarian lines are

much more distinctly drawn, and the members of the different churches keep more closely within their lines, than in this country. I am persuaded that the true way to labor for a revival movement there, is to have no particular connection with any distinct denomination; but to preach the true Gospel, and make a stand in halls, or even in streets when the weather is favorable, where no denominational feelings and peculiarities can straiten the influences of the Spirit of God.

On the second of August, 1860, we left Manchester and went down to Liverpool. A goodly number of our friends went down with us, and remained overnight. On the morning of the third, we left in the Persia for New York. We found that large numbers of our friends had assembled from different parts of England, to bid us goodbye. We took an affectionate and an affecting leave of them, and the glorious old steamer rushed out to sea, and we were on our way home.

02.36. WORK AT HOME

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WORK AT HOME.

WE had had very little rest in England for a year and a half; and those who are used to sea voyages will not wonder that I did not rest much during our voyage home. Indeed we arrived a good deal exhausted. I was myself hardly able to preach at all. However the state of things was such, and the time of year such, that I could not, as I supposed, afford to rest. There were many new students here, and strangers had been moving into the place; so that there was a large number of impenitent persons residing here at that time. The brethren were of opinion that an effort must be made immediately to revive religion in the churches, and to secure the conversion of the unconverted students. During my absence in England the congregation had become so large that the house could not, with any comfort, contain them; and after considering the matter, the church concluded to divide and form a second Congregational church. They did so; the new church worshipping in the College chapel, and the First church continuing to occupy their usual place of worship. The Second church invited me to preach a part of the time to them, in the College chapel. But that would hold scarcely more than half as many as the church; and I could not think it my duty to divide my labors, and preach part of the time to one congregation and part of the time to the other; and therefore took measures immediately to secure a revival of religion, holding our meetings at the large church. The Second church people came in, and labored as best they could; but the preaching devolved almost altogether upon myself.

We held daily prayer meetings in the church, which were largely attended. The body of the church would generally be full. At these meetings I labored hard, to secure the legitimate results of a prayer meeting judiciously managed. Besides preaching twice on Sabbath, and holding a meeting of inquiry in the evening of every Sabbath, I preached several evenings during the week. In addition to these labors I was obliged to use up my strength in conversing with inquirers, who were almost constantly visiting me when I was out of meeting. These labors increased in intensity and pressure, from week to week. The revival became very general throughout the place, and seemed to bid fair to make a clean sweep of the unconverted in the place. But after continuing these labors for four months, until I had very little rest day or night, I came home one Sabbath afternoon, from one of the most powerful and interesting meetings I ever witnessed, and was taken with a severe chill; and from that time I was confined to my bed between two and three months.

It was found in this case, as it always has been so far as my experience has gone, that the change of preaching soon let down the tone of the revival; and not suddenly, but gradually it ceased. There was not, that I am aware of, any reaction. But the conversions grew less frequent, and from week to week, the weekday meetings gradually fell off in their attendance; so that by the time I was able to preach again, I found the state of religion interesting, but not what we here call a revival of religion. However, the next summer, as has been almost universally the case, a goodly number of our students were converted, and there was a very interesting state of religion during

the season.

During the summer months there is a great pressure upon the people here. The students are engaged in preparing for the anniversaries of their various college societies, for their examinations, and for commencement; and of course during the summer term there is a great deal of excitement unfavorable to the progress of a revival of religion. We have much more of this excitement in later years than we had when we first commenced here. College societies have increased in number, and the class exhibitions and other interesting occasions have been multiplied; so that it has become more and more difficult to secure a powerful revival during the summer term. This ought not to be.

Before I went to England the last time, I saw that an impression seemed to be growing in Oberlin, that during term time we could not expect to have a revival; and that our revivals must be expected to occur during the long vacations in the winter. This was not deliberately avowed by anyone; and yet it was plain that that was coming to be the impression. But I had come to Oberlin, and resided here, for the sake of the students, to secure their conversion and sanctification; and it was only because there was so great a number of them here, which gave me so good an opportunity to work upon so many young minds in the process of education, that I had remained here from year to year. I had, frequently, almost made up my mind to leave, and give myself wholly to the work of an evangelist. But the plea always used with me had been, that we could not do so much in this country in promoting revivals anywhere, except at that season of the year when we have our long vacation; furthermore, that my health would not enable me to sustain revival labor the year round; and that, therefore, I could do more good here during the term time that is, in the spring, summer, and early autumn than I could anywhere else. This I myself believed to be true; and therefore had continued to labor here during term time, for many years after my heart strongly urged me to give up my whole time in laboring as an evangelist.

While I was last in England, and was receiving urgent letters to return, I spoke of the impression to which I have alluded, that we could not expect revivals in term time; and said, that if that was going to be the prevalent idea, it was not the place for me; for during our long vacation our students were gone, of course, and it was for their salvation principally that I remained. I had been greatly afflicted too, by finding, when an effort was made to secure the conversion of the students during term time, that the first I would know some excursion would be planned, some amusement or entertainment that would counteract all that we could do to secure the conversion of the students. I never supposed that was the design; but such was the result, in so much that previous to going to England the last time, I had become almost discouraged in making efforts to secure revivals of religion during term time. In my replies to letters received while I was in England, I was very free and full upon this point, in saying that, unless there could be a change, Oberlin was not my field of labor any longer.

Our fall term is properly our harvest here. It begins about the first of September, when we have a large number of new students, and many of these unconverted ones. I have always felt, as a good many others have, and I believe the faculty generally, that during that term was the time to secure the conversion of our new students. This was secured to a very great extent, the year that we returned. The idea that during term time we could not expect a revival of religion, seemed to be exploded, the people took hold of the work and we had a powerful revival.

Since then we have been much less hindered in our revival efforts in term time, by counteracting influences, than we had been for a few years before. Our revival efforts have taken effect among the students from year to year, because they were aimed to secure the conversion especially of the students. Our general population is a changing one, and we very frequently need a sweeping revival through the whole town, among the householders as well as the students, to keep up a healthy tone of piety. A goodly number of our students learn to work themselves in promoting revivals, and are very efficient in laboring for the conversion of their fellow students. The young men's prayer meetings have been greatly blessed. The young peoples meetings, where all meet for a general prayer meeting, have also been blessed. The efforts of brethren and sisters in the church, have been increasingly blessed from year to year. We have had more or less of a revival continually, summer and winter.

Since 1860, although continually pressed by churches, East and West, to come and labor as an evangelist, I have not dared to comply with their request. I have been able, by the blessing of God, to perform a good deal of labor here; but I have felt inadequate to the exposure and labor of attempting to secure revivals abroad.

Last winter, 1866 and 67, the revival was more powerful among the inhabitants than it had been since 1860. However, as heretofore, I broke down in the midst, and was unable to attend any more meetings. The brethren, however, went forward with the work, and it continued with great interest until spring. Thus I have brought my revival narrative down to this time, the 13th of January, 1868. Yesterday, Sabbath, we had a very solemn day in the First church. I preached all day upon resisting the Holy Ghost. At the close of the afternoon service I called first, upon all professors of religion who were willing to commit themselves against all resistance offered to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to rise up and unite with us in prayer, under the solemnity of this promise. Nearly all the professors of religion rose up without hesitation. I then called upon those that were not converted to rise up, and take the same stand. I had been endeavoring to show that they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, and had always resisted the Holy Ghost. I asked those of them who were willing to pledge themselves to do this no more, and to accept the teachings of the Holy Spirit and give themselves to Christ, also to rise up, and we would make them subjects of prayer. So far as I could see from the pulpit, nearly every person in the house stood up under these calls. We then had a very solemn season of prayer, and dismissed the meeting.

02.37. CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION.

THOSE who have read the preceding pages, will naturally inquire in reference to the closing years of a life so full of labor and of usefulness. The narrative, completed with the beginning of 1868, leaves Mr. Finney still pastor of the First church in Oberlin, and lecturer in the seminary. The responsibilities of pastor he continued to sustain, with the help of his associate, some four or five years longer, preaching, as his health would admit, usually once each Sabbath. At the same time, as professor of Pastoral Theology, he gave a course of lectures each summer term, on the pastoral work, on Christian experience, or on revivals. He resigned the pastorate in 1872, but still retained his connection with the seminary, and completed his last course of lectures in July 1875, only a few days before his death. He preached, from time to time, as his strength permitted; and during the last month of his life, he preached one Sabbath morning in the First church, and another in the Second.

Notwithstanding the abundant and exhausting labors of his long public life, the burden of years seemed to rest lightly upon him. He still stood erect, as a young man, retained his faculties to a remarkable degree, and exhibited to the end the quickness of thought, and feeling, and imagination, which always characterized him. His life and character perhaps never seemed richer in the traits and the beauty of goodness, than in these closing years and months. His public labors were of course very limited, but the quiet power of his life was felt as a benediction upon the community, which, during forty years, he had done so much to guide and mold and bless.

His last day on earth was a quiet Sabbath, which he enjoyed in the midst of his family, walking out with his wife at sunset, to listen to the music, at the opening of the evening service in the church near by. Upon retiring he was seized with pains which seemed to indicate some affection of the heart; and after a few hours of suffering, as the morning dawned, he died, August 16th, 1875, lacking two weeks of having completed his eighty-third year.

The foregoing narrative gives him chiefly in one line of his work, and one view of his character. It presents him in the ruling purpose, and even passion of his life, as an evangelist, a preacher of righteousness. His work as a theologian, a leader of thought, in the development and expression of a true Christian philosophy, and as an instructor, in quickening and forming the thought of others, has been less conspicuous, and in his own view doubtless entirely subordinate; but in the view of many, scarcely less fruitful of good to the church and the world. To set forth the results of his life in these respects, would require another volume, which will probably never be written; but other generations will reap the benefits, without knowing the source whence they have sprung.

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THE END.

03.00. LECTURES TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

LECTURES

TO

PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

BY THE

REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY,

DELIVERED IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

IN THE YEARS 1836 AND 1837.

FROM NOTES BY THE EDITOR OF THE NEW-YORK EVANGELIST.

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

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NEW YORK:

JOHN S. TAYLOR, BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL,

OPPOSITE THE CITY HALL.

- - - -

1837.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1837,

by CHARLES G. FINNEY & JOSHUA LEAVITT,

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This is 100% Finney with no deletions or additions. It is from the original first edition printed in 1837. These lectures were edited and proofed from photocopies from the original book. My many thanks to Bill Mann, Michael and Pam Burns, Bob Borer, Paul J. DiBartolo, Eugene Detweiler, Sheila Rose, Daniel F. Smith, John Hempstead, Tom Shadle, Tim Brown and Ron Jensen for all their hard work.

My special thanks to Robert Wynn who edited the whole series and without all his hard work these lectures would not exist.

Reformatted by Katie Stewart This lecture was typed in by Chris Delk.

03.000. PREFACE

PREFACE. As these Lectures occupied from an hour and a quarter to an hour and three quarters in the delivery, it will be seen by their length, as here given, that the reporter took down but little more than a full skeleton of them. I have made but very slight alterations and additions in revising them, for the following reasons:

1. Their publication was determined on too late, so that I had very little time.

2. My ill health and multiplied duties forbade.

3. To have enlarged them much would have swelled the volume beyond the contemplated size.

4. From experience I have learned that the conversational and condensed style in which they were reported, is more interesting and edifying to common readers, than a more elevated and less laconic style.

I have, therefore, left them as they were reported, with a few verbal and trifling alterations.

The author of the Lectures has no claim to literary merit; and, if he knows his own heart, has no desire that the Lectures should be anything else than useful.

I have reason to believe that, upon the whole, they will be as much so in their present as under any other form I could give them, circumstanced as I am.

As my friends wish to have them in a volume, they must take them as they are.

C. G. FINNEY

New York, 16th March 1837.

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Chapter 48

03.01. BOUND TO KNOW YOUR TRUE CHARACTER

BOUND TO KNOW YOUR TRUE CHARACTER.

TEXT:--"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves"-- 2Co 13:5.

In speaking from this text I design to pursue the following order:

I. Show what is intended by the requirement in the text.

II. The necessity of this requirement.

III. The practicability of the duty enjoined.

IV. Give some directions as to the manner of performing the duty.

I. I am to show what is intended by the requirement in the text, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

It requires that we should understand our own hearts, that we should take the proper steps to make proof of our real characters, as they appear in the sight of God. It refers not to a trial or proof of our strength, or knowledge, but our moral character, that we should thoroughly test it, so as to understand it as it is. It implies that we should know how God regards us, and what He thinks of us, whether He considers us saints or sinners. It is nothing less than a positive command, that we should ascertain our own true character, and settle the question definitely for ourselves, whether we are saints or sinners, heirs of heaven or heirs of hell.

II. I am to show the necessity of this requirement.

1. It is indispensable to our own peace of mind, that we should prove and ascertain our true character, as it is in the sight of God.

The individual who is uncertain as to his real character, can have no such thing as settled peace of mind. He may have apathy, more or less complete and perfect, but apathy is very different from peace. And very few professors of religion, or persons who continue to hear the gospel, can have such apathy for any length of time, as to suppress all uneasy feelings, at being uncertain respecting their true character and destiny. I am not speaking of hypocrites, who have seared their consciences, or of scoffers who may be given up of God. But in regard to others, it is strictly true that they must have this question settled in order to enjoy peace of mind.

2. It is essential to Christian Honesty.

A man who is not truly settled in his mind as to his own character is hardly honest in religion. If he makes a profession of religion when he does not honestly believe himself a saint, who does not know that that is not exactly honest? He is half a hypocrite, at heart. So when he prays, he is always in doubt whether his prayers are acceptable, as coming from a child of God.

3. A just knowledge of one’s own character is indispensable to usefulness.

If a person has always to agitate this question in his mind,"Am I a Christian?"---if he has to be always anxiously looking at his own estate all the while, and doubtful how he stands, it must be a great hindrance to his usefulness. If when he speaks to sinners, he is uncertain whether he is not himself a sinner, he cannot exhort with that confidence and simplicity, that he could if he felt his own feet on a rock. It is a favorite idea with some people, that it is best for saints to be always in the dark, to keep them humble. Just as if it was calculated to make a child of God proud to know that he is a child of God. Whereas, one of the most weighty considerations in the universe to keep him from dishonoring God is, to know that he is a child of God. When a person is in an anxious state of mind, he can have but little faith, and his usefulness cannot be extensive till the question is settled.

III. The practicability of this requirement.

It is a favorite idea with some, that in this world the question never can be settled. It is amazing what a number of persons there are, that seem to make a virtue of their great doubts, which they always have, whether they are Christians. For hundreds of years it has been looked upon by many as a suspicious circumstance, if a professor of religion is not filled with doubts. It is considered as almost a certain sign, he knows nothing of his own heart. One of the universal questions put to candidates for admission has been, "Have you any doubts of your good estate?" And if the candidate answers, "O, yes, I have great doubts," that is all very well, and is taken as evidence that he is spiritual, and has a deep acquaintance with his own heart, and has a great deal of humility. But if he has no doubts, it is taken as evidence that he knows little of his own heart, and is most probably a hypocrite. Over against all this, I maintain that the duty enjoined in the text is a practicable duty, and that Christians can put themselves to such a proof, as to know their own selves, and have a satisfactory assurance of their real character.

1. This is evident from the command in the text, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Will any one believe that God requires us to examine ourselves, and prove ourselves, and see what is our true character, when he knows it to be impossible for us ever to learn our true character?

2. We have the best possible medium of proof, to try ourselves, and prove our character, and that is our consciousness.

Consciousness gives the highest possible certainty as to the facts by which our characters are to be determined, and the great question is settled, What is our state before God? We may have, and ought to have, the same kind of evidence of our state before God as we have of our existence; and that is, consciousness. Nay, we cannot help having the evidence. Consciousness is continually testifying what are our states of mind, and it only needs for us to take notice of what consciousness testifies, and we can settle the question as certainly as we can our own existence.

3. God gives men such constant opportunities to act out what is in their hearts, that nothing but negligence can prevent their coming to a decision of the matter.

If men were shut up in dungeons, where they had no opportunity to act, and no chance of being influenced by circumstances, and no way to develop the state of their hearts, they would not be so

much to blame for not knowing themselves. But God has placed them in the circumstances in which they are in this life on purpose, as He said to the children of Israel, to prove them, and to know what is in their hearts, and whether they will keep His commandments or no. The things around us must produce an impression on our minds, and lead us to feel and act in some way. And this affords opportunities of self-knowledge, when we see how we feel and how we are inclined to act in such diversified circumstances.

4. We are further qualified to trust our own true characters, by having a perfect rule to try them by.

The law of God is a true standard by which to try our characters. We know exactly what that is, and we have therefore an infallible and an invariable rule by which to judge of ourselves. We can bring all our feelings and actions to this rule, and compare them with this standard, and know exactly what is their true character in the sight of God, for God himself tries them by the same standard.

5. Our circumstances are such that nothing but dishonesty can possibly lead us to self-deception.

The individual who is self-deceived is not only careless and negligent, but decidedly dishonest, or he would not deceive himself. He must be to a great degree prejudiced by pride, and blinded by self-will, or he could not but know that he is not what he professes to be. The circumstances are so many and so various, that call forth the exercises of his mind, that it must be willful blindness that is deceived. If they never had any opportunities to act, or if circumstances did not call forth their feelings, they might be ignorant. A person who had never seen a beggar, might not be able to tell what were his true feelings towards beggars. But place him where he meets beggars every day, and he must be willfully blind or dishonest, if he does not know the temper of his heart towards a beggar.

IV. I will mention a few things as to the manner of performing this duty.

First. Negatively.

I. It is not done by waiting for evidence to come to us.

Many seem to wait, in a passive attitude, for the evidence to come to them, to decide whether they are Christians or not. They appear to be waiting for certain feelings to come to them. Perhaps they pray about it; perhaps they pray very earnestly, and then wait for the feelings to come which will afford them satisfactory evidence of their good estate. Many times they will not do anything in religion till they get this evidence, and they sit and wait, and wait, in vain expectation that the Spirit of God will come some time or other, and lift them out of this slough, while they remain thus passive and stupid. They may wait till doomsday and never get it in this way.

2. Not by any direct attempt to force the feelings into exercise which are to afford the evidence.

The human mind is so constituted, that it never will feel by trying to feel. You may try as hard as you please, to feel in a particular way. Your efforts to put forth feelings are totally unphilosophical and absurd. There is now nothing before the mind to produce emotion or feeling. Feeling is always awakened in the mind by the mind’s being intensely fixed on some object calculated to awaken feeling. But when the mind is fixed, not upon the object, but on direct attempts to put forth feeling, this will not awaken feeling. It is impossible. The attention must be taken up with the object

calculated to awaken feeling, or there will be no feeling. You may as well shut up your eyes and attempt to see, or go into a dark room. In a dark room there is no object to awaken the sense of sight, and you may EXERT yourself, and strain your eyes, and try to see, but you will see nothing. When the mind's attention is taken up with looking inward, and attempting to examine the nature of the present emotion, that emotion at once ceases to exist, because the attention is no longer fixed on the object that causes the emotion. I hold my hand before this lamp, it casts a shadow; but if I take the lamp away, there is no shadow; there must be light to produce a shadow. It is just so certain that if the mind is turned away from the object that awakens emotion, the emotion ceases to exist. The mind must be fixed on the object, not on the emotion, or there will be no emotion, and consequently no evidence.

3. You will never get evidence by spending time in mourning over the state of your heart.

Some people spend their time in nothing but complaining, "O, I don't feel, I can't feel, my heart is so hard." What are they doing? Nothing but mourning and crying because they don't feel. Perhaps they are trying to work themselves up into feeling! Just as philosophical as trying to fly. While they are mourning all the while, and thinking about their hard hearts, and doing nothing, they are the ridicule of the devil. Suppose a man should shut himself out from the fire and then go about complaining how cold he is, the very children would laugh at him. He must expect to freeze, if he will shut himself out from the means of warmth. And all his mourning and feeling bad will not help the matter.

Second. Positively. What must be done in this duty?

If you wish to test the true state of your heart with regard to any object, you must fix your attention on that object. If you wish to test the power or accuracy of sight, you must apply the faculty to the object, and then you will test the power and state of that faculty. You place yourself in the midst of objects, to test the state of your eyes, or in the midst of sounds, if you wish to test the perfectness of your ears. And the more you shut out other objects that excite the other senses, and the more strongly you fasten your minds on this one, the more perfectly you test the keenness of your vision, or the perfectness of your hearing. A multiplicity of objects is liable to distract the mind. When we attend to any object calculated to awaken feeling, it is impossible not to feel. The mind is so constituted that it cannot but feel. It is not necessary to stop and ask, "Do I feel?" Suppose you put your hand near the fire, do you need to stop and ask the question, "Do I really feel the sensation of warmth?" You know, of course, that you do feel. If you pass your hand rapidly by the lamp, the sensation may be so slight as not to be noticed, but is none the less real, and if you paid attention strictly enough, you would know it. Where the impression is slight, it requires an effort of attention to notice your own consciousness. So the passing feeling of the mind may be so slight as not to occupy your thoughts, and thus may escape your notice, but it is not the less real. But hold your hand in the lamp a minute, and the feeling will force itself upon your notice, whatever be your other occupations. If the mind is fixed on an object calculated to excite emotions of any kind, it is impossible not to feel those emotions in a degree; and if the mind is intently fixed, it is impossible not to feel the emotions in such a degree as to be conscious that they exist. These principles will show you how we are to come at the proof of our characters, and know the real state of our feelings towards any object. It is by fixing our attention on the object till our emotions are so excited that we become conscious what they are.

I will specify another thing that ought to be borne in mind. Be sure the things on which your mind is fixed, and on which you wish to test the state of your heart are realities.

There is a great deal of imaginary religion in the world, which the people who are the subjects of it mistake for real. They have high feelings, their minds are much excited, and the feeling corresponds with the object contemplated. But here is the source of the delusion---the object is imaginary. It is not that the feeling is false or imaginary. It is real feeling. It is not that the feeling does not correspond with the object before the mind. It corresponds perfectly. But the object is a fiction. The individual has formed a notion of God, or of Jesus Christ, or of salvation, that is altogether aside from the truth, and his feelings in view of these imaginations are such as they would be towards the true objects, if he had true religion, and so he is deluded. Here is undoubtedly a great source of the false hopes and professions in the world.

V. I will now specify a few things on which it is your duty to try the state of your minds.

1. Sin---not your own particular sins, but sin itself, as an outrage committed against God.

You need not suppose you will get at the true state of your hearts, merely by finding in your mind a strong feeling of disapprobation of sin. This belongs to the nature of an intelligent being, as such. All intelligent beings feel a disapprobation of sin, when viewed abstractly, and without reference to their own selfish gratification. The devil, no doubt, feels it. The devil no more feels approbation for sin, when viewed abstractly, than Gabriel. He blames sinners, and condemns their conduct, and whenever he has no selfish reason for being pleased at what they do, he abhors it. You will often find in the wicked on earth a strong abhorrence of sin. There is not a wicked man on earth, that would not condemn and abhor sin, in the abstract. The mind is so constituted, that sin is universally and naturally and necessarily abhorrent to right reason and to conscience. Every power of the mind revolts at sin. Man has pleasure in them that commit iniquity, only when he has some selfish reason for wishing them to commit it. No rational being approves of sin, as sin.

But there is a striking difference between the constitutional disapprobation of sin, as an abstract thing, and that hearty detestation and opposition that is founded on love to God. To illustrate this idea. It is one thing for that youth to feel that a certain act is wrong, and quite another thing to view it as an injury to his father. Here is something in addition to his former feeling. He has not only indignation against the act as wrong, but his love to his father produces a feeling of grief that is peculiar. So the individual who loves God feels not only a strong disapprobation of sin, as wrong, but a feeling of grief mingled with indignation when he views it as committed against God.

If, then, you want to know how you feel towards sin, how do you feel when you move round among sinners, and see them break God’s law? When you hear them swear profanely, or see them break the Sabbath, or get drunk, how do you feel? Do you feel as the Psalmist did when he wrote, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word?" So he says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." And again, "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law."

2. You ought to test the state of your hearts towards your own sins.

Look back on your past sins, call up your conduct in former times, and see whether you do cordially condemn it and loathe it, and feel as an affectionate child would feel, when he remembers

how he has disobeyed or dishonored a beloved parent. It is one thing to feel a strong conviction that your former conduct was wicked. It is quite another thing to have this feeling attended with strong emotions of grief, because it was sin against God. Probably there are few Christians who have not looked back upon their former conduct towards their parents with deep emotion, and thought how a beloved father and an affectionate mother have been disobeyed and wronged; and who have not felt, in addition to a strong disapprobation of their conduct, a deep emotion of grief, that inclined to vent itself in weeping, and perhaps did gush forth in irrepressible tears. Now this is true repentance towards a parent. And repentance towards God is the same thing, and if genuine, it will correspond in degree to the intensity of attention with which the mind is fixed on the subject.

3. You want to test your feelings towards impenitent sinners.

Then go among them, and converse with them, on the subject of their souls, warn them, see what they say, and how they feel, and get at the real state of their hearts, and then you will know how you feel towards the impenitent. Do not shut yourself up in your closet and try to imagine an impenitent sinner. You may bring up a picture of the imagination that will affect your sympathies, and make you weep and pray. But go and bring your heart in contact with the living reality of a sinner, reason with him, exhort him, find out his cavils, his obstinacy, his insincerity, pray with him if you can. You cannot do this without waking up emotions in your mind, and if you are a Christian, it will wake up such mingled emotions of grief, compassion and indignation, as Jesus Christ feels, and as will leave you no room to doubt what is the state of your heart on this subject. Bring your mind in contact with sinners, and fix it there, and rely on it you will feel.

4. You want to prove the state of your mind towards God.

Fix your thoughts intently on God. And do not set yourselves down to imagine a God after your own foolish hearts, but take the Bible and learn there what is the true idea of God. Do not fancy a shape or appearance, or imagine how He looks, but fix your mind on the Bible description of how He feels and what He does, and what He says, and you cannot but feel. Here you will detect the real state of your heart. Nay, this will constitute the real state of your heart, which you cannot mistake.

5. Test your feelings toward Christ.

You are bound to know whether you love the Lord Jesus Christ or not. Run over the circumstances of His life, and see whether they appear as realities to your mind, His miracles, His sufferings, His lovely character, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession now at the right hand of the throne of God. Do you believe all these? Are they realities to your mind? What are your feelings in view of them? When you think of His willingness to save, His ability to save, His atoning death, His power, if these things are realities to you, you will have feelings, of which you will be conscious, and concerning which there will be no mistake.

6. What are your feelings towards the saints?

If you wish to test your heart on this point, whether you love the saints, do not let your thoughts run to the ends of the earth, but fix your mind on the saints by you, and see whether you love them, whether you desire their sanctification, whether you really long to have them grow in grace, whether you can bear them in your heart to the throne of grace in faith, and ask God to bestow

blessings on them.

7. So in regard to revivals.

You wish to know what is the state of your feelings toward revivals, then read about them, think about them, fix your mind on them, and you cannot but have feelings that will evince the state of your heart. The same is true of the heathen, of the slaves, of drunkards, of the Bible, of any object of pious regard. The only way to know the state of your heart is to fix your mind on the reality of those things, till you feel so intensely that there is no mistaking the nature of your feelings.

Should you find a difficulty in attending to any of these objects sufficiently to produce feeling, it is owing to one of two reasons, either your mind is taken up with some other parts of religion, so as not to allow of such fixed attention to the specified object, or your thoughts wander with the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth. The former is sometimes the case, and I have known some Christians to be very much distressed because they did not feel so intensely as they think they ought on some subjects. Their own sins, for instance. A person's mind may be so much taken up with anxiety and labor and prayer for sinners, that it requires an effort to think enough about his own soul to feel deeply, and when he goes on his knees to pray about his own sins, that sinner with whom he has been talking comes right up before his mind, and he can hardly pray for himself. It is not to be regarded as evidence against you, if the reason why you do not feel on one subject in religion is because your feelings are so engrossed about another, of equal importance. But if your thoughts run all over the world, and that is the reason you do not feel deeply enough to know what is your true character, if your mind will not come down to the Bible, and fix on any object of religious feeling, lay a strong hand on yourself, and fix your thoughts with a death-grasp, till you do feel. You can command your thoughts: God has put the control of your mind in your own hands. And in this way, you can control your own feelings, by turning your attention upon the object you wish to feel about. Bring yourself, then, powerfully and resolutely, to that point, and give it not over till you fasten your mind to the subject, and till the deep fountains of feeling break up in your mind, and you know what is the state of your heart, and understand your real character in the sight of God.

REMARKS.

1. Activity in religion is indispensable to self-examination.

An individual can never know what is the true state of his heart, unless he is active in the duties of religion. Shut up in his closet, he never can tell how he feels towards objects that are without, and he never can feel right towards them until he goes out and acts. How can he know his real feelings towards sinners, if he never brings his mind in contact with sinners? He goes into his closet, and his imagination may make him feel, but it is a deceitful feeling, because not produced by a reality. If you wish to test the reality of your feelings towards sinners, go out and warn sinners, and then the reality of your feelings will manifest itself.

2. Unless persons try their hearts by the reality of things, they are constantly subject to delusion, and are all the time managing to delude themselves.

Suppose an individual shut up in a cloister, shut out from the world of reality, and living in a world of imagination. He becomes a perfect creature of imagination. So it is in religion, with those who

do not bring their mind in contact with realities. Such persons think they love mankind, and yet do them no good. They imagine they abhor sin, and yet do nothing to destroy it. How many persons deceive themselves, by an excitement of the imagination about missions, for instance; how common it is for persons to get up a great deal of feeling, and hold prayer meetings for missions, who really do nothing to save souls. Women will spend a whole day at a prayer meeting to pray for the conversion of the world, while their impenitent servant in the kitchen is not spoken to all day, and perhaps not in a month, to save her soul. People will get up a public meeting, and talk about feeling for the heathen, when they are making no direct efforts for sinners around them. This is all a fiction of the imagination. There is no reality in such a religion as that. If they had real love of God, and love of souls, and real piety, the pictures drawn by the imagination about the distant heathen would not create so much more feeling than the reality around them.

It will not do to say, it is because their attention is not turned towards sinners around them. They hear the profane oaths, and see the Sabbath breaking and other vices, as a naked reality before their eyes, everyday. And if these produce no feeling, it is in vain to pretend that they feel as God requires for sinners in heathen lands, or anywhere. Nay, take this very individual, now so full of feeling for the heathen, as he imagines, and place him among the heathen, transport him to the Friendly Islands, or elsewhere, away from the fictions of imagination, and in the midst of the cold and naked reality of heathenism, and all his deep feeling is gone. He may write letters home about the abominations of the heathen, and all that, but his feeling about their salvation is gone. You hear people talk so about the heathen, who have never converted a soul at home, rely upon it that is all imagination. If they do not promote revivals at home, where they understand the language, and where they have direct access to their neighbors, much less can they be depended on to promote the real work of religion on heathen ground. The churches ought to understand this, and keep it in mind in selecting men to go on foreign missions. They ought to know that if the naked reality at home does not excite a person to action, the devil would only laugh at a million such missionaries.

The same delusion often manifests itself in regard to revivals. There is an individual who is a great friend to revivals. But mark; they are always the revivals of former days, or of revivals in the abstract, or distant revivals, or revivals that are yet to come. But as to any present revival, he is always aloof and doubtful. He can read about the revivals in President Edward’s day, or in Scotland, or Wales, and be greatly excited and delighted. He can pray, "O Lord, revive thy work, O Lord, let us have such revivals, let us have a pentecost season, when thousands shall be converted in a day." But get him into the reality of things, and he never happens to see a revival in which he can take any interest, or feel real complacency. He is friendly to the fictitious imaginings of his own mind, he can create a state of things that will excite his feelings, but no naked reality ever brings him out to cooperate in actually promoting a revival.

In the days of our Savior, the people said, and no doubt really believed, that they abhorred the doings of those who persecuted the prophets. They said, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them of the blood of the prophets." No doubt they wondered that people could be so wicked as to do such things. But they had never seen a prophet, they were moved simply by their imagination. And as soon the Lord Jesus Christ appeared, the greatest of prophets, on whom all the prophecies centered, they rejected Him, and finally put Him to death with as much cold-hearted cruelty as ever their fathers had killed a

prophet. "Fill ye up," says our Savior, "the measure of your fathers, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth."

Mankind have always, in every age of the world, fallen in love with fictions of their own imagination, over which they have stumbled into hell. Look at the Universalist. He imagines a God that will save everybody, at any rate, and a heaven that will accommodate everybody; and then he loves the God he has made and the heaven he has imagined, and perhaps will even weep with love. His feelings are often deep, but they are all delusive, because excited by fiction and not by truth.

3. The more an individual goes out from himself, and makes things not belonging to himself the subject of thought, the more piety he will have, and the more evidence of his piety.

Religion consists in love, in feeling right and doing right, or doing good. If therefore you wish to have great piety, don’t think of having it by cultivating it in a way which never caused piety to grow; that is, by retiring into a cloister and withdrawing from contact with mankind.---If the Lord Jesus Christ had supposed such circumstances to be favorable to piety, He would have directed them so. But He knew better. He has therefore appointed circumstances as they are, so that His people may have a thousand objects of benevolence, a thousand opportunities to do good. And if they go out of themselves and turn their hearts upon these things, they cannot fail to grow in piety, and to have their evidences increasing and satisfactory.

4. It is only in one department of self-examination that we can consistently shut ourselves up in the closet to perform the duty. That is when we want to look back and calmly examine the motives of our past conduct. In such cases it is often necessary to abstract our thoughts and keep out other things from our minds, to turn our minds back and look at things we have done and the motives by which we were actuated. To do this effectually it is often necessary to resort to retirement, and fasting, and prayer. Sometimes it is impossible to wake up a lively recollection of what we wish to examine, without calling in the laws of association to our aid. We attempt to call up past scenes, and all seems to be confusion and darkness, until we strike upon some associated idea, that gradually brings the whole fresh before us. Suppose I am to be called as a witness in court concerning a transaction, I can sometimes regain a lively recollection of what took place, only by going to the place, and then all the circumstances come up, as if but of yesterday. So we may find in regard to the re-examination of some part of our past history, that no shutting ourselves up will bring it back, no protracted meditation, or fasting, or prayer, till we throw ourselves into some circumstances that will wake up the associated ideas, and thus bring back the feelings we formerly had.

Suppose a minister wishes to look back and see how he felt, and the spirit with which he had preached years ago. He wishes to know how much real piety there was in his labors. He might get at a great deal in his closet on his knees, by the aid of the strong influences of the Spirit of God. But he will come at it much more effectually by going to the place, and preaching there again. The exact attitude in which his mind was before, may thus recur to him and stand in strong reality before his mind.

5. In examining yourselves, be careful to avoid expecting to find all the graces of the Christian in exercise in your mind at once.

This is contrary to the nature of mind. You ought to satisfy yourselves, if you find the exercises of your mind are right, on the subject that is before your mind. If you have wrong feelings at the time, that is another thing. But if you find that the emotions at the time are right, do not draw a wrong inference, because some other right emotion is not in present exercise. The mind is so constituted, that it can only have one train of emotions at a time.

6. From this subject you see why people often do not feel more than they do.

They are taking a course not calculated to produce feeling. They feel, but not on the right subjects. Mankind always feel on some subjects, and the reason why they do not feel deeply on religious subjects is, because their attention is not deeply fixed on these subjects.

7. You see the reason why there is such a strange diversity in the exercises of real Christians.

There are some Christians whose feelings, when they have any feeling, are always of the happy kind. There are others whose feelings are always of a sad and distressing kind. They are in almost constant agony for sinners. The reason is, that their thoughts are directed to different objects. One class are always thinking of the class of objects calculated to make them happy; the other are thinking of the state of the church, or the state of sinners, and weighed down as with a burden, as if they had a mountain on their shoulders. Both may be religious, both classes of feelings are right, in view of the objects at which they look. The apostle Paul had continual heaviness and sorrow of heart on account of his brethren. No doubt he felt right. The case of his brethren, who had rejected the Savior, was so much the object of his thoughts, the dreadful wrath that they had brought upon themselves, the doom that hung over them, was constantly before his mind, and how could he be otherwise than sad?

8. Observe the influence of these two classes of feelings in the usefulness of individuals.

Show me a very joyful and happy Christian, and he is not generally a very useful Christian. Generally, such are so taken up with enjoying the sweets of religion, that they do but little. You find a class of ministers, who preach a great deal on these subjects, and make their pious hearers very happy in religion, but such ministers are seldom instrumental in converting many sinners, however much they may have refreshed and edified and gratified saints. On the other hand you will find men who are habitually filled with deep agony of soul in view of the state of sinners, and these men will be largely instrumental in converting men. The reason is plain. Both preached the truth, both preached the gospel, in different proportions, and the feelings awakened correspond with the views they preached. The difference is, that one comforted the saints, the other converted sinners.

You may see a class of professors of religion who are always happy, and they are lovely companions, but they are very seldom engaged in pulling sinners out of the fire. You find others always full of agony for sinners, looking at their state, and longing to have souls converted. Instead of enjoying the antepast of heaven on earth, they are sympathizing with the Son of God when He was on earth, groaning in His spirit, and spending all night in prayer.

9. The real revival spirit is a spirit of agonizing desires and prayer for sinners.

10. You see how you may account for your own feelings at different times.

People often wonder why they feel as they do. The answer is plain. You feel so, because you think so. You direct your attention to those objects which are calculated to produce those feelings.

11. You see why some people's feelings are so changeable.

There are many whose feelings are always variable and unsteady. That is because their thoughts are unsteady. If they would fix their thoughts, they would regulate their feelings.

12. You see the way to beget any desired state of feeling in your own mind, and how to beget any desired state of feeling in others.

Place the thoughts on the subject that is calculated to produce those feelings, and confine them there, and the feelings will not fail to follow.

13. There are multitudes of pious persons who dishonor religion by their doubts.

They are perpetually talking about their doubts, and they take up a hasty conviction that they have no religion. Whereas, if instead of dwelling on their doubts they will fix their minds on other objects, on Christ for instance, or go out and seek sinners, and try to bring them to repentance, rely upon it, they will feel, and feel right, and feel so as to dissipate their doubts.

Remember, you are not to wait till you feel right before you do this. Perhaps some things that I said to this church have not been rightly understood. I said you could do nothing for God unless you felt right. Do not therefore infer, that you are to sit still and do nothing till you are satisfied that you do feel right. But place yourself in circumstances to make you feel right, and go to work. On one hand, to bustle about without any feeling is no way, and on the other hand, to shut yourself up in your closet and wait for feeling to come, is no way. Be sure to be always active. You never will feel right otherwise. And then keep your mind constantly under the influence of those objects that are calculated to create and keep alive Christian feelings.

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END OF THE LECTURES IN 1836.

03.02. CHRIST THE HUSBAND OF THE CHURCH

CHRIST THE HUSBAND OF THE CHURCH.

TEXT:--"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."--- Rom 7:4

In the discussion of this subject, the following is the order in which I shall direct your thoughts:

I. Show that the marriage state is abundantly set forth in the Bible, as describing the relation between Christ and the church.

II. Show what is implied in this relation.

III. The reason for the existence of this relation.

IV. Show the great guilt of the church, in conducting towards Christ as she does.

V. The forbearance of Christ towards the church.

I. I am to show that the marriage state is abundantly set forth in the Bible, as describing the relation between Christ and the church.

Christ is often spoken of as the husband of the church. "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." The church is spoken of as the bride, the Lamb’s wife. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." That is, Christ and the church say, "Come." In 2 Corinthians xi. 2, the apostle Paul says, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealously: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." I can merely refer to these passages. You that are acquainted with your Bibles, will not need that I should take up time to show that this relation is often adverted to in the Bible, in a great variety of forms.

II. I am to show what is implied in this relation.

1. The wife gives up her own name, and assumes that of her husband.

This is universally true in the marriage state. And the church assumes the name of Christ, and when united with Him is baptized into His name.

2. The wife’s separate interest is merged in that of her husband.

A married woman has no separate interest, and no right to have any. So the church has no right to have a separate interest from the Lord Jesus Christ. If a wife has property, it goes to her husband. If it is real estate, the life interest passes to him, and if it is personal estate, the whole merges in him.

The reputation of the wife is wholly united to that of her husband, so that his reputation is hers, and her reputation is his. What affects her character, affects his; and what affects his character, affects hers. Their reputation is one, their interests are one. So with the church, whatever concerns the church is just as much the interest of Christ, as if it was personally His own matter. As the husband of the church, He is just as much pledged to do everything that is needful to promote the interest of the church, as the husband is pledged to promote the welfare of his wife. As a faithful husband gives up his time, his labor, his talents, to promote the interest and happiness of his wife; so Jesus Christ gives Himself up to promote the welfare of His church. He is as jealous of the reputation of His church, as ever a husband was of the reputation of his wife. Never was a human being so pledged, so devoted to the interest of his wife, or felt so keenly an injury, as Jesus Christ feels when His church has her reputation or her feelings injured. He declares that it were better a man had a mill stone hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones that believe in Him.

3. The relation between husband and wife is such, that if anything is the matter with one, the other is full of sympathy.

So Christ feels for all the sufferings of the church, and the church feels for all the sufferings of Christ. When a believer has any realizing view of the sufferings of Christ, there is nothing in the universe so affects and dissolves the mind with sorrow. Never did a wife feel such distress, such broken-hearted grief, if she has occasioned suffering or death to her husband, as the Christian feels when he views his sins as the occasion of the death of Jesus Christ. Let me ask some of these married women present, how you would feel, if your husband, to redeem you from merited ignominy and death, had volunteered the greatest suffering and pain, and even death for you? When you saw his face, how would it affect you? To be reminded of it by any circumstance, how would it melt you down in broken-hearted grief? Now, have you never understood that your sins caused the death of Christ, and that He died for you just as absolutely, as if you had been the only sinner in all God’s world? He suffered pain and contempt and death for you. He loved His church, and gave Himself for it. It is called the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.

4. The wife pledges herself to yield her will to the will of her husband, and to yield obedience to his will.

She has no separate interest, and ought to have no separate will. The Bible enjoins this, and makes it a Christian duty for the wife to conform in all things to the will of her husband. The will of the husband becomes to the faithful wife the mainspring of her activity. Her entire life is only carrying out the will of her husband. The relation of the church to Christ is precisely the same. The church is governed by Christ’s will.---When believers exercise faith, they are so, absolutely, and the will of Christ becomes the moving cause of all their conduct.

5. The wife recognizes her husband as her head.

The Bible declares that he is so. In like manner, as from the head proceed those influences that govern the body, so from Christ proceed those influences that govern the church.

6. The wife looks to her husband as her support, her protector and her guide.

Every believer places himself as absolutely under the protection of Christ, as a married woman is under the protection of her husband. The woman naturally looks to her husband to preserve her from injury, from insult, and from want. She hangs her happiness on him, and expects he will protect her; and he is bound to do it.

So Christ is pledged to protect His church from every foe. How often have the powers of hell tried to put down the church, but her husband has never abandoned her. No weapon formed against the church has ever been allowed to prosper, or ever shall. Never will the Lord Jesus Christ so far forget His relation to the church, as to have His bride unprotected. No. Let all earth and all hell conspire against the church, and just as certain as Christ has power to do it, His church is safe. And every individual believer is just as safe, as if he were the only believer on earth, and has Christ as truly pledged for his preservation. The devil can no more put down a single believer, to final destruction, than he can put down God Almighty. He may murder them, but that is no injury. Overcoming a believer by taking his life, affords Satan no triumph. He put Christ to death, but what did he gain by it? The grave had no power over Him, to retain Him. So with a believer; neither the grave nor hell has any more power to injure one of Christ's little ones, that believe in Him, than they have to injure Christ Himself. He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." And, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."---There is no power in the universe, that can prevail against a single believer, to destroy him. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, and Head over all things to the church, and the church is safe.

7. The legal existence of the wife is so merged in that of her husband, that she is not known in law as a separate person.

If any actions or civil liability come against the wife, the husband is responsible. If the wife has committed a trespass, the husband is answerable. It is his business to guide and govern her, and her business to obey; and if he does not restrain her from breaking the laws, he is responsible. And if the wife does not obey her husband, she has it in her power to bring him into great trouble, disgrace, and expense. In like manner, Jesus Christ is Lord over His church, and if He does not actually restrain His church from sin, He has it to answer for, and is brought into great trouble and reproach by the misconduct of His people. By human laws, the husband is not liable for capital crimes committed by the wife, but the law so far recognizes her separate existence, as to punish her. But Christ has assumed the responsibility for His church, of all her conduct. He took the place of His people, when they were convicted of capital crimes, and sentenced to eternal damnation. This is answering in good earnest. And now it is His business to take care of the church, and control her, and keep her from sin; and for every sin of every member, Jesus Christ is responsible, and must answer. And He does answer for them. He has made an atonement to cover all this, and ever liveth to make intercession for His people. So that He holds himself responsible before God for all the conduct of His church. Every believer is so a part of Jesus Christ, and so perfectly united to Him, that whatever any of them may be guilty of, Jesus Christ takes upon Himself to answer for. This is abundantly taught in the Bible.

What an amazing relation! Christ has here assumed the responsibility, not only for the civil conduct of his church, but even for the capital crime of rebellion against God. There is a sense, therefore, in which the church is lost in Christ, and has no separate existence known in law. God has so

given up the church to Christ, by the covenant of grace, that strictly speaking, the church is not known in law. I do not mean that crimes, committed by believers against the moral law, are not sin, but that the law cannot get hold of them, for condemnation. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The penalty of the law is forever remitted. The crimes of the believer are not taken into account so as to bring him under condemnation; no, in no case whatever. Whatever is to be done falls upon Christ. He has assumed the responsibility of bringing them off from under the power of sin, as well as from under the law, and stands pledged to give them all the assistance they need to gain a complete victory.

III. I am to explain the reason why this relation is constituted between Christ and His church.

1. The first reason is assigned in the text, "that we should bring forth fruit unto God." A principal design of the institution of marriage is the propagation of the species. So it is in regard to the church. Through the instrumentality of the church, children are to be born to Christ, and He is to see His seed, and to see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, by converts multiplied as the drops of morning dew. It is not only through the travail of the Redeemer's soul, but through the travail of the church, that believers are born unto Jesus Christ. As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children.

2. Another object of the marriage institution is the protection and support of those who are naturally helpless and dependent. If the law of power prevailed in society, everybody knows that females, being the weaker sex, would be universally enslaved. And the design of the institution of marriage is to secure protection and support to those who are so much more frail, that by the law of force they would be continually enslaved. So Jesus Christ upholds His church, and affords her all the protection against her enemies, and all the powers of hell, that she needs.

3. The mutual happiness of the parties is another end of the marriage institution.

The same is true of the relation between Christ and His church. Perhaps you will think it strange, if I tell you that the happiness of Christ is increased by the love of the church. But what does the Bible say? "Who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." What was the joy set before him, if the love of the church was not a part of it? It would be very strange to hear of a husband contributing to the happiness of his wife, that should not enjoy it himself. Jesus Christ enjoys the happiness of His church as much more, as He loves His church better than any husbands love their wives.

4. The alleviation of mutual sufferings and sorrows is one end of marriage.

Sharing each other's sorrow is a great alleviation. Who does not know this? In like manner do Christ and His church share each other's sorrows. The apostle Paul says he was always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus; "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." And he declared that one end of all his toils and self-denials was that he might know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." And he rejoiced in all his sufferings, that he might fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ. The church feels, keenly, every reproach cast upon Christ, and Christ feels keenly every injury inflicted on the church.

5. The principal reason for this union of Christ with His church, is that he may sanctify the church.

Read what is said in Ephesians v. 22-27. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Here then is set forth the great design of Christ in marrying the church. It is that He might sanctify it, and cleanse it, or that it should be perfectly holy and without blemish. John, in the Revelation informs us that he saw those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. See how beautifully the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is described in the 21st chapter, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

IV. I will make a few remarks on the wickedness of the church, in conducting towards Christ as she does.

1. Vast multitudes of those who profess to be a part of the church, the bride of Christ, really set up a separate interest.

They have pretended to merge their self-interest in the interest of Christ, but manifestly keep up a separate interest. And if you attempt to make them act on the principle that they have no separate interest, they will plainly show, that they have no such design. What would you think of a wife, keeping up a separate interest from her husband? You would say it was plain that she did not love her husband, as she ought.

2. The church is not satisfied with Christ's love.

Everybody knows what an abominable thing it is for a wife, not to be satisfied with the love of her husband, but continually seeking other lovers, and always associating with other men. Yet, how plain it is that the church is not satisfied with the love of Christ, but is always seeking after other lovers. What are we to think of those members of the church, who are not satisfied with the love of Christ for happiness, but must have the riches and pleasures and honors of the world to make them happy?

Still more horrible would be the conduct of a wife, who should select her lovers from the enemies of her husband, and should bring them home with her, and make them her chosen friends. Yet how many who profess to belong to Christ go away, and give their affections to Christ's enemies. Some will even marry those whom they know to be haters of God and religion. Horrible! Is that the way a bride should do?

3. Everyone knows that it is a disgraceful thing for the wife to play the harlot.

Yet God often speaks of His church as going astray and committing spiritual whoredom. And it is true. He does not make this charge, as a man makes it against his wife, when he is determined to leave her and cast her off. But he makes it with grief and tenderness, and accompanies it with the moving expostulations, and the most melting entreaties that she would return.

4. What would you think of a married woman, who should expect, at the very time of her marriage, that she should get tired of her husband, and leave him and play the harlot?

Yet, how many there are, professors of religion, who when they made a profession had no more expectation of living without sin, than they expected to have wings and fly. They have come into His house, and pledged themselves to live entirely for Him, and married Him in this public manner, covenanting to forsake all sin, and to live alone for Christ, and be satisfied with His love, and have no other lovers; and yet all the while they are doing it, they expect in their minds that they shall scatter their ways to strangers upon every high hill, and commit sin and dishonor Christ.

5. What are we to think of a woman, who at the very time of her marriage, expected to continue in her course of adultery as long as she lives, in spite of all the commands and expostulations of her husband?

Then what are we to think of professors of religion, who deliberately expect to commit spiritual adultery, and continue in it as long as they live?

6. But the most abominable part of such a wife's wickedness is, when she turns round and charges the blame of her conduct upon her faithful husband.

Now the church does this. Notwithstanding Christ has done all that He could do, short of absolute force, to keep His church from sinning, yet the church charges her sin upon Him, as if He had laid her under an absolute necessity of sinning, by not making any adequate provision for preserving His people against temptation. And they are horrified now at the very name of Christian Perfection, as if it was really dishonoring Christ to believe that He is able to keep His people from committing sin and falling into the snare of the devil. And so it has been, for hundreds of years, that with the greater part of the church it has not been orthodox to teach that Jesus Christ really has made such provision that His people may live free from sin. And it is really considered a wonder, that anybody should teach that the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ is expected to do as she pretends to do. Has He married a bride, and made no provision adequate to protect her against the arts and seductions of the devil? Well done! That must be the ridicule of hell.

7. Suppose a wife should refuse to obey her husband and then make him responsible for her conduct.

Yet the church refuses to obey Jesus Christ, and then makes Him answer for her sins. This is the great difficulty with the church, that she is continually bringing in her Head for her delinquencies.

8. The church is continually dishonoring Christ.

The reputation of husband and wife is one. Whatever dishonors one, dishonors the other. Now, the church, instead of avoiding every appearance of evil, is continually causing the enemies of God to blaspheme by her conduct.

V. I will say a few words on the forbearance of Christ towards the church.

What other husband, in such circumstances, would suffer the connection to remain, and bear what Christ bears? Yet He still offers to be reconciled, and lays himself out to regain the affections of His bride. Sometimes a husband really loses his affection towards his wife, and treats her so like a

brute that, although she once loved him, she loves him no more. But where can anything be found in the character and conduct of Christ, to justify the treatment He receives? He has laid himself out to the utmost, to engross the affections of the church. What could He have done more? Where can any fault or any deficiency be found in Him. And even after all that the church has done against Him, What is He doing now? Suppose a husband should for years follow his wandering, guilty wife, from city to city, beseeching and entreating her, with tears, to return to his house and be reconciled; and after all, she should persist in going after her lovers, and yet he continues to cry after her and beg her to come back and live with him, and he will forgive and love her still. Is there any such forbearance and condescension known among men?

REMARKS.

I. Christians ought to understand the bearing of their sins.

Your sins dishonor Christ, and grieve Christ, and injure Christ, and then you make Christ responsible for them. You sustain such a relation to Him, and you ought to know what is the effect of your sin. How does a wife feel, when she has disgraced her husband? How blushes cover her face, and tears fill her eyes! When her guilty offended husband comes into her presence, how she falls down at his feet, with a full heart, and confesses her fault, and pours her penitential tears into his bosom. She is grieved and humbled, and though she loves him, his very presence is a grief, until she breaks down before him, and feels that he has forgiven her.

Now how can a Christian fail to recognize this; and when he is betrayed into sin and has injured Christ, how can he sleep? How can you help realizing that your sins take hold of Jesus Christ, and injure him, in all these tender relations?

II. One great difficulty of Christians is their expecting to live in sin, and this expectation insures their continuance in sin.

If an individual expects to live in sin, he in fact means to live in sin, and of course he will live in sin. It is very much to be feared, that many professors of religion never really meant to live without sin. The apostle insists that believers should reckon themselves dead to sin, that they should henceforth have no more to do with it than if they were dead, and no more expect to sin than a dead man should expect to walk. They should throw themselves upon Christ, and receive Him in all His relations, and expect to be preserved and sanctified and saved by Him. If they would do this, do you not suppose they would be kept from sin? Just as certainly as they believe in Christ for it. To believe in Christ that He will keep them, insures the result that He will. And the reason why they do not receive preserving grace at all times, as they need and all they need, is that they do not expect it, and do not trust in Christ to preserve them in perfect love. The man tries to preserve himself. Instead of throwing himself upon Christ, he throws himself upon his own resources, and then in his weakness expects to sin, and of course he does sin. If he knew his own entire emptiness, and would throw himself upon Christ as absolutely, and rest on Christ as confidently, for sanctification, as for justification, the one is just as certain as the other.

No one that trusted in God for anything He has promised, ever failed to receive according to his faith, the very thing for which he trusted. If you trust in God for what He has not promised, that is tempting God. If Peter had not been called by Christ to come to him on the water, it would have been tempting God for him to get down out of the ship into the water, and he would have lost his

life for his presumption and folly. But as soon as Christ told him to come, it was merely an act of sound and rational faith for him to do it. It was a pledge on the part of Christ, that he should be sustained; and so he was sustained, as long as he had faith. Now, if the Bible has promised that those who receive Christ as their sanctification shall be sanctified, then you who believe in Him for this end have just as much reason to expect it, as Peter had to expect he should walk on the waves. It is true, we do not expect a miracle to be wrought to sustain the believer, as it was to sustain Peter. But it is promised that he shall be sustained, and if miracles were necessary, no doubt they would be performed, for God would move the universe, and turn the course of nature upside down, sooner than one of His promises should fail, to them that put their trust in Him. If God is pledged to anything, a person that venture, on that pledge will find it redeemed, just as certainly as God possesses almighty power. Has God promised sanctification to them that trust Him for it? If He has not, then to go to Him in faith for preservation from temptation and sin is tempting God. It is fanaticism. If God has left us to the dire necessity of getting along with our own watchfulness and our own firmness and strength, we must submit to it, and do the best we can. But if He has made any promises, He will redeem them to the uttermost, though all earth and all hell should oppose. And so it is in regard to the mistakes and errors which Christians fall into. If there is no promise that they shall be guided just so far as they need, and led into the truth, and in the way of duty and of peace; then for a Christian to look to God for knowledge, and wisdom, and guidance, and direction, without any promises, is tempting God. But if there are promises on this subject, depend on it, they will be fulfilled to the very last mite to the believer who trusts in them; and exercising confidence in such promises is only a sober and rational faith in the word of God.

I believe the great difficulty of the church on the subject of Christian perfection lies here, that she has not fully understood how the Lord Jesus Christ is wholly pledged in all these relations, and that the church has just as much reason and is just as much bound to trust in Him for sanctification as for justification. What saith the scripture? "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." How came the idea to be taken up in the church, that Jesus Christ is our Redemption, and has made Himself responsible for the meanest individual who throws himself on Him for justification shall infallibly obtain it? This has been universally admitted in the church, in all ages. But it is no more plainly or more abundantly taught, than it is, that Jesus Christ is promised and pledged for Wisdom and for Sanctification to all that receive Him in these relations. Has He promised that if any man lack wisdom, he may ask of God, and if he asks in faith, God will give it to him? What then?---Is there then no such thing as being preserved by Christ from falling into this and that delusion and error? God has made this broad promise, and Christ is as much pledged for our wisdom and our sanctification, if we only trust in Him, as He is for our justification. If the church would only renounce any expectation from herself, and die as absolutely to her own wisdom and strength, as she does to her own righteousness, or the expectation of being saved by her own works, Jesus Christ is as much pledged for one as for the other. The only reason why the church does not realize the same results, is that Christ is trusted for justification, and as for wisdom and sanctification He is not trusted.

The truth is, the great body of believers, having begun in the Spirit, are now trying to be made perfect by the flesh. We have thrown ourselves on Christ for justification, and then have been attempting to sanctify ourselves. If it is true, as the apostle affirms, that Christ is to the church both wisdom and sanctification, what excuse have Christians for not being sanctified?

III. If individuals do not as much expect to live without sin against Christ, as they expect to live without open sins against men, such as murder or adultery, it must be for one of three reasons:

1. Either we love our fellow men better than we do Christ, and so are less willing to do them an injury.

2. Or we are restrained by a regard to our own reputation; and this proves that we love reputation more than Christ.

3. Or we think we can preserve ourselves better from these disgraceful crimes than we can from less heinous sins.

Suppose I were to ask any of you, if you expect to commit murder, or adultery? Horrible! you say. But why not? Are you so virtuous that you can resist any temptation which the devil can offer? If you say so, you do not know yourself. If you have real power to keep yourself, so as to abstain from openly disgraceful sins, in your own strength, you have power to abstain from all sins. But if your only reliance is on Jesus Christ to keep you from committing murder and adultery, how is it, that you should get the idea, that He is not equally able to keep you from all sin? O, if believers would only throw themselves wholly on Christ, and make Him responsible, by placing themselves entirely at His control, they would know His power to save, and would live without sin.

IV. What a horrible reproach is the church to Jesus Christ.

V. You see why it is that converts are what they are.

Degenerate plants of a strange vine, sure enough! The church is in such a state, that it is no wonder those who are brought in, with few exceptions, prove a disgrace to religion. How can it be otherwise? How can the church, living in such a manner, bring forth offspring that shall do honor to Christ? The church does not, and individual believers do not, in general, receive Christ in all His offices, as He is offered in the Bible. If they did, it would be impossible they should live like such loathsome harlots.

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END OF THE LECTURES IN 1837

Chapter 50

03.03. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

TEXT:--"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."--- Mat 5:48.

In the 43rd verse, the Savior says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

In discoursing on the subject of Christian Perfection, it is my design to pursue this order:

I. I shall show what is not to be understood by the requirement, "Be ye therefore perfect;" or, what Christian Perfection is not.

II. Show what is the perfection here required.

III. That this perfection is a duty.

IV. That it is attainable; and,

V. Answer some of the objections which are commonly argued against the doctrine of Christian Perfection.

I. I am to show you what Christian Perfection is not.

1. It is not required that we should have the same natural perfections that God has.

God has two kinds of perfections, natural and moral. His natural perfections constitute His nature, essence, of constitution. They are His eternity, immutability, omnipotence, etc. These are called natural perfections, because they have no moral character. They are not voluntary. God has not given them to Himself, because He did not create himself, but existed from eternity, with all these natural attributes in full possession. All these God possesses in an infinite degree. These natural perfections are not the perfection here required. The attributes of our nature were created in us, and we are not required to produce any new natural attributes, nor would it be possible. We are not required to possess any of them in the degree that God possesses them.

2. The perfection required in the text is not perfection of knowledge, even according to our limited faculties.

3. Christian Perfection, as here required, is not freedom from temptation, either from our constitution or from things that are about us. The mind may be ever so sorely tried with the animal

appetites, and yet not sin. The apostle James says, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The sin is not in the temptations, but in yielding to them. A person may be tempted by Satan, as well as by the appetites, or by the world, and yet not have sin. All sin consists in voluntary consenting to the desires.

4. Neither does Christian perfection imply a freedom from what ought to be understood by the Christian warfare.

5. The perfection required is not the infinite moral perfection which God has; because man, being a finite creature, is not capable of infinite affections. God being infinite in Himself, for Him to be perfect is to be infinitely perfect. But this is not required of us.

II. I am to show what Christian perfection is; or what is the duty actually required in the text.

It is perfect obedience to the law of God. The law of God requires perfect, disinterested, impartial benevolence, love to God and love to our neighbor. It requires that we should be actuated by the same feeling, and to act on the same principles that God acts upon; to leave self out of the question as uniformly as He does, to be as much separated from selfishness as He is; in a word, to be in our measure as perfect as God is. Christianity requires that we should do neither more nor less than the law of God prescribes. Nothing short of this is Christian perfection. This is being, morally, just as perfect as God. Everything is here included, to feel as He feels, to love what He loves, and hate what He hates, and for the same reasons that He loves and hates.

God regards every being in the universe according to its real value. He regards His own interests according to their real value in the scale of being, and no more. He exercises the same love towards Himself that He requires of us, and for the same reason. He loves himself supremely, both with the love of benevolence and the love of complacency, because He is supremely excellent. And He requires us to love Him just so, to love Him as perfectly as He loves Himself. He loves Himself with the love of benevolence, or regards His own interest, and glory, and happiness, as the supreme good, because it is the supreme good. And He requires us to love Him in the same way. He loves Himself with infinite complacency, because He knows that He is infinitely worthy and excellent, and He requires the same of us. He also loves His neighbor as Himself, not in the same degree that He loves Himself, but in the same proportion, according to their real value. From the highest angel to the smallest worm, He regards their happiness with perfect love, according to their worth. It is His duty to conform to these principles, as much as it is our duty. He can no more depart from this rule than we can, without committing sin; and for Him to do it would be as much worse than for us to do it, as He is greater than we. God is infinitely obligated to do this. His very nature, not depending on His own volition, but uncreated, binds Him to this. And He has created us moral beings in His own image, capable of conforming to the same rule with Himself. This rule requires us to have the same character with Him, to love as impartially, with as perfect love---to seek the good of others with as single an eye as He does. This, and nothing less than this, is Christian Perfection.

III. I am to show that Christian Perfection is a duty.

1. This is evident from the fact that God requires it, both under the law and under the gospel.

The command in the text, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," is given under the gospel. Christ here commands the very same thing that the law requires. Some suppose that much less is required of us under the gospel, than was required under the law. It is true that the gospel does not require perfection, as the condition of salvation. But no part of the obligation of the law is discharged. The gospel holds those who are under it to the same holiness as those under the law.

2. I argue that Christian Perfection is a duty, because God has no right to require anything less.

God cannot discharge us from the obligation to be perfect, as I have defined perfection. If He were to attempt it, He would just so far give a license to sin. He has no right to give any such license. While we are moral beings, there is no power in the universe that can discharge us from the obligation to be perfect. Can God discharge us from the obligation to love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength? That would be saying that God does not deserve such love. And if He cannot discharge us from the whole law, He cannot discharge from any part of it, for the same reason.

3. Should anyone contend that the gospel requires less holiness than the law, I would ask him to say just how much less it requires.

If we are allowed to stop short of perfect obedience, where shall we stop? How perfect are we required to be? Where will you find a rule in the Bible, to determine how much less holy you are allowed to be under the gospel, than you would be under the law? Shall we say each one must judge for himself? Then I ask, if you think it is your duty to be any more perfect than you are now? Probably all would say, Yes. Can you lay down any point at which, when you have arrived, you can say, "Now I am perfect enough; it is true, I have some sin left, but I have gone as far as it is my duty to go in this world?" Where do you get your authority for any such notion? No; the truth is, that all who are truly pious, the more pious they are, the more strongly they feel the obligation to be perfect, as God is perfect.

IV. I will now show that Christian Perfection is attainable, or practicable, in this life.

1. It may be fairly inferred that Christian Perfection is attainable, from the fact that it is commanded.

Does God command us to be perfect as He is perfect, and still shall we say it is an impossibility? Are we not always to infer, when God commands a thing, that there is a natural possibility of doing that which He commands? I recollect hearing an individual say, he would preach to sinners that they ought to repent, because God commands it; but he would not preach that they could repent, because God has nowhere said that they can. What consummate trifling! Suppose a man were to say he would preach to citizens, that they ought to obey the laws of the country because the government had enacted them, but he would not tell them that they could obey, because it is nowhere in the statute book enacted that they have the ability. It is always to be understood, when God requires anything of men, that they possess the requisite faculties to do it. Otherwise God requires of us impossibilities, on pain of death, and sends sinners to hell for not doing what they were in no sense able to do.

2. That there is natural ability to be perfect is a simple matter of fact.

There can be no question of this. What is perfection. It is to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. That is, it requires us not to exert the powers of somebody else, but our own powers. The law itself goes no farther than to require the right use of the powers you possess. So that it is a simple matter of fact that you possess natural ability, or power, to be just as perfect as God requires.

Objection. Here some may object, that if there is a natural ability to be perfect, there is a moral inability, which comes to the same thing, for inability is inability, call it what you will, and if we have moral inability, we are as really unable as if our inability was natural.

Answer 1. There is no more moral inability to be perfectly holy, than there is to be holy at all. So far as moral ability is concerned, you can as well be perfectly holy as you can be holy at all. The true distinction between natural ability and moral ability, is this: Natural ability relates to the powers and faculties of the mind; Moral ability only to the will. Moral inability is nothing else than unwillingness to do a thing. So it is explained by President Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, and by other writers on the subject. When you ask whether you have moral ability to be perfect, if you mean by it, whether you are willing to be perfect, I answer, No. If you were willing to be perfect, you would be perfect; for the perfection required is only a perfect conformity of the will to God's law, or willing right. If you ask then, Are we able to will right? I answer, the question implies a contradiction, in supposing that there can be such a thing as a moral agent unable to choose, or will. President Edwards says expressly, in his chapter on Moral Inability, as you may see, if you will read it, that strictly speaking, there is no such thing as Moral Inability. When we speak of inability to do a thing, if we mean to be understood, of a real inability, it implies a willingness to do it, but a want of power. To say, therefore, we are unable to will, is absurd. It is saying we will and yet are unable to will, at the same time.

Answer 2. But I admit and believe, that there is desperate unwillingness in the case. And if this is what you mean by Moral Inability, it is true. There is a pertinacious unwillingness in sinners to become Christians, and in Christians to become perfect, or to come up to the full perfection required both by the law and gospel. Sinners may strongly wish to become Christians, and Christians may strongly wish or desire to be rid of all their sins, and may pray for it, even with agony. They may think they are willing to be perfect, but they deceive themselves. They may feel, in regard to their sins taken all together, or in the abstract, as if they are willing to renounce them all. But take them up in the detail, one by one, and there are many sins they are unwilling to give up. They wrestle against sin in general, but cling to it in the detail.

I have known cases of this kind where individuals will break down in such a manner that they think they never will sin again; and then perhaps in one hour, something will come up that they are ready to fight for the indulgence, and need to be broken down again and again. Christians actually need to be hunted from one sin after another, in this way, before they are willing to give them up, and after all, are unwilling to give up all sins. When they are truly willing to give up all sin, when they have no will of their own, but merge their own will entirely in the will of God, then their bonds are broken. When they will yield absolutely to God's will, then they are filled with all the fullness of God.

After all, the true point of inquiry is this: Have I any right to expect to be perfect in this world? Is there any reason for me to believe that I can be so completely subdued, that my soul shall burn

with a steady flame, and I shall love God wholly, up to what the law requires? That it is a real duty, no one can deny. But the great query is, Is it attainable?

I answer, Yes, I believe it is.

Here let me observe, that so much has been said within a few years about Christian Perfection, and individuals who have entertained the doctrine of Perfection have run into so many wild notions, that it seems as if the devil had anticipated the movements of the church, and created such a state of feeling, that the moment the doctrine of the Bible respecting the sanctification is crowded on the church, one and another cries out, "Why, this is Perfectionism." But I will say, notwithstanding the errors into which some of those called Perfectionists have fallen, there is such a thing held forth in the Bible as Christian Perfection, and that the Bible doctrine on the subject is what nobody need to fear, but what everybody needs to know. I disclaim, entirely, the charge of maintaining the peculiarities, whatever they be, of modern Perfectionists. I have read their publications, and have had much knowledge of them as individuals, and I cannot assent to many of their views. But the doctrine that Christian Perfection is a duty, is one which I have always maintained, and I have been more convinced of it within a few months, that it is attainable in this life. Many doubt this, but I am persuaded it is true, on various grounds.

1. God wills it.

The first doubt which will arise in many minds, is this; "Does God really will my sanctification in this world?" I answer: He says He does. The law of God is itself as strong an expression as He can give of His will on the subject, and it is backed up by an infinite sanction. The gospel is but a republication of the same will, in another form. How can God express His will more strongly on this point than He has in the text? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." In the Thessalonians iv. 3, we are told expressly, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." If you examine the Bible carefully, from one end to the other, you will find that it is everywhere just as plainly taught that God wills the sanctification of Christians in this world, as it is that He wills sinners should repent in this world. And if we go by the Bible, we might just as readily question whether He wills that men should repent, as whether He wills that Christians should be holy. Why should He not reasonably expect it? He requires it. What does He require? When He requires men to repent, He requires that they should love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. What reason have we to believe that He wills they should repent at all, or love Him at all, which is not a reason for believing that He wills they should love Him perfectly? Strange logic, indeed! to teach that He wills it in one case, because He requires it, and not admit the same inference in the other. No man can show, from the Bible, that God does not require perfect sanctification in this world, nor that He does not will it, nor that it is not just as attainable as any degree of sanctification.

I have turned over the Bible with special reference to this point, and thought I would note down on my card, where I have the plan of my discourse, the passages that teach this doctrine. But I found they were altogether too numerous to do it, and that if I collected them all, I should do nothing else this evening, but stand and read passages of scripture. If you have never looked into the Bible with this view, you will be astonished to see how many more passages there are that speak of deliverance from the commission of sin, than there are that speak of deliverance from the punishment of sin. The passages that speak only of deliverance from punishment, are as nothing,

in comparison of the others.

2. All the promises and prophecies of God, that respect the sanctification of believers in this world, are to be understood of course, of their perfect sanctification.

What is sanctification, but holiness? When a prophecy speaks of the sanctification of the church, are we to understand that it is to be sanctified only partially? When God requires holiness, are we to understand that of partial holiness? Surely not. By what principle, then, will you understand it of partial holiness when He promises holiness. We have been so long in the way of understanding the scriptures with reference to the existing state of things, that we lose sight of the real meaning. But if we look only at the language of the Bible, I defy any man to prove that the promises and prophecies of holiness mean anything short of perfect sanctification, unless the requirements of both the law and gospel are to be understood of partial obedience which is absurd.

3. Perfect sanctification is the great blessing promised, throughout the Bible.

The apostle says we have exceeding great and precious promises, and what are they, and what is their use? "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, HAVING ESCAPED THE CORRUPTION that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter I. 4. If that is not perfect sanctification, I beg to know what is. It is a plain declaration that these "exceeding great and precious promises" are given for this object, that by believing and appropriating and using them, we might become partakers of the divine nature. And if we will use them for the purposes for which they were put in the Bible, we may become perfectly holy.

Let us look at some of these promises in particular. I will begin with the promise of the Abrahamic covenant. The promise is that his posterity should possess the land of Canaan, and that through him, by the Messiah, all nations should be blessed. The seal of the covenant, circumcision, which everyone knows is a type of holiness, shows us what was the principal blessing intended. It was HOLINESS. So the apostle tells us, in another place, Jesus Christ was given, that He might sanctify unto Himself a peculiar people.

All the purifications and other ceremonies of the Moasic ritual signified the same thing; as they are all pointed forward to a Savior to come. Those ordinances of purifying the body were set forth, everyone of them, with reference to the purifying of the mind, or holiness.

Under the gospel, the same thing is signified by baptism; the washing of the body representing the sanctification of the mind.

In Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, this blessing is expressly promised, as the great blessing of the gospel: "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 you shall keep my judgments, and do them."

So it is in Jeremiah xxxiii. 8: "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." But it would take up too much time to quote all the passages

in the Old Testament prophecies, that represent holiness to be the great blessing of the covenant. I desire you all to search the Bible for yourselves, and you will be astonished to find how uniformly the blessing of sanctification is held up as the principal blessing promised to the world through the Messiah.

Why, who can doubt that the great object of the Messiah's coming was to sanctify His people? Just after the fall it was predicted that Satan would bruise His heel, but that He should bruise Satan's head. And the apostle John tells us that "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He has undertaken to put Satan under His feet. His object is to win us back to our allegiance to God, to sanctify us, to purify our minds. As it is said in Zecheriah xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."

And Daniel says, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." But it is in vain to name the multitude of these texts. The Old Testament is full of it.

In the New Testament, the first account we have of the Savior, tells us, that he was called "JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins." So it is said, "He was manifested to take away our sins," and " to destroy the works of the devil." In Titus ii. 13, the apostle Paul speaks of the grace of God, or the gospel, as teaching us to deny ungodliness. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And in Ephesians v. 25, we learn that "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." I only quote these few passages by way of illustration, to show that the object for which Christ came is to sanctify the church to such a degree that it should be absolutely "holy and without blemish." So in Romans xi. 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." And in 1 John I. 9, it is said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What is it to "cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness," if it is not perfect sanctification? I presume all of you who are here tonight, if there is such a thing promised in the Bible as perfect sanctification, wish to know it. Now what do you think? In 1 Thessalonians v. 23, the apostle Paul prays a very remarkable prayer: "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." What is that? "Sanctify you wholly." Does that mean perfect sanctification? You may think it does not mean perfect sanctification in this world. But the apostle says not only that your whole soul and spirit, but that your "body be preserved blameless." Could an inspired apostle make such a prayer, if he did not believe the blessing prayed for to be possible? But he goes on to say, in the very next verse, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also WILL DO IT." Is that true, or is it false?

4. The perfect sanctification of believers is the very object for which the Holy Spirit is promised.

To quote the passages that show this, would take up too much time. The whole tenor of scripture respecting the Holy Spirit proves it. The whole array of gospel means through which the Holy Spirit works, is aimed at this, and adopted to the end of sanctifying the church. All the commands to be holy, all the promises, all the prophecies, all the ordinances, all the providences, the blessings and the judgments, all the duties of religion, are means which the Holy Ghost is to employ for sanctifying the church.

5. If it is not a practicable duty to be perfectly holy in this world, then it will follow that the devil has so completely accomplished his design in corrupting mankind, that Jesus Christ is at fault, and has no way to sanctify His people but by taking them out of the world.

Is it possible that Satan has so got the advantage of God, that God’s kingdom cannot be re-established in this world, and that the Almighty has no way but to back out, and to take His saints to heaven, before He can make them holy? Is God’s kingdom to be only partially established, and is it to be always so, that the best saints shall one-half of their time be serving the devil? Must the people of God always go drooping and driveling along in religion, and live in sin, until they get to heaven? What is that stone cut out of a mountain without hands, that is to fill the earth, if it does not show that there is yet to be a universal triumph of the love of God in the world?

6. If perfect sanctification is not attainable in this world, it must be, either from a want of motives in the gospel, or a want of sufficient power in the Spirit of God.

It is said that in another life we may be like God, for we shall see Him as He is. But why not here, if we have that faith which is the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen?" There is a promise to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" that "they shall be filled." What is it to be "filled" with righteousness, but to be perfectly holy? And are we never to be filled with righteousness till we die? Are we to go through life hungry and thirsty and unsatisfied? So the Bible has been understood, but it does not read so.

OBJECTIONS.

I. "The power of habit is so great, that we ought not to expect to be perfectly sanctified in this life."

Answer. If the power of habit can be so far encroached upon that an impenitent sinner can be converted, why can it not be absolutely broken, so that a converted person may be wholly sanctified? The greatest difficulty, surely, is when selfishness has the entire control of the mind, and when the habits of sin are wholly unbroken. This obstacle is so great, in all cases, that no power but that of the Holy Ghost can overcome it, and so great in many instances, that God Himself cannot, consistently with His wisdom, use the means necessary to convert the soul. But is it possible to suppose, that after He has begun to overcome it, after He has broken the power of selfishness and the obstinacy of habit, and actually converted the individual, that after this God has not resources sufficient to sanctify the soul altogether?

2. "Many physical difficulties have been created by a life of sin, that cannot be overcome or removed by moral means."

This is a common objection. Men feel that they have fastened upon themselves appetites and physical influences, which they do not believe it possible to overcome by moral means. The apostle Paul, in the 7th of Romans, describes a man in great conflict with the body. But in the next

chapter he speaks of one who had gotten the victory over the flesh. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." This quickening of the body is not spoken of the resurrection of the body, but of the influence of the Spirit of God upon the body---the sanctification of the body.

You will ask, "Does the Spirit of God produce a physical change in the body?" I will illustrate it by the case of the drunkard. The drunkard has brought upon himself a diseased state of the body, an unnatural thirst, which is insatiable, and so strong that it seems impossible he should be reclaimed. But very likely you know cases in which they have been reclaimed, and have entirely overcome this physical appetite. I have heard of cases, where drunkards have been made to see the sin of drunkenness in such a strong light, that they abhorred strong drink, and forever renounced it, with such a loathing that they never had the least desire for strong drink again.

I once knew an individual who was a slave to the use of tobacco. At length he became convinced that it was a sin for him to use it, and the struggle against it finally drove him to God in such an agony of prayer, that he got the victory at once over the appetite, and never had the least desire for it again. I am not now giving you philosophy, but FACTS. I have heard of individuals over whom a life of sin had given to certain appetites a perfect mastery, but in time of revival they have been subdued into perfect quiescence, and these appetites have ever after been as dead as if they had no body. I suppose the fact is, that the mind may be so occupied and absorbed with greater things, as not to give a thought to the things that would revive the vicious appetite. If a drunkard goes by a grocery, or sees people drinking, and allows his mind to run upon it, the appetite will be awakened. The wise man, therefore, tells him to "Look not upon the wine when it is red." But there is no doubt that any appetite of the body may be subdued, if a sufficient impression is made upon the mind to break it up. I believe every real Christian will be ready to admit that this is possible, from his own experience. Have you not, beloved, known times when one great absorbing topic has so filled your mind, and controlled your soul, that the appetites of the body remained, for the time, perfectly neutralized? Now, suppose this state of mind to continue, to become constant; would not all these physical difficulties be overcome, which you speak of as standing in the way of perfect sanctification?

3. "The Bible is against this doctrine, where it says, there is not a just man on the earth, that liveth and sinneth not."

Answer. Suppose the Bible does say that there is not one on earth, it does not say there cannot be one. Or, it may have been true at that time, or under that dispensation, that there was not one man in the world who was perfectly sanctified; and yet it may not follow that at this time, or under the gospel dispensation, there is no one who lives without sin. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." Hebrews 7. 9. i.e. The gospel did.

4. "The apostles admit that they were not perfect."

Answer. I know the apostle Paul says, in one place, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." But it is not said that he continued so till his death, or that he never did attain to perfect sanctification, and the manner in which he speaks in the remainder of the verse,

looks as if he expected to become so: "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Nor does it appear to me to be true that in this passage referred to, he is speaking of perfect sanctification, but rather of perfect knowledge.

And the apostle John speaks of himself as if he loved God perfectly. But whatever may be the truth, as to the actual character of the apostles, it does not follow, because they were not perfect that no others can be. They clearly declare it to be a duty, and that they were aiming at it, just as if they expected to attain it in this life. And they command us to do the same.

5. "But is it not presumption for us to think we can be better than the apostles and primitive Christians?"

Answer. What is the presumption in the case? Is it not a fact that we have far greater advantages for religious experience, than the primitive churches. The benefit of their experience, the complete scriptures, the state of the world, the near approach of the millennium, all give us the advantage over the primitive believers. Are we to suppose the church is always to stand in regard to religious experience, and never to go ahead in anything? What scripture is there for this? Why should not the church be always growing better? It seems to be the prevailing idea that the church is to be always looking back to the primitive saints as the standard. I suppose the reverse of this is a duty, and that we ought to be always aiming at a much higher standard than theirs. I believe the church must go far ahead of the primitive Christians, before the millennium can come. I leave out of view the apostles, because it does not clearly appear but what they become fully sanctified.

6. "But so many profess to be perfect, who are not so, that I cannot believe in perfection in this life."

Answer. How many people profess to be rich, who are not;. Will you therefore say, you cannot believe anybody is rich? Fine logic!

7. "So many who profess perfection have run into error and fanaticism, that I am afraid to think of it."

Answer. I find in history, that a sect of Perfectionists has grown out of every great and general revival that ever took place. And this is exactly one of the devil’s masterpieces, to counteract the effects of a revival. He knows that if the church were brought to the proper standard of holiness, it would be a speedy death blow to his power on earth, and he takes this course to defeat the efforts of the church for elevating the standard of piety, by frightening Christians from marching right up to the point, and aiming at living perfectly conformed to the will of God. And so successful has he been, that the moment you begin to crowd the church up to be holy, and give up all their sins, somebody will cry out, "Why, this leads to Perfectionism;" and thus give it a bad name and put it down.

8. "But do you really think anybody ever has been perfectly holy in this world?"

Answer. I have reason to believe there have been many. It is highly probable that Enoch and Elijah were free from sin, before they were taken out of the world. And in different ages of the church there have been numbers of Christians who were intelligent and upright, and had nothing that could be said against them, who have testified that they themselves lived free from sin. I know it is said, in reply, that they must have been proud, and that no man would say he was free from sin for

any other motive but pride. But I ask, why may not a man say he is free from sin, if it is so, without being proud, as well as he can say he is converted without being proud? Will not the saints say it in heaven, to the praise of the grace of God, which has thus crowned His glorious work? And why may they not say it now, from the same motive? I do not myself profess now to have attained perfect sanctification, but if I had attained it, if I felt that God had really given me the victory over the world, the flesh and the devil, and made me free from sin, would I keep it a secret, locked up in my own breast, and let my brethren stumble on in ignorance of what the grace of God can do? Never. I would tell them, that they might expect complete deliverance, if they would only lay hold on the arm of help which Christ reaches forth, to save His people from their sins.

I have heard people talk like this, that if a Christian really was perfect, he would be the last person that would tell of it. But would you say of a person who professed conversion, "If he was really converted, he would be the last person to tell of it?" On the contrary, is it not the first impulse of a converted heart to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul!" Why then should not the same desire exist in one who feels that he has obtained sanctification? Why all these suspicions, and refusing to credit evidence? If anyone gives evidence of great piety, if his life is irreproachable, and his spirit not to be complained of, if he shows the very spirit of the Son of God, and if such a person testifies that after great struggles and agonizing prayer God has given him the victory, and his soul is set at liberty by the power of divine grace; why are we not bound to receive his testimony, just as much, as when he says he is converted. We always take such testimony, so far. And now, when he says he has gone farther, and got the victory over all sin, and that Christ has actually fulfilled His promise in this respect, why should we not credit this also?

I have recently read Mr. Wesley's "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," a book I never saw until lately. I find some expressions in it to which I should object, but I believe it is rather the expression than the sentiments. And I think, with this abatement, it is an admirable book, and I wish every member of this church would read it. An edition is in the press, in this city. I would also recommend the memoir of James Brainerd Taylor, and I wish every Christian would get it, and study it. I have read the most of it three times within a few months. From many things in that book, it is plain that he believed in the doctrine that Christian perfection is a duty, and that it is attainable by believers in this life. There is nothing published which shows that he professed to have attained it, but it is manifest that he believed it to be attainable. But I have been told that much which is found in his diary on this subject, as well as some things in his letters, were suppressed by his biographer, as not fitted for the eye of the church in her present state. I believe if the whole could come to light, that it would be seen that he was a firm believer in this doctrine. These books should be read and pondered by the church.

I have now in my mind an individual, who was a member of the church, but very worldly, and when a revival came he opposed it, at first; but afterwards he was awakened, and after an awful conflict, he broke down, and has ever since lived a life of the most devoted piety, laboring and praying incessantly, like his blessed Master, to promote the kingdom of God. I have never heard this man say he thought he was perfect, but I have often heard him speak of the duty and practicability of being perfectly sanctified. And if there is a man in the world who is so, I believe he is one.

People have the strangest notions on this subject. Sometimes you will hear them argue against Christian Perfection on this ground, that a man who was perfectly holy could not live, could not exist in this world. I believe I have talked just so myself, in time past. I know I have talked like a fool on the subject. Why, a saint who was perfect would be more alive than ever, to the good of his fellow men. Could not Jesus Christ live on earth? He was perfectly holy. It is thought that if a person was perfectly sanctified, and loved God perfectly, he would be in such a state of excitement, that he could not remain in the body, could neither eat nor sleep, nor attend to the ordinary duties of life. But there is no evidence of this. The Lord Jesus Christ was a man, subject to all the temptations of other men, He also loved the Lord his God with all His heart and soul and strength. And yet it does not appear that He was in such a state of excitement that He could not both eat and sleep, and work at His trade as a carpenter, and maintain perfect health of body and perfect composure of mind. And why needs a saint that is perfectly sanctified, to be carried away with uncontrollable excitement, or killed with intense emotion, any more than Jesus Christ? There is no need of it, and Christian Perfection implies no such thing.

REMARKS.

We can see now the reasons why there is no more perfection in the world.

1. Christians do not believe that it is the will of God, or that God is willing they should be perfectly sanctified in this world.

They know He commands them to be perfect, as He is perfect, but they think that He is secretly unwilling, and does not really wish them to be so; "Otherwise," say they, "why does He not do more for us, to make us perfect?" No doubt, God prefers their remaining as they are, to using any other means or system of influences to make them otherwise; because He sees that it would be a greater evil to introduce a new system of means than to let them remain as they are. Where one of the evils is unavoidable, He chooses the least of the two evils, and who can doubt that He prefers their being perfect in the circumstances in which they are, to their sinning in these circumstances. Sinners reason just as these professors reason. They say, "I don’t believe He wills my repentance; if He did, He would make me repent." Sinner, God may prefer your continued impenitence, and your damnation, to using any other influences than He does use to make you repent. But for you to infer from this, that He does not wish you to yield to the influences He does use, is strange logic! Suppose your servant should reason so, and say, "I don’t believe my master means I should obey him, because he don’t stand by me all day, to keep me at work." Is that a just conclusion? Very likely, the master’s time is so valuable, that it would be a greater evil to his business, than for that servant to stand still all day.

So it is in the government of God. If God were to bring all the power of His government to bear on one individual, He might save that individual, while at the same time, it would so materially derange His government, that it would be a vastly greater evil than for that individual to go to hell. In the same way, in the case of a Christian, God has furnished him with all the means of sanctification, and required him to be perfect, and now he turns round and says, "God does not really prefer my being perfect; if He did, He would make me so." This is just the argument of the impenitent sinner, and no better in one case than the other. The plain truth is, God does desire, of both, that in the circumstances in which they are placed, they should do just what He commands them to do.

2. They do not expect it themselves.

The great part of the church do not really expect to be any more pious than they are.

3. Much of the time, they do not even desire perfect sanctification.

4. They are satisfied with their hunger and thirst after righteousness, and do not expect to be filled.

Here let me say, that hunger and thirst after holiness IS NOT HOLINESS. The desire of a thing is not the thing desired. If they hunger and thirst after holiness, they ought to give God no rest, till He comes up to His promise, that they shall be filled with holiness, or made perfectly holy.

5. They overlook the great design of the gospel.

Too long has the church been in the habit of thinking that the great design of the gospel is, to save men from the punishment of sin, whereas its real design and object is to deliver men FROM SIN. But Christians have taken the other ground, and think of nothing but that they are to go on in sin, and all they hope for is to be forgiven, and when they die made holy in heaven. Oh, if they only realized that the whole framework of the gospel is designed to break the power of sin, and fill men on earth with all the fullness of God, how soon there would be one steady blaze of love in the hearts of God’s people all over the world!

6. The promises are not understood, and not appropriated by faith.

If the church would read the Bible, and lay hold of every promise there, they would find them exceeding great and precious. But now the church loses its inheritance, and remains ignorant of the extent of the blessings she may receive. Had I time tonight, I could lead you to some promises which, if you would only get hold of and appropriate, you would know what I mean.

7. They seek it by the law, and not by faith.

How many are seeking sanctification by their own resolutions and works, their fastings and prayers, their endeavors and activity, instead of taking right hold of Christ, by faith, for sanctification, as they do for justification. It is all work, work, WORK, when it should be by faith in "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and SANCTIFICATION, and redemption." When they go and take right hold of the strength of God, they will be sanctified. Faith will bring Christ right into the soul, and fill it with the same spirit that breathes through Himself. These dead works are nothing. It is faith that must sanctify, it is faith that purifies the heart; that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, takes hold of Christ and brings Him into the soul, to dwell there the hope of glory; that the life which we live here should be by the faith of the Son of God. It is from not knowing, or not regarding this, that there is so little holiness in the church.

And finally,

8. From the want of the right kind of dependence.

Instead of taking scriptural views of their dependencies and seeing where their strength is, and realizing how willing God is to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask, now and continually, and thus taking hold and holding on by the arm of God, they sit down, in unbelief and sin, to wait God’s

time, and call this depending on God. Alas how little is felt, after all this talk about dependence on the Holy Spirit, how little is really felt of it, and how little is there of the giving up of the whole soul to His control and guidance, with faith in His power to enlighten, to lead, to sanctify, to kindle the affections, and fill the soul continually with all the fullness of God!

Chapter 51

03.04. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION (CONT)

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

TEXT:--"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."--- Mat 5:48.

In speaking from these words, two weeks ago, I pursued the following order.

1. I showed what is implied in being perfect.

2. What Christian perfection is.

3. That it is a duty.

4. That it is attainable in this life.

5. Answered some objections, and then gave some reasons why so many persons are not perfect. Tonight my object is to mention some additional causes which prevent the great body of Christians from attaining perfect sanctification. As a matter of fact, we know that the church is not sanctified, and we ought to know the reasons. If the defect is in God, we ought to know it. If He has not provided a sufficient revelation, or if the power of the Holy Spirit is not adequate to sanctify His people in this world, we ought to understand it, so as not to perplex ourselves with idle endeavors after what is unattainable. And if the fault is in us, we ought to know it, and the true reasons ought to be understood, lest by any means we should charge God foolishly, even in thought, by imagining that He has required of us that which He has furnished us no adequate means of attaining.

I. The first general reason which I shall mention, for persons not being sanctified, is that they seek sanctification by works, and not by faith.

The religion of works assumes a great variety of forms; and it is interesting to see the ever-varying, shifting forms it takes:

1. One form is where men are aiming to live so as to render their damnation unjust. It matters not, in this case, whether they deem themselves Christians or not, if they are in fact trying to live so as to render it unjust for God to send them to hell. This was the religion of the ancient Pharisees. And there are not a few, in the present day, whose religion is purely of this character. You will often find them out of the church, and perhaps ready to confess that they have never been born again. But yet they speak of their own works in a way that makes it manifest that they think themselves quite too good to be damned.

2. Another form of the religion of works is, where persons are not aiming so much to render it unjust in God to damn them, but are seeking by their works to recommend themselves to the mercy of God. They know they deserve to be damned, and will forever deserve it. But they also know that God is merciful; and they think that if they live honest lives, and do many kind things to the poor, it will so recommend them to the general mercy of God, that He will not impute their

iniquities to them, but will forgive their sins and save them. This is the religion of most modern moralists. Living under the gospel, they know they cannot be saved by their works, and yet they think that if they go to meeting, and help support the minister, and do this and that and the other kinds of good works, it will recommend them to God's mercy sufficiently for salvation. So far as I understand the system of religion held by modern Unitarians, this must be their system. Whether they understand it so, or admit it to be so, or not, as far as I can see, it comes to this. They set aside the atonement of Christ, and do not expect to be saved by the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and I know not on what they do depend, but this. They seem to have a kind of sentimental religion, and on this, with their morality and their liberality, they depend to recommend them to the mercy of God. On this ground they expect to receive the forgiveness of their sins, and to be saved.

3. Another form of the religion of works is, where persons are endeavoring to prepare themselves to accept of Christ.

They understand that salvation is only through Jesus Christ. They know that they cannot be saved by works, nor by the general mercy of God, without an atonement, and that the only way to be saved is by faith in Christ. But they have heard the relations of the experience of others, who went through a long process of distress before they submitted to Christ and found peace in believing. And they think a certain preparatory process is necessary, and that they must make a great many prayers and run hither and thither to attend meetings, and lie awake many nights, and suffer so much distress, and perhaps fall into despair, and then they shall be in a situation to accept of Christ. This is the situation of many convicted sinners. When they are awakened, and get so far as to find that they cannot be saved by their own works, then they set themselves to prepare to receive Christ. Perhaps some of you, who are here tonight, are in just this case. You dare not come to Christ just as you are, when you have made so few prayers, and attended so few meetings, and felt so little distress, and done so little and been so little engaged. And so, instead of going right to Christ for all you need, as a poor lost sinner, throwing yourself unreservedly into His hands, you set yourself to lash your mind into more conviction and distress, in order to prepare you to accept of Christ. Such cases are just about as common as convicted sinners are. How many there are, who abound in such works, and seem determined they will not fall down at once at the feet of Christ. It is not necessary to go into an argument here, to show that they are growing no better by all this process. There is no love to God in it, and no faith, and no religion. It is all mere mockery of God, and hypocrisy, and sin. There may be a great deal of feeling, but it is of no use; it brings them in fact no nearer to Christ; and after all, they have to do the very thing at last, which they might have done just as well at first.

Now suppose an individual should take it into his head that this is the way to become holy. Every Christian can see that it is very absurd, and that however he may multiply such works, he is not beginning to approach to holiness. The first act of holiness is to believe, to take hold of Christ by faith. And if a Christian, who is awakened to feel the need of sanctification, undertakes to go through a preparatory process of self-created distress, before he applies to Christ, it is just as absurd as for an awakened sinner to do it.

4. Another form of the religion of works is, where individuals perform works to beget faith and love.

The last mentioned class was where individuals are preparing to come to Christ. Here we suppose them to have come to Christ, and that they have accepted Him, and are real Christians; but having

backslidden they set themselves to perform many works to beget faith and love, or to beget and perfect a right state of feeling. This is one of the most common and most subtle forms in which the religion of works shows itself at the present day.

Now this is very absurd. It is an attempt to produce holiness by sin. For if the feelings are not right, the act is sin. If the act does not proceed from faith and love, whatever they may do is sin. How idle, to think that a person, by multiplying sins, can beget holiness! And yet it is perfectly common for persons to think they can beget holiness by a course of conduct that is purely sinful. For certainly, any act that does not spring from love already existing, is sinful. The individual acts not from the impulse of faith that works by love and purifies the heart, but he acts without faith and love, with a design to beget those affections by such acts as these.

It is true, when faith and love exist, and are the propelling motive to action, the carrying of them out in action has a tendency to increase them. This arises from the known laws of mind, by which every power and every faculty gains strength by exercise. But the case supposed is where individuals have left their first love, if ever they had any, and then set themselves, without faith or love, to bustle about and warn sinners, or the like, under the idea that this is the way to wake up, or to become holy, or to get into the state of feeling that God requires. It is really most unphilosophical and absurd, and ruinous, to think of waking up faith in the soul, where it does not exist, by performing outward acts from some other motive. It is mocking God, to pretend, by doing things from wrong motives, to produce a holy frame of mind. By and by, I shall show where the deception lies, and how it comes to pass that any persons should ever dream of such a way of becoming sanctified. The fact is too plain to be proved, that pretending to serve God in such a way, so far from having any tendency to produce a right spirit, is in fact grieving the Holy Ghost, and insulting God.

So far as the philosophy of the thing is concerned, it is just like the conduct of convicted sinners. But there is one difference: the sinner, in spite of all his wickedness, may by and by learn his own helplessness, and actually renounce all his own works, and feel that his continued refusal to come to Christ, so far from being a preparation for coming, is only heaping up so many sins against God. But it is otherwise with those who think themselves to be already Christians, as I will explain by and by.

It is often remarked, by careful observers in religion, that many persons who abound in religious acts, are often the most hardened, and the farthest removed from spiritual feeling. If performing religious duties was the way to produce religious feeling, we should expect that ministers, and leaders in the church, would be always the most spiritual. But the fact is, that where faith and love are not in exercise, in proportion as persons abound in outward acts without the inward life, they become hardened and cold, and full of iniquity. They may have been converted but have backslidden, and so long as they are seeking sanctification in this way, by multiplying their religious duties, running round to protracted meetings, or warning sinners, without any spiritual life, they will never find it, but will in fact become more hardened and stupid. Or if they get into an excitement in this way, it is a spurious superficial state of mind that has nothing holy in it.

II. Another reason why so many persons are not sanctified is this: They do not receive Christ in all His relations, as He is offered in the gospel.

Most people are entirely mistaken here, and they will never go ahead in sanctification, until they learn that there is a radical error in the manner in which they attempt to attain it. Take a case: Suppose an individual who is convinced of sin. He sees that God might in justice send him to hell, and that he has no way in which he can make satisfaction. Now tell him of Christ's atonement, show him how Christ died to make satisfaction, so that God can be just and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, he sees it to be right and sufficient, and exactly what he needs, and he throws himself upon Christ, in faith, for justification. He accepts Him as his justification, and that is as far as he understands the gospel. He believes, and is justified, and feels the pardon of his sins. Now, here is the very attitude in which most convicted sinners stop. They take up with Christ in the character in which, as sinners, they most feel the need of a Savior, as the propitiation of their sins, to make atonement and procure forgiveness, and there they stop. And after that, it is often exceedingly difficult to get their attention to what Christ offers beyond. Say what you will in regard to Christ as the believer's wisdom and righteousness and his sanctification, and all his relations as a Savior from sin---they do not feel their need of Him sufficiently to make them really throw themselves upon Him in these relations. The converted person feels at peace with God, joy and gratitude fill his heart, he rejoices in having found a Savior that can stand between him and his Judge, he may have really submitted, and for a time, he follows on in the way of obedience to God's commandments. But, by and by, he finds the workings of sin in his members, unsubdued pride, his old temper breaking forth, and a multitude of enemies assaulting his soul, from within and without, and he is not prepared to meet them.

Hitherto, he has taken up Christ and regarded Him, mainly, in one of His relations, that of a Savior to save him from hell. If I am not mistaken, the great mass of professing Christians lose sight, almost altogether, of many of the most interesting relations which Christ sustains to believers. Now, when the convert finds himself thus brought under the power of temptation, and drawn into sin, he needs to receive Christ in a new relation, to know more of the extent of His provision, to make a fresh application to Him, and give a new impulse to his mind to resist temptation. This is not fully apprehended by many Christians. They never really view Christ, under his name Jesus, because he saves His people from their sins. They need to receive him AS A KING, to take the throne in their hearts, and rule over them with absolute and perfect control, bringing every faculty and every thought into subjection. The reason why the convert thus falls under the power of temptation, is that he has not submitted his own will to Christ, as a king, in everything, as perfectly as he ought, but is, after all, exercising his own self-will in some particulars.

Again: There are a multitude of what are called sins of ignorance, which need not be. Christians complain that they cannot understand the Bible, and there are many things concerning which they are always in doubt. Now, what they need is, to receive Christ as wisdom, to accept Him in His relation as the source of light and knowledge. Who of you now attach a full and definite idea to the text which says, "We are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" What do you understand by it? It does not say He is a justifier, and a teacher, and a sanctifier, and a redeemer; but that He is wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. What does that mean? Until Christians shall find out by experience, and know what that scripture meaneth, how can the church be sanctified? The church is now just like a branch plucked off from a vine; "Except ye abide in me, ye cannot bear fruit." Suppose a branch had power voluntarily to separate itself from the vine, and then

should undertake to bring forth fruit, what would you think? So with the church; until Christians will go to the Eternal Source of sanctification, and wisdom, and redemption, it will never become holy. If they would become, by faith, absolutely united with Him, in all those offices and relations in which He is offered, they would know what sanctification is.

I may, at some other time, take this text as the foundation of a separate discourse, and discuss these points, one by one, and show what this means. I will only say, at present, as much as this: that it means just what it says, and there is no need of explaining it away, as has too commonly been done. And when the church shall once take hold of Christ, in ALL His relations, as here set forth, they will know what it is, and will see that He is the light and the life of the world. To be sanctified by Him, they must so embrace Him, as to receive from Him those supplies of grace and knowledge, which alone can purify the soul and give the complete victory over sin and Satan.

I will mention some reasons why Christians do not receive Christ in all his relations.

(1.) They may not have those particular convictions, that are calculated to make them deeply feel the necessity of a Savior in those relations.

If an individual is not deeply convicted of his own depravity, and has not learned intimately his own sinfulness, and if he does not know experimentally, as a matter of fact, that he needs help to overcome the power of sin, he will never receive Jesus Christ into his soul AS A KING. When men undertake to help themselves out of sin, and feel strong in their own strength to cope with their spiritual enemies, they never receive Christ fully, nor rely on Him solely to save them from sin. But when they have tried to keep themselves by their own watchfulness and prayers, and binding themselves by resolution and oaths to obey God, and find that, after all, if left to themselves, there is nothing in them but depravity, then they feel their own helplessness, and begin to inquire what they shall do? The Bible teaches all this plainly enough, and if people would believe the Bible, converts would know their own helplessness, and their need of a Savior to save from sin, at the outset. But, as a matter of fact, they do not receive nor believe the Bible on this subject, until they have set themselves to work out a righteousness of their own, and thus have found out by experiment that they are nothing without Christ. And therefore they do not receive Him in this relation, till after they have spent, it may be, years, in these vain and self-righteous endeavors to do the work of sanctification themselves. Having begun in the Spirit they are trying to be made perfect by the flesh.

(2.) Others, when they see their own condition, do not receive Christ as a Savior from sin, because they are, after all unwilling to abandon all sin.

They know that if they give themselves up entirely to Christ, all sin must be abandoned; and they have some idol which they are unwilling to give up.

(3.) Sometimes, when persons are deeply convinced, and anxious to know what they shall do to get rid of sin, they do not apply to Christ in faith, because they do not know what they have a right to expect from Him.

There are many who seem to suppose they are under a fatal necessity to sin, and that there is no help for it, but they must drag along this load of sin till their death. They do not absolutely charge God foolishly, and say in words that He has made no provision for such a case as this. But they

seem to suppose that Christ's atonement being so great as to cover all sins, and God's mercy being so great, if they do go on in sin all their days, as they expect they shall, He will forgive all at last, and it will be just about as well in the end, as if they had been really sanctified. They do not see that the gospel has made provision sufficient to rid us forever of the commission of all sin. They look at it as merely a system of pardon, leaving the sinner to drag along his load of sin to the very gate of heaven; instead of a system to break up the very power of sin in the mind. The consequence is, they make very little account of the promises. O, how little use do Christians make of those exceeding great and precious promises, in the Bible, which were given expressly for this purpose, that we might become partakers of the divine nature! Here God has suited His promises to our exigencies, for this end, and we have only to draw upon Him for all that we want, and we shall have whatever we need for our sanctification. Hear the Savior say, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, BELIEVE that ye receive them and ye shall have them."

The fact is, Christians do not really believe much that is in the Bible. Now, suppose you were to meet God, and you knew it was God himself, speaking to you, and He should reach out a book in His hand, and tell you to take that book, and that the book contains exceeding great and precious promises, of all that you need, or ever can need, to resist temptation, to overcome sin, and to make you perfectly holy, and fit you for heaven; and then He tells you that whenever you are in want of anything for this end, you need only take the appropriate promise, and present it to Him at any time, and He will do it. Now, if you were to receive such a book, directly from the hand of God, and knew that God had written it for you, with His own hand, would you not believe it? And would you not read it a great deal more than you now read the Bible? How eager you would be to know all that was in it? And how ready to apply the promises in time of need! You would want to get it all by heart, and often repeat it all through, that you might keep your mind familiar with its contents, and be always ready to apply the promises you read! Now, the truth is, the Bible is that book. It is written just so, and filled with just such promises; so that the Christian, by laying hold of the right promise, and pleading it, can always find all that he needs for his spiritual benefit.

Christ is a complete Savior. All the promises of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God the Father. That is, God has promised in the second person of the Trinity, in the person of Jesus Christ, and made them all certain through Him. Now, the thing which is needed is, that Christians should understand these promises, and believe them, and in every circumstance of need apply them, for sanctification. Suppose they lack wisdom. Let them go to God, and plead the promise. Suppose they cannot understand the scriptures, or the path of duty is not plain. The promise is plain enough, take that. Whatever they lack of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, only let them go to God in faith, and take hold of the promise, and if He does not prove false, they will assuredly receive all that they need.

4.) Another reason why many do not receive Christ in all His relations is, that they are too proud to relinquish all self-dependence or reliance on their own wisdom and their own will.

How great a thing it is, for the proud heart of man to give up its own wisdom, and knowledge, and will, and everything, to God. I have found this the greatest of all difficulties. Doubtless all find it so. The common plea is, "Our reason was given us, to be exercised in religion, but what is the use, if we may not rely on it, or follow it?" But there is one important discrimination to be made, which many overlook. Our reason was given us to use in religion; but it is not in the proper province of

reason to ask whether what God says is reasonable, but to show us the infinite reasonableness of believing that ALL which God says must be true, whether we in our ignorance and blindness can see the reasonableness of it or not. And if we go beyond this, we go beyond the proper province of reason. But how unwilling the proud heart of man is to lay aside all its own vain wisdom, and become like a little child, under the teaching of God! The apostle says, "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." There is a vast meaning in this. He that does not receive Christ alone as his wisdom, knows nothing in religion to any purpose. If he is not taught by Jesus Christ, he has not learned the first lesson of Christianity. So again, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son revealeth him." The individual who has learned this lesson, feels that he has not one iota of knowledge in religion, that is of any value, only as he is taught by Jesus Christ. For it is written, "And they shall all be taught of God."

REMARKS.

I. You see what kind of preaching the church now needs.

The church needs to be searched thoroughly, shown their great defects, and brought under conviction, and then pointed to where their great strength lies. With their everlasting parade of dead works, they need to be shown how poor they are. "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Until Christians are shown their poverty, and the infinite emptiness and abominable wickedness of their dead works, and then shown just where their help is, and that it is by FAITH ALONE they can never be sanctified, the church will go farther and farther from God, till it will have only the form of godliness, denying the power thereof.

II. When you see the Christian character defective in any particular, you may always know that the individual needs to receive Christ more fully in the very relation that is calculated to supply this defect.

The defect, whatever it be, in the character of any believer, will never be remedied, until he sees the relation of Christ to that part of his character, so as by faith to take hold of Christ and bring Him in to remedy that defect. Suppose a person is naturally penurious and selfish, and reluctant to act in a disinterested manner; he will never remedy that defect, until he receives Christ as his pattern, and the selfishness is driven out of his heart by imbuing his very soul with the infinite benevolence of the Savior. So it is with regard to any other defect; he will never conquer it, until you make him see that the infinite fullness of Christ is answerable to that very want.

III. You see the necessity there is that ministers should be persons of deep experience in religion.

It is easy for even a carnal mind to preach so as to bring sinners under conviction. But until the tone of sanctification is greatly raised among ministers, it is not to be expected that the piety of the church will be greatly elevated. Those Christians who have experience of these things should therefore be much in prayer for ministers, that the sons of Levi may be purified, that the leaders of Israel may take hold of Christ for the sanctification of their own hearts, and then they will know what to say to the church on the subject of holiness.

IV. Many seek sanctification by works, who do not know that they are seeking in this way.

They profess that they are seeking sanctification only by faith. They tell you they know very well that it is in vain to seek it in their own strength. But yet the results show how conclusively, that they are seeking by works, and not by faith. It is of the last importance that you should know, whether you are seeking sanctification by works, or by faith, for all seeking of it by works is absurd, and never will lead to any good results. How will you know?

Take again the case of a convicted sinner. Sinner, how are you seeking salvation? The sinner replies, "By faith, of course; everybody knows that no sinner can be saved by works." I say, No, you are seeking salvation by works. How shall I show it to him? Sinner, do you believe in Christ? "I do." But does He give you peace with God? "O no, not yet, but I am trying to get more conviction, and to pray more, and be more earnest in seeking, and I hope He will give me peace if I persevere." Now, every Christian sees, at a glance, that with all his pretensions to the contrary, this man is seeking salvation by works. And the way to prove it to him is exceedingly simple. It is evident he is seeking by works, because he is relying on certain preparatory steps and processes to be gone through, before he exercises saving faith. He is not ready now to accept of Christ, he is conscious he is not, but thinks he must bring himself into a different state of mind as a preparation, and it is at this he is aiming. That is works. No matter what the state of mind is, that he aims at as preparatory to coming to Christ; if it is anything that must precede faith, or any preparatory process for faith, and he is trying without faith to get into a proper state of mind to have faith, it is all the religion of works.

Now, how common is just such a state of mind among those Christians who profess to be seeking sanctification. You say, you must mortify sin, but the way you go about it is by a self-righteous preparation, seeking to recommend yourselves to Christ as worthy to receive the blessing, instead of coming right to Christ, as an unworthy and ruined beggar, to receive at once, by faith, the very blessing you need. No efforts of your own are going to make you any better. Like a person in a horrible pit of miry clay, every struggle of your own sinks you deeper in the clay. You have no need of any such thing, and all your endeavors, instead of bringing you any nearer to Christ, are only sinking you down in the filth, farther and farther from God. It is not even the beginning of help.

The sinner, by his preparatory seeking, gains no advantage. There he lies, dead in trespasses and sins, as far removed from spiritual life, or holiness, as ever a dead corpse was from natural life; until at length, ceasing from his own dead works, he comes to the conviction that there is nothing he can do for himself but to go NOW, just as he is, and submit to Christ. As long as he thinks there is something he must do first, he never feels that now is God’s time of salvation. And as long as the Christian is seeking sanctification in the way of works, he never feels that now is God’s time to give him the victory over sin.

V. Multitudes deceive themselves in this matter, by the manner in which they have seen certain old-fashioned, Antinomian churches roused up, who were dragging along in death.

Where such a church has been found, that had been fed on dry doctrine till they were about as stupid as the seats they sat on, the first thing has been to rouse them up to do something, and that very fact perhaps would bring such a church under conviction, and lead them to repentance. It is not because there is any religion in these doings of professors in such a state; but it shows them their deficiencies, and their unfitness to be members of the church, and awakens their consciences. So it is, sometimes, when a careless sinner has been set to praying. Everybody

knows there is no piety in such prayers, but it calls his attention to the subject of religion, and gives the Holy Spirit an opportunity to bring the truth full upon his conscience. But if you take a man who has been in the habit of praying from his childhood, and whose formal prayers have made him as cold as a stone, praying will never bring that man under conviction, till you show him what is the true character of his prayers, and STOP his ungodly and heaven-daring praying.

In many cases, where a church has sunk down in stupidity, the most effectual way to rouse them has been found to be, setting them to warning sinners of their danger. This would get the attention of the church to the subject of religion, and perhaps bring many of them to repentance. Hence many have formed a general rule, that the way for a church to wake up, always is, to go to work, and warn sinners. They do not discriminate, here, between the habits of different churches, and the different treatment they consequently require. Whereas, if you take what is called a "working church," where they have been in the habit of enjoying revivals and holding protracted meetings, you will find there is no difficulty in rousing up the church to act, and bustle about, and make a noise. But as a general rule, unless there is great wisdom and faithfulness in dealing with the church, every succeeding revival will make their religion more and more superficial; and their minds will be more hardened instead of being convicted, by their efforts. Tell such a church they are self-righteous, and that there is no Holy Ghost in their bustling, and they will be affronted and stare at you, "Why, don't you know that the way to wake up in religion is to go to work in religion?" Whereas, the very fact that activity has become a habit with them, shows that they require a different course. They need first to be thoroughly probed and searched, and made sensible of their deficiencies, and brought humble and believing to the foot of the cross, for sanctification.

When I was an evangelist, I labored in a church that had enjoyed many revivals, and it was the easiest thing in the world to get the church to go out and bring in sinners to the meetings; and the impenitent would come in and hear, but there was no deep feeling, and no faith in the church. The minister saw that this way of proceeding was ruining the church, and that each successive revival, brought about in this manner, made the converts more and more superficial, and unless we came to a stand, and got more sanctification in the church, we should defeat our object. We began to preach with that view, and the church members writhed under it. The preaching ran so directly across all their former notions, about the way to promote religion, that some of them were quite angry. They would run about and talk but would do nothing else. But after a terrible state of things many of them broke down, and became as humble and as teachable as little children.

Now there are multitudes in the churches who insist upon it that the way to get sanctification is to go to work, and they think that, by dint of mere friction, they can produce the warm love of God in their hearts. This is all wrong. Mere driving about and bustle and noise will never produce sanctification. And least of all, when persons have been accustomed to this course.

VI. You that are in the habit of performing many religious duties, and yet fall short of holiness, can see what is the matter.

The truth is, you have gone to work to wake up, instead of at once throwing yourself on the Lord Jesus Christ for sanctification, and then going to work to serve Him. You have gone to work for your life instead of working from a principle of life within, impelling you to the work of the Lord. You have undertaken to get holiness by a lengthened process, like that of the convicted sinner, who is preparing to come to Christ. But the misfortune is, that you have not half the perseverance of the

sinner. The sinner is driven by the fear of going to hell, and he exerts himself in the way of works till his strength is all exhausted, and all his self-righteousness is worked up, and then, feeling that he is helpless and undone, he throws himself into the arms of Christ. But you have not so much perseverance, because you have not so much fear. You think you are a Christian, and that however you may come short of sanctification, yet you are safe from hell, and can go to heaven without it. And so you will not persevere and put forth your efforts for holiness by works, till you have used up all your self-righteousness, and are driven to Christ as your only hope for sanctification. This is the reason why convicted Christians so generally fall short of that submission to Christ for holiness, which the convicted sinner exercises for forgiveness.

You say to the sinner, who is seeking salvation by works, "Why don't you yield up all your self-righteous efforts, and come right to Christ for salvation? He is ready to receive you NOW!" And why don't you do so too? When will you learn the first lesson in religion, that you have no help in yourselves, and that all your exertions without Christ, for sanctification, are just as vain as it is for the wretch who is in the horrible pit and miry clay, by his own struggling to get himself out.

VII. The growth of works in the church is no certain sign of growth in holiness.

If the church grows in holiness, it will grow in works. But it does not follow, that growth in works always proves growth in holiness. It may be that works of religion may greatly increase, while the power of religion is actually and rapidly declining. It often happens in a church, that when a revival begins to lose its power, the church may be willing to do even more than ever, in works, but it will not arrest the decline, unless they get broken down before God.

I see I must take up this subject again. O, that I could convince the whole church that they need no other help but Christ, and that they would come at once to Christ for all they want, and receive Him as their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. How soon would all their wants be supplied, from His infinite fullness.

Chapter 52

03.05. COMFORMITY TO THE WORLD

CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

TEXT:--"Be not conformed to this world."--- Rom 12:2.

It will be recollected by some who are present, that sometime since I made use of this text in preaching in this place, but the object of this evening's discourse is so far different that it is not improper to employ the same text again. The following is the order in which I design to discuss the subject of CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD I. To show what is not meant by the command of the text.

II. Show what is meant by the command, "Be not conformed to this world."

III. To mention some of the reasons why this requirement is made upon all who will live a godly life.

IV. To answer some objections that are made to the principles laid down.

I. I am to show what is not meant by the requirement, "Be not conformed to this world."

I suppose it is not meant, that Christians should refuse to benefit by the useful arts, improvements and discoveries of the world. It is not only the privilege but the duty of the friends of God to avail themselves of these, and to use for God all the really useful arts and improvements that arise among mankind.

II. I am to show what is meant by the requirement.

It is meant that Christians are bound not to conform to the world in the three following things. I mention only these three, not because there are not many other things in which conformity to the world is forbidden, but because these three classes are all that I have time to examine tonight, and further, because these three are peculiarly necessary to be discussed at the present time. The three things are three departments of life, in which it is required that you be not conformed to this world. They are BUSINESS---FASHION---POLITICS In all these departments it is required that Christians should not do as the world do, they should neither receive the maxims, nor adopt the principles, nor follow the practices of the world.

III. I am to mention some reasons for the command, "Be not conformed to this world."

You are by no means to act on the same principles, nor from the same motives, nor pursue your object in the same manner that the world do, either in the pursuits of business, or of fashion, or of politics. I shall examine these several departments separate.

First.---Of business.

1. The first reason why you are not to be conformed to this world in business, is that the principle of the world is that of supreme selfishness. This is true universally, in the pursuit of business. The whole course of business in the world is governed and regulated by the maxims of supreme and

unmixed selfishness. It is regulated without the least regard to the commands of God, or the glory of God, or the welfare of their fellow men. The maxims of business generally current among business men, and the habits and usages of business men, are all based upon supreme selfishness. Who does not know, that in making bargains, the business men of the world consult their own interest, and seek their own benefit, and not the benefit of those they deal with? Who has ever heard of a worldly man of business making bargains, and doing business for the benefit of those he dealt with? No, it is always for their own benefit. And are Christians to do so? They are required to act on the very opposite principle to this: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." They are required to copy the example of Jesus Christ. Did He ever make bargains for His own advantage?---And may His followers adopt the principle of the world---a principle that contains in it the seeds of hell! If Christians are to do this, is it not the most visionary thing on earth to suppose the world is ever going to be converted to the gospel.

2. They are required not to conform to the world, because conformity to the world is totally inconsistent with the love of God or man.

The whole system recognizes only the love of self. Go through all the ranks of business men, from the man that sells candy on the sidewalk at the corner of the street, to the greatest wholesale merchant or importer in the United States, and you will find that one maxim runs through the whole---to buy as cheap as you can, and sell as dear as you can---to Look out for number one---and to do always, as far as the rules of honesty will allow, all that will advance your own interests, let what will become of the interest of others. Ungodly men will not deny that these are the maxims on which business is done in the world. The man who pursues this course is universally regarded as doing business on business principles. Now, are these maxims consistent with holiness, with the love of God or the love of man, with the spirit of the gospel or the example of Jesus Christ? Can a man conform to the world in these principles, and yet love God? Impossible! No two things can be more unlike. Then Christians are by no means to conform to the business maxims of the world.

3. These maxims, and the rules by which business is done in the world, are directly opposite to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the spirit He exhibited, and the maxims He inculcated, and the rules which He enjoined that all His followers should obey, on pain of hell.

What was the spirit Jesus Christ exemplified on earth? It was the spirit of self-denial, of benevolence, of sacrificing Himself to do good to others. He exhibited the same spirit that God does, who enjoys His infinite happiness in going out of himself to gratify His benevolent heart in doing good to others. This is the religion of the gospel, to be like God, not only doing good, but enjoying it, joyfully going out of self to do good. This is the gospel maxim: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And again, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." What says the business man of the world? "Look out for number one." These very maxims were made by men who knew and cared no more for the gospel, than the heathen do. Why should Christians conform to such maxims as these?

4. To conform to the world in the pursuits of business is a flat contradiction of the engagements that Christians make when they enter the church.

What is the engagement that you make when you enter the church? Is it not, to renounce the world and live for God, and to be actuated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and to possess supreme love to God, and to renounce self, and to give yourself to glorify God, and do good to men? You profess not to love the world, its honors or its riches. Around the communion table, with your hand on the broken body of your Savior, you avouch these to be your principles, and pledge yourself to live by these maxims. And then what do you do? Go away, and follow maxims and rules gotten up by men, whose avowed principle is the love of the world, and whose avowed object is to get the world? Is this your way? Then, unless you repent, let me tell you, you will be damned. It is no more certain, that any infidel or any profligate wretch will go to hell, than that all such professing Christians will go there, who conform to the world. They have double guilt. They are sworn before God to a different course, and when they pursue the business principles of the world, they show that they are perjured wretches.

5. Conformity to the world is such a manifest contradiction of the principles of the gospel, that sinners, when they see it, do not and cannot understand from it the true nature and object of the gospel itself.

How can they understand that the object of the gospel is to raise men above the love of the world, and above the influence of the world, and place them on higher ground, to live on totally different principles? When they see professing Christians acting on the same principles with other men, how can they understand the true principles of the gospel, or know what it means by heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, benevolence, and so on?

6. It is this spirit of conformity to the world, that has already eaten out the love of God from the church.

Show me a young convert, while his heart is warm, and the love of God glows out from his lips. What does he care for the world? Call up his attention to it, point him to its riches, its pleasures or its honors, and try to engage him in their pursuit, and he loathes the thought. But let him now go into business, and do business on the principles of the world one year, and you no longer find the love of God glowing in his heart, and his religion has become the religion of conscience, dry, meager, uninfluential---anything but the glowing love of God, moving in him to acts of benevolence. I appeal to every man in this house, and if my voice was loud enough I would appeal to every professor of religion in this city, if it is not. And if anyone should say, "No, it is not so," I should regard it as proof that he never knew what it was to feel the glow of a convert’s first love.

7. This conformity to the world in business is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of the conversion of sinners.

What do wicked men think, when they see professing Christians, with such professions on their lips, and pretending to believe what the Bible teaches, and yet driving after the world, as eager as anybody, making the best bargains, and dealing as hard as the most worldly?---What do they think? I can tell you what they say. They say "I do not see but these Christians do just as the rest of us do, they act on the same principles, look out as sharp for number one, drive as hard bargains, and get as high interest as anybody." And it must be said that these are not things of which the world accuse Christians slanderously. It is a notorious fact that most of the members of the church pursue the world, so far as appears in the same spirit, by the same maxims, and to the

same degree, that the ungodly do who maintain a character for uprightness and humanity. The world say, "Look at the church, I don't see as they are any better than I am; they go to the full length that I do after the world." If professing Christians act on the same principles with worldly men, as the Lord liveth, they shall have the same reward. They are set down in God's book of remembrance as black hypocrites, pretending to be the friends of God while they love the world. For whoso liveth the world is the enemy of God. They profess to be governed by principles directly opposite to the world, and if they do the same things with the world, they are hypocrites.

8. Another reason for the requirement, "Be not conformed to this world," is the immense, salutary and instantaneous influence it would have if everybody would do business on the principles of the gospel.

Just turn the tables over, and let Christians do business one year on gospel principles. It would shake the world. It would ring louder than thunder. Let the ungodly see professing Christians, in every bargain, consulting the good of the person they are trading with---seeking not their own wealth, but every man another's wealth---living above the world---setting no value on the world any farther than it can be a means of glorifying God---what do you think would be the effect? What effect did it have in Jerusalem, when the whole body of Christians gave up their business, and turned out en masse to pursue the salvation of the world? They were only a few ignorant fishermen, and a few humble women, but they turned the world upside down. Let the church live so now, and it would cover the world with confusion of face, and overwhelm them with convictions of sin. Only let them see the church living above the world, and doing business on gospel principles, seeking not their own interests but the interests of their fellow men, and infidelity would hide its head, heresy would be driven from church, and this charming, blessed spirit of love, would go over the world like the waves of the sea.

Secondly.---Of Fashions.

Why are Christians required not to follow the fashions of the world?

1. Because it is directly at war with the spirit of the gospel, and is minding earthly things.

What is minding earthly things, if it is not to follow the fashions of the world, that like a tide are continually setting to and fro, and fluctuating in their forms, and keeping the world continually changing? There are many men of large business in the world, and men of wealth, who think they care nothing for the fashions. They are occupied with something else, and they trust the fashions altogether with their tailor, taking it for granted that he will make all right. But mind, if he should make a garment unfashionable, you would see that they do care about the fashions, and they never would employ that tailor again. Still, at present their thoughts are not much on the fashions. They have a higher object in view. And they think it beneath the dignity of a minister to preach about fashions. They overlook the fact, that with the greater part of mankind fashion is everything. The greater part of the community are not rich, and never expect to be, but they look to the world to enable them to make a respectable appearance, and to bring up their families in a respectable manner; that is, to follow the fashions. Nine-tenths of the population never look at anything higher, than to do as the world does, or to follow the fashions. For this they strain every nerve. And this is what they set their hearts on, and what they live for.

The merchant and the rich man deceives himself, therefore, if he supposes that fashion is a little thing. The great body of the people mind this, their minds are set upon it, the thing which they look for in life is to have their dress, equipage, furniture, and so on, like other people, in the fashion, or respectable as they call it.

2. To conform to the world is contrary to their profession.

When people join the church, they profess to give up the spirit that gives rise to the fashions. They profess to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, to repent of their pride, to follow the meek and lowly Savior, to live for God. And now, what do they do? You often see professors of religion go to the extreme of the fashion. Nothing will satisfy them that is not in the height of fashion. And a Christian female dress-maker, who is conscientiously opposed to the following of fashions, cannot get her bread. She cannot get employment even among professing Christian ladies, unless she follows the fashions in all their countless changes. God knows it is so, and they must give up their business if their conscience will not permit them to follow the changes of fashion.

3. This conformity is a broad and complete approval of the spirit of the world.

What is it that lies at the bottom of all this shifting scenery? What is the cause that produces all this gaudy show and dash, and display? It is the love of applause. And when Christians follow the changes of fashion, they pronounce all this innocent. All this waste of money and time and thought, all this feeding and cherishing of vanity and the love of applause, the church sets her seal to, when she conforms to the world.

4. Nay, further, another reason is, that following the fashions of the world, professing Christians show that they do in fact love the world.

They show it by their conduct, just as the ungodly show it by the same conduct. As they act alike they give evidence that they are actuated by one principle, the love of fashion.

5. When Christian professors do this, they show most clearly that they love the praise of men.

It is evident that they love admiration and flattery, just as sinners do. Is not this inconsistent with Christian principle, to go right into the very things that are set up by the pride and fashion and lust of the ungodly?

6. Conforming to the world in fashion, you show that you do not hold yourself accountable to God for the manner in which you lay out money.

You practically disown your stewardship of the wealth that is in your possession. By laying out money to gratify your own vanity and lust, you take off the keen edge of that truth, which ought to cut that sinner in two, who is living to himself. It is practically denying that the earth is the Lord’s, with the cattle on a thousand hills, and all to be employed for His glory.

7. You show that reputation is your idol.

When the cry comes to your ears on every wind, from the ignorant and the lost of all nations, "Come over and help us, come over and help us," and every week brings some call to send the gospel, to send tracts and Bibles, and missionaries to those who are perishing for lack of

knowledge, if you choose to expend money in following the fashions, it is demonstration that reputation is your idol.---Suppose now, for the sake of argument, that it is not prohibited in the word of God to follow the fashions, and that professing Christians, if they will, may innocently follow the fashions, (I deny that it is innocent, but suppose it were,) does not the fact that they do follow them when there are such calls for money, and time, and thought, and labor to save souls, prove conclusively that they do not love God nor the souls of men?

Take the case of a woman, whose husband is in slavery, and she is trying to raise money enough for his redemption. There she is, toiling and saving, rising up early and sitting up late, and eating the bread of carefulness, because her husband, the father of her children, the friend of her youth, is in slavery. Now go to that woman and tell her that it is innocent for her to follow the fashions, and dress and display like her neighbors---will she do it? Why not? She does not desire to do it. She will scarcely buy a pair of shoes for her feet, she grudges almost the bread she eats, so intent is she on her great object.

Now suppose a person loved God and the souls of men and the kingdom of Christ, does he need an express prohibition from God to prevent him from spending his money and his life in following the fashion? No, indeed, he will rather need a positive injunction to take what is needful for his own comfort and the support of his own life. Take the case of Timothy. Did he need a prohibition to prevent him from indulging in the use of wine? So far from it, he was so cautious that it required an express injunction from God to make him drink a little as a medicine. Although he was sick, he would not drink it till he had the word of God for it, he saw the evils of it so clearly. Now, show me a man or woman, I care not what their professions are, that follows the fashions of the world, and I will show you what spirit they are of.

Now, don’t ask me why Abraham, and David, and Solomon, who were so rich, did not lay out their money in spreading the kingdom of God. Ah, tell me, did they enjoy the light that professors now enjoy? Did they even know so much as this, that the world can be converted, as Christians now see clearly that it can? But suppose it were as allowable in you as it was in Abraham or David to be rich, and to lay out the property you possess in display and pomp and fashion. Suppose it were perfectly innocent, who that loves the Lord Jesus Christ would wish to lay out money in fashion when they could lay it out to gratify the ALL-ABSORBING passion, to do good to the souls of men?

8. By conforming to the world in fashion, you show that you differ not at all from ungodly sinners.

Ungodly sinners say, "I don’t see but that these Christian men and women love to follow the fashions as well as I do." Who does not know, that this leads many to infidelity.

9. By following the fashions you are tempting God to give you up to a worldly spirit.

There are many now that have followed the world, and followed the fashions, till God seems to have given them over to the devil for the destruction of the flesh. They have little or no religious feeling, no spirit of prayer, no zeal for the glory of God or the conversion of sinners, the Holy Spirit seems to have withdrawn from them.

10. You tempt the church to follow the fashions.

Where the principal members, the elders and leaders in the church, and their wives and families, are fashionable Christians, they drag the whole church along with them into the train of fashion,

and every one apes them as far as they can, down to the lowest servant. Only let a rich Christian lady come out to the house of God in full fashion, and the whole church are set agog to follow as far as they can, and it is a chance if they do not run in debt to do it.

11. You tempt yourself to pride and folly and a worldly spirit.

Suppose a man that had been intemperate and was reformed, should go and surround himself with wine and brandy and every seductive liquor, keeping the provocatives of appetite always under his eye, and from time to time tasting a little; does he not tempt himself?---Now see that woman that has been brought up in the spirit of pride and show, and that has been reformed and professed to abandon them all. Let her keep all these trappings, and continue to follow the fashions, and pride will drag her backwards as sure as she lives. She tempts herself to sin and folly.

12. You are tempting the world.

You are setting the world into a more fierce and hot pursuit of these things. The very things that the world love, and that they are sure to have scruples about their being right, professing Christians fall in with and follow, and thus tempt the world to continue in the pursuit of what will destroy their souls in hell.

13. By following the fashions, you are tempting the devil to tempt you.

When you follow the fashions, you open your heart to him. You keep it for him, empty, swept, and garnished. Every woman that suffers herself to follow the fashions may rely upon it, she is helping Satan to tempt her to pride and sin.

14. You lay a great stumbling block before the greatest part of mankind.

There are a few persons who are pursuing greater objects than fashion. They are engaged in the scramble for political power, or they are eager for literary distinction, or they are striving for wealth. And they do not know that their hearts are set on fashion at all. They are following selfishness on a larger scale. But the great mass of the community are influenced mostly by these fluctuating fashions. To this class of persons it is a great and sore stumbling block, when they see professing Christians just as prompt and as eager to follow the changings of fashion as themselves. They see, and say, "What does their profession amount to, when they follow the fashions as much as anybody?" or, "Certainly it is right to follow the fashions, for see, the professing Christians do it as much as we."

15. Another reason why professing Christians are required not to be conformed to the world in fashion is, the great influence their disregarding fashion would have on the world.

If professing Christians would show their contempt for these things, and not pretend to follow them or regard them, how it would shame the world, and convince the world that they were living for another object, for God and for eternity! How irresistible it would be! What an overwhelming testimony in favor of our religion! Even the apparent renunciation of the world, by many orders of monks, has doubtless done more than anything else to put down the opposition to their religion, and give it currency and influence in the world. Now suppose all this was hearty and sincere, and coupled with all that is consistent and lovely in Christian character, and all that is zealous and bold

in labors for the conversion of the world from sin to holiness. What an influence it would have! What thunders it would pour into the ears of the world, to wake them up to follow after God!

Thirdly.---In Politics.

I will show why professing Christians are required not to be conformed to the world in politics.

1. Because the politics of the world are perfectly dishonest.

Who does not know this? Who does not know that it is the proposed policy of every party to cover up the defects of their own candidate, and the good qualities of the opposing candidate? And is not this dishonest? Every party holds up its candidate as a piece of perfection, and then aims to ride him into office by any means, fair or foul. No man can be an honest man, that is committed to a party, to go with them, let them do what they may. And can a Christian do it, and keep a conscience void of offense?

2. To conform to the world in politics is to tempt God.

By falling in with the world in politics, Christians are guilty of setting up rulers over them by their own vote, who do not fear nor love God, and who set the law of God at defiance, break the Sabbath, and gamble, and commit adultery, and fight duels, and swear profanely, and leave the laws unexecuted at their pleasure, and that care not for the weal or woe of their country, so long as they can keep their office. I say Christians do this. For it is plain that where parties are divided, as they are in this country, there are Christians enough to turn the scale in any election. Now let Christians take the ground that they will not vote for a dishonest man, or a Sabbath breaker, or gambler, or whoremonger, or duelist, for any office, and no party could ever nominate such a character with any hope of success. But on the present system, where men will let the laws go unexecuted, and give full swing to mobs, or lynch-murders, or robbing the mails, or anything else, so they can run in their own candidate who will give them the offices, any man is a dishonest man that will do it, be he professor or non-professor. And can a Christian do this and be blameless?

3. By engaging with the world in politics, Christians grieve the Spirit of God.

Ask any Christian politician if he ever carried the Spirit of God with him into a political campaign? Never. I would by no means be understood to say that Christians should refuse to vote, and to exercise their lawful influence in public affairs. But they ought not to follow a party.

4. By following the present course of politics, you are contributing your aid to undermine all government and order in the land.

Who does not know that this great nation now rocks and reels, because the laws are broken and trampled under foot, and the executive power refuses or dare not act? Either the magistrate does not wish to put down disorder, or he temporizes and lets the devil rule. And so it is in all parts of the country, and all parties. And can a Christian be consistent with his profession, and vote for such men to office?

5. You lay a stumbling-block in the way of sinners.

What do sinners think, when they see professing Christians acting with them in their political measures, which they themselves know to be dishonest and corrupt? They say, "We understand

what we are about, we are after office, we are determined to carry our party into power, we are pursuing our own interest; but these Christians profess to live for another and a higher end, and yet here they come, and join with us, as eager for the loaves and fishes as the rest of us." What greater stumbling-block can they have?

6. You prove to the ungodly that professing Christians are actuated by the same spirit with themselves.

Who can wonder that the world is incredulous as to the reality of religion? If they do not look for themselves into the scriptures, and there learn what religion is, if they are governed by the rules of evidence from what they see in the lives of professing Christians, they ought to be incredulous. They ought to infer, so far as this evidence goes, that professors of religion do not themselves believe in it. It is the fact. I doubt, myself, whether the great mass of professors believe the Bible.

7. They show, so far as their evidence can go, that there is no change of heart.

What is it? Is it going to the communion table once in a month or two, and sometimes to prayer meeting? In that a change of heart, when they are just as eager in the scramble for office as any others? The world must be fools to believe in a change of heart on such evidence.

8. Christians ought to cease from conformity to the world in politics, from the influence which such a course would have on the world.

Suppose Christians were to act perfectly conscientious and consistent in this matter, and to say, "We will not vote for any man to office, unless he fears God and will rule the people in righteousness." Ungodly men would not set men as candidates, who themselves set the laws at defiance. No. Every candidate would be obliged to show that he was prepared to act from higher motives, and that he would lay himself out to make the country prosperous, and to promote virtue, and to put down vice and oppression and disorder, and to do all he can to make the people happy and HOLY! It would shame the dishonest politicians, to show that the love of God and man is the motive that Christians have in view. And a blessed influence would go over the land like a wave.

IV. I am to answer some objections that are made against the principles here advanced.

1. In regard to business.

Objection. "If we do not transact business on the same principles on which ungodly men do it, we cannot compete with them, and all the business of the world will fall into the hands of the ungodly. If we pursue our business for the good of others, if we buy and sell on the principle of not seeking our own wealth, but the wealth of those we do business with, we cannot sustain a competition with worldly men, and they will get all the business."

Let them have it, then. You can support yourself by your industry in some humbler calling, and let worldly men do all the business.

Objection. "But then, how should we get money to spread the gospel?"

A holy church, that would act on the principles of the gospel, would spread the gospel faster than all the money that ever was in New York, or that ever will be. Give me a holy church, that would live above the world, and the work of salvation would roll on faster than with all the money in

Christendom.

Objection. "But we must spend a great deal of money to bring forward an educated ministry."

Ah! if we had a holy ministry, it would be far more important than an educated ministry. If the ministry were holy enough, they would do without so much education. God forbid that I should undervalue an educated ministry. Let ministers be educated as well as they can, the more the better, if they are only holy enough. But it is all a farce to suppose that a literary ministry can convert the world. Let the ministry have the spirit of prayer, let the baptism of the Holy Ghost be upon them, and they will spread the gospel. Only let Christians live as they ought, and the church would shake the world. If Christians in New York would do it, the report would soon fill every ship that leaves the port, and waft the news on every wind, till the earth was full of excitement and inquiry, and conversions would multiply like the drops of morning dew.

Suppose you were to give up your business, and devote yourselves entirely to the work of extending the gospel. The church once did so, and you know what followed. When that little band in Jerusalem gave up their business and spent their time in the work of God, salvation spread like a wave. And, I believe, if the whole Christian church were to turn right out, and convert the world, it would be done in a very short time.

And further, the fact is, that you would not be required to give up your business. If Christians would do business in the spirit of the gospel, they would soon engross the business of the world. Only let the world see, that if they go to a Christian to do business, he will not only deal honestly, but benevolently, that he will actually consult the interest of the person he deals with, as if it were his own interest, and who would deal with anybody else? What merchant would go to an ungodly man to trade, who he knew would try to get the advantage of him, and cheat him, while he knew that there were Christian merchants to deal with that would consult his interests as much as they do their own? Indeed, it is a known fact, that there are now Christian merchants in this city, who regulate the prices of the articles they deal in. Merchants come in from the country, and inquire around to see how they can buy goods, and they go to these men to know exactly what articles are worth at a fair price, and govern themselves accordingly.

The advantage, then, is all on one side. The church can make it for the interest of the ungodly to do business on right principles. The church can regulate the business of the world, and woe to them if they do not.

2. In regard to fashion.

Objection. "Is it best for Christians to be singular?"

Certainly, Christians are bound to be singular. They are called to be peculiar people, that is, a singular people, essentially different from the rest of mankind. To maintain that we are not to be singular, is the same as to maintain that we are to be conformed to the world. "Be not singular," that is, Be like the world. In other words, "Be ye conformed to the world." This is the direct opposite to the command in the text.

But the question now regards fashion, in dress, equipage, and so on. And here I will confess that I was formerly myself in error. I believed, and I taught, that the best way for Christians to pursue, was to dress so as not to be noticed, to follow the fashions and changes so as not to appear

singular, and that nobody would be led to think of their being different from others in these particulars. But I have seen my error, and now wonder very much at my former blindness. It is your duty to dress so plain as to show to the world that you place no sort of reliance in the things of fashion, and set no value at all on them, but despise and neglect them altogether. But unless you are singular, unless you separate yourselves from the fashions of the world, you show that you do value them. There is no way in which you can bear a proper testimony by your lives against the fashions of the world but by dressing plain. I do not mean that you should study singularity, but that you should consult convenience and economy, although it may be singular.

Objection. "But if we dress plain, the attention of people will be taken with it."

The reason of it is this, so few do it that it is a novelty, and everybody stares when they see a professing Christian so strict as to disregard the fashions. Let them all do it, and the only thing you show by it is that you are a Christian, and do not wish to be confounded with the ungodly. Would it not tell on the pride of the world, if all the Christians in it were united in bearing a practical testimony against its vain show.

Objection. "But in this way you carry religion too far away from the multitude. It is better not to set up an artificial distinction between the church and the world."

The direct reverse of this is true. The nearer you bring the church to the world, the more you annihilate the reasons that ought to stand out in view of the world, for their changing sides and coming over to the church. Unless you go right out from them, and show that you are not of them in any respect, and carry the church so far as to have a broad interval between saints and sinners, how can you make the ungodly feel that so great a change is necessary.

Objection. "But this change which is necessary is a change of heart."

True; but will not a change of heart produce a change of life?

Objection. "You will throw obstacles in the way of persons becoming Christians. Many respectable people will become disgusted with religion, and if they cannot be allowed to dress and be Christians, they will take to the world altogether."

This is just about as reasonable as it would be for a temperance man to think he must get drunk now and then, to avoid disgusting the intemperate, and to retain his influence over them. The truth is, that persons ought to know, and ought to see in the lives of professing Christians, that if they embrace religion, they must be weaned from the world, and must give up the love of the world, and its pride and show and folly, and live a holy life, in watchfulness and self-denial and active benevolence.

Objection. "Is it not better for us to disregard this altogether, and not pay any attention to such little things, and let them take their course; let the milliner and mantua-maker do as they please, and follow the usages of society in which we live, and the circle in which we move?"

Is this the way to show contempt for the fashions of the world? Do people ordinarily take this course of showing contempt for a thing, to practice it? Why, the way to show your abhorrence of ardent spirit is to drink it! And so the way to show your abhorrence of the world is to follow along in the customs and the fashions of the world! Precious reasoning, this.

Objection. "No matter how we dress, if our hearts are right?"

Your heart right! Then your heart may be right when your conduct is all wrong. Just as well might the profane swearer say, "No matter what words I speak, if my heart is right." No, your heart is not right, unless your conduct is right. What is outward conduct, but the acting out of the heart? If your heart was right, you would not wish to follow the fashions of the world.

Objection. "What is the standard of dress? I do not see the use of all your preaching, and laying down rules about plain dress, unless you give us a standard."

This is a mighty stumbling block with many. But to my mind the matter is extremely simple. The whole can be comprised in two simple rules. One is, Be sure in all your equipage, and dress and furniture to show that you have no fellowship with the designs and principles of those who are aiming to set off themselves, and to gain the applause of men. The other is, Let economy be first consulted, and then convenience. Follow Christian economy, that is, save all you can for Christ's service; and then let things be as convenient as Christian economy will admit.

Objection. "Would you have us to turn all Quakers, and put on their plain dress?"

Who does not know, that the plain dress of the Quakers has won for them the respect of all the thinking part of the ungodly in the community? Now, if they had coupled with this the zeal for God, and the weanedness from the world, and the contempt for riches, and the self-denying labor for the conversion of sinners to Christ, which the gospel enjoins, and the clear views of the plan of salvation which the gospel inculcates, they would long since have converted the world. And if all Christians would imitate them in their plain dress, (I do not mean the precise cut and fashion of their dress, but in a plain dress, throwing contempt upon the fashions of the world,) who can doubt that the conversion of the world would hasten on apace?

Objection. "Would you make us all Methodists?"

Who does not know that the Methodists, when they were noted for their plain dress, and for renouncing the fashions and show of the world, used to have power with God in prayer? And that they had the universal respect of the world as sincere Christians. And who does not know that since they have laid aside this peculiarity, and conformed to the world in dress and other things, and seemed to be trying to lift themselves up as a denomination, and gain influence with the world, they are losing the power of prayer? Would to God they had never thrown down this wall. It was one of the leading excellences of Wesley's system, to have his followers distinguished from others by a plain dress.

Objection. "We may be proud of a plain dress as well as of a fashionable dress. The Quakers are as proud as we are."

So may any good thing be abused. But that is no reason why it should not be used, if it can be shown to be good. I put it back to the objector; Is that any reason why a Christian female, who fears God and loves the souls of men, should neglect the means which may make an impression that she is separated from the world, and pour contempt on the fashions of the ungodly, in which they are dancing their way to hell?

Objection. "This is a small thing, and ought not to take up so much of a minister's time in the pulpit."

This is an objection often heard from worldly professors. But the minister that fears God will not be deterred by it. He will pursue the subject, until such professing Christians are cut off from their conformity to the world or cut off from the church. It is not merely the dress, as dress, but it is the conformity to the world in dress and fashion, that is the great stumbling-block in the way of sinners. How can the world be converted, while professing Christians are conformed to the world? What good will it do to give money to send the gospel to the heathen, when Christians live so at home? Well might the heathen ask, "What profit will it be to become Christians, when those who are Christians are pursuing the world with all the hot-haste of the ungodly?" The great thing necessary for the church is to break off from conformity to the world, and then they will have power with God in prayer, and the Holy Ghost will descend and bless their efforts, and the world will be converted.

Objection. "But if we dress so, we shall be called fanatics."

Whatever the ungodly may call you, fanatics, Methodists, or anything, you will be known as Christians, and in the secret consciences of men will be acknowledged as such. It is not in the power of unbelievers to pour contempt on a holy church, that are separated from the world. How was it with the early Christians? They lived separate from the world, and it made such an impression, that even infidel writers say of them, "These men win the hearts of the mass of the people, because they give themselves up to deeds of charity, and pour contempt on the world." Depend upon it, if Christians would live so now, the last effort of hell would soon be expended in vain to defeat the spread of the gospel. Wave after wave would flow abroad, till the highest mountain tops were covered with the waters of life.

3. In regard to politics.

Objection. "In this way, by acting on these principles, and refusing to unite with the world in politics, we could have no influence in government and national affairs."

I answer, first, It is so now. Christians, as such, have no influence. There is not a Christian principle adopted because it is Christian, or because it is according to the law of God.

I answer, secondly, If there is no other way for Christians to have an influence in the government, but by becoming conformed to the world in their habitual principles and parties, then let the ungodly take the government and manage it in their own way, and do you go and serve God.

I answer, thirdly, No such result will follow. Directly the reverse of this would be the fact. Only let it be known that Christian citizens will on no account assist bad men into office; only let it be known that the church will go only for men that will aim at the public good, and both parties will be sure to set up such men. And in this way, the church could legitimately exert an influence, by compelling all parties to bring forward only men who are worthy of an honest man's support.

Objection. "In this way the church and the world will be arrayed against each other."

The world is too selfish for this. You cannot make parties so. Such a line can never be a permanent division. For one year, the ungodly might unite against the church, and leave Christians in a small minority. But in the end, the others would form two parties, each courting the suffrages

of Christians, by offering candidates such as Christians can conscientiously vote for.

REMARKS.

1. By non-conformity to the world, you may save much money for doing good.

In one year a greater fund might be saved by the church, than all that has ever been raised for the spread of the gospel.

2. By non-conformity to the world, a great deal of time may be saved for doing good, that is now consumed and wasted in following the fashions, and obeying the maxims, and joining in the pursuits of the world.

3. At the same time, Christians in this way would preserve their peace of conscience, would enjoy communion with God, would have the spirit of prayer, and would possess far greater usefulness.

Is it not time something was done? Is it not time that some church struck out a path, that should be not conformed to the world, but should be according to the example and Spirit of Christ?

You profess that you want to have sinners converted. But what avails it, if they sink right back again into conformity with the world? Brethren, I confess, I am filled with pain in view of the conduct of the church. Where are the proper results of the glorious revivals we have had? I believe they were genuine revivals of religion and outpourings of the Holy Ghost, that the church has enjoyed the last ten years. I believe the converts of the last ten years are among the best Christians in the land. Yet, after all, the great body of them are a disgrace to religion. Of what use would it be to have a thousand members added to the church, to be just such as are now in it? Would religion be any more honored by it, in the estimation of ungodly men? One holy church, that are really crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them, would do more to recommend Christianity, than all the churches in the country, living as they now do. O, if I had strength of body, to go through the churches again, instead of preaching to convert sinners, I would preach to bring up the churches to the gospel standard of holy living. Of what use is it to convert sinners, and make them such Christians as these? Of what use is it to try to convert sinners, and make them feel there is something in religion, and then when they go to trade with you, or meet you in the street, have you contradict it all, and tell them, by your conformity to the world, that there is nothing in it?

Where shall I look, where shall the Lord look for a church like the first church, that will come out from the world and be separate, and give themselves up to serve God? O, if this church would do so. But it is of little use to make Christians, if they are not better. Do not understand me as saying that the converts made in our revivals are spurious conversions. But they live so as to be a disgrace to religion. They are so stumbled by old professors that many of them do more hurt than good. The more there are of them, the more occasion infidelity seems to find for her jeers and scoffs.

Now do you believe, that God commands you not to be conformed to the world? Do you believe it? And DARE YOU obey it, let people say what they will about you? Dare you now separate yourselves from the world, and never again be controlled by its maxims, and never again copy its practices, and never again will be whiffled here and there by its fashions? I know a man that lives so, I can mention his name, he pays no attention to the customs of the world in this respect. And

what is the result? Wherever that man goes, he leaves the impression behind that he is a Christian. O, if one church would do so, and would engage in it with all the energy that men of the world engage in their business, they would turn the world upside down. Will you do so? Will you break off from the world now, and enter into covenant with God, and declare that you will dare to be singular enough to be separate from the world, and from this time set your faces as a flint to obey God, let the world say what they will? Dare you do it? Will you do it?

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Chapter 53

03.06. DISHONESTY IN SMALL MATTERS

DISHONESTY IN SMALL MATTERS INCONSISTENT WITH HONESTY IN ANYTHING.

TEXT:--"He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Luk 16:10.

These words are a part of the parable of the unjust steward, or rather, a principle which our Lord lays down in connection with the parable. The words do not require that I should go into an explanation of the parable itself, as they make no part of the story which the Lord Jesus was relating. The principle involved or laid down, is what I have to do with to-night. In preaching from these words I design to illustrate the principle laid down which is this:

One who is dishonest in small matters, is not really honest in any thing.

The order which I shall pursue is the following:

I. I shall show what I do not mean by this principle.

II. Show what I do mean by it.

III. Prove the principle, that one who is dishonest in small matters is not really honest at all.

IV. Show by what principle those individuals are governed who, while they are dishonest in small things, appear to be honest, and even religious, in larger affairs.

V. Mention several instances where persons often manifest a want of principle in small matters.

I. I am to show what I do not mean by the principle, that one who is dishonest in small matters is not really honest in anything.

Answer. I do not mean that if a person is dishonest in small matters, and will take little advantages in dealing, it is therefore certain that in greater matters he will not deal openly and honorably according to the rules of business.

Or that it is certain, if a man will commit petty thefts and depredations, that he will commit highway robbery. There may be various reasons why a man who will commit such depredations will not go into more daring and outrageous crimes.

Or that if a man indulges unclean thoughts, it is certain he will commit adultery.

Or that if he indulges covetous desires, it is certain he will steal.

Or that if he indulges in ill-will towards anyone, he will commit murder.

Or that if he would enslave a fellow man, and deprive him of instruction and of all the rights of man, he will certainly commit other crimes of equal enormity.

Or that if he will defraud the government in little things, such as postage, or duties on little articles, he will rob the treasury.

II. I am to explain what I do mean by the principle laid down, that if a man is dishonest in little things, he is not really honest in any thing.

What I mean is, that if a man is dishonest in small matters, it shows that he is not governed by principle in anything. It is therefore certain that it is not real honesty of heart which leads him to act right in greater matters. He must have other motives than honesty of heart, if he appears to act honestly in larger things, while he acts dishonestly in small matters.

III. I am to prove the principle.

I am not going to take it for granted, although the Lord Jesus Christ expressly declares it. I design to mention several considerations in addition to the force of the text. I believe it is a general impression that a person may be honest in greater matters, and deserve the character of honesty, notwithstanding he is guilty of dishonesty in small matters.

1. If he was actuated by a supreme regard to the authority of God, and if this was the habitual state of his mind, such a state of mind would be quite as apt to manifest itself in smaller matters as in large. Nay, where the temptation is small, he would be more certain to act conscientiously than in greater matters, because there is less to induce him to act otherwise. What is honesty? If a man has no other motives for acting honestly than mere selfishness, the devil is as honest as he is; for I dare say he is honest with his fellow devils, as far as it is for his interest or policy to be so. Is that honesty? Certainly not. And, therefore, if a man does not act honestly from higher motives than this, he is not honest at all, and if he appears to be honest in certain important matters, he has other motives than a regard to the honor of God.

2. It is certain that, if an individual is dishonest in small matters, he is not actuated by love to God. If he was actuated by love to God, he would feel that dishonesty in small matters is just as inconsistent as in great. It is as real a violation of the law of God, and one who truly loves God would no more act dishonestly in one than in the other.

3. It is certain that he is not actuated by real love to his neighbor, such as the law of God requires. If he loved his neighbor as himself, he would not defraud him in small things any more than in great. Nay, he might do it in great things, where the temptation to swerve from his integrity was powerful. But where the temptation is small, it cannot be that one who truly loves his neighbor would act dishonestly. See the case of Job. Job truly loved God, and you see how far he went, and what distress he endured, before he would say a word that even seemed disparaging or complaining of God. And when the temptation was overwhelming, and he could see no reason why he should be so afflicted, and his distress became intolerable, and his soul was all in darkness, and his wife set in and told him to curse God and die, he would not do it then, but said, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Do you suppose Job would have swerved from his integrity in little things, or for small temptations? Never. He loved God. And if you find a man who truly loves his neighbor, you will not see him deceiving or defrauding his neighbor for trifling temptations.

IV. I am to examine some of the motives by which a person may be actuated, who is dishonest in little things, while he may appear to be honest in greater matters.

Our business here is to ascertain how this apparent discrepancy can consist with the declaration in the text. The Lord Jesus Christ has laid down the principle, that if a man is dishonest in small matters, he is not strictly honest at all. Now, here are facts, which to many appear to contradict this. We see many men that in small matters exhibit a great want of principle, and appear to be quite void of principle, while in larger things they appear to be honorable and even pious. This must be consistent, or Jesus Christ has affirmed a falsehood. That it is consistent with truth will be admitted, if we can show that their conduct in regard to larger matters can be accounted for on other principles than honesty of heart. If we can account for it on principles of mere selfishness, it will be admitted, that where a man is dishonest in small things, he is not really honest at all, however honestly he may act in regard to larger matters.

1. They may act honestly in larger matters for fear of disgrace.

They may know that certain small things are not likely to be mentioned in public, or to have a noise made about them, and so they may do such things, while the fear of disgrace deters them from doing the same things in regard to larger matters, because it will make a noise. What is this but one form of selfishness overbalancing another form? It is selfishness still, not honesty.

2. He may suppose it will injure his business, if he is guilty of dishonesty with men of business, and so he deals honestly in important matters, while in little things he is ready to take any advantage he can, that will not injure his business. Thus a man will take advantage of a seamstress, and pay her a few cents less than he knows it is really worth for making a garment, while the same individual, in buying a bale of goods, would not think of showing a disposition to cheat, because it would injure his business. In dealing with an abused and humble individual, he can gripe and screw out a few cents without fear of public disgrace, while he would not for any consideration do an act which would be publicly spoken of as disreputable and base.

3. Fear of human law may influence a man to act honestly in such things as are likely to be taken up, while in such small matters as the law is not likely to notice, he will defraud or take advantage.

4. The love of praise influences many to act honestly and honorably, and even piously, in matters that are likely to be noticed. Many a man will defraud a poor person out of a few cents in the price of labor, and then, in some great matter on public occasion, appear to act with great liberality. What is the reason, that individuals who habitually screw down their servants, seamstresses, and other poor people that they employ, to the lowest penny, and take all the advantage they can of such people, will then, if a severe winter comes, send out cart loads of fuel to the poor, or give hundreds of dollars to the committees? You see that it is for the love of praise, and not the love of God nor the love of man.

5. The fear of God. He may be afraid of the divine wrath, if he commits dishonest acts of importance, while he supposes God will overlook little things, and not notice it if he is dishonest in such small matters.

6. He may restrain his dishonest propensities from mere self-righteousness, and act honestly in great things for the sake of bolstering up his own good opinion of himself, while in little things he will cheat and play the knave.

I said in the beginning, that I did not mean, that if a man would take advantages, he would certainly never act with apparent uprightness. It often comes to pass, that individuals who act with great meanness and dishonesty in small affairs, will act uprightly and honorably, on the ground that their character and interest are at stake. Many a man who among merchants is looked upon as an honorable dealer, is well known, by those who are more intimately acquainted with him, to be mean and knavish and overreaching in small matters, or in his dealings with more humble and more dependent individuals. It is plain that it is not real honesty of heart, which makes him act with apparent honesty in his more public transactions.

So I said, that if an individual will commit petty thefts, it is not certain he would commit highway robbery. He might have various reasons for abstaining, without having a particle too much honesty to rob on the highway, or to cut a purse out of your pocket in the crowd. The individual may not have courage enough to break out in highway robbery, or not skill enough, or nerve enough, or he may be afraid of the law, or afraid of disgrace, or other reasons.

An individual may indulge unclean thoughts, habitually, and yet never actually commit adultery. He may be restrained by fear, or want of opportunity, and not by principle. If he indulges unclean thoughts, he would certainly act uncleanly, if it were not for other reasons than purity of principle.

An individual may manifest a covetous spirit, and yet not steal. But he has the spirit that would lead him to steal, if not restrained by other reasons than honesty or principle.

A man may be angry, and yet his anger never break out in murder. But his hatred would lead him to do it, so far as principle is concerned. And if it is not done, it is for other reasons than true principle.

An individual may oppress his fellow man, enslave him, deprive him of instruction, and compel him to labor without compensation, for his own benefit, and yet not commit murder, or go to Africa to engage in the slave trade, because it would endanger his reputation or his life. But if he will do that which divests life of all that is desirable to gratify his own pride or promote his own interest, it cannot be principle, either of love to God or love to man, that keeps him from going any length, if his interest requires it. If a man, from regard to his own selfish interest, will take a course towards any human being which will deprive him of all that renders life desirable, it is easy to see that, so far as principle is concerned, there is nothing in the way of his doing it by violence on the coast of Africa, or taking life itself, when his interest requires it.

So an individual who will defraud the United States' treasury of eighteen cents in postage, has none too much principle to rob the treasury, if he had the same prospect of impunity. The same principle that allowed him to do the one, would allow him to do the other. And the same motive that led him to do the one, would lead him to do the other if he had an opportunity, and if it were not counteracted by some other motive equally selfish.

A man may, in like manner, be guilty of little misrepresentations, who would not dare to tell a downright LIE. Yet if he is guilty of coloring the truth, and misrepresenting facts, with a design to deceive, or to make facts appear otherwise than they really are, he is really lying, and the individual who will do this would manufacture ever so many lies, if it was for his interest, or were he not restrained by other reasons than a sacred regard to truth.

V. I will mention some instances, where persons are dishonest in small matters, while they appear to act honestly and even piously in regard to matters of greater importance.

1. We often find individuals manifesting a great want of principle in regard to the payment of small debts, while they are extremely careful and punctual in the payment of notes in the bank, and in all their commercial transactions.

For instance, there is a man takes a newspaper, the price is only a small sum, and the publisher cannot send a collector to every individual, so this man lets his subscription lie along perhaps for years, and perhaps never pays it. The same individual, if it had been a note at the bank, would have been punctual enough; and no pains would have been spared, rather than let the note run beyond the day. Why? Because, if he does not pay his note in the bank, it will be protested, and his credit will be injured, but the little debt of twenty shillings or five dollars will not be protested, and he knows it, and so he lets it go by, and the publisher has to be at the trouble and expense of sending for it, or go without his money. How manifest it is that this man does not pay his notes at the bank from honesty of principle, but purely from a regard to his own credit and interest.

2. I have before referred to the case of seamstresses. Suppose an individual employs women to sew for him, and for the sake of underselling others in the same trade, he beats down these women below the just price of such work. It is manifest that the individual is not honest in any thing. If, for the sake of making more profits, or of underselling, he will beat down these women---suppose he is honorable and prompt in his public transactions---no thanks to him, it is not because he is honest in his heart, but because it is his interest to seem so.

3. Some manifest this want of principle by committing little petty thefts. If they live at a boarding house, where there are boarders, they will commit petty thefts, perhaps, for fuel in the cellar. An individual will not be at the expense of getting a little charcoal for himself, to kindle his fire in the morning, but gets along by pilfering from the stores laid in by others, a handful at a time. Now the individual that will do that, shows himself to be radically rotten at heart.

A case once came to my knowledge, of this kind. An individual was sitting in a room, where the gentleman had on the table for some purpose a tumbler of wine and a pitcher of water. The gentleman had occasion to go out of the room a moment, but accidentally left the door a-jar, and while he was out, looking back he saw this individual drink part of the wine in the tumbler, and then to conceal it, fill up the tumbler with water, and take his seat. Now, the individual who did that showed that he loved wine, and that he was none too good to steal, he showed that so far as principle was concerned, he would get drunk if he had the means, and steal if he had a chance; in fact, at heart, he was both a drunkard and a thief.

4. Individuals often manifest great dishonesty when they find articles that have been lost, especially articles of small value. One will find a penknife, perhaps, or a pencil case, and never make the least inquiry, even among those he has reason to believe were the losers. Now, the man that would find a penknife, and keep it without making inquiry, where there was any prospect of finding the owner, so far as principle is concerned, would keep a pocket-book full of bank notes, if he should find it and have an equal chance of concealment. And yet this same individual, if he should find a pocket book with five thousand dollars in it, would advertise it in the newspapers, and make a great noise, and profess to be wonderfully honest. But what is his motive? He knows that

the five thousand dollars will be inquired after, and if he is discovered to have concealed it, he shall be ruined. Fine honesty, this!

5. Many individuals conceal little mistakes that are made in their favor, in reckoning, or in giving change. If an individual would keep still, say nothing, and let it pass, when such a mistake is made in his favor, it is manifest that nothing but a want of opportunity and impunity would prevent him from taking any advantage whatever, or overreaching to any extent.

6. Frauds on the Post Office are of the same class.

Who does not know that there is a great deal of dishonesty practiced here. Some seem to think there is no dishonesty in cheating the government out of a little postage. Postmasters will frank letters that they have no right to. Many will frank letters not only for their families but for their neighbors, all directly contrary to law, and a fraud upon the Post Office. The man that will do that is not honest. What would not such a man do, if he had the same prospect of impunity in other frauds, that he has in this?

7. Smuggling is a common form of petty dishonesty. How many a man will contrive to smuggle little articles in his trunk, when he comes home from England, that he knows ought to pay duty to the custom house, and he thinks but little of it, because the sum is so small, whereas, the smaller the sum, the more clearly the principle is developed. Because the temptation is so small, it shows how weak is the man's principle of honesty, that can be overcome by such a trifle. The man that would do this, if he had the same opportunity, would smuggle a cargo. If, for so little, he will lose sight of his integrity, and do a dishonest act, he is not too good to rob the treasury.

REMARKS.

1. The real state of a man's heart is often more manifested in smaller matters than in business of greater moment.

Men are often deceived here, and think their being honest in greater things will go to prove their honesty of heart, notwithstanding their knavishness in smaller things, and so they are sure to be on their guard in great things, while they are careless of little matters, and so act out their true character. They overlook the fact, that all their honesty in larger matters springs from a wrong principle, from a desire to appear honest, and not from a determination to be honest. They overlook their own petty frauds because they guard their more public manifestations of character, and then take it for granted that they are honest, while they are nothing but rottennes at heart. The man who will take advantage in little things, where he is not watched, is not actuated by principle. If you want to know your real character, watch your hearts, and see how your principles develop themselves in little things.

For instance, suppose you are an eye-servant. You are employed in the service of another, and you do not mind being idle at times, for a short time, in the absence of your employer. Or you slight your work when not under the eye of your employer, as you would if he was present. The man who will do this is totally dishonest, and not to be trusted in any thing, and very likely would take money from his employer's pocket book, if it were not for the fear of detection, or some other equally selfish motive. Such a person is not to be trusted at all, except in circumstances where it is his interest to be honest.

Mechanics that slight their work when it will not be seen or known by their employer, are rotten at heart, and not to be trusted at all, any farther than you can make it for their interest to be honest.

Persons who will knowingly misstate facts in conversation, would bear false witness in court under oath, if favored with opportunity and impunity. They never tell the truth at all because it is truth, or from the love of truth. Let no such man be trusted.

Those who are, are unchaste in conversation would be unchaste in conduct, if they had opportunity and impunity.---Spurn the man or woman who will be impure in speech, even among their own sex, they have no principle at all, and are not to be trusted on the ground of their principles. If persons are chaste from principle, they will no more indulge in unclean conversation than unclean actions. They will abhor even the garment spotted with the flesh.

2. The individual who will indulge in any one sin, does not abstain from any sin because it is sin.

If he hated sin, and was opposed to sin because it is sin, he would no more indulge in one sin than another. If a person goes to pick and choose among sins, avoiding some, and practicing others, it is certain that it is not because he regards the authority of God, or hates sin, that he abstains from any sin whatever.

3. Those individuals who will not abandon all intoxicating drinks for the purpose of promoting temperance, never gave up ardent spirits for the sake of promoting temperance.

It is manifest that they gave up ardent spirits from some other consideration than a regard to the temperance cause. If that had been their object, they would give up alcohol in all its forms, and when they find that there is alcohol in wine and beer and cider, they would give them up of course. Why not?

4. The man who, for the sake of gain, will sell rum, or intoxicating drinks, to his neighbor, and put a cup to his neighbor’s mouth, and would thus consent to ruin him, soul and body, would consent to sell his neighbor into slavery to promote his own selfish interests, if he could do it with impunity. And if he did not rob and murder him for the sake of his money, it certainly would not be because the love of God or of man restrained him. If the love of self is so strong, that he will consent to do his neighbor the direct injury of selling him ardent spirits, nothing but selfishness under some other form, prevailing over the love of money, could prevent his selling men into slavery, robbing, or murdering them, to get their money. He might love his own reputation; he might fear the penalty of human law; he might fear the destruction of his own soul, so much as to restrain him from these acts of outrage and violence. But certainly it could not be the principle of love to God or man that would restrain him.

5. The individual who will enslave his fellow men for his own selfish objects, would enslave others, any or all, if his interest demanded, and if he had the same opportunity.

If a man will appropriate the rights of one, he would appropriate the rights of all men, if he could do it with impunity. The individual who will deprive a black man of his liberty, and enslave him, would make no scruple to enslave a white man, if circumstances were equally favorable. The man who contends that the black laborer of the south ought to be held in slavery, if he dared, would contend to have the white laborers of the north enslaved, and would urge the same kind of arguments, that the peace and order of society requires it, and laborers are so much better off when they have a

master to take care of them. The famous Bible argument too, is as good in favor of white slaves as blacks, if you only had the power to carry it out. The man who holds his fellow man as property, would take his fellow man as property, if he could with impunity. The principle is the same in all. It is not principle that keeps men who holds slaves from kidnapping on the coast of Africa, or from making war to enslave the free laborers of the north.

6. The man that will not practice self-denial in little things to promote religion, would not endure persecution for the sake of promoting religion.

Those who will not deny their appetite would not endure the scourge and the stake. Perhaps, if persecution were to arise, some might endure it for the sake of the applause it would bring, or to show their spirit, and to face opposition. There is a natural spirit of obstinacy, which is often roused by opposition, that would go to the stake rather than yield a point. But it is easily seen, that it is not true love to the cause which prompts a man to endure opposition, if he will not endure self-denial in little things for the sake of the cause.

7. Little circumstances often discover the state of the heart.

The individual that we find delinquent in small matters, we of course infer would be much more so in larger affairs, if circumstances were equally favorable.

Where you find persons wearing little ornaments from vanity, set them down as rotten at heart. If they could, they would go all lengths in display, if they were not restrained by some other considerations than a regard to the authority of God and the honor of religion. You may see this every day in the streets. Men walking with their cloaks very carefully thrown over their shoulders so as to show the velvet, and women with their feathers tossing in the air---it is astonishing how many ways there are in which these little things show their pride and rottenness of heart.

You say these are little things. I know they are little things, and because they are little things, I mention them. It is because they are little things, that they show the character so clearly. If their pride was not deeply rooted, they would not show it in little things. If a man had it put in his power to live in a palace, with every thing corresponding, it would be no wonder if he should give way to the temptation. But when his vanity shows itself in little things, he gives full evidence that it has possession of his soul.

How important it is for you to see this, and to keep a watch over these little things, so as to see what you are, and to know your characters, as they appear in the sight of God.

How important to cultivate the strictest integrity, such as will carry itself out in small things as well as in large. There is something so beautiful, when you see an individual acting in little things with the same careful and conscientious uprightness as in matter of the greatest moment. Until professors of religion will cultivate this universal honesty, they will always be a reproach to religion.

Oh, how much would be gained, if professors of religion would evince that entire purity and honesty on all occasions and to all persons, and do what is just right, so as to commend religion to the ungodly. How often do sinners fix their eye on some petty delinquencies of professors of religion, and look with amazement at such things in persons who profess the fear of God. What an everlasting reproach to religion, that so many of its professors are guilty of these little, mean, paltry knaveries. The wicked have cause enough to see, that such professors cannot have any principle

of honesty, and that such religion as they exhibit is good for nothing, and is not worth having.

Of what use is it for that woman to talk to her impenitent servant about religion, when her servant knows that she will not hesitate to overreach and screw down and cheat in petty things? Or for that merchant to talk to his clerks, who know that however honorable he may be in his greater and more public transactions, he is mean and knavish in little things? It is worse than useless.

03.07. DOUBTFUL ACTIONS ARE SINFUL

DOUBTFUL ACTIONS ARE SINFUL.

TEXT:--"He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."--- Rom 14:23.

It was a custom among the idolatrous heathen to offer the bodies of slain beasts in sacrifice, a part of every beast that was offered belonged to the priest. The priests used to send their portion to market to sell, and it was sold in the shambles as any other meat. The Christian Jews that were scattered everywhere, were very particular as to what meats they ate, so as not even to run the least danger of violating the Mosaic law, and they raised doubts and created disputes and difficulties among the churches. This was one of the subjects about which the church of Corinth was divided and agitated, until they finally wrote to the apostle Paul for directions. A part of the First Epistle to the Corinthians was doubtless written as a reply to such inquiries. It seems there were some who carried their scruples so far that they thought it not proper to eat any meat, for if they went to market for it they were continually in danger of buying that which was offered to idols.---Others thought it made no difference, they had a right to eat meat, and they would buy it in the market as they found it, and give themselves no trouble about the matter. To quell the dispute, they wrote to Paul, and in the 8th chapter he takes up the subject and discusses it in full.

Now, as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many;) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

"His conscience is defiled," that is, he regards it as a meat offered to an idol, and is really practicing idolatry. The eating of meat is a matter of total indifference, in itself.

But meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.---But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee, which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?

Although they might have a sufficient knowledge on the subject to know that an idol is nothing, and cannot make any change in the meat itself, yet if they should be seen eating meat that was known to have been offered to an idol, those who were weak might be emboldened by it to eat the

sacrifices as such, or as an act of worship to the idol, supposing all the while that they were but following the example of their more enlightened brethren.

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

This is his benevolent conclusion, that he would rather forego the use of flesh altogether than be the occasion of drawing a weak brother away into idolatry. For, in fact, to sin so against a weak brother is to sin against Christ.

In writing to the Romans he takes up the same subject,---the same dispute had existed there. After laying down some general maxims and principles, he gives this rule:

Him that is weak in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak, eateth herbs.

There were some among them who chose to live entirely on vegetables, rather than run the risk of buying in the shambles flesh which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Others ate their flesh as usual, buying what was offered in market, asking no questions for conscience' sake. Those who lived on vegetables charged the others with idolatry. And those that ate flesh accused the others of superstition and weakness. This was wrong.

Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

There was also a controversy about observing the Jewish festival days and holy days. A part supposed that God required this, and therefore they observed them. The others neglected them because they supposed God did not require the observance.

One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For as it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Now mark what he says.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably: destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

That is, I know that the distinction of meats into clean and unclean, is not binding under Christ, but to him that believes in the distinction, it is a crime to eat indiscriminately, because he does what he believes to be contrary to the commands of God. "All things indeed are pure, but it is evil to him that eateth with offense." Every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind, that what he is doing is right. If a man eat of meats called unclean, not being clear in his mind that it was right, he offended God.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

This is a very useful hint to those wine-bibbers and beer guzzlers, who think the cause of temperance is going to be ruined by giving up wine and beer, when it is notorious, to every person of the least observation, that these things are the greatest hindrance to the cause all over the country.

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eatethnot of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

The word rendered damned means condemned, or adjudged guilty of breaking the law of God. If a man doubts whether it is lawful to do a thing, and while in that state of doubt he does it, he displeases God, he breaks the law and is condemned whether the thing be in itself right or wrong. I have been thus particular in explaining the text in its connection with the context, because I wished fully to satisfy your minds of the correctness of the principle laid down.

That if a man does that of which he doubts the lawfulness, he sins, and is condemned for it in the sight of God.

Whether it is lawful itself, is not the question. If he doubts its lawfulness, it is wrong in him.

There is one exception which ought to be noticed here,---And that is, where a man as honestly and fully doubts the lawfulness of omitting to do it as he does the lawfulness of doing it. President Edwards meets this exactly in his 39th resolution.

"Resolved, never to do any thing that I so much question the lawfulness of, as that I intend, at the same time, to consider and examine afterwards, whether it be lawful or not: except I as much question the lawfulness of the omission."

A man may have equal doubts whether he is bound to do a thing or not to do it. Then all that can be said is, that he must act according to the best light he can get. But where he doubts the lawfulness of the act, but has no cause to doubt the lawfulness of the omission, and yet does it, he sins and is condemned before God, and must repent or be damned. In further examination of the subject, I propose,

I. To show some reasons why a man is criminal for doing that of which he doubts the lawfulness.

II. To show its application to a number of specific cases.

III. Offer a few inferences and remarks, as time may allow.

I. I am to show some reasons for the correctness of the principle laid down in the text---that if a man does that of which he doubts the lawfulness, he is condemned.

1. One reason why an individual is condemned if he does that of which he doubts the lawfulness, is---That if God so far enlightens his mind as to make him doubt the lawfulness of an act, he is bound to stop there and examine the question and settle it to his satisfaction.

To illustrate this: suppose your child is desirous of doing a certain thing, or suppose he is invited by his companions to go somewhere, and he doubts whether you would be willing, do you not see that it is his duty to ask you? If one of his schoolmates invites him home, and he doubts whether you would like it, and yet goes, is not this palpably wrong?

Or suppose a man cast away on a desolate island, where he finds no human being, and he takes up his abode in a solitary cave, considering himself as all alone and destitute of friends or relief or hope; but every morning he finds a supply of nutritious and wholesome food prepared for him, and set by the mouth of his cave, sufficient for his wants that day. What is his duty? Do you say, he does not know that there is a being on the island, and therefore he is not under obligations to any one? Does not gratitude, on the other hand, require him to search and find out his unseen friend, and thank him for his kindness? He cannot say, "I doubt whether there is any being here, and therefore will do nothing but eat my allowance and take my ease, and care for nothing." His not searching for his benefactor would of itself convict him of as desperate wickedness of heart, as if he knew who it was, and refused to return thanks for the favors received.

Or suppose an Atheist opens his eyes on this blessed light of heaven, and breathes this air sending health and vigor through his frame. Here is evidence enough of the being of God to set him on the inquiry after that great being who provides all these means of life and happiness. And if he does not inquire for further light, if he does not care, if he sets his heart against God, he shows that he has the heart as well as the intellect of an Atheist. He has, to say the least, evidence that there may be a God. What then is his business? Plainly, it is to set himself honestly, and with a most child-like and reverent spirit, to inquire after Him and pay Him reverence. If, when he has so much light as to doubt whether there may not be a God, he still goes around as if there were none, and does not inquire for truth and obey it, he shows that his heart is wrong, and that it says let there be no God.

There is a Deist, and here a Book claiming to be a revelation from God. Many good men have believed it to be so. The evidences are such as to have perfectly satisfied the most acute and upright minds of its truth. The evidences, both external and internal are of great weight. To say there are no evidences is itself enough to bring any man’s soundness of mind into question, or his honesty. There is, to say the least, that can be said, sufficient evidence to create a doubt whether it is a fable and an imposture. This is in fact but a small part, but we will take it on this ground. Now is it his duty to reject it? No Deist pretends that he can be so fully persuaded in his own mind, as to be free from all doubt. All he dares to attempt is to raise cavils and create doubts on the other side. Here, then, it is his duty to stop, and not oppose the Bible, until he can prove without a doubt, that it is not from God.

So with the Unitarian. Granting (what is by no means true) that the evidence in the Bible is not sufficient to remove all doubts that Jesus Christ is God; yet it affords evidence enough to raise a

doubt on the other side, he has no right to reject the doctrine as untrue, but is bound humbly to search the scriptures and satisfy himself. Now, no intelligent and honest man can say that the scriptures afford no evidence of the divinity of Christ. They do afford evidence which has convinced and fully satisfied thousands of the acutest minds, and who have before been opposed to the doctrine. No man can reject the doctrine without a doubt, because here is evidence that it may be true. And if it may be true, and there is reason to doubt, if it is not true, then he rejects it at his peril.

Then the Universalist. Where is one who can say he has not so much as a doubt whether there is not a hell, where sinners go after death into endless torment. He is bound to stop and inquire, and search the scriptures. It is not enough for him to say he does not believe in a hell. It may be there is, and if he rejects it, and goes on reckless of the truth whether there is or not, that itself makes him a rebel against God. He doubts whether there is not a hell which he ought to avoid, and yet acts as if he was certain and had no doubts. He is condemned. I once knew a physician who was a Universalist, and who has gone to eternity to try the reality of his speculations. He once told me that he had strong doubts of the truth of Universalism, and had mentioned his doubts to his minister, who confessed that he, too, doubted its truth, and he did not believe there was a Universalist in the world who did not.

2. For a man to do a thing when he doubts whether it is lawful shows that he is selfish, and has other objects besides doing the will of God.

It shows that he wants to do it to gratify himself. He doubts whether God will approve of it, and yet he does it. Is he not a rebel? If he honestly wished to serve God, when he doubted he would stop and inquire and examine until he was satisfied. But to go forward while he is in doubt, shows that he is selfish and wicked, and is willing to do it whether God is pleased or not, and that he wants to do it, whether it is right or wrong. He does it because he wants to do it, and not because it is right.

3. To act thus is an impeachment of the divine goodness.

He assumes it as uncertain whether God has given a sufficient revelation of His will, so that he might know his duty if he would. He virtually says that the path of duty is left so doubtful that he must decide at a venture.

4. It indicates slothfulness and stupidity of mind.

It shows that he had rather act wrong than use the necessary diligence to learn and know the path of duty. It shows that he is either negligent or dishonest in his inquiries.

5. It manifests a reckless spirit.

It shows a want of conscience, an indifference to right, a setting aside of the authority of God, a disposition not to do God’s will, and not to care whether He is pleased or displeased, a desperate recklessness and headlong temper, that is the height of wickedness.

The principle then, which is so clearly laid down in the text and context, and also in the chapter which I read from Corinthians, is fully sustained by examination---That for a man to do a thing, when he doubts the lawfulness of it, is sin, for which he is condemned before God, and must repent or be damned.

II. I am now to show the application of this principle to a variety of particular cases in human life. But,

First---I will mention some cases where a person may be equally in doubt with respect to the lawfulness of a thing, whether he is bound to do it or not to do it.

Take the subject of Wine at the Communion Table.

Since the Temperance Reformation has brought up the question about the use of wine, and various wines have been analyzed and the quantity of alcohol they contain has been disclosed, and the difficulty shown of getting wines in this country that are not highly alcoholic, it has been seriously doubted by some whether it is right to use such wines as we can get here in celebrating the Lord's supper. Some are strong in the belief that wine is an essential part of the ordinance, and that we ought to use the best wine we can get, and there leave the matter. Others say that we ought not to use alcoholic or intoxicating wine at all, and that as wine is not in their view essential to the ordinance, it is better to use some other drink.---Both these classes are undoubtedly equally conscientious, and desirous to do what they have most reason to believe is agreeable to the will of God. And others, again, are in doubt on the matter. I can easily conceive that some conscientious persons may be very seriously in doubt which way to act. They are doubtful whether it is right to use alcoholic wine, and are doubtful whether it is right to use any other drink in the sacrament. Here is a case that comes under President Edwards' rule, "where it is doubtful in my mind, whether I ought to do it or not to do it," and which men must decide according to the best light they can get, honestly and with a single desire to know and do what is most pleasing to God.

I do not intend to discuss this question, of the use of wine at the communion, nor is this the proper place for a full examination of the subject. I introduced it now merely for the purpose of illustration. But since it is before us, I will make two or three remarks.

(1.) I have never apprehended so much evil as some do, from the use of common wine at the communion. I have not felt alarmed at the danger or evil of taking a sip of wine, a teaspoonful or so, once a month, or once in two months, or three months. I do not believe that the disease of intemperance (and intemperance, you know, is in reality a disease of the body) will be either created or continued by so slight a cause. Nor do I believe it is going to injure the Temperance cause so much as some have supposed. And therefore, where a person uses wine as we have been accustomed to do, and is fully persuaded in his own mind, he does not sin.

(2.) On the other hand, I do not think that the use of wine is any way essential to the ordinance. Very much has been said and written and printed on the subject, which has darkened counsel by words without knowledge. To my mind there are stronger reasons than I have anywhere seen exhibited, for supposing that wine is not essential to this ordinance. Great pains have been taken to prove that our Savior used wine that was unfermented, when he instituted the supper, and which therefore contained no alcohol. Indeed, this has been the point chiefly in debate. But in fact it seems just as irrelevant as it would to discuss the question, whether He used wheat or oaten bread, or whether it was leavened or unleavened. Why do we not hear this question vehemently discussed? Because all regard it as unessential.

In order to settle this question about the wine, we should ask what is the meaning of the ordinance of the supper.---What did our Savior design to do? It was to take the two staple articles for the

support of life, food and drink, and use them to represent the necessity and virtue of the atonement.

It is plain that Christ had that view of it, for it corresponds with what He says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and thy blood is drink indeed." So He poured out water in the temple, and said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."---He is called the "Bread of life." Thus it was customary to show the value of Christ's sufferings by food and drink. Why did He take bread instead of some other article of food? Those who know the history and usages of that country will see that he chose that article of food which was in most common use among the people. When I was in Malta, it seemed as if a great part of the people lived on bread alone. They would go in crowds to the market-place, and buy each a piece of coarse bread, and stand and eat it. Thus the most common and the most universally wholesome article of diet is chosen by Christ to represent His flesh. Then why did He take wine to drink? For the same reason; wine is the common drink of the people, especially at their meals, in all those countries. It is sold there for about a cent a bottle, wine being cheaper than small beer is here. In Sicily I was informed that wine was sold for five cents a gallon, and I do not know but it was about as cheap as water. And you will observe that the Lord's supper was first observed at the close of the feast of the Passover, at which the Jews always used wine. The meaning of the Savior in this ordinance, then, is this:---As food and drink are essential to the life of the body, so His body and blood, or His atonement, are essential to the life of the soul. For myself, I am fully convinced that wine is not essential to the communion, and I should not hesitate to give water to any individual that conscientiously preferred it. Let it be the common food and drink of the country, the support of life to the body, and it answers the end of the institution. If I was a missionary among the Esquimaux Indians, where they live on dried seal's flesh and snow-water, I would administer the supper in those substances. It would convey to their minds the idea that they cannot live without Christ.

I say, then, that if an individual is fully persuaded in his own mind, he does not sin in giving up the use of wine. Let this church be fully persuaded in their own minds, and I shall have no scruple to do either way. If they will substitute any other wholesome drink, that is in common use, instead of the wine. And at the same time I have no objection myself against going on in the old way.

Now, don't lose sight of the great principle that is under discussion. It is this: where a man doubts honestly, whether it is lawful to do a thing, and doubts equally, on the other hand, whether it is lawful to omit doing it, he must pray over the matter, and search the scriptures, and get the best light he can on the subject, and then act. And when he does this, he is by no means to be judged or censured by others for the course he takes. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" And no man is authorized to make his own conscience the rule of his neighbor's conduct.

A similar case is where a minister is so situated that it is necessary for him to go a distance on the Sabbath to preach, as where he preaches to two congregations, and the like. Here he may honestly doubt what is his duty, on both hands. If he goes, he appears to strangers to disregard the Sabbath. If he does not go, the people will have no preaching. The direction is, let him search the scriptures, and get the best light he can, make it a subject of prayer, weigh it thoroughly, and act according to his best judgment.

So in the case of a Sabbath-school teacher. He may live at a distance from the school, and be obliged to travel to it on the Sabbath, or they will have no school. And he may honestly doubt

which is his duty, to remain in his own church on the Sabbath, or to travel there, five, eight, or ten miles, to a destitute neighborhood, to keep up the Sabbath school. Here he must decide for himself, according to the best light he can get. And let no man set himself up to judge over a humble and conscientious disciple of the Lord Jesus.

You see that in all these cases it is understood and is plain, that the design is to honor God, and the sole ground of doubt is, which course will really honor Him. Paul says, in reference to all laws of this kind, "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." The design is to do right, and the doubt is as to the means of doing it in the best manner.

Secondly---I will mention some cases, where the design is wrong, where the object is to gratify self, and the individual has doubts whether he may do it lawfully. I shall refer to cases concerning which there is a difference of opinion---to acts of which the least that can be said is that a man must have doubts of their being lawful.

1. Take, for instance, the making or vending of alcoholic drinks.

After all that has been said on this subject, and all the light that has been thrown upon the question, is there a man living in this land who can say he sees no reason to doubt the lawfulness of this business. To say the least that can be said, there can be no honest mind but must be brought to doubt it. We suppose, indeed, that there is no honest mind but must know it is unlawful and criminal. But take the most charitable supposition possible for the distiller or the vender, and suppose he is not fully convinced of its unlawfulness. We say he must, at least, doubt its lawfulness. What is he to do then? Is he to shut his eyes to the light, and go on, regardless of truth so long as he can keep from seeing it? No. He may cavil and raise objections, as much as he pleases, but he knows that he has doubts, about the lawfulness of his business. And if he doubts, and still persists in doing it, without taking the trouble to examine and see what is right, he is just as sure to be damned as if he went on in the face of knowledge. You hear these men say, "Why, I am not fully persuaded in my own mind, that the Bible forbids making or vending ardent spirits." Well, suppose you are not fully convinced, suppose all your possible and conceivable objections and cavils are not removed, what then? You know you have doubts about its lawfulness. And it is not necessary to take such ground to convict you of doing wrong. If you doubt its lawfulness, and yet persist in doing it, you are in the way to hell.

2. So where an individual is engaged in an employment that requires him to break the Sabbath.

As for instance, attending on a Post-office that is opened on the Sabbath, or a Turnpike gate, or in a Steamboat, or any other employment that is not a work of necessity. There are always some things that must be done on the Sabbath, they are works of absolute necessity or of mercy.

But suppose a case in which the labor is not necessary, as in the transportation of the U.S. Mail on the Sabbath, or the like. The least that can be said, the lowest ground that can be taken by charity itself, without turning fool, is that the lawfulness of such employment is doubtful. And if they persist in doing it, they sin, and are on the way to hell. God has sent out the penalty of His law against them, and if they do not repent they must be damned.

3. Owning stocks in steamboat and railroad companies, in stages, canal boats, &c. that break the Sabbath.

Can any such owner truly say he does not doubt the lawfulness of such an investment of capital? Can charity stoop lower than to say that man must strongly doubt whether such labor is a work of necessity or mercy? It is not necessary in the case to demonstrate that it is unlawful, though that can be done fully, but only to show so much light as to create a doubt of its lawfulness. Then if he persists in doing it, with that doubt unsatisfied, he is condemned---and lost.

4. The same remarks will apply to all sorts of lottery gambling. He doubts.

5. Take the case of those indulgences of appetite, which are subject of controversy, and which to say the least, are of doubtful right.

(1.) The drinking of wine, and beer, and other fermented intoxicating liquors. In the present aspect of the temperance cause, is it not questionable at least, whether making use of these drinks is not transgressing the rule laid down by the apostle, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak." No man can make me believe he has no doubts of the lawfulness of doing it. There is no certain proof of its lawfulness, and there is strong proof of its unlawfulness, and every man who does it while he doubts the lawfulness, is condemned, and if he persists, is damned.

If there is any sophistry in all this, I should like to know it, for I do not wish to deceive others nor to be deceived myself. But I am entirely deceived if this is not a simple, direct, and necessary inference from the sentiment of the text.

(2.) Tobacco. Can any man pretend that he has no doubt that it is agreeable to the will of God for him to use tobacco? No man can pretend that he doubts the lawfulness of his omission of these things. Does any man living think that he is bound in duty to make use of wine, or strong beer, or tobacco, as a luxury? No. The doubt is all on one side. What shall we say then, of that man who doubts the lawfulness of it, and still fills his face with the poisonous weed? He is condemned.

(3.) I might refer to tea and coffee. It is known generally, that these substances are not nutritious at all, and that nearly eight millions of dollars are spent annually for them in this country. Now, will any man pretend that he does not doubt the lawfulness of spending all this money for that which is of no use, and which are WELL KNOWN, to all who have examined the subject, to be positively injurious, intolerable to weak stomachs, and as much as the strongest can dispose of? And all this while the various benevolent societies of the age are loudly calling for HELP to send the gospel abroad and save a world from hell! To think of the church alone spending millions upon their tea tables, is there no doubt here?

6. Apply this principle to various amusements.

(1.) The Theatre. There are vast multitudes of professors of religion who attend the theater. And they contend that the Bible nowhere forbids it. Now mark.---What Christian professor ever went to a theater and did not doubt whether he was doing what is lawful. I by no means admit that it is a point which is only doubtful. I suppose it is a very plain case, and can be shown to be, that it is unlawful. But I am now only meeting those of you, if there are any here, who go to the theater, and are trying to cover up yourselves in the refuge that the Bible nowhere expressly forbids it.

(2.) Parties of Pleasure, where they go and eat and drink to surfeiting. Is there no reason to doubt whether that is such a use of time and money as God requires? Look at the starving poor, and consider the effect of this gaiety and extravagance, and see if you will ever go to another such party, or make one, without doubting its lawfulness. Where can you find a man, or a woman, that will go so far as to say they have no doubt? Probably there is not one honest mind who will say this. And if you doubt, and still do it, you are condemned.

You see that this principle touches a whole class of things, about which there is a controversy, and where people attempt to parry off by saying it is not worse than to do so and so, and thus get away from the condemning sentence of God's law. But in fact, if there is a doubt, it is their duty to abstain.

(3.) Take the case of balls, of novel reading, and other methods of wasting time. Is this God's way to spend your lives? Can you say you have no doubt of it?

7. Making calls on the Sabbath. People will make a call, and then make an apology about it. "I did not know as it was quite right, but I thought I would venture it." He is a Sabbath-breaker in heart, at all events, because he doubts.

8. Compliance with worldly customs at new-year's day.---Then the ladies are all at home, and the gentlemen are running all about town to call on them, and the ladies make their great preparations, and treat them with their cake, and their wine, and punch, enough to poison them almost to death, and all together are bowing down to the goddess of fashion. Is there a lady here that does not doubt the lawfulness of all this? I say it can be demonstrated to be wicked, but I only ask the ladies of this city. Is it NOT DOUBTFUL whether this is all lawful? I should call in question the sanity of the man or woman that had no doubt of the lawfulness of such a custom, in the midst of such prevailing intemperance as exists in this city.---Who among you will practice it again? Practice it if you dare---at the peril of your soul. If you do that which is merely doubtful, God frowns and condemns, and His voice must be regarded.

I know people try to excuse the matter, and say it is well to have a day appropriated to such calls, when every lady is at home and every gentleman freed from business, and all that. And all that is very well. But when it is seen to be so abused, and to produce so much evil, I ask every Christian here, if you can help doubting its lawfulness? And if it is doubtful, it comes under the rule: "If meat make my brother to offend," if keeping new-year's leads to so much gluttony, and drunkenness, and wickedness, does it not bring the lawfulness of it into doubt? Yes, that is the least that can be said, and they who doubt and yet do it, sin against God.

9. Compliance with the extravagant fashions of the day.

Christian lady! have you never doubted, do you not now doubt, whether it is lawful for you to copy these fashions, brought from foreign countries, and from places which it were a shame even to name in this assembly? Have you no doubt about it? And if you doubt and do it, you are condemned, and must repent of your sin, or you will be lost forever.

10. Intermarriages of Christians with impenitent sinners.

This answer always comes up. "But after all you say, it is not certain that these marriages are not lawful." Supposing it be so, yet does not the Bible and the nature of the case make it, at least,

doubtful whether they are right? It can be demonstrated, indeed, to be unlawful. But suppose it could not be reduced to demonstration. What Christian ever did it and did not doubt whether it was lawful? And he that doubteth is condemned. See that Christian man or woman that is about forming such a connection---doubting all the way whether it is right---trying to pray down conscience under the pretext of praying for light, praying all round your duty, and yet pressing on---TAKE CARE---you know you doubt the lawfulness of what you propose, and REMEMBER that he that doubteth is damned.

Thus you see, my hearers, that here is a principle that will stand by you when you attempt to rebuke sin, and the power of society is employed to face you down and put you on the defensive, to bring absolute proof of the sinfulness of a cherished practice. Remember the burden of PROOF does not lie on you, to show beyond a doubt the absolute unlawfulness of the thing. If you can show sufficient reason to question its lawfulness, and to create a valid doubt whether it is according to the will of God, you shift the burden of proof to the other side. And unless they can remove the doubt, and show that there is no room for doubt, they have no right to continue and if they do, they sin against God.

REMARKS.

1. The knowledge of duty is not indispensable to moral obligation, but the possession of the means of knowledge is sufficient to make a person responsible.

If a man has the means of knowing whether it is right or wrong, he is bound to use the means, and is bound to inquire and ascertain, at his peril.

2. If those are condemned, and adjudged worthy of damnation, who do that of which they doubt the lawfulness, what shall we say of the multitudes who are doing continually that which they know and confess to be wrong?

Woe to that man who practices that which he condemns.---And "happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

3. Hypocrites often attempt to shelter themselves behind their doubts to get clear of their duty.

The hypocrite is unwilling to be enlightened, he don’t wish to know the truth, because he don’t wish to obey the Lord, and so he hides behind his doubts, and turns away his eye from the light, and will not look or examine to see what his duty is, and in this way he tries to shield himself from responsibility. But God will drag them out from behind this refuge of lies, by the principle laid down in the text, that their very doubts condemn them.

Many will not be enlightened on the subject of temperance, and still persist in drinking or selling rum, because they are not fully convinced it is wrong. And they will not read a tract or a paper, nor attend a temperance meeting, for fear they shall be convinced. Many are resolved to indulge in the use of wine and strong beer, and they will not listen to anything calculated to convince them of the wrong. It shows that they are determined to indulge in sin, and they hope to hide behind their doubts. What better evidence could they give that they are hypocrites?

Who in all these United States can say, that he has no doubt of the lawfulness of slavery? Yet the great body of the people will not hear anything on the subject, and they go into a passion if you

name it, and it is even seriously proposed, both at the north and at the south, to pass laws forbidding inquiry and discussion on the subject. Now, suppose these laws should be passed, for the purpose of enabling the nation to shelter itself behind its doubts whether slavery is a sin, that ought to be abolished immediately---will that help the matter? Not at all. If they continue to hold their fellow men as property, in slavery, while they doubt its lawfulness, they are condemned before God, and we may be sure their sin will find them out, and God will let them KNOW how He regards it.

It is amazing to see the foolishness of people on this subject---as if by refusing to get clear of their doubts they could get clear of their sin. Think of the people of the south; Christians, and even ministers refusing to read a paper on the subject of slavery, and perhaps sending it back with abusive or threatening words. Threatening---for what? For reasoning with them about their duty.---It can be demonstrated absolutely, that slavery is unlawful, and ought to be repented of and given up like any other sin. But suppose they only doubt the lawfulness of slavery, and do not mean to be enlightened, they are condemned of God. Let them know that they cannot put this thing down, they cannot clear themselves of it; so long as they doubt its lawfulness they cannot hold men in slavery without sin, and that they do doubt its lawfulness is demonstrated by this opposition to discussion.

We may suppose a case, and perhaps there may be some such in the southern country, where a man doubts the lawfulness of holding slaves and equally doubts the lawfulness of emancipating them in their present state of ignorance and dependence. In that case he comes under Pres. Edward’s rule, and it is his duty, not to fly in a passion with those who would call his attention to it, not to send back newspapers and refuse to read, but to inquire on all hands for light, and examine the question honestly in the light of the word of God, till his doubts are cleared up. The least he can do is to set himself with all his power to educate them and train them to take care of themselves as fast and as thoroughly as possible, and to put them in a state where they can be set at liberty.

5. It is manifest there is but very little conscience in the church.

See what multitudes are persisting to do what they strongly doubt the lawfulness of.

6. There is still less love to God than there is conscience.

It cannot be pretended that love to God is the cause of all this following of fashions, this practicing indulgences, and other things of which people doubt the lawfulness.---They do not persist in these things because they love God so well. No, no, but they persist in it because they wish to do it, to gratify themselves, and they had rather run the risk of doing wrong than to have their doubts cleared up. It is because they have so little love for God, so little care for the honor of God.

7. Do not say, in your prayers, "O Lord, if I have sinned in this thing, O Lord, forgive me the sin."

If you have done that of which you doubted the lawfulness, you have sinned, whether the thing itself be right or wrong. And you must repent, and ask forgiveness.

And now, let me ask you all who are here present, are you convinced that to do what you doubt the lawfulness of, is sin? If you are, I have one more question to ask you. Will you from this time relinquish every thing of which you doubt the lawfulness? Every amusement, every indulgence,

every practice, every pursuit? Will you do it, or will you stand before the solemn judgment seat of Jesus Christ, condemned? If you will not relinquish these things, you show that you are an impenitent sinner, and do not intend to obey God, and if you do not repent, you bring down upon your head God’s condemnation and wrath for ever.

Chapter 55

03.08. FALSE PROFESSORS

FALSE PROFESSORS.

TEXT:--"They feared the Lord, and served their own gods" 2Ki 17:33.

When the ten tribes of Israel were carried away captives by the king of Assyria, their places were supplied with strangers of different idolatrous nations, who knew nothing of the religion of the Jews. Very soon, the wild beasts increased in the country, and the lions destroyed multitudes of the people, and they thought it was because they did not know the god of that country, and had therefore ignorantly transgressed his religion, and offended him, and he had sent the lions among them as a punishment. So they applied to the king, who told them to get one of the priests of the Israelites to teach them the manner of the god of the land. They took this advice, and obtained one of the priests to come to Bethel and teach them the religious ceremonies and modes of worship that had been practiced there. And he taught them to fear Jehovah, as the god of that country. But still, they did not receive Him as the only God. They feared Him; that is, they feared His anger and His judgments, and to avert these they performed the prescribed rites. But they served their own gods. They kept up their idolatrous worship, and this was what they loved and preferred, though they felt obliged to pay some reverence to Jehovah, as the god of that country. There are still multitudes of persons, professing to fear God, and perhaps possessing a certain kind of fear of the Lord, who nevertheless serve their own gods--they have other things to which their hearts are supremely devoted, and other objects in which they mainly put their trust.

There are, as you know, two kinds of fear. There is that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, which is founded in love. There is also a slavish fear, which is a mere dread of evil and is purely selfish. This is the kind of fear which is possessed by those people spoken of in the text. They were afraid Jehovah would send His judgments upon them, if they did not perform certain rites and this was the motive they had for paying Him worship. Those who have this fear are supremely selfish, and while they profess to reverence Jehovah, have other gods whom they love and serve.

There are several classes of persons to whom this is applicable, and my object tonight is to describe some of them, in such a way that those of you here, who possess this character, may know yourselves, and may see how it is that your neighbors know you and understand your real characters.

To serve a person is to be obedient to the will and devoted to the interests of that individual. It is not properly called serving, where only certain acts are performed, without entering into the service of the person, but to serve is to make it a business to do the will and promote the interest of the person. To serve God is to make religion the main business of life. It is to devote one’s self, heart, life, powers, time, influence, and all, to promote the interests of God, to build up the kingdom of God, and to advance the glory of God. Who are they who, while they profess to fear the Lord, serve their own gods?

I answer, First, All those of you, who have not heartily and practically renounced the ownership of your possessions, and given them up to God.

It is self-evident that if you have not done this, you are not serving God. Suppose a gentleman were to employ a clerk to take care of his store, and suppose the clerk were to continue to attend to his own business, and when asked to do what is necessary for his employer, who pays him his wages, he should reply, "I really have so much business of my own to attend to, that I have no time to do these things;" would not everybody cry out against such a servant, and say he was not serving his employer at all, his time is not his own, it is paid for, and he but served himself? So where a man has not renounced the ownership of himself, not only in thought, but practically, he has not taken the first lesson in religion. He is not serving the Lord, but serving his own gods.

2. That man who does not make the business in which he is engaged a part of his religion, does not serve God.

You hear a man say sometimes, I am so much engaged all day in the world, or in worldly business, that I have not time to serve God. He thinks he serves God a little while in the morning, and then attends to his worldly business. That man, you may rely upon it, left his religion where he said his prayers. He is not serving God. It is a mere burlesque for him to pretend to serve God. He is willing, perhaps, to give God the time before breakfast, before he gets ready to go to his own business, but as soon as that is over, away he goes to his own work. He fears the Lord, perhaps, enough to go through with his prayers night and morning, but he serves his own gods.--That man's religion is the laughing-stock of hell! He prays very devoutly, and then, instead of engaging in his business for God, he is serving himself. No doubt the idols are well satisfied with the arrangement, but God is wholly displeased.

3. But, again: Those of you are serving your own gods, who devote to Jehovah that which costs you little or nothing.

There are many who make religion consist in certain acts of piety that do not interfere with their selfishness. You pray in the morning in your family, because you can do it then very conveniently, but do not suffer the service of Jehovah to interfere with the service of your own god's, or to stand in the way of your getting rich, or enjoying the world. The gods you serve make no complaint of being slighted or neglected for the service of Jehovah.

4. All that class are serving your own gods, who suppose that the six days of the week belong to yourselves and that the Sabbath only is God's day.

There are multitudes who suppose that the week is man's time, and the Sabbath only God's, and that they have a right to do their own work during the week, and to serve themselves, and promote their own interests, if they will only keep the Sabbath strictly and serve God on the Sabbath. For instance: A celebrated preacher, in illustrating the wickedness of breaking the Sabbath, used this illustration: "Suppose a man having seven dollars in his pocket should meet a beggar in great distress, and give him six dollars, keeping only one for himself, and the beggar, seeing that he retained one dollar, should turn and rob him of that; would not every heart despise his baseness?" You see it embodies this idea---that it is very ungrateful to break the Sabbath, since God has given to men six days for their own, to serve themselves, and only reserved the Sabbath to Himself, and to rob God of the seventh day is base ingratitude.

You that do this do not serve God at all. If you are selfish during the week, you are selfish altogether. To suppose you had any real piety would imply that you were converted every Sabbath and unconverted every Monday. If a man would serve himself all the week and really posses religion on the Sabbath, he requires to be converted for it. But is this the idea of the Sabbath, that it is a day to serve God in, exclusive of other days? Is God in need of your Services on the Sabbath to keep His work along? God requires all your services as much on the six days as on the Sabbath, only He has appropriated the Sabbath to peculiar duties, and required its observance as a day of rest from bodily toil and from those fatiguing cares and labors that concern the present world. But because God uses means in accomplishing His purposes, and men have bodies as well as souls, and the gospel is to be spread and sustained by the things of this world, therefore God requires you to work all the six days at your secular employments. But it is all for His service, as much as the worship of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is no more given for the service of God than Monday. You have no more right to serve yourselves on Monday than you have on the Sabbath. If any of you have thus considered the matter, and imagined that the six days of the week are your own time, it shows that you are supremely selfish. I beg of you not to consider that in prayer and on the Sabbath you are serving God at all, if the rest of the time you are considered as serving yourself. You have never known the radical principle of serving the Lord.

5. Those are serving themselves, or their own gods, who will not make any sacrifices of personal ease and comfort in religion.

For instance---There are multitudes who object to Free Churches on this ground, that they require a sacrifice of personal gratification. They talk like this: "We wish to sit with our families;" or, "We want our seats cushioned," or, "We always like to sit in the same place." They admit that Free Churches are necessary, in order to make the gospel accessible to the thousands who are going to hell in this city. But they cannot make these little sacrifices, to throw open the doors of God’s house to this great mass of impenitent sinners.

These little things often indicate most clearly the state of men’s hearts. Suppose your servant were to say, "I can’t do this," or "I can’t do that," because it interferes with his personal ease and comfort. He cannot do this because he likes to sit on a cushion and work. Or he cannot do that because it would separate him from his family an hour and a half. What! is that doing service? When a man enters into service, he gives up his ease and comfort, for the interest and at the will of his employer. Is it true that any man is supremely devoted to the service of God, when he shows that his own ease and comfort are dearer than the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and that he would sooner sacrifice the salvation of sinners than sit on a hard seat, or be separated from his family an hour or two?

6. Those are serving their own gods, who give their time and money to God’s service, when they do give, grudgingly, by constraint, and not of a ready mind and with a cheerful heart.

What would you think of your servant, if you had to dun or drive him all the time to do anything for your interest? Would you not say he was an eye-servant? How many people there are who, when they do anything on account of religion, do it grudgingly. If they do anything, it comes hard. If you go to one of these characters, and want his time or his money, for any religious object, it is difficult to get him engaged. It seems to go across the grain, and is not easy or natural. It is plain he does not consider the interests of Christ’s kingdom the same with his own. He may make a show of

fearing the Lord, but he serves some other gods of his own.

7. Those who are always ready to ask how little they may do for religion, rather than how much they may do, are serving their own gods.

There are multitudes of persons who seem always to ask how little they can get along with in what they do for God. You hear such a man making up his account of profits and loss---"So much made this year---then so much it costs for charity---so much obliged to give for religion." (OBLIGED to give for the interests of religion!)---"and so much lost by fire, and so much by bad debts," and so on. Is that man serving God? It is a simple matter of fact, that you have never set your hearts on the object of promoting religion in the world. If you had, you would ask, How much can I do for this object and for that?---Cannot I do so much---or so MUCH---or SO MUCH?

8. They who are laying up wealth for their own families, to elevate and aggrandize them, are serving gods of their own, and not Jehovah.

Those who are thus aiming to elevate their own families into a different sphere, by laying up wealth for them, show that they have some other object to live for than bringing this world under the authority of Jesus Christ. They have other gods to serve. They may pretend to fear the Lord, but they serve their own gods.

9. Those who are making it their object to accumulate so much property that they can retire from business and live at ease, are serving their own gods.

There are many persons who profess to be the servants of God, but are eagerly engaged in gathering property, and calculating to retire to their country seat by-and-by, and live at their ease. What do you mean? Has God given you a right to a perpetual Sabbath, as soon as you have made so much money? Did God tell you, when you professed to enter His service, to work hard so many years, and then you might have a perpetual holiday? Did He promise to excuse you after that from making the most of your time and talents, and let you live at ease the rest of your days? If your thoughts are set upon this notion, I tell you, you are not serving God, but your own selfishness and sloth.

10. Those persons are serving their own gods, who, would sooner gratify their appetites than deny themselves things that are unnecessary, or even hurtful, for the sake of doing good.

You find persons who greatly love things that do them no good, and others even form an artificial appetite for a thing positively loathsome, and after it they will go, and no arguments will prevail upon them to abandon it for the sake of doing good. Are such persons absorbed in the service of God? Certainly not. Will they sacrifice their lives for the kingdom of God? Why, you cannot make them even give up a quid of TOBACCO, a weed that is injurious to health and loathsome to society, they cannot give it up, were it to save a soul from death!

Who does not see that selfishness predominates in such persons? It shows the astonishing strength of selfishness. You often see the strength of selfishness showing itself in some such little thing more than in things that are greater. The real state of a man’s mind stands out, that self-gratification is the law of his life, so strong that it will not give place, even in a trifle, to those great interests, for which he ought to be willing to lay down his life.

11. Those persons who are most readily moved to action by appeals to their own selfish interests, show that they are serving their own gods.

You see what motive influences such a man. Suppose I wish to get him to subscribe for building a church, what must I urge? Why, I must show how it will improve the value of his property, or advance his party, or gratify his selfishness in some other way. If he is more excited by these motives, than he is by a desire to save perishing souls and advance the kingdom of Christ, you see that he has never given himself up to serve the Lord. He is still serving himself. He is more influenced by his selfish interests than by all those benevolent principles on which all religion turns. The character of a true servant of God is right opposite to this.

Take the case of two servants, one devoted to his master's interests, and the other having no conscience or concern but to secure his wages. Go to one, and he throws into the shade all personal considerations, and enlists with heart and soul in achieving the object. The other will not act unless you present some selfish motive, unless you say, Do so, and I will raise your wages, or set you up in business, or the like. Is there not a radical difference between these two servants? Is not this an illustration of what actually takes place in our churches? Propose a plan of doing good that will cost nothing, and they will all go for it. But propose a plan which is going to affect their personal interest, to cost money, or take up time, in a busy season, and you will see they begin to divide. Some hesitate, some doubt, some raise objections, and some resolutely refuse. Some enlist at once, because they see it will do great good. Others stand back till you devise some way to excite their selfishness in its favor. What causes the difference? Some of them are serving their own gods.

12. Those are of this character, who are more interested in other subjects than in religion.

If you find them more ready to talk on other subjects, more easily excited by them, more awake to learn the news, they are serving their own gods. What multitudes are more excited by the bank question, or the question about war, or about the fire, or anything of a worldly nature, than about revivals, missions, or anything connected with the interests of religion. You find them all engaged about politics or speculation, but if you bring up the subject of religion, ah, they are afraid of excitement, and talk about animal feeling, showing that religion is not the subject that is nearest their hearts. A man is always most easily excited on that subject that lies nearest his heart.---Bring that up, and he is interested. When you can talk early and late about the news and other worldly topics, and when you cannot possibly be interested in the subject of religion, you know that your heart is not in it, and if you pretend to be a servant of God, you are a hypocrite.

13. When persons are more jealous for their own fame than for God's glory, it shows that they live for themselves, and serve their own gods.

You see a man more vexed or grieved by what is said against him than against God, whom does he serve? Who is his God, himself or Jehovah? There is a minister thrown into a fever because somebody has said a word derogatory to his scholarship, or his dignity, or his infallibility, while he is as cool as ice at all the indignities thrown upon the blessed God. Is that man a follower of Paul, willing to be considered a fool for the cause of Christ? Did that man ever take the first lesson in religion? If he had, he would rejoice to have his name cast out as evil for the cause of religion. No, he is not serving God, he is serving his own gods.

14. Those are serving their own gods, who are not making the salvation of souls the great and leading object of their lives.

The end of all religious institutions, that which gives value to them all, is the salvation of sinners. The end for which Christ lives, and for which He has left His church in the world, is the salvation of sinners. This is the business which God sets His servants about, and if any man is not doing this, as his business, as the leading and main object of his life, he is not serving Jehovah, he is serving his own gods.

15. Those who are doing but little for God, or who bring but little to pass for God, cannot properly be said to serve Him.

Suppose you ask a professed servant of God. "What are you doing for God? Are you bringing anything to pass? Are you instrumental in the conversion of any sinners? Are you making impressions in favor of religion, or helping forward the cause of Christ?" He replies, "Why, I do not know, I have a hope; I sometimes think I do love God, but I do not know as I am doing any thing in particular at present." Is that man serving God? Or is he serving his own gods? "I talk to sinners some times," he says, "but they do not seem to feel much." Then YOU DON'T FEEL. If your heart is not in it, no wonder you cannot make sinners feel. Whereas, if you do your duty, with your heart in the work, sinners cannot help feeling.

16. Those who seek for happiness in religion, rather than for usefulness, are serving their own gods.

Their religion is entirely selfish. They want to enjoy religion, and are all the while inquiring how they can get happy frames of mind, and how they can be pleasurably excited in religious exercises. And they will go only to such meetings, and sit only under such preaching, as will make them happy; never asking the question whether that is the way to do the most good or not. Now, suppose your servant should do so, and be constantly contriving how to enjoy himself, and if he thought he could be most happy in the parlor, stretched on the sofa, with a pillow of down under his head, and another servant to fan him, refusing to do the work which you set him about, and which your interest urgently requires; instead of manifesting a desire to work for you, and a solicitude for your interest, and a willingness to lay himself out with all his powers in your service, he wants only to be happy! It is just so with those professed servants of Jehovah, who want to do nothing but sit on their handsome cushion, and have the minister feed them. Instead of seeking how to do good, they are only seeking to be happy. Their daily prayer is not, like that of the converted Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" but, "Lord, tell me how I can be happy." Is that the spirit of Jesus Christ? No, he said, "I delight to DO THY WILL, O God." Is that the spirit of the apostle Paul? No, he threw off his upper garments at once, and made his arms bare for the field of LABOR.

17. Those who make their own salvation their supreme object in religion, are serving their own gods.

There are multitudes in the church, who show by their conduct, and even avow in their language, that their leading object is to secure their own salvation, and their grand determination is to get their own souls planted on the firm battlements of the heavenly Jerusalem, and walk the golden fields of Canaan above. If the Bible is not in error all such characters will go to hell. Their religion is

pure selfishness. And "he that will save his life shall loose it, and he that will loose his life for my sake, shall save it."

REMARKS.

1. See why so little is accomplished in the world for Jesus Christ.

It is because there are so few that do anything for it.---It is because Jesus Christ has so few real servants in the world. How many professors do you suppose there are in this church, or in your whole acquaintance, that are really at work for God, and making a business of religion, and laying themselves out to advance the kingdom of Christ? The reason why religion advances no faster is, that there are so few to advance it, and so many to hinder it. You see a parcel of people at a fire, trying to get out the goods of a store. Some are determined to get out the goods, but the rest are not engaged about it, and they divert their attention by talking about other things, or positively hinder them by finding fault with their way of doing it, or by holding them back. So it is in the church. Those who are desirous of doing the work are greatly hindered by the backwardness, the cavils, and the positive resistance of the rest.

2. See why so few Christians have the spirit of prayer.

How can they have the spirit of prayer? What should God give them the spirit of prayer for? Suppose a man engaged in his worldly schemes, and that God should give that man the spirit of prayer. Of course he would pray for that which lies nearest his heart; that is, for success in his worldly schemes, to serve his own gods with. Will God give him the spirit of prayer for such purpose?---Never. Let him go to his own gods for a spirit of prayer, but let him not expect Jehovah to bestow the spirit of prayer, while he is serving his own gods.

3. You see that there are a multitude of professors of religion that have not begun to be religious yet.

Said a man to one of them, Do you feel that your property and your business are all God’s, and do you hold and manage them for God? "O, no," said he, "I have not got so far as that yet." Not got so far as that! That man had been a professor of religion for years, and yet had not got so far as to consider his property, and business, and all that he had as belonging to God! No doubt he was serving his own gods. For I insist upon it, that this is the very beginning of religion. What is conversion, but turning from the service of the world to the service of God? And yet this man had not found out that he was God’s servant. And he seemed to think he was getting a great way in religion, to feel that all he had was the Lord’s.

4. It is great dishonesty for persons to profess to serve the Lord, and yet in reality serve themselves.

You, who are performing religious duties from selfish motives, are in reality trying to make God your servant. If your own interest be the supreme object, all your religious services are only desires to induce God to promote your interests. Why do you pray, or keep the Sabbath, or give your property for religious objects? You answer, "for the sake of promoting my own salvation." Indeed! Not to glorify God, but to get to heaven! Don’t you think the devil would do all that, if he thought he could gain his end by it---and be a devil still? The highest style of selfishness must be to get God, with all His attributes, enlisted in the service of your mighty self!

And now, my hearers, where are you all? Are you serving Jehovah, or are you serving your own gods? How have you been doing these six months that I have been absent? Have you done anything for God? Have you been living as servants of God? Is Satan’s kingdom weakened by what you have done? Could you say now, "Come with me, and I will show you this and that sinner converted, or this and that backslider reclaimed, or this and that weak saint strengthened and aided?" Could you bring living witnesses of what you have done in the service of God? Or would your answer be, "I have been to meeting regularly on the Sabbath, and heard a great deal of good preaching, and I have generally attended the prayer meetings, and we had some precious meetings, and I have prayed in my family, and twice or thrice a day in my closet, and read the Bible." And in all that you have been merely passive, as to anything done for God. You have feared the Lord, and served your own gods.

"Yes, but I have sold so many goods, and made so much money, of which I intend to give a tenth to the missionary cause."

Who hath required this at your hand, instead of saving souls? Going to send the gospel to the heathen, and letting sinners right under your own eyes go down to hell. Be not deceived. If you loved souls, if you were engaged to serve God, you would think of souls here, and do the work of God here. What should we think of a missionary going to the heathen, who had never said a word to sinners around him at home? Does he love souls? There is burlesque in the idea of sending such a man to the heathen. The man that will do nothing at home, is not fit to go to the heathen. And he that pretends to be getting money for missions while he will not try to save sinners here, is an outrageous hypocrite.

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03.09. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

TEXT:--"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

This last sentiment is expressed in the same terms, in the 3rd chapter of Romans. The subject of the present lecture, as I announced last week, is Justification by Faith. The order which I propose to pursue in the discussion is this:

I. Show what justification by law, or legal justification, is.

II. Show that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified.

III. Show what gospel justification is.

IV. Show what is the effect of gospel justification, or the state into which it brings a person that is justified.

V. Show that gospel justification is by faith.

VI. Answer some inquiries which arise in many minds on this subject.

I. I am to show what legal justification is.

1. In its general legal sense it means not guilty. To justify an individual in this sense, is to declare that he is not guilty of any breach of the law. It is affirming that he has committed no crime. It is pronouncing him innocent.

2. More technically, it is a form of pleading to a charge of crime, where the individual who is charged admits the fact, but brings forward an excuse, on which he claims that he had a right to do as he did, or that he is not blameworthy. Thus, if a person is charged with murder, the plea of justification admits that he killed the man, but alleges either that it was done in self-defense and he had a right to kill him, or that it was by unavoidable accident, and he could not help it. In either case, the plea of justification admits the fact, but denies the guilt, on the ground of a sufficient excuse.

II. I am to show that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified. And this is true under either form of justification.

1. Under the first, or general form of justification. In this case, the burden of proof is on the accuser, who is held to prove the facts charged. And in this case, he only needs to prove that a crime has been committed once. If it is proved once, the individual is guilty. He cannot be justified, in this way, by the law. He is found guilty. It is not available for him to urge that he has done more good than hurt, or that he has kept God’s law longer than he has broken it, but he must make it out

that he has fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. Who can be justified by the law in this way? No one.

2. Nor under the second, or technical form of justification. In this case, the burden of proof lies on him who makes the plea. When he pleads in justification he admits the fact alleged, and therefore he must make good his excuse, or fail. There are two points to be regarded. The thing pleaded as an excuse must be true, and it must be a good and sufficient excuse or justification, not a frivolous apology, or one that does not meet the case. If it is not true, or if it is insufficient, and especially if it reflects on the court or government, it is an infamous aggravation of his offense. You will see the bearing of this remark, by and by.

I will now mention some of the prominent reasons which sinners are in the habit of pleading as a justification, and will show what is the true nature and bearing of these excuses, and the light in which they stand before God. I have not time to name all these pleas, but will only refer to two of each of the classes I have described, those which are good if true, and those which are true but unavailing.

(1.) Sinners often plead their sinful nature as a justification.

This excuse is a good one, if it is true. If it is true, as they pretend, that God has given them a nature which is itself sinful, and the necessary actings of their nature are sin, it is a good excuse for sin, and in the face of heaven and earth, and at the day of judgment, will be a good plea in justification. God must annihilate the reason of all the rational universe, before they will ever blame you for sin if God made you sin, or if He gave you a nature that is itself sinful. How can your nature be sinful? What is sin? Sin is a transgression of the law. There is no other sin but this. Now, does the law say you must not have such a nature as you have? Nothing like it.

The fact is, this doctrine overlooks the distinction between sin and the occasion of sin. The bodily appetites and constitutional susceptibilities of body and mind, when strongly excited, become the occasions of sin. So it was with Adam. No one will say that Adam had a sinful nature. But he had, by his constitution, an appetite for food and a desire for knowledge. These were not sinful, but were as God made them, and were necessary to fit him to live in this world, as a subject of God's moral government. But being strongly excited, as you know, led to prohibited indulgence, and thus became the occasions of his sinning against God. They were innocent in themselves, but he yielded to them in a sinful manner, and that was his sin. When the sinner talks about his sinful nature as a justification, he confounds these innocent appetites and susceptibilities, with sin itself. By so doing, he in fact charges God foolishly, and accuses Him of giving him a sinful nature, when in fact his nature, in all its elements, is essential to moral agency, and God has made it as well as it could be made, and perfectly adapted to the circumstances in which he lives in this world. The truth is, man's nature is all right, and is as well fitted to love and obey God as to hate and disobey Him. Sinner! the day is not far distant, when it will be known whether this is a good excuse or not. Then you will see whether you can face your Maker down in this way; and when He charges you with sin, turn round and throw the blame back upon Him.

Do you inquire what influence Adam's sin has then had in producing the sin of his posterity? I answer, it has subjected them to aggravated temptation, but has by no means rendered their nature in itself sinful.

2. Another excuse coming under the same class, is inability. This also is a good excuse if it is true. If sinners are really unable to obey God, this is a good plea in justification. When you are charged with sin, in not obeying the laws of God, you have only to show, if you can, by good proof, that God has required what you were not able to perform, and the whole intelligent universe will resound with the verdict of not guilty. If you have not natural power to obey God, they must give this verdict, or cease to be reasonable beings. For it is a first law of reason, that no being is obliged to do what he has no power to do.

Suppose God should require you to undo something which you have done. This, everyone will see, is a natural impossibility. Now, are you to blame for not doing it? God requires repentance of past sins, and not that you should undo them. Now, suppose it was your duty, on the first of January, to warn a certain individual, who is now dead. Are you now under obligation to warn that individual? No. That is an impossibility. All that God can now require is, that you should repent. It never can be your duty, now, to warn that sinner. God may hold you responsible for not doing your duty to him when it was in your power. But it would be absurd to make it your duty to do what it is not in your power to do.

This plea being false, and throwing the blame of tyranny on God, is an infamous aggravation of the offense. If God requires you to do what you have no power to do, it is tyranny. And what God requires is on penalty of eternal death---He threatens an infinite penalty for not doing what you have no power to do, and so He is an infinite tyrant. This plea, then, charges God with infinite tyranny, and is not only insufficient for the sinner’s justification, but is a horrible aggravation of his offense.

Let us vary the case a little. Suppose God requires you to repent for not doing what you never had natural ability to do. You must either repent, then, of not doing what you had no natural power to do, or you must go to hell. Now, you can neither repent of this, nor can He make you repent of it. What is repentance? It is to blame yourself and justify God. But if you had no power, you can do neither. It is a natural impossibility that a rational being should ever blame himself for not doing what he is conscious he had not power to do. Nor can you justify God. Until the laws of mind are reversed, the verdict of all intelligent beings must pronounce it infinite tyranny to require that which there is no power to perform.

Suppose God should call you to account, and require you to repent for not flying. By what process can He make you blame yourself for not flying, when you are conscious that you have no wings, and no power to fly? If He could cheat you into the belief that you had the power, and make you believe a lie, then you might repent. But what sort of a way is that for God to take with His creatures?

What do you mean, sinner, by bringing such an excuse? Do you mean to have it go, that you have never sinned? It is a strange contradiction you make, when you admit that you ought to repent, and in the next breath say you have no power to repent. You ought to take your ground, one way or the other. If you mean to rely on this excuse, come out with it in full, and take your ground before God’s bar, and say, "Lord, I am not going to repent at all---I am not under any obligation to repent, for I have not power to obey thy law, and therefore I plead not guilty absolutely, for I have never sinned!"

In which of these ways can any one of you be justified? Will you, dare you take ground on this excuse, and throw back the blame upon God?

3. Another excuse which sinners offer for their continued impenitence is their wicked heart.

This excuse is true, but it is not sufficient. The first two that I mentioned, you recollect were good if they had been true, but they were false. This is true, but is no excuse. What is a wicked heart? It is not the bodily organ which we call the heart, but the affection of the soul, the wicked disposition, the wicked feelings, the actings of the mind. If these will justify you, they will justify the devil himself. Has he not as wicked a heart as you have? Suppose you had committed murder, and you should be put on trial and plead this plea. "It is true," you would say, "I killed the man, but then I have such a thirst for blood, and such a hatred of mankind, that I cannot help committing murder, whenever I have an opportunity." "Horrible!" the judge would exclaim, "Horrible! Let the gallows be set up immediately, and let this fellow be hung before I leave the bench; such a wretch ought not to live an hour. Such a plea! Why, that is the very reason he ought to be hung, if he has such a thirst for blood, that no man is safe." Such is the sinner's plea of a wicked heart in justification of sin. Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant.

4. Another great excuse which people make, is the conduct of Christians.

Ask many a man among your neighbors why he is not religious, and he will point you at once to the conduct of Christians as his excuse. "These Christians," he will say, "are no better than anybody else; when I see them live as they profess, I shall think it time for me to attend to religion." Thus he is hiding behind the sins of Christians. He shows that he knows how Christians ought to live, and therefore he cannot plead that he has sinned through ignorance. But what does it amount to as a ground of justification? I admit the fact, that Christians behave very badly, and do much that is entirely contrary to their profession. But is that a good excuse for you? So far from it, this is itself one of the strongest reasons why you ought to be religious. You know so well how Christians ought to live, you are bound to show an example. If you had followed them ignorantly, because you did not know any better, and had fallen into sin in that way, it would be a different case. But the plea, as it stands, shows that you know they are wrong, which is the very reason why you ought to be right, and exert a better influence than they do. Instead of following them and doing wrong because they do, you ought to break off from them, and rebuke them, and pray for them, and try to lead them in a better way. This excuse, then, is true in fact, but unavailable in justification. You only make it an excuse for charging God foolishly, and instead of clearing you, it only adds to your dreadful, damning guilt. A fine plea this, to get behind some deacon, or some elder in the church, and there shoot your arrows of malice and caviling at God!

Who among you, then, can be justified by the law?---Who has kept it? Who has got a good excuse for breaking it? Who dare go to the bar of God on these pleas, and face his Maker with such apologies?

III. I am to show what Gospel Justification is.

First, Negatively.

1. Gospel Justification is not the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if He had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead. It is not an uncommon mistake to suppose that when sinners are justified under the gospel they are accounted righteous in the eye of the law, by having the obedience or righteousness of Christ imputed to them. I have not time to go into an examination of this subject now. I can only say that this idea is absurd and impossible, for this reason, that Jesus Christ was bound to obey the law for himself, and could no more perform works of supererogation, or obey on our account, than anybody else. Was it not His duty to love the Lord his God, with all His heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love His neighbor as himself? Certainly; and if He had not done so, it would have been sin. The only work of supererogation He could perform was to submit to sufferings that were not deserved. This is called His obedience unto death, and this is set down to our account. But if His obedience of the law is set down to our account, why are we called on to repent and obey the law ourselves? Does God exact double service, yes, triple service, first to have the law obeyed by the surety for us, then that He must suffer the penalty for us, and then that we must repent and obey ourselves? No such thing is demanded. It is not required that the obedience of another should be imputed to us. All we owe is perpetual obedience to the law of benevolence. And for this there can be no substitute. If we fail of this we must endure the penalty, or receive a free pardon.

2. Justification by faith does not mean that faith is accepted as a substitute for personal holiness, or that by an arbitrary constitution, faith is imputed to us instead of personal obedience to the law.

Some suppose that justification is this, that the necessity of personal holiness is set aside, and that God arbitrarily dispenses with the requirement of the law, and imputes faith as a substitute. But this is not the way. Faith is accounted for just what it is, and not for something else that it is not. Abraham’s faith was imputed unto him for righteousness, because it was itself an act of righteousness, and because it worked by love, and thus produced holiness. Justifying faith is holiness, so far as it goes, and produces holiness of heart and life, and is imputed to the believer as holiness, not instead of holiness.

3. Nor does justification by faith imply that a sinner is justified by faith without good works, or personal holiness.

Some suppose that justification by faith only, is without any regard to good works, or holiness. They have understood this from what Paul has said, where he insists so largely on justification by faith. But it should be borne in mind that Paul was combating the error of the Jews, who expected to be justified by obeying the law. In opposition to this error, Paul insists on it that justification is by faith, without works of law. He does not mean that good works are unnecessary to justification, but that works of law are not good works, because they spring from legal considerations, from hope and fear, and not from faith that works by love. But inasmuch as a false theory had crept into the church on the other side, James took up the matter, and showed them that they had misunderstood Paul. And to show this, he takes the case of Abraham. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?---And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." This epistle was supposed to contradict Paul, and some of the ancient churches rejected it on that

account. But they overlooked the fact that Paul was speaking of one kind of works, and James of another. Paul was speaking of works performed from legal motives. But he has everywhere insisted on good works springing from faith, or the righteousness of faith, as indispensable to salvation. All that he denies is, that works of law, or works grounded on legal motives, have anything to do in the matter of justification. And James teaches the same thing, when he teaches that men are justified, not by works nor by faith alone, but by faith together with the works of faith; or as Paul expresses it, faith that works by love. You will bear in mind that I am speaking of gospel justification, which is very different from legal justification.

Secondly, Positively.

4. Gospel justification, or justification by faith, consists in pardon and acceptance with God.

When we say that men are justified by faith and holiness, we do not mean that they are accepted on the ground of law, but that they are treated as if they were righteous, on account of their faith and works of faith. This is the method which God takes, in justifying a sinner. Not that faith is the foundation of justification. The foundation is in Christ. But this is the manner in which sinners are pardoned, and accepted, and justified, that if they repent, believe, and become holy, their past sins shall be forgiven, for the sake of Christ.

Here it will be seen how justification under the gospel differs from justification under the law. Legal justification is a declaration of actual innocence and freedom from blame. Gospel justification is pardon and acceptance, as if he was righteous, but on other grounds than his own obedience. When the apostle says, "By deeds of law shall no flesh be justified", he uses justification as a lawyer, in a strictly legal sense. But when he speaks of justification by faith, he speaks not of legal justification, but of a person’s being treated as if he were righteous.

IV. I will now proceed to show the effect of this method of justification; or the state into which it brings those who are justified.

1. The first item to be observed is, that when an individual is pardoned, the penalty of the law is released. The first effect of a pardon is to arrest and set aside the execution of the penalty. It admits that the penalty was deserved, but sets it aside. Then, so far as punishment is concerned, the individual has no more to fear from the law, than if he had never transgressed. He is entirely released. Those, then, who are justified by true faith, as soon as they are pardoned, need no more be influenced by fear or punishment. The penalty is as effectually set aside, as if it had never been incurred.

2. The next effect of pardon is, to remove all the liabilities incurred in consequence of transgression, such as forfeiture of goods, or incapacity for being a witness, or holding any office under government. A real pardon removes all these, and restores the individual back to where he was before he transgressed. So, under the government of God, the pardoned sinner is restored to the favor of God. He is brought back into a new relation, and stands before God and is treated by Him, so far as the law is concerned, as if he were innocent. It does not suppose or declare him to be really innocent, but the pardon restores him to the same state as if he were.

3. Another operation of pardon under God’s government is, that the individual is restored to sonship. In other words, it brings him into such a relation to God, that he is received and treated as

really a child of God.

Suppose the son of a sovereign on the throne had committed murder, and was convicted and condemned to die. A pardon, then, would not only deliver him from death, but restore him to his place in the family. God's children have all gone astray, and entered into the service of the devil; but the moment a pardon issues to them, they are brought back; they receive a spirit of adoption, are sealed heirs of God, and restored to all the privileges of children of God.

4. Another thing effected by justification is to secure all needed grace to rescue themselves fully out of the snare of the devil, and all the innumerable entanglements in which they are involved by sin.

Beloved, if God were merely to pardon you, and then leave you to get out of sin as you could by yourselves, of what use would your pardon be to you? None in the world. If a child runs away from his father's house, and wanders in a forest, and falls into a deep pit, and the father finds him and undertakes to save him; if he merely pardons him for running away, it will be of no use, unless he lifts him up from the pit and leads him out of the forest. So in the scheme of redemption, whatever helps and aids you need, are all guaranteed, if you believe. If God undertakes to save you, he pledges all the light and grace and help that are necessary to break the chains of Satan and the entanglements of sin, and leads you back to your Father's house.

I know when individuals are first broken down under a sense of sin, and their hearts gush out with tenderness, they look over their past lives and feel condemned and see that it is all wrong, and then they break down at God's feet and give themselves away to Jesus Christ; they rejoice greatly in the idea that they have done with sin. But in a little time they begin to feel the pressure of old habits and former influences, and they see so much to be done before they overcome them all, that they often get discouraged, and cry, "O, what shall I do, with so many enemies to meet, and so little strength of resolution or firmness of purpose to overcome them?" Let me tell you, beloved, that if God has undertaken to save you, you have only to keep near to Him, and He will carry you through. You need not fear your enemies. Though the heavens should thunder and the earth rock, and the elements melt, you need not tremble, nor fear for enemies without or enemies within. God is for you, and who can be against you? "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

5. Justification enlists all the divine attributes in your favor, as much as if you had never sinned.

See that holy angel, sent on an errand of love to some distant part of the universe. God's eye follows him, and if He sees him likely to be injured in any way, all the divine attributes are enlisted at once to protect and sustain him. Just as absolutely are they all pledged for you, if you are justified, to protect and support and save you. Notwithstanding you are not free from remaining sin, and are so totally unworthy of God's love, yet if you are truly justified, the only wise and eternal God is pledged for your salvation. And shall you tremble and be faint-hearted, with such support?

If a human government pardons a criminal, it is then pledged to protect him as a subject, as much as if he had never committed a crime. So it is when God justifies a sinner. The Apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Henceforth, God is on his side, and pledged as his faithful and eternal Friend.

Gospel justification differs from legal justification, in this respect: If the law justifies an individual, it holds no longer than he remains innocent. As soon as he transgresses once, his former justification is of no more avail. But when the gospel justifies a sinner, it is not so; but "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." A new relation is now constituted, entirely peculiar. The sinner is now brought out from under the covenant of works, and placed under the covenant of grace. He no longer retains God's favor by the tenure of absolute and sinless obedience. If he sins, now, he is not thrust back again under the law, but receives the benefit of the new covenant. If he is justified by faith; and so made a child of God, he receives the treatment of a child, and is corrected, and chastised, and humbled, and brought back again. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The meaning of that is not, that God calls and saves the sinner without his repenting, but that God never changes His mind when once he undertakes the salvation of a soul

I know this is thought by some to be very dangerous doctrine, to teach that believers are perpetually justified---because, say they, it will embolden men to sin. Indeed! To tell a man that has truly repented of sin, and heartily renounced sin, and sincerely desires to be free from sin, that God will help him and certainly give him the victory over sin, will embolden him to commit sin! Strange logic that! If this doctrine emboldens any man to commit sin, it only shows that he never did repent; that he never hated sin, and never loved God for His own sake, but only feigned repentance, and if he loved God it was only a selfish love, because he thought God was going to do him a favor. If he truly hated sin, the consideration that notwithstanding all his unworthiness God had received him as a child, and would give him a child's treatment, is the very thing to break him down and melt his heart in the most godly sorrow. O, how often has the child of God, melted in adoring wonder at the goodness of God, in using means to bring him back, instead of sending him to hell, as he deserved! What consideration is calculated to bring him lower in the dust, than the thought that notwithstanding all God had done for him, and the gracious help God was always ready to afford him, he should wander away again, when his name was written in the Lamb's book of life!

6. It secures the discipline of the covenant. God has pledged Himself that if any who belong to Christ go astray, He will use the discipline of the covenant, and bring them back. In the eighty-ninth psalm, God says, putting David for Christ, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

Thus you see that professors of religion may always expect to be more readily visited with God's judgments, if they get out of the way, than the impenitent. The sinner may grow fat, and live in riches, and have no bands in his death, all according to God's established principles of government. But let a child of God forsake his God, and go after riches or any other worldly object, and as certain as he is a child, God will smite him with His rod. And when he is smitten and brought back, he will say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Perhaps some of you have known what it is to be afflicted in this way, and to feel that it was good.

7. Another effect of gospel justification is, to insure sanctification. It not only insures all the means of sanctification, but the actual accomplishment of the work, so that the individual who is truly converted, will surely persevere in obedience till he is fitted for heaven and actually saved.

V. I am to show that this is justification by faith.

Faith is the medium by which the blessing is conveyed to the believer. The proof of this is in the Bible. The text declares it expressly. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh he justified." The subject is too often treated of in the New Testament to be necessary to go into a labored proof. It is manifest, from the necessity of the case, that if men are saved at all, they must be justified in this way, and not by works of law, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

VI. I will now answer several inquiries which may naturally arise in your minds, growing out of this subject.

1. "Why is justification said to be by faith, rather than by repentance, or love, or any other grace."

Answer. It is no where said that men are justified or saved for faith, as the ground of their pardon, but only that they are justified by faith, as the medium or instrument. If it is asked why faith is appointed as the instrument, rather than any other exercise of the mind, the answer is, because of the nature and effect of faith. No other exercise could be appointed. What is faith? It is that confidence in God which leads us to love and obey Him. We are therefore justified by faith because we are sanctified by faith. Faith is the appointed instrument of our justification, because it is the natural instrument of sanctification. It is the instrument of bringing us back to obedience, and therefore is designated as the means of obtaining the blessings of that return. It is not imputed to us, by an arbitrary act, FOR what it is not, but for what it is, as the foundation of all real obedience to God. This is the reason why faith is made the medium through which pardon comes. It is simply set down to us for what it really is; because it first leads us to obey God, from a principle of love to God. We are forgiven our sins on account of Christ. It is our duty to repent and obey God, and when we do so, this is imputed to us as what it is, holiness, or obedience to God. But for the forgiveness of our past sins, we must rely on Christ. And therefore justification is said to be by faith in Jesus Christ.

2. The second query is of great importance: "What is justifying faith? What must I believe, in order to be saved?"

Answer. (1) Negatively, justifying faith does not consist in believing that your sins are forgiven. If that was necessary, you would have to believe it before it was done, or to believe a lie. Remember, your sins are not forgiven until you believe. But if saving faith is believing that they are already forgiven, it is believing a thing before it takes place, which is absurd. You cannot believe your sins are forgiven, before you have evidence that they are forgiven; and you cannot have evidence that they are forgiven until it is true that they are forgiven, and they cannot be forgiven until you exercise saving faith. Therefore saving faith must be believing something else.

Nor (2) does saving faith consist in believing that you shall be saved at all. You have no right to believe that you shall be saved at all, until after you have exercised justifying or saving faith.

But (3) justifying faith consists in believing the atonement of Christ, or believing the record which God has given of his Son.

The correctness of this definition has been doubted by some; and I confess my own mind has undergone a change on this point. It is said that Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. But what did Abraham believe? He believed that he should have a son. Was this all? By no means. But his faith included the great blessing that depended on that event, that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, should spring from him. This was the great subject of the Abrahamic covenant, and it depended on his having a son. Of course, Abraham's faith included the "Desire of all nations," and was faith in Christ. The apostle Paul has showed this, at full length, in the 3d chapter of Galatians, that the sum of the covenant was, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." In verse 16, he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

It is said that in the 11th of Hebrews, the saints are not all spoken of as having believed in Christ. But if you examine carefully, you will find that in all cases, faith in Christ is either included in what they believed, or fairly implied by it. Take the case of Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Why was his sacrifice more excellent? Because, by offering the firstlings of his flock, he recognized the necessity of the atonement, and that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Cain was a proud infidel, and offered the fruits of the ground, as a mere thank offering, for the blessings of Providence, without any admission that he was a sinner, and needed an atonement, as the ground on which he could hope for pardon.

Some suppose that an individual might exercise justifying faith, while denying the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ. I deny this. The whole sum and substance of revelation, like converging rays, all center on Jesus Christ, His divinity and atonement. All that the prophets and other writers of the Old Testament say about salvation comes to Him. The Old Testament and the New, all the types and shadows point to Him. All the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in Him. Their faith terminated in the coming Messiah, as that of the New Testament saints did in the Messiah already come. In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul shows what place he would assign to this doctrine: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Mark that expression, "first of all." It proves that Paul preached that Christ died for sinners, as the "first" or primary doctrine of the gospel. And so you will find it, from one end of the Bible to the other, that the attention of men was directed to this new and living way, as the only way of salvation. This truth is the only truth that can sanctify men. They may believe a thousand other things, but this is the great source of sanctification, "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." And this alone can therefore be justifying faith.

There may be many other acts of faith, that may be right and acceptable to God. But nothing is justifying faith, but believing the record that God has given of His Son. Simply believing what God has revealed on any point, is an act of faith; but justifying faith fastens on Christ, takes hold of His

atonement, and embraces Him as the only ground of pardon and salvation. There may be faith in prayer, the faith that is in exercise in offering up prevailing prayer to God. But that is not properly justifying faith.

3. "When are men justified?"

This is also an inquiry often made. I answer---Just as soon as they believe in Christ, with the faith which worketh by love. Sinner, you need not go home from this meeting under the wrath of Almighty God. You may be justified here, on the spot, now, if you will only believe in Christ. Your pardon is ready, made out and sealed with the broad seal of heaven; and the blank will be filled up, and the gracious pardon delivered, as soon as, by one act of faith, you receive Jesus Christ as He is offered in the gospel.

4. "How can I know whether I am in a state of justification or not?""

Answer. You can know it in no way, except by inference. God has not revealed it in the scriptures, that you, or any other individuals, are justified; but He has set down the characteristics of a justified person, and declared that all who have these characteristics are justified.

(1.) Have you the witness of the Spirit? All who are justified have this. They have intercourse with the Holy Ghost, He explains the Scriptures to them, and leads them to see their meaning, He leads them to the Son and to the Father, and reveals the Son in them, and reveals the Father. Have you this? If you have, you are justified. If not, you are yet in your sins.

(2.) Have you the fruits of the Spirit? They are love, joy, peace, and so on. These are matters of human consciousness; have you them? If so, you are justified.

(3.) Have you peace with God? The apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Christ says to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." And again, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you find rest in Christ? Is your peace like a river, flowing gently through your soul, and filling you with calm and heavenly delight? Or do you feel a sense of condemnation before God?

Do you feel a sense of acceptance with God, of pardoned sin, of communion with God? This must be a matter of experience, if it exists. Don’t imagine you can be in a justified state, and yet have no evidence of it. You may have great peace in reality, filling your soul, and yet not draw the inference that you are justified. I remember the time, when my mind was in a state of such sweet peace, that it seemed to me as if all nature was listening for God to speak; but yet I was not aware that this was the peace of God, or that it was evidence of my being in a justified state. I thought I had lost all my conviction, and actually undertook to bring back the sense of condemnation that I had before. I did not draw the inference that I was justified, till after the love of God was so shed abroad in my soul by the Holy Ghost, that I was compelled to cry out, "Lord, it is enough, I can bear no more." I do not believe it possible for the sense of condemnation to remain, where the act of pardon is already past.

(4.) Have you the spirit of adoption? If you are justified, you are also adopted, as one of God’s dear children, and He has sent forth His Spirit into your heart, so that you naturally cry, "Abba, Father!" He seems to you just like a father, and you want to call him father. Do you know anything of this? It is one thing to call God your father in heaven, and another thing to feel towards Him as a father.

This is one evidence of a justified state, when God gives the spirit of adoption.

REMARKS.

I. I would go around, to all my dear hearers tonight, and ask them one by one, "Are you in a state of justification? Do you honestly think you are justified?"

I have briefly run over the subject, and showed what justification is not, and what it is, how you can be saved, and the evidences of justification. Have you it? Would you dare to die now? Suppose the loud thunders of the last trumpet were now to shake the universe, and you should see the Son of God coming to judgment---are you ready? Could you look up calmly and say, "Father, this is a solemn sight, but Christ has died, and God has justified me, and who is he that shall condemn me?"

II. If you think you ever was justified, and yet have not at present the evidence of it, I want to make an inquiry. Are you under the discipline of the covenant?---If not, have you any reason to believe you ever were justified? God's covenant with you, if you belong to Christ, is this---"If they backslide, I will visit their iniquity with the rod, and chasten them with stripes." Do you feel the stripes? Is God awakening your mind, and convicting your conscience, is He smiting you? If not, where are the evidences that He is dealing with you as a son? If you are not walking with God, and at the same time are not under chastisement, you cannot have any good reason to believe you are God's children.

III. Those of you who have evidence that you are justified, should maintain your relation to God, and live up to your real privileges. This is immensely important. There is no virtue in being distrustful and unbelieving. It is important to your growth in grace. One reason why many Christians do not grow in grace is, that they are afraid to claim the privileges of God's children which belong to them. Rely upon it, beloved, this is no virtuous humility, but criminal unbelief. If you have the evidence that you are justified, take the occasion from it to press forward to holiness of heart, and come to God with all the boldness that an angel would, and know how near you are to Him. It is your duty to do so. Why should you hold back? Why are you afraid to recognize the covenant of grace, in its full extent? Here are the provisions of your Father's house, all ready and free; and are you converted and justified, and restored to His favor, and yet afraid to sit down at your Father's table? Do not plead that you are so unworthy. This is nothing but self-righteousness and unbelief. True, you are so unworthy. But if you are justified, that is no longer a bar. It is now your duty to take hold of the promises as belonging to you. Take any promise you can find in the Bible, that is applicable, and go with it to your Father, and plead it before Him, believing. Do you think He will deny it? These exceeding great and precious promises were given you for this very purpose, that you may become a partaker of the divine nature. Why then should you doubt? Come along, beloved, come along up to the privileges that belong to you, and take hold of the love, and peace, and joy, offered to you in this holy gospel.

IV. If you are not in a state of justification, however much you have done, and prayed, and suffered, you are nothing. If you have not believed in Christ, if you have not received and trusted in Him, as He is set forth in the gospel, you are yet in a state of condemnation and wrath. You may have been, for weeks and months, and even for years, groaning with distress, but for all that, you are still in the gall of bitterness. Here you see the line drawn; the moment you pass this, you are in

a state of justification.

Dear hearer, are you now in a state of wrath? Now believe in Christ. All your waiting and groaning will not bring you any nearer. Do you say you want more conviction? I tell you to come now to Christ. Do you say you must wait till you prayed more? What is the use of praying in unbelief? Will the prayers of a condemned rebel avail? Do you say you are so unworthy? But Christ died for just such as you. He comes right to you now, on your seat. Where do you sit? Where is that individual I am speaking to? Sinner, you need not wait. You need not go home in your sins, with that heavy load on your heart. Now is the day of salvation. Hear the word of God: "If thou believe in thine heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if thou confess with thy mouth that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Do you say, "What must I believe?" Believe just what God says of his Son; believe any of those great fundamental truths which God has revealed respecting the way of salvation, and rest your soul on it, and you shall be saved. Will you now trust Jesus Christ to dispose of you? Have you confidence enough in Christ to leave yourself with Him, to dispose of your body and your soul, for time and eternity? Can you say

"Here, Lord, I give myself away; 'Tis all that I can do?"

Perhaps you are trying to pray yourself out of your difficulties before coming to Christ. Sinner, it will do no good. Now, cast yourself down at His feet, and leave your soul in His hands. Say to Him, "Lord, I give myself to thee, with all my powers of body and of mind; use me and dispose of me, as thou wilt, for thine own glory; I know thou wilt do right, and that is all I desire." Will you do it?

Chapter 57

03.10. LEGAL EXPERIENCE

LEGAL EXPERIENCE.

TEXT:--The 7th chapter of Romans.

I have more than once had occasion to refer to this chapter, and have read some portions of it and made remarks. But I have not been able to go into a consideration of it so fully as I wished, and therefore thought I would make it the subject of a separate lecture. In giving my views I shall pursue the following order:

I. Mention the different opinions that have prevailed in the church concerning this passage.

II. Show the importance of understanding this portion of scripture aright, or of knowing which of these prevailing opinions is the true one.

III. Lay down several facts and principles which have a bearing on the exposition of this passage.

IV. Refer to some rules of interpretation which ought always to be observed in interpreting either the scriptures or any other writing or testimony.

V. Give my own views of the real meaning of the passage, with the reasons.

I shall confine myself chiefly to the latter part of the chapter, as that has been chiefly the subject of dispute. You see from the manner in which I have laid out my work, that I design to simplify the subject as much as possible, so as to bring it within the compass of a single lecture. Otherwise I might make a volume; as much has been written to show the meaning of this chapter.

I. I am to show what are the principal opinions that have prevailed concerning the application of this chapter.

1. One opinion that has extensively prevailed and still prevails, is that the latter part of the chapter is an epitome of Christian experience.

It has been supposed to describe the situation and exercises of a Christian, and designed to exhibit the Christian warfare with indwelling sin. It is to be observed, however, that this is, comparatively, a modern opinion. No writer is known to have held this view of the chapter, for centuries after it was written. According to Professor Stuart, who has examined the subject more thoroughly than any other man in this country, Augustine was the first writer that exhibited this interpretation, and he resorted to it in his controversy with Pelagius.

2. The only other interpretation given is that which prevailed in the first centuries, and which is still generally adopted on the continent of Europe as well as by a considerable number of writers in England and in this country; that this passage describes the experience of a sinner under conviction, who was acting under the motives of the law, and not yet brought to the experience of the gospel. In this country, the most prevalent opinion is, that the 7th of Romans delineates the

experience of a Christian.

II. I am to show the importance of a right understanding of this passage.

A right understanding of this passage must be fundamental. If this passage in fact describes a sinner under conviction, or a purely legal experience, and if a person supposing that it is a Christian experience finds his own experience to correspond with it, his mistake is a fatal one. It must be a fatal error, to rest in his experience as that of a real Christian, because it corresponds with the 7th of Romans, if Paul is in fact giving only the experience of a sinner under legal motives and considerations.

III. I will lay down some principles and facts, that have a bearing on the elucidation of this subject.

1. It is true, that mankind act, in all cases, and from the nature of mind must always act, as on the whole they feel to be preferable.

Or, in other words, the will governs the conduct. Men never act against their will. The will governs the motion of the limbs. Voluntary beings cannot act contrary to their will.

2. Men often desire what, on the whole, they do not choose.

The desires and the will are often opposed to each other. The conduct is governed by the choice, not by the desires. The desires may be inconsistent with the choice. You may desire to go to some other place tonight, and yet on the whole choose to remain here. Perhaps you desire very strongly to be somewhere else, and yet choose to remain in meeting. A man wishes to go a journey to some place. Perhaps he desires it strongly. It may be very important to his business or his ambition. But his family are sick, or some other object requires him to be at home, and on the whole he chooses to remain. In all cases, the conduct follows the actual choice.

3. Regeneration, or conversion, is a change in the choice.

It is a change in the supreme controlling choice of the mind. The regenerated or converted person prefers God’s glory to everything else. He chooses it as the supreme object of affection. This is a change of heart. Before, he chose his own interest or happiness, as his supreme end. Now, he chooses God’s service in preference to his own interest. When a person is truly born again, his choice is habitually right, and of course his conduct is in the main right.

The force of temptation may produce an occasional wrong choice, or even a succession of wrong choices, but his habitual course of action is right. The will, or choice, of a converted person is habitually right, and of course his conduct is so. If this is not true, I ask, in what does the converted differ from the unconverted person? If it is not the character of the converted person, that he habitually does the commandments of God, what is his character? But I presume this position will not be disputed by anyone who believes in the doctrine of regeneration.

4. Moral agents are so constituted, that they naturally and necessarily approve of what is right.

A moral agent is one who possesses understanding, will, and conscience. Conscience is the power of discerning the difference of moral objects. It will not be disputed that a moral agent can be led to see the difference between right and wrong, so that his moral nature shall approve of what is right. Otherwise, a sinner never can be brought under conviction. If he has not a moral

nature, that can see and highly approve the law of God, and justify the penalty, he cannot be convicted. For this is conviction, to see the goodness of the law that he has broken and the justice of the penalty he has incurred. But in fact, there is not a moral agent, in heaven, earth, or hell, that cannot be made to see that the law of God is right, and whose conscience does not approve the law.

5. Men may not only approve the law, as right, but they may often, when it is viewed abstractly and without reference to its bearing on themselves, take real pleasure in contemplating on it.

This is one great source of self-deception. Men view the law of God in the abstract, and love it. When no selfish reason is present for opposing it, they take pleasure in viewing it. They approve of what is right, and condemn wickedness, in the abstract. All men do this, when no selfish reason is pressing on them. Whoever found a man so wicked, that he approved of evil in the abstract? Where was a moral being ever found that approved the character of the devil, or that approved of other wicked men, unconnected with himself? How often do you hear wicked men express the greatest abhorrence and detestation of enormous wickedness in others. If their passions are in no way enlisted in favor of error or of wrong, men always stand up for what is right. And this merely constitutional approbation of what is right may amount even to delight, when they do not see the relations of right interfering in any manner with their own selfishness.

6. In this constitutional approbation of truth and the law of God, and the delight which naturally arises from it, there is no virtue.

It is only what belongs to man’s moral nature. It arises naturally from the constitution of the mind. Mind is constitutionally capable of seeing the beauty of virtue. And so far from their being any virtue in it, it is in fact only a clearer proof of the strength of their depravity, that when they know the right, and see its excellence, they do not obey it. It is not then that impenitent sinners have in them something that is holy. But their wickedness is herein seen to be so much the greater. For the wickedness of sin is in proportion to the light that is enjoyed. And when we find that men may not only see the excellence of the law of God, but even strongly approve of it and take delight in it, and yet not obey it, it shows how desperately wicked they are, and makes sin appear exceeding sinful.

7. It is a common use of language for persons to say, "I would do so and so, but cannot," when they only mean to be understood as desiring it, but not as actually choosing to do it. And so to say, "I could not do so," when they only mean that they would not do it, and, they could if they would.

Not long since, I asked a minister to preach for me next Sabbath. He answered, "I can’t." I found out afterwards that he could if he would. I asked a merchant to take a certain price for a piece of goods. He said, "I can’t do it." What did he mean? That he had not power to accept of such a price? Not at all. He could if he would, but he did not choose to do it. You will see the bearing of these remarks, when I come to read the chapter. I proceed, now,

IV. To give several rules of interpretation, that are applicable to the interpretation not only of the Bible, but of all written instruments, and to all evidence whatever.

There are certain rules of evidence, which all men are bound to apply, in ascertaining the meaning of instruments and the testimony of witnesses, and of all writings.

1. We are always to put that construction on language which is required by the nature of the subject.

We are bound always to understand a person's language as it is applicable to the subject of discourse. Much of the language of common life may be tortured into anything, if you lose sight of the subject, and take the liberty to interpret it without reference to what they are speaking of. How much injury has been done, by interpreting separate passages and single expressions in the scriptures, in violation of this principle. It is chiefly by overlooking this simple rule, that the scriptures have been tortured into the support of errors and contradictions innumerable and absurd beyond all calculation. This rule is applicable to all statements. Courts of justice never would allow such perversions as have been committed upon the Bible.

2. If a person's language will admit, we are bound always to construe it so as to make him consistent with himself.

Unless you observe this rule, you can scarcely converse five minutes with any individual on any subject and not make him contradict himself. If you do not hold to this rule, how can one man ever communicate his ideas so that another man will understand him? How can a witness ever make known the facts to the jury, if his language is to be tortured at pleasure, without the restraints of this rule?

3. In interpreting a person's language, we are always to keep in view the point to which he is speaking.

We are to understand the scope of his argument, the object he has in view, and the point to which he is speaking. Otherwise we shall of course not understand his language. Suppose I were to take up a book, any book, and not keep my eye on the object the writer had in view in making it, and the point to which he is aiming, I never can understand that book. It is easy to see how endless errors have grown out of a practice of interpreting the scriptures in disregard of the first principles of interpretation.

4. When you understand the point to which a person is speaking, you are to understand him as speaking to that point; and not to put a construction on his language unconnected with his object, or inconsistent with it.

By losing sight of this rule, you may make nonsense of everything. You are bound always to interpret language in the light of the subject to which it is applied, or about which it is spoken.

V. Having laid down these rules and principles I proceed in the light of them to give my own view of the meaning of the passage, with the reasons for it. But first I will make a remark or two.

1st. REMARK. Whether the apostle was speaking of himself in this passage, or whether he is supposing a case, is not material to the right interpretation of the language.

It is supposed by many, that because he speaks in the first person, he is to be understood as referring to himself. But it is a common practice, when we are discussing general principles, or arguing a point, to suppose a case by way of illustration, or to establish a point. And it is very natural to state it in the first person, without at all intending to be understood, and in fact without ever being understood, as declaring an actual occurrence, or an experience of our own. The

apostle Paul was here pursuing a close train of argument, and he introduces this simply by way of illustration. And it is no way material whether it is his own actual experience, or a case supposed.

If he is speaking of himself, or if he is speaking of another person, or if he is supposing a case, he does it with a design to show a general principle of conduct, and that all persons under like circumstances would do the same. Whether he is speaking of a Christian, or of an impenitent sinner, he lays down a general principle.

The apostle James, in the 3d chapter, speaks in the first person; even in administering reproof. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all."

"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."

The apostle Paul often says "I," and uses the first person, when discussing and illustrating general principles: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any:" And again, "Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." So also, "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." In lst Corinthians iv. 6. he explains exactly how he uses illustrations, "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself, and to Apollos, for your sakes: that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."

2nd. REMARK. Much of the language which the apostle uses here, is applicable to the case of a backslider, who has lost all but the form of religion. He has left his first love, and has in fact fallen under the influence of legal motives, of hope and fear, just like an impenitent sinner. If there be such a character as a real backslider, who has been a real convert, he is then actuated by the same motives as the sinner, and the same language may be equally applicable to both. And therefore the fact that some of the language before us is applicable to a Christian who has become a backslider, does not prove at all that the experience here described is Christian experience, but only that a backslider and a sinner are in many respects alike. I do not hesitate to say this much, at least; that no one who was conscious that he was actuated by love to God could ever have thought of applying this chapter to himself. If anyone is not in the exercise of love to God, this describes his character; and whether he is backslider or sinner, it is all the same thing.

3rd. REMARK. Some of the expressions here used by the apostle are supposed to describe the case of a believer who is not a habitual backslider, but who is overcome by temptation and passion for a time, and speaks of himself as if he were all wrong. A man is tempted, we are told, when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed. And in that state, no doubt, he might find expressions here that would describe his own experience, while under such influence. But that proves nothing in regard to the design of the passage, for while he is in this state, he is so far under a certain influence, and the impenitent sinner is all the time under just such influence. The same language, therefore, may be applicable to both, without inconsistency.

But although some expressions may bear this plausible construction, yet a view of the whole passage makes it evident that it cannot be a delineation of Christian experience. My own opinion therefore is, that the apostle designed here to represent the experience of a sinner, not careless, but strongly convicted and yet not converted, The reasons are these:

1. Because the apostle is here manifestly describing the habitual character of some one; and this one who is wholly under the dominion of the flesh. It is not as a whole a description of one who, under the power of present temptation, is acting inconsistently with his general character, but his general character is so. It is one who uniformly falls into sin, notwithstanding his approval of the law.

2. It would have been entirely irrelevant to his purpose, to state the experience of a Christian as an illustration of his argument. That was not what was needed. He was laboring to vindicate the law of God, in its influence on a carnal mind. In a previous chapter he had stated the fact, that justification was only by faith, and not by works of law. In this seventh chapter, he maintains not only that justification is by faith, but also that sanctification is only by faith. "Know ye not brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." What is the use of all this? Why, this, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." While you were under the law you were bound to obey the law, and hold to the terms of the law for justification. But now being made free from the law, as a rule of judgment, you are no longer influenced by legal considerations, of hope and fear, for Christ to whom you are married, has set aside the penalty, that by faith ye might be justified before God.

"For when we were in the flesh," that is, in an unconverted state, "the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death: But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Here he is stating the real condition of a Christian, that he serves in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. He had found that the fruit of the law was only death, and by the gospel he had been brought into true subjection to Christ. What is the objection to this? "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The law was enacted that people might live by it, if they would perfectly obey it; but when we were in the flesh, we found it unto death. "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Now he brings up the objection again. How can anything that is good be made death unto you?---"Was, then, that which is good made death unto me?---God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might be exceedingly sinful." And he vindicates the law, by showing that it is not the fault of the law, but the fault of sin, and that this very result shows at once the excellence of the law and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Sin must be a horrible thing, if it can work such a perversion, as to take the good law of God and make it the means of death.

"For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Here is the hinge, on which the whole questions turns. Now mark; the apostle is here vindicating the law against the objection, that if the law is the means of death to sinners, it cannot be good. Against this objection, he goes on to show, that all its action on the mind of the sinner proves it to be good. Keeping his eye on this point, he argues, that the law is good, and that the evil comes from the motions of sin in our members. Now he comes to that part which is supposed to delineate a Christian experience, and which is the subject of controversy. He begins by saying, "the law is spiritual but I am carnal." This word carnal he uses once and only once, in reference to Christians, and then it was in reference to persons who were in a very low state in religion. "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men." These Christians had backslidden, and acted as if they were not converted persons, but were carnal. The term itself is generally used to signify the worst of sinners. Paul here defines it so; "carnal, sold under sin." Could that be said of Paul himself, at the time he wrote this epistle? Was that his own experience? Was he sold under sin?" Was that true of the great apostle? No, but he was vindicating the law, and he uses an illustration, by supposing a case. He goes on, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I."

Here you see the application of the principles I have laid down. In the interpretation of this word "would," we are not to understand it of the choice or will, but only a desire. Otherwise the apostle contradicts a plain matter of fact, which everybody knows to be true, that the will governs the conduct. Professor Stuart has very properly rendered the word desire; what I desire, I do not, but what I disapprove, that I do. Then comes the conclusion, "If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good." If I do that which I disapprove, if I disapprove of my own conduct, if I condemn myself, I thereby bear testimony that the law is good. Now, keep your eye on the object the apostle has in view, and read the next verse, "Now then it is no more that I do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Here he, as it were, divides himself against himself, or speaks of himself as possessing two natures, or, as some of the heathen philosophers taught, as having two souls, one which approves the good and another which loves and chooses evil. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Here "to will" means to approve, for if men really will to do a thing, they do it. This everybody knows. Where the language will admit, we are bound to interpret it so as to make it consistent with known facts. If you understand "to will" literally, you involve the apostle in the absurdity of saying that he willed what he did not do, and so acted contrary to his own will, which contradicts a notorious fact. The meaning must be desire. Then it coincides with the experience of every convicted sinner. He knows what he ought to do, and he strongly approves it, but he is not ready to do it. Suppose I were to call on you to do some act. Suppose, for instance, I were to call on those of you who are impenitent, to come forward and take that seat, that we might see who you are, and pray for you, and should show you your sins and that it is your duty to submit to God, some of you would exclaim, "I know it is my duty, and I greatly desire to do it, but I cannot." What do you mean by it? Why, simply, that on the whole, the balance of your will is on the other side.

In the 20th verse he repeats what he had said before, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Is that the habitual character and experience of a Christian? I admit that a Christian may fall so low that this language may apply to him; but if this is his general

character, how does it differ from that of an impenitent sinner? If this is the habitual character of a Christian, there is not a word of truth in the scripture representations, that the saints are those who really obey God; for here is one called a Christian of whom it is said expressly that he never does obey.

"I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present within me." Here he speaks of the action of the carnal propensities, as being so constant and so prevalent that he calls it a "law." "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Here is the great stumbling-block. Can it be said of an impenitent sinner that he "delights" in the law of God? I answer, yes. I know the expression is a strong one, but the apostle was using strong language all along, on both sides. It is no stronger language than the prophet Isaiah uses in chapter lviii. He was describing as wicked and rebellious a generation as ever lived. He says, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Yet he goes on to say of this very people, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they TAKE DELIGHT in approaching to God." Here is one instance of impenitent sinners manifestly delighting in approaching to God. So in Ezekiel xxxiii. 32. "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." The prophet had been telling how wicked they were. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Here were impenitent sinners, plainly enough, yet they loved to hear the eloquent prophet. How often do ungodly sinners delight in eloquent preaching or powerful reasoning, by some able minister! It is to them an intellectual feast. And sometimes they are so pleased with it, as really to think they love the word of God. This is consistent with entire depravity of heart and enmity against the true character of God. Nay, it sets their depravity in a stronger light, because they know and approve the right, and yet do the wrong.

So, notwithstanding this delight in the law, he says, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Here the words, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," are plainly a parenthesis, and a brake in upon the train of thought. Then he sums up the whole matter, "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

It is as if he had said, My better self, my unbiased judgment, my conscience, approves the law of God; but the law in my members, my passions, have such a control over me that I still disobey. Remember, the apostle was describing the habitual character of one who was wholly under the dominion of sin. It was irrelevant to his purpose to adduce the experience of a Christian. He was vindicating the law, and therefore it was necessary for him to take the case of one who was under the law. If it is Christian experience, he was reasoning against himself, for if it is Christian experience, this would prove, not only that the law is inefficacious for the subduing of passion and the sanctification of men, but that the gospel also is inefficacious. Christians are under grace, and it is irrelevant, in vindicating the law, to adduce the experience of those who are not under the law, but under grace.

Another conclusive reason is, that he here actually states the case of a believer, as entirely different. In verses 4 and 6, he speaks of those who are not under law and not in the flesh, that is, not carnal, but delivered from the law, and actually serving, or obeying God, in spirit.

Then, in the beginning of the 8th chapter, he goes on to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He had alluded to this in the parenthesis above, "I thank God," &c. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Who is this, of whom he is now speaking? If the person in the last chapter was one who had a Christian experience, whose experience is this? Here is something entirely different. The other was wholly under the power of sin, and under the law, and while he knew his duty, never did it. Here we find one for whom what the law could not do, through the power of passion, the gospel has done, so that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, or what the law requires is obeyed. "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: because the carnal mind is enmity to God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." There it is. Those whom he had described in the 7th chapter, as being carnal, cannot please God. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." But here is an individual whose body is dead. Before, the body had the control, and dragged him away from duty and from salvation; but now the power of passion is subdued.

Now I will give you the sum of the whole matter:

(1.) The strength of the apostle’s language cannot decide this question, for he uses strong language on both sides. If it is objected that the individual he is describing is said to "delight in the law," he is also said to be "carnal, sold under sin." When a writer uses strong language, it must be so understood as not to make it irrelevant or inconsistent.

(2.) Whether he spoke of himself, or of some other person, or merely supposed a case by way of illustration, is wholly immaterial to the question.

(3.) It is plain that the point he wished to illustrate was the vindication of the law of God, as to its influence on a carnal mind.

(4.) The point required by way of illustration, the case of a convicted sinner, who saw the excellence of the law, but in whom the passions had the ascendency.

(5.) If this is spoken of Christian experience, it is not only irrelevant, but proves the reverse of what he intended. He intended to show that the law, though good, could not break the power of passion. But if this is Christian experience, then it proves that the gospel, instead of the law, cannot subdue passion and sanctify men.

(6.) The contrast between the state described in the 7th chapter, and that described in the 8th chapter, proves that the experience of the former was not that of a Christian.

REMARKS.

I. Those who find their own experience written in the 7th chapter of Romans, are not converted persons. If that is their habitual character, they are not regenerated; they are under conviction, but not Christians.

II. You see the great importance of using the law in dealing with sinners, to make them prize the gospel, to lead them to justify God and condemn themselves. Sinners are never made truly to repent but as they are convicted by the law.

III. At the same time, you see the entire insufficiency of the law to convert men. The case of the devil illustrates the highest efficacy of the law, in this respect.

IV. You see the danger of mistaking mere desires, for piety. Desire, that does not result in right choice, has nothing good in it. The devil may have such desires. The wickedest men on earth may desire religion, and no doubt often do desire it, when they see that it is necessary to their salvation, or to control their passions.

V. Christ and the gospel present the only motives that can sanctify the mind. The law only convicts and condemns.

VI. Those who are truly converted and brought into the liberty of the gospel, do find deliverance from the bondage of their own corruptions.

They do find the power of the body over the mind broken. They may have conflicts and trials, many and severe; but as an habitual thing, they are delivered from the thraldom of passion, and get the victory over sin, and find it easy to serve God. His commandments are not grievous to them. His yoke is easy, and His burden light.

VII. The true convert finds peace with God. He feels that he has it. He enjoys it. He has a sense of pardoned sin, and of victory over corruption.

VIII. You see, from this subject, the true position of a vast many church members. They are all the while struggling under the law. They approve of the law, both in its precept and its penalty, they feel condemned, and desire relief. But still they are unhappy. They have no spirit of prayer, no communion with God, no evidence of adoption. They only refer to the 7th of Romans as their evidence. Such a one will say, "There is my experience exactly." Let me tell you, that if this is your experience, you are yet in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. You feel that you are in the bonds of guilt, and you are overcome by iniquity, and surely you know that it is bitter as gall. Now, don’t cheat your soul by supposing that with such an experience as this, you can go and sit down by the side of the apostle Paul. You are yet carnal, sold under sin, and unless you embrace the gospel, you will be damned.

03.11. LEGAL RELIGION

LEGAL RELIGION.

TEXT:--"Who is on the Lord’s side?"-- Exo 32:26.

Last Friday evening, you will remember, that in discoursing from this text, I mentioned three classes of professors of religion; those who truly love God and man, those who are actuated solely by selfishness or at most by self-love in their religious duties, and those who are actuated only by a regard for public opinion. I also mentioned several characteristics of the first class, by which they may be known. This evening I intend to mention several characteristics of the second class,

THOSE PROFESSORS WHO ARE ACTUATED BY SELF-LOVE OR BY SELFISHNESS.

I design to show how their leading or main design in religion develops itself in their conduct. The conduct of men invariably shows what is their true and main design. A man’s character is as his supreme object is. And if you can learn by his conduct what that leading object is, then you can know with certainty what his character is. And I suppose this may generally be known by us with great certainty, if we would candidly and thoroughly observe their conduct.

These three classes of professors agree in many things, and it would be impossible to discriminate between them by an observation of these things only. But there are certain things in which they differ, and by close observation the difference will be seen in their conduct, from which we infer a difference in their character. And those points in which they differ belong to the very fundamentals of religion.

I will now proceed to mention some of the characteristics of the second class; those who are actuated in religion by self-love, or by selfishness, in whom hope and fear are the main springs of all they do in religion. And the things that I shall mention are such as, when they are seen, make it evident that the individual is actuated by a supreme regard to his own good, and that the fear of evil, or the hope of advantage to himself; is the foundation of all his conduct.

1. They make religion a subordinate concern.

They show by their conduct that they do not regard religion as the principal business of life, but as subordinate to other things. They consider religion as something that ought to come in by the by, as something that ought to come in and find a place among other things, as a sort of Sabbath-day business, or something to be confined to the closet and the hour of family prayer and the Sabbath, and not as the grand business of life. They make a distinction between religious duty and business, and consider them as entirely separate concerns. Whereas, if they had right views of the matter, they would consider religion as the only business of life, and nothing else either lawful or worth pursuing, any further than as it promotes or subserves religion. If they had the right feeling, religion would characterize all that they do, and it would be manifest that every thing they do is an act of obedience to God, or an act of irreligion.

2. Their religious duties are performed as a task, and are not the result of the constraining love of God that burns within them.

Such a one does not delight in the exercise of religious affections, and as to communion with God, he knows nothing of it. He performs prayer as a task. He betakes himself to religious duties as sick persons take medicine, not because they love it, but because they hope to derive some benefit from it.

And here let me ask those who are present tonight, Do you enjoy religious exercises, or do you perform them because you hope to receive benefit by them? Be honest, now, and answer this question, just according to the truth, and see where you stand.

3. They manifestly possess a legal spirit, and not a gospel spirit.

They do rather what they are obliged to do, in religion, and not what they love to do. They have an eye to the commands of God, and yield obedience to His requirements, in performing religious duties, but do not engage in those things because they love them. They are always ready to inquire, in regard to duty, not so much how they can do good, as how they can be saved. There is just the difference between them, that there is between a convinced sinner and a true convert. The convinced sinner asks, "What must I do to be saved?" The true convert asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" So this class of professors are constantly asking, "What must I do to get to heaven?" and not "What can I do to get other people there?" The principal object of such a professor of religion is not to save the world, but to save himself.

4. They are actuated by fear much more than by hope.

They perform their religious duties chiefly because they dare not omit them. They go to the communion, not because they love to meet Christ, or because they love to commune with their brethren, but because they dare not stay away. They fear the censures of the church, or they are afraid they shall be damned if they neglect it. They perform their closet duties not because they enjoy communion with God, but because they dare not neglect them. They have the spirit of slaves, and go about the service of God, as slaves go about the service of their master, feeling that they are obliged to do about so much, or be beaten with many stripes. So these professors feel as if they were obliged to have about so much religion, and perform about so many religious duties, or be lashed by conscience and lose their hopes. And therefore they go through, painfully and laboriously enough, with about so many religious duties in a year, and that they call religion !

5. Their religion is not only produced by the fear of disgrace or the fear of hell, but it is mostly of a negative character.

They satisfy themselves, mostly, with doing nothing that is very bad. Having no spiritual views, they regard the law of God chiefly as a system of prohibitions, just to guard men from certain sins, and not as a system of benevolence fulfilled by love. And so, if they are moral in their conduct, and tolerably serious and decent in their general deportment, and perform the required amount of religious exercises, this satisfies them. Their conscience harasses them, not so much about sins of omission as sins of commission. They make a distinction between neglecting to do what God positively requires, and doing what He positively forbids. The most you can say of them is, that they are not very bad. They seem to think little or nothing of being useful to the cause of Christ, so

long as they cannot be convicted of any positive transgression.

6. This class of persons are more or less strict in religious duties, according to the light they have and the sharpness with which conscience pursues them.

Where they have enlightened minds and tender consciences, you often find them the most rigid of all professors. They tithe even to mint and annise. They are stiff even to moroseness. They are perfect pharisees, and carry everything to the greatest extremes, so far as outward strictness is concerned.

7. They are more or less miserable in proportion to the tenderness of their conscience.

With all their strictness, they cannot but be sensible that they are great sinners after all; and having no just sense of gospel justification, this leaves them very unhappy. And the more enlightened and tender their conscience, the more they are unhappy. Notwithstanding their strictness, they feel that they come short of their duty, and not having any gospel faith, nor any of that holy anointing of the Holy Spirit that brings peace to the soul, they are unsatisfied and uneasy and miserable.

Perhaps many of you have seen such persons. Perhaps some of you are such, and you never knew what it was to feel justified before God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, and you know nothing what it is to feel that Jesus Christ has accepted and owned you as His. You never felt in your minds what that is which is spoken of in this text, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Does such language bring home any warm and practical idea to you, that it is a reality because you experience it in your soul? Or do you, after all, still feel condemned and guilty, and have no sense of pardoned sin and no experimental peace with God or confidence in Jesus Christ?

9. This class of persons are encouraged and cheered by reading the accounts of ancient saints who fell into great sins.

They feel wonderfully instructed and edified when they hear the sins of God’s people set forth in a strong light.---Then they are comforted and their hopes are wonderfully strengthened. Instead of feeling humbled and distressed, and feeling that such conduct is so contrary to all religion that they could hardly believe they were saints if it had not been found in the Bible, and that they could not believe at all that persons who should do such things under the light of the Christian dispensation, could be saints, they feel gratified and strengthened and their hopes confirmed by all these things. I once knew a man, an elder too, brought before the session of a church for the crime of adultery, and he actually excused himself by this plea. He did not know, he said, why he should be expected to be better than David, the man after God’s own heart.

10. They are always much better pleased, by how much the lower the standard of piety is held out from the pulpit.

If the minister adopts a low standard, and is ready charitably to hope that almost everybody is a Christian, they are pleased, and compliment him for his expansive charity, and praise him as such an excellent man, so charitable, &c. It is easy to see why this class of persons are pleased with such an exhibition of Christianity. It subserves their main design. It helps them to maintain what they call a "comfortable hope," notwithstanding they do so little for God. Right over against this, you will see, is the conduct of the man whose main design is to rid the world of SIN. He wants all

men to be holy, and therefore he wants to have the true standard of holiness held up. He wants all men to be saved, but he knows they cannot be saved unless they are truly holy. And he would as soon think of Satan's going to heaven as of getting a man there by frittering away the Bible standard of holiness by "charity."

11. They are fond of having comfortable doctrines preached.

Such persons are apt to be fond of having the doctrine of saints' perseverance much dwelt on, and the doctrine of election. Often, they want nothing else but what they call the doctrines of grace. And if they can be preached in such an abstract way, as to afford them comfort without galling their consciences too much, then they are fed.

12. They love to have their minister preach sermons to feed Christians.

Their main object is not to save sinners, but to be saved themselves, and therefore they always choose a minister, not for his ability in preaching for the conversion of sinners, but for his talents in feeding the church with mere abstractions.

13. They lay great stress on having a comfortable hope.

You will hear them talking very solemnly about the importance of having a comfortable hope. If they can only enjoy their minds, they show very little solicitude whether anybody else around them is saved or not. If they can have only their fears silenced and their hopes cherished, they have religion enough to satisfy them.

Right over against this, you will find the true friends of God and man are thinking mainly of something else.---They are trying to pull sinners out of the fire, and do not spend their energy in sustaining a comfortable hope for themselves.

In their prayers, you will find the class I am now speaking of, are praying mainly that their evidences may be brightened, and that they may feel assured that they are going to heaven, and know that they are accepted of God. Their great object is to secure their hopes, and so they pray that their evidences may be brightened, instead of praying that their faith may be strengthened, and their souls full of the Holy Ghost to pull sinners out of the fire.

14. They live very much on their own frames of mind.

They lay great stress on the particular emotions which they have from time to time. If at any time they have some high-wrought feelings of a religious nature, they dwell on them, and make this evidence last a great while. One such season of excitement will prop up their hopes as long as they can distinctly call it up to remembrance. No matter if they are not doing any thing now, and are conscious they have no exercises of love to God now, they recollect the time when they had such and such feelings, and that answers to keep alive their hopes. If there has been a revival, and they mingled in its scenes until their imagination has been wrought up so that they could weep and pray and exhort with feeling, during the revival, that will last them a long time, and they will have a comfortable hope for years on the strength of it. Although, after the revival is over, they do nothing to promote religion, and their hearts are as hard as adamant, they have a very comfortable hope all the while, patiently waiting for a revival to come and give them another move.

Are any of you who are here now, propping yourselves up by your past frames and feelings, leaning on evidences, not from what you are now doing but something that you felt last year, or years ago? Let me tell you, that if you are thus living on past experience, you will find it will fail when you come to need it.

15. They pray almost exclusively for themselves.

If you could listen at the door of their closets, you would hear eight-tenths of all their petitions going up for themselves. It shows how they value their own salvation in comparison with the salvation of others. It is as eight to two. And if they pray in meetings, very often it will be just the same, and you would not suppose, from their prayers, that they knew there was a sinner on earth traveling the road to hell. They pray for themselves just as they do in the closet, only they couple the rest of the church with them so as to say we.

16. Such persons pray to be fitted for death much more than they pray to befitted to live a useful life.

They are more anxious to be prepared to die, than to be prepared to save sinners around them. If they ask for the Spirit of God, they want it to prepare them to die, more than as the Psalmist prayed, "Then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." How many of you are of this character? How many are there here, whose prayers are described exactly? An individual who made it his great absorbing object to do good and save sinners, would not be apt to think so much about when or where or how he shall die, as how he may do the most good while he lives. And as to his death, he leaves that all to God, and he is not afraid to heave it all with Him. He has long ago given his soul up to Him, and now the great question with him is not, When shall I die? but, How shall I live so as to honor God?

17. They are more afraid of punishment than they are of sin.

Precisely over against this, you will find the true friends of God and man more afraid of sin than of punishment.---It is not the question with them, "If I do this, shall I be punished?" or "If I do this, will God forgive me?" But the question is that which Joseph asked, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" There was the spirit of a child of God, afraid of sin more than punishment, and so much afraid of sin that he had no thought of punishment.

This class of persons I am speaking of, often indulge in sin if they can persuade themselves that God will forgive them, or when they think they can repent of it afterwards. They often reason in this way: "Such a minister does this," or "Such an elder or professor does this, and why may not I do the same?" There was a member of this church had a class in the Sabbath school; but seeing that others did not take a class, the individual reasoned in this way: "Why should I do it any more than they?" and so gave up the class. There is the spirit of this whole description of professors---"Others get along without doing such and such things, and why should I trouble myself to be better than they?" It is not sin that they fear, but punishment. They sin, THEY KNOW, but they hope to escape the punishment. Who cannot see that this is contrary to the spirit of the true friends of God, whose absorbing object it is to get sin, and all sin, out of the world? Such persons are not half so much afraid of hell as they are of committing sin.

18. They feel and manifest greater anxiety about being saved themselves, than if all the world was going to hell.

Such a professor, if his hope begins to fail, wants to have everybody engaged, to pray for him, and make a great ado; and move all the church, when he never thinks of doing anything for the sinners around him, who are certainly on the road to hell. He shows that his mind is absorbed in himself, and that his main design is not to see how much good he can do.

19. They are more fond of receiving good than of doing good.

You may know such persons have not the spirit of the gospel. They have never entered into the spirit of Jesus Christ, when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." A person actuated by true love to God and man, enjoys what he does to benefit others, far more than they do who receive good at his hand. He is really benevolent, and it is a gratification to him to show kindness, because his heart is set upon it, and when he can do it, a holy joy is shed over his mind, and he enjoys it exquisitely.

The other class are more eager to receive than to impart. They want to receive instruction more than to impart it. They want to receive comfort, but are never ready to deny themselves to give the comforts of the gospel to others. How directly contrary this is to the diffusive spirit of the gospel, any one can see at a glance. That spirit finds its supreme happiness in communicating happiness to others. But this class of persons want to lay everybody under contribution to impart happiness to themselves, instead of laying themselves out to bless others.

Who does not know these two classes of professors?---One always seeking out objects to do good to, the other always trying to gain good themselves. One anxious to communicate, the other to receive. One to do good, the other to get good. These two classes of characters are just as opposite as light and darkness.

20. If this class of professors are led to pray for the conversion and salvation of others, you may observe that they are actuated by the same kind of considerations as they are when they pray for themselves.

They are chiefly afraid of hell themselves, and when they are strongly convicted, they are afraid others will go there too. They are seeking happiness for themselves, and when self is not in the way, they seek the same for others. They pray for sinners, not because they have such a sense of the evil of sin which sinners are committing, as because they have such a sense of the terrors of hell to which sinners are going. It is not because sinners dishonor God that they want them converted, but because they are in danger. Their great object in praying is to secure the safety of those they pray for, as it is their great object in religion to secure their own safety. They pity themselves and they pity others. If there was no danger, they would have no motive to pray either for themselves or others.

The true friends of God and man feel compassion for sinners too, but they feel much more for the honor of God. They are more distressed to see God abused and dishonored than to see sinners go to hell. And if God must be forever dishonored or men go to hell---just as certainly as they love God supremely, they will decide that sinners shall sink to endless torments sooner than God fail of His due honor. And they manifest their true feelings in their prayers. You hear them praying for

sinners as rebels against God, as guilty criminals deserving of eternal wrath, as the enemies of God and the universe; and while they are full of compassion for sinners, they feel also the enkindlings of holy indignation against them for their conduct towards the blessed God.

21. This class of professors I am speaking of are very apt to be distressed with doubts.

They are apt to talk a great deal about their doubts. This makes up a great part of their history, the detail of their doubts. The great thing with them being the enjoyment of a comfortable hope, as soon as they begin to doubt, it is all over with them, and so they make a great ado with their doubts, and then they are not prepared to do any thing for religion because they have these doubts. The true friends of God and man, being engaged in doing good, if the devil at any time suggests that they are going to hell, the first answer they think of is, "What if I should? only let me pull sinners out of the fire while I can." I suppose a real Christian may have doubts. But they are much less apt to have them, by how much the more they are fully bent on saving sinners. It will be very hard work for Satan to get a church who are fully engaged in the work to be much troubled with doubts. Their attention is not on that, but on something else and he cannot get the advantage over them.

22. They manifest great uneasiness at the increasing calls for self-denial to do good.

Said an individual, "What will this Temperance Reformation come to? At first they only went against ardent spirit, and I gave up that, and did very well without it. Then they called on us to give up wine, and now they are calling on us to give up our tea and coffee and tobacco, and where will it end?" This class of persons are in constant distress at being called on to give up so much. The good that is to be done does not enter into their thoughts, because they are all the while dwelling on what they have to give up.

It is easily seen why it is that these aggressive movements on the kingdom of darkness distress such persons. Their object never was to search out and banish from this world everything that is dishonorable to God or injurious to man. They never entered upon religion with the determination to clear out every such thing from the earth, as far as they had the power, and as fast as they were convinced that it was injurious to themselves or others, in soul or body. And therefore they are distressed by the movements of those who are truly engaged to search out and clear away every evil.

These persons are annoyed by the continually increasing calls to give for missions, Bibles, tracts, and the like. The time was, when if a rich man gave $25 a year to such things, he was thought to be doing pretty well. But now there are so many calls for subscriptions and contributions, that they are in torment all the time. "I don’t like these contributions, I am opposed to having contributions taken up in the congregation, I think they do hurt." They feel specially sore at these agents. "I don’t know about these beggars that are going about." They are obliged to keep giving all the time, in order to keep up their character, or to have any hope, but they are much distressed about it, and don’t know what the world is coming to, things are in such a strange pass.

As you raise the general standard of living in the church, this class of professors have to come up too, lest their hopes should be shaken. And the common standard of professors has been raised already so much, that I have no doubt it costs this class of persons now four times as much of what they call religion, to keep up a hope, as it did twenty years ago. And what will become of

them, if there are to be so many new movements and new measures, and so much done to save the world? The Lord help them, for they are in great distress!

23. When they are called upon to exercise self-denial for the sake of doing good, instead of being a pleasant thing, it gives them unmingled pain.

Such a one does not know any thing about enjoying self-denial. He cannot understand how self-denial is pleasant, or how anybody can take pleasure in it, or have joy of heart in denying himself for the sake of doing good to others. That he thinks is a height in religion which he has not attained to. Yet the true friend of God and man, whose heart is fully set to do good, never enjoys any money he expends so well as that which he gives to promote Christ's kingdom. If he is really pious, he knows that is the best disposition he can make of his money. Nay, he is sorry to be obliged to use money for anything else, when there are so many opportunities to do good with it.

I want you who are here to look at this. It is easy to see that if an individual has his heart very much set upon any thing, all the money he can save for that object is most pleasing to him, and the more he can save from other objects for this that his heart is set on, the better he is pleased. If an individual finds it hard for him to give money for religious objects, it is easy to see that his heart is not set on it. If it were, he would have given his money with joy. What would you think of a man who should set himself against giving money for the advancement of religion, and get up an excitement in the church about the missionary cause, and having so many calls for money, when he had never given five dollars? It would be absolute demonstration that his heart was not truly set on the cause of Christ. If it was, he would give his money for it, as free as water. And the more he could spare for it, the better he would be pleased.

24. This class of persons are not forward in promoting revivals.

This is not their great object. They always have to be dragged into the work. When a revival has begun, and gone on, and the excitement is great, then they come in and appear to be engaged in it. But you never see them taking the lead, or striking out ahead of the rest, and saying to the rest of the brethren, Come on, and let us do something for the Lord.

25. As a matter of fact, they do not convert sinners to God.

They may be instrumental of good, in various ways, and so may Satan be instrumental of good. But as a general thing, they do not pull sinners out of the fire. And the reason is, that this is not their great object. How is it with you? Do you absolutely succeed in converting sinners ? Is there any one who will look to you as the instrument of his conversion? If you were truly engaged for this, you could not rest satisfied without doing it, and you would go about it so much in earnest, and with such agonizing prayer that you would do it.

26. They do not manifest much distress when they behold sin.

They do not rebuke it. They love to mingle in scenes where sin is committed. They love to be where they can hear vain conversation, and even to join in it. They love worldly company and worldly books. Their spirit is worldly. Instead of hating even the garment spotted with the flesh, they love to hang around the confines of sin, as if they had complacency in it.

27. They take but very little interest in published accounts or revivals, missions, &c.

If any of the missions are tried severely, they neither know nor feel it. If missions prosper, they never know it, they take no interest in it. Very likely they do not take any religious paper whatever. Or if they do, when they sit down to read it, if they come to a revival, they pass it over, to read the secular news, or the controversy, or something else. The other class, the true friends of God and man, on the contrary, love to learn the progress of revivals. They love to read a religious paper, and when they take it up, the first thing they do is to run their eye over it to find where there are revivals, and there they feast their souls and give glory to God. And so with missions, their heart goes forth with the missionaries, and when they hear that the Lord has poured forth His Spirit on a mission, they feel a glow of holy joy thrill through them.

28. They do not aim at any thing higher than a legal, painful, negative religion.

The love of Christ does not constrain them to a constant warfare against sin, and a constant watch to do all the good in their power. But what they do is done only because they think they must. And they maintain a kind of piety that is formal, heartless, worthless.

29. They come reluctantly into all the special movements of the church for doing good.

If a protracted meeting is proposed, you will generally find this class of persons hanging back, and making objections, and raising difficulties as long as they can. If any other special effort is proposed, they come reluctantly, and prefer the good old way. They feel sore at being obliged to add so much every year to their religion in order to maintain their hope.

30. They do not enjoy secret prayer.

They do not pray in their closets because they love to pray, but because they think it is their duty, and they dare not neglect it.

31. They do not enjoy the Bible

They do not read the Bible because it is sweet to their souls, sweeter than honey or the honey comb. They do not enjoy the reading, as a person enjoys the most exquisite delights. They read it because it is their duty to read it, and it would not do to profess to be a Christian and not read the Bible, but in fact they find it a dry book.

32. They do not enjoy prayer meetings.

Slight excuses keep them away. They never go unless they find it necessary for the sake of keeping up appearances, or to maintain their hope. And when they do go, instead of having their souls melted and fired with love, they are cold, listless, dull, and glad when it is over.

33. They are very much put to it to understand what is meant by disinterestedness.

To serve God because they love Him, and not for the sake of the reward, is what they do not understand.

34. Their thoughts are not anxiously fixed upon the question, When shall the world be converted to God?

Their hearts are not agonized with such thoughts as this, 0, how long shall wickedness prevail? 0, when shall this wretched world be rid of sin and death? 0, when shall men cease to sin against

God? They think much more of the question, When shall I die and go to heaven, and get rid of all my trials and cares?

But I find I am again obliged to omit the examination of the last class of professors till next Friday evening, when, with the leave of Providence, it will be attended to.

REMARKS.

1. I believe you will not think me extravagant, when I say that the religion I have described, appears to be the religion of a very large mass in the church.

To say the least, it is greatly to be feared that a majority of professing Christians are of this description. To say this is neither uncharitable nor censorious.

2. This religion is radically defective.

There is nothing of true Christianity in it. It differs as much from Christianity as much as the Pharisees differed from Christ---as much as gospel religion differs from legal religion.

Now, let me ask you, to which of these classes do you belong? Or are you in neither? It may be that because you are conscious you do not belong to the second class, you may think you belong to the first, when in fact you will find, when I come to describe the third class of professors, that is your true character.

How important it is that you know for a certainty what is your true character---whether you are actuated in religion by true love to God and man, or whether you are religious only out of regard to yourself. 0, what a solemn thought, if this church, of which I have been the pastor, have never come to an intelligent decision of the question, whether they are the true friends of God and man or not. Do settle it, beloved. Now is the time. Settle this, and then go to work for God.

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Chapter 59

03.12. LOVE THE WHOLE OF RELIGION

LOVE THE WHOLE OF RELIGION.

TEXT:--"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law".--- Rom 13:10

In speaking from these words, I design,

I. To make some remarks on the nature of love.

II. To show that love is the whole of religion.

III. Some things that are not essential to perfect love.

IV. Some things that are essential.

V. Some of the effects of perfect love.

I. I am to make some remarks on the nature of love.

1. The first remark I have to make is, that there are various forms under which love may exist.

The two principal forms, so far as religion is concerned, are benevolence and complacency. Benevolence is an affection of the mind, or an act of the will. It is willing good, or a desire to promote the happiness of its object. Complacency is esteem, or approbation of the character of its object. Benevolence should be exercised towards all beings, irrespective of their moral character. Complacency is due only to the good and holy.

2. Love may exist either as an affection or as an emotion.

When love is an affection, it is voluntary, or consists in the act of the will. When it is an emotion, it is involuntary. What we call feelings, or emotions, are involuntary. They are not directly dependent on the will, or controlled by a direct act of will. The virtue of love is mostly when it is in the form of an affection. The happiness of love is mostly when it is in the form of an emotion. If the affection of love be very strong, it produces a high degree of happiness, but the emotion of holy love is happiness itself.

I said that the emotion of love is involuntary. I do not mean that the will has nothing to do with it, but that it is not the result of a mere or direct act of the will. No man can exercise the emotion of love by merely willing it. And the emotion may often exist in spite of the will. Individuals often feel emotions rising in their minds, which they know to be improper, and try by direct effort of will to banish them from their minds; and finding that impossible, therefore conclude that they have no control of these emotions. But they may always be controlled by the will in an indirect way. The mind can bring up any class of emotions it chooses, by directing the attention sufficiently to the proper object. They will be certain to rise in proportion as the attention is fixed, provided the will is right in regard to the object of attention. So of those emotions which are improper or disagreeable; the mind may be rid of them, by turning the attention entirely away from the object, and not

suffering the thoughts to dwell on it.

3. Ordinarily, the emotions of love towards God are experienced when we exercise love towards Him in the form of affection.

But this is not always the case. We may exercise good will towards any object, and yet at times feel no sensible emotions of love. It is not certain that even the Lord Jesus Christ exercised love towards God, in the form of emotion, at all times. So far as our acquaintance with the nature of the mind goes, we know that a person may exercise affection, and be guided and be governed by it, constantly, in all his actions, without any felt emotion of love towards its object at the time. Thus a husband and father may be engaged in laboring for the benefit of his family, and his very life controlled by affection for them, while his thoughts are not so engaged upon them as to make him feel any sensible emotions of love to them at the time. The things about which he is engaged may take up his mind so much, that he has scarcely a thought of them, and so he may have no felt emotion towards them, and yet he is all the time guided and governed by affection for them. Observe, here, that I use the term, affection, in the sense of President Edwards, as explained by him in his celebrated Treatise on the Will. An affection in his treatise is an act of the will or a volition.

4. Love to our neighbor naturally implies the existence of love to God, and love to God naturally implies love to our neighbor.

The same is declared in the 8th verse, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that liveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Here it is taken for granted that love to our neighbor implies the existence of love to God, otherwise it could not be said that "he that liveth another hath fulfilled the law." The apostle James recognizes the same principle, when he says, "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well." Here love to our neighbor is spoken of as constituting obedience to the whole law. Benevolence, that is, good will to our neighbor, naturally implies love to God. It is love to the happiness of being. So the love of complacency towards holy beings naturally implies love to God, as a being of infinite holiness.

II. I am to show that love is the whole of religion.

In other words, all that is required of man by God consists in love, in various modifications and results. Love is the sum total of all.

1. The first proof I shall offer is, that the sentiment is taught in the text, and many other passages of scripture.

The scriptures fully teach, that love is the sum total of all the requirements, both of the law and gospel. Our Savior declares that the great command, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself, is the sum total of all the law and the prophets, or implies and includes all that the whole scriptures, the law and the gospel require.

2. God is love, and to love is to be like God, and to be perfect in love is to be perfect as God is perfect.

All God’s moral attributes consist in love, acting under certain circumstances and for certain ends. God’s justice in punishing the wicked, His anger at sin, and the like, are only exercises of His love to the general happiness of His kingdom. So it is in man. All that is good in man is some modification of love. Hatred to sin, is only love to virtue acting itself out in opposing whatever is opposed to virtue. So true faith implies and includes love, and faith which has no love in it, or that does not work by love, is no part of religion. The faith that belongs to religion is an affectionate confidence in God. There is a kind of faith in God, which has no love in it. The devil has that kind of faith. The convicted sinner has it. But there is no religion in it. Faith might rise even to the faith of miracles, and yet if there is no love in it, it amounts to nothing. The apostle Paul, in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Just so it is with repentance. The repentance that does not include love is not "repentance towards God." True repentance implies obedience to the law of love, and consequent opposition to sin.

III. I will mention some things that are not essential to perfect love.

1. The highest degree of emotion is not essential to perfect love.

It is manifest that the Lord Jesus Christ very seldom had the highest degree of emotion of love, and yet He always had perfect love. He generally manifested very little emotion, or excitement. Excitement is always proportioned to the strength of the emotions as it consists in them. The Savior seemed generally remarkably calm. Sometimes His indignation was strong, or His grief for the hardness of men’s hearts; and sometimes we read that He rejoiced in spirit. But He was commonly calm, and manifested no high degree of emotion. And it is plainly not essential to perfect love, that the emotion of love should exist in a high degree.

2. Perfect love does not exclude the idea of increase in love, or growth in grace.

I suppose the growth of the mind in knowledge, to all eternity, naturally implies growth in love to all eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His human nature, grew in stature, and in favor with God and man. Doubtless, as a child, He grew in knowledge, and as He grew in knowledge, He grew in love towards God, as well as in favor with God. His love was perfect when He was a child, but it was greater when He became a man. As a human being, He probably always continued to increase in love to God, as long as He lived. From the nature of mind, we see that it may be so with all the saints in glory, that their love will increase to all eternity, and yet it is always perfect love.

3. It is not essential to perfect love, that love should always be exercised towards all individuals alike.

We cannot think of all individuals at once. You cannot even think of every individual of your acquaintance at once. The degree of love towards an individual depends on the fact that the individual is present to the thoughts.

4. It is not essential to perfect love, that there should be the same degree of the spirit of prayer for every individual, or for the same individual at all times.

The spirit of prayer is not always essential to pure and perfect love. The saints in heaven have pure and perfect love for all beings, yet we know not that they have the spirit of prayer for any. You may love any individual with a very strong degree of love, and yet not have the spirit of prayer for that individual. That is, the Spirit of God may not lead you to pray for the salvation of that individual. You do not pray for the wicked in hell. The spirit of prayer depends on the influences of the Holy Ghost, leading the mind to pray for things agreeable to the will of God. You cannot pray in the Spirit, with the same degree of fervor and faith for all mankind. Jesus Christ said expressly, He did not pray for all mankind: "I pray not for the world." Here has been a great mistake in regard to the spirit of prayer. Some suppose that Christians have not done all their duty, if they have not prayed in faith for every individual, as long as there is a sinner on earth. Then Jesus Christ never did all His duty, for He never did this. God has never told us He will save all mankind, and never gave us any reason to believe He will do it. How then can we pray in faith for the salvation of all? What has that faith to rest on?

5. Perfect love is not inconsistent with those feelings of languor or constitutional debility, which are the necessary consequence of exhaustion or ill health.

We are so constituted, that excitement naturally and necessarily exhausts our powers. But love may be perfect, notwithstanding. Though one may feel more like lying down and sleeping, than he does like praying, yet his love may be perfect The Lord Jesus Christ often felt this weariness and exhaustion, when the spirit was still willing, but the flesh was weak.

IV. What is essential to perfect love.

I. It implies that there is nothing in the mind inconsistent with love.

No hatred, malice, wrath, envy, or any other malignant emotions that are inconsistent with pure and perfect love.

2. That there is nothing in the life inconsistent with love.

All the actions, words, and thoughts, continually under the entire and perfect control of love.

3. That the love to God is supreme.

The love to God is completely supreme, and so entirely above all other objects, that nothing else is loved in comparison with God.

4. That love to God is disinterested.

God is loved for what He is; not for His relation to us, but for the excellence of His character.

5. That love to our neighbor should be equal, i.e. that his interest and happiness should be regarded by us of equal value with our own, and he and his interests are to he treated accordingly by us.

V. I am to mention some of the effects of perfect love.

1. One effect of perfect love to God and man will certainly be, delight in self-denial for the sake of promoting the interests of God’s kingdom and the salvation of sinners.

See affectionate parents, how they delight in self-denial for the sake of promoting the happiness of their children. There is a father; he gives himself up to exhausting labor, day by day, and from year to year, through the whole of a long life, rising early, and eating the bread of carefulness continually, to promote the welfare of his family. And he counts all this self-denial and toil not a grief or a burden, but a delight, because of the love he bears to his family. See that mother; she wishes to educate her son at college, and now, instead of finding it painful it is a joy to her to sit up late and labor incessantly to help him. That is because she really loves her son. Such parents rejoice more in conferring gifts on their children, than they would in enjoying the same things themselves. What parent does not enjoy a piece of fruit more in giving it to his little child, than in eating it himself? The Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed more solid satisfaction in working out salvation for mankind, than any of His saints can never enjoy in receiving favors at His hands. He testified that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This was the joy set before Him for which he endured the cross and despised the shame. His love was so great for mankind, that it constrained Him to undertake this work, and sustained Him triumphantly through it. The apostle Paul did not count it a grief and a hardship to be hunted from place to place, imprisoned, scourged, stoned, and counted the offscouring of all things, for the sake of spreading the gospel and saving souls. It was his joy. The love of Christ so constrained him, he had such a desire to do good, that it was his highest delight to lay himself on that altar as a sacrifice to the cause. Other individuals have had the same mind with the apostle. They have been known who would be willing to live a thousand years, or to the end of time, if they could be employed in doing good, in promoting the kingdom of God, and saving the souls of men, and willing to forego even sleep and food to benefit objects they so greatly love.

2. It delivers the soul from the power of legal motives

Perfect love leads a person to obey God, not because he fears the wrath of God, or hopes to be rewarded for doing this or that, but because he loves God and loves to do the will of God. There are two extremes on this subject. One class make virtue to consist in doing right, simply because it is right, without any reference to the will of God, or any influence from God. Another class make virtue to consist in acting from love to the employment, but without reference to God’s authority, as a Ruler and Law-giver. Both of these are in error. To do a thing simply because he thinks it right, and not out of love to God is not virtue. Neither is it virtue to do a thing because he loves to do it, with no regard to God’s will. A woman might do certain things because she knew it would please her husband, but if she did the same thing merely because she loved to do it, and with no regard to her husband, it would be no virtue as it respects her husband. If a person loves God, as soon as he knows what is God’s will, he will do it because it is God’s will. Perfect love will lead to universal obedience, to do God’s will in all things, because it is the will of God.

3. The individual who exercises perfect love will be dead to the world.

I mean by this, that he will be cut loose from the influence of worldly considerations. Perfect love will so annihilate selfishness, that he will have no will but the will of God, and no interest but God’s glory. He will not be influenced by public sentiment, or what this and that man will say or think. See that woman, what she will do from natural affection to her husband? She is willing to cut loose from all her friends, as much as if she was dead to them, and not pay the least regard to what they say, and leave all the riches, and honors, and delights they can offer, to join the individual whom

she loves, and live with him in poverty, in disgrace, and in exile. Her affection is so great, that she does it joyfully, and is ready to go from a palace, to any cottage or cave in earth, and be perfectly happy. And all that her friends can say against the man of her affection has not the least influence on her mind, only to make her cling the more closely to him. This one ALL-ABSORBING affection has actually killed all the influences that used to act on her. To attempt to influence her by such things is in vain. There is only one avenue of approach to her mind; only one class of motives move her, and that is through the object of her affection.

So far as the philosophy of mind is concerned, the perfect love of God operates in the same way. The mind that is filled with perfect love, it is impossible to divert from God, while love continues in exercise. Take away his worldly possessions, his friends, his good name, his children, send him to prison, beat him with stripes, bind him to the stake, fill his flesh full of pine knots and set them on fire; and then leave him his God, and he is happy. His strong affection can make him insensible to all things else. He is as if he were dead to all the world but his God. Cases have been known of martyrs who, while their bodies were frying at the stake, were so perfectly happy in God, as to lose their sense of pain. Put such a one in hell, in the lake of fire and brimstone, and as long as he enjoys God, and the love of God fills his soul, he is happy.

Who has not witnessed or heard of cases of affection, approaching in degree to what I have described, where a person is in fact dead to all other things, and lives only for the loved object. How often do you see fond parents, who live for an only child, and when that child dies, wish themselves dead. Sometimes a husband and wife have such an absorbing affection for each other, that they live for nothing else; and if the husband dies, the wife pines away and dies also. The soul-absorbing object for which she lived is gone, and why should she live any longer? So, when an individual is filled with the perfect love of God, he wishes to live only to love and serve God; he is dead to the world, dead to his own reputation, and has no desire to live for any other reason, here, or in heaven, or anywhere else in the universe, but to glorify God. He is willing to live, here or anywhere else, and suffer and labor a thousand years, or to all eternity, if it will glorify God.

I recollect hearing a friend say, often, "I don’t know that I have one thought of living a single moment for any other purpose than to glorify God, any more than I should think of leaping right into hell." This was said soberly and deliberately, and the whole life of that individual corresponded with the declaration. He was intelligent, sober-minded, and honest, and I have no doubt expressed what had been the fullest conviction of his mind for years. What was this but perfect love? What more does any angel in heaven do than this? His love may be greater in degree, because his strength is greater. But the highest angel could not love more perfectly than to be able to say in sincerity, "I should as soon think of leaping into hell, as of living one moment for any other object but to glorify God." What could Jesus Christ himself say more than that?

4. It is hardly necessary to say that perfect joy and peace are the natural results of perfect love.

But I wish to turn your attention here to what the apostle says in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, speaking of charity, or love. You will observe that the word here translated charity is the same that is in other places rendered love. It means love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all

faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." He might have even the faith of miracles, so strong that he could move mountains from their everlasting foundations, and yet have no love. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." You see how far he supposes a man may go without love. "Charity suffereth long." Long-suffering is meekness under opposition or injury. This is one of the effects of love, to bear great provocations, and not retaliate or revile again. Love "is kind," or affectionate in all intercourse with others, never harsh or rude, or needlessly giving pain to any. Love "envieth not," never dislikes others because they are more thought of or noticed, more honored or useful, or make greater attainments in knowledge, happiness or piety. "Is not puffed up" with pride, but always humble and modest. "Doth not behave itself unseemly," but naturally begets a pleasant and courteous deportment towards all. However unacquainted the individual may be with the ways of society, who is actuated by perfect love, he always appears well, it is natural to him to be so kind and gentle and courteous. "Seeketh not her own," or has no selfishness. "Is not easily provoked." This is always the effect of love. See that mother, how long she bears with her children, because she loves them.

If you see an individual that is testy, or crusty, easily flying into a passion when anything goes wrong---he is by no means perfect in love, if he has any love. To be easily provoked is always a sign of pride. If a person is full of love, it is impossible to make him exercise sinful anger while love continues. He exercises such indignation as God exercises, and as holy angels feel, at what is base and wrong, but he will not be provoked by it. "Thinketh no evil." Show me a man that is always suspicious of the motives of others, and forever putting the worst construction on the words and actions of his fellow men, and I will show you one who has the devil in him, not the Holy Ghost. He has that in his own mind which makes him think evil of others. If an individual is honest and simple-hearted himself, he will be the last to think evil of others. He will not be always smelling heresy or mischief in others. On the contrary, such persons are often liable to be imposed on by designing men, not from any want of good sense, but from the effect of love. They do not suspect evil, where the exterior appears fair, nor without the strongest proof.

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." See a man who exults at his neighbor’s fall, or cries out, "I told you so;" and I tell you, that man is far enough from being perfect in love. "Beareth all things," all provocations and injuries, without revenge, "Believeth all things," instead of being hard to be convinced of what is in favor of others, is always ready to believe good wherever there is the least evidence of it. "Hopeth all things;" even where there is reason to suspect evil, as long as there is room for hope, by putting the best construction upon the thing which it will bear. Where you see an individual that has not this Spirit, rest assured, he is by no means perfect in love. Nay, he has no love at all.

I might pursue this course of thought farther, but have not time. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Mark that, NO ILL! Perfect love never overreaches, nor defrauds, nor oppresses, nor does any ill to a neighbor. Would a man under the influence of perfect love, sell his neighbor rum? Never. Would a man that loved God with all his heart, perfectly, hold his neighbor as a slave? "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor;" Slavery denies him the wages that he has earned, and perhaps sells him, and tears him away from his family, deprives him of the Bible, and endeavors as far as possible to make him a brute. There cannot be greater falsehood and hypocrisy, than for a man who will do that, to pretend that he loves God. Now that light is shed upon this subject, and

the attention of men turned upon it. Will a man hate his own flesh? How can he love God that hates or injures his neighbor?

I designed to remark on one other effect of perfect love. It uniformly shows itself in great efforts for the sanctification of the church and the salvation of souls. Where a person is negligent or deficient in either of these, he is by no means perfect in love, whatever may be his pretensions.

REMARKS.

I. You see why it is true, what the apostle James says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

The man that professes to be religious, and yet allows himself to speak against his neighbor with an unbridled tongue, to injure his neighbor, deceives himself, if he thinks he loves his neighbor as himself. Strange love!

II. There may be much light in the mind, concerning religion, without love.

You often see individuals, who understand a great deal, intellectually, about religion, and can spread it out before others, while it is plain they are not actuated by the spirit of love. They have not the law of kindness on their lips.

III. Those individuals who have much religious knowledge and zeal, without love, are most unlovely and dangerous persons.

They are always censorious, proud, heady, high-minded. They may make a strong impression, but do not produce true religion. They zealously affect you, but not well.

IV. The drift of a man's zeal will determine the character of his religion.

It will show whether the light in his mind is accompanied with love. If it is, his zeal will not be sectarian in its character. Show me a man full of jealously towards all that do not belong to his sect or party, and there is a man far enough from perfect love.

True love is never denunciatory or harsh. If it has occasion to speak of the faults of others, it does it in kindness, and with sorrow. Perfect love cannot speak in a rough or abusive manner, either to or of others. It will not lay great stress on the mere circumstantials of religion, nor be sticklish for particular measures or forms. Many will contend fiercely either for or against certain things, as for or against new measures; but if they were full of love they would not do it. The zeal that is governed by perfect love will not spend itself in contending for or against any forms in religion, nor attack minor errors and evils. Love leads to laying stress on the fundamentals in religion. It cleaves to warm-hearted Christians, no matter of what denomination they may be, and loves them, and delights to associate with them.

This zeal is never disputatious, or full of controversy. Find a man who loves to attend ecclesiastical meetings, and enters into all the janglings of the day, and that man is not full of love. To a mind filled with holy love, it is exceedingly painful to go to such meetings, and see ministers dividing into parties, and maneuvering, and caucussing, and pettifogging, and striving for the mastery. Find an individual who loves controversy in the newspapers, he is not full of love. If he was, he would rather be abused, and reviled, and slandered, either in person or by the papers, than turn aside to

defend himself or to reply. He would never return railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. And as much as possible, he would live peaceably with all men.

V. How much that is called religion has no love.

How much of what passes for works of religion, is constrained by outward causes and influences, and not by the inward power of love. It ought to be better understood than it is, that unless love is the mainspring, no matter what the outward action may be, whether praying, praising, giving, or anything else, there is no religion in it.---How much excitement that passes for religion, has no love. How much zeal has no religion in it. See that man always full of bitter zeal, and if reproved for it, flying to the example of Paul, when he said, "Thou child of the devil." If he was under the influence of perfect love, he would see that his circumstances are so different as not to justify the exercise of such a spirit.

VI. Those religious excitements which do not consist in the spirit of love, are not revivals of religion.

Perhaps the church may be much excited, and bustle about with a great show of zeal, and boisterous noise, but no tenderness of spirit. Perhaps those who go about may show a spirit of insolence, and rudeness, and pick a quarrel with every family they visit. I once knew a young man who acknowledged that he aimed at making people angry, and the reason he assigned was, that it often brought them under conviction, and so issued in conversion. And so it might if he should go in and utter horrid blasphemies in their presence, until they were frightened into a consideration of their own character. But who would defend such a conduct on the ground that such was now and then the result? And if this is the character of the excitement, it may be a revival of wrath, and malice, and all uncharitableness, but it is not a revival of religion. I do not mean that when some or many are "filled with wrath," it is certain evidence that there is no revival of religion. But that when the excitement has this prevailing character, it is not a true revival of religion. Some among them may have the spirit of love, but certainly those who are filled with a bitter disputatious zeal are not truly religious. Religion may be in some individuals revived, but in the main, in such cases, it is a revival of irreligion.

VII. When persons profess to be converted, if love is not the ruling feature in their character, they are not truly converted.

However well they may appear in other respects, no matter how clear their views, or how deep their feelings, if they have not the spirit of love to God, and love to man, they are deceived. Let no such converts be trusted.

VIII. See what the world will be, when mankind are universally actuated by a spirit of love.

We learn that the time will come, when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy, and when the Spirit of love will universally prevail. What a change in society! What a change in all the methods of doing business, and in all the intercourse of mankind, when each shall love his neighbor as himself, and seek the good of others as his own. Could one of the saints that live now revisit the earth at that day, he would not know the world in which he lived, everything will be so altered. "Is it possible," he would exclaim, "that this is the earth; the same earth that used to be so full of jangling, and oppression, and fraud?"

IX. The thing on which the Lord Jesus Christ is bent, is to bring all mankind under the influence of love.

Is it not a worthy object? He came to destroy the works of the devil. And this is the way to do it. Suppose the world was full of such men as Jesus Christ was in His human nature. Compare it with what it is now. Would not such a change be worthy of the Son of God? What a glorious end, to fill the earth with love!

X. It is easy to see what makes heaven.

It is love---perfect love. And it is easy to see what makes heaven begun on earth, in those who are full of love. How sweet their temper, what delightful companions, how blessed to live near them, to associate with them, so full of candor, so kind, so gentle, so careful to avoid offense, so divinely amiable in all things!

And is this to be attained by men? Can we love God, here in this world, with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind? Is it our privilege and our duty to have the Spirit of Christ; and shall we exhibit the spirit of the devil? Beloved, let our hearts be set on perfect love, and let us give God no rest till we feel our hearts full of love, and till all our thoughts and all our lives are full of love to God and love to man. O, when will the church come up to this ground? Only let the church be full of love, and she will be fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible to all wickedness, in high places and low places, as an army with banners.

Chapter 60

03.13. NECESSITY OF DIVINE TEACHING

NECESSITY OF DIVINE TEACHING.

TEXT:--"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. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me---of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more---of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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."--- John 16:7-13.

The doctrine of the necessity of Divine Influence, to enlighten and sanctify the minds of men, is very abundantly taught in the Bible, and is generally maintained, as a matter of opinion at least, in all orthodox churches. But, as a matter of fact, there seems to be very little available knowledge of the gospel among mankind; so little that it exerts comparatively little influence. The great ends of the gospel have hardly begun to be realized, in the production of holiness on the earth. It is a grand question, whether we do need Divine Influence to attain the ends of the gospel; and if we do need it, then in what degree do we need it, and why? If our minds are unsettled on this question, we shall be unsettled on all the subjects that practically concern our sanctification.

In discoursing on this subject tonight, I design to pursue the following order:

I. Inquire how far the reason of man, unaided by Divine illumination, is capable of understanding the things of religion.

II. Show wherein the reason of man is defective, in regard to the capacity of gaining any available knowledge of the gospel.

III. That the Spirit of God alone can supply the Illumination that is needed.

IV. That every one may have the influence of the Spirit, according to his necessities.

V. The reasons why any individual fails to receive this divine aid to the extent of his necessities.

VI. That men are responsible for the light which they might have, as well as for that which they actually enjoy.

I. I shall inquire how far the reason of man, unaided by Divine illumination, is capable of apprehending the things of religion.

1. The mind of man is capable of understanding the historical facts of religion; just as it comprehends any other historical facts.

2. It is capable of understanding the doctrinal propositions of the gospel.

That is, it can understand those abstractions which make up the skeleton of the gospel; such as the being and character of God, the divine authority and inspiration of the scriptures, and other fundamental doctrines which make up the framework of the gospel. That is, it can understand them as propositions, and see the evidence that supports them as true, just as it can any other propositions in science. For instance, to enter a little into detail:

A man, by his reason, may understand the law of God. He can understand that it requires him to exercise perfect love, towards God and all other beings. He can see the ground of his obligation to do this, because he is a moral being. He knows by experience what love is, for he has exercised love towards different objects. And he can, therefore, form or comprehend the idea of love, so far as to see the reasonableness of the requirement. He can understand the foundation and the force of moral obligation, and see, in some measure, the extent of his obligation to love God.

So, likewise, he can see that he is a sinner, and that he cannot be saved by his own works. He has broken the law, so that the law can never justify him. He can see, that if he is ever saved, he must be justified through mere mercy, by an act of pardon.

I might go through the whole circle of theology, and show that the human understanding is capable of knowing it, in the abstract, as a system of propositions, to be received and believed, on evidence, like any other science. I do not mean to be understood, as saying, that unaided reason can attain any available knowledge of the things of religion, or any such knowledge as will be effectual to produce a sanctifying change.

II. I am to show wherein our knowledge of the things of religion is necessarily defective, without the aids of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, I am to show what our knowledge of the gospel lacks, to make it available to salvation.

And here it is needful to distinguish between knowledge which might be available, to one that was himself dispose to love and obey God; and what will be available, in fact, to a sinner, who is wholly indisposed to holiness. It is easy to see, that one who is disposed to do right would be influenced to duty by a far less amount of illumination, or a far less clear and vivid view of motives, than one who is disposed to do wrong. What we are now inquiring after respects the matter of fact, in this world. Whether the knowledge attainable by our present faculties would be available to influence us to do right, were there no sin in the world, is more than I can say. As a matter of fact, the knowledge which Adam had when in a state of innocency did not avail to influence him to do right. But we are now speaking of things as they are in this world, and to show what is the reason that men, as sinners, can have no available knowledge of divine things; no such knowledge as will, as a matter of fact, influence them to love and serve God.

Knowledge, to avail anything towards effecting its object, must be such as will influence the mind. The will must be controlled. And to do this, the mind must have such a view of things as to excite emotion, corresponding to the object in view. Mere intellect never will move the soul to act. A pure scientific abstraction of the intellect, that does not touch the feelings, or excite any emotion, is wholly unavailable to move the will. It is so everywhere. It would be so in heaven. You must bring the mind under a degree of excitement, to influence the will in any case. And in the case of sinners, to influence sinners to love and obey God, you must have a great degree of light, such as

will powerfully excite the mind, and produce strong emotions. The reasons for obedience must be made to appear with great strength and vividness, so as to subdue their rebellious hearts and bring them voluntarily to obey God. This is available knowledge. This men never have, and never can have, without the Spirit of God. If men were disposed to do right, I know not how far their knowledge, attainable by unaided reason, might avail. But, as they are universally and totally indisposed, this knowledge will never do it. I will mention some of the reasons:

1. All the knowledge we can have here of spiritual things, is by analogy, or comparison.

Our minds are here shut up in the body, and derive all our ideas from external objects, through the senses. Now, we never can of ourselves obtain knowledge of spiritual or eternal things in this way sufficient to rightly influence our wills. Our bodily powers were not created for this. All the ideas we can have of the spiritual world is by analogy, or comparing them with the things around us. It is easily seen that all ideas conveyed to our minds in this way, must be extremely imperfect, and that we do not, after all, get the true idea in our minds. The Jewish types were probably the most forcible means which God could then use, for giving to the Jews a correct idea of the gospel. Considering how the eastern nations were accustomed, by their education, to the use of figures, and parables, and types, probably the system of types was the most impressive and happy mode that could be devised to gain a more ready access for the truth to their minds, and give them a more full idea of the plan of redemption than could be communicated in any other way. And yet it is manifest that the ideas which were communicated in this way were extremely imperfect; and that, without divine illumination to make them see the reality more fully than they could by unaided reason, they never would have got any available knowledge in this way.

So words are merely signs of ideas. They are not the ideas, but the representatives of ideas. It is often very difficult, and sometimes impossible to convey ideas by words. Take a little child, and attempt to talk with him, and how difficult it is, on many subjects, to get your ideas into his little mind. He must have some experience of the things you are trying to teach, before you can convey ideas to him by words.

Suppose this congregation were all blind, and had never seen colors. Then suppose that on that wall hung a most grand and beautiful painting, and that I was a perfect master of the subject, and should undertake to describe it to you. No language that I could use would give you such an idea of the painting, as to enable you to form a picture of it in your minds.---Where, on any subject, we are obliged, from the nature of the case, to use figurative language, analogies, and resemblances, the knowledge we communicate is necessarily defective and inadequate. Who of you have not heard descriptions of persons and places, till you thought you had an accurate knowledge of them; but when you come to see them you find you had no true idea of the reality?

Suppose an individual were to visit this world, from another planet, where all things are constituted on the most opposite principles from those which are adopted here. Suppose him to remain here long enough to learn our language, and that then he should undertake to give us a description of the world he had left. We should understand it according to our ideas and experience. Now, if the analogy between the two worlds is very imperfect, it is plain that our knowledge of things there, from his description, must be imperfect in proportion. So, when we find in the Bible descriptions of heaven and hell, or anything in the invisible world, it is plain that from mere words we can get no true ideas at all adequate to the reality.

2. The wickedness of our hearts is so great, as to pervert our judgment, and shut out from our minds much that we might understand of the things of religion.

When a man's mind is so perverted on any subject, that he will not take up the evidence concerning it, he cannot, of course, come at the knowledge of the truth on that subject. This is our case in regard to religion. Perverseness of heart so shuts out the light, that the intellect does not, and from the nature of things cannot, get even the ideas it might otherwise gain, respecting divine things.

3. Prejudice is a great obstacle to the reception of correct knowledge concerning religion.

Take the case of the disciples of Christ. They had strong Jewish prejudices respecting the plan of salvation---so strong that all the instructions of Christ himself could not make them understand the truth. After teaching them personally, for three years, with all the talent, and simplicity, and skill He was master of, He could never get their minds in possession of the first principles of the gospel. Up to His very death, He could not make them see that He should die, and rise from the dead. Therefore He says in his last conversation---"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." This was the very design of His going away from them, that the Spirit of Truth might come, and put them in possession of the things which He meant by the words He had used in teaching them.

The general truth is this; that without divine illumination, men can understand from the Bible enough to convict and condemn them, but not enough to sanctify and save them.

Some may ask, What, then, is the use of revelation?

It is of much use. The Bible is as plain as it can be. Who doubts that our Lord Jesus Christ gave instructions to His disciples, as plainly as He could? See the pains which He took to illustrate His teaching; how simple His language; how He brings it down to the weakest comprehension, as a parent would to a little child. And yet it remains true, that without divine illumination, the unaided reason of man never did, and never will attain any available knowledge of the gospel. The difficulty lies in the subject. The Bible contains the gospel, as plain as it can be made. That is, it contains the signs of the ideas, as far as language can represent the things of religion. No language but figurative language can be used for this purpose. And this will forever be inadequate to put our minds in real possession of the things themselves. The difficulty is in our ignorance and sin, and in the nature of the subject. This is the reason why we need divine illumination, to get any available knowledge of the gospel.

III. The Spirit of God alone, can give us this illumination.

The Bible says, "No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Now the abstract proposition of the Deity of Christ, can be proved, as a matter of science, so as to gain the assent of any unbiased mind to the truth, that Jesus is Lord. But nothing short of the Holy Ghost can so put the mind in possession of the idea of Christ, as God, as to fix the soul in the belief of the fact, and make it available to sanctify the heart.

Again, it is said that "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

Here it is evident that the drawing spoken of, is teaching by the Holy Spirit. They must be taught of God, and learn of the Father, before they can ever have such a knowledge of the things of religion as actually to come to Christ.

Christ says, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." The word Paracletos, here translated Comforter, properly means a Helper or Teacher. "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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."

So in the fourteenth chapter the Savior says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And again, in the 26th verse, "But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Here you see the office of the Spirit of God is, to instruct mankind in regard to the things of religion.

Now, it is manifest that none but the Spirit of God can supply this defect, from a single consideration---That all teaching by words, whether by Jesus Christ, or by apostles, or by any inspired or uninspired teacher, coming merely through the senses, can never put the mind in possession of the idea of spiritual things. The kind of teaching that we need is this; we want someone to teach us the things of religion, who is not obliged to depend on words, or to reach our minds through the medium of the senses. We want some way in which the ideas themselves can be brought to our minds, and not merely the signs of the ideas. We want a teacher who can directly approach the mind itself, and not through the senses; and who can exhibit the ideas of religion, without being obliged to use words. This the Spirit of God can do.

The manner in which the Spirit of God does this, is what we can never know in this world. But the fact is undeniable, that He can reach the mind without the use of words, and can put our minds in possession of the ideas themselves, of which the types, or figures, or words, of the human teacher, are only the signs or imperfect representatives. The human teacher can only use words to our senses, and finds it impossible to possess us of the ideas of that which we have never experienced. But the Spirit of God, having direct access to the mind, can, through the outward sign, possess us of the actual idea of things. What Christian does not know this, as a matter of fact? What Christian does not know, from his own experience, that the Spirit of God does lead him instantly to see that in a passage of scripture, which all his study, and effort of mind to know the meaning of could never have given him in the world?

Take the case again, of a painting on the wall there, and suppose that all the congregation were blind, and I was trying to describe to them this painting. Now suppose, while I was laboring to make them understand the various distinctions and combinations of colors, and they are bending their minds to understand it, all at once their eyes are opened! You can then see for yourselves the very things which I was vainly trying to bring to your minds by words. Now, the office of the Spirit of

God, and what He alone can do, is to open the spiritual eye, and bring the things which we try to describe by analogy and signs, in all their living reality, before the mind, so as to put the mind in complete possession of the thing as it is.

It is evident, too, that no one but the Spirit of God so knows the things of God as to be able to give us the idea of those things correctly. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him?" What can a beast know of the things of a man, of a man's character, designs, etc.? I can speak to your consciousness---being a man, and knowing the things of a man. But I cannot speak these things to the consciousness of a beast, neither can a beast speak of these things, because he has not the spirit of a man in him, and cannot know them. In like manner the Bible says, "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." The Spirit of God, knowing from consciousness the things of God, possesses a different kind of knowledge of these things from what other beings can possess; and therefore, can give us the kind of instruction that we need, and such as no other being can give.

IV. The needed influences of the Spirit of God may be possessed by all men, freely, and under the gospel.

A few passages from the Bible will show this:

Jesus Christ says God is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than parents are to give their children bread. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "Therefore, I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." James says, "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." If it be true, that God has made these unlimited promises, that ALL MEN, who will ask of Him, may have divine illumination as much as they will ask for, then it is true that all men may have as much of divine illumination as they need.

V. I will show the reasons why any do not have as much divine illumination as they need.

1. They do not ask for it in any such manner or degree as they need it.

2. They ask amiss, or from selfish motives.

The apostle James says, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts." When an individual has a selfish motive for asking, or some other reason, than a desire to glorify God, he need not expect to receive divine illumination. If his object in asking for the Holy Ghost, is that he may always be happy in religion, or that he may be very wise in the scriptures, or be looked upon as an eminent Christian, or have his experience spoken of as remarkable, or any other selfish view, that is a good reason why he should not receive even what he asks.

3. They do not use the proper means to attain what they ask.

Suppose a person neglects his Bible, and yet asks God to give him a knowledge of the things of religion. That is tempting God. The manner in which God gives knowledge is through the Bible, and preaching, and the other appointed means of instruction. If a person will not use these means,

when they are in his power, however much he may pray, he need not expect divine instruction. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

There is an important difference to be observed, between the cases of those who possess these means, and those who do not. I suppose that a person may learn the gospel, and receive all the illumination he needs, under any circumstances of privation of means. As if he was on a desolate island, he might receive direct illumination from the Spirit of God. And so he might, in any other circumstances, where he absolutely could not have access to any means of instruction. Some very remarkable cases of this kind have occurred within a few years. I have known one case, which I looked upon at the time as miraculous, and for that reason have seldom mentioned it, feeling that even the church were not prepared to receive it. When I was an evangelist, I labored once in a revival, in a neighborhood where there were many Germans. They had received but little instruction, and many of them could not read. But when the gospel was preached among them, the Spirit of God was poured out, and a most powerful revival followed. In the midst of the harvest, if a meeting, was appointed at any place, the whole neighborhood would come together, and fill the house, and hang upon the preacher’s lips, while he tried to possess their minds with the truths of the gospel. One poor German woman naturally intelligent, but who could not read, in relating her experience in one of these meetings, told this fact which was certified to by her neighbors. With many tears and a heart full of joy, she said, "When I loved God, I longed to read the Bible, and I prayed to Jesus Christ, I said and felt, O Jesus! thou canst teach me to read thy Holy Bible, and the Lord taught me to read. There was a Bible in the house, and when I had prayed, I thought I could read the Bible, and I got the book, and opened it, and the words were just what I had heard people read. I said, O Lord Jesus Christ, thou canst teach me to read," and I believed He could, and I thought I did read, but I went and asked the school-madam if I read, and she said I read it right, and the Lord has taught me to read my Bible, blessed be His name for it." I do not know but the school-madam to whom she referred was in the house and heard her relation. At all events, she was a woman of good character among her neighbors, and some of the most respectable of them afterwards told me, they did not doubt the truth of what she said. I have no doubt it was true.

At the time, I thought it was a miracle; but since the facts which have been developed within a few years, respecting the indestructibleness of the memory, I have thought this case might be explained in that way; and that she had probably been told the names of letters and their powers when young, and now the Spirit of God, in answer to her prayer, had quickened her mind, and brought it all to her remembrance, so that she could read the Bible.

Some of you will recollect the facts which were stated here, one evening, by President Mahan, which show that every impression which is made on the mind of man, remains there forever indelible. One case that he mentioned was that of an old lady, who when she was young, had read some lines of poetry, relating a little story; and afterwards, when old, she wished to tell the story to some children, to whom she thought it would be useful, and to her surprise the whole of the lines came up fresh in her memory, and she repeated them verbatim, although she had never committed them to memory at all, but only read them when she was young. Another was the case of an ignorant servant girl. She had once lived with a learned minister, who was accustomed to read aloud the Hebrew Bible, in his study, which was in hearing of the place where this girl did her work. Of course she understood nothing of the words, but only heard the sounds. Long afterwards when she was on her death-bed, she astonished the bystanders by reciting whole chapters of

Hebrew and Chaldaic. The neighbors at first thought it was a miracle, but at length learned the explanation. It is plain from this, that even unintelligible sound may be so impressed on the memory, as afterwards to recur with entire distinctness. I suppose that was probably the case with this poor German woman, and that the Spirit of God, in answer to her fervent prayer, so refreshed her memory as to recall the sounds and forms of letters, she had been told when a child, and thus enable her at once to read the Bible.

I say, therefore, that while those who do not possess any outward means of instruction may obtain directly from the Spirit of God whatever degree or kind of illumination they need in the things of religion; those who possess or can obtain the outward means, and do not use them, tempt God, when they pray for divine illumination and neglect the use of means for obtaining knowledge. To those who have the opportunity, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If any man keeps away from the means within his reach, he can expect illumination in no other way. Whereas, if he is shut out from the use of means, as God is true to His promises, we must believe that he can be illuminated without means, to any extent that he needs.

4. Another reason why many do not receive that illumination from the Spirit of God which they need is, because they grieve the Spirit, in many ways.

They live in such a manner, as to grieve, or offend the Holy Spirit, so that He cannot consistently grant them His illuminating grace.

5. Another reason is, that they depend on instructions and means, as available without divine influence.

How many rely on the instructions they receive from ministers, or commentaries, or books, or their own powers of inquiry; not feeling that all these things, without the Spirit of God, will only kill, but can never make alive---can only damn, but never save. It seems as though the whole church was in error on this point; depending on means for divine knowledge, without feeling that NO MEANS are available, without the Spirit of God. Oh! if the church felt this---if they really felt that all the means in creation are unavailing without the teaching of the Holy Ghost, how they would pray, and cleanse their hands, and humble their hearts, until the Comforter would descend to teach them all things that they need to know of religion.

6. Self-confidence is another reason why so little is experienced of divine illumination.

So long as professing Christians place confidence in learning, or criticism, or their natural ingenuity, to learn the things of religion, rely on it, they are not likely to enjoy much of the illumination of the Spirit of God.

VI. I am to show that men are responsible for what they might have of divine illumination.

This is a universal truth, and is acknowledged by all mankind, that a man is just as responsible for what light he might have, as for that he actually has. The common law, which is the voice of common reason, adopts it as a maxim that no man who breaks the law is to be excused for ignorance of the law, because all are held bound to know what the law is. So it is with your children, in a case where they might know your will, you consider them so much the more blameworthy, if they offend. So it is in religion: where men have both the outward means of instruction, and the inward teachings of the Holy Spirit, absolutely within their reach, if they sin in

ignorance, they are not only without excuse on that score, but their ignorance is itself a crime, and is an aggravation of their guilt. And all men are plainly without excuse for not possessing all the knowledge which would be available for their perfect and immediate sanctification.

REMARKS.

I. You see what is the effect of all other instructions on a congregation where no divine influence is enjoyed.

It may convince the church of duty, but will never produce sanctification. It may harden the heart, but will never change it. Without divine influence, it is but a savor of death unto death.

II. You see that it is important to use all the appropriate means of religious instruction in our power, as the medium through which the Spirit of God conveys divine illumination to the mind.

There is no reason why we should not use the means in our power, and apply our natural faculties to acquire knowledge of religion, as faithfully as if we could understand the whole subject without divine influence. And if we do not use means, when within our power, we have no reason to expect divine aid. When we help ourselves, God helps us. When we use our natural faculties to understand these things, we may expect God will enlighten us. To turn our eyes away from the light, and then pray that we may be made to see, is to tempt God.

III. They are blind leaders of the blind, who attempt to teach the things of religion without being themselves taught of God.

No degree of learning, or power of discrimination as to the didactics of theology, will ever make a man a successful teacher of religion, unless he enjoys the illuminating powers of the Holy Ghost. He is blind if he supposes he understands the Bible without this, and if he undertakes to teach religion, he deceives himself, and all who depend on him, and both will fall into the ditch together.

IV. If an individual teaches the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, he will be understood.

He may understand the gospel himself, and yet not make his hearers understand it, because the Holy Ghost is not sent on them as well as himself. But if the Spirit of God is on them, precisely in proportion as he himself understands the real meaning of the gospel, he will make his hearers understand it.

V. In preaching the gospel, ministers should never use texts, the meaning of which they have not been taught by the Spirit of the God.

They should not attempt to explain passages of which they are not confident they have been taught the meaning by the Holy Spirit. It is presumption. And they need not do it, for they may always have the teachings of the Spirit, by asking. God is more ready to bestow divine illumination than an earthly parent is to give bread to his child; and if they ask, as a child, when he is hungry, asks his mother for a piece of bread, they may always receive all the light they need. This is applicable both to preachers and to teachers in Sabbath schools and Bible classes. If any of them attempt to teach the scriptures without being themselves taught, they are no more fit to teach without divine teaching, than the most ignorant person in the streets is fit to teach astronomy. I fear

both minister and teachers generally, have understood very little of their need of this divine teaching, and have felt very little of the necessity of praying over their sermons and bible lessons, till they felt confident that the Spirit of God has possessed their minds with the true idea of the word of God. If this was done as it ought to be, their instructions would be far more effectual than we now see them.

Do you, who are teachers of Bible and Sabbath school classes in this church, believe this? Are you in the habit, conscientiously and uniformly, of seeking the true idea of every lesson on your knees? Or do you go to some commentary and then come and peddle out your dry stuff to your classes, that you get out of the commentaries and books, without any of the Holy Ghost in your teaching? If you do this, let me tell you, that you had better be doing something else. What would you say of a minister, if you knew he never prayed over his texts? You might as well have Balaam's ass for a minister, and even the dumb beast in such a case might speak with man's voice and rebuke the madness of such a man. He could give just as much available instruction to reach the deep fountains of the heart, as such a preacher. Well, now, this is just as important for a Sunday school teacher as for a minister. If you do not pray over your lesson, until you feel that God has taught you the idea contained in it, BEWARE! How dare you go and teach that for religion, which you do not honestly suppose you have been taught of God?

VI. It is a vast error in theological students, when they study to get the views of all the great teachers, the tomes of the fathers and doctors, and everybody's opinion as to what the Bible means, but the opinion of the Holy Ghost.

With hearts as cold as marble, instead of going right to the source of light, they go and gather up the husks of learning, and peddle it out among the churches as religious instruction. Horrible! While they do thus, we never shall have an efficient ministry. It is right they should get all the help they can from learning, to understand the word of God. But they ought never to rest in anything they get from book learning, until they are satisfied that God has put them in possession of the very idea which HE would have them receive.

I have tried hard to make this impression, and I believe I have succeeded in some degree, on the theological students under my care. And if I had done it more, I have no doubt I might have succeeded better. And I can say, that when I studied theology, I spent many hours on my knees, and perhaps I might say weeks, often with the Bible before me, laboring and praying to come at the very mind of the Spirit. I do not say this boastingly, but as a matter of fact, to show that the sentiment here advanced is no novel opinion with me. And I have always got my texts and sermons on my knees. And yet I am conscious that I have gained very little knowledge in religion, compared with what I might have had, if I had taken right hold of the source of Light, as I ought to have done.

VII. How little knowledge have the great body of the church, respecting the word of God !

Put them, for instance, to read the epistles, and other parts, and probably they will not have knowledge enough to give an opinion as to the real meaning of one-tenth of the Bible. No wonder the church is not sanctified! They need MORE TRUTH. Our Savior says, "Sanctify them through thy truth." This grand means of sanctification must be more richly enjoyed before the church will know what entire sanctification means. The church do not understand the Bible. And the reason is,

THEY HAVE NOT GONE TO THE AUTHOR to explain it. Although they have this blessed privilege every day, and just as often as they choose, of carrying the book right to the Author for His explanation; yet how little, how very little, do the church know of the Bible, which they are conscious they have been taught to know by the Holy Ghost! Read the text again, read other similar passages, and then say if Christians are not exceedingly to blame for not understanding the Bible.

VIII. You see the necessity that we should all give ourselves up to the study of the Bible, under divine teaching.

I have recently recommended several books to you to read, such as Wesley's Thoughts on Christian Perfection, the Memoirs of Brainerd Taylor, Payson, Mrs. Rogers, and others. I have found that, in a certain state of mind, such books are useful to read. But I never pretend to make but ONE BOOK my study. I read them occasionally, but have little time or inclination to read other books much while I have so much to learn of my Bible. I find it like a deep mine, the more I work it, the richer it grows. We must read that more than any or all other books. We must pause and pray over it, verse after verse, and compare part with part, dwell on it, digest it, and get it into our minds, till we feel that the Spirit of God has filled us with the spirit of holiness.

Will you do it? Will you lay your hearts open to God, and not give Him rest, till He has filled you with divine knowledge? Will you SEARCH the scriptures? I have often been asked by young converts, and young men preparing for the ministry, what they should read. READ THE BIBLE. I would give the same answer five hundred times, over and above all other things, study the Bible. It is a sad fact, that most young men, when they enter the ministry often know less of the Bible than of any other book they study. Alas! alas! O, if they had the spirit of James Brainerd Taylor, his love for the scriptures, his prayer for divine teaching, we should no longer hear the groans of the churches over the barrenness of so many young preachers, who come out of our seminaries full of book-learning, and almost destitute of the Holy Ghost.

03.14. RELIGION OF PUBLIC OPINION

RELIGION OF PUBLIC OPINION.

TEXT:--"For they loved the praise or men more than the praise or God." John 12:43

These words were spoken of certain individuals who refused to confess that Jesus was the Christ, because He was extremely unpopular with the scribes and pharisees, and principal people of Jerusalem.

There is a plain distinction between self-love, or the simple desire of happiness, and selfishness. Self-love, the desire of happiness and dread of misery, is constitutional, it is a part of our frame as God made us and as He intended us to be; and its indulgence, within the limits of the law of God, is not sinful. Whenever it is indulged contrary to the law of God, it becomes sinful. When the desire of happiness or the dread of misery becomes the controlling principle, and we prefer our own gratification to some other greater interest, it becomes selfishness. When to avoid pain or procure happiness, we sacrifice other greater interests, we violate the great law of disinterested benevolence. It is no longer self-love, acting within lawful bounds, but selfishness.

In my last Friday evening Lecture, I described a class of professors of religion, who are moved to perform religious exercises by hope and fear. They are moved sometimes by self-love, and sometimes by selfishness. Their supreme object is not to glorify God, but to secure their own salvation. You will recollect that this class, and the class I had described before as the real friends of God, and man, agree in many things, and if you look only at the things in which they agree, you cannot distinguish between them. It is only by a close observation of those things in which they differ, that you can see that the main design of the latter class is not to glorify God, but to secure their own salvation. In that way we can see their supreme object developed, and see that when they do the same things, outwardly, which those do whose supreme object is to glorify God, they do them from entirely different motives, and consequently the acts themselves are, in the sight of God, of an entirely different character.

To-night, I design to point out the characteristics of the third class of professing Christians, who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God."

I would not be understood to imply that a mere regard for reputation has led this class to profess religion. Religion has always been too unpopular with the great mass of mankind to render it a general thing to become professing Christians from a mere regard to reputation. But I mean, that where it is not generally unpopular to become a professor of religion, and will not diminish popularity, but will increase it with many, a complex motive operates---the hope of securing happiness in a future world and that it may increase reputation here. And thus many are led to profess religion, when after all, on a close examination it will be seen that the leading object, which is prized beyond any thing else, is the good opinion of their fellow men. Sooner than forfeit this utterly, they would not profess religion. Their profession turns on this. And although they do profess to be sincere Christians, you may see by their conduct, on close examination, that they will

do nothing that will forfeit this good opinion of men. They will not encounter the odium that they must, if they were to give themselves up to root sin out of the world.

Observe, that impenitent sinners are always influenced by one of two things, in all that they do that appears like religion. Either they do them out of regard to mere natural principles, as compassion or self-love---principles that are constitutional in them---or from selfishness. They are done either out of regard to their own reputation or happiness, or the gratification of some natural principle in them, that has no moral character; and not from the love of God in them. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

I will now mention several things by which you may detect the true character of the class of persons of whom I have been speaking; who make the praise of men their idol, notwithstanding they profess to love God supremely. And they are things by which you can detect your own true characters, if there are any present who properly belong to this class.

1. They do what the apostle Paul says certain persons did in his day, and for that reason they remained ignorant of the true doctrine; they "measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves."

There are a vast many individuals, who, instead of making Jesus Christ their standard of comparison, and the Bible their rule of life, manifestly aim at no such thing. They show that they never seriously dreamed of making the BIBLE their standard. The great question with them is, whether they do about as many things in religion, and are about as pious as other people, or as the churches around them. Their object is to maintain a respectable profession of religion. Instead of seriously inquiring for themselves, what the Bible really requires, and asking how Jesus Christ would act in such and such cases, they are looking simply at the common run of professing Christians, and are satisfied with doing what is commendable in their estimation. They prove to a demonstration, that their object is not so much to do what the Bible lays down as duty, as to do what the great mass of professing Christians do---to do what is respectable, rather than what is RIGHT.

2. This class of persons do not trouble themselves about elevating the standard of piety around them.

They are not troubled at the fact, that the general standard of piety is so low in the church, that it is impossible to bring the great mass of sinners to repentance. They think the standard at the present time is high enough. Whatever be the standard at the time, it satisfies them. While the real friends of God and man are complaining of the church, because the standard of piety is so low, and trying to wake up the church to elevate the tone of religion, it all seems to this class of persons like censoriousness, and a meddlesome, uneasy disposition, and as denoting a bad spirit in them. Just as when Jesus Christ denounced the scribes and pharisees and leading professors of His day, they said, "He hath a devil." "Why, He is denouncing our doctors of divinity, and all our best men, and even dares to call the scribes and pharisees hypocrites, and He tells us that except our righteousness shall exceed theirs, we can in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. What a bad spirit He has!"

A large part of the church at the present day have the same spirit, and every effort to open the eyes of the church, and to make Christians see that they live so low, so worldly, so much like

hypocrites, that it is impossible the work of the Lord should go on, only excites ill will and occasions reproach. "O," they say, "what a bad spirit he shows, so censorious, and so unkind, surely that is anything but the meek, and kind, and loving spirit of the Son of God." They forget how Jesus Christ poured out His anathemas, enough to make the hills of Judea shake, against those that had the reputation of being the most pious people in that day. Just as if Jesus Christ never said any thing severe to anybody, but just fawned over them, and soothed them into His kingdom. Who does not know that it was the hypocritical spirit exhibited by professors of religion, that roused His soul and moved His indignation, and called forth His burning torrents of denunciation. He was always complaining of the very people who were set up as patterns of piety, and called them hypocrites, and thundered over their heads the terrible words, "HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL!"

It is not wonderful, when so many love the praise of men more than the praise of God, that there should be excitement when the truth is told. They are very well satisfied with the standard of piety as it is, and think that while the people are doing so much for Sabbath schools, and missions, and tracts, that is doing pretty well, and they wonder what the man would have. Alas! alas! for their blindness! They do not seem to know that with all this, the lives of the generality of professing Christians are almost as different from the standard of Jesus Christ as light is from darkness.

3. They make a distinction between those requirements of God that are strongly enforced by public sentiment and those that are not thus guarded.

They are very scrupulous in observing such requirements as public sentiment distinctly favors, while they easily set at nought those which public sentiment does not enforce. You have illustrations, of this on every side. I might mention the Temperance Reformation. How many there are who yield to public sentiment in this matter what they never would yield to God or man. At first they waited to see how it would turn. They resisted giving up of ardent spirits. But when that became popular, and they found that they could do very well with other alcoholic stimulants, they gave it up. But they are determined to yield no further than public sentiment drives them. They show that it is not their object, in joining the Temperance Society, to CARRY OUT the reform, so as to slay the monster, Intemperance, but their object is to maintain a good character. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

See how many individuals there are, who keep the Sabbath, not because they love God, but because it is respectable. This is manifest, because they keep it while they are among their acquaintances, or where they are known. But when they get where they are not known, or where it will not be a public disgrace, you will find them traveling on the Sabbath.

All those sins that are reprobated by public opinion this class of persons abstain from, but they do other things just as bad which are not thus frowned on. They do those duties which are enforced by public opinion, but not those that are less enforced. They will not stay away from public worship on the Sabbath, because they could not maintain any reputation for religion at all if they did. But they neglect things that are just as peremptorily enjoined in the word of God. Where an individual habitually disobeys any command of God, he knowing it to be such, it is just as certain as his soul lives, that the obedience he appears to render, is not from a regard to God’s authority, or love to God, but from other motives. He does not, in fact, obey any command of God. The Apostle has settled this question. " Whosoever," says he, " Shall keep the whole law and offend in one point is

guilty of all," I. e. does not truly keep any one precept of the law. Obedience to God's commands implies an obedient state of the heart, and therefore nothing is obedience that does not imply a supreme regard to the authority of God. Now, if a man's heart is right, then whatever God enjoins he regards as of more importance than anything else. And if a man regards anything else of superior weight to God's authority, that is his idol. Whatever we supremely regard, that is our God---whether it be reputation, or comfort, or riches, or honor, or whatever it is that we regard supremely, that is the God of our hearts. Whatever a man's reason is for habitually neglecting anything he knows to be the command of God, or that he sees to be required to promote the kingdom of Christ, there is demonstration absolute that he regards that as supreme. There is nothing acceptable to God in any of his services. Rest assured, all his religion is the religion of public sentiment. If he neglects anything required by the law of God, because he can pass along in neglect, and public sentiment does not enjoin it, or if he does other things inconsistent with the law of God, merely because public opinion does require it, it is a simple matter of fact, that it is public sentiment to which he yields obedience, in all his conduct, and not a regard to the glory of God.

How is it with you, beloved? Do you habitually neglect any requirement of God, because it is not sustained and enforced by public sentiment? If you are a professor of religion, it is to be presumed you do not neglect any requirement that is strongly urged by public sentiment.---But, how is it with others? Do you not habitually neglect some duties? Do you not live in some practices reputable among men, that you know to be contrary to the law of God? If you do, it is demonstration absolute that you regard the opinions of men more than the judgment of God. Write down your name HYPOCRITE.

4. This class of professors are apt to indulge in some sins when they are away from home, that they would not commit at home.

Many a man who is temperate at home, when he gets to a distance, will toss off his glass of brandy and water at the table, or step up to the bar of a steamboat and call for liquor without shame, or if they are in Europe, they will go to the theater. When I was in the Mediterranean, at Messina, a gentleman one day asked me if I would go to the theater with him. "What! I go to the theater? A minister go to the theater?" Why, said he, you are away from home, and no one would know it. "But would not God know it?" It was plain that he thought, although I was a minister, I could go to the theater when I was away from home. No matter if God knew it, so long as men did not know it. And how should he get that idea, but by seeing ministers who would do just such things?

5. Another development of the character of these individuals is, that they indulge themselves in secret sin.

I am now speaking of something, by which you may know yourselves. If you allow yourselves in any sins secretly, when you can get along without having any human being know it, know that God sees it, and that He has already written down your name, HYPOCRITE. You are more afraid of disgrace in the eye of mortals, than of disgrace in the eye of God. If you loved God supremely, it would be a small thing to you that any and everybody else knew your sins, in comparison with having them known to God. If tempted to any such thing, you would exclaim, "What! shall I commit sin under the eye of God?"

6. They indulge in secret omissions of duty, which they would not dare to have known to others.

They may not practice any secret sins, or indulge in those secret pollutions that are spoken of, but they neglect those duties, that if they were known to neglect, it would be called disreputable to their Christian character. Such as secret prayer, for instance. They will go to the communion---yes, to the communion!---and appear to be very pious on the Sabbath, and yet, as to private piety, they know nothing of it. Their closet for prayer is unknown to God or man. It is easy to see that reputation is their idol. They dread to lose their reputation more than to offend God.

How is it with you? Is it a fact, that you habitually omit those secret duties, and are more careful to perform your public duties than private ones? Then what is your character? Do you need to be told? They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

7. The conscience of this class of persons seems to be formed on other principles than those of the gospel.

They seem to have a conscience in those things that are popular, and no conscience at all on those things that are not required by public sentiment. You may preach to them ever so plainly, their duty, and prove it ever so clearly, and even make them confess that it is their duty, and yet so long as public sentiment does not require it, and it is not a matter of reputation, they will continue on in the same way as before. Show them a "Thus saith the Lord," and make them see that their course is palpably inconsistent with Christian perfection, and contrary to the interests of the kingdom of Christ, and yet they will not alter. They make it manifest that it is not the requirement of God they regard, but the requirement of public opinion. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

8. This class of persons generally dread, very much, the thought of being considered fanatical.

They are ignorant, practically, of a first principle in religion, that ALL THE WORLD IS WRONG! That the public sentiment of the world is all against God, and that everyone who intends to serve God must in the first instance set his face against the public sentiment of the world. They are to take it for granted, that in a world of rebels, public sentiment is as certainly wrong as that there is a controversy with God. They have never had their eyes open to this fundamental truth, that the world is wrong, and that God’s ways are directly over against their ways. Consequently, it is true, and always has been true, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." They shall be called fanatical, superstitious, ultras, and the like. They always have been, and they always will be, as long as the world is wrong.

But this class of persons will never go further than is consistent with the opinions of worldly men. They say they must do this and that in order to have influence over such men. Right over against this is the course of the true friends of God and man. Their leading aim is to reverse the order of the world, and turn the world upside down, to bring all men to obey God, and all the opinions of men to conform to the word of God, and all the usages and institutions of the world to accord with the spirit of the gospel.

9. They are very intent on making friends on both sides.

They take the middle course always. They avoid the reputation of being righteous over-much, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of being lax or irreligious. It has been so for centuries, that a

person could maintain a reputable profession of religion, without ever being called fanatical. And the standard is still so low, that probably the great mass of the Protestant churches are trying to occupy this middle ground. They mean to have friends on both sides. They are not set down as reprobates, on the one hand, nor as fanatics or bigots on the other. They are FASHIONABLE CHRISTIANS ! They may be called fashionable Christians for two reasons. One is, that their style of religion is popular and fashionable; and the other is, that they generally follow worldly fashions. Their aim in religion is not to do anything that will disgust the world. No matter what God requires, they are determined to be so prudent as not to bring on them the censures of the world, nor offend the enemies of God. They have manifestly more regard to men than to God. And if they are ever so circumstanced that they must do that which will displease their friends and neighbors, or offend God, they will offend God. If public sentiment clashes with the commands of God, they will yield to public sentiment.

10. They will do more to gain the applause of men than to gain the applause of God.

This is evident from the fact, that they will yield obedience only to those requirements of God which are sustained by public opinion. Although they will not exercise self-denial to gain the applause of God, yet they will exercise great self-denial to gain the applause of men. The men that gave up ardent spirit, because public sentiment rendered it necessary, will give up wine also, whenever a public sentiment sufficiently powerful shall demand it. And not till then.

11. They are more anxious to know what are the opinions of men about them, than to know what is God’s opinion of them.

If one of this class is a minister, and preaches a sermon, he is more anxious to know what the people thought of it, than to know what God thought of it. And if he makes any thing like a failure, the disgrace of it with men cuts him ten times more than the thought that he has dishonored God, or hindered the salvation of souls. Just so with an elder, or a member of the church, of this class. If he prays in a meeting, or exhorts, he is more concerned to know what is thought of it than to know how God is pleased.

If such a one has some secret sin found out, he is vastly more distressed about it because he is disgraced than because God is dishonored. Or if he falls into open sin, when he comes to be met with it, he cares as much again about the disgrace as about the sin of it.

They are more anxious about their appearance in the eyes of the world, than in the eyes of God. Females of this character are vastly more anxious, when they go to church, how the body shall appear in the eyes of men than how the heart shall appear in the eyes of God. Such a one will be all the week engaged in getting everything in order, so as to make her person appear to advantage, and perhaps will not spend half an hour in her closet, to prepare her heart to appear before God in His courts. Everybody can see, at a glance, what this religion is, the moment it is held up to view. Nobody is at a loss to say what that man or that woman’s name is. It is HYPOCRITE. They will go into the house of God, with their heart dark as midnight, while everything in their external appearance is comely and decent. They must appear well in the eyes of men, no matter how that part is, on which God fixes His eye. The heart may be dark and disordered and polluted, and they care not, so long as the eye or man detects no blemish.

12. They refuse to confess their sins, in the manner which the law of God requires, lest they should lose reputation among men.

If they are ever required to make confession of more than they think consistent with their reputation, they are more anxious how it will affect their character, than whether God is satisfied.

Search your hearts, you that have made confessions, and see which most affects your minds, the question what God thought of it or what men thought of it. Have you refused to confess what you knew God required, because it will hurt your reputation among men? Will not God judge your hearts? Only be honest now, and let it be answered.

13. They will yield to custom what they know to be injurious to the cause of religion, and to the welfare of mankind.

A striking instance of this is found in the manner of keeping new year's day. Who does not know that the customary manner of keeping new year's day, setting out their wine and their rich cake and costly entertainments, and spending the day as they do, is a waste of money, hurtful to health, and injurious to their own souls and to the interests of religion? And yet they do it. Shall we be told that persons who will do this, when they KNOW it is injurious, supremely love God? I care not who attempts to defend such a custom, it is wrong, and every Christian must know it to be so. And those who persist in it when they know better, demonstrate that a supreme regard to God is not their rule of' life.

14. They will do things of doubtful character, or things the lawfulness of which they strongly doubt, in obedience to public sentiment.

You will recollect that on the evening of the first day of the year I took up this subject, and showed that those who do things of doubtful character, of the lawfulness of which they are not satisfied, are condemned for it in the sight of God.

15. They are often ashamed to do their duty, and so much ashamed that they will not do it.

Now when a person is so much ashamed to do what God requires as not to do it, it is plain that his own reputation is his idol. How many do you find who are ashamed to acknowledge Jesus Christ, ashamed to reprove sin, in high places or low places, and ashamed to speak out when religion is assailed. If they supremely regarded God, could they ever be ashamed of doing their duty? Suppose a man's wife was calumniated, would he be ashamed to defend his wife? By no means. If his children were abused, would he be ashamed to take their part? Not if he loved them, it would not be shame that would deter him from defending his wife or children. If a man was friendly to the administration of the government of his country, and heard it calumniated, would he be ashamed to defend it? He might not think it expedient to speak, for other reasons; but if he was a true friend to the government, he would not be ashamed to speak in its behalf, anywhere.

Now such persons as I am speaking of, will not take decided ground when they are among the enemies of truth, where they would be subject to reproach for doing it.---They are very bold for the truth when among its friends, and will make a great display of their courage. But when put to the trial, they will sell the Lord Jesus Christ, or deny Him before His enemies, and put Him to open shame, rather than rebuke wickedness or speak out in His cause among His enemies.

16. They are opposed to all encroachments on their self-indulgence, by advancing light on practical subjects.

They are much disturbed by every new proposal that draws on their purses, or breaks in upon their habitual self-indulgence. And you may talk as much, and preach as much in favor of it as you please, there is only one way to reach this kind of people, and that is by creating a new public sentiment. When you have brought over, by the power of benevolence and of conscience, a sufficient number in the community to create a public sentiment in its favor, then they will adopt your new proposals, and not before.

17. They are always distressed at what they call the ultraism of the day.

They are much afraid the ultraism of the present day will destroy the church. They say we are carrying things too far, and we shall produce a reaction. Take, for instance, the Temperance Reformation. The true friends of temperance now know, that alcohol is the same thing, wherever it is found, and that to save the world and banish intemperance, it is necessary to banish alcohol in all its forms. The pinch of the Temperance Reformation has never yet been decided. The mass of the community have never been called to any self-denial in the cause. The place where it will pinch is, when it comes to the question, whether men will exercise self-denial to crush the evil. If they may continue to drink wine and beer, it is no self-denial to give up ardent spirits. It is only changing the form in which alcohol is taken, and they can drink as freely as before. Many friends of the cause, when they saw what multitudes were rushing into it, were ready to shout a triumph. But the real question is not yet tried. And multitudes will never yield, until the friends of God and man can form a public sentiment so strong as to crush the character of every man who will not give it up. You will find many doctors of divinity and pillars of the church, who are able to drink their wine, that will stand their ground, and no command of God, no requirement of benevolence, no desire to save souls, no pity for bleeding humanity, will move such persons, until you can form a public sentiment so powerful as to force them to it, on penalty of loss of reputation. For they love the praise of men.

And it is a query now in my mind, a matter of solemn and anxious doubt, whether in the present low state of piety and decline of revivals of religion in the church, a public sentiment can be formed, so powerful as to do this. If not, we shall be driven back. The Temperance Reformation, like a dam of sand, will be swept away, the floodgates will be opened again, and the world will go reeling---down to hell. And yet thousands of professors of religion, who want to enjoy public respect and at time same time enjoy themselves in their own way, are crying out as if they were in distress at the ultraism of the times!

18. They are often opposed to men, and measures, and things, while they are unpopular and subject to reproach, and when they become popular, fall in with them.

Let an individual go through the churches in any section, and wake them up to a revival of religion, and while he is little known, these persons are not backward to speak against him. But let him go on, and gain influence, and they will fall in and commend him and profess to be his warmest friends. It was just so with Jesus Christ. Before His death, He had a certain degree of popularity.---Multitudes would follow him, as He went through the streets, and cry "Hosanna, Hosanna!" But observe, they never would follow Him an atom further than His popularity followed

him. As soon as He was arrested as a criminal, they all turned round and began to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

This class of persons, as they set with the tide one way, when a man is reproached, so they will set with the tide the other way, when he comes to be honored. There is only one exception. And that is, when they have become so far committed to the opposition, that they cannot come round without disgrace. And then they will be silent, until another opportunity comes up for letting out the burning fires that are rankling within them.

Very often a revival in a church, when it first begins, is opposed by certain members of the church. They do not like to have such things carried on, they are afraid there is too much animal excitement, and the like. But the work goes on, and by and by, they seem to fall in and go with the multitude. At length the revival is over, and the church grows cold again, and before long you will find this class of persons renewing their opposition to the work, and as the church declines they press their opposition, and perhaps, in the end, induce the church itself to take ground against the very revival which they had so much enjoyed. This is the very way in which individuals have acted in regard to revivals in this country. There are many such cases. They were awed by public sentiment and made to bow down to the revival, while it was in its power, but by and by, as the revival declines, they begin to let out the opposition that is in their hearts, and which was suppressed for a time because the revival was popular.

It has been just so in regard to the cause of missions, in a degree, and if anything should turn up, unfavorable to missions, so as to break the present power of public sentiment in their favor, you would find plenty of these fair weather supporters turning to the opposition.

19. If any measure is proposed to promote religion, they are very sensitive and scrupulous not to have anything done that is unpopular.

If they live in a city, they ask what will the other churches think of such a measure? And if it is likely to bring reproach on their church or their minister, in view of the ungodly, or in view of the other churches, they are distressed about it. No matter how much good it will do, or how many souls it will save, they do not want to have anything done to injure the respectability of their church.

20. This class of persons never aim at forming a public sentiment in favor of perfect godliness.

The true friends of God and man are always aiming at forming public sentiment, and correcting public sentiment on all points where it is wrong. They are set, with all their hearts, to search out all the evils in the world, and to reform the world, and drive out iniquity from the earth. The other class are always following public sentiment as it is, and feeling after the course of the tide, to go that way, shrinking back from everything that goes in the face of public sentiment. And they are ready to brand as imprudent, or rash, any man or anything, that goes to stem the tide of public sentiment and turn it the other way.

REMARKS.

1. It is easy for persons to take credit for their sins, and make themselves believe certain things are acts of piety, which are in fact only acts of hypocrisy.

They do the things that outwardly pertain to piety, and they give themselves credit for being pious, when their motives are all corrupt and hollow, and not one of them drawn from a supreme regard to God's authority. This is manifest from the fact that they do nothing except where God's requirements are backed up by public sentiment.---Unless you aim to do ALL your duty, and yield obedience in every thing, the piety for which you claim credit is mere hypocrisy, and is in fact sin against God.

2. There is a great deal more apparent piety in the church, than there is real piety.

3. There are many things which sinners suppose are good, but which are abominable in the sight of God.

4. But for the love of reputation and the fear of disgrace, how many there are in the church, who would break out into open apostacy.

How many are there here, who know you would break out into open vice, were it not for the restraints of public sentiment, the fear of disgrace, and the desire to gain the credit of virtue? Where a person is virtuous from a regard to the authority of God, whether public sentiment favor it or frown upon it, that is true piety. If otherwise, they have their reward. They do it for the sake of gaining credit in the eyes of men, and they gain it. But if they expect any favor at the hand or God, they will assuredly be disappointed. The only reward which HE will bestow upon such selfish hypocrites is, that they may be damned.

And now I wish to know how many of you will determine to do your duty, and all your duty, according to the will of God, let public sentiment be as it may? Who of you will agree to take the Bible for your rule, Jesus Christ for your pattern, and do what is RIGHT, in all cases, whatever man may say or think? Everyone that is not willing to take this ground must regard himself as a stranger to the grace of God. He is by no means in a state of justification. If he is not resolved upon doing what he knows to be right, let public sentiment be as it may, it is proof positive that he loves the praise of men more than the praise of God.

And let me say to the impenitent sinners present---You see what it is to be a Christian. It is to be governed by the authority or God in all things, and not by public sentiment, to live not by hopes and fears, but by supreme consecration of yourself unto God. You see that if you mean to be religious, you must count the cost. I will not flatter you. I will never try to coax you to become religious, by keeping back the truth. If you mean to be Christians, you must give yourselves wholly up to Christ. You cannot float along to heaven on the waves of public sentiment. I will not deceive you on this point.

Do you ask, sinner, what is to become of all these professors of religion, who are conformed to the world, and who love the praise of men more than the praise of God? I answer---They will go to hell, with you, and with all other hypocrites. Just as certain as that the friendship of the world is in enmity with God.

Wherefore, come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, saith the Lord, I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. And now, who will do it? In the church and among sinners, who will do it? Who? Who is on the Lord's side? Who is willing to say, "We will no longer go with the multitude to do evil, but are determined to do the will

of God, in all things whatsoever, and let the world think or say of us as it may." As many of you as are now willing to do this, will signify it by rising in your places before the congregation, and will then kneel down, while prayer is offered, that God would accept and seal your solemn covenant to obey God henceforth in everything, through evil report and through good report.

Chapter 62

03.15. RELIGION OF THE LAW & GOSPEL

RELIGION OF THE LAW AND GOSPEL.

TEXT: --"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." -- Rom 9:30-33.

In the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle pursues a systematic course of reasoning, to accomplish a particular design. In the beginning of it, he proves that not only the Gentiles, but the Jews also, were in a state of entire depravity; and that the Jews were not, as they vainly imagined, naturally holy. He then introduces the Moral Law, and by explaining it shows that by works of law no flesh could be saved. His next topic is Justification by Faith, in opposition to Justification by Law. Here I will observe, in passing, that it is my design to make this the subject of my next lecture. The next subject, with which he begins chap. 6, is to show that sanctification is by faith; or that all true religion, all the acceptable obedience there ever was in the world, is based on faith. In the eighth and ninth chapters, he introduces the subject of divine sovereignty; and in the last part of the ninth chapter, he sums up the whole matter, and asks, "What shall we say, then?" What shall we say of all this?---That the Gentiles, who never thought of the law, have become pious, and obtained the holiness which is by faith; but the Jews, attempting it by the law, have entirely failed. Wherefore? Because they made the fatal mistake of attempting to become pious by obeying the law, and have always come short, while the Gentiles have obtained true religion, by faith in Jesus Christ.---Jesus Christ is here called "that stumbling-stone," because the Jews were so opposed to Him. But whosoever believeth in Him shall not be confounded.

My design tonight is, to point out as distinctly as I can, the true distinction between the religion of law and the religion of faith. I shall proceed in the following order:

I. Show in what the distinction does not consist.

II. Show in what it does consist. And

III. Bring forward some specimens of both, to show more plainly in what they differ.

I. I am to show in what the distinction between the religion of law and the religion of faith does not consist.

1. The difference does not lie in the fact, that under the law men were justified by works, without faith. The method of salvation in both dispensations has been the same. Sinners were always justified by faith. The Jewish dispensation pointed to a Savior to come, and if men were saved at all, it was by faith in Christ. And sinners now are saved in the same way.

2. Not in the fact that the gospel has canceled or set aside the obligations of the moral law. It is true, it has set aside the claims of the ceremonial law, or law of Moses. The ceremonial law was nothing but a set of types pointing to the Savior, and was set aside, of course, when the great ante-type appeared. It is now generally admitted by all believers, that the gospel has not set aside the moral law. But that doctrine has been maintained in different ages of the church. Many have maintained that the gospel has set aside the moral law, so that believers are under no obligation to obey it. Such was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, so severely reprobated by Christ. The Antinomians, in the days of the apostles and since, believed that they were without any obligation to obey the moral law; and held that Christ's righteousness was so imputed to believers, and that He had so fulfilled the law for them, that they were under no obligation to obey it themselves.

There have been many, in modern times, called Perfectionists, who held that they were not under obligation to obey the law. They suppose that Christ has delivered them from the law, and given them the Spirit, and that the leadings of the Spirit are now to be their rule of life, instead of the law of God. Where the Bible says, sin shall not have dominion over believers, these persons understand by it, that the same acts, which would be sin if done by an unconverted person, are not sin in them. The others, they say, are under the law, and so bound by its rules, but themselves are sanctified, and are in Christ, and if they break the law it is no sin. But all such notions must be radically wrong. God has no right to give up the moral law. He cannot discharge us from the duty of love to God and love to man, for this is right in itself. And unless God will alter the whole moral constitution of the universe, so as to make that right which is wrong, He cannot give up the claims of the moral law. Besides, this doctrine represents Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost as having taken up arms openly against the government of God.

3. The distinction between law religion and gospel religion does not consist in the fact that the gospel is any less strict in its claims, or allows any greater latitude of self-indulgence than the law. Not only does the gospel not cancel the obligations of the moral law, but it does in no degree abate them. Some people talk about gospel liberty; as though they had got a new rule of life, less strict, and allowing more liberty than the law. I admit that it has provided a new method of justification, but it everywhere insists that the rule of life is the same with the law. The very first sentence of the gospel, the command to repent, is in effect a re-enactment of the law, for it is a command to return to obedience. The idea that the liberty of the gospel differs from the liberty of the law, is erroneous.

4. Neither does the distinction consist in the fact that those called legalists, or who have a legal religion, do, either by profession or in fact, depend on their own works for justification. It is not often the case, at least in our day, that legalists do profess dependence on their own works, for there are few so ignorant as not to know that this is directly in the face of the gospel. Nor is it necessarily the case that they really depend on their own works. Often they really depend on Christ for salvation. But their dependence is false dependence, such as they have no right to have. They depend on Him, but they make it manifest that their faith, or dependence, is not that which actually "worketh by love," or that "purifieth the heart," or that "overcometh the world." It is a simple matter of fact, that the faith which they have does not do what the faith does which men must have in order to be saved, and so it is not the faith of the gospel. They have a kind of faith, but not that kind that makes men real Christians, and brings them under the terms of the gospel.

II. I am to mention some of the particulars in which these two kinds of religion differ.

There are several different classes of persons who manifestly have a legal religion. There are some who really profess to depend on their own works for salvation. Such were the Pharisees. The Hicksite Quakers formerly took this ground, and maintained that men were to be justified by works; setting aside entirely justification by faith. When I speak of works, I mean works of law. And here I want you to distinguish between works of law and works of faith. This is the grand distinction to be kept in view. It is between works produced by legal considerations, and those produced by faith. There are but two principles on which obedience to any government can turn: One is the principle of hope and fear, under the influence of conscience. Conscience points out what is right or wrong, and the individual is induced by hope and fear to obey. The other principle is confidence and love. You see this illustrated in families, where one child always obeys from hope and fear, and another from affectionate confidence. So in the government of God, the only thing that ever produced even the appearance of obedience, is one of these two principles.

There is a multitude of things that address our hopes and fears; such as character, interest, heaven and hell, &c. These may produce external obedience, or conformity to the law. But filial confidence leads men to obey God from love. This is the only obedience that is acceptable to God. God not only requires a certain course of conduct, but that this should spring from love. There never was and never can be, in the government of God, any acceptable obedience but the obedience of faith. Some suppose that faith will be done away in heaven. This is a strange notion! As if there were no occasion to trust God in heaven, or no reason to exercise confidence in Him. Here is the great distinction between the religion of law and gospel religion. Legal obedience is influenced by hope and fear, and is hypocritical, selfish, outward, constrained. Gospel obedience is from love, and is sincere, free, cheerful, true. There is a class of legalists, who depend on works of law for justification, who have merely deified what they call a principle of right, and have set themselves to do right; it is not out of respect to the law of God, or out of love to God, but just because it is right.

There is another distinction here. The religion of law is the religion of purposes, or desires, founded on legal considerations, and not the religion of preference, or love to God. The individual intends to put off his sins; he purposes to obey God and be religious; but his purpose does not grow out of love to God, but out of hope and fear. It is easy to see that a purpose, founded on such considerations, is very different from a purpose growing out of love. But the religion of the gospel is not a purpose merely, but an actual preference consisting in love.

Again, there is a class of legalists that depend on Christ, but their dependence is not gospel dependence, because the works which it produces are works of law; that is, from hope and fear, not from love. Gospel dependence may produce, perhaps, the very same outward works, but the motives are radically different. The legalist drags on a painful, irksome, moral, and perhaps, outwardly, religious life. The gospel believer has an affectionate confidence in God, which leads him to obey out of love. His obedience is prompted by his own feelings. Instead of being dragged to duty, he goes to it cheerfully, because he loves it, and doing it is a delight to his soul.

There is another point. The legalist expects to be justified by faith, but he has not learned that he must be sanctified by faith. I propose to examine this point another time, in full. Modern legalists do not expect to be justified by works; they know these are inadequate---they know that the way to be saved is by Christ. But they have no practical belief that justification by faith is only true, as

sanctification by faith is true, and that men are justified by faith only, as they are first sanctified by faith. And therefore, while they expect to be justified by faith, they set themselves to perform works that are works of law.

Again: I wish you to observe that the two classes may agree in these points; the necessity of good works, and, theoretically, in what constitutes good works; that is, obedience springing from love to God. And further, they may agree in aiming to perform good works of this kind. But the difference lies here; in the different influences to which they look, to enable them to perform good works. The considerations by which they expect their minds to be affected, are different. They look to different sources for motives. And the true Christian alone succeeds in actually performing good works. The legalist, aiming to perform good works, influenced by hope and fear, and a selfish regard to his own interest, obeying the voice of conscience because he is afraid to do otherwise, falls entirely short of loving God with all his heart, and soul, and strength. The motives under which he acts have no tendency to bring him to the obedience of love. The true Christian, on the contrary, so appreciates God, so perceives and understands God’s character, in Christ, as begets such an affectionate confidence in God, that he finds it easy to obey from love. Instead of finding it, as a hymn has strangely represented,

Hard to obey, and harder still to love,"

he finds it no hardship at all. The commandments are not grievous. The yoke is easy, and the burden light. And he finds the ways of wisdom to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace.

Is it so with most professors of religion? Is it so with YOU? Do you feel, in your religious duties constrained by love? Are you drawn by such strong cords of love, that it would give you more trouble to omit duty than to obey? Do your affections flow out in such a strong current to God, that you cannot but obey? How is it with those individuals who find it "hard to obey, and harder still to love?" What is the matter? Ask that wife who loves her husband, if she finds it hard to try to please her husband? Suppose she answers, in a solemn tone, "O yes, I find it hard to obey and harder still to love my husband," what would the husband think? What would anyone of you who are parents say, if you should hear one of your children complaining, "I find it harder to obey my father, and harder still to love?" The truth is, there is a radical defect in the religion of those people who love such expressions and live as if they were true. If any one of you find religion a painful thing, rely on it, you have the religion of the law. Did you ever find it a painful thing to do what you love to do? No. It is a pleasure to do it. The religion of the gospel is no labor to them that exercise it. It is the feeling of the heart. What would you do in heaven, if religion is such a painful thing here?---Suppose you were taken to heaven and obliged to grind out just so much religion every week, and month and year, to eternity. What sort of a heaven would it be to you? Would it be heaven, or would it be hell?---If you were required to have ten thousand times as much as you have here, and your whole life were to be filled up with this, and nothing else to do or enjoy but an eternal round of such duties, would not hell itself be a respite to you?

The difference, then, lies here. One class are striving to be religious from hope and fear, and under the influence of conscience which lashes them if they do not do their duty. The other class act from love to God, and the impulses of their own feelings, and know what the text means, which says, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts, I will be their God, and they

shall be my people."

III. I will give some specimens of these two classes, by way of illustration.

The first example I shall give is that of the apostle Paul, as he has recorded it in the 7th of Romans, where he exhibits the struggle to obey the law, under the influence of law alone. [Here Mr. Finney proceeded, at a considerable length, to comment on the 7th chapter of Romans, but as he has since concluded to give a separate lecture on that subject, these remarks are omitted here. He showed how Paul had struggled, and labored, under the motives of law, until he absolutely despaired of help from that quarter; and how, when the gospel was brought to view, the chain was broken, and he found it easy to obey. He then proceeded:]

You may see the same in the experience of almost any convicted sinner, after he has become truly converted. He was convicted, the law was brought home to his mind, he struggled to fulfill the law, he was in agony, and then he was filled with joy and glory. Why? He was agonized under the law, he had no rest and no satisfaction, he tried to please God by keeping the law, he went about in pain all the day, he read the Bible, he tried to pray; but the Spirit of God was upon him, showing him his sins, and he had no relief. The more he attempts to help himself the deeper he sinks in despair. All the while, his heart is cold and selfish. But now let another principle be introduced, and let him be influenced by love to God. The same Holy Spirit is upon him, showing him the same sins that grieved and distressed him so before. But now he goes on his knees, his tears flow like water as he confesses his guilt, and his heart melts in joyful relentings, such as cannot be described, but easily understood by them that have felt it. Now he engages in performing the same duties that he tried before. But, O, how changed! The Spirit of God has broken his chains, and now he loves God and is filled with joy and peace in believing.

The same thing is seen in many professors of religion, who find religion a painful thing. They have much conviction, and perhaps much of what they call religion, but their minds are chiefly filled with doubts and fears, doubts and fears, all the time. By and by, perhaps, that same professor will come out, all at once, a different character. His religion now is not all complaints and sighs, but the love of God fills his heart, and he goes cheerfully and happily to his duty; and his soul is so light and happy in God, that he floats in an ocean of love and joy, and the peace that fills him is like a river.

Here, then, is the difference between the slavery of law and the liberty of the gospel. The liberty of the gospel does not consist in being freed from doing what the law requires, but in a man’s being in such a state of mind that doing it is itself a pleasure, instead of a burden. What is the difference between slavery and freedom? The slave serves because he is obliged to do so, the freeman serves from choice. The man who is under the bondage of law does duty because conscience thunders in his ears if he does not obey, and he hopes to go to heaven if he does. The man who is in the liberty of the gospel does the same things because he loves to do them. One is influenced by selfishness, the other by disinterested benevolence.

REMARKS.

I. You can easily see, that if we believe the words and actions of most professors of religion, they have made a mistake; and that they have the religion of law, and not gospel religion. They are not constrained by the love of Christ, but moved by hopes and fears, and by the commandments of

God. They have gone no farther in religion than to be convicted sinners. Within the last year, I have witnessed the regeneration of so many professors of religion, that I am led to fear that great multitudes in the church are yet under the law; and although they profess to depend on Christ for salvation, their faith is not that which works by love.

II. Some persons are all faith, without works. These are Antinomians. Others are all works and no faith. These are Legalists. In all ages of the church, men have inclined first to one of these extremes, and then over to the other. Sometimes they are settled down on their lees, pretending to be all faith, and waiting God's time. Then they get roused up and dash on in works, without regard to the motive from which they act.

III. You see the true character of those professors of religion who are forever crying out "Legality!" as soon as they are pressed up to holiness. When I first began to preach, I found this spirit in many places; so that the moment Christians were urged up to duty, the cry would rise, This is legal preaching, do preach the gospel; salvation is by faith, not by duty; you ought to comfort saints, not to distress them. All this was nothing but rank Antinomianism.

On the other hand, the same class of churches now complain, if you preach faith to them, and show them what is the true nature of gospel faith. They now want to do something, and insist that no preaching is good that does not excite them, and stir them up to good works. They are all for doing, doing, doing, and will be dissatisfied with preaching that discriminates between true and false faith, and urges obedience of the heart, out of love to God. The Antinomians wait for God to produce right feelings in them. The Legalists undertake to get right feelings by going to work. It is true that going to work is the way, when the church feels right, to perpetuate and cherish right feelings. But it is not the way to get right feeling, in the first place, to dash right into the work, without any regard to the motives of the heart.

IV. Real Christians are a stumbling block to both parties; to those who wait God's time and do nothing, and to those who bustle about with no faith. The true Christian acts under such a love to God and to his fellow man, and he labors to pull sinners out of the fire with such earnestness, that the waiting party cry out, "O, he is getting up an excitement; he is going to work in his own strength; he don't believe in the necessity of divine influences; we ought to feel our dependence; let us wait God's time, and not try to get up a revival without God." So they sit down and fold their hands, and sing, "We feel our dependence, we feel our dependence; wait God's time; we don't trust in our own works." On the other hand, the legalists when once they get roused to bustle about, will not see but their religion is the same with the real Christian. They make as strenuous outward efforts, and suppose themselves to be actuated by the same spirit.

You will rarely see a revival, in which this does not show itself. If the body of the church are awakened to duty, and have the spirit of prayer and zeal for the conversion of sinners, there will be some who sit still and complain that the church are depending on their own strength, and others very busy and noisy, but without any feeling; while the third class are so full of love and compassion to sinners that they can hardly eat or sleep, and yet so humble and tender that you would imagine they felt themselves to be nothing. The legalist, with his dry zeal, makes a great noise, deceives himself, perhaps, and thinks he is acting just like a Christian. But mark! The true Christian is stirring and active in the service of Christ, but moves with the holy fire that burns within his own bosom. The legalist depends on some protracted meeting, or some other influence from

without, to excite him to do his duty.

V. You see why the religion of some persons is so steady and uniform, and that of others, is so fitful and evanescent. You will find some individuals, who seem to be always engaged in religion. Talk to them any time, on the subject, and their souls will kindle. Others are awake only now and then. Once in a while you may find them full of zeal. The truth is, when one has the anointing that abides, he has something that is durable. But if his religion is only that of the law, he will only have just so much of it as he has of conviction at the present moment, and his religion will be fitful and evanescent, of course.

VI. You see why some are so anxious to get to heaven, while others are so happy here. There are some, who have such a love for souls, and such a desire to have Christ's kingdom built upon earth, that they are perfectly happy here, and willing to live and labor for God, as long as He chooses to have them. Nay, if they were sent to hell, and permitted to labor there for souls, they would be happy. While others talk as if people were never to expect true enjoyment in this life; but when they get to heaven, they expect to be happy. One class have no enjoyment but in hope. The other has already the reality, the very substance of heaven begun in the soul.

Now, beloved, I have as particularly as I could in the time, pointed out to you the distinction between the religion of the law and the religion of the gospel. And now, what religion have you? True religion is always the same, and consists in disinterested love to God and man. Have you that kind of religion? Or have you the kind that consists, not in disinterested love, but in the pursuit of happiness as the great end. Which have you? The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace.---There is no condemnation of such religion. But if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.---Now, don't make a mistake here, and suffer yourselves to go down to hell with a lie in your right hand, because you have the religion of the law. The Jews failed here, while the Gentiles attained true holiness by the gospel. O, how many are deceived, and are acting under legal considerations, while they know nothing of the real religion of the gospel!

Chapter 63

03.16. REPROOF A CHRISTIAN DUTY

REPROOF A CHRISTIAN DUTY.

TEXT:.--"Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him."--- Lev 19:17.

The whole verse reads thus: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." In the margin, as those of you who have Bibles with marginal notes can see, the last words of the verse are rendered, "that thou bear not sin for him." And this, I am satisfied, is the correct translation. The idea is this:

THAT MEN ARE BOUND TO REPROVE THEIR NEIGHBORS FOR SIN, LEST THEY BECOME PARTAKERS WITH THEM, OR ACCESSORY TO THEIR SIN.

In speaking from these words I design to pursue the following order:

I. To show the reasons for the rule laid down by God in the text.

II. Show to whom the rule is applicable.

III. Mention several exceptions which God has made to the rule, or classes of persons who are not to be reproved for their sins.

IV. The manner of performing this duty.

V. Several specific applications of the principles established.

I. I am to show the reasons for the rule.

1. Love to God plainly requires this.

If we really love God, we shall of course feel bound to reprove those that hate and abuse Him and break His commands. If I love the government of the country, should I not reprove and rebuke a man who should abuse or revile the government? If a child loves his parents, will he not of course reprove a man that abuses his parents in his hearing?

2. Love to the universe will lead to the same thing.

If a man loves the universe, if he is actuated by universal benevolence, he knows that sin is inconsistent with the highest good of the universe, and that it is calculated to injure and ruin the whole if not counteracted; that its direct tendency is to overthrow the order and destroy the happiness of the universe. And therefore, if he sees this doing, his benevolence will lead him to reprove and oppose it.

3. Love to the community in which you live, is another reason.

Not only love to the universe at large, but love to the particular people with which you are connected should lead you to reprove sin. Sin is a reproach to any people, and whoever commits it

goes to produce a state of society that is injurious to every thing good. His example has a tendency to corrupt society, to destroy its peace and to introduce disorder and ruin, and it is the duty of every one who loves the community to resist and reprove it.

4. Love to your neighbor demands it.

Neighbor, here, means anybody that sins within the reach of your influence; not only in your presence, but in your neighborhood, if your influence can reach him, or in your nation, or in the world. If he sins he injures himself, and therefore if we love him we shall reprove his sins. Love to the intemperate induces us to warn him of the consequences of his course. Suppose we see our neighbor exposed to a temporal calamity, say his house on fire. True love will induce us to warn him and not to leave him to perish in the flames. Especially if we saw him inclined to persist in his course, and stay in the burning house, we should expostulate earnestly with him, and not suffer him to destroy himself, if we could possibly prevent it. Much more should we warn him of the consequences of sin, and reprove him, and strive to turn him, before he destroys himself.

5. It is cruel to omit it.

If you see your neighbor sin, and you pass by and neglect to reprove him, it is just as cruel as if you should see his house on fire, and pass by and not warn him of it. Why not? If he is in the house, and the house burns, he will lose his life. If he sins and remains in sin, he will go to hell. Is it not cruel to let him go unwarned to hell? Some seem to consider it not cruel to let a neighbor go on in sin till the wrath of God comes on him to the uttermost. Their feelings are so tender that they cannot wound him by telling him of his sin and his danger. No doubt, the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Instead of warning their neighbor of the consequences of sin, they actually encourage him in it.

6. To refuse to do it is rebellion against God.

For any one to see rebellion and not to reprove it or lift his hand to oppose it, is itself rebellion. It would be counted rebellion by the laws of the land. The man who should know of a treasonable plot, and did not disclose it or endeavor to defeat it, would be held an accessory, and condemned as such by law. So if a man sees rebellion breaking out against God, and does not oppose it or make efforts to suppress it, he is himself a rebel.

7. If you do not reprove your neighbors for their sin, you are chargeable with their death.

God holds us chargeable with the death of those whom we suffer to go on in sin without reproof, and it is right He should. If we see them sin, and make no opposition, and give no reproof, we consent to it, and countenance them in it. If you see a man preparing to kill his neighbor, and stand still and do nothing to prevent it, you consent, and are justly chargeable as accessory; in the eye of God and in the eye of law, you are justly chargeable with the same sin. So if you see a man committing any iniquity, and do nothing to resist it, you are guilty with him. His blood will be upon his own head, but at whose hand will God require it? What says God respecting a watchman? "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand." This is true of all men. If you suffer a neighbor,

who is within reach of your influence, to pass on in sin unwarned, he will die in his iniquity, but his blood shall be required at your hand.

8. Your silence encourages him in sin.

He is authorized to infer from your silence that you approve his sin, or, at least, that you do not care for it. Especially if he knows you as a professor of religion. It is an old maxim that silence is consent. Sinners do regard your silence as a virtual sanction of what they do.

9. By reproving your neighbor who sins, you may save him.

What multitudes have been reformed by timely reproof. Most of those who are saved, are saved by somebody's rebuking them for their sins and urging them to repentance. You may be instrumental in saving any man, if you speak to him and reprove him and pray for him, as you ought. How many instances there are, where a single reproof has been to the transgressor like the barbed arrow in his soul, that rankled, and rankled, the poison whereof drank up his spirits, until he submitted to God. I have known instances where even a look of reproof has done the work.

10. If you do not save the individual reproved, your reproof may save somebody else that may be acquainted with the fact.

Such cases have often occurred, where the transgressor has not been reclaimed, but others have been deterred from following his example by the rebukes directed to him.---Who can doubt that, if professors of religion were faithful in this duty, men would fear encountering their reproofs, and that fear would deter them from such conduct, and multitudes who now go on unblushing and unawed, would pause and think, and be reclaimed and saved? Will you, with such an argument for faithfulness before you, let sinners go on unrebuked till they stumble into hell?

11. God expressly requires it.

The language of the text is, in the original, exceedingly strong. The word is repeated, which is the way in which the Hebrew expresses a superlative, so as to leave no doubt on the mind, not the least uncertainty as to the duty, nor any excuse for not doing it. There is not a stronger command of God in the Bible than this. God has given it the greatest strength of language that He can. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke him,"---that is, without any excuse, "and not bear his sin," not be accessory to his ruin. It is a maxim of law, that if a man knows of a murder about to be committed and does not use means to prevent it, he shall be held accessory before the fact. If he knows of murder which has been done, and does not endeavor to bring the criminal to justice, he is accessory after the fact. So by the law of God, if you do not endeavor to bring a known transgressor to repentance, you are implicated in the guilt of his crime, and are held responsible at the throne of God.

12. If you do it in a right manner, you will keep a conscience void of offense in regard to your neighbor, whatever may be his end.

And you cannot do this without being faithful in the reproof of sin. A man does not live conscientiously, towards God or man, unless he is in the habit of reproving transgressors who are within his influence. This is one grand reason why there is so little conscience in the church. In what respect are professors of religion so much in the habit of resisting their consciences, as in

regard to the duty of reproving sin? Here is one of the strongest commands in the Bible, and yet multitudes do not pay any attention to it at all. Can they have a clear conscience? They may just as well pretend to have a clear conscience, and get drunk every day. No man keeps the law of God, or keeps his conscience clear, who sees sin and does not reprove it. He has additional guilt, who knows of sin and does not reprove it. He breaks two commandments. First, he becomes accessory to the transgression of his neighbor, and then he disobeys an express requirement by refusing to reprove his neighbor.

13. Unless you reprove men for their sins, you are not prepared to meet them in judgment.

Are you prepared to meet your children in the judgment, if you have not reproved nor chastised them, nor watched over their morals? "Certainly not," you say.---But why? "Because God has made it my duty to do this, and He holds me responsible for it." Very well. Then take the case of any other man that sins under your eye, or within reach of your influence, and goes down to hell, and you have never reproved him. Are you not responsible? Oh, how many are now groaning in hell, that you have seen commit sin, and have never reproved, and now they are pouring curses on your head because you never warned them. And how can you meet them in judgment?

14. Unless you do this, you are not prepared to meet God.

How many there are, who profess to love God, and yet never so much as pretend to obey this command. Are such people prepared to meet God? When He says, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor"---that is, without any excuse.

II. To whom is this command addressed?

Manifestly, to all men that have neighbors. It was addressed to all the people of Israel, and through them to all who are under the government of God---to high and low, rich and poor, young and old, male and female, and every individual who is under the government of God or bound to obey His commands.

III. Some exceptions to the universal application of this law.

He that made the law has a right to admit of exceptions. And the rule is binding in all cases, unless they come within the exceptions. There are some exceptions to the rule before us, laid down in the Bible.

l. God says, "Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee."

There is a state of mind, where a person is known to be a scorner, a despiser of religion, a hater of God, and has no regard to His law, and not to be influenced by any fear or care for God, why should you reprove him? It will only provoke a quarrel, without any good resulting to any body. Therefore God makes such a character an exception to the rule.

2. Jesus Christ says, "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

Whatever else this passage means, it appears to me to mean this, that sometimes men are in such a state of mind that to talk to them about religion would be at once irrational and dangerous, like casting pearls before swine. They have such a contempt for religion, and such a stupid,

sensual, swinish heart, that they will trample all your reproofs under their feet, and turn upon you in anger besides. It is lawful to let such men go on; and your not meddling with them will be greater wisdom than to attack them. But great charity should be used, not to suppose those of your neighbors to be swine, who do not deserve it, and who might be benefited by suitable reproof.

3. Men who are in a settled state of self-righteousness, it is best to let alone.

Christ said of the Scribes and Pharisees, "Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind." That is, they were so full of pride and conceit, so satisfied of their own wisdom and goodness, that they cannot be reached by any reproof, and it seems best to let them alone; for if you begin to reprove them, you might as well face a north-wester as to think of making an impression on them. They will face you down, and are so full of arguments and cavils and bullyings, that you gain nothing.

IV. The manner in which this duty is to be performed.

1. It should be done always in the name of the Lord.

It is important when you reprove your neighbor for sin, always to make him feel it is not a personal controversy with you, not a matter of selfishness on your part, or claiming any right of superiority, or to lord it over him, but that you reprove him in the name of the Lord, for the honor of God, because he has broken His law. If, by your manner, you in any way make the impression on his mind, that it is a personal controversy, or done for any private motive with you, he will invariably rise up against you, and resist, and perhaps retort upon you. But if you make the impression on his mind that it is done in the name of God, and bring him right up before God as an offender, he will find it exceedingly difficult to get away from you without at least confessing that he is wrong.

2. It should always be done with great solemnity.

Above all things, do not make him think that it is just a little thing that you hint to him, but make him feel that it is for a sin against God you are reproving him, and that it is what in your view ought to be looked upon as an awful thing.

3. You should use more or less severity, according to the nature of the case, and the circumstances under which the sin was committed.

(1.) The relation of the parties.

Your relation to the person who has been guilty of sin, should be properly regarded.

If a child is going to reprove a parent, he should do it in a manner suited to the relation he stands in. If a man is going to reprove a magistrate, or if an individual is about to rebuke an elder, the apostle says it must be in that way, "entreat him as a father." This relation should enter deeply into the manner of administering reproof. The relation of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of brothers and sisters, should all be regarded. So the ages of the parties, their relative circumstances in life. For servants to reprove their masters in the same manner as their equals is improper. This direction should never be overlooked or forgotten, for if it is, the good effect of reproof will be all lost. BUT REMEMBER, that no relations in life, or relative circumstances of the parties, take away the obligation of this duty. Whatever be the relation, you are to reprove sin, and are bound to do it in the name of the Lord. Do it, not as if you were complaining or finding fault for

a personal injury committed against yourself, but as a sin against God. Thus, when a child reproves a parent for sin, he is not to do it as if he was expostulating with him for any injury done to himself, but with an eye to the fact that the parent has sinned against God, and therefore, with all that plainness and faithfulness and pungency that sin calls for.

(2.) Reproof should be regulated by the knowledge which the offender has of his duty.

If the individual is ignorant, reproof should be more in the form of instruction, rather than of severe rebuke. How do you do with your little child? You instruct him and strive to enlighten his mind respecting his duty. You proceed, of course, very differently from what you would do with a hardened offender.

(3.) With reference also to the frequency of the offense.

You would reprove a first offense in a very different manner from what you would use towards a habitual transgressor. If a person is accustomed to sin, and knows that it is wrong, you use more severity. If it is the first time, perhaps a mere allusion to it may be sufficient to prevent a repetition.

(4.) So, also, you are to consider whether he has been frequently reproved for the sin.

If he has not only often committed the sin, but been often reproved, and yet has hardened his neck, there is the greater necessity for using sharpness. The hardening influence of former reproofs resisted, shows that no common expostulations will take hold. He needs to have the terrors of the Lord poured upon him like a storm of hail.

4. Always show that your temper is not ruffled.

Never manifest any displeasure at the transgressor, which he can possibly construe into personal displeasure at himself. It is often important to show your strong displeasure at what he is doing. Otherwise he will think you are not in earnest. Suppose you reprove a man for murder, in a manner not expressing any abhorrence of his crime. You would not expect to produce an effect. The manner should be suited to the nature of the crime, yet so as not to lead him to think you have any personal feeling. Here is the grand defect in the manner of reproving crime, both in the pulpit and out of it. For fear of giving offence, men do not express their abhorrence of the sin, and therefore transgressors are so seldom reclaimed.

5. Always reprove in the Spirit of God.

You should always have so much of the Holy Ghost with you, that when you reprove a man for sin, he will feel as if it come from God. I have known cases, where reproof from a Christian in that state cuts the transgressor to the heart, and stings like the arrow of the Almighty, and he cannot get rid of it till he repents.

6. There are many different ways of giving reproof so as to reach the individual reproved.

Sometimes it can be done best by sending a letter, especially if the person is at a distance. And there are cases where it can be done so, even in your own neighborhood. I knew an individual who chose this way of reprimanding a sea-captain for intemperance in crossing the Atlantic. The captain drank hard, especially in bad weather, and when his services were most wanted. The individual was in great agony, for the captain was not only intemperate, but when he drank, he was

ill-natured, and endangered the lives of all on board. He made it a subject of prayer. It was a difficult case---he did not know how to approach the captain so as to make it probable he should do good and not hurt; for a captain at sea, you know, is a perfect despot, and has the most absolute power on earth. After a while he sat down and wrote a letter, and gave it to the captain with his own hand, in which he plainly and affectionately, but faithfully and most pointedly set forth his conduct, and the sin he was committing against God and man. He accompanied it with much prayer to God. The captain read it, and it completely cured him; he made an apology to the individual, and never drank another drop of anything stronger than coffee or tea on the whole passage.

7. Sometimes it is necessary to reprove sin by forming societies, and getting up newspapers, and forming a public sentiment against a particular sin, that shall be a continued and overwhelming rebuke. The Temperance societies, Moral Reform societies, Anti-Slavery societies, &c. are designed for this end.

V. I will mention now some of the cases in which these principles are applicable.

They are peculiarly applicable to those crimes which are calculated to undermine the institutions of society, and to exert a wide-spread influence. Such sins can only be held in check and put down by faithfulness in reproof.

1. Sabbath-breaking.

If Christians would universally mark transgressors, and rebuke them that trample on the Sabbath, they would do more to put a stop to Sabbath breaking than by all other means. If Christians were united in this, how long do you suppose it would be before this sin would be put down? If only a few were faithful, and constant, and persevering, they might do much. If only a few do it, and these only now and then, it might not have much effect. But I believe if all professors of religion were to do it, every grocery and grog shop, and oyster cellar and fruit stand would be shut up. At all events, they are bound to do it, whatever may be the results; and so long as they neglect their duty, they are chargeable before God with all the Sabbath breaking in the city. If all the churches and ecclesiastical bodies in the land were united to remonstrate with the government, and would continue to do it, firmly and in the name of the Lord, do you suppose that government would continue to violate the Sabbath with their mail? I tell you, no. The church can do this, I believe, in one year, if all were united throughout the country and could speak out fully, in the fear of God, and without any fear of man. No man, who ever expected to be elected to office again, would ever again advise the breaking of the Sabbath. But now, while the church is divided and not half in earnest, there are so few speak out that Congress despises them, and pays no attention. Thus it is that the church connive at Sabbath breaking, and they are without excuse, till they speak out and rebuke their rulers, in the name of Jehovah, for breaking His holy law.

2. Intemperance and rum-selling.

Suppose every man in this city that sells rum were continually subject to the rebukes which God requires---suppose every man that passed by were to reprove him for his sin, how long could he sell rum? If only the church were to do it, if that deacon and that elder would do it, and every Christian would follow him with rebukes in the name of the Lord for poisoning men to death with rum, he could not go on and do it. Such a strong and decided testimony would soon drive him from

his trade of death. In self-defense, he would have to yield to the pressure of solemn rebuke.

3. Lewdness.

This is a wide-spreading evil, that ought to be universally rebuked.

It should be rebuked unsparingly, not only from the pulpit, but by the press, and in the street, till it is driven from its strong holds, and made to hide itself in the chambers of hell.

4. Slavery.

What! shall men be suffered to commit one of the most God-dishonoring and most heaven-daring sins on earth, and not be reproved? It is a sin against which all men should bear testimony, and lift up their voice like a trumpet, till this giant iniquity is banished from the land and from the world.

VI. I shall consider some of the difficulties which are sometimes raised in the way of the performance of this duty.

1. It is often asked, Is it a duty to reprove my neighbor when there is no prospect of doing any good?

I answer, it may be very essential to reprove sin in many cases where there is no prospect that the individual whom you reprove will be benefited. As in cases where your silence would be taken for connivance in his sin. Or where the very fact of his being reproved may prevent others from falling into the like crime. Where the offender comes properly under the description of a scorner or a swine, there God has made an exception, and you are not bound to reprove. But in other cases, duty is yours, consequences God’s.

2. It is asked, Should I reprove strangers? Why not? Is not the stranger your neighbor? You are not to reprove a stranger in the same way that you would a familiar acquaintance, but the fact of his being a stranger is not a reason why he should not be reproved, if he breaks the command of God. If a man swears profanely, or breaks the Sabbath, in your presence, his being a stranger does not excuse you from the duty and the responsibility of administering reproof, or trying to bring him to repentance and save his soul.

3. It is asked, Should we reprove a person when he is drunk?

Generally not, for when a person is drunk he is deranged. There may be cases where it is proper, for the purpose of warning others. But so far as the drunkard himself is concerned, as a general rule, it is not expedient. Yet there are many cases, where reproof to a man even when drunk, has taken such a hold on his mind as to sober him and turn him from his beastly sin.

4. Shall we reprove great men, and those who are above us in society, and who may look down on us and on our reproofs with contempt?

That does not alter your duty. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin for him." You should bear in mind the relation in which he stands and treat him accordingly. But still, if he sins against God, it is your duty to reprove him, in an appropriate manner.

REMARKS.

1. Do not talk about people’s sins, but go and reprove them.

It is very common to talk about people’s sins behind their backs, but this is great wickedness. If you want to talk about any person’s sins, go and talk to him about them, and try to get him to repent and forsake them. Do not go and talk to others against him behind his back, and leave him to go on in his sins, unwarned, to hell.

2. How few professors of religion are sufficiently conscientious to practice this duty.

I suppose there are thousands in this city, who never think of doing it. Yes; professors of religion live in habitual disobedience to this plain, and strongly-expressed command of God. And then they wonder why they do not have the spirit of prayer, and why there are not more revivals! Wonder!

3. See why so few persons enjoy religion.

They live in habitual neglect of this command, making excuses, when God has said there shall be no excuse. And how can they enjoy religion? What would the universe think of God, if he should grant the joys of religion to such unfaithful professors?

4. We see that the great mass of professors of religion have more regard to their own reputation than to the requirements of God.

The proof is, that sooner than run the risk of being called censorious, or of getting enemies by rebuking sin, they will let men go on in sin unrebuked, notwithstanding God says, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor." But I shall offend him if I reprove his sin. In any wise rebuke him, says Jehovah. It shows that they have greater fear of men than of God. For fear of offending men, they run the risk of offending God. Yea, they absolutely disobey God, in one of His plainest and strongest commandments, rather than incur the displeasure of men by rebuking their sins.

5. No man has a right to say to us, when we reprove him for his sin, that it is none of our business to meddle with him.

How often do transgressors tell faithful reprovers, they had better mind their own business and not meddle with what does not concern them. And they are called meddlers and busybodies, for interfering in other people’s concerns. At the south, they have got themselves into a great rage because we at the north are trying to convince them of the wickedness of slavery. And they say it is none of our business, that slavery is a matter peculiarly their own, and they will not suffer anybody else to interfere with them, and they require us to let them alone, and will not even allow us to talk about the subject. And they want our northern legislatures to pass laws forbidding us to rebuke our southern neighbors for their sin in holding men in slavery. God forbid that we should be silent. Jehovah Himself has commanded us to rebuke our neighbor in any wise, let the consequences be as they may. And we will rebuke them, though all hell should rise up against it.

Are we to hold our peace and be partakers in the sin of slavery, by connivance, as we have been? God forbid.---We will speak of it, and bear our testimony against it, and pray over it, and complain of it to God and man.---Heaven shall know, and the world shall know, and hell shall know, that we protest against the sin and will continue to rebuke it, till it is broken up. God Almighty says, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor," and we must do it.

So the rum-dealer is all the while pleading, "It is none of your concern what I do, please to mind your own business and let me alone." But it is our business to reprove him when he dispenses his poison, and it is everybody’s concern, and every man is bound to rebuke his crime till he gives it up and ceases to destroy the lives and souls of his neighbors.

6. We see the importance of consistency in religion.

If a man professes to love God, he ought to have consistency enough to reprove those that oppose God. If Christians were only consistent in this duty, many would be converted by it, a right public sentiment would be formed, and sin would be rebuked and forced to retire before the majesty of Christian rebuke. If Christians were not such cowards, and absolutely disobedient to this plain command of God, one thing would certainly come of it---either they would be murdered in the streets as martyrs, because men could not bear the intolerable presence of truth, or they would be speedily converted to God.

What shall we say then to such professors of religion? Afraid to reprove sinners! When God commands, not prepared to obey? How will they answer it to God?

Now, beloved, will you practice this duty? Will you reprove sin faithfully, so as not to bear sin for your neighbors? Will you make your whole life a testimony against sin? Will you clear your souls, or will you hold your peace and be weighed down with the guilt of all transgressors around you and within the sphere of your influence? God says, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin for him."

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Chapter 64

03.17. REST OF THE SAINTS

REST OF THE SAINTS.

TEXT:--"For we which have believed do enter into rest."--- Heb 4:3.

The following is the course of thought to which I wish to direct your attention this evening:

I. I shall endeavor to show what is not the rest here spoken of.

II. Show what it is.

III. Show when we are to enter into this rest.

IV. Show how to come into possession of this rest.

V. Show that all sin consists in or is caused by unbelief.

I. I will endeavor to show what is not the rest spoken of in the text.

1. It is evidently not a state of inactivity in religion, that is of in the text under the name of rest.

The apostle who wrote this was very far from being himself inactive in religion, or from encouraging it in others. Those of whom he spoke, including himself, where be says, "WE who haved believed, do enter into rest," would know at once that it was not true, that they had entered into the rest of supineness.

2. Neither are we to understand that the perfect rest of heaven, is the rest here spoken of.

He speaks of it a as a present state, "we DO enter," which was not consistent with the idea that heaven is the rest here spoken of. The perfect rest of heaven includes an absolute freedom form all pains, trials, sufferings and temptations of this life.---The rest of the believer here, may be of the same nature, substantially, with the rest in heaven. It is that rest begun on earth. But it is not made perfect. It differs in some respects, because it does not imply a deliverance from all trials, pains, sickness, and death. The apostles and primitive Christians had not escaped these trials, but still suffered their full share of them.

II. I will show what we are to understand by the rest here spoken of.

1. It is rest from controversy with God.

In this sense of cessation from controversy, the word rest, is often used in the Bible. In the context, it is said the children of Israel rested, when they were freed from their enemies. It is cessation from strife or war. Those who enter into this rest cease from their warfare with God, from their struggle against the truth, their war with their own conscience. The reproaches of conscience, that kept them in agitation, the slavish fears of the wrath of God under which men exert themselves as slaves in building up their own works, all are done away. They rest.

2. It implies cessation from our own works.

(1.) Cessation from works performed for ourselves.

Much of the apparent religion there is in the world is made up of works done by people which are their own, in this sense. They are working for their own lives---that is , they have this end in view, and are working for themselves, as absolutely as the man who is laboring for his bread. If the object of what you do in religion be, that you may be saved, it matters not whether it is from temporal or eternal ruin, it is for yourself, and you have not ceased from you own works, but are still multiplying works of your own. Now, the rest spoken of in the text, is entire cessation from all this kind of works.---The apostle, in verse 10th, affirms this: "He that is entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own works." And in the text, he says, "We that believe do enter," or have entered, "into rest." It is plain that this rest is ceasing from our own works. Not ceasing from all kinds of works, for that is true neither of the saints on earth nor of saints in heaven. We have no reason to believe that any saint or angel, or that God Himself, or any holy being is ever inactive. But we cease to perform works with any such design as merely to save our own souls. It is ceasing to work for ourselves, that we may work for God. We are performing our own works, just as long as the supreme object of our works is to be saved. But if the question of our own salvation is thrown entirely on Jesus Christ, and our works are performed out of love to God, they are not our own works.

(2.) In entering into this rest, we cease from all works performed from ourselves, as well as works performed for ourselves.

Works are from ourselves, when they result from the simple, natural principles of human nature, such as conscience, hope, fear, &c., without the influences of the Holy Ghost. Such works are universally and wholly sinful. They are the efforts of selfishness, under the direction of mere natural principles.---His conscience convicts him, hope and fear come in aid, and under this influence, the carnal, selfish mind acts. Such acts cannot but be wholly sinful. It is nothing but selfishness.---Multiply the forms of selfishness by selfishness forever, and it will never come to love. Where there is nothing but natural conscience pointing out the guilt and danger, and the constitutional susceptibilities of hope and fear leading to do something, it comes to nothing but the natural workings of an unsanctified mind. Such works are always the works of the flesh, and not the works of the Spirit. To enter into rest is to cease from all these, and no more to perform works from ourselves than for ourselves. Who does not know what a painful time those have, who set about religion from themselves; painfully grinding out about so much religion a month, constrained by hope and fear, and lashed up to the work by conscience, but without the least impulse from that divine principle of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost? All such works are just as much from themselves, as any work of any devil is. No matter what kind of works are performed, if the love of God is not the mainspring and life and heart of them, they are our own works, and there is no such thing as rest in them, We must cease from them, because they set aside the gospel. The individual, who is actuated by these principles, sets aside the gospel, in whole or in part. If he is actuated only by these considerations, he sets aside the gospel entirely. And just so far as he is influenced by them, he refuses to receive Christ as his Savior in that relation. Christ is offered as a complete Savior, as our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. And just so far as any one is making efforts to dispense with a Savior in any of these

particulars, he is setting aside the gospel for so much.

(3.) To enter into rest implies that we cease from doing anything for ourselves.

We are not so much as to eat or drink for ourselves; "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The man who has entered into this rest, has ceased from doing it. God requires it, and he that has entered into rest has ceased to have any interest of his own. He has wholly merged his own interest in that of Christ. He has given himself so perfectly to Christ, that he has no work of his own to do. There is no reason why he should go about any work of his own. He knows he might as well sit still till he is in hell, as attempt anything of his own, as to any possibility of saving himself by any exertions of his own. When a man fully understands this, he ceases from making any efforts in this way. See the convicted sinner, how he will strain himself, and put forth all his efforts to help himself, until he learns that he is nothing; and then he ceases from all this, and throws himself helpless and lost, into the hands of Christ. Until he feels that he is in himself without strength, or help, or hope, for salvation or anything that tends to it, he will never think of the simplicity of the gospel. No man applies to Christ for righteousness and strength, until he has used up his own, and feels that he is helpless and undone. Then he can understand the simplicity of the gospel plan, which consists in RECEIVING salvation, by faith, as a free gift. When he has done all that he could, in his own way, and finds that he as grown no better, that he is no nearer salvation, but rather grown worse, that sin is multiplied upon sin, and darkness heaped upon darkness, until he is crushed down with utter helplessness, then he ceases, and gives all up into the hand of Christ. See that sinner, trying to get into a agony of conviction, or trying to understand religion, and finding all dark as Egypt, and cannot see what it is that he must do. O, says he, what must I do? I am willing to do anything. I can’t tell why I don’t submit, I know not how to do anything more; what am I to do, or how shall I find out what is the difficulty? When he is fully convinced, then he turns his eyes to the Savior, and there he finds all he needs, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. Christ the Life of the world, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, and he needs nothing of all these but what is in Christ, that all he wants, and all he can ask, is in Christ, and to be received by faith; then he ceases from his own works, and throws himself at once and entirely upon Christ for salvation.

(4.) To cease from our own works is to cease attempting to do anything in our own strength.

Everyone who has entered into rest knows, that whatever he does in his own strength, will be an abomination to God. Unless Christ lives in him, unless God worketh in him, to will and to do, of His good pleasure, nothing is ever done acceptably to God. To set himself to do anything in his own strength, independent of the Spirit of God, is forever an utter abomination to God. He who has not learned this, has not ceased from his own works, and has not accepted the Savior. The apostle says we are not able of ourselves to think anything, as of ourselves. The depth of degradation to which sin has reduced us, is not understood until this is known and felt.

3. To enter into rest also includes the idea of throwing our burdens upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

He invites us to throw all our burdens and cares on Him. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Casting all your cares upon him, for he careth for you." These words mean just as they say. Whether your burden is temporal or spiritual, whether your care is for the soul or body, throw it all upon the Lord. See that little child, going along with his

father; the father is carrying something that is heavy, and the child takes hold with its little hand to help, but what can he do towards carrying such a load? Many Christians make themselves a great deal of trouble, by trying to help the Lord Jesus Christ in His work. They weary and worry themselves with one thing and another, as if everything hung on their shoulders. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is as much pledged to the believer for ALL that concerns him, as He is for his justification; and just as absolutely bound for his temporal as for his eternal interests. There is nothing that concerns the Christian, which he is not to cast on the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not mean to be understood, that the Christian has no agency in the matter. Here is a man who has cast his family upon Jesus Christ; but he has not done it in any such manner, that he is not to do anything for his family. But he has so cast himself upon God, for direction, for light, for strength, for success, that he has yielded himself up absolutely to God, to guide and to sustain him; and Christ is pledged to see to it, that everything is done right.

4. To enter into rest is to make the Lord Jesus Christ our Wisdom, our Righteousness, our Sanctification, and our Redemption; and to receive Him in all His offices, as a full and perfect substitute for all our own deficiencies.

We lack all these things, absolutely, and are to receive Him as a full and perfect substitute, to fill the vacancy, and supply all our needs. It is to cease expecting or hoping or attempting anything of ourselves, to fill the vacancy; and receiving Christ as all.

5. Entering into this rest implies the yielding up or our powers so perfectly to His control, that henceforth all our works shall be His works.

I hope you will not understand anything from this language, more mystical than the Bible. It is a maxim of the Common Law, that what a man does by another, he does by himself. Suppose I hire a man to commit murder; the deed is as absolutely my own as if I had done it with my own hand. The crime is not in the hand which struck the blow, any more than it is in the sword, that stabs the victim. The crime is in my mind. If I use another’s hand, if my mind, as the moving cause, influenced him, it is my act still. Suppose that I had taken his hand by force, and used it to shoot my neighbor, would not that be my act? Certainly, but it was in my mind, and it is just as much my act, if I influenced his mind to do it. Now apply this principle to the doctrine, that the individual who has entered into rest has so yielded himself up to Christ’s control, that all his works are the works of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says, "I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God in me." And he frequently insists upon it, that it was not himself that did the works, but Christ in him. Do not misunderstand it now. It is no said, and is not to be so understood, that the believer acts upon compulsion, or that Christ acts in him without his own will, but that Christ by His spirit dwelling in him, influences and leads his mind that he acts voluntarily in such a way as to please God. When one ceases from his own works, he so perfectly gives up his own interest and his own will, and places himself so perfectly under the dominion and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that whatever he does is done by the impulse of the Spirit of Christ. The Apostle describes it exactly, when he says, "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, to will and to do of his good plea-sure." God influences the will, not by force but by love, to do just what will please Him. If it was done by force, we should be no longer free agents. But it is love that so sweetly influences the will, and brings it entirely under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not that our agency is suspended, but is employed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hands, our feet, our powers of body and mind, are all employed to work for Him. He does not suspend the laws of our constitution, but so directs our agency, that the love of Christ so constrains us, that we will and do of His good pleasure.

Thus you see, that all works that are really good in man, are, in an important sense, Christ's works. This is affirmed in the Bible, over and over again, that our good works are not from ourselves, nor in any way by our own agency without God, but God directs our agency, and influences our wills, to do his will, and we do it. They are in one sense our works, because we do them by our voluntary agency. Yet, in another sense they are His works, because He is the moving cause of all.

6. Entering into this rest implies, that insomuch as we yield our agency to Christ, insomuch we cease from sin.

If we are directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, He will not direct us to sin. Just as far as we give ourselves up to God we cease from sin. If we are controlled by Him so that He works in us, it is to will and to do of His good pleasure. And just so far as we do this, so far we cease from sin. I need not spend time to prove this.

III. I am to inquire when they that believe do enter into rest.

It is in this life.

I. This appears from the text and context. The apostle in connection with the text, was reasoning with the Jews. He warns them to beware, lest they fail of entering into the true rest, which was typified by their fathers' entering into the land of Canaan. The Jews supposed that was the true rest. But the apostle argues with them, to show that there was a higher rest, of which the rest of temporal Canaan was only a type, and into which the Jews might have entered but for their unbelief. If Joshua had given them the real rest, he would not have spoken of another day. Yet another day is spoken of. Even so late as David's day, it is spoken of in the Psalms as yet to come: "To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus (that is Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." He therefore argues, that the rest in Canaan was not the real rest which was promised, but was typical of the true rest. What then was the true rest? It was the rest of repose of faith in Christ or the gospel state, a cessation from our own works. And believers enter into that state by faith.

I know it is generally supposed that the rest here spoken of is the heavenly rest, beyond this life. But it is manifestly a rest that commences here. "We which believe DO enter into rest." It begins here, but extends into eternity. It is the same in kind, but made there more perfect in degree, embracing freedom from the sorrows and trials to which all believers are subject in this life. But it is the same in kind, the rest of faith, the Sabbath-keeping of the soul when it ceases from its own works, and casts itself wholly upon the Savior.

2. It is manifest that this rest must commence in this world, if faith puts us in possession of it. This is the very point that the apostle was arguing, that faith is essential to taking possession of it. They "could not enter in because of unbelief." "Beware, lest ye fail of entering in after the same example

of unbelief." He warns them not to indulge in unbelief, because by faith they may take immediate possession of the rest. If this rest by faith ever commences at all, it must be in this world.

3. The nature of the case proves this. Nothing short of this taking possession of rest is fully embracing Jesus Christ. It is a spiritual rest from the conflict with God, from the stings of conscience, and from efforts to help ourselves by any workings of our own mind. Nothing short of this is getting clear away from the law, or entering fully into the gospel.

IV. I am to show how we are to enter into this rest.

From what has already been said, you will understand that we take possession of it by faith.

The text, with the context, shows this. You will recollect also what the Lord Jesus Christ says, Matthew xi. 28,29---"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Here this same rest is spoken of, and we are told that if we will only come to Christ, we may find it. If we will take His easy yoke, which is love, and trust Him to bear all our burdens, we shall find rest. The Psalmist speaks of the same rest---"Return unto thy rest, O my soul." What Christian does not know what it is to have the soul rest in Christ, to hang upon His arm, and find rest from all the cares and perplexities and sorrows of life?

Again---It is evident that faith in Christ, from its own nature, brings the soul into the very state of rest which I have described. How instantly faith breaks up slavish fear, and brings the soul into the liberty of the gospel! How it sets us free from selfishness, and all those influences we formerly acted under! By faith we confide all to Christ, to lead us, and sanctify us, and justify us. And we may be just as certain to be led and to be sanctified, as we are to be justified, if we only exercise faith and leave ourselves in the hands of Christ for all. As a simple matter of fact, such faith brings the soul into a state of rest. The soul sees that there is not need of its own selfish efforts, and no hope from them if they were needed. In itself, it is so far gone in sin that it is as hopeless as if it had been in hell a thousand years. Take the best Christian on earth, and let the Lord Jesus Christ leave his soul, and where is he? Well he pray, or do anything good, or acceptable to God, without Christ! Never. The greatest saint on earth will go right off into sin in a moment, if abandoned by Jesus Christ. But faith throws all upon Christ, and that is rest.

Again: Faith makes us cease from all works for ourselves. By faith we see, that we have no more need of doing works for ourselves, than the child needs to work for his daily bread, whose father is worth millions. He may work, from love to his father, or from love to the employment, but not from any necessity to labor for his daily bread. The soul that truly understands the gospel, sees perfectly well that there is no need of mingling his own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, or his own wisdom with the wisdom of Christ, or His own sufferings with the sufferings of Christ. If there was any need of this, there would be just so much temptation to selfishness, and to working from legal motives. But there is none.

Again: By faith the soul ceases from all works performed from itself. Faith brings a new principle into action, entirely above all considerations addressed to the natural principles, of hope and fear and conscience. Faith brings the mind under the influence of love. It takes the soul out from the influences of conscience, lashing it up to duty, and brings it under the influence of the same holy, heavenly principles, that influenced Christ himself.

Again: Faith brings the mind into rest, inasmuch as it brings it to cease from all efforts merely for its own salvation, and puts the whole being in to the hands of Christ.

Faith is confidence. It is yielding up all our powers and interests to Christ, in confidence, to be led, and sanctified, and saved by Him.

It annihilates selfishness, and thus leaves no motives for our own works.

In short: Faith is an absolute resting of the soul in Christ, for all that it needs, or can need. It is trusting Him for everything. For instance---Here is a little child, wholly dependent on its father. Now, if the little child did not trust its father, it must be constantly miserable. It is absolutely dependent on its father, for house and home, food and raiment, and everything under the sun. Yet that little child feels no uneasiness, because it confides in its father. It rests in him, and gives itself no uneasiness, but that he will provide all that it needs. It is just as cheerful and happy, all the day long, as if it had all things in itself, because it has such confidence. Now the soul of the believer rests in Christ, just as the infant does on the arms of its mother. The penitent sinner, like a condemned wretch, hangs all on Christ, without the least help or hope, only as they come from Christ alone, and as Christ does all that is needed.

If faith does consist in thus trusting absolutely in Christ, then it is manifest, that this rest is taken possession of, when we believe; and that it must be in this life, if faith is to be exercised in this life.

V. I am to show that unbelief is the cause of all the sin there is the world.

I do not mean to imply, by this, that unbelief is not itself a sin; but to say, that it is the fountain, out of which flows all other sin. Unbelief is distrust of God, or want of confidence. It is manifest that it was this want of confidence which constituted Adam's real crime. It was not the mere eating of the fruit, but the distrust which led to the outward act, that constituted the real crime, for which he was cast out of Paradise. That unbelief is the cause of all sin, is manifest from the following considerations:

The moment an individual wants faith, and is left to the simple influence of natural principles and appetites, he is left just like a beast, and the things that address his mind through the senses, alone influence him. The motives that influence the mind when it acts right, are discerned by faith. Where there is no faith, there are no motives before the mind, but such as are confined to this world. The soul is then left to its mere constitutional propensities, and gives itself up to the minding of the flesh. This is the natural and inevitable result of unbelief. The eye is shut to eternal things, and there is nothing before the mind, calculated to beget any other action but that which is selfish. It is therefore left to grovel in the dust, and can never rise above its own interest and appetites. It is a natural impossibility that the effect should not be so; for how can the mind act without motives? But the motives of eternity are seen only by faith. The mere mental and bodily appetites that terminate on this world, can never raise the mind above the things of this world, and the result is only sin, sin, sin, the minding of the flesh forever. The very moment Adam distrusted God, he was given up to follow his appetites. And it is so with all other minds.

Suppose a child loses all confidence in his father. He can henceforth render no hearty obedience. It is a natural impossibility. If he pretends to obey, it is only from selfishness, and not from the heart; for the mainspring and essence of all real hearty obedience is gone. It would be so in

heaven, it is so in hell. Without faith it is impossible to please God. It is a natural impossibility to obey God in such a manner as to be accepted of Him, without faith. Thus unbelief is shown to be the fountain of all the sin in earth and hell, and the soul that is destitute of faith, is just left to work out its own damnation.

REMARKS.

I. The rest which those who believe do enter into here on earth, is of the same nature with the heavenly rest.

The heavenly rest will be more complete; for it will be a rest from all the sorrows and trials to which even a perfect human soul is liable here. Even Christ himself experienced these trials and sorrows and temptations. But the soul that believes, rests as absolutely in Him here, as in heaven.

II. We see why faith is said to be the substance of things hoped for.

Faith is the very thing that makes heaven; and therefor it is the substance of heaven, and will be to all eternity.

III. We see what it is to be led by the Spirit of God.

It is to yield up all our powers and faculties to His control, so as to be influenced by the Spirit in all that we do.

IV. We see that perfect faith would produce perfect love, or perfect sanctification.

A perfect yielding up of ourselves, and continuing to trust all that we have and are to Christ, would make us perfectly holy.

V. We see that just as far as any individual is not sanctified, it is because his faith is weak.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, if his disciples fell into sin, he always reproached them with a want of faith: "O ye of little faith." A man that believes in Christ has no more right to expect to sin, than he has a right to expect to be damned. You may startle at this, but it is true.

You are to receive Christ as your sanctification, just as absolutely as for your justification. Now you are bound to expect to be damned, unless you receive Christ as your justification. But if you receive Him as such, you have then no reason and no right to expect to be damned. Now, He is just as absolutely your sanctification, as your justification. If you depend upon Him for sanctification, He will no more let you sin, than He will let you go to hell. And it is as unreasonable, and unscriptural and wicked, to expect one as the other. And nothing but unbelief, in any instance, is the cause of your sin. Some of you have read the life of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, and recollect how habitual it was with her, when any temptation assailed her, instantly to throw herself upon Christ. And she testifies, that in every instance He sustained her.

Take the case of Peter. When the disciples saw Christ walking upon the water, after their affright was over, Peter requested to be permitted to come to Him on the water, and Christ told him to come; which was a promise on the part of Christ, that if he attempted it, he should be sustained. But for this promise, his attempt would have been tempting God. But with this promise, he had no reason and no right to doubt. He made the attempt, and while he believed, the energy of Christ

bore him up, as if he had been walking upon the ground. But as soon as he began to doubt, he began to sink. Just so it is with the soul; as soon as it begins to doubt the willingness and the power of Christ to sustain it in a state of perfect love, it begins to sink. Take Christ at His word, make Him responsible, and rely on Him, and heaven and earth will sooner fail then He will allow such a soul to fall into sin. Say, with Mrs. Rogers, when Satan comes with a temptation, "Lord Jesus, here is a temptation to sin, see thou to that."

VI. You see why the self-denying labors of saints are consistent with being in a state of rest.

These self-denying labors are all constrained by love, and have nothing in them that is compulsory or hard. Inward love draws them to duty. So far is it from being true, that the self-denying labors of Christians are hard work, that it would be vastly more painful to them not to do it. Their love for souls is such, that if they were forbidden to do anything for them, they would be in agony. In fact, a state of inaction would be inconsistent with this rest. How could it be rest, for one whose heart was burning and bursting with love to God and to souls, to sit still and do nothing for them. But it is perfect rest for the soul to go out in prayer and effort for their salvation. Such a soul cannot rest, while God is dishonored and souls destroyed, and nothing done for their rescue. But when all his powers are used for the Lord Jesus Christ, this is true rest. Such is the rest enjoyed by angels, who cease not day nor night, and who are all ministering spirits, to minister to the heirs of salvation.

The apostle says, "Take heed, therefore, lest a promise being left of entering into rest, any of you should come short of it." And "Let us labor therefore, to enter into rest. Do any of you know what it is to come to Christ, and rest in Him? Have you found rest, from all your own efforts to save yourselves, from the thunders of Sinai, and the stings of conscience? Can you rest sweetly in Jesus, and find in Him everything essential to sanctification and eternal salvation? Have you found actual salvation in Him? If you have, then you have entered into rest. If you haven t found this, it is because you are still laboring to perform your own works.

Chapter 65

03.18. SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH

SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH.

TEXT:.--"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."--Rom 3:31.

The apostle had been proving that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, were in their sins, and refuting the doctrine so generally entertained by the Jews, that they were a holy people and saved by their works. He showed that justification can never be by works, but by faith. He then anticipates an objection, like this, "Are we to understand you as teaching that the law of God is abrogated and set aside by this plan of justification?" "By no means," says the apostle, "we rather establish the law." In treating of this subject, I design to pursue the following order:

I. Show that the gospel method of justification does not set aside or repeal the law.

II. That it rather establishes the law, by producing true obedience to it, and as the only means that does this.

The greatest objection to the doctrine of Justification by Faith has always been, that it is inconsistent with good morals, conniving at sin, and opening the flood-gates of iniquity. It has been said, that to maintain that men are not to depend on their own good behavior for salvation, but are to be saved by faith in another, is calculated to make men regardless of good morals, and to encourage them to live in sin, depending on Christ to justify them. By others, it has been maintained that the gospel does in fact release from obligation to obey the moral law, so that a more lax morality is permitted under the gospel than was allowed under the law.

I. I am to show that the gospel method of justification does not set aside the moral law.

1. It cannot be that this method of justification sets aside the moral law, because the gospel everywhere enforces obedience to the law, and lays down the same standard of holiness.

Jesus Christ adopted the very words of the moral law, "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, and thy neighbor as thyself."

2. The conditions of the gospel are designed to sustain the moral law.

The gospel requires repentance, as the condition of salvation. What is repentance? The renunciation of sin. The man must repent of his breaches of the law of God, and return to obedience to the law. This is tantamount to a requirement of obedience.

3. The gospel maintains that the law is right.

If it did not maintain the law to its full extent, it might be said that Christ is the minister of sin.

4. By the gospel plan, the sanctions of the gospel are added to the sanctions of the law, to enforce obedience to the law.

The apostle says, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Thus adding the awful sanctions of the gospel to those of the law, to enforce obedience to the precepts of the law.

II. I am to show that the doctrine of justification by faith produces sanctification, by producing the only true obedience to the law.

By this I mean, that when the mind understands this plan, and exercises faith in it, it naturally produces sanctification. Sanctification is holiness, and holiness is nothing but obedience to the law, consisting in love to God and love to man.

In support of the proposition that justification by faith produces true obedience to the law of God, my first position is, that sanctification never can be produced among selfish or wicked beings, by the law itself, separate from the considerations of the gospel, or the motives connected with justification by faith.

The motives of the law did not restrain those beings from committing sin, and it is absurd to suppose the same motives can reclaim them from sin, when they have fallen under the power of selfishness, and when sin is a confirmed by habit. The motives of the law lose a great part of their influence, when a being is once fallen. They even exert an opposite influence. The motives of the law, as viewed by a selfish mind, have a tendency to cause sin to abound. This is the experience of every sinner. When he sees the spirituality of the law, and does not see the motives of the gospel, it raises the pride of his heart, and confirms him in his rebellion. The case of the devil is an exhibition of what the law can do, with all its principles and sanctions, upon a wicked heart. He understands the law, sees its reasonableness, has experienced the blessedness of obedience, and knows full well that to return to obedience would restore his peace of mind. This he knows better than any sinner of our race, who never was holy, can know it, and yet it presents to his mind no such motives as reclaim him, but on the contrary, drive him to a returnless distance from obedience.

When obedience to the law is held forth to the sinner as the condition of life, immediately it sets him upon making self-righteous efforts. In almost every instance, the first effort of the awakened sinner is to obey the law. He thinks he must first make himself better, in some way, before he may embrace the gospel. He has no idea of the simplicity of the gospel plan of salvation by faith, offering eternal life as a mere gratuitous gift. Alarm the sinner with the penalty of the law, and he naturally, and by the very laws of his mind, sets himself to do better, to amend his life, and in some self-righteous manner obtain eternal life, under the influence of slavish fear. And the more the law presses him, the greater are his pharisaical efforts, while hope is left to him, that if he obeys he may be accepted. What else could you expect of him? He is purely selfish, and though he ought to submit at once to God, yet, as he does not understand the gospel terms of salvation, and his mind is of course first turned to the object of getting away from the danger of the penalty, he tries to get up to heaven some other way. I do not believe there is an instance in history, of a man who has

submitted to God, until he has seen that salvation must be by faith, and that his own self-righteous strivings have no tendency to save him.

Again; if you undertake to produce holiness by legal motives, the very fear of failure has the effect to divert attention from the objects of love, from God and Christ. The sinner is all the while compassing Mount Sinai, and taking heed to his footsteps, to see how near he comes to obedience; and how can he get into the spirit of heaven?

Again; the penalty of the law has no tendency to produce love in the first instance. It may increase love in those who already have it, when they contemplate it as an exhibition of God's infinite holiness. The angels in heaven, and good men on earth, contemplate its propriety and fitness, and see in it the expression of the good will of God to His creatures, and it appears amiable and lovely, and increases their delight in God and their confidence towards Him. But it is right the reverse with the selfish man. He sees the penalty hanging over his own head, and no way of escape, and it is not in mind to become enamored with the Being that holds the thunderbolt over his devoted head. From the nature of mind, he will flee from Him, not to Him. It seems never to have been dreamed of, by the inspired writers, that the law could sanctify men. The law is given rather to slay than to make alive, to cut off men's self-righteous hopes forever, and compel them to flee to Christ. Again; Sinners, under the naked law, and irrespective of the gospel---I say, sinners, naturally and necessarily, and of right, under such circumstances, view God as an irreconcilable enemy. They are wholly selfish; and apart from the considerations of the gospel, they view God just as the devil views Him. No motive in the law can be exhibited to a selfish mind that will beget love. Can the influence of penalty do it?

A strange plan of reformation this, to send men to hell to reform them! Let them go on in sin and rebellion to the end of life, and then be punished until he becomes holy. I wonder the devil has not become holy! He has suffered long enough, he has been in hell these thousands of years, and he is no better than he was. The reason is, there is no gospel there, and no Holy Spirit there to apply the truth, and the penalty only confirms his rebellion.

Again: The doctrine of justification by faith can relieve these difficulties. It can produce and it has produced real obedience to the precept of the law. Justification by faith does not set aside the law as a rule of duty, but only sets aside the penalty of the law. And the preaching of justification as a mere gratuity, bestowed on the simple act of faith, is the only way in which obedience to the law is ever brought about. This I shall now show from the following considerations:

1. It relieves the mind from the pressure of those considerations that naturally tend to confirm selfishness.

While the mind is looking only at the law, it only feels the influence of hope and fear, perpetuating purely selfish efforts. But justification by faith annihilates this spirit of bondage. The apostle says, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." This plan of salvation begets love and gratitude to God, and leads the soul to taste the sweets of holiness.

2. It relieves the mind also from the necessity of making its own salvation its supreme object.

The believer in the gospel plan of salvation finds salvation, full and complete, including both sanctification and eternal life, already prepared; and instead of being driven to the life of a

Pharisee in religion, of laborious and exhausting effort, he receives it as a free gift, a mere gratuity, and is now left free to exercise disinterested benevolence, and to live and labor for the salvation of others, leaving his own soul unreservedly to Christ.

3. The fact that God has provided and given him salvation as a gratuity, is calculated to awaken in the believer a concern for others, when he sees them dying for the want of this salvation, that they may be brought to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. How far from every selfish motive are those influences. It exhibits God, not as the law exhibits Him, as an irreconcilable enemy, but as a grieved and offended father, willing to be reconciled, nay, very desirous that His subjects should become reconciled to Him and live. This is calculated to beget love. It exhibits God as making the greatest sacrifice to reconcile sinners to Himself; and from no other motive than a pure and disinterested regard to their happiness. Try this in your own family. The law represents God as armed with wrath, and determined to punish the sinner, without hope or help. The gospel represents Him as offended, indeed, but yet so anxious they should return to Him, that He has made the greatest conceivable sacrifices, out of pure disinterested love to His wandering children.

I once heard a father say, that he had tried in his family to imitate the government of God, and when his child did wrong he reasoned with him and showed him his faults; and when he was fully convinced and confounded and condemned, so that he had not a word to say, then the father asked him, Do you deserve to be punished? "Yes, sir." I know it, and now if I were to let you go, what influence would it have over the other children? Rather than do that, I will take the punishment myself. So he laid the ferule on himself, and it had the most astonishing effect on the mind of the child. He had never tried anything so perfectly subduing to the mind as this. And from the laws of mind, it must be so. It affects the mind in a manner entirely different from the naked law.

4. It brings the mind under an entire new set of influences, and leaves it free to weigh the reasons for holiness, and decide accordingly.

Under the law, none but motives of hope and fear can operate on the sinner’s mind. But under the gospel, the influence of hope and fear are set aside, and a new set of considerations presented, with a view of God’s entire character, in all the attractions He can command. It gives the most heart-breaking sin-subduing views of God. It presents Him to the senses in human nature. It exhibits His disinterestedness. The way Satan prevailed against our first parents was by leading them to doubt God’s disinterestedness. The gospel demonstrates the truth, and corrects this lie. The law represents God as the inexorable enemy of the sinner as securing happiness to all who perfectly obey, but thundering down wrath on all who disobey. The gospel reveals new features in God’s character, not known before. Doubtless the gospel increases the love of all holy beings, and gives greater joy to the angels in heaven, greatly increasing their love and confidence and admiration, when they see God’s amazing pity and forbearance towards the guilty. The law drove the devils to hell, and it drove Adam and Eve from Paradise. But when the blessed spirits see the same holy God waiting on rebels, nay, opening His own bosom and giving His beloved Son for them, and taking such unwearied pains for thousands of years to save sinners, do you think it has no influence in strengthening the motives in their minds to obedience and love?

The devil, who is a purely selfish being, is always accusing others of being selfish. He accused Job of this, "Doth Job fear God for naught?" He accused God to our first parents, of being selfish,

and that the only reason for His forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge was the fear that they might come to know as much as Himself. The gospel shows what God is. If He was selfish, He would not take such pains to save those whom He might with perfect ease crush to hell. Nothing is so calculated to make selfish persons ashamed of their selfishness, as to see disinterested benevolence in others. Hence the wicked are always trying to appear disinterested. Let the selfish individual, who has any heart, see true benevolence in others, and it is like coals of fire on his head. The wise man understood this, when he said, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; and if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Nothing is so calculated to cut down an enemy, and win him over, and make him a friend.

This is what the gospel does to sinners. It shows them, that notwithstanding all that they have done to God, God still exercises towards them disinterested love. When he sees God stooping from heaven to save him, and understands that it is indeed TRUE, O, how it melts and breaks down the heart, strikes a death blow to selfishness, and wins him over to unbounded confidence and holy love. God has so constituted the mind that it must necessarily do homage to virtue. It must do this, as long as it retains the powers of moral agency. This is as true in hell as in heaven. The devil feels this. When an individual sees that God has no interested motives to condemn him, when he sees that God offers salvation as a mere gratuity, through faith, he cannot but feel admiration of God’s benevolence. His selfishness is crushed, the law has done its work, he sees that all his selfish endeavors have done no good; and the next step is for his heart to go out in disinterested love.

Suppose a man was under sentence of death for rebellion, and had tried many expedients to recommend himself to the government, but failed, because they were all hollow hearted and selfish. He sees that the government understands his motives, and that he is not really reconciled. He knows himself that they were all hypocritical and selfish, moved by the hope of favor or the fear of wrath, and that the government is more and more incensed at his hypocrisy. Just now let a paper be brought to him from the government, offering him a free pardon on the simple condition that he would receive it as a mere gratuity, making no account of his own works---what influence will it have on his mind? The moment he finds the penalty set aside, and that he has no need to go to work by any self-righteous efforts, his mind is filled with admiration. Now, let it appear that the government has made the greatest sacrifices to procure this; his selfishness is slain, and he melts down like a child at his sovereign’s feet, ready to obey the law because he loves his sovereign.

5. All true obedience turns on faith. It secures all the requisite influences to produce sanctification. It gives the doctrines of eternity access to the mind and a hold on the heart. In this world the motives of time are addressed to the senses. The motives that influence the spirits of the just in heaven do not reach us through the senses. But when faith is exercised, the wall is broken down, and the vast realities of eternity act on the mind here with the same kind of influence that they have in eternity. Mind is mind, everywhere. And were it not for the darkness of unbelief, men would live here just as they do in the eternal world. Sinners here would rage and blaspheme, just as they do in hell; and saints would love and obey and praise, just as they do in heaven. Now, faith makes all these things realities, it swings the mind loose from the clogs of the world, and he beholds God, and apprehends His law and His love. In no other way can these motives take hold on the mind. What a mighty action must it have on the mind, when it takes hold of the love of Christ! What a life-giving power, when the pure motives of the gospel crowd into the mind and stir it up with

energy divine! Every Christian knows, that in proportion to the strength of his faith, his mind is buoyant and active, and when his faith flags, his soul is dark and listless. It is faith alone that places the things of time and eternity in their true comparison, and sets down the things of time and sense at their real value. It breaks up the delusions of the mind, the soul shakes itself from its errors and clogs, and it rises up in communion with God.

REMARKS.

I. It is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural to attempt to convert and sanctify the minds of sinners without the motives of the gospel.

You may press the sinner with the law, and make him see his own character, the greatness and justice of God, and his ruined condition. But hide the motives of the gospel from his mind, and it is all in vain.

II. It is absurd to think that the offers of the gospel are calculated to beget a selfish hope.

Some are afraid to throw out upon the sinner's mind all the character of God; and they try to make him submit to God, by casting him down in despair. This is not only against the gospel, but it is absurd in itself. It is absurd to think that, in order to destroy the selfishness of a sinner, you must hide from him the knowledge of how much God loves and pities him, and how great sacrifices He has made to save him.

III. So far is it from being true, that sinners are in danger of getting false hopes if they are allowed to know the real compassion of God, while you hide this, it is impossible to give him any other than a false hope. Withholding from the sinner who is writhing under conviction, the fact that God has provided salvation as a mere gratuity, is the very way to confirm his selfishness; and if he gets any hope, it must be a false one. To press him to submission by the law alone, is to set him to build a self-righteous foundation.

IV. So far as we can see, salvation by grace, not bestowed in any degree for our own works, is the only possible way of reclaiming selfish beings.

Suppose salvation was not altogether gratuitous, but that some degree of good works was taken into the account, and for those good works in part we were justified---just so far as this consideration is in the mind, just so far there is a stimulus to selfishness. You must bring the sinner to see that he is entirely dependent on free grace, and that a full and complete justification is bestowed, on the first act of faith, as a mere gratuity, and no part of it as an equivalent for anything he is to do. This alone dissolves the influence of selfishness, and secures holy action.

V. If all this is true, sinners should be put in the fullest possible possession, and in the speediest manner, of the whole plan of salvation.

They should be made to see the law, and their own guilt, and that they have no way to save themselves; and then, the more fully the whole length and breadth and height and depth of the love of God should be opened, the more effectually will you crush his selfishness, and subdue his soul in love to God. Do not be afraid, in conversing with sinners, to show the whole plan of salvation, and give the fullest possible exhibition of the infinite compassion of God. Show him that, notwithstanding his guilt, the Son of God is knocking at the door and beseeching him to be

reconciled to God.

VI. You see why so many convicted sinners continue so long compassing Mount Sinai, with self-righteous efforts to save themselves by their own works.

How often you find sinners trying to get more feeling, or waiting till they have made more prayers and made greater efforts, and expecting to recommend themselves to God in this way. Why is all this? The sinner needs to be driven off from this, and made to see that he is all the while looking for salvation under the law. He must be made to see that all this is superseded by the gospel offering him all he wants as a mere gratuity. He must hear Jesus, saying, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life: O, no, you are willing to pray, and go to meeting, and read the Bible, or anything, but come unto me. Sinner, this is the road; I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the light of the world. Here, sinner, is what you want. Instead of trying your self-righteous prayers and efforts, here is what you are looking for, only believe and you shall be saved."

VII. You see why so many professors of religion are always in the dark.

They are looking at their sins, confining their observations to themselves, and losing sight of the fact, that there have only to take right hold of Jesus Christ and throw themselves upon Him, and all is well.

VIII. The law is useful to convict men; but, as a matter of fact, it never breaks the heart. The Gospel alone does that. The degree in which a convert is broken hearted, is in proportion to the degree of clearness with which he apprehends the gospel.

IX. Converts, if you call them so, who entertain a hope under legal preaching, may have an intellectual approbation of the law, and a sort of dry zeal, but never make mellow, broken hearted Christians. If they have not seen God in the attitude in which He is exhibited in the gospel, they are not such Christians as you will see sometimes, with the tear trembling in their eye, and their frames shaking with emotion, at the name of Jesus.

X. You see what needs to be done with sinners who are under conviction, and what with those professors who are in darkness. They must be led right to Christ, and made to take hold of the plan of salvation by faith. It is in vain to expect to do them good in any other way.

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03.19. SELF DECEIVERS

SELF DECEIVERS.

TEXT:--"But be ye doers of the word, and not hears only, deceiving your own selves." Jas 1:22

There are two extremes in religion, equally false and equally fatal. And there are two classes of hypocrites that occupy these two extremes. The first class make religion consist altogether in the belief of certain abstract doctrines, or what they call faith, and lay little or no stress on good works. The other class make religion to consist altogether in good works, (I mean dead works,) and lay little or no stress on faith in Jesus Christ, but hope for salvation by their own deeds. The Jews belonged generally to the last mentioned class. Their religious teachers taught them that they would be saved by obedience to the ceremonial law. And therefore, when Paul began to preach, he seems to have attacked more especially this error of the Jews. He was determined to carry the main question, that men are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, in opposition to the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, that salvation is by obedience to the law. And he pressed this point so earnestly, in his preaching and in his epistles, that he carried it, and settled the faith of the church in the great doctrine of justification by faith. And then certain individuals in the church laid hold of this doctrine and carried it to the opposite extreme, and maintained that men are saved by faith altogether, irrespective of works of any kind. They overlooked the plain principle, that genuine faith always results in good works, and is itself a good work.

I said that these two extremes, that which makes religion consist altogether in outward works and that which makes it consist altogether in faith, are equally false and equally fatal. Those who make religion consist altogether in good works, overlook the fact that works themselves are not acceptable to God, unless they proceed from faith. For without faith it is impossible to please Him. And those who make religion consist altogether in faith, overlook the fact, that true faith always works by love, and invariably produces the works of love.

They are equally fatal, because, on the one hand, without faith they cannot be pardoned or justified; and on the other, without sanctification they cannot be fitted either for the employments or enjoyments of Heaven. Let a sinner turn from his sins altogether, and suppose his works to be as perfect as he thinks them to be, and yet he could not be pardoned, without faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ. And so if any one supposed he could be justified by faith while his works were evil, he ought to know that without sanctification his faith is but dead and cannot even be the instrument of his justification.

It appears that the apostle James designed in this epistle to put this matter upon the right ground, and show exactly where the truth lay, and to explain the necessity and the reason of the necessity of both faith and good works. This epistle is a very practical one, and it meets full in the face all the great practical questions of the day, and decides them.

Doctrines in religion are of two classes, those which refer to God, and those which refer to human practice. Many confine their idea of religious doctrines to the former class. They think nothing is

properly called doctrine but what respects God, His attributes, mode of existence, decrees, and so on.---When I gave notice that I should commence a course of PRACTICAL LECTURES, I hope you did not understand me to mean that the lectures would not be doctrinal, or would have no doctrine in them. My design is to preach, if the Lord will, a course of lectures on practical doctrines.

The doctrine which I propose to consider tonight is this.

THAT PROFESSOR OF RELIGION WHO DOES NOT PRACTICE WHAT HE ADMITS TO BE TRUE, IS SELF-DECEIVED.

There are two classes of hypocrites among professors of religion---those that deceive others and those that deceive themselves. One class of hypocrites are those that, under a specious outside of morality and show of religion, cover up the enmity of their hearts against God, and lead others to think they are very pious people. Thus the Pharisees obtained the reputation of being remarkably pious, by their outside show of religion, their alms and their long prayers. The other class is that referred to in the text, who do not deceive others but themselves. These are orthodox in sentiment but loose in practice. They seem to suppose religion to consist in a parcel of notions, without regard to practice, and thus deceive themselves to think they are good Christians while destitute of true holiness. They are hearers of the word but not doers. They love orthodox preaching, and take great pleasure in hearing the abstract doctrines of religion exhibited, and perhaps have flights of imagination and glowing feelings in view of the character and government of God, but they are not careful to practice the precepts of God’s word, nor are they pleased with the preaching of those doctrines which relate to human practice.

Perhaps there are some present tonight of both these classes of hypocrites. Now, mark: I am not going to preach tonight to those of you who, by great strictness of morals and outside show of religion, deceive others. I address now those of you who do not practice what you know to be true---who are hearers and not doers. Perhaps I had better say, to secure attention, that it is highly probable there are a number here now, of this character. I do not know your names, but I wish you to understand that if you are of that character, you are the persons I am speaking to, just as if I called out your names. I mean you. You hear the word and believe it in theory, while you deny it in practice. I say to you that YOU DECEIVE YOURSELVES. The text proves it. Here you have an express "Thus saith the Lord" for it, that all such characters are self-deceivers. I might quote a number of other passages of scripture, that are to the point, and there leave it. But I wish to call your attention to some other considerations, besides the direct scripture testimony.

In the first place, you do not truly believe the word. You hear it, and admit it to be true, but you do not truly believe it. And here let me say, that persons are themselves liable to deception on this point. Not that their consciousness deceives them, but they do not understand what it is that consciousness testifies. Two things are indispensable to evangelical or saving faith. The first is intellectual conviction of the truth of a thing. And here I do not mean merely the abstract truth of it, but in its bearing on you. The truth, in its relation to you, or its bearing on your conduct, must be received intellectually. And then true faith includes a corresponding state of heart. This always enters into the essence of true faith. When a man’s understanding is convinced, and he admits the truth in its relation to himself, then there must be a hearty approbation of it in its bearing or relation to himself. Both these states of mind are indispensable to true faith. Intellectual conviction of the truth is not saving faith. But intellectual conviction, when accompanied with a corresponding state

of the affections, is saving faith. Hence it follows that where there is true saving faith, there is always corresponding conduct. The conduct always follows the real faith. Just as certain as the will controls the conduct, men will act as they believe. Suppose I say to a man, Do you believe this? "Yes, I believe it." What does he mean? A mere intellectual conviction? He may have that, and yet not have faith.

A man may even feel an approbation of an abstract truth. This is what many persons suppose to be faith, the approbation which they feel for the character and government of God, and for the plan of salvation, when viewed abstractedly. Many persons, when they hear an eloquent sermon on the attributes or government of God, are set all in a glow at the sublimity and excellency displayed, when they have not a particle of true faith. I have heard of an infidel who would be moved even to ecstasy at such themes. The rational mind is so constituted that it naturally and necessarily approves of truth when viewed abstractedly. The wickedest devils in hell love it, if they can see it without its relation to themselves. If they could see the gospel without any relation that interferes with their own selfishness, they would not only see it to be true, but would heartily approve it. All hell, if they could view God in His absolute existence, without any relation to themselves, would heartily approve of His character. The reason why wicked men and devils hate God, is because they see Him in a relation to themselves. Their hearts rise up in rebellion, because they see Him opposed to their selfishness.

Here is the source of a grand delusion among men in regard to religion. They see it to be true, and they really rejoice in contemplating it: they do not enter into its relations to themselves, and so they love to hear such preaching, and say they are fed by it. But MARK:---They go away and do not practice! See that man. He is sick, and his feelings are tender. In view of Christ as a kind and tender Savior, his heart melts, and he feels strong emotions of approbation towards Jesus Christ. Why? For the very same reasons that he would feel strong emotions towards the hero of a romance. But he does not obey Christ. He never practices one thing out of obedience to Christ, but just views Him abstractedly, and is delighted with His glorious and lovely character, while he himself remains in the gall of bitterness. Thus it is apparent that your faith must be an efficient faith, such as regulates your practice and produces good works, or it is not the faith of the gospel, it is no real faith at all.

Again: It is further manifest that you are deceiving yourselves, because all true religion consists in obedience. And, therefore, however much you may approve of Christianity, you have no religion unless you obey it. In saying that all religion consists in obedience, I do not mean outward obedience. But faith itself, true faith, works by love, and produces corresponding action. There is no real obedience but the obedience of the heart: love is the fulfilling of the law; and religion consists in the obedience of the heart, with a corresponding course of life. The man, therefore, who hears the truth, and approves it, and does not practice it, deceiveth himself. He is like the man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of a man he was.

Again: That state of mind which you mistake for religion, an intellectual conviction of truth, and approval of it in the abstract, so far from being evidence that you are pious, is as common to the wicked as to the good, whenever they can be brought to look at it abstractedly. This is the reason why it is often so difficult to convince sinners that they are opposed to God and His truth. Men are

so constituted that they do approve of virtue, and do admire the character and government of God, and would approve and admire every truth in the Bible, if they could view it abstractedly, and without any relation to themselves. And when they sit under preaching that holds up the truth in such a way, that it has not much of a practical bearing on themselves, they may sit for years and never consider that they are opposed to God and His government.

And I am more and more persuaded, that great multitudes are to be found in all our congregations, where the abstract doctrines of the gospel are much preached, who like the preaching and like to hear about God, and all these things, and yet are unconverted. And no doubt multitudes of them get into the churches, because they love orthodox preaching, when after all it is manifest that they are not doers of the word. And here is the difficulty: they have not had that searching preaching that made them see the truth in its bearing on themselves. And now they are in the church, whenever the truth is preached in its practical relation to them, they show the enmity of their hearts unchanged, by rising up in opposition to the truth.

They took it for granted that they were Christians, and so joined the church, because they could hear sound doctrinal preaching and approve of it, or because they read the Bible and approved of it. If their faith be not so practical as to influence their conduct, if they do not view the truth in its relation to their own practice, their faith does not affect them so much as the FAITH OF THE DEVIL.

REMARKS.

1. Great injury has been done by false representations regarding the wickedness of real Christians.

A celebrated preacher, not long since, is said to have given this definition of a Christian---"A little grace and a great deal of devil." I utterly deny this definition. It is false and ruinous. A great deal is said that makes an impression that real Christians are the wickedest beings on the face of the earth. It is true that when they do sin, they incur great guilt. For a Christian to sin is highly criminal. And it is also true that enlightened Christians see in their sins great wickedness. When they compare their obligations with their lives, they are greatly humbled, and express their humility in very strong language. But it is not true that they are as bad as the devil, or anywhere in the neighborhood of it. This is perfectly demonstrable. When they do sin, their sins have great aggravation, and appear extremely wicked in the sight of God. But to suppose that men are real Christians while they live in the service of the devil, and have little of even the appearance of religion, is a sentiment that is not only false but of very dangerous tendency. It is calculated to encourage all that class of hypocrites who are Antinomians, and to encourage backsliders, as well as to do a great injury to the cause of Christ in the estimation of scorners. The truth is, those who do not obey God are not Christians. The contrary doctrine is ruinous to the churches, by filling them up with multitudes whose claim to piety depends on their adoption of certain notions, while they never heartily intended to obey the requirements of the gospel in their lives.

2. Those who are so much more zealous for doctrines than for practice, and who lay much more stress on that class of doctrines which relate to God than on that class which relate to their own conduct, are Antinomians.

There are many who will receive that class of the doctrines of the Bible that relate to God, and approve and love them, who have not a particle of religion. Those who are never "fed," as they call it, on any preaching but that of certain abstract points of doctrine, are Antinomians. They are the very persons against whom the apostle James wrote this epistle. They make religion to consist in a set of notions, while they do not lead holy lives.

3. That class of professors of religion, who never like to hear about God or His attributes, or mode of existence, the Trinity, decrees, election, and the like, but lay all stress on religious practice to the exclusion of religious doctrine, are Pharisees.

They make great pretensions to outward piety, and perhaps to inward flights of emotion of a certain poetical cast, while they will not receive the great truths that relate to God, but deny the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

4. The proper end and tendency of all right doctrine, when truly believed, is to produce correct practice.

Wherever you find a man’s practice heretical, you may be sure his belief is heretical too. The faith that he holds in his heart is just as heretical as his life. He may not be heretical in his notions and theories. He may be right there, even on the very points where he is heretical in his practice. But he does not really believe it.

For illustration: See that careless sinner, there, grasping wealth and rushing headlong in the search for riches. Does that man truly believe he is ever going to die? Perhaps you will say, he knows he must die. But I say, that while he is in this attitude, he does not actually believe he is ever going to die. It is not before his thoughts at all. It is therefore impossible that he should believe it in his utter thoughtlessness. You ask him if he expects ever to die, and he will reply, "O, yes, I know I must die, all men are mortal." As soon as he turns his thoughts to it, he assents to the truth. And if you could fasten the conviction on his mind till he is really and permanently impressed with it, he would infallibly change his conduct, and live for another world instead of this. It is just so in religion; whatever a man really believes, is just as certain to control his practice as that the will governs the conduct.

5. The church has for a long time acted too much on an Antinomial policy.

She has been sticklish for the more abstract doctrines, and left the more practical too much out of view. She has laid greater stress on orthodoxy in those doctrines that are not practical, than in those that are practical. Look at the creeds of the church, and see how they all lay the main stress on those doctrines that have little relation to our practice. A man may be the greatest heretic on points of practice, provided he is not openly profane and vicious, and yet maintain a good standing in the church, whether his life corresponds with the gospel or not. Is not this monstrous? And hence we see, that when it is attempted to purify the church in regard to practical errors, she cannot bear it.---Why else is it that so much excitement is produced by attempting to clear the church from participation in the sins of intemperance, and Sabbath-breaking, and slavery? Why is it so difficult to induce the church to do anything effectual for the conversion of the world? O, when shall the church be purified or the world converted? Not till it is a settled point, that heresy in practice is the proof of heresy in belief. Not while a man may deny the whole gospel in his practice every day, and yet maintain his standing in the church as a good Christian.

6. See how a minister may be deceived in regard to the state of his congregation.

He preaches a good deal on the abstract doctrines, that do not immediately relate to practice, and his people say they are fed, and rejoice in it, and he thinks they are growing in grace, when in fact it is no certain sign that there is any religion among them. It is manifest that this is not certain evidence. But if when he preaches practical doctrines, his people show that they love the truth in its relation to themselves, and show it by practicing it, then they give evidence of real love to the truth.

If a minister finds that his people love abstract doctrinal preaching, but that when he comes to press the practical doctrines they rebel, he may be sure that if they have any religion it is in a low state; and if he finds on fair trial that he cannot bring them up to it, so as to receive practical doctrine, he may be satisfied they have not a particle of religion, but are a mere company of Antinomians, who think they can go to heaven on a dead faith in abstract orthodoxy.

8. See what a vast multitude of professors of religion there are, who are deceiving themselves.

Many suppose they are Christians from the emotions they feel in view of truth, when in fact what they receive is truth presented to their minds in such a way that they do not see its bearing on themselves. If you bring the truth so to bear upon them, as to destroy their pride and cut them off from their worldliness, such professors resist it. Look abroad upon the church. See what a multitude of orthodox churches and orthodox Christians live and feed upon the abstract doctrines of religion from year to year. Then look further at their lives and see how little influence their professed belief has upon their practice. Have they saving faith? It cannot be. I do not mean to say that none of these church members are pious, but I do say that those who do not adopt in practice what they admit in theory---who are hearers of the word but not doers, deceive themselves.

Inquire now how many of you really believe the truths you hear preached. I have proposed to preach a course of practical lectures. I do not mean that I shall preach lectures that have no doctrine in them. That is not preaching at all. But what I desire is to see whether you will, as a church, do what you believe to be true. If I do not succeed in convincing you that any doctrine I may maintain is really true, that is another affair. That is reason enough why you should not do it. But if I do succeed in proving from the scriptures and convincing your understanding that it is true, and yet you do not practice it, I shall then have the evidence before my own eyes what your character is, and no longer deceive myself with the idea that this is a Christian church. Are you conscious that the gospel is producing a practical effect upon you, according to your advancement in knowledge? Is it weaning you from the world? Do you find this to be your experience, that when you receive any practical truth into your minds you love it, and love to feel its application to yourself, and take pleasure in practicing it? If you are not growing in grace, becoming more and more holy, YIELDING YOURSELVES UP to the influence of the gospel, you are deceiving yourselves.---How is it now with you who are elders of this church? How is it with you who are heads of families---all of you? When you hear a sermon, do you seize hold of it and take it home to you, and practice it; or do you receive it in your minds, and approve of it and never practice it? Woe to that man who admits the truth, and yet turns away and does not practice it, like the man beholding his natural face in a glass turning away and forgetting what manner of man he was.

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Chapter 67

03.20. SELFISHNESS NOT TRUE RELIGION

SELFISHNESS NOT TRUE RELIGION.

TEXT:--"Seeketh not her own."--- 1Co 13:5.

That is, Charity, or Christian love, seeketh not her own.

The proposition which I design to establish this evening, is the following:

THAT A SUPREME REGARD TO OUR OWN HAPPINESS IS INCONSISTENT WITH TRUE RELIGION.

This proposition is naturally the first in the series that I have been laboring to illustrate in the present lectures, and would have been the first to be discussed, had I been aware that it was seriously called in question by any considerable number of professed Christians. But I can honestly say, that when I commenced these lectures, I did not expect to meet any serious difficulty here; and therefore I took it in a great measure for granted, that selfishness is not religion. And hence, I passed over this point with but a slight attempt at proving it. But since, I learn that there are many professed Christians who maintain that a supreme regard to our own happiness is true religion, I think it necessary to examine the subject more carefully, and give you the arguments in favor of what I suppose to be the truth. In establishing my proposition, I wish to distinguish between things that differ; I shall therefore

I. Show what is not intended by the proposition, that a supreme regard to our own happiness is not religion.

II. Show what is meant by it. And

III. Attempt to prove it.

I. I am to explain what is not meant by the proposition.

1. The point in dispute is not, whether it is lawful to have any regard to our own happiness. On the contrary; it is admitted and maintained to be a part of our duty to have a due regard to our own happiness, according to its real value, in the scale with other interests. God has commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. This plainly makes it a duty to love ourselves or regard our own happiness, by the same rule that we regard that of others.

2. The proposition is not that we ought to have no regard to the promises and threatenings of God, as affecting ourselves. It is plainly right to regard the promises of God and threatenings of evil, as affecting ourselves, according to the relative value of our own interests. But who does not see that a threatening against us is not so important as a threatening against a large number of individuals. Suppose a threatening of evil against yourself as an individual. This is plainly not so important as if it included your family. Then suppose it extend to the whole congregation, or to the state, or the whole nation, or the world. Here, it is easy to see, that the happiness of an individual, although

great, ought not to be regarded as supreme.

I am a minister. Suppose God says to me, "If you do not do not your duty, you will be sent to hell." This is a great evil, and I ought to avoid it. But suppose Him to say, "If your people do not do their duty, they will all be sent to hell; but if you do your duty faithfully, you will probably save the whole congregation." Is it right for me to be as much influenced by the fear of evil to myself, as by the fear of having a whole congregation sent to hell? Plainly not.

3. The question is not whether our own eternal interests ought to be pursued in preference to our temporal interests. It is expressly maintained by myself, and so it is by the Bible, that we are bound to regard our eternal interests as altogether of more consequence than our temporal interests.

Thus, the Bible tells us "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." This teaches that we are not to regard or value our temporal interests at all, in comparison with eternal life.

So, where our Savior says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break not through nor steal." Here the same duty is enjoined, of preferring eternal to temporal interests.

There is another. When Christ sent out his disciples, two and two, to preach and to work miracles, they came back full of joy and exultation, because they found even the devils yielding to their power. "Lord, even the devils are subject to us." Jesus saith, "Rejoice not that the devils are subject to you; but rather rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven." Here He teaches, that it is a greater good to have our names written in heaven, than to enjoy the greatest temporal power, even authority over devils themselves.

The Bible everywhere teaches, that eternal good is to be preferred in all our conduct to temporal good. But this is very different from maintaining that our own individual eternal interest is to be aimed at as the supreme object of regard.

4. The proposition is not, that hope and fear should not influence our conduct. All that is implied is, that when we are influenced by hope and fear, the things that are hoped or feared should be put into the scale according to their real value, in comparison with other interests.

5. The question is not, whether the persons did right, who are spoken of in the Bible, as having been at least in some degree influenced by hope and fear, or having respect unto the recompense of reward, or to the joy that was set before them. This is admitted. Noah was moved with fear and built the ark. But was it the fear of being drowned himself, or fear for his own personal safety that chiefly moved him? The Bible does not say it. He feared for the safety of his family; yea, more, he dreaded the destruction of the whole human race, with all the interests depending thereon.

Whenever it is said that good men were influenced by hope and fear, it is admitted. But in order to make it bear on this subject, it must be shown that this hope or fear respecting their own personal interest was the controlling motive. Now, this is no where affirmed in the Bible. It was right for them to be influenced by promises and threatenings. Otherwise, they could not obey the second part of the law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

II. I am to show what is meant by the proposition, that a supreme regard to our own interest is inconsistent with true religion.

The question is, whether supreme regard to our own happiness is religion. It is, whether we are to fear our own damnation more than the damnation of all other men, and the dishonor of God thereby. And whether we are to aim at securing our own happiness more than the happiness of all other men, and the glory of God. And whether, if we do this, we act according to the requirements of the true religion, or inconsistent with true religion. This is the proper point of inquiry, and I wish you to bear it constantly in mind, and not to confound it with any of the other points that I have referred to.

III. For the proof of the proposition.

Before proceeding to the proof of the proposition, that a supreme regard to our own happiness is inconsistent with true religion, I will observe that all true religion consists in being like God; in acting on the same principles and grounds, and having the same feelings towards different objects. I suppose this will not be denied. Indeed, it cannot be, by any sane mind. I then observe, as the first proof of the proposition,

1. That a supreme regard to our own happiness is not according to the example of God; but is being totally unlike Him.

The Bible tells us that "God is love." That is, benevolence is the sum total of His character. All His other moral attributes, such as justice, mercy, and the like, are but modifications of this benevolence. His love is manifested in two forms. One is that of benevolence, good willing, or desiring the happiness of others. The other is complacency, or approving the character of others who are holy. God’s benevolence regards all beings that are capable of happiness. This is universal. Towards all holy beings, He exercises the love of complacency.---In other words, God loves His neighbor as Himself. He regards the interests of all beings, according to their relative value, as much as His own. He seeks His own happiness, or glory, as the supreme good. But not because it is His own, but because it is the supreme good. The sum total of His happiness, as an infinite being, is infinitely greater than the sum total of the happiness of all other beings, or of any possible number of finite creatures.

Take a very familiar illustration. Here is a man that is kind to brutes. This man and his horse fall into the river. Now, does true benevolence require the man to drown himself in order to extricate his horse? No. It would be true disinterested benevolence in him, to save himself, and, if need be, leave his horse to perish; because his happiness is of so much greater value than that of the horse. You see this at a glance. But the difference between God and all created beings is infinitely greater than between a man and a horse, or between the highest angel and the meanest insect.

God, therefore, regards the happiness of all creatures precisely according to its real value. And unless we do the same, we are not like God. If we are like God, we must regard God’s happiness and glory in the same light that He does; that is, as the supreme good, beyond everything else in the universe. And if we desire our own happiness more than God’s happiness, we are infinitely unlike God.

2. To aim at our own happiness supremely is inconsistent with true religion, because it is contrary to the spirit of Christ.

We are told, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And it is repeatedly said of Him as a man, that he sought not His own, that He sought not His own glory, and the like. What was He seeking? Was it His own personal salvation? No. Was it His own personal happiness? No. It was the glory of His Father, and the good of the universe, through the salvation of men. He came on an errand of pure benevolence, to benefit the kingdom of God, not to benefit Himself. This was "the joy that was set before him," for which "he endured the cross, despising the shame." It was the great good He could do by thus throwing Himself out to labor and suffer for the salvation of men.

3. To regard our own happiness as the supreme object of pursuit is contrary to the law of God.

I have mentioned this before, but recur to it again for the sake of making my present demonstration complete. The sum of that law is this---"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; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is the great thing required; benevolence towards God and man. The first thing is really to love the happiness and glory of God, above all other things, because it is so infinitely lovely and desirable, and is properly the supreme good. Some have objected that it was not our duty to seek the happiness of God, because His happiness is already secured. Suppose, now, that the king of England is perfectly independent of me, and has his happiness secured without me; does that make it any the less my duty to wish him well, to desire his happiness, and to rejoice in it? Because God is happy, in Himself, independent of His creatures, is that a reason why we should not love His happiness, and rejoice in it? Strange!

Again: We are bound by the terms of God’s law to exercise complacency in God, because He is holy, infinitely holy.

Again: This law binds us to exercise the same good will, or benevolence, towards others that we do to ourselves; that is, to seek both their interests and our own, according to their relative value. Who of you is doing this? And we are bound to exercise the love of complacency toward those who are good and holy.

Thus we see that the sum of the law of God is to exercise benevolence towards God and all beings, according to their relative value, and complacency in all that are holy. Now I say, that to regard our own happiness supremely, or to seek it as our supreme end, is contrary to that law, to its letter and to its spirit. And,

4. It is as contrary to the gospel as it is to the law.

In the chapter from which the text is taken, the apostle begins---"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Charity here means love. In the original it is the same word that is rendered love. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Now mark! In no stronger language could he have expressed the idea that charity, or benevolence, is essential to true religion. See how he throws out his guards on every side, so that it is impossible to mistake his views. If a person has not true charity, he is nothing. He then proceeds and shows what are the characteristics of this true charity. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things endureth all things." Here you see that one leading peculiarity of this love is that charity "seeketh not her own." Mark that! If this is true religion, and without it there is no religion, then one peculiarity of true religion is, that it "seeketh not her own."

Those of you who have Bibles with marginal references can follow out these references and find a multitude of passages that plainly teach the same thing. Recollect the passages I quoted in the last lecture. I will just refer to one of them---"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." Here you see it laid down as an established principle of God’s government, that if a person aims supremely at his own interest he will lose his own interest.

The same is taught in the tenth chapter of this epistle, verse 24: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth." If you look at the passage, you will see that word wealth is in italic letters, to show that it is a word added by the translators, that is not in the Greek. They might just as well have used the word happiness, or welfare, as wealth. So in the 33rd verse: "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Therefore I say, that to make our own interest the supreme object of pursuit, is as contrary to the gospel as it is to the law.

5. It is contrary to conscience.

The universal conscience of mankind has decided that a supreme regard to our own happiness is not virtue. Men have always known that to serve God and benefit mankind is what is right, and to seek supremely their own personal interest is not right. They have always regarded it mean and contemptible for individuals to seek their own happiness as the supreme object, and consequently, we see how much pains men take to conceal their selfishness and to appear benevolent. It is impossible for any man, unless his conscience is strangely blunted by sin, or perverted by false instruction, not to see that it is sinful to regard his own happiness above other interests of more importance.

6. It is contrary to right reason.

Right reason teaches us to regard all things according to their real value. God does this, and we should do the same. God has given us reason for this very purpose, that we should weigh and compare the relative value of things. It is a mockery of reason, to deny that it teaches us to regard things according to their real value. And if so, then to aim at and prefer our own interest, as the supreme end, is contrary to reason.

7. It is contrary to common sense.

What has the common sense of mankind decided on this point? Look at the common sense of mankind in regard to what is called patriotism. No man was ever regarded as a true patriot, in fighting for his country, if his object was to subserve his own interest. Suppose it should appear that his object in fighting was to get himself crowned king; would anybody give him credit for patriotism? No. All men agree that it is patriotism when a man is disinterested, like Washington; and fights for his country, for his country's sake. The common sense of mankind has written reprobation on that spirit that seeks its own things, and prefers its own interest, to the greater interests of others. It is evident that all men so regard it. Otherwise, how is it that every one is anxious to appear disinterested?

8. It is contrary to the constitution of the mind.

I do not mean, by this, that it is impossible, by our very constitution, for us to seek our own happiness as the supreme object. But we are so constituted that if we do this, we never can attain it. As I have said in a former lecture, happiness is the gratification of desire. We must desire something, and gain the object we desire. Now, suppose a man to desire his own happiness, the object of his desire will always keep just so far before him, like his shadow, and the faster he pursues it, the faster it flies. Happiness is inseparably attached to the attainment of the object desired. Suppose I desire a thousand dollars. That is the thing on which my desire fastens, and when I get it that desire is gratified, and I am happy, so far as gratifying this desire goes to make me happy. But if I desire the thousand dollars for the purpose of getting a watch, a dress, and such like things, the desire is not gratified till I get those things. But now suppose the thing I desired was my own happiness. Getting the thousand dollars then does not make me happy, because that is not the thing my desire was fixed on. And so getting the watch, and the dress, and other things will not make me happy, for they do not gratify my desire. God has so constituted things, and given such laws to the mind, that man never can gain happiness by pursuing it. This very constitution plainly indicates the duty of disinterested benevolence. Indeed, He has made it impossible for them to be happy, but in proportion as they are disinterested.

Here are two men walking along the street together. They come across a man that has just been run over by a cart, and lies weltering in his gore. They take him up, and carry him to the surgeon, and relieve him. Now it is plain that their gratification is in proportion to the intensity of their desire for his relief. If one of them felt but little and cared but little about the sufferings of the poor man, he will be but little gratified. But if his desire to have the man relieved amounted to agony, his gratification would be accordingly. Now suppose a third individual that had no desire to relieve the distressed man; certainly relieving him could be no gratification to that person. He could pass right by him, and see him die. Then he is not gratified at all. Therefore, you see, happiness is just in proportion as the desires are gratified, by obtaining the things desired.

Here observe, that in order to make the happiness of gratified desire complete, the desire itself must be virtuous. Otherwise, if the desire is selfish, the gratification will be mingled with pain, from the conflict of the mind.

That all this is true, is a matter of consciousness, and is proved to us by the very highest kind of testimony we can have. And for any one to deny it, is to charge God foolishly, as if He had given us a constitution that would not allow us to be happy in obeying Him.

9. It is also inconsistent with our own happiness, to make our own interest the supreme object. This follows from what I have just said. Men may enjoy a certain kind of pleasure, but not true happiness. The pleasure which does not spring from the gratification of virtuous desire, is a deceptive delusion. The reason why all mankind do not find happiness, when they are all so anxious for it, is that they are seeking IT. If they would seek the glory of God and the good of the universe as their supreme end, IT would pursue them.

10. It is inconsistent with the public happiness. If each individual is to aim at his own happiness as his chief end, these interests will unavoidably clash and come into collision, and universal war and confusion will follow in the train of universal selfishness.

11. To maintain that a supreme regard to our own interest is true religion, is to contradict the experience of all real saints. I answer, that every real saint knows that his supreme happiness consists in going out of himself, and regarding the glory of God and the good of others. If he does not know this, he is no saint.

12. It is also inconsistent with the experience of all those who have had a selfish religion, and have found out their mistake and got true religion. This is a common occurrence. I suppose I have known hundreds of cases. Some members in this church have recently made this discovery. And they can all testify that they know now by experience that benevolence is true religion.

13. It is contrary to the experience of all the impenitent. Every impenitent sinner knows that he is aiming supremely at the promotion of his own interest, and he knows that he has not true religion. The very thing that his conscience condemns him for is this, that he is regarding his own interest instead of the glory of God.

Now just turn the leaf over, for a moment, and admit that a supreme regard for our own happiness is true religion; and then see what will follow.

1. Then it will follow that God is not holy. That is, if a supreme regard to our own interest, because it is our own, is true religion, then it will follow that God is not holy. God regards His own happiness, but it is because it is the greatest good, not because it is His own. But He is love, or benevolence; and if benevolence is not true religion, God’s nature must be changed.

2. The law of God must be altered. If a supreme regard to our own happiness is religion, then the law should read, "Thou shalt love thyself with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and God and thy neighbor infinitely less than thyself."

3. The gospel must be reversed. Instead of saying, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," it should read, "Do all for your own happiness." Instead of "He that will save his life shall lose it," we should find it saying, "He that is supremely anxious to save his own life shall save it; but he that is benevolent, and willing to lose his life for the good of others, shall lose it."

4. The consciences of men should be changed so as to testify in favor of selfishness, and condemn and reprobate everything like disinterested benevolence.

5. Right reason must be made not to weigh things according to their relative value, but to decide our own little interest to be of more value than the greatest interests of God and the universe.

6. Common sense will have to decide, that true patriotism consists in every man's seeking his own interest instead of the public good, and each one seeking to build himself up as high as he can.

7. The human constitution must be reversed. If supreme selfishness is virtue, the human constitution was made wrong. It is so made, that man can be happy only by being benevolent. And if this doctrine is true, that religion consists in seeking our own happiness as a supreme good, then the more religion a man has the more miserable he is.

8. And the whole framework of society will have to be changed. Now it is so, that the good of the community depends on the extent to which everyone regards the public interest. And if this doctrine holds, it must be changed, so that the public good will be best promoted when every man is scrambling for his own interest regardless of the interests of others.

9. The experience of the saints will have to be reversed. Instead of finding, as they now do, that the more benevolence they have, the more religion and the more happiness, they should testify that the more they aim at their own good, the more they enjoy of religion and the favor of God.

10. The impenitent should be found to testify that they are supremely happy in supreme selfishness, and that they find true happiness in it.

I will not pursue this proof any farther; it would look like trifling. If there is any such thing as proof to be had, it is fully proved, that to aim at our own happiness supremely, is inconsistent with true religion.

REMARKS.

I. We see why it is, that while all are pursuing happiness, so few find it.

The fact is plain. The reason is this; the greater part of mankind do not know in what true happiness consists, and they are seeking it in that which can never afford it. They do not find it because they are pursuing it. If they would turn round and pursue holiness, happiness would pursue them. If they would become disinterested, and lay themselves out to do good, they could not but be happy. If they choose happiness as an end, it flies before them. True happiness consists in the gratification of virtuous desires; and if they would set themselves to glorify God, and do good, they would find it. The only class of persons that never do find it, in this world, or the world to come, are those who seek it as an end.

II. The constitution of the human mind and of the universe, affords a beautiful illustration of the economy of God.

Suppose man could find happiness, only by pursuing his own happiness. Then each individual would have only the happiness that himself had gained, and all the happiness in the universe would be only the sum total of what individuals had gained, with the offset of all the pain and misery produced by conflicting interests. Now mark! God has so constituted things, that while each lays himself out to promote the happiness of others, his own happiness is secured and made complete. How vastly greater then is the amount of happiness in the universe, than it would have been, had selfishness been the law of Jehovah's kingdom. Because each one who obeys the law of God, fully secures his own happiness by his benevolence, and the happiness of the whole is increased by how much each receives from all others.

Many say, "Who will take care of my happiness if I do not? If I am to care only for my neighbor's interest, and neglect my own, none of us will be happy." That would be true, if you care for your neighbor's happiness was a detraction from your own. But if your happiness consists in doing good and promoting the happiness of others, the more you do for others, the more you promote your own happiness.

III. When I gave out the subject of this lecture, I avoided the use of the term, selfishness, lest it should be thought invidious. But I now affirm, that a supreme regard to our own interest is selfishness, and nothing else. It would be selfishness in God, if He regarded His own interest; supremely because it is His own. And it is selfishness in man. And whoever maintains that a supreme regard to our own interest is true religion, maintains that selfishness is true religion.

IV. If selfishness is virtue, then benevolence is sin. They are direct opposites and cannot both be virtue. For a man to set up his own interest over God's interest, giving it a preference, and placing it in opposition to God's interest is selfishness. And if this is virtue, then Jesus Christ, in seeking the good of mankind as He did, departed from the principles of virtue. Who will pretend this?

V. Those who regard their own interest as supreme, and yet think they have true religion, are deceived. I say it solemnly, because I believe it is true, and I would say it if it were the last word I was to speak before going to the judgment. Dear hearer, whoever you are, if you are doing this, you are not a Christian. Don't call this being censorious. I am not censorious. I would not denounce any one. But as God is true, and your soul is going to the judgment, you have not the religion of the Bible.

VI. Some will ask here, "What! are we to have no regard to our happiness, and if so, how are we to decide whether it is supreme or not?" I do not say that. I say, you may regard it according to its relative value. And now I ask, is there any real practical difficulty here? I appeal to your consciousness. You cannot but know, if you are honest, what it is that you regard supremely. Are these interests, your own interest on one side, and God's glory and the good of the universe on the other, so nearly balanced in your mind, that you cannot tell which you prefer? It is impossible! If you are not as conscious that you prefer the glory of God to your own interest, as you are that you exist, you may take it for granted that you are all wrong.

VII. You see why the enjoyment of so many professors of religion depends on their evidences. These persons are all the time hunting after evidence; and just in proportion as that varies, their enjoyments wax and wane. Now, mark! If they really regarded the glory of God and the good of mankind, their enjoyment would not depend on their evidences. Those who are purely selfish, may enjoy much in religion, but it is by anticipation. The idea of going to heaven is pleasing to them. But those who go out of themselves, and are purely benevolent, have a present heaven in their breasts.

VIII. You see, here, that all of you, who had no peace and joy in religion before you had a hope, are deceived. Perhaps I can give an outline of your experience. You were awakened, and were distressed, as you had reason to be, by the fear of going to hell. By and by, perhaps while you were engaged in prayer, or while some person was conversing with you, your distress left you. You thought your sins were pardoned. A gleam of joy shot through your mind, and warmed up your heart into a glow, that you took for evidence, and this again increased your joy. How very

different is the experience of a true Christian! His peace does not depend on his hope; but true submission and benevolence produce peace and joy, independent of his hope.

Suppose the case of a man in prison, condemned to be hung the nest day. He is in great distress, walking his cell, and waiting for the day. By and by, a messenger comes with a pardon. He seizes the paper, turns it up to the dim light that comes through his grate, reads the word PARDON, and almost faints with emotion, and leaps for joy. He supposes the paper to be genuine. Now suppose it turns out that the paper is counterfeit. Suddenly his joy is all gone. So in the case of a deceived person. He was afraid of going to hell, and of course he rejoices if he believes he is pardoned. If the devil should tell him so, and he believed it, his joy would be just as great, while the belief lasts, as if it was a reality. True Christian joy does not depend on evidence. He submits himself into the hands of God with such confidence, and that very act gives him peace. He had a terrible conflict with God, but all at once he yields the controversy, and says, "God will do right, let God's will be done." Then he begins to pray, he is subdued, he melts down before God, and that very act affords sweet, calm, and heavenly joy. Perhaps he has not thought of a hope. Perhaps he may go for hours, or even for a day or two, full of joy in God, without thinking of his own salvation. You ask him if he has a hope, he never thought of that. His joy does not depend on believing that he is pardoned, but consists in a state of mind, acquiescing in the government of God. In such a state of mind, he could not but be happy.

Now let me ask which religion have you? If you exercise true religion, suppose God should put you into hell, and there let you exercise supreme love to God, and the same love to your neighbor as to yourself, that itself is a state of mind inconsistent with being miserable.

I wish this to be fully understood. These hope-seekers will be always disappointed. If you run after hope, you will never have a hope good for anything. But if you pursue holiness, hope, and peace, and joy, will come of course. Is your religion the love of holiness, the love of God and of souls? Or is it only a hope?

IX. You see why it is that anxious sinners do not find peace.

They are looking at their own guilt and danger. They are regarding God as an avenger, and shrinking from His terrors. This will render it impossible they should ever come at peace. While looking at the wrath of God, making them wither and tremble, they cannot love Him, they hide from Him. Anxious sinners, let me tell you a secret. If you keep looking at that feature of God's character, it will drive you to despair, and that is inconsistent with true submission. You should look at His whole character, and see the reasons why you should love Him, and throw yourself upon Him without reserve, and without distrust; and instead of shrinking from Him, come right to Him, and say, "O, Father in heaven, thou art not inexorable, thou art sovereign, but thou art good, I submit to thy government, and give myself to thee, with all I have and all I am, body and soul, for time and for eternity."

The subject for the next lecture will be, the distinction between legal submission and gospel submission, or between the religion of the law and the religion of faith. And here let me observe, that when I began to preach on the subject of selfishness in religion, I did not dream that it would be regarded by anyone as a controversial subject at all. I have no fondness for controversy, and I should as soon think of calling the doctrine of the existence of God a controversial subject, as this.

The question is one of the greatest importance, and we ought to weigh the arguments, and decide according to the word of God. Soon we shall go together to the bar of God, and you must determine whether you will go there with selfishness in your hearts, or with that disinterested benevolence that seeketh not her own.---Will you now be honest? For as God is true, if you are seeking your own, you will soon be in hell, unless you repent. O be honest! and lay aside prejudice, and act for eternity.

03.21. TRUE & FALSE CONVERSION

LECTURES IN 1837

LECTURE I.

TRUE AND FALSE CONVERSION.

TEXT:--"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."--- Isa 50:11.

It is evident, from the connection of these words in the chapter, that the prophet was addressing those who professed to be religious, and who flattered themselves that they were in a state of salvation, but in fact their hope was a fire of their own kindling, and sparks created by themselves. Before I proceed to discuss the subject, let me say, that as I have given notice that it was my intention to discuss the nature of true and false conversion, it will be of no use but to those who will be honest in applying it to themselves. If you mean to profit by the discourse, you must resolve to make a faithful application of it to yourselves---just as honest as if you thought you were now going to the solemn judgment. If you will do this, I may hope to be able to lead you to discover your true state, and if you are now deceived, direct you in the true path to salvation. If you will not do this, I shall preach in vain, and you will hear in vain.

I design to show the difference between true and false conversion, and shall take up the subject in the following order:

I. Show that the natural state of man is a state of pure selfishness.

II. Show that the character of the converted is that of benevolence.

III. That the New Birth consists in a change from selfishness to benevolence.

IV. Point out some things wherein saints and sinners, or true and spurious converts, may agree, and some things in which they differ. And,

V. Answer some objections that may be offered against the view I have taken, and conclude with some remarks.

I. I am to show that the natural state of man, or that in which all men are found before conversion, is pure, unmingled selfishness.

By which I mean, that they have no gospel benevolence. Selfishness is regarding one’s own happiness supremely, and seeking one’s own good because it is his own. He who is selfish places his own happiness above other interests of greater value; such as the glory of God and the good of the universe. That mankind, before conversion, are in this state, is evident from many considerations.

Every man knows that all other men are selfish. All the dealings of mankind are conducted on this principle. If any man overlooks this, and undertakes to deal with mankind as if they were not selfish, but were disinterested, he will be thought deranged.

II. In a converted state, the character is that of benevolence.

An individual who is converted is benevolent, and not supremely selfish. Benevolence is loving the happiness of others, or rather, choosing the happiness of others. Benevolence is a compound word, that properly signifies good willing, or choosing the happiness of others. This is God's state of mind. We are told that God is love; that is, He is benevolent. Benevolence comprises His whole character. All His moral attributes are only so many modifications of benevolence. An individual who is converted is in this respect like God. I do not mean to be understood, that no one is converted, unless he is purely and perfectly benevolent, as God is; but that the balance of his mind, his prevailing choice is benevolent. He sincerely seeks the good of others, for its own sake. And, 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. The man who is disinterested feels happy in doing good. Otherwise doing good itself would not be virtue in him. In other words, if he did not love to do good, and enjoy doing good, it would not be virtue in him.

Benevolence is holiness. It is what the law of God requires: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." Just as certainly as the converted man yields obedience to the law of God, and just as certainly as he is like God, he is benevolent. It is the leading feature of his character, that he is seeking the happiness of others, and not his own happiness, as his supreme end.

III. That true conversion is a change from a state of supreme selfishness to benevolence.

It is a change in the end of pursuit, and not a mere change in the means of attaining the end. It is not true that the converted and the unconverted differ only in the means they use, while both are aiming at the same end. It is not true that Gabriel and Satan are pursuing the same end, and both alike aiming at their own happiness, only pursuing a different way. Gabriel does not obey God for the sake of promoting his own happiness. A man may change his means, and yet have the same end, his own happiness. He may do good for the sake of the temporal benefit. He may not believe in religion, or in any eternity, and yet may see that doing good will be for his advantage in this world. Suppose, then, that his eyes are opened, and he sees the reality of eternity; and then he may take up religion as a means of happiness in eternity. Now, everyone can see that there is no virtue in this. It is the design that gives character to the act, not the means employed to effect the design. The true and the false convert differ in this. The true convert chooses, as the end of his pursuit, the glory of God and the good of His kingdom. This end he chooses for its own sake, because he views this as the greatest good, as a greater good than his own individual happiness. Not that he is indifferent to his own happiness, but he prefers God's glory, because it is a greater

good. He looks on the happiness of every individual according to its real importance, as far as he is capable of valuing it, and he chooses the greatest good as his supreme object.

IV. Now I am to show some things in which true saints and deceived persons may agree, and some things in which they differ.

1. They may agree in leading a strictly moral life.

The difference is in their motives. The true saint leads a moral life from love to holiness; the deceived person from selfish considerations. He uses morality as a means to an end, to effect his own happiness. The true saint loves it as an end.

2. They may be equally prayerful, so far as the form of praying is concerned.

The difference is in their motives. The true saint loves to pray; the other prays because he hopes to derive some benefit to himself from praying. The true saint expects a benefit from praying, but that is not his leading motive. The other prays from no other motive.

3. They may be equally zealous in religion.

One may have great zeal, because his zeal is according to knowledge, and he sincerely desires and loves to promote religion, for its own sake. The other may show equal zeal, for the sake of having his own salvation more assured, and because he is afraid of going to hell if he does not work for the Lord, or to quiet his conscience, and not because he loves religion for its own sake.

4. They may be equally conscientious in the discharge of duty; the true convert because he loves to do duty, and the other because he dare not neglect it.

5. Both may pay equal regard to what is right; the true convert because he loves what is right, and the other because he knows he cannot be saved unless he does right. He is honest in his common business transactions, because it is the only way to secure his own interest. Verily, they have their reward. They get the reputation of being honest among men, but if they have no higher motive, they will have no reward from God.

6. They may agree in their desires, in many respects. They may agree in their desires to serve God; the true convert because he loves the service of God, and the deceived person for the reward, as the hired servant serves his master.

They may agree in their desires to be useful; the true convert desiring usefulness for its own sake, the deceived person because he knows that is the way to obtain the favor of God. And then in proportion as he is awakened to the importance of having God’s favor, will be the intensity of his desires to be useful.

In desires for the conversion of souls; the true saint because it will glorify God; the deceived person to gain the favor of God. He will be actuated in this, just as he is in giving money. Who ever doubted that a person might give his money to the Bible Society, or the Missionary Society, from selfish motives alone, to procure happiness, or applause, or obtain the favor of God? He may just as well desire the conversion of souls, and labor to promote it, from motives purely selfish.

To glorify God; the true saint because he loves to see God glorified, and the deceived person because he knows that is the way to be saved. The true convert has his heart set on the glory of God, as his great end, and he desires to glorify God as an end, for its own sake. The other desires it as a means to his great end, the benefit of himself.

To repent. The true convert abhors sin on account of its hateful nature, because it dishonors God, and therefore he desires to repent of it. The other desires to repent, because he knows that unless he does repent he will be damned.

To believe in Jesus Christ. The true saint desires it to glorify God, and because he loves the truth for its own sake. The other desires to believe, that he may have a stronger hope of going to heaven.

To obey God. The true saint that he may increase in holiness; the false professor because he desires the rewards of obedience.

7. They may agree not only in their desires, but in their resolutions. They may both resolve to give up sin, and to obey God, and to lay themselves out in promoting religion, and building up the kingdom of Christ; and they may both resolve it with great strength of purpose, but with different motives.

8. They may also agree in their designs. They may both really design to glorify God, and to convert men, and to extend the kingdom of Christ, and to have the world converted; the true saint from love to God and holiness, and the other for the sake of securing his own happiness. One chooses it as an end, the other as a means to promote a selfish end.

They may both design to be truly holy; the true saint because he loves holiness, and the deceived person because he knows that he can be happy in no other way.

9. They may agree not only in their desires, and resolutions, and designs, but also in their affection towards many objects.

They may both love the Bible; the true saint because it is God’s truth, and he delights in it, and feasts his soul on it; the other because he thinks it is in his own favor, and is the charter of his own hopes.

They may both love God; the one because he sees God’s character to be supremely lovely and excellent in itself, and he loves it for its own sake; the other because he thinks God is his particular friend, that is going to make him happy for ever, and he connects the idea of God with his own interest.

They may both love Christ. The true convert loves His character; the deceived person thinks He will save him from hell, and give him eternal life, and why should he not love Him?

They may both love Christians: the true convert because he sees in them the image of Christ, and the deceived person because they belong to his own denomination, or because they are on his side, and he feels the same interest and the same hopes with them.

10. They may also agree in hating the same things. They may both hate infidelity, and oppose it strenuously---the true saint because it is opposed to God and holiness, and the deceived person

because it injures an interest in which he is deeply concerned, and if true, destroys all his own hopes for eternity. So they may hate error; one because it is detestable in itself, and contrary to God---and the other because it is contrary to his views and opinions.

I recollect seeing in writing, some time ago, an attack on a minister for publishing certain opinions, "because," said the writer, "these sentiments would destroy all my hopes for eternity." A very good reason indeed! As good as a selfish being needs for opposing an opinion.

They may both hate sin; the true convert because it is odious to God, and the deceived person because it is injurious to himself. Cases have occurred, where an individual has hated his own sins, and yet not forsaken them. How often the drunkard, as he looks back at what he once was, and contrasts his present degradation with what he might have been, abhors his drink; not for its own sake, but because it has ruined him. And he still loves his cups, and continues to drink, though when he looks at their effects, he feels indignation.

They may be both opposed to sinners. The opposition of true saints is a benevolent opposition, viewing and abhorring their character and conduct, as calculated to subvert the kingdom of God. The other is opposed to sinners because they are opposed to the religion he has espoused, and because they are not on his side.

11. So they may both rejoice in the same things. Both may rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, and the conversion of souls; the true convert because he has his heart set on it, and loves it for its own sake, as the greatest good, and the deceived person because that particular thing in which he thinks he has such a great interest is advancing.

12. Both may mourn and feel distressed at the low state of religion in the church: the true convert because God is dishonored, and the deceived person because his own soul is not happy, or because religion is not in favor.

Both may love the society of the saints; the true convert because his soul enjoys their spiritual conversation, the other because he hopes to derive some advantage from their company. The first enjoys it because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; the other because he loves to talk about the great interest he feels in religion, and the hope he has of going to heaven.

13. Both may love to attend religious meetings; the true saint because his heart delights in acts of worship, in prayer and praise, in hearing the word of God and in communion with God and His saints, and the other because he thinks a religious meeting a good place to prop up his hope. He may have a hundred reasons for loving them, and yet not at all for their own sake, or because he loves, in itself, the worship and the service of God.

14. Both may find pleasure in the duties of the closet. The true saint loves his closet, because he draws near to God, and finds delight in communion with God, where there are no embarrassments to keep him from going right to God and conversing. The deceived person finds a kind of satisfaction in it, because it is his duty to pray in secret, and he feels a self-righteous satisfaction in doing it. Nay, he may feel a certain pleasure in it, from a kind of excitement of the mind which he mistakes for communion with God.

15. They may both love the doctrines of grace; the true saint because they are so glorious to God, the other because he thinks them a guarantee of his own salvation.

16. They may both love the precept of God’s law; the true saint because it is so excellent, so holy, and just, and good; the other because he thinks it will make him happy if he loves it, and he does it as a means of happiness.

Both may consent to the penalty of the law. The true saint consents to it in his own case, because he feels it to be just in itself for God to send him to hell. The deceived person because he thinks he is in no danger from it. He feels a respect for it, because he knows that it is right, and his conscience approves it, but he has never consented to it in his own case.

17. They may be equally liberal in giving to benevolent societies. None of you doubt that two men may give equal sums to a benevolent object, but from totally different motives. One gives to do good, and would be just as willing to give as now, if he knew that no other living person would give. The other gives for the credit of it, or to quiet his conscience, or because he hopes to purchase the favor of God.

18. They may be equally self-denying in many things. Self-denial is not confined to true saints. Look at the sacrifices and self-denials of the Mohammedans, going on their pilgrimage to Mecca. Look at the heathen, throwing themselves under the car of Juggernaut. Look at the poor ignorant papists, going up and down over the sharp stones on their bare knees, till they stream with blood. A Protestant congregation will not contend that there is any religion in that. But is there not self-denial? The true saint denies himself, for the sake of doing more good to others. He is more set on this than on his own indulgence or his own interest. The deceived person may go equal lengths, but from purely selfish motives.

19. They may both be willing to suffer martyrdom. Read the lives of the martyrs, and you will have no doubt that some were willing to suffer, from a wrong idea of the rewards of martyrdom, and would rush upon their own destruction because they were persuaded it was the sure road to eternal life.

In all these cases, the motives of one class are directly over against the other. The difference lies in the choice of different ends. One chooses his own interest, the other chooses God’s interest, as his chief end. For a person to pretend that both these classes are aiming at the same end, is to say that an impenitent sinner is just as benevolent as a real Christian; or that a Christian is not benevolent like God, but is only seeking his own happiness, and seeking it in religion rather than in the world.

And here is the proper place to answer an inquiry, which is often made: "If these two classes of persons may be alike in so many particulars, how are we to know our own real character, or to tell to which class we belong? We know that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and how are we to know whether we love God and holiness for their own sake, or whether we are seeking the favor of God, and aiming at heaven for our own benefit?" I answer:

1. If we are truly benevolent, it will appear in our daily transactions. This character, if real, will show itself in our business, if anywhere. If selfishness rules our conduct there, as sure as God reigns we are truly selfish. If in our dealings with men we are selfish, we are so in our dealings with God. "For whoso liveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Religion is not merely love to God, but love to man also. And if our daily transactions show us to be selfish, we are unconverted; or else benevolence is not essential to religion, and a man can be

religious without loving his neighbor as himself.

2. If you are disinterested in religion, religious duties will not be a task to you. You will not go about religion as the laboring man goes to his toil, for the sake of a living. The laboring man takes pleasure in his labor, but it is not for its own sake. He would not do it if he could help it. In its own nature it is a task, and if he takes any pleasure in it, it is for its anticipated results, the support and comfort of his family, or the increase of his property.

Precisely such is the state of some persons in regard to religion. They go to it as the sick man takes his medicine, because they desire its effects, and they know they must have it or perish. It is a task that they never would do for its own sake. Suppose men love labor, as a child loves play. They would do it all day long, and never be tired of doing it, without any other inducement than the pleasure they enjoy in doing it. So it is in religion, where it is loved for its own sake, there is no weariness in it.

3. If selfishness is the prevailing character of your religion, it will take sometimes one form and sometimes another. For instance: If it is a time of general coldness in the church, real converts will still enjoy their own secret communion with God, although there may not be so much doing to attract notice in public. But the deceived person will then invariably be found driving after the world. Now, let the true saints rise up, and make a noise, and speak their joys aloud, so that religion begins to be talked of again; and perhaps the deceived professor will soon begin to bustle about, and appear to be even more zealous than the true saint. He is impelled by his convictions, and not affections. When there is no public interest, he feels no conviction; but when the church awakes, he is convicted, and compelled to stir about, to keep his conscience quiet. It is only selfishness in another form.

4. If you are selfish, your enjoyment in religion will depend mainly on the strength of your hopes of heaven, and not on the exercise of your affections. Your enjoyments are not in the employments of religion themselves, but of a vastly different kind from those of the true saint. They are mostly from anticipating. When your evidences are renewed, and you feel very certain of going to heaven, then you enjoy religion a good deal. It depends on your hope, and not on your love for the things for which you hope. You hear persons tell of their having no enjoyment in religion when they lose their hopes. The reason is plain. If they loved religion for its own sake, their enjoyment would not depend on their hope. A person who loves his employment is happy anywhere. And if you loved the employments of religion, you would be happy, if God should put you in hell, provided He would only let you employ yourself in religion. If you might pray and praise God, you would feel that you could be happy anywhere in the universe; for you would still be doing the things in which your happiness mainly consists. If the duties of religion are not the things in which you feel enjoyment, and if all your enjoyment depends on your hope, you have no true religion; it is all selfishness.

I do not say that true saints do not enjoy their hope. But that is not the great thing with them. They think very little about their own hopes. Their thoughts are employed about something else. The deceived person, on the contrary, is sensible that he does not enjoy the duties of religion; but only that the more he does, the more confident he is of heaven. He takes only such kind of enjoyment in it, as a man does who thinks that by great labor he shall have great wealth.

5. If you are selfish in religion, your enjoyments will be chiefly from anticipation. The true saint already enjoys the peace of God, and has heaven begun in his soul. He has not merely the prospect of it, but eternal life actually begun in him. He has that faith which is the very substance of things hoped for. Nay, he has the very feelings of heaven in him. He anticipates joys higher in degree, but the same in kind. He knows that he has heaven begun in him, and is not obliged to wait till he dies to taste the joys of eternal life. His enjoyment is in proportion to his holiness, and not in proportion to his hope.

6. Another difference by which it may be known whether you are selfish in religion, is this---that the deceived person has only a purpose of obedience, and the other has a preference of obedience. This is an important distinction, and I fear few persons make it. Multitudes have a purpose of obedience, who have no true preference of obedience. Preference is actual choice, or obedience of heart. You often hear individuals speak of their having had a purpose to do this or that act of obedience, but failed to do it. And they will tell you how difficult it is to execute their purpose. The true saint, on the other hand, really prefers, and in his heart chooses obedience, and therefore he finds it easy to obey. The one has a purpose to obey, like that which Paul had before he was converted, as he tells us in the seventh chapter of Romans. He had a strong purpose of obedience, but did not obey, because his heart was not in it. The true convert prefers obedience for its own sake; he actually chooses it, and does it. The other purposes to be holy, because he knows that is the only way to be happy. The true saint chooses holiness for its own sake, and he is holy.

7. The true convert and the deceived person also differ in their faith. The true saint has a confidence in the general character of God, that leads him to unqualified submission to God. A great deal is said about the kinds of faith, but without much meaning. True confidence in the Lord’s special promises, depends on confidence in God’s general character. There are only two principles on which any government, human or divine, is obeyed, fear and confidence. No matter whether it is the government of a family, or a ship, or a nation, or a universe. All obedience springs from one of these two principles. In the one case, individuals obey from hope of reward and fear of the penalty. In the other, from that confidence in the character of the government, which works by love. One child obeys his parent from confidence in his parent. He has faith which works by love. The other yields an outward obedience from hope and fear. The true convert has this faith, or confidence in God, that leads him to obey God because he loves God. This is the obedience of faith. He has that confidence in God, that he submits himself wholly into the hands of God.

The other has only a partial faith, and only a partial submission. The devil has a partial faith. He believes and trembles. A person may believe that Christ came to save sinners, and on that ground may submit to Him, to be saved; while he does not submit wholly to Him, to be governed and disposed of. His submission is only on condition that he shall be saved. It is never with that unreserved confidence in God’s whole character, that leads him to say, "Let thy will be done." He only submits to be saved. His religion is the religion of law. The other is gospel religion. One is selfish, the other benevolent. Here lies the true difference between the two classes. The religion of one is outward and hypocritical. The other is that of the heart, holy, and acceptable to God.

8. I will only mention one difference more. If your religion is selfish, you will rejoice particularly in the conversion of sinners, where your own agency is concerned in it, but will have very little

satisfaction in it, where it is through the agency of others. The selfish person rejoices when he is active and successful in converting sinners, because he thinks he shall have a great reward. But instead of delighting in it when done by others, he will be even envious. The true saint sincerely delights to have others useful, and rejoices when sinners are converted by the instrumentality of others as much as if it was his own. There are some who will take interest in a revival, only so far as themselves are connected with it, while it would seem they had rather sinners should remain unconverted, than that they should be saved by the instrumentality of an evangelist, or a minister of another denomination. The true spirit of a child of God is to say, "Send, Lord, by whom thou wilt send---only let souls be saved, and thy name glorified!"

V. I am to answer some objections which are made against this view of the subject.

Objection 1. "Am I not to have any regard to my own happiness?"

Answer. It is right to regard your own happiness according to its relative value. Put it in this scale, by the side of the glory of God and the good of the universe, and then decide, and give it the value which belongs to it. This is precisely what God does. And this is what He means, when He commands you to love your neighbor as yourself.

And again: You will in fact promote your own happiness, precisely in proportion as you leave it out of view. Your happiness will be in proportion to your disinterestedness. True happiness consists mainly in the gratification of virtuous desires. There may be pleasure in gratifying desires that are selfish, but it is not real happiness. But to be virtuous, your desires must be disinterested. Suppose a man meets a beggar in the street; there he sits on the curbstone, cold and hungry, without friends, and ready to perish. The man’s feelings are touched, and he steps into a grocery near by, and buys him a loaf of bread. At once the countenance of the beggar lights up, and he looks unutterable gratitude. Now it is plain to see, that the gratification of the man in the act is precisely in proportion to the singleness of his motive. If he did it purely and solely out of benevolence, his gratification is complete in the act itself. But if he did it partly to have it known that he is a charitable and humane person, then his happiness is not complete until the deed is published to others. Suppose here is a sinner in his sins; he is very wicked and very wretched. Your compassion is moved, and you convert and save him. If your motive was to obtain honor among men and to secure the favor of God, you are not completely happy until the deed is told, and perhaps put in the newspaper. But if you wished purely to save a soul from death, then as soon as you see that done, your gratification is complete, and your joy is unmingled. So it is in all religious duties; your happiness is precisely in proportion as you are disinterested.

If you aim at doing good for its own sake, then you will be happy in proportion as you do good. But if you aim directly at your own happiness, and if you do good simply as a means of securing your own happiness, you will fail. You will be like the child pursuing his own shadow; he can never overtake it, because it always keeps just so far before him. Suppose in the case I have mentioned, you have no desire to relieve the beggar, but regard simply the applause of a certain individual. Then you will feel no pleasure at all in the relief of the beggar; but when that individual hears of it and commends it, then you are gratified. But you are not gratified in the thing itself. Or suppose you aim at the conversion of sinners; but if it is not love to sinners that leads you to do it, how can the conversion of sinners make you happy? It has no tendency to gratify the desire that prompted the effort. The truth is, God has so constituted the mind of man, that it must seek the happiness of

others as its end, or it cannot be happy. Here is the true reason why all the world, seeking their own happiness and not the happiness of others, fail of their end. It is always just so far before them. If they would leave off seeking their own happiness, and lay themselves out to do good, they would be happy.

Objection 2. "Did not Christ regard the joy set before Him? And did not Moses also have respect unto the recompense of reward? And does not the Bible say we love God because He first loved us?"

Answer 1. It is true that Christ despised the shame and endured the cross, and had regard to the joy set before Him. But what was the joy set before Him? Not His own salvation, not His own happiness, but the great good He would do in the salvation of the world. He was perfectly happy in himself. But the happiness of others was what He aimed at. This was the joy set before Him. And that He obtained.

Answer 2. So Moses had respect to the recompense of reward. But was that his own comfort? Far from it. The recompense of reward was the salvation of the people of Israel. What did he say? When God proposed to destroy the nation, and make of him a great nation, had Moses been selfish he would have said, "That is right, Lord; be it unto thy servant according to thy word." But what does he say? Why, his heart was so set on the salvation of his people, and the glory of God, that he would not think of it for a moment, but said, "If thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written." And in another case, when God said He would destroy them, and make of Moses a greater and a mightier nation, Moses thought of God’s glory, and said, "Then the Egyptians shall hear of it, and all the nations will say, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land." He could not bear to think of having his own interest exalted at the expense of God’s glory. It was really a greater reward, to his benevolent mind, to have God glorified, and the children of Israel saved, than any personal advantage whatever to himself could be.

Answer 3. Where it is said, "We love him because he first loved us" the language plainly bears two interpretations; either that His love to us has provided the way for our return and the influence that brought us to love Him, or that we love Him for His favor shown to ourselves.---That the latter is not the meaning is evident, because Jesus Christ has so expressly reprobated the principle, in His sermon on the mount: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? Do not the publicans the same?" If we love God, not for His character but for His favors to us, Jesus Christ has written us reprobate.

Objection 3. "Does not the Bible offer happiness as the reward of virtue?"

Answer. The Bible speaks of happiness as the result of virtue, but nowhere declares virtue to consist in the pursuit of one’s own happiness. The Bible is everywhere inconsistent with this, and represents virtue to consist in doing good to others. We can see by the philosophy of the mind, that it must be so. If a person desires the good of others, he will be happy in proportion as he gratifies that desire. Happiness is the result of virtue, but virtue does not consist in the direct pursuit of one’s own happiness, but is wholly inconsistent with it.

Objection 4. "God aims at our happiness, and shall we be more benevolent than God? Should we not be like God? May we not aim at the same thing that God aims at? Should we not be seeking

the same end that God seeks?"

Answer. This objection is specious, but futile and rotten. God is benevolent to others. He aims at the happiness of others, and at our happiness. And to be like Him, we must aim at, that is, delight in His happiness and glory, and the honor and glory of the universe, according to their real value.

Objection 5. "Why does the Bible appeal continually to the hopes and fears of men, if a regard to our own happiness is not a proper motive to action?"

Answer l. The Bible appeals to the constitutional susceptibilities of men, not to their selfishness. Man dreads harm, and it is not wrong to avoid it. We may have a due regard to our own happiness, according to its value.

Answer 2. And again; mankind are so besotted with sin, that God cannot get their attention to consider His true character, and the reasons for loving Him, unless He appeals to their hopes and fears. But when they are awakened, then He presents the gospel to them. When a minister has preached the terrors of the Lord till he has got his hearers alarmed and aroused, so that they will give attention, he has gone far enough in that line; and then he ought to spread out all the character of God before them, to engage their hearts to love Him for His own excellence.

Objection 6. "Do not the inspired writers say, Repent, and believe the gospel, and you shall be saved?"

Answer. Yes; but they require true repentance; that is, to forsake sin because it is hateful in itself. It is not true repentance, to forsake sin on condition of pardon, or to say, "I will be sorry for my sins, if you will forgive me." So they require true faith, and true submission; not conditional faith, or partial submission. This is what the Bible insists on. It says he shall be saved, but it must be disinterested repentance, and disinterested submission.

Objection 7. "Does not the gospel hold out pardon as a motive to submission."

Answer. This depends on the sense in which you must the term motive. If you mean that God spreads out before men His whole character, and the whole truth of the case, as reasons to engage the sinner’s love and repentance, I say, Yes; His compassion, and willingness to pardon, are reasons for loving God, because they are a part of His glorious excellence, which we are bound to love. But if you mean by motive a condition, and that the sinner is to repent on condition he shall be pardoned, then I say, that the Bible no where holds out any such view of the matter. It never authorizes a sinner to say, "I will repent if you will forgive," and nowhere offers pardon as a motive to repentance, in such a sense as this.

With two short remarks I will close:

1. We see, from this subject, why it is that professors of religion have such different views of the nature of the gospel.

Some view it as a mere matter of accommodation to mankind, by which God is rendered less strict than He was under the law; so that they may be fashionable or worldly, and the gospel will come in and make up the deficiencies and save them. The other class view the gospel as a provision of divine benevolence, having for its main design to destroy sin and promote holiness; and that

therefore so far from making it proper for them to be less holy than they ought to be under the law, its whole value consists in its power to make them holy.

II. We see why some people are so much more anxious to convert sinners, than to see the church sanctified and God glorified by the good works of His people.

Many feel a natural sympathy for sinners, and wish to have them saved from hell; and if that is gained, they have no farther concern. But true saints are most affected by sin as dishonoring God. And they are more distressed to see Christians sin, because it dishonors God more. Some people seem to care but little how the church live, if they can only see the work of conversion go forward. They are not anxious to have God honored. It shows that they are not actuated by the love of holiness, but by mere compassion for sinners.

In my next lecture, I propose to show to how persons whose religion is selfish may become truly religious.

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Chapter 69

03.22. TRUE & FALSE REPENTANCE

LECTURE IX.

TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE.

TEXT:--"For godly sorrow worketh repentance into salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death."--- 2Co 7:10

In this chapter the apostle refers to another epistle, which he had formerly written to the church at Corinth, on a certain subject, in which they were greatly to blame. He speaks here of the effect that it had, in bringing them to true repentance. They sorrowed after a godly sort. This was the evidence that their repentance was genuine.

"For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

In the verse which I have taken for my text, he speaks of two kinds of sorrow for sin, one working repentance unto salvation, the other working death. He alludes to what is generally understood by two kinds of repentance. And this is the subject of discourse tonight. TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE In discoursing on the subject, I design to show

I. What true repentance is:

II. How it may be known:

III. What is false and spurious repentance:

IV. How it may be known:

It is high time professors of religion were taught to discriminate much more than they do in regard to the nature and character of various exercises on the subject of religion. Were it so, the church would not be so overrun with false and unprofitable professors. I have of late been frequently led to examine, over and over again, the reason why there is so much spurious religion, and I have sought to know what is the foundation of the difficulty. That multitudes suppose themselves to be religious, who are not so, unless the Bible is false---is notorious. Why is it that so many are deceived? Why do so many, who are yet impenitent sinners, get the idea that they have repented? The cause is doubtless a want of discriminating instruction respecting the foundation of religion, and especially a want of discrimination respecting true and false repentance.

I. I am to show what is true repentance.

It involves a change of opinion respecting the nature of sin, and this change of opinion followed by a corresponding change of feeling towards sin. Feeling is the result of thought. And when this

change of opinion is such as to produce a corresponding change of feeling, if the opinion is right and the feeling corresponds, this is true repentance. It must be right opinion. The opinion now adopted might be such an opinion as God holds respecting sin. Godly sorrow, such as God requires, must spring from such views of sin as God holds.

First. There must be a change of opinion in regard to sin.

1. A change of opinion in regard to the nature of sin.

To one who truly repents, sin looks like a very different thing from what it does to him who has not repented. Instead of looking like a thing that is desirable or fascinating, it looks the very opposite, most odious and detestable, and he is astonished at himself, that he ever could have desired such a thing. Impenitent sinners may look at sin and see that it will ruin them, because God will punish them for it. But after all, it appears in itself desirable. They love it. They roll it under their tongue. If it could end in happiness, they never would think of abandoning it. But to the other it is different; he looks at his own conduct as perfectly hateful. He looks back upon it, and exclaims, "How hateful, how detestable, how worthy of hell, such and such a thing was in me."

2. A change of opinion of the character of sin as respects its relation to God.

Sinners do not see why God threatens sin with such terrible punishment. They love it so well themselves, that they cannot see why God should look at it in such a light as to think it worthy of everlasting punishment. When they are strongly convicted, they see it differently, and so far as opinion is concerned, they see it in the same light as a Christian does, and then they only want a corresponding change of feeling to become Christians. Many a sinner sees its relation to God to be such that it deserves eternal death, but his heart does not go with his opinions. This is the case with the devils and wicked spirits in hell. Mark, then; a change of opinion is indispensable to true repentance, and always precedes it. The heart never goes out to God in true repentance without a previous change of opinion. There may be a change of opinion without repentance, but no genuine repentance without a change of opinion.

3. A change of opinion in regard to the tendencies of sin.

Before, the sinner thinks it utterly incredible that sin should have such tendencies as to deserve everlasting death. He may be fully changed, however, as to his opinions on this point without repentance, but it is impossible a man should truly repent without a change of opinion. He sees sin in its tendency, as ruinous to himself and everybody else, soul and body, for time and eternity, and at variance with all that is lovely and happy in the universe. He sees that sin is calculated in its tendencies to injure himself, and everybody else, and that there is no remedy but universal abstinence. The devil knows it to be so. And possibly there are some sinners now in this congregation who know it.

4. A change of opinion in regard to the desert of sin.

The word rendered repentance implies all this. It implies a change in the state of the mind including all this. The careless sinner has almost no right ideas, even so far as this life is concerned, respecting the desert of sin. Suppose he admits in theory that sin deserves eternal death, he does not believe it. If he believed it, it would be impossible for him to remain a careless sinner. He is deceived, if he supposes that he honestly holds such an opinion as that sin deserves

the wrath of God forever. But the truly awakened and convicted sinner has no more doubt of this than he has of the existence of God. He sees clearly that sin must deserve everlasting punishment from God. He knows that this is a simple matter of fact.

Secondly. In true repentance there must be a corresponding change of feeling.

The change of feeling respects sin in all these particulars, its nature, its relations, its tendencies, and its deserts. The individual who truly repents, not only sees sin to be detestable and vile and worthy of abhorrence, but he really abhors it, and hates it in his heart. A person may see sin to be hurtful and abominable, while yet his heart loves it, and desires it, and clings to it. But when he truly repents, he most heartily abhors and renounces it.

In relation to God, he feels towards sin as it really is. And here is the source of those gushings of sorrow in which Christians sometimes break out, when contemplating sin. The Christian views it as to its nature, and simply feels abhorrence. But when he views it in relation to God, then he feels like weeping, the fountains of his sorrow gush forth, and he wants to get right down on his face and pour out a flood of tears over his sins.

Then as to the tendencies of sin, the individual who truly repents feels it as it is. When he views sin in its tendencies, it awakens a vehement desire to stop it, and to save people from their sins, and roll back the tide of death. It sets his heart on fire, and he goes to praying, and laboring, and pulling sinners out of the fire with all his might, to save them from the awful tendencies of sin. When the Christian sets his mind on this, he will bestir himself to make people give up their sins. Just as if he saw all the people taking poison which he knew would destroy them, and he lifts up his voice to warn them to BEWARE.

He feels right, as to the desert of sin. He has not only an intellectual conviction that sin deserves everlasting punishment, but he feels that it would be so right and so reasonable, and so just for God to condemn him to eternal death, that so far from finding fault with the sentence of the law that condemns him, he thinks it the wonder of heaven, a wonder of wonders, if God can forgive him. Instead of thinking it hard, or severe, or unkind in God, that incorrigible sinners are sent to hell, he is full of adoring wonder that he is not sent to hell himself, and that this whole guilty world has not long since been hurled down to endless burnings. It is the last thing in the world he would think to complain of, that all sinners are not saved, but O, it is a wonder of mercy that all the world is not damned. And when he thinks of such a sinner's being saved, he feels a sense of gratitude that he never knew anything of till he was a Christian.

II. I am to show what are the works or effects of genuine repentance.

I wish to show you what are the works of true repentance, and to make it so plain to your minds, that you can know infallibly whether you have repented or not.

1. If your repentance is genuine, there is in your mind a conscious change of views and feeling in regard to sin.

Of this you will be just as conscious as you ever were of a change of views and feelings on any other subject. Now, can you say this? Do you know, that on this point there has been a change in you, and that old things are done away and all things have become new?

2. Where repentance is genuine, the disposition to repeat sin is gone.

If you have truly repented, you do not now love sin; you do not now abstain from it through fear, and to avoid punishment, but because you hate it. How is this with you? Do you know that your disposition to commit sin is gone? Look at the sins you used to practice when you were impenitent. How do they appear to you? Do they look pleasant, and would you really love to practice them again if you dared?---If you do, if you have the disposition to sin left, you are only convicted. Your opinions of sin may be changed, but if the love of that sin remains, as your soul lives, you are still an impenitent sinner.

3. Genuine repentance worketh a reformation of conduct.

I take this to be the idea chiefly intended in the text, where it says "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." Godly sorrow produces a reformation of conduct. Otherwise it is a repetition of the same idea or saying, that repentance produces repentance. Whereas, I suppose the apostle was speaking of such a change of mind as produces a change of conduct, ending in salvation. Now, let me ask you, are you really reformed? Have you forsaken your sins? Or, are you practicing them still? If so, you are still a sinner. However you may have changed your mind, if it has not wrought a change of conduct, an actual reformation, it is not godly repentance, or such as God approves.

4. Repentance, when true and genuine, leads to confession and restitution.

The thief has not repented, while he keeps the money he stole. He may have conviction, but no repentance. If he had repentance, he would go and give back the money. If you have cheated anyone, and do not restore what you have taken unjustly; or if you have injured anyone, and do not set about it to undo the wrong you have done, as far as in you lies, you have not truly repented.

5. True repentance is a permanent change of character and conduct.

The text says it is repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. What else does the apostle mean by that expression but this, that true repentance is a change so deep and fundamental that the man never changes back again? People often quote it as if it read repentance that does not need to be repented of. But that is not what he says. It is not to be repented of, or in other words, repentance that will not be repented of, so thorough that there is no going back. The love of sin is truly abandoned. The individual, who has truly repented, has so changed his views and feelings, that he will not change back again, or go back to the love of sin. Bear this in mind now, all of you, that the truly penitent sinner exercises feelings of which he never will repent. The text says it is "unto salvation." It goes right on, to the very rest of heaven. The very reason why it ends in salvation is because it is such as will not be repented of.

And here I cannot but remark, that you see why the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance is true, and what it means. True repentance is such a thorough change of feelings, and the individual who exercises it comes so to abhor sin, that he will persevere of course, and not go and take back all his repentance and return to sin again.

III. I am to speak of false repentance.

False or spurious repentance is said to be worldly, the sorrow of the world, that is, it is sorrow for sin, arising from worldly considerations and motives connected with the present life, or at most, has respect to his own happiness in a future world, and has no regard to the true nature of sin.

1. It is not founded on such a change of opinion as I have specified to belong to true repentance.

The change is not on fundamental points. A person may see the evil consequences of sin in a worldly point of view, and it may fill him with consternation. He may see that it will greatly affect his character, or endanger his life; that if some of his concealed conduct should be found out, he would be disgraced, and this may fill him with fear and distress. It is very common for persons to have this kind of worldly sorrow, when some worldly consideration is at the bottom of it all.

2. False repentance is founded in selfishness.

It may be simply a strong feeling of regret, in the mind of the individual, that he has done as he has, because he sees the evil consequences of it to himself, because it makes him miserable, or exposes him to the wrath of God, or injures his family or his friends, or because it produces some injury to himself in time or in eternity. All this is pure selfishness. He may feel remorse of conscience---biting, consuming REMORSE---and no true repentance. It may extend to fear---deep and dreadful fear---of the wrath of God and the pains of hell, and yet be purely selfish, and all the while there may be no such thing as a hearty abhorrence of sin, and no feelings of the heart going out after the convictions of the understanding, in regard to the infinite evil of sin.

IV. I am to show how this false or spurious repentance may be known.

1. It leaves the feelings unchanged.

It leaves unbroken and unsubdued the disposition to sin in the heart. The feelings as to the nature of sin are not so changed, but that the individual still feels a desire for sin. He abstains from it, not from abhorrence of it, but from dread of the consequences of it.

2. It works death.

It leads to hypocritical concealment. The individual who has exercised true repentance is willing to have it known that he has repented, and willing to have it known that he was a sinner. He who has only false repentance, resorts to excuses and lying to cover his sins, and is ashamed of his repentance. When he is called to the anxious seat, he will cover up his sins by a thousand apologies and excuses, trying to smooth them over, and extenuate their enormity. If he speaks of his past conduct, he always does it in the softest and most favorable terms. You see a constant disposition to cover up his sin. This repentance leads to death. It makes him commit one sin to cover up another. Instead of that ingenuous, openhearted breaking forth of sensibility and frankness, you see a palavering, smooth-tongued, half-hearted mincing out of something that is intended to answer the purpose of a confession, and yet to confess nothing.

How is it with you? Are you ashamed to have any person talk with you about your sins? Then your sorrow is only a worldly sorrow, and worketh death. How often you see sinners getting out of the way to avoid conversation about their sins, and yet calling themselves anxious inquirers, and expecting to become Christians in that way. The same kind of sorrow is found in hell. No doubt all those wretched inhabitants of the pit wish to get away from the eye of God. No such sorrow is

found among the saints in heaven. Their sorrow is open, ingenuous, full and hearty. Such sorrow is not inconsistent with true happiness. The saints are full of happiness, and yet full of deep and undisguised, and gushing sorrow for sin. But this worldly sorrow is ashamed of itself, is mean and miserable, and worketh death.

3. False repentance produces only a partial reformation of conduct.

The reformation that is produced by worldly sorrow extends only to those things of which the individual has been strongly convicted. The heart is not changed. You will see him avoid only those cardinal sins, about which he has been much exercised.

Observe that young convert. If he is deceived, you will find that there is only a partial change in his conduct. He is reformed in certain things, but there are many things which are wrong that he continues to practice. If you become intimately acquainted with him, instead of finding him tremblingly alive to sin everywhere, and quick to detect it in everything that is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, you will find him, perhaps, strict and quick-sighted in regard to certain things, but loose in his conduct and lax in his views on other points, and very far from manifesting a Christian spirit in regard to all sin.

4. Ordinarily, the reformation produced by false sorrow is temporary even in those things which are reformed.

The individual is continually relapsing into his old sins. The reason is, the disposition to sin is not gone, it is only checked and restrained by fear, and as soon as he has a hope and is in the church, and gets bolstered up so that his fears are allayed, you see him gradually wearing back, and presently returning to his old sins. This was the difficulty with the house of Israel, that made them so constantly return to their idolatry and other sins. They had only worldly sorrow. You see it now everywhere in the church. Individuals are reformed for a time, and taken into the church, and then relapse into their old sins. They love to call it getting cold in religion, and backsliding, and the like, but the truth is, they always loved sin, and when the occasion offered, they returned to it, as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, because she was always a sow.

I want you should understand this point thoroughly.---Here is the foundation of all those fits and starts in religion, that you see so much of. People are awakened, and convicted, and by and by they get to hope and settle down in false security, and then away they go. Perhaps, they may keep so far on their guard as not to be turned out of the church, but the foundations of sins are not broken up, and they return to their old ways. The woman that loved dress loves it still, and gradually returns to her ribands and gewgaws. The man who loved money loves it yet, and soon slides back into his old ways, and dives into business, and pursues the world as eagerly and devotedly as he did before he joined the church.

Go through all the departments of society, and if you find thorough conversions, you will find that their most besetting sins before conversion are farthest from them now. The real convert is least likely to fall into his old besetting sin, because he abhors it most. But if he is deceived and worldly minded, he is always tending back into the same sins. The woman that loves dress comes out again in all her glory, and dashes as she used to. The fountain of sin was not broken up. They have not purged out iniquity from their heart, but they regarded iniquity in their heart all the time.

5. It is a forced reformation.

The reformation produced by a false repentance is not only a partial reformation, and a temporary reformation, but it is also forced and constrained. The reformation of one who has true repentance is from the heart; he has no longer a disposition to sin. In him the Bible promise is fulfilled. He actually finds that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." He experiences that the Savior's yoke is easy and His burden is light. He has felt that God's commandments are not grievous but joyous. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. But this spurious kind of repentance is very different: it is a legal repentance, the result of fear and not of love; a selfish repentance, anything but a free, voluntary, hearty change from sin to obedience. You will find, if there are any individuals here that have this kind of repentance, you are conscious that you do not abstain from sin by choice, because you hate it, but from other considerations. It is more through the forbiddings of conscience, or the fear you shall lose your soul, or lose your hope, or lose your character, than from abhorrence of sin or love to duty.

Such persons always need to be crowded up to do duty, with an express passage of scripture, or else they will apologize for sin, and evade duty, and think there is no great harm in doing as they do. The reason is, they love their sins, and if there is not some express command of God which they dare not fly in the face of, they will practice them. Not so with true repentance. If a thing seems contrary to the great law of love, the person who has true repentance will abhor it, and avoid it of course, whether he has an express command of God for it or not. Show me such a man and I tell you he don't need an express command to make him give up the drinking or making or vending of strong drink. He sees it is contrary to the great law of benevolence, and he truly abhors it, and would no more do it than he would blaspheme God, or steal, or commit any other abomination.

So the man that has true repentance does not need a "Thus saith the Lord," to keep him from oppressing his fellow men, because he would not do anything wrong. How certainly men would abhor anything of the kind, if they had truly repented of sin.

6. This spurious repentance leads to self-righteousness.

The individual who has this repentance may know that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners, and may profess to believe on Him and to rely on Him alone for salvation, but after all, he is actually placing ten times more reliance on his reformation than on Jesus Christ for his salvation. And if he would watch his own heart, he might know it is so. He may say he expects salvation by Christ, but in fact he is dwelling more on his reformation, and his hope is founded more on that, than on the atonement of Christ, and he is really patching up a righteousness of his own.

7. It leads to false security.

The individual supposes the worldly sorrow he has had to be true repentance, and he trusts to it. It is a curious fact, that so far as I have been able to get at the state of mind of this class of persons, they seem to take it for granted that Christ will save them because they have had sorrow on account of their sins, although they are not conscious that they have ever felt any resting in Christ. They felt sorrow, and then they got relief and felt better, and now they expect to be saved by Christ, when their very consciousness will teach them that they have never felt a hearty reliance

on Christ.

8. It hardens the heart.

The individual who has this kind of sorrow becomes harder in heart, in proportion to the number of times that he exercises such sorrow. If he has strong emotions of conviction, and his heart does not break up and flow out, the fountains of feeling are more and more dried up, and his heart more and more difficult to be reached. Take a real Christian, one who has truly repented, and every time you bring the truth to bear upon him so as to break him down before God, he becomes more and more mellow, and more easily affected, and excited, and melted, and broken down under God's blessed word, so long as he lives---and to all eternity. His heart gets into the habit of going along with the convictions of his understanding, and he becomes as teachable and tractable as a little child.

Here is the grand distinction. Let churches, or individual members, who have only this worldly repentance, pass through a revival, and get waked up and bustle about, and then grow cold again. Let this be repeated and you find them more and more difficult to be roused, till by and by they become as hard as the nether mill-stone, and nothing can ever rally them to a revival again. Directly over against this are those churches and individuals who have true repentance. Let them go through successive revivals, and you find them growing more and more mellow and tender until they get to such a state, that if they hear the trumpet blow for a revival, they kindle and glow instantly and are ready for the work.

This distinction is as broad as between light and darkness. It is everywhere observable among the churches and church members. You see the principle illustrated in sinners, who after passing through repeated revivals, by and by will scoff and rail at all religion, and although the heavens hang with clouds of mercy over their heads, they heed it not but reject it. It is so in churches and members, if they have not true repentance, every fresh excitement hardens the heart and renders them more difficult to be reached by the truth.

9. It sears the conscience.

Such persons are liable at first to be thrown into distress, whenever the truth is flashed upon their mind. They may not have so much conviction as the real Christian. But the real Christian is filled with peace at the very time that his tears are flowing from conviction of sin. And each repeated season of conviction makes him more and more watchful, and tender, and careful, till his conscience becomes, like the apple of his eye, so tender that the very appearance of evil will offend it. But the other kind of sorrow, which does not lead to hearty renunciation of sin, leaves the heart harder than before, and by and by sears the conscience as with a hot iron. This sorrow worketh death.

10. It rejects Jesus Christ as the ground of hope.

Depending on reformation and sorrow, or anything else, it leads to no such reliance on Jesus Christ, that the love of Christ will constrain him to labor all his days for Christ.

11. It is transient and temporary.

This kind of repentance is sure to be repented of. By and by you will find such persons becoming ashamed of the deep feelings that they had. They do not want to speak of them, and if they talk of them it is always lightly and coldly. They perhaps bustled about in time of revival, and appeared as much engaged as anybody, and very likely were among the extremes in everything that was done. But now the revival is over, and you find them opposed to new measures, and changing back, and ashamed of their zeal. They in fact repent of their repentance.

Such persons, after they have joined the church, will be ashamed of having come to the anxious seat. When the height of the revival has gone by, they will begin to talk against being too enthusiastic, and the necessity of getting into a more sober and consistent way in religion. Here is the secret---they had a repentance of which they afterwards repented.

You sometimes find persons who profess to be converted in a revival, turning against the very measures, and means, and doctrines, by which they profess to have been converted. Not so with the true Christian. He is never ashamed of his repentance. The last thing he would ever think of being ashamed of, is the excitement of feeling he felt in a revival.

REMARKS.

1. We learn from what has been said, one reason why there is so much spasmodic religion in the church.

They have mistaken conviction for conversion, the sorrow of the world for that godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. I am convinced, after years of observation, that here is the true reason for the present deplorable state of the church all over the land.

2. We see why sinners under conviction feel as if it was a great cross to become Christians.

They think it a great trial to give up their ungodly companions, and to give up their sins. Whereas, if they had true repentance, they would not think it any cross to give up their sins. I recollect how I used to feel, when I first saw young persons becoming Christians and joining the church. I thought it was a good thing on the whole to have religion, because they would save their souls and get to heaven. But for the time, it seemed to be a very sorrowful thing. I never dreamed then, that these young people could be really happy now. I believe it is very common for persons, who know that religion is good on the whole, and good in the end, to think they cannot be happy in religion. This is all owing to a mistake respecting the true nature of repentance. They do not understand that true repentance leads to an abhorrence of those things that were formerly loved. Sinners do not see that when their young friends become true Christians, they feel an abhorrence for their balls and parties, and sinful amusements and follies, that the love for these things is crucified.

I once knew a young lady who was converted to God. Her father was a very proud worldly man. She used to be very fond of dress, and the dancing school, and balls. After she was converted, her father would force her to go to the dancing school. He used to go along with her, and force her to stand up and dance. She would go there and weep, and sometimes when she was standing up on the floor to dance, her feelings of abhorrence and sorrow would so come over her, that she would turn away and burst into tears. Here you see the cause of all that. She truly repented of these things, with a repentance not to be repented of. O, how many associations would such a scene

recall to a Christian, what compassion for her former gay companions, what abhorrence of their giddy mirth, how she longed to be in the prayer-meeting, how could she be happy there? Such is the mistake which the impenitent, or those who have only worldly sorrow, fall into, in regard to the happiness of the real Christian.

3. Here you see what is the matter with those professing Christians who think it a cross to be very strict in religion.

Such persons are always apologizing for their sins, and pleading for certain practices, that are not consistent with strict religion. It shows that they love sin still, and will go as far as they dare in it. If they were true Christians, they would abhor it, and turn from it, and would feel it to be a cross to be dragged to it.

4. You see why some know nothing what it is to enjoy religion.

They are not cheerful and happy in religion. They are grieved because they have to break off from so many things they love, or because they have to give so much money. They are in the fire all the time. Instead of rejoicing in every opportunity of self-denial, and rejoicing in the plainest and most cutting exhibitions of truth, it is a great trial to them to be told their duty, when it crosses their inclinations and habits. The plain truth distresses them. Why? Because their hearts do not love to do duty. If they loved to do their duty, every ray of light that broke in upon their minds from heaven, pointing out their duty, would be welcomed, and make them more and more happy.

Whenever you see such persons, if they feel cramped and distressed because the truth presses them, if their hearts do not yield and go along with the truth, HYPOCRITE is the name of all such professors of religion. If you find that they are distressed like anxious sinners, and that the more you point out their sins the more they are distressed, be you sure, that they have never truly repented of their sins, nor given themselves up to be God’s.

5. You see why many professed converts, who have had very deep exercises at the time of their conversion, afterwards apostatize.

They had deep convictions and great distress of mind, and afterwards they got relief and their joy was very great, and they were amazingly happy for a season. But by and by they decline, and then they apostatize. Some, who do not discriminate properly between true and false repentance, and who think there cannot be such deep exercises without divine power, call these cases of falling from grace. But the truth is, they went out from us because they were not of us. They never had that repentance that kills and annihilates the disposition to sin.

6. See why backsliders are so miserable.

Perhaps you will infer that I suppose all true Christians are perfect, from what I said about the disposition to sin being broken up and changed. But this does not follow. There is a radical difference between a backslidden Christian and a hypocrite who has gone back from his profession. The hypocrite loves the world, and enjoys sin when he returns to it. He may have some fears and some remorse, and some apprehension about the loss of character; but after all he enjoys sin. Not so with the backslidden Christian. He loses his first love, then he falls a prey to temptation, and so he goes into sin. But he does not love it; it is always bitter to him; he feels unhappy and away from home. He has indeed, at the time, no Spirit of God, no love of God in

exercise to keep him from sin, but he does not love sin; he is unhappy in sin; he feels that he is a wretch. He is as different from the hypocrite as can be. Such an one, when he leaves the love of God, may be delivered over to Satan for a time, for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved; but he can never again enjoy sin as he used to, or delight himself as he once could in the pleasures of the world. Never again can he drink in iniquity like water. So long as he continues to wander, he is a wretch. If there is one such here tonight, you know it.

7. You see why convicted sinners are afraid to pledge themselves to give up their sins.

They tell you they dare not promise to do it, because they are afraid they shall not keep the promise. There you have the reason. They love sin. The drunkard knows that he loves rum, and though he may be constrained to keep his promise and abstain from it, yet his appetite still craves it. And so with the convicted sinner. He feels that he loves sin, that his hold on sin has never been broken off, and he dares not promise.

8. See why some professors of religion are so much opposed to pledges.

It is on the same principle. They love their sins so well, they know their hearts will plead for indulgence, and they are afraid to promise to give them up. Hence many who profess to think they are Christians, refuse to join the church. The secret reason is, they feel that their heart is still going after sin, and they dare not come under the obligations of the church-covenant. They do not want to be subject to the discipline of the church, in case they should sin. That man knows he is a hypocrite.

9. Those sinners who have worldly sorrow, can now see where the difficulty lies, and what is the reason they are not converted.

Their intellectual views of sin may be such, that if their hearts corresponded, they would be Christians. And perhaps they are thinking that this is true repentance. But if they were truly willing to give up sin, and all sin, they would not hesitate to pledge themselves to it, and to have all the world know that they had done it. If there are any such here, I ask you now to come forward, and take these seats. If you are willing to give up sin, you are willing to promise to do it, and willing to have it known that you have done it. But if you resist conviction, and when your understanding is enlightened to see what you ought to do, your heart still goeth forth after your sins, tremble, sinner, at the prospect before you. All your convictions will avail you nothing. They will only sink you deeper in hell for having resisted them.

If you are willing to give up your sins, you can signify it as I have named. But if you still love your sins, and want to retain them, you can keep your seats. And now, shall we go and tell God in prayer, that these sinners are unwilling to give up their sins, that though they are convinced they are wrong, they love their idols and after them they will go? The Lord have mercy on them, for they are in a fearful case.

03.23. TRUE SAINTS

TRUE SAINTS.

TEXT:--"Who is on the Lord’s side?"--- Exo 32:26.

This question was addressed by Moses to the professed people of God, immediately after their great departure from God while Moses was in the Mount, when they went and worshiped a golden calf which had been cast for them by Aaron. After expostulating with the guilty nation, he called out, "Who is on the Lord’s side?" It is not my intention to dwell on the history of this case particularly, but to come at once to the main design I have in view this evening, which is to show that there are THREE CLASSES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.

I. The true friends of God and man.

II. Those who are actuated by hope and fear, or in other words, by self-love, or by selfishness.

III. Those who are actuated by public opinion.

These three classes may be known by attending to the characteristic developments which show what is the leading design in their religion. It needs not be proved, that persons may set out in religion from very different motives, some from real love to religion, and some from other motives. The differences may be arranged in these three classes, and by attending to the development of their real design in becoming religious, you learn their characters. They all profess to be servants of God, and yet by observing the lives of many, it becomes manifest that instead of their being God’s servants they are only trying to make God their servant. Their leading aim and object is to secure their own salvation, or some other advantage for themselves, through the medium of the favor of God. They are seeking to make God their friend, that they may make use of Him to serve their own turn.

I. There is a class of professed Christians who are the true friends of God and man.

If you attend to those things which develop the true design and aim, of their religion, you will see it to be such. They are truly and sincerely benevolent.

1. They will make it manifest that this is their character, by their carefulness in avoiding sin.

They will show that they hate it in themselves, and they hate it in others. They will not justify it in themselves, and they will not justify it in others. They will not seek to cover up or to excuse their own sins, neither will they try to cover up or to excuse the sins of others. In short, they aim at PERFECT HOLINESS. This course of conduct makes it evident that they are the true friends of God. I do not mean to say that every true friend of God is perfect, no more than I would say that every truly affectionate and obedient child is perfect, or never fails in duty to his parent. But if he is an affectionate and obedient child, his aim is to obey always, and if he fails in any respect, he by no means justifies it, or pleads for it, or aims to cover it up, but as soon as he comes to think of the matter, is dissatisfied with himself, and condemns his conduct.

So these persons who are the true friends of God and man, are ever ready to complain of themselves, and to blame and condemn themselves for what is wrong. But you never see them finding fault with God. You never hear them excusing themselves and throwing off the blame upon their Maker, by telling of their inability to obey God, or speaking as if God had required impossibilities of His creatures. They always speak as if they felt that what God has required is right and reasonable, and themselves only to blame for their disobedience.

2. They manifest a deep abhorrence of the sins of other people.

They do not cover up the sins of others, or plead for them and excuse them, or smooth them over by "perhaps" this, or "perhaps" that. You never hear them apologizing for sin. As they are indignant at sin in themselves, they are just as much so when they see it in others. They know its horrible nature, and abhor it always.

3. Another thing in which this spirit manifests itself, is zeal for the honor and glory of God.

They show the same ardor to promote God's honor and interest, that the true patriot does to promote the honor and interest of his country. If he greatly loves his country, its government and its interest, he sets his heart upon promoting its advancement and benefit. He is never so happy as when he is doing something for the honor and advancement of his country. So a child that truly loves his father, is never so happy as when he is advancing his father's honor and interest. And he never feels more indignant grief, than when he sees his father abused or injured. If he sees his father disobeyed or abused by those who ought to obey and love and honor him, his heart breaks forth with indignant grief.

There are multitudes of professing Christians, and even ministers, who are very zealous to defend their own character and their own honor. But this one class feel more engaged, and their hearts beat higher when defending or advancing God's honor. These are the true friends of God and man.

4. They show that they sympathize with God in His feelings towards man.

They have the same kind of friendship for souls that God feels. I do not mean that they feel in the same degree, but that they have the same kind of feelings. There is such a thing as loving the souls of men and hating their conduct too. There is such a thing as constitutional sympathy, which persons feel for those who are in distress. This is natural. You always feel this for a person in distress, unless you have some selfish reason for feeling malevolent. If you saw a murderer hung, you would feel compassion for him. The wicked have this natural sympathy for those that suffer.

There is another peculiar kind of sympathy which the real child of God feels and manifests towards sinners. It is a mingled feeling of abhorrence and compassion, of indignation against his sins, and pity for his person. It is possible to feel this deep abhorrence of sin mingled with deep compassion for souls capable of such endless happiness, and yet bound to eternal misery.

I will explain myself. There are two kinds of love.---One is the love of benevolence. This has no respect to the character of the person loved, but merely views the individual as exposed to suffering and misery. This God feels towards all men. The other kind includes esteem or approbation of character. God feels this only towards the righteous. He never feels this love towards sinners. He infinitely abhors them. He has an infinitely strong exercise of compassion and

abhorrence at the same time. Christians have the same feelings, only not in the same degree, but they have them at the same time. Probably they never feel right unless they have both these feelings in exercise at the same time. The Christian does not feel as God feels towards individuals, nor feel according to the true character of the individuals, unless both these feelings exist in his mind at the same time. You see this by one striking characteristic. The Christian will rebuke most pointedly and frequently those for whom he feels the deepest compassion. Did you never see this? Did you never see a parent yearning with compassion over a child, and reprove him with tears, and yet with a pungency that would make the little offender quail under his rebuke. Jesus Christ often manifested strongly these two emotions. He wept over Jerusalem, and yet He tells the reason, in a manner that shows His burning indignation against their conduct. "O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!"---Ah! what a full view He had of their wickedness, at the moment that He wept with compassion for the doom that hung over them. It is just so with this class of Christians. You never find one of them addressing a sinner so as merely to make him weep because somebody is weeping for him. But his most tender appeals are accompanied with strong rebuke for sin.

I wish you to remember this point---that the true friend of God and man never takes the sinner's part, because he never acts through mere compassion. And at the same time, he is never seen to denounce the sinner, without at the same time manifesting compassion for his soul, and a strong desire to save him from death.

5. It is a prominent object with such Christians, in all their intercourse with men, to make them friends of God.

Whether they converse, or pray, or attend to the duties of life, it is their prominent object to recommend religion and to lead everybody to glorify God. It is very natural they should do this, if they are the true friends of God. A true friend of the government wishes everybody to be a friend of the government. A true and affectionate child wishes everybody to love and respect his father. And if any one is at enmity, it is his constant aim and effort to bring him to reconciliation. The same you would expect from a true friend of God, as a leading feature of his character, that he would make it a PROMINENT object of his life to reconcile sinners to God.

Now, mark me! If this is not the leading feature of your character, if it is not the absorbing topic of thought and effort to reconcile men to God, you have not the root of the matter in you. Whatever appearance of religion you may have, you lack the leading and fundamental characteristic of true piety. It wants the leading feature of the character and aims of Jesus Christ, and of His apostles and prophets. Look at them, and see how this feature stands out in strong and eternal relief, as the leading characteristic, the prominent design and object of their lives. Now let me ask you, what is the leading object of your life, as appears in your daily walk? Is it to bring all God's enemies to submit to Him? If not, away with your pretensions to religion. Whatever else you have, you have not the true love of God in you.

6. Where there are persons of this class, you will see them scrupulously avoid everything that in their estimation is calculated to defeat their great end.

They always wish to avoid everything calculated to prevent the salvation of souls, everything calculated to divert attention, or in any way to hinder the conversion of souls. It is not the natural

question with them, when anything is proposed which is doubtful, to ask, "Is this something which God expressly forbids?" The first question that naturally suggests itself to their minds is, "What will be the bearing of this upon religion? Will it have a tendency to prevent the conversion of sinners, to hinder the progress of revivals, to roll back the wheels of salvation?" If so, they do not need the thunders of Sinai to be pealed in their ears, to forbid their doing it. If they see it contrary to the spirit of holiness, and contrary to the main object they have in view, that is enough.

Look at the temperance reformation for an illustration of this. Here let me say, that it was the influence of intemperance in hindering the conversion and salvation of sinners that first turned the attention of the benevolent men who commenced the reformation, to inquire on the subject. And the same class of persons are still carrying it on. Such men do not stand and cavil at every step of the way, and say, "Drinking rum is no where prohibited in the Bible and I do not feel bound to give it up." They find that it hinders the great object for which they live, and that is enough for them, they give it up of course. They avoid whatever they see would hinder revival, as a matter of course, just as a merchant would avoid anything that had a tendency to impair his credit, and defeat his object of making money by his business. Suppose a merchant was about to do something that you knew would injuriously affect his credit, and you go to him in the spirit of friendship and advise him not to do it, would he turn round and say, "Show me the passage where God has prohibited this in the Bible?" No. He don’t ask you to show him any thing more than this, that it is inconsistent with his main design.

Mark this, all of you. A person who is strongly desirous of the conversion of sinners does not need an express prohibition to prevent his doing that which he sees is calculated to prevent this. There is no danger of his doing that which will defeat the very object of his life.

7. This class of professing Christians are always distressed, unless they see the work of converting sinners going on.

They call it a lamentable state of things in the church, if no sinners are converted. No matter what else is true, no matter how rich the congregation grows, nor how popular their minister, nor how many come to hear him, their panting hearts are uneasy unless they see the work of conversion actually going on. They see that all the rest is nothing without this---yea, that even the means of grace are doing more hurt than good, unless sinners are converted.

Such professors as these are a great trouble to those who are religious from other motives, and who therefore wish to keep all quiet and have everything go on regularly in the good old way. They are often called "uneasy spirits in the church." And mark it! if a church has a few such spirits in it, the minister will be made uneasy unless his preaching is such as to convert sinners. You sometimes hear of these men reproving the church, and pouring out their expostulations for living so cold and worldly, and the church reply, "O, we are doing well enough, do you not see how we flourish, it is only because you are always uneasy." When in fact their hearts are grieved and their souls in agony because sinners are not converted and souls are pressing down to hell.

8. You will see them when manifesting a spirit of prayer, praying not for themselves but for sinners.

If you know the habitual tenor of people’s prayers, it will show which way the tide of their feelings sets. If a man is actuated in religion mainly by a desire to save himself, you will hear him praying chiefly for himself---that he may have his sins pardoned and enjoy much of the Spirit of God, and

the like. But if he is truly the friend of God and man, you will find that the burden of his prayers is for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, and he is never so copious and powerful in prayer, as when he gets upon his favorite topic---the conversion of sinners. Go into the prayer meeting where such Christians pray, and instead of seeing them all shut up in the nut shell of their own interests, spending their whole prayer upon themselves, and just closing with a flourish about the kingdom of Christ, you will hear them pouring out their souls in prayer for the salvation of sinners. I believe there have been cases of such Christians who were so much absorbed in their desires for the salvation of sinners, that for weeks together they did not even pray for their own salvation. Or if they pray for themselves at all, it is that they may be clothed with the Spirit of God, so that they can go out and be mighty through God in pulling souls out of the fire.

You that are here can tell how it is with your prayers, whether you feel most and pray most for yourself or for sinners. If you know nothing about the spirit of prayer for sinners, you are not the true friend of God and man. What! no heart to feel, when sinners are going to hell by your side! No sympathy with the Son of God, who gave His life to save sinners! Away with all such professions of religion. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Don't tell me men are truly pious, when their prayers are droned over, as much a matter of form as when the poor Popish priest counts over his beads. Such a man deceives himself, if he talks about being the true friend of God and man.

9. These persons do not want to ask what are the things they are required to do for the conversion of sinners.

When anything is presented to them that promises success in converting sinners, they do not wait to be commanded to do it, on pains and penalties if they do not. They only want the evidence that it is calculated to advance the object on which their hearts are set, and they will engage in it with all their soul. The question is not with them all the while, "What am I expressly commanded to do?" but, "In what way can I do most for the salvation of souls, and the conversion of the world to God?" They do not wait for an express command in the Bible, before they will engage in the work of missions, or Sabbath schools, or any other enterprise that promises to save souls; but they are ready to every good word and work.

10. Another characteristic of such Christians is a disposition to deny themselves to do good to others.

God has established throughout all the universe the principle of giving. Even in the natural world, the rivers, the ocean, the clouds, all give. It is so throughout the whole kingdom of nature and of grace. This diffusive principle is everywhere recognized. This is the very spirit of Christ. He sought not to please himself, but to do good to others. He found His highest happiness in denying himself to do good to others. So it is with this class of persons, they are ever ready to deny themselves of enjoyments and comforts, and even of necessaries, when by so doing they can do more good to others.

11. They are continually devising new means and new measures for doing good.

This is what would be expected from their continual desire to do good. Instead of being satisfied with what does not succeed, they are continually devising new ways and means to effect their object. They are not like those persons who make themselves satisfied with doing what they call

their DUTY. Where an individual is aiming mainly at his own salvation, he may think if he does his duty he is discharged from responsibility, and so he is satisfied---he thinks he has escaped from divine wrath and gained heaven for himself, by doing what God required him to do, and he cannot help it, whether sinners are saved or lost. But with the other class, it is not so much their object to gain heaven and avoid wrath, but their leading object is to save souls and to honor God. And if this object is not advanced, they are in pain. Such a man is the one whose soul is all the while devising liberal things, and trying new things, and if one fails, trying another and another, and cannot rest till he has found something that will succeed in the salvation of souls.

12. They always manifest great grief when they see the church asleep and doing nothing for the salvation of sinners.

They know the difficulty---the impossibility of doing anything considerable for the salvation of sinners while the church are asleep. Go into a church where the great mass are doing nothing for the conversion of sinners, and floating along on the current of the world, and you will find that the true friends of God and man are grieved at such a state of things. Those who have other objects in view in being religious, may think they are going on very well. They are not grieved when they see the professed people of God going after show and folly. But if there are any of this class, you will find them grieved and distressed at heart, because the church is in such a state.

13. They are grieved if they see reason to think their minister temporizes, or does not reprove the church pointedly and faithfully for their sins.

The other classes of professors are willing to be rocked to sleep, and willing their minister should preach smooth, flowery and eloquent sermons, and flattering sermons, with no point and no power. But these are not satisfied unless he preaches powerfully and pointedly, and boldly, and rebukes and entreats and exhorts, with all long-suffering and doctrine. Their souls are not fed, or edified, or satisfied with anything that does not take hold, and do the work for which the ministry was appointed by Jesus Christ.

14. This class of persons will always stand by a faithful minister, who preaches the truth boldly and pointedly.

No matter if the truth he preaches hits them, they like it, and say, Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be an excellent oil. When the truth is poured forth with power, their souls are fed, and grow strong in grace. They can pray for such a minister. They can weep in their closet, and pour out their souls in prayer for him, that he may have the Spirit of God always with him. While others scold and cavil at him and talk about his being extravagant, and all that, you will find Christians of this sort will stand by him, yea, and would go to the stake with him for the testimony of Jesus. And this they do for the best of all reasons---such preaching falls in with the great design for which these Christians live.

15. This sort of Christians are especially distressed when ministers preach sermons not adapted to convert sinners.

I mean when the sermon is not specially addressed to the church, to stir them up. Others may approve the sermon, and praise it, and tell what a great sermon it is, or how eloquent, or lucid or grand or sublime, but it does not suit them if it lacks this one characteristic---a tendency to convert

sinners. You will find some people that are great sticklers for the doctrine of election, and they will not believe it is a gospel sermon unless it has the doctrine of election in it, but if the doctrine of election is in it they are suited whether it is adapted to convert sinners or not.---But where a man has his heart set on the conversion of sinners, if he hears a sermon not calculated to do this, he feels as if it lacked the great thing that constitutes a gospel sermon. But if they hear a sermon calculated to save souls, then they are fed, and their souls rejoice.

Hence you see the ground for the astonishing difference you often find in the judgment which people pass upon preaching. There is in fact no better test of character than this. It is easy to see who they are that are filled with the love of God and of souls, by the judgment which they pass upon preaching. The true friends of God and man, when they hear a sermon that is not particularly designed to probe and rouse the church and bring them to action, if it is not such as to bear down on sinners and does not tend to convert sinners, it is not the sermon for them.

16. You will always find this class of persons speaking in terms of dissatisfaction with themselves, that they do no more for the conversion of sinners.

However much they may really do for this object, it seems that the more they do the more they long to do. They are never satisfied. Instead of being satisfied with the present degree of their success, there is no end of their longing for the conversion of sinners. I recollect a good man, who used to pray till he was exhausted with praying for individuals and for places and for the world's conversion. Once when he was quite exhausted with praying, he exclaimed "Oh! my longing, aching heart! There is no such thing as satisfying my unutterable desires for the conversion of sinners. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath." That man, though he had been useful beyond almost any other man of his age, yet he saw so much to do, and he so longed to see the work go forward and sinners saved, that his mortal frame could not sustain it. "I find," said he one day, "that I am dying for want of strength to do more to save the souls of men; Oh, how much I want strength, that I may save souls."

17. If you wish to move this class of persons, you must make use of motives drawn from their great and leading object.

If you wish to move them, you must hold up the situation of sinners, and show how they dishonor God, and you will find this will move their souls and set them on fire sooner than any appeal to their hopes and fears. Roll on them this great object. Show them how they can convert sinners, and their longing hearts beat and wrestle with God in prayer, and travail for souls, until they see them converted and Christ formed in them the hope of glory.

I might mention many other characteristics which belong to this class of professing Christians---the true friends of God and man, did time and strength permit. But I must stop here, and postpone the consideration of the other two classes till next Friday evening, if we are spared and the Lord permit.

Now, do you belong to this class, or not? I have mentioned certain great fundamental facts, which when they exist, indicate the true character of individuals, by showing what is their main design and object in life. You can tell whether this is your character. When I come upon the other part of the subject, I shall endeavor to describe those classes of professing Christians, whose religious zeal, prayers and efforts have another design, and show their character and how this design is

carried out.

And now, beloved, I ask you before God, have you these characteristics of a child of God? Do you KNOW they belong to you? Can you say, "O Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, and that these are the features of my character!"

03.24. TRUE SUBMISSION

TRUE SUBMISSION.

TEXT:--"Submit yourselves therefore to God."--- Jas 4:7.

The subject of this lecture is, "What Constitutes True Submission?"

Before I enter on the discussion of this subject, I wish to make two remarks, introductory to the main question.

1. The first remark is this: If any of you are deceived in regard to your hopes, and have built on a false foundation, the fundamental error in your case was your embracing what you thought was the gospel plan of salvation from selfish motives. Your selfish hearts were unbroken. This is the source of your delusion, if you are deceived. If your selfishness was subdued, you are not deceived in your hope. If it was not, all your religion is vain, and your hope is vain.

2. The other remark I wish to make is, that if any of you are deceived, and have a false hope, you are in the utmost danger of reviving your old hope, whenever you are awakened to consider your condition. It is a very common thing for such professors, after a season of anxiety and self-examination, to settle down again on the old foundation. The reason is, their habits of mind have become fixed in that channel, and therefore, by the laws of the mind it is difficult to break into a new course. It is indispensable, therefore, if you ever mean to get right, that you should see clearly that you have hitherto been wholly wrong, so that you need not multiply any more the kind of efforts that have deceived you heretofore.

Who does not know that there is a great deal of this kind of deception? How often will a great part of the church lie cold and dead, till a revival commences? Then you will see them bustling about, and they get engaged, as they call it, in religion, and renew their efforts and multiply their prayers for a season; and this is what they call getting revived. But it is only the same kind of religion that they had before. Such religion lasts no longer than the public excitement. As soon as the body of the church begin to diminish their efforts for the conversion of sinners, these individuals relapse into their former worldliness, and get as near to what they were before their supposed conversion, as their pride and their fear of the censures of the church will let them. When a revival comes again, they renew the same round; and so they live along by spasms, over and over again, revived and backslidden, revived and backslidden, alternately, as long as they live. The truth is, they were deluded at first, by a spurious conversion, in which selfishness never was broken down; and the more they multiply such kind of efforts, the more sure they are to be lost.

I will now enter upon the direct discussion of the subject, and endeavor to show you what true gospel submission is, in the following order, viz.:

I. I shall show what is not true submission.

II. Show what true submission is.

I. I am to show what true submission is not.

1. True submission to God is not indifference. No two things can be more unlike than indifference and true submission.

2. It does not consist in being willing to be sinful for the glory of God. Some have supposed that true submission included the idea of being willing to be sinful for the glory of God. But this is a mistake. To be willing to be sinful is itself a sinful state of mind. And to be willing to do anything for the glory of God, is to choose not to be sinful. The idea of being sinful for the glory of God is absurd.

3. It does not consist in a willingness to be punished?

If we were now in hell, true submission would require that we should be willing to be punished. Because then it would be certain that it was God's will we should be punished. So, if we were in a world where no provision was made for the redemption of sinners, and where our punishment was therefore inevitable, it would be our duty to be willing to be punished. If a man has committed murder, and there is no other way to secure the public interest but for him to be hung, it is his duty to be willing to be hung for the public good. But if there was any other way in which the murderer could make the public interest whole, it would not be his duty to be willing to be hung. So if we were in a world solely under law, where there was no plan of salvation, and no measure to secure the stability of government in the forgiveness of sinners, it would be the duty of every man to be willing to be punished. But as it is in this world, genuine submission does not imply a willingness to be punished. Because we know it is not the will of God that all shall be punished, but on the other hand, we know it is His will that all who truly repent and submit to God shall be saved.

II. I am to show what genuine submission is.

1. It consists in perfect acquiescence in all the providential dealings and dispensations of God; whether relating to ourselves, or to others, or to the universe. Some persons suppose they do acquiesce in the abstract, in the providential government of God. But yet, if you converse with them you see they will find fault with God's arrangements in many things. They wonder why God suffered Adam to sin? Or why He suffered sin to enter the universe at all? Or why He did this or that? Or why He made this or that thus or so? In all these cases, supposing we could assign no reason at all that would be satisfactory, true submission implies a perfect acquiescence in what ever he has suffered or done; and feeling that, so far as his providence is concerned, it is all right.

2. True submission implies acquiescence in the precept of God's moral law. The general precept of God's moral law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Perhaps some will say, "I do acquiesce in this precept, I feel that it is right, and I have no objection to this law." Here I want you to make the distinction carefully between a constitutional approbation of God's law, and actual submission to it. There is no mind but what naturally, and by its own common sense of what is right, approves of this law. There is not a devil in hell that does not approve of it. God has so constituted mind, that it is impossible to be a moral agent, and not approve His law. But this is not the acquiescence I am speaking of. A person may feel this approbation to so great a degree as to be even delighted without having true submission to it. There are two ideas included in genuine submission, to which I wish your particular attention.

(1.) The first idea is, that true acquiescence in God's moral law includes actual obedience. It is vain for a child to pretend a real acquiescence in his father's commands, unless he actually obeys them. It is in vain for a citizen to pretend an acquiescence in the laws of the land, unless he obeys the laws.

(2.) The main idea of submission is the yielding up of that which constitutes the great point in controversy. And that is this; that men have taken off their supreme affection from God and His kingdom, and set up self-interest as the paramount object of regard. Instead of laying themselves out in doing good, as God requires, they have adopted the maxim that "Charity begins at home." This is the very point in debate, between God and the sinner. The sinner aims at promoting his own interest, as his supreme object. Now, the first ideal implied in submission is the yielding up of this point. We must cease placing our own interest as supreme, and let the interests of God and His kingdom rise in our affections just as much above our own interests as their real value is greater. The man who does not do this is a rebel against God.

Suppose a civil ruler were to set himself to promote the general happiness of his nation; and should enact laws wisely adapted to this end, and should embark all his own resources in this object; and that he should then require every subject to do the same. Then suppose an individual should go and set up his own private interest in opposition to the general interest. He is a rebel against the government, and against all the interest which the government is set to promote. Then the first idea of submission, on the part of the rebel, is giving up that point, and falling in with the ruler and the obedient subjects in promoting the public good. Now, the law of God absolutely requires that you should make your own happiness subordinate to the glory of God and the good of the universe. And until you do this, you are the enemy of God and the universe, and a child of hell.

And the gospel requires the same as the law. It is astonishing, that many, within a few years, have maintained that it is right for a man to aim directly at his own salvation, and make his own happiness the great object of pursuit. But it is plain that God's law is different from this, and requires everyone to prize God's interest supremely. And the gospel requires the same with the law. Otherwise, Jesus Christ is the minister of sin, and came into the world to take up arms against God's government.

It is easy to show, from the Bible, that the gospel requires disinterested benevolence, or love to God and love to man, the same as the law. The first passage I shall quote is this, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." What does that mean? Strange as it may seem, a writer has lately quoted this very text to prove that it is right to seek first our own salvation or our own happiness and to make that the leading object of pursuit. But that is not the meaning. It requires everyone to make the promotion of the kingdom of God his great object. I suppose it to enjoin the duty of aiming at being holy, and not at our own happiness. Happiness is connected with holiness, but it is not the same thing, and to such holiness or obedience to God, and to honor and glorify Him, is a very different thing from seeking supremely our own interests.

Another passage is, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Indeed! What? may we not eat and drink to please ourselves? No. We may not even gratify our natural appetite for food, but as subordinate to the glory of God. This is what the gospel requires, for the apostle wrote this to the Christian church.

Another passage is, "Look not on your own things, but every man on the things of another." But it is vain to attempt to quote all the passages that teach this. You may find, on almost every page of the Bible, some passage that means the same thing, requiring us not to seek our own good, but the benefit of others.

Our Savior says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life shall save it." That is, If a man aims at his own interest, he shall lose his own interest; if he aims at saving his own soul, as his supreme object, he will lose his own soul; he must go out of himself, and make the good of others his supreme object, or he will be lost.

And again he says, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life." Here some people may stumble, and say, There is a reward held out as a motive. But, mark! What are you to do? Forsake self for the sake of a reward to self? No; but to forsake self for the sake of Christ and His gospel; and the consequence will be as stated. Here is the important distinction.

In the 13th chapter of Corinthians Paul gives a full description of this disinterested love, or charity, without which a person is nothing in religion. It is remarkable how much he says a person may do, and yet be nothing. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though, I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." But true gospel benevolence is of this character. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." She seeketh not her own. Mark that; it has no selfish end, but seeks the happiness of others as its great end. Without this kind of benevolence, we know there is not a particle of religion. You see, I might stand here all night quoting and explaining passages to the same point; showing that all pure religion consists in disinterested benevolence.

Before I go farther, I wish to mention several objections to this view, which may arise in your minds. I do this more particularly, because some of you may stumble right here, and after all get the idea that it is right to have our religion consist in aiming at our own salvation as our great object.

Objection l. "Why are the threatenings of the word of God given, if it is selfishness to be influenced by a fear of the wrath to come?"

Many answers may be given to this objection.

Answer 1. Man is so constituted that by the laws of his being he dreads pain. The scripture threatenings therefore answer many purposes. One is, to arrest the attention of the selfish mind, and lead it to examine the reasons there are for loving and obeying God. When the Holy Spirit thus gets the attention, then he rouses the sinner's conscience, and engages that to consider and

decide on the reasonableness and duty of submitting to God.

Objection 2. "Since God has given us these susceptibilities to pleasure and pain, is it wrong to be influence by them?"

Answer. It is neither right nor wrong. These susceptibilities have no moral character. If I had time tonight, I might make all plain to you. In morals, there is a class of actions that come under the denomination of prudential considerations. For instance: Suppose you stand on a precipice, where, if you throw yourself down, you will infallibly break your neck. You are warned against it. Now, if you do not regard the warning, but throw yourself down, and destroy your life, that will be sin. But regarding it is no virtue. It is simply a prudential act. There is no virtue in avoiding danger, although it may often be sinful not to avoid it. It is sinful for men to brave the wrath of God. But to be afraid of hell is not holy, no more than the fear of breaking your neck down a precipice is holy. It is simply a dictate of the constitution.

Objection 3. "Does not the Bible make it our immediate duty to seek our own happiness?"

Answer. It is not sinful to seek our own happiness, according to its real value. On the contrary, it is a real duty to do so. And he that neglects to do this, commits sin. Another answer is, that although it is right to seek our own happiness, and the constitutional laws of the mind require us to regard our own happiness, still our constitution does not indicate that to pursue our own happiness as the chief good, is right. Suppose any one should argue, that because our constitution requires food, therefore it is right to seek food as the supreme good---would that be sound? Certainly not; for the Bible expressly forbids any such thing, and says---"Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."

Objection 4. "Each one’s happiness is put particularly in his own power; and if everyone should seek his own happiness, the happiness of the whole will be secured, to the greatest amount that is possible."

This objection is specious, but not sound. I deny the conclusion altogether. For,

(1.) The laws of the mind are such, that it is impossible for anyone to be happy while he makes his own happiness the supreme object. Happiness consists in the gratification of virtuous desires. But to be gratified, the thing must be obtained that is desired. To be happy, therefore, the desires that are gratified must be right, and therefore they must be disinterested desires. If your desires terminate on yourself; for instance---if you desire the conversion of sinners for the sake of promoting your own happiness, when sinners are converted it does not make you happy, because it is not the thing on which your desire terminated. The law of the mind, therefore, renders it impossible, if each individual pursues his own happiness, that he should ever obtain it. To be more definite. Two things are indispensable to true happiness. First, there must be virtuous desire. If the desire be not virtuous, conscience will remonstrate against it, and therefore a gratification would be attended with pain. Secondly, this desire must be gratified in the attainment of its object. The object must be desired for its own sake, or the gratification would not be complete, even should the object be attained. If the object is desired as a means to an end, the gratification would depend on obtaining the end by this means. But if the thing was desired as an end, or for its own sake, obtaining it would produce unmingled gratification. The mind must, therefore, desire not its own happiness, for in this way it can never be attained, but the desire must terminate on some other

object which is desired for its own sake, the attainment of which would be a gratification, and thus result in happiness.

(2.) If each one pursues his own happiness, as his supreme end, the interests of different individuals will clash, and destroy the happiness of all. This is the very thing we see in the world. This is the reason of all the fraud, and violence, and oppression, and wickedness in earth and hell. It is because each one is pursuing his own interest, and their interests clash. The true way to secure our own happiness is, not to pursue that as an end, but to pursue another object, which, when obtained, will afford complete gratification---the glory of God and the good of the universe. The question is not, whether it is right to desire and pursue our own happiness at all, but whether it is right to make our own happiness our supreme end.

Objection 5. "Happiness consists in gratifying virtuous desire. Then the thing I aim at, is gratifying virtuous desire. Is not that aiming at my own happiness?"

Answer. The mind does not aim at gratifying the desire, but at accomplishing the thing desired. Suppose you see a beggar, as mentioned last week, and you give him a loaf of bread. You aim at relieving the beggar. That is the object desired, and when that is done, your desire is gratified, and you are happy. But if, in relieving the beggar, the object you aimed at was your own happiness, then relieving the beggar will not gratify the desire, and you render it impossible to gratify it.

Thus you see, that both the law and the gospel require disinterested benevolence, as the only condition on which man can be happy.

3. True submission implies acquiescence in the penalty of God's law.

I again advert to the distinction, which I have made before. We are not, in this world, simply under a government of naked law. This world is a province of Jehovah's empire, that stands in a peculiar relation to God's government. It has rebelled, and a new and special provision has been made, by which God offers us mercy. The conditions are, that we obey the precepts of the law, and submit to the justice of the penalty. It is a government of law, with the gospel appended to it. The gospel requires the same obedience with the law. It maintains the ill desert of sin, and requires the sinner's acquiescence, in the justice of the penalty. If the sinner were under mere law, it would require that he should submit to the infliction of the penalty. But man is not, and never has been, since the fall, under the government of mere law, but has always known, more or less clearly, that mercy is offered. It has, therefore, never been required, that men should be willing to be punished. In this respect it is, that gospel submission differs from legal submission. Under naked law, submission would consist in willingness to be punished. In this world, submission consists in acquiescence in the justice of the penalty, and regarding himself as deserving the eternal wrath of God.

4. True submission implies acquiescence in the sovereignty of God.

It is the duty of every sovereign to see that all his subjects submit to his government. And it is his duty to enact such laws, that every individual, if he obeys perfectly, will promote the public good, in the highest possible degree. And then, if any one refuses to obey, it is his duty to take that individual by force, and make him subserve the public interest in the best way that is possible with a rebellious subject. If he will not subserve the public good voluntarily, he should be made to do it

involuntarily. The government must either hang him, or shut him up, or in some way make him an example of suffering; or if the public good admits of mercy, it may show mercy in such a way as will best subserve the general interest. Now God is a sovereign ruler, and the submission which He requires is just what He is bound to require. He would be neglecting His duty as a ruler, if He did not require it. And since you have refused to obey this requirement, you are now bound to throw yourself into His hands, for Him to dispose of you, for time and eternity, in the way that will most promote the interests of the universe. You have forfeited all claim to any portion in the happiness of the universe or the favor of God. And the thing which is now required of you is, that since you cannot render obedience for the past, you should acknowledge the justice of His law, and leave your future destiny entirely and unconditionally at His disposal, for time and for eternity. You must submit all you have and all you are to Him. You have justly forfeited all, and are bound to give up all at His bidding, in any way that He calls for them, to promote the interests of His kingdom.

5. Finally, it requires submission to the terms of the gospel. The terms of the gospel are---

(1.) Repentance, hearty sorrow for sin, justifying God and taking His part against yourself.

(2.) Faith, perfect trust and confidence towards God, such as leads you without hesitation to throw yourself, body and soul, and all you have and are, into His hand, to do with you as He thinks good.

(3.) Holiness, or disinterested benevolence.

(4.) To receive salvation as a mere matter of pure grace, to which you have no claim on the score of justice.

(5.) To receive Christ as your mediator and advocate, your atoning sacrifice, your ruler and teacher, and in all the offices in which He is presented to you in God’s word. In short, you are to be wholly acquiescent in God’s appointed way of salvation.

REMARKS.

I. You see why there are so many false hopes in the church.

The reason is, that so many persons embrace what they consider the gospel, without yielding obedience to the law. They look at the law with dread, and regard the gospel as a scheme to get away from the law. These tendencies have always been manifested among men. There is a certain class that hold to the gospel and reject the law; and another class that take the law and neglect the gospel. The Antinomians think to get rid of the law altogether. They suppose the gospel rule of life is different from the law; whereas, the truth is, that the rule of life is the same in both, and both require disinterested benevolence. Now, if a person thinks that, under the gospel, he may give up the glory of God as his supreme object, and instead of loving God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, may make his own salvation his supreme object, his hopes are false. He has embraced another gospel---which is no gospel at all.

II. The subject shows how we are to meet the common objection, that faith in Christ implies making our own salvation our object or motive.

Answer. What is faith? It is not believing that you shall be saved, but believing God's word concerning His Son. It is nowhere revealed that you shall be saved. He has revealed the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. What you call faith, is more properly hope. The confident expectation that you shall be saved is an inference from the act of faith; and an inference which you have a right to draw when you are conscious of obeying the law and believing the gospel. That is, when you exercise the feelings required in the law and gospel, you have a right to trust in Christ for your own salvation.

III. It is an error to suppose that despair of mercy is essential to true submission.

This is plain from the fact that, under the gospel, everybody knows it is the will of God that every soul shall be saved that will exercise disinterested benevolence. Suppose a man should come to me and ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" and I should tell him, "If you expect to be saved you must despair of being saved," what would he think? What inspired writer ever gave any such direction as this? No, the inspired answer is, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," "Repent," "Believe the gospel," and so on. Is there any thing here that implies despair?

It is true that sinners sometimes do despair, before they obtain true peace. But what is the reason? It is not because despair is essential to true peace; but because of their ignorance, or of wrong instructions given to them, or misapprehension of the truth. Many anxious sinners despair because they get a false impression that they have sinned away their day of grace, or that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that their sins are peculiarly aggravated, and the gospel provision does not reach them. Sometimes they despair for this reason---they know that there is mercy provided, and ready to be bestowed as soon as they will comply with the terms, but they find all their efforts at true submission vain. They find they are so proud and obstinate, that they cannot get their own consent to the terms of salvation. Perhaps most individuals who do submit, do in fact come to a point where they give up all as lost. But is that necessary? That is the question. Now, you see, it is nothing but their own wickedness drives them to despair. They are so unwilling to take hold of the mercy that is offered. Their despair, then, instead of being essential to true submission under the gospel, is inconsistent with it, and no man ever did embraced the gospel while in that state. It is horrid unbelief then, it is sin to despair; and to say it is essential to true submission, is saying that sin is essential to true submission.

IV. True submission is acquiescing in the whole government of God.

It is acquiescing in His Providential government, in His moral government, in the precept of His law, and in the penalty of His law, so that he is himself deserving of an exceeding great and eternal weight of damnation; and submission to the terms of salvation in the gospel. Under the gospel, it is no man's duty to be willing to be damned. It is wholly inconsistent with his duty to be willing to be damned. The man who submits to the naked law, and consents to be damned, is as much in rebellion as ever; for it is one of God's express requirements that he should obey the gospel.

V. To call on a sinner to be willing to be punished is a grand mistake, for several reasons.

It is to set aside the gospel, and place him under another government than that which exists. It sets before him a partial view of the character of God, to which he is required to submit. It keeps back the true motives to submission. It presents not the real and true God, but a different being. It

is practicing a deception on him, by holding out the idea that God desires his damnation, and he must submit to it; for God has taken His solemn oath that He desires not the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his wickedness and live. It is a slander upon God, and charging God with perjury. Every man under the gospel, knows that God desires sinners to be saved, and it is impossible to hide the fact. The true ground on which salvation should be placed is, that he is not to seek his own salvation, but to seek the glory of God; not to hold out the idea that God desires or means he should go to hell.

What did the apostles tell sinners, when they inquired what they must do to be saved? What did Peter tell them at the Pentecost? What did Paul tell the jailer? To repent and forsake their selfishness, and believe the gospel. This is what men must do to be saved.

There is another difficulty in attempting to convert men in this way. It is attempting to convert them by the law, and setting aside the gospel. It is attempting to make them holy, without the appropriate influences to make them holy. Paul tried this way, thoroughly, and found it never would answer. In the 7th of Romans, he gives us the result in his own case. It drove him to confess that the law was holy and good, and he ought to obey it; and there it left him in distress, and crying, "The good that I would, I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do." The law was not able to convert him, and he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Just here the love of God in sending his Son, Jesus Christ, is presented to his mind, and that did the work. In the next chapter he explains it; "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The whole Bible testifies that it is only the influence of the gospel which can bring sinners to obey the law. The law will never do it. Shutting out from the soul that class of motives which cluster around it from the gospel, will never convert a sinner.

I know there may be some persons who suppose they were converted in this way, and that they have submitted to the law, absolutely, and without any influence from the gospel. But was it ever concealed from them for a moment, that Christ had died for sinners, and that if they should repent and believe, they should be saved? These motives must have had their influence, for all the time that they think they were looking at the naked law, they expected that if they believed they should be saved.

I suppose the error of attempting to convert men by the law, without the gospel, lies here; in the old Hopkinsion notion that men, in order to be saved must be willing to be damned. It sets aside the fact, that this world is, and since the fall always has been, under a dispensation of mercy. If we were under a government of mere law, true submission to God would require this. But men are not, in this sense, under the law, and never have been; for immediately after the fall, God revealed to Adam the intimations of mercy.

An objection arises here in the mind of some, which I will remove.

Objection. "Is not the offer of mercy, in the gospel, calculated to produce a selfish religion?"

Answer. The offer of mercy may be perverted, as every other good thing may be, and then it may give rise to a selfish religion. And God knew it would be so, when He revealed the gospel. But observe: Nothing is calculated to subdue the rebellious heart of man, but this very exhibition of the

benevolence of God, in the offer of mercy.

There was a father who had a stubborn and rebellious son, and he tried long to subdue him by chastisement. He loved his son, and longed to have him virtuous and obedient. But the child seemed to harden his heart against his repeated efforts. At length the poor father was quite discouraged, and burst out into a flood of convulsive weeping---"My son! my son! what shall I do? Can I save you? I have done all that I could to save you; O! what can I do more?" The son had looked at the rod with a brow of brass, but when he saw the tears rolling down his father's furrowed cheeks and heard the convulsive sobs of anguish from his aged bosom, he too burst into tears, and cried out, "Whip me father! do whip me, as much as you please, but don't cry!" Now the father had found out the way to subdue that stubborn heart. Instead of holding over him nothing but the iron hand of law, he let out his soul before him; and what was the effect? To crush him into hypocritical submission? No, the rod did that. The gushing tears of his father's love broke him down at once to true submission to his father's will.

So it is with sinners. The sinner braves the wrath of Almighty God, and hardens himself to receive the heaviest bolt of Jehovah's thunder; but when he sees the LOVE of his Heavenly Father's heart, if there is anything that will make him abhor and execrate himself, that will do it, when he sees God manifested in the flesh, stooping to take human nature, hanging on the cross, and pouring out His soul in tears and bloody sweat and death. Is this calculated to make hypocrites? No, the sinner's heart melts, and he cries out, "O, do any thing else, and I can bear it; but the love of the blessed Jesus overwhelms me." This is the very nature of the mind, to be thus influenced. Instead, therefore, of being afraid of exhibiting the love of God to sinners, it is the only way to make them truly submissive and truly benevolent. The law may make hypocrites; but nothing but the gospel can draw out the soul in true love to God.

Next Thursday, evening I design to pursue the same subject farther.

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03.25. WAY OF SALVATION

WAY OF SALVATION.

TEXT:--"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."--- Acts 16:30-31, with 1Co 1:30.

There can be no objection to putting these texts together in this manner as only a clause in the first of them is omitted, which is not essential to the sense, and which is irrelevant to my present purpose.

In the passage first quoted, the apostle tells the inquiring jailer, who wished to know what he must do to be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And in the other he adds the explanatory remark, telling what a Savior Jesus Christ is, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The following is the order in which I design to discuss the subject tonight:

I. Show what salvation is.

II. Show the way of salvation.

I. What is salvation?

Salvation includes several things; sanctification, justification, and eternal life and glory. The two prime ideas, are sanctification and justification. Sanctification is the purifying of the mind, or making it holy. Justification relates to the manner in which we are accepted and treated by God.

II. The way of salvation.

1. It is by faith, in opposition to works.

Here I design to take a brief view of the gospel plan of salvation, and exhibit it especially in contrast with the original plan on which it was proposed to save mankind.

Originally, the human race was put on the foundation of law for salvation; so that, if saved at all, they were to be saved on the ground of perfect and eternal obedience to the law of God. Adam was the natural head of the race. It has been supposed by many, that there was a covenant made with Adam such as this, that if he continued to obey the law for a limited period, all his posterity should be confirmed in holiness and happiness forever. What the reason is for this belief, I am unable to ascertain; I am not aware that the doctrine is taught in the Bible. And if it is true, the condition of mankind now, does not differ materially from what it was at first. If the salvation of the race originally turned wholly on the obedience of one man, I do not see how it could be called a covenant of works so far as the race is concerned. For if their weal or woe was suspended on the conduct of one head, it was a covenant of grace to them, in the same manner, that the present system is a covenant of grace. For according to that view, all that related to works depended on

one man, just as it does under the gospel; and the rest of the race had no more to do with works, than they have now, but all that related to works was done by the representative. Now, I have supposed, and there is nothing in the Bible to the contrary, that if Adam had continued in obedience forever, his posterity would have stood forever on the same ground, and must have obeyed the law themselves forever in order to be saved. It may have been, that if he had obeyed always, the natural influence of his example would have brought about such a state of things, that as a matter of fact all his posterity would have continued in holiness. But the salvation of each individual would still have depended on his own works. But if the works of the first father were to be so set to the account of the race, that on account of his obedience they were to be secured in holiness and happiness forever, I do not see wherein it differs materially from the covenant of grace, or the gospel.

As a matter of fact, Adam was the natural head of the human race, and his sin has involved them in its consequences, but not on the principle that his sin is literally accounted their sin. The truth is simply this; that from the relation in which he stood as their natural head, as a matter of fact his sin has resulted in the sin and ruin of his posterity. I suppose that mankind were originally all under a covenant of works, and that Adam was not so their head or representative, that his obedience or disobedience involved them irresistibly in sin and condemnation, irrespective of their own acts. As a fact it resulted so, that "by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners;" as the apostle tells us in the 5th of Romans. So that, when Adam had fallen, there was not the least hope, by the law, of saving any of mankind. Then was revealed THE PLAN, which had been provided in the counsels of eternity, on foresight of this event, for saving mankind by a proceeding of mere grace. Salvation was now placed on an entire new foundation, by a Covenant of Redemption. You will find this covenant in the 89th Psalm, and other places in the Old Testament. This, you will observe, is a covenant between the Father and the Son, regarding the salvation of mankind, and is the foundation of another covenant, the covenant of grace. In the covenant of redemption, man is no party at all, but merely the subject of the covenant; the parties being God the Father and the Son. In this covenant, the Son is made the head or representative of His people. Adam was the natural head of the human family, and Christ is the covenant head of His church.

On this covenant of redemption was founded the covenant of grace. In the covenant of redemption, the Son stipulated with the Father, to work out an atonement; and the Father stipulated that He should have a seed, or people, gathered out of the human race. The covenant of grace was made with men and was revealed to Adam, after the fall, and more fully revealed to Abraham. Of this covenant, Jesus Christ was to be the Mediator, or He that should administer it. It was a covenant of grace, in opposition to the original covenant of works, under which Adam and his posterity were placed at the beginning; and salvation was now to be by faith, instead of works, because the obedience and death of Jesus Christ were to be regarded as the reason why any individual was to be saved, and not each one’s personal obedience. Not that His obedience was, strictly speaking, performed for us. As a man, He was under the necessity of obeying, for Himself; because He had not put Himself under the law, and if He did not obey it He became personally a transgressor. And yet there is a sense in which it may be said that His obedience is reckoned to our account. His obedience has so highly honored the law, and His death has so fully satisfied the demands of public justice, that grace (not justice,) has reckoned His righteousness to us. If He had obeyed the law strictly for us, and had owed no obedience for Himself, but was at liberty to obey

only for us, then I cannot see why justice should not have accounted His obedience to us, and we could have obtained salvation on the score of right, instead of asking it on the score of grace or favor. But it is only in this sense accounted ours, that He, being God and man, having voluntarily assumed our nature, and then voluntarily laying down His life to make atonement, casts such a glory on the law of God, that grace is willing to consider His obedience in such a sense ours, as, on His account, to treat us as if we were righteous.

Christ is also the covenant head of those that believe. He is not the natural head, as Adam was, but our covenant relation to Him is such, that whatever is given to Him is given to us. Whatever He is, both in His divine and human nature; whatever He has done, either as God or man, is given to us by covenant, or promise, and is absolutely ours. I want you should understand this. The church, as a body, has never yet understood the fullness and richness of this covenant, and that all there is in Christ is made over to us in the covenant of grace.

And here let me say, that we receive this grace by faith. It is not by works, by anything we do, more or less, previous to the exercise of faith, that we become interested in this righteousness. But as soon as we exercise faith, all that Christ has done, all there is of Christ, all that is contained in the covenant of grace, becomes ours by faith. Hence it is, that the inspired writers make so much of faith. Faith is the voluntary compliance, on our part, with the condition of the covenant. It is the eye that discerns, the hand that takes hold, the medium by which we become possessed of the blessings of the covenant. By the act of faith, the soul becomes actually possessed of all that is embraced is that act of faith. If there is not enough received to break the bonds of sin and set the soul at once at liberty, it is because the act has not embraced enough of what Christ is, and what He has done.

I have read the verse from Corinthians, for the purpose of remarking on some of the fundamental things contained in this covenant of grace. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." When Christ is received and believed on, He is made to us what is meant by these several particulars. But what is meant? How and in what sense is Christ our wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption? I will dwell a few moments on each.

This is a very peculiar verse, and my mind has long dwelt on it with great anxiety to know its exact and full meaning. I have prayed over it as much as over any passage in the Bible, that I might be enlightened to understand its real import. I have long been in the habit, when my mind fastened on any passage that I did not understand, to pray over it till I felt satisfied. I have never dared to preach on this verse, because I never felt fully satisfied that I understood it. I think I understand it now. At all events, I am willing to give my opinion on it. And if I have any right knowledge respecting its meaning, I am sure I have received it from the Spirit of God.

1. In what sense is Christ our wisdom?

He is often called "the Wisdom of God." And in the Book of Proverbs He is called Wisdom. But how is He made to us wisdom.

One idea contained in it is, that we have absolutely all the benefits of His wisdom; and if we exercise the faith we ought, we are just as certain to be directed by it, and it is in all respects just as well for us, as if we had the same wisdom, originally, of our own. Else it cannot be true that He

is made unto us wisdom. As He is the infinite source of wisdom, how can it be said that He is made unto us wisdom, unless we are partakers of His wisdom, and have it guaranteed to us; so that, at any time, if we trust in Him, we may have it as certainly, and in any degree we need, to guide us as infallibly, as if we had it originally ourselves? This is what we need from the gospel, and what the gospel must furnish, to be suited to our necessities. And the man who has not learned this, has not known anything as he ought. If he thinks his own theorizing and speculating are going to bring him to any right knowledge on the subject of religion, he knows nothing at all, as yet. His carnal, earthly heart, can no more study out the realities of religion so as to get any available knowledge of them than the heart of a beast. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." What can we know, without experience, of the character or Spirit of God? Do you say, "We can reason about God." What if we do reason? What can reason do here? Suppose here was a mind that was all pure intellect, and had no other powers, and I should undertake to teach that pure intellect what it was to love. I could lecture on it, and instruct that pure intellect in the words, so that it could reason and philosophize about love, and yet anybody can see that it is impossible to put that pure intellect in possession of the idea of what love is, unless it not only has power to exercise love, but has actually exercised it! It is just as if I should talk about colors to a man born blind. He hears the word, but what idea can he attach to it, unless he has seen? It is impossible to get the idea home to his mind, of the difference of colors. The term is a mere word.

Just so it is in religion. One whose mind has not experienced it, may reason upon it. He may demonstrate the perfections of God, as he would demonstrate a proposition in Euclid. But that which is the spirit and life of the gospel, can no more be carried to the mind by mere words, without experience, than love to a pure intellect, or colors to a man born blind. You may so far give him the letter, as to crush him down to hell with conviction; but to give the spiritual meaning of things, without the Spirit of God, is as absurd as to lecture a blind man about colors.

These two things, then are contained in the idea of wisdom.

1. As Christ is our representative, we are interested in all His wisdom, and all the wisdom He has is exercised for us. His infinite wisdom is actually employed for our benefit. And, 2. That His wisdom, just as much as is needed, is guaranteed to be always ready to be imparted to us, whenever we exercise faith in Him for wisdom. From His infinite fullness, in this respect, we may receive all we need. And if we do not receive from Him the wisdom which we need, in any and every case, it is because we do not exercise faith.

2. He is made unto us righteousness. What is the meaning of this?

Here my mind has long labored to understand the distinction which the apostle intended to make between righteousness and sanctification. Righteousness means holiness, or obedience to law; and sanctification means the same.

My present view of the distinction aimed at is, that by His being made unto us righteousness, the apostle meant to be understood, that Christ is our outward righteousness; or, that His obedience is, under the covenant of grace, accounted to us. Not in the sense that on the footing of justice he obeyed for us, and God accounts us just, because our substitute has obeyed; but that we are so interested in His obedience, that as a matter of grace, we are treated as if we had ourselves

obeyed.

You are aware there is a view of this subject, which is maintained by some, different from this;---that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed to us, that we are considered as having been always holy. It was at one time extensively maintained that righteousness was so imputed to us, that we had a right to demand salvation, on the score of justice. My view of the matter is entirely different. It is, that Christ's righteousness becomes ours by gift. God has so united us to Christ, as on His account to treat us with favor. It is just like a case, where a father had done some signal service to his country, and the government thinks it proper to reward such signal service with signal reward; and not only is the individual himself rewarded, but all his family receive favors on his account, because they are the children of a father who had greatly benefited their country. Human governments do this, and the ground of it is very plain. It is just so in the divine government. Christ's disciples are in such a sense considered one with Him, and God is so highly delighted with the single service He has done the kingdom, from the circumstances under which He became a Savior, that God accounts His righteousness to them as if it were their own; or in other words, treats them just as He would treat Christ Himself. As the government of the country, under certain circumstances, treats the son of a father who had greatly benefited the country, just as they would treat the father, and bestow on him the same favors. You will bear in mind, that I am now speaking of what I called the outward righteousness; I mean, the reason out of the individual, why God accepts and saves them that believe in Christ. And this reason includes both the obedience of Christ to the law, and His obedience unto death, or suffering upon the cross to make atonement.

3. In what sense is Christ made unto us sanctification?

Sanctification is inward purity. And the meaning is, that He is our inward purity. The control which Christ Himself exercises over us, His Spirit working in us, to will and to do, His shedding His love abroad in our hearts, so controlling us that we are ourselves, through the faith which is of the operation of God, made actually holy.

I wish you to get the exact idea here. When it is said that Christ is our sanctification, or our holiness, it is meant that He is the author of our holiness. He is not only the procuring cause, by His atonement and intercession, but by His direct intercourse with the soul He himself produces holiness. He is not the remote but the immediate cause of our being sanctified. He works our works in us, not by suspending our own agency, but He so controls our minds, by the influences of His Spirit in us, in a way perfectly consistent with our freedom, as to sanctify us. And this, also, is received by faith. It is by faith that Christ is received and enthroned as KING in our hearts; when the mind, from confidence in Christ, just yields itself up to Him, to be led by His Spirit, and guided and controlled by His hand. The act of the mind, that thus throws the soul into the hand of Christ for sanctification, is faith. Nothing is wanting, but for the mind to break off from any confidence in itself, and to give itself up to Him, to be led and controlled by Him, absolutely: just as the child puts out its little hand to its father, to have him lead it anywhere he pleases. If the child is distrustful, or not willing to be led, or if it has confidence in its own wisdom and strength, it will break away and try to run alone. But if all that self-confidence fails, it will cease from its own efforts, and come and give itself up to its father again, to be led entirely at his will. I suppose this is similar to the act of faith, by which an individual gives his mind up to be led and controlled by Christ. He ceases from

his own efforts to guide and control and sanctify himself; and just gives himself up, as yielding as air, and leaves himself in the hands of Christ as his sanctification.

4. It is said Christ is made of God unto us redemption. What are we to understand by that?

Here the apostle plainly refers to the Jewish practice of redeeming estates, or redeeming relatives that had been sold for debt. When an estate had been sold out of the family, or an individual had been deprived of liberty for debt, they could be redeemed, by paying the price of redemption. There are very frequent allusions in the Bible to this practice of redemption. And where Christ is spoken of as our redemption, I suppose it means just what it says. While we are in our sins, under the law, we are sold as slaves, in the hand of public justice, bound over to death, and have no possible way to redeem ourselves from the curse of the law. Now, Christ makes Himself the price of our redemption. In other words, He is our redemption money; He buys us out from under the law, by paying Himself as a ransom. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; and thus, also, redeems us from the power of sin. But I must leave this train of thought, and return to a consideration of the plan of salvation.

Under this covenant of grace, our own works, or anything that we do, or can do, as works of law, have no more to do with our salvation, than if we had never existed. I wish your minds to separate entirely between salvation by works, and salvation by grace. Our salvation by grace is founded on a reason entirely separate from and out of ourselves. Before, it depended on ourselves. Now we receive salvation, as a free gift, solely on account of Jesus Christ. He is the sole author, ground, and reason of our salvation. Whether we love God or do not love God, so far as it is a ground of our salvation, is of no account. The whole is entirely a matter of grace, through Jesus Christ. You will not understand me as saying that there is no necessity for love to God or good works. I know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But the necessity of holiness is not at all on this ground. Our own holiness does not enter at all into the ground or reason for our acceptance and salvation. We are not going to be indebted to Christ for awhile, until we are sanctified, and all the rest of the time stand in our own righteousness. But however perfect and holy we may become, in this life, or to all eternity, Jesus Christ will forever be the sole reason in the universe why we are not in hell. Because, however holy we may become, it will be forever true that we have sinned, and in the eye of justice, nothing in us, short of our eternal damnation can satisfy the law. But now, Jesus Christ has undertaken to help, and He forever remains the sole ground of our salvation.

According to this plan, we have the benefit of His obedience to the law, just as if He had obeyed it for us. Not that He did obey for us, in distinction from himself, but we have the benefits of His obedience, by the gift of grace, the same as if He had done so.

I meant to dwell on the idea of Christ as our Light, and our Life, and our Strength. But I find there is not time tonight. I wish to touch a little on this question, "How does faith put us in possession of Christ, in all these relations?"

Faith in Christ puts us in possession of Christ, as the sum and substance of the blessings of the gospel. Christ was the very blessing promised in the Abrahamic covenant. And throughout the scriptures, He is held forth as the sum and substance of all God’s favors to man.---He is the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, our Strength, our All. The gospel has taxed all the powers of language to describe the vast variety of His relations, and to show that faith is to put believers in possession of

Jesus Christ, in all these relations.

The manner in which Faith puts the mind in possession of all these blessings is this: It annihilates all those things that stand in the way of our intercourse with Christ. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here is a door, an obstacle to our intercourse with Christ, something that stands in the way. Take the particular of wisdom. Why do we not receive Christ as our wisdom? Because we depend on our own wisdom, and think we have ourselves some available knowledge of the things of God, and as long as we depend on this, we keep the door shut. That is the door. Now, let us just throw this all away, and give up all wisdom of our own, and see how infinitely empty we are of any available knowledge, as much so as a beast that perisheth, as to the way of salvation, until Christ shall teach us. Until we feel this, there is a door between us and Christ. We have something of our own instead of coming and throwing ourselves perfectly into the hands of Christ, we just come to Him to help out our own wisdom.

How does faith put us in possession of the Righteousness of Christ? This is the way. Until our mind takes hold on the righteousness of Christ, we are alive to our own righteousness. We are naturally engaged in working out a righteousness of our own, and until we cease entirely from our own works, by absolutely throwing ourselves on Christ for righteousness, we do not come to Christ. Christ will not patch up our own righteousness, to make it answer the purpose. If we depend on our prayers, our tears, our charities, or anything we have done, or expect to do, He will not receive us. We must have none of this. But the moment an individual takes hold on Christ, he receives and appropriates all Christ’s righteousness as his own; as a perfect and unchangeable reason for his acceptance with God, by grace.

It is just so, with regard to Sanctification and Redemption. I cannot dwell on them so particularly as I wished. Until an individual receives Christ, he does not cease from his own works. The moment he does that, by this very act he throws the entire responsibility upon Christ. The moment the mind does fairly yield itself up to Christ, the responsibility comes upon Him, just as the person who undertakes to conduct a blind man is responsible for his safe conduct. The believer by the act of faith pledges Christ for his obedience and sanctification. By giving himself up to Christ, all the veracity of the Godhead are put at stake, that he shall be led right or made holy.

And with regard to Redemption, as long as the sinner supposes that his own sufferings, his prayers or tears, or mental agony, are of any avail, he will never receive Christ. But as soon as he receives Christ, he sinks down as lost and condemned, as in fact a dead person, unless redeemed by Christ.

REMARKS.

I. There is no such thing as spiritual life in us, or anything acceptable to God, until we actually believe in Christ.

The very act of believing, receives Christ as just that influence which alone can wake up the mind to spiritual life.

II. We are nothing, as Christians, any farther than we believe in Christ.

III. Many seem to be waiting to do something first, before they receive Christ.

Some wait to become more dead to the world. Some to get a broken heart. Some to get their doubts cleared up, before they come to Christ. THIS IS A GRAND MISTAKE. It is expecting to do that first, before faith, which is only the result of faith. Your heart will not be broken, your doubts will not be cleared up, you will never die to the world, until you believe. The moment you grasp the things of Christ, your mind will see, as in the light of eternity, the emptiness of the world, of reputation, riches, honor and pleasure. To expect this first, preparatory to the exercise of faith, is beginning at the wrong end. It is seeking that as a preparation for faith, which is always the result of faith.

IV. Perfect faith will produce perfect love.

When the mind duly recognizes Christ, and receives Him, in His various relations; when the faith is unwavering and the views clear, there will be nothing left in the mind contrary to the law of God.

V. Abiding faith would produce abiding love.

Faith increasing, would produce increasing love. And here you ought to observe, that love may be perfect at all times, and yet be in different degrees at different times. An individual may love God perfectly and eternally, and yet his love may increase in vigor to all eternity, as I suppose it will. As the saints in glory see more and more of God's excellencies, they will love Him more and more, and yet will have perfect love all the time. That is, there will be nothing inconsistent with love in the mind, while the degrees of love will be different as their views of the character of God unfold. As God opens to their view the wonders of His glorious benevolence, they will have their souls thrilled with new love to God. In this life, the exercises of love vary greatly in degree. Sometimes God unfolds to His saints the wonders of His government, and gives them such views as well-nigh prostrate the body, and then love is greatly raised in degree. And yet the love may have been perfect before; that is, the love of God was supreme and single, without any mixture of inconsistent affections. And it is not unreasonable to suppose, that it will be so to all eternity; that occasions will occur in which the love of the saints will be brought into more lively exercise by new unfoldings of God's glory. As God develops to them wonder after wonder, their love will be increased indefinitely, and they will have continually enlarged accessions of its strength and fervor, to all eternity.

I designed to mention some things on the subject of instantaneous and progressive sanctification. But there is not time tonight, and they must be postponed.

VI. You see, beloved, from this subject, the wayin which you can be made holy, and when you can be sanctified.

Whenever you come to Christ, and receive Him for all that He is, and accept a whole salvation by grace, you will have all that Christ is to you, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. There is nothing but unbelief to hinder you from now enjoying it all. You need not wait for any preparation. There is no preparation that is of any avail. You must RECEIVE a whole salvation, as a FREE GIFT. When will you thus lay hold on Christ? When will you believe? Faith, true faith, always works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Whenever you find any difficulty in your way, you may know what is the matter. It is a want of faith. No matter what may befall you outwardly: if you find yourself thrown back in religion, or your mind thrown all into confusion, unbelief is the cause, and faith the remedy. If you lay hold on Christ, and keep hold,

all the devils in hell can never drive you away from God, or put out your light. But if you let unbelief prevail, you may go on in this miserable, halting way, talking about sanctification, using words without knowledge, and dishonoring God, till you die.

Chapter 73

04.00. ON BEING HOLY

Power From On High By Charles Finney A Series Published in "The Independent" in 1868

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04.01. POWER FROM ON HIGH

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 1 POWER FROM ON HIGH

Please permit me through your columns to correct a misapprehension of some of the members of the late Council at Oberlin of the brief remarks which I made to them; first on Saturday morning, and afterwards on the Lord's Day. In my first remarks to them I called attention to the mission of the Church to disciple all nations, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, and stated that this commission was given by Christ to the whole Church, and that every member of the Church is under obligation to make it his lifework to convert the world. I then raised two inquiries:

1. What do we need to secure success in this great work? 2. How can we get it?

Answer. 1. We need the enduement of power from on high. Christ had previously informed the disciples that without Him they could do nothing. When He gave them the commission to convert the world, He added, "But tarry ye in Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high. Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Lo, I send upon you the promise of My Father." This baptism of the Holy Ghost, this thing promised by the Father, this enduement of power from on high, Christ has expressly informed us is the indispensable condition of performing the work which he has set before us.

2. How shall we get it? Christ expressly promised it to the whole Church, and to every individual whose duty it is to labor for the conversion of the world. He admonished the first disciples not to undertake the work until they had received this enduement of power from on high. Both the promise and the admonition apply equally to all Christians of every age and nation. No one has, at any time, any right to expect success, unless he first secures this enduement of power from on high. The example of the first disciples teaches us how to secure this enduement. They first consecrated themselves to his work, and continued in prayer and supplication until the Holy Ghost fell upon them on the Day of Pentecost, and they received the promised enduement of power from on high. This, then, is the way to get it. The Council desired me to say more upon this subject; consequently, on the Lord's Day, I took for my text the assertion of Christ, that the Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than we are to give good gifts to our children.

1. I said, This text informs us that it is infinitely easy to obtain the Holy Spirit, or this enduement of power from the Father.

2. That this is made a constant subject of prayer. Everybody prays for this, at all times, and yet, with all this intercession, how few, comparatively, are really endued with this spirit of power from on high! This want is not met. The want of power is a subject of constant complaint. Christ says, "Everyone that asketh receiveth," but there certainly is a "great gulf" between the asking and receiving, that is a great stumbling-block to many. How, then, is this discrepancy to be explained? I then proceeded to show why this enduement is not received. I said:

(1) We are not willing, upon the whole, to have what we desire and ask.

(2) God has expressly informed us that if we regard iniquity in our hearts He will not hear us. But the petitioner is often self-indulgent. This is iniquity, and God will not hear him.

(3) He is uncharitable.

(4) Censorious.

(5) Self-dependent.

(6) Resists conviction of sin.

(7) Refuses to confess to all the parties concerned.

(8) Refuses to make restitution to injured parties.

(9) He is prejudiced and uncandid.

(10) He is resentful.

(11) Has a revengeful spirit.

(12) Has a worldly ambition.

(13) He has committed himself on some point, and become dishonest, and neglects and rejects further light.

(14) He is denominationally selfish.

(15) Selfish for his own congregation.

(16) He resists the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

(17) He grieves the Holy Spirit by dissension.

(18) He quenches the Spirit by persistence in justifying wrong.

(19) He grieves Him by a want of watchfulness.

(20) He resists Him by indulging evil tempers.

(21) Also by dishonesties in business.

(22) Also by indolence and impatience in waiting upon the Lord.

(23) By many forms of selfishness.

(24) By negligence in business, in study, in prayer.

(25) By undertaking too much business, too much study, and too little prayer.

(26) By a want of entire consecration.

(27) Last and greatest, by unbelief. He prays for this enduement without expecting to receive it. "He that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar." This, then, is the greatest sin of all. What an

insult, what a blasphemy, to accuse God of lying!

I was obliged to conclude that these and other forms of indulged sin explained why so little is received, while so much is asked. I said I had not time to present the other side. Some of the brethren afterward inquired, "What is the other side?" The other side presents the certainty that we shall receive the promised enduement of power from on high, and be successful in winning souls, if we ask, and fulfill the plainly revealed conditions of prevailing prayer. Observe, what I said upon the Lord's Day was upon the same subject, and in addition to what I had previously said. The misapprehension alluded to was this: If we first get rid of all these forms of sin, which prevent our receiving this enduement, have we not already obtained the blessing? What more do we need?

Answer. There is a great difference between the peace and the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The disciples were Christians before the Day of Pentecost, and, as such, had a measure of the Holy Spirit. They must have had the peace of sins forgiven, and of a justified state, but yet they had not the enduement of power necessary to the accomplishment of the work assigned them. They had the peace which Christ had given them, but not the power which He had promised. This may be true of all Christians, and right here is, I think, the great mistake of the Church, and of the ministry. They rest in conversion, and do not seek until they obtain this enduement of power from on high. Hence so many professors have no power with either God or man. They prevail with neither. They cling to a hope in Christ, and even enter the ministry, overlooking the admonition to wait until they are endued with power from on high. But let anyone bring all the tithes and offerings into God's treasury, let him lay all upon the altar, and prove God herewith, and he shall find that God "will open the windows of heaven, and pour him out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

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04.02. WHAT IS IT?

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS IT? The apostles and brethren, on the Day of Pentecost, received it. What did they receive? What power did they exercise after that event? They received a powerful baptism of the Holy Ghost, a vast increase of divine illumination. This baptism imparted a great diversity of gifts that were used for the accomplishment of their work. It manifestly included the following things: The power of a holy life. The power of a self sacrificing life. (The manifestation of these must have had great influence with those to whom they proclaimed the gospel.) The power of a cross bearing life. The power of great meekness, which this baptism enabled them everywhere to exhibit. The power of a loving enthusiasm in proclaiming the gospel. The power of teaching. The power of a loving and living faith. The gift of tongues. An increase of power to work miracles. The gift of inspiration, or the revelation of many truths before unrecognized by them. The power of moral courage to proclaim the gospel and do the bidding of Christ, whatever it cost them. In their circumstances all these enduements were essential to their success; but neither separately nor all together did they constitute that power from on high which Christ promised, and which they manifestly received. That which they manifestly received as the supreme, crowning, and all-important means of success was the power to prevail with both God and man, the power to fasten saving impressions upon the minds of men. This last was doubtless the thing which they understood Christ to promise. He had commissioned the Church to convert the world to Him. All that I have named above were only means, which could never secure the end unless they were vitalized and made effectual by the power of God. The apostles, doubtless, understood this; and, laying themselves and their all upon the altar, they besieged a Throne of Grace in the spirit of entire consecration to their work.

They did, in fact, receive the gifts before mentioned; but supremely and principally this power to savingly impress men. It was manifested right upon the spot. They began to address the multitude; and, wonderful to tell, three thousand were converted the same hour. But, observe, here was no new power manifested by them upon this occasion, save the gift of tongues.

They wrought no miracle at that time, and used these tongues simply as the means of making themselves understood. Let it be noted that they had not had time to exhibit any other gifts of the Spirit which have been above named. They had not at that time the advantage of exhibiting a holy life, or any of the powerful graces and gifts of the Spirit. What was said on the occasion, as recorded in the gospel, could not have made the impression that it did, had it not been uttered by them with a new power to make a saving impression upon the people. This power was not the power of inspiration, for they only declared certain facts of their own knowledge. It was not the power of human learning and culture, for they had but little. It was not the power of human eloquence, for there appears to have been but little of it. It was God speaking in and through them. It was a power from on high--God in them making a saving impression upon those to whom they

spoke. This power to savingly impress abode with and upon them. It was, doubtless, the great and main thing promised by Christ, and received by the apostles and primitive Christians. It has existed, to a greater or less extent, in the Church ever since. It is a mysterious fact often manifested in a most surprising manner. Sometimes a single sentence, a word, a gesture, or even a look, will convey this power in an overcoming manner. To the honor of God alone I will say a little of my own experience in this matter. I was powerfully converted on the morning of the 10th of October. In the evening of the same day, and on the morning of the following day, I received overwhelming baptisms of the Holy Ghost, that went through me, as it seemed to me, body and soul.

I immediately found myself endued with such power from on high that a few words dropped here and there to individuals were the means of their immediate conversion. My words seemed to fasten like barbed arrows in the souls of men. They cut like a sword. They broke the heart like a hammer. Multitudes can attest to this. Oftentimes a word dropped, without my remembering it, would fasten conviction, and often result in almost immediate conversion. Sometimes I would find myself, in a great measure, empty of this power. I would go out and visit, and find that I made no saving impression. I would exhort and pray, with the same result. I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me, and would inquire anxiously after the reason of this apparent emptiness. After humbling myself, and crying out for help, the power would return upon me with all its freshness. This has been the experience of my life.

I could fill a volume with the history of my own experience and observation with respect to this power from on high. It is a fact of consciousness and of observation, but a great mystery. I have said that sometimes a look has in it the power of God. I have often witnessed this. Let the following fact illustrate it. I once preached, for the first time, in a manufacturing village. The next morning I went into a manufacturing establishment to view its operations. As I passed into the weaving department I beheld a great company of young women, some of whom, I observed, were looking at me, and then at each other, in a manner that indicated a trifling spirit, and that they knew me. I, however, knew none of them. As I approached nearer to those who had recognized me they seemed to increase in their manifestations of lightness of mind. Their levity made a peculiar impression upon me; I felt it to my very heart. I stopped short and looked at them, I know not how, as my whole mind was absorbed with the sense of their guilt and danger. As I settled my countenance upon them I observed that one of them became very much agitated. A thread broke. She attempted to mend it; but her hands trembled in such a manner that she could not do it. I immediately observed that the sensation was spreading, and had become universal among that class of triflers. I looked steadily at them until one after another gave up and paid no more attention to their looms. They fell on their knees, and the influence spread throughout the whole room. I had not spoken a word; and the noise of the looms would have prevented my being heard if I had. In a few minutes all work was abandoned, and tears and lamentations filled the room. At this moment the owner of the factory, who was himself an unconverted man, came in, accompanied, I believe, by the superintendent, who was a professed Christian. When the owner saw the state of things he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill." What he saw seemed to pierce him to the heart.

"It is more important," he hurriedly remarked, "that these souls should be saved than that this mill should run." As soon as the noise of the machinery had ceased, the owner inquired: "What shall we do? We must have a place to meet, where we can receive instruction." The superintendent replied: "The muleroom will do." The mules were run up out of the way, and all of the hands were notified and assembled in that room. We had a marvelous meeting. I prayed with them, and gave them such instructions as at the time they could bear. The word was with power. Many expressed hope that day; and within a few days, as I was informed, nearly every hand in that great establishment, together with the owner, had hope in Christ. This power is a great marvel. I have many times seen people unable to endure the word. The most simple and ordinary statements would cut men off from their seats like a sword, would take away their bodily strength, and render them almost as helpless as dead men. Several times it has been true in my experience that I could not raise my voice, or say anything in prayer or exhortation except in the mildest manner, without wholly overcoming those that were present. This was not because I was preaching terror to the people; but the sweetest sounds of the gospel would overcome them. This power seems sometimes to pervade the atmosphere of one who is highly charged with it. Many times great numbers of persons in a community will be clothed with this power, when the very atmosphere of the whole place seems to be charged with the life of God. Strangers coming into it, and passing through the place, will be instantly smitten with conviction of sin, and in many instances converted to Christ. When Christians humble themselves, and consecrate their all afresh to Christ, and ask for this power, they will often receive such a baptism that they will be instrumental in converting more souls in one day than in all their lifetime before. While Christians remain humble enough to retain this power the work of conversion will go on, till whole communities and regions of country are converted to Christ. The same is true of ministers. But this article is long enough. If you will allow me, I have more to say upon this subject.

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04.03. THE ENDUEMENT OF THE SPIRIT

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 3 THE ENDUEMENT OF THE SPIRIT

Since the publication in the Independent of my article on "The Power from on High" I have been confined with protracted illness. In the meantime I have received numerous letters of inquiry upon that subject. They relate mostly to three particular points of inquiry:

1. They request further illustrations of the exhibition of this power.

2. They inquire, "Who have a right to expect this enduement?"

3. How or upon what conditions can it be obtained?

I am unable to answer these inquiries by letters to individuals. With your leave I propose, if my health continues to improve, to reply to them in several short articles through your columns. In the present number I will relate another exhibition of this power from on high, as witnessed by myself. Soon after I was licensed to preach I went into a region of country where I was an entire stranger. I went there at the request of a Female Missionary Society, located in Oneida County, New York. Early in May, I think, I visited the town of Antwerp, in the northern part of Jefferson County. I stopped at the village hotel, and there learned that there were no religious meetings held in that town at the time. They had a brick meeting-house, but it was locked up. By personal efforts I got a few people to assemble in the parlor of a Christian lady in the place, and preached to them on the evening after my arrival. As I passed round the village I was shocked with the horrible profanity that I heard among the men wherever I went. I obtained leave to preach in the school-house on the next Sabbath; but before the Sabbath arrived I was much discouraged, and almost terrified, in view of the state of society which I witnessed. On Saturday the Lord applied with power to my heart the following words, addressed by the Lord Jesus to Paul (Acts 18:9-10): "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." This completely subdued my fears; but my heart was loaded with agony for the people. On Sunday morning I arose early, and retired to a grove not far from the village to pour out my heart before God for a blessing on the labors of the day. I could not express the agony of my soul in words, but struggled with much groaning, and, I believe, with many tears, for an hour or two, without getting relief. I returned to my room in the hotel; but almost immediately came back to the grove. This I did thrice. The last time I got complete relief, just as it was time to go to meeting. I went to the school house, and found it filled to its utmost capacity. I took out my little pocket Bible, and read for my text: "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I exhibited the love of God as contrasted with the manner in which He was treated by those for whom He gave up His Son.

I charged home their profanity upon them; and, as I recognized among my hearers several whose profanity I had particularly noticed, in the fullness of my heart and the gushing of my tears I pointed to them, and said, "I heard these men call upon God to damn their fellows." The Word took powerful effect. Nobody seemed offended, but almost everybody greatly melted. At the close of the service the amiable landlord, Mr. Copeland, rose and said that he would open the meeting house in the afternoon. He did so. The meeting house was full, and, as in the morning, the Word took powerful effect. Thus a powerful revival commenced in the village, which soon after spread in every direction. I think it was on the second Sabbath after this, when I came out of the pulpit in the afternoon, an aged man approached, and said to me: "Can you not come and preach in our neighborhood? We have never had any religious meetings there." I inquired the direction and the distance, and appointed to preach there the next afternoon, Monday, at five o'clock, in their school-house.

I had preached three times in the village, and attended two prayer meetings on the Lord's Day; and on Monday I went on foot to fulfill this appointment. The weather was very warm that day, and before I arrived there I felt almost too faint to walk, and greatly discouraged in my mind. I sat down in the shade by the wayside, and felt as if I was too faint to reach there; and if I did, too much discouraged to open my mouth to the people. When I arrived I found the house full, and immediately commenced the service by reading a hymn. They attempted to sing, but the horrible discord agonized me beyond expression. I leaned forward, put my elbows upon my knees and my hands over my ears, and shook my head withal, to shut out the discord, which even then I could barely endure. As soon as they had ceased to sing I cast myself down upon my knees, almost in a state of desperation. The Lord opened the windows of heaven upon me, and gave me great enlargement and power in prayer. Up to this moment I had no idea what text I should use on the occasion. As I rose from my knees the Lord gave me this: "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city." I told the people, as nearly as I could recollect, where they would find it, and went on to tell them of the destruction of Sodom. I gave them an outline of the history of Abraham and Lot, and their relations to each other; of Abraham's praying for Sodom, and of Lot, as the only pious man that was found in the city.

While I was doing this I was struck with the fact that the people looked exceedingly angry about me. Many countenances appeared very threatening, and some of the men near me looked as if they were about to strike me. This I could not understand, as I was only giving them, with great liberty of spirit, some interesting sketches of Bible history. As soon as I had completed the historical sketch I turned upon them, and said that I had understood they had never had any religious meetings in that neighborhood; and, applying that fact, I thrust at them with the sword of the Spirit with all my might. From this moment the solemnity increased with great rapidity. In a few moments there seemed to fall upon the congregation an instantaneous shock. I cannot describe the sensation that I felt, nor that which was apparent in the congregation; but the word seemed literally to cut like a sword. The power from on high came down upon them in such a torrent that they fell from their seats in every direction. In less than a minute nearly the whole congregation were either down on their knees, or on their faces, or in some position prostrate before God. Everyone was crying or groaning for mercy upon his own soul. They paid no further attention to me or to my preaching. I tried to get their attention; but I could not. I observed the aged man who had invited me there as still retaining his seat near the center of the house. He was staring around

him with a look of unutterable astonishment. Pointing to him, I cried at the top of my voice, "Can’t you pray?" He knelt down and roared out a short prayer, about as loud as he could holler, but they paid no attention to him. After looking round for a few moments, I knelt down and put my hand on the head of a young man who was kneeling at my feet, and engaged in prayer for mercy on his soul. I got his attention, and preached Jesus in his ear. In a few moments he seized Jesus by faith, and then broke out in prayer for those around him. I then turned to another in the same way, and with the same result; and then another, and another, till I know not how many had laid hold of Christ and were full of prayer for others.

After continuing in this way till nearly sunset I was obliged to commit the meeting to the charge of the old gentleman who had invited me, and go to fulfill an appointment in another place for the evening. In the afternoon of the next day I was sent for to go down to this place, as they had not been able to break up the meeting. They had been obliged to leave the school-house, to give place to the school; but had removed to a private house near by, where I found a number of persons still too anxious and too much loaded down with conviction to go to their homes. These were soon subdued by the Word of God, and I believe all obtained a hope before they went home. Observe, I was a total stranger in that place, had never seen or heard of it, until as I have related. But here, at my second visit, I learned that the place was called Sodom, by reason of its wickedness; and the old man who invited me was called Lot, because he was the only professor of religion in the place. After this manner the revival broke out in this neighborhood. I have not been in that neighborhood for many years; but in 1856, I think, while laboring in Syracuse, New York, I was introduced to a minister of Christ from St. Lawrence County by the name of Cross. He said to me, "Mr. Finney, you don’t know me; but do you remember preaching in a place called Sodom?" I said, "I shall never forget it." He replied, "I was then a young man, and was converted at that meeting." He is still living, a pastor in one of the churches in that county, and is the father of the principal of our preparatory department. Those who have lived in that region can testify of the permanent results of that blessed revival. I can only give in words a feeble description of that wonderful manifestation of power from on high attending the preaching of the Word.

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04.04. CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING POWER FROM ON HIGH

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 4 [The conditions upon which this] ENDUEMENT OF POWER FROM ON HIGH [can be obtained.] In this article I propose to consider the conditions upon which this enduement of power can be obtained. Let us borrow a little light from the Scriptures. I will not cumber your paper with quotations from the Bible, but simply state a few facts that will readily be recognized by all readers of the Scriptures. If the readers of this article will read in the last Chapter of Matthew and of Luke the commission which Christ gave to His disciples, and in connection read the first and second Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, they will be prepared to appreciate what I have to say in this article.

1st. The disciples had already been converted to Christ, and their faith had been confirmed by His resurrection. But here let me say that conversion to Christ is not to be confounded with a consecration to the great work of the world's conversion. In conversion the soul has to do directly and personally with Christ.

It yields up its prejudices, its antagonisms, its self-righteousness, its unbelief, its selfishness; accepts Him, trusts Him, and supremely loves Him. All this the disciples had, more or less, distinctly done. But as yet they had received no definite commission, and no particular enduement of power to fulfill a commission.

2nd. But when Christ had dispelled their great bewilderment resulting from His crucifixion, and confirmed their faith by repeated interviews with them, He gave them their great commission to win all nations to Himself. But He admonished them to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high, which He said they should receive not many days hence. Now observe what they did. They assembled, the men and women, for prayer. They accepted the commission, and, doubtless, came to an understanding of the nature of the commission, and the necessity of the spiritual enduement which Christ had promised. As they continued day after day in prayer and conference they, no doubt, came to appreciate more and more the difficulties that would beset them, and to feel more and more their inadequacy to the task. A consideration of the circumstances and results leads to the conclusion that they, one and all, consecrated themselves, with all they had, to the conversion of the world as their life-work. They must have renounced utterly the idea of living to themselves in any form, and devoted themselves with all their powers to the work set before them. This consecration of themselves to the work, this self-renunciation, this dying to all that the world could offer them, must, in the order of nature, have preceded their intelligent seeking of the promised enduement of power from on high. They then continued, with one accord, in prayer for the promised baptism of the Spirit, which baptism included all that was essential to their success. Observe, they had a work set before them. They had a promise of power to perform it. They were admonished to wait until the promise was fulfilled. How did they wait? Not in listlessness and inactivity; not in making preparations by study and otherwise to get along without it; not by going about their business, and offering an occasional prayer that the

promise might be fulfilled; but they continued in prayer, and persisted in their suit till the answer came. They understood that it was to be a baptism of the Holy Ghost. They understood that it was to be received from Christ. They prayed in faith. They held on, with the firmest expectation, until the enduement came. Now, let these facts instruct us as to the conditions of receiving this enduement of power.

We, as Christians, have the same commission to fulfill. As truly as they did, we need an enduement of power from on high. Of course, the same injunction, to wait upon God till we receive it, is given to us.

We have the same promise that they had. Now, let us take substantially and in spirit the same course that they did. They were Christians, and had a measure of the Spirit to lead them in prayer and in consecration. So have we. Every Christian possesses a measure of the Spirit of Christ, enough of the Holy Spirit to lead us to true consecration and inspire us with the faith that is essential to our prevalence in prayer. Let us, then, not grieve or resist Him: but accept the commission, fully consecrate ourselves, with all we have, to the saving of souls as our great and our only life-work. Let us get on to the altar with all we have and are, and lie there and persist in prayer till we receive the enduement. Now, observe, conversion to Christ is not to be confounded with the acceptance of this commission to convert the world. The first is a personal transaction between the soul and Christ relating to its own salvation. The second is the soul’s acceptance of the service in which Christ proposes to employ it. Christ does not require us to make brick without straw. To whom He gives the commission He also gives the admonition and the promise. If the commission is heartily accepted, if the promise is believed, if the admonition to wait upon the Lord till our strength is renewed be complied with, we shall receive the enduement.

It is of the last importance that all Christians should understand that this commission to convert the world is given to them by Christ individually.

Everyone has the great responsibility devolved upon him or her to win as many souls as possible to Christ. This is the great privilege and the great duty of all the disciples of Christ. There are a great many departments in this work. But in every department we may and ought to possess this power, that, whether we preach, or pray, or write, or print, or trade, or travel, take care of children, or administer the government of the state, or whatever we do, our whole life and influence should be permeated with this power. Christ says: "If any man believe in Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" that is, a Christian influence, having in it the element of power to impress the truth of Christ upon the hearts of men, shall proceed from Him. The great want of the Church at present is, first, the realizing conviction that this commission to convert the world is given to each of Christ’s disciples as his life-work. I fear I must say that the great mass of professing Christians seem never to have been impressed with this truth. The work of saving souls they leave to ministers. The second great want is a realizing conviction of the necessity of this enduement of power upon every individual soul.

Many professors of religion suppose it belongs especially and only to such as are called to preach the Gospel as a life-work. They fail to realize that all are called to preach the Gospel, that the whole life of every Christian is to be a proclamation of the glad tidings. A third want is an earnest faith in the promise of this enduement. A vast many professors of religion, and even ministers, seem to doubt whether this promise is to the whole Church and to every Christian. Consequently,

they have no faith to lay hold of it. If it does not belong to all, they don't know to whom it does belong. Of course they cannot lay hold of the promise by faith. A fourth want is that persistence in waiting upon God for it that is enjoined in the Scriptures. They faint before they have prevailed, and, hence, the enduement is not received. Multitudes seem to satisfy themselves with a hope of eternal life for themselves. They never get ready to dismiss the question of their own salvation, leaving that, as settled, with Christ. They don't get ready to accept the great commission to work for the salvation of others, because their faith is so weak that they do not steadily leave the question of their own salvation in the hands of Christ; and even some ministers of the Gospel, I find, are in the same condition, and halting in the same way, unable to give themselves wholly to the work of saving others, because in a measure unsettled about their own salvation. It is amazing to witness the extent to which the Church has practically lost sight of the necessity of this enduement of power. Much is said of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit by almost everybody; but how little is this dependence realized. Christians and even ministers go to work without it. I mourn to be obliged to say that the ranks of the ministry seem to be filling up with those who do not possess it. May the Lord have mercy upon us! Will this last remark be thought uncharitable? If so, let the report of the Home Missionary Society, for example, be heard upon this subject. Surely, something is wrong. An average of five souls won to Christ by each missionary of that Society in a year's toil certainly indicates a most alarming weakness in the ministry. Have all or even a majority of these ministers been endued with the power which Christ promised? If not, why not? But, if they have, is this all that Christ intended by His promise? In a former article I have said that the reception of this enduement of power is instantaneous. I do not mean to assert that in every instance the recipient was aware of the precise time at which the power commenced to work mightily within him. It may have commenced like the dew and increased to a shower. I have alluded to the report of the Home Missionary Society. Not that I suppose that the brethren employed by that Society are exceptionally weak in faith and power as laborers for God. On the contrary, from my acquaintance with some of them, I regard them as among our most devoted and self-denying laborers in the cause of God. This fact illustrates the alarming weakness that pervades every branch of the Church, both clergy and laity. Are we not weak? Are we not criminally weak? It has been suggested that by writing thus I should offend the ministry and the Church. I cannot believe that the statement of so palpable a fact will be regarded as an offense. The fact is, there is something sadly defective in the education of the ministry and of the Church. The ministry is weak, because the Church is weak. And then, again, the Church is kept weak by the weakness of the ministry. Oh for a conviction of the necessity of this enduement of power and faith in the promise of Christ!

04.05. IS IT A HARD SAYING?

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 5 IS IT A HARD SAYING? In a former article I said that the want of an enduement of power from on high should be deemed a disqualification for a pastor, a deacon or elder, a Sabbath school superintendent, a professor in a Christian college, and especially for a professor in a theological seminary. Is this a hard saying? Is this an uncharitable saying? Is it unjust? Is it unreasonable? Is it unscriptural?

Suppose any one of the Apostles, or those present on the day of Pentecost, had failed, through apathy, selfishness, unbelief, indolence, or ignorance, to obtain this enduement of power, would it have been uncharitable, unjust, unreasonable, or unscriptural, to have accounted him disqualified for the work which Christ had appointed them?

Christ had expressly informed them that without this enduement they could do nothing. He had expressly enjoined it upon them not to attempt it in their own strength, but to tarry at Jerusalem until they received the necessary power from on high. He had also expressly promised that if they tarried, in the sense which He intended, they should receive it "not many days hence." They evidently understood Him to enjoin upon them to tarry in the sense of a constant waiting upon Him in prayer and supplication for the blessing. Now, suppose that any one of them had stayed away and attended to his own business, and waited for the sovereignty of God to confer this power. He of course would have been disqualified for the work; and if his fellow-Christians, who had obtained this power, had deemed him so, would it have been uncharitable, unreasonable, unscriptural? And is it not true of all to whom the command to disciple the world is given, and to whom the promise of this power is made, if through any shortcoming or fault of theirs they fail to obtain this gift, that they are in fact disqualified for the work, and especially for any official station? Are they not, in fact, disqualified for leadership in the sacramental host? Are they qualified for teachers of those who are to do the work? If it is a fact that they do lack this power, however this defect is to be accounted for, it is also a fact that they are not qualified for teachers of God’s people; and if they are seen to be disqualified because they lack this power, it must be reasonable and right and Scriptural so to deem them, and so to speak of them, and so to treat them. Who has a right to complain?

Surely, they have not. Shall the Church of God be burdened with teachers and leaders who lack this fundamental qualification, when their failing to possess it must be their own fault? The manifest apathy, indolence, ignorance, and unbelief that exist upon this subject are truly amazing. They are inexcusable. They must be highly criminal. With such a command to convert the world ringing in our ears; with such an injunction to wait in constant, wrestling prayer till we receive the power; with such a promise, made by such a Savior, held out to us of all the help we need from Christ Himself, what excuse can we offer for being powerless in this great work? What an awful responsibility rests upon us, upon the whole Church, upon every Christian! One might ask, How is apathy, how is indolence, how is the common fatal neglect possible, under such circumstances? If

any of the primitive Christians to whom this commandment was given had failed to receive this power, should we not think them greatly to blame? If such default had been sin in them, how much more in us with all the light of history and of fact blazing upon us, which they had not received? Some ministers and many Christians treat this matter as if it were to be left to the sovereignty of God, without any persistent effort to obtain this enduement. Did the primitive Christians so understand and treat it? No, indeed. They gave themselves no rest till this baptism of power came upon them.

I once heard a minister preaching upon the subject of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He treated it as a reality; and when he came to the question of how it was to be obtained, he said truly that it was to be obtained as the Apostles obtained it on the day of Pentecost. I was much gratified, and listened eagerly to hear him press the obligation on his hearers to give themselves no rest till they had obtained it. But in this I was disappointed: for before he sat down he seemed to relieve the audience from the feeling of obligation to obtain the baptism, and left the impression that the matter was to be left to the discretion of God, and said what appeared to imply a censure of those that vehemently and persistently urged upon God the fulfillment of the promise. Neither did he hold out to them the certainty of their obtaining the blessing if they fulfilled the conditions. The sermon was in most respects a good one; but I think the audience left without any feeling of encouragement or sense of obligation to seek earnestly the baptism. This is a common fault of the sermons that I hear. There is much that is instructive in them; but they fail to leave either a sense of obligation or a feeling of great encouragement, as to the use of means, upon the congregation. They are greatly defective in their winding up. They neither leave the conscience under a pressure nor the whole mind under the stimulus of hope. The doctrine is often good, but the "what then?" is often left out. Many ministers and professors of religion seem to be theorizing, criticizing, and endeavoring to justify their neglect of this attainment. So did not the Apostles and other Christians. It was not a question which they endeavored to grasp with their intellects before they embraced it with their hearts. It was with them, as it should be with us, a question of faith in a promise. I find many persons endeavoring to grasp with their intellect and settle as a theory questions of pure experience. They are puzzling themselves with endeavors to apprehend with the intellect that which is to be received as a conscious experience through faith.

There is need of a great reformation in the Church on this particular point. The Churches should wake up to the facts in the case, and take a new position, a firm stand in regard to the qualifications of ministers and Church officers. They should refuse to settle a man as pastor of whose qualifications for the office in this respect they are not well satisfied. Whatever else he may have to recommend him, if his record does not show that he has this enduement of power to win souls to Christ, they should deem him unqualified. It used to be the custom of Churches, and I believe in some places is so still, in presenting a call to the pastorate, to certify that, having witnessed the spiritual fruits of his labors, they deem him qualified and called of God to the work of the ministry. Churches should be well satisfied in some way that they call a fruitful minister, and not a dry stalk, that is, a mere intellect, a mere head with little heart; an elegant writer, but with no unction; a great logician, but of little faith; a fervid imagination, it may be, with no Holy Ghost power. The Churches should hold the theological seminaries to a strict account in this matter; and until they do, I fear the theological seminaries will never wake up to their responsibility. Some years since, one branch of the Scotch Church was so tried with the want of unction and power in

the ministers furnished them by their theological seminary that they passed a resolution that until the seminary reformed in this respect they would not employ ministers that were educated there. This was a necessary, a just, a timely rebuke, which I believe had a very salutary effect. A theological seminary ought by all means to be a school not merely for the teaching of doctrine, but also, and even more especially, for the development of Christian experience. To be sure the intellect should be well furnished in those schools; but it is immeasurably more important that the pupils should be led to a thorough personal knowledge of Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be made conformable to His death. A theological seminary that aims mainly at the culture of the intellect, and sends out learned men who lack this enduement of power from on high, is a snare and a stumbling-block to the Church. The seminaries should recommend no one to the Churches, however great his intellectual attainments, unless he has this most essential of all attainments, the enduement of power from on high. The seminaries should be held as incompetent to educate men for the ministry if it is seen that they send out men as ministers who have not this most essential qualification. The Churches should inform themselves, and look to those seminaries which furnish not merely the best educated, but the most unctuous and spiritually powerful ministers. It is amazing that, while it is generally admitted that the enduement of power from on high is a reality, and essential to ministerial success, practically it should be treated by the Churches and by the schools as of comparatively little importance. In theory it is admitted to be everything; but in practice treated as if it were nothing. From the Apostles to the present day it has been seen that men of very little human culture, but endued with this power, have been highly successful in winning souls to Christ; whilst men of the greatest learning, with all that the schools have done for them, have been powerless so far as the proper work of the ministry is concerned. And yet we go on laying ten times more stress on human culture than we do on the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Practically, human culture is treated as infinitely more important than the enduement of power from on high. The seminaries are furnished with learned men, but often not with men of spiritual power; hence, they do not insist upon this enduement of power as indispensable to the work of the ministry. Students are pressed almost beyond endurance with study and the culture of the intellect, while scarcely an hour in a day is given to instruction in Christian experience. Indeed, I do not know that so much as one course of lectures on Christian experience is given in the theological seminaries. But religion is an experience. It is a consciousness. Personal intercourse with God is the secret of the whole of it. There is a world of most essential learning in this direction wholly neglected by the theological seminaries. With them doctrine, philosophy, theology, Church history, sermonizing are everything, and real heart-union with God nothing. Spiritual power to prevail with God and to prevail with man has but little place in their teaching. I have often been surprised at the judgment men form in regard to the prospective usefulness of young men preparing for the ministry. Even professors are very apt, I see, to deceive themselves on this subject. If a young man is a good scholar, a fine writer, makes good progress in exegesis, and stands high in intellectual culture, they have strong hopes of him, even though they must know in many such cases that these young men cannot pray; that they have no unction, no power in prayer, no spirit of wrestling, of agonizing, and prevailing with God. Yet they are expecting them, because of their culture, to make their mark in the ministry, to be highly useful. For my part, I expect no such thing of this class of men. I have infinitely more hope of the usefulness of a man who, at any cost, will keep up daily intercourse with God; who is yearning for and struggling after the highest possible spiritual attainment; who will not

live without daily prevalence in prayer and being clothed with power from on high. Churches, presbyteries, associations, and whoever license young men for the ministry, are often very faulty in this respect. They will spend hours in informing themselves of the intellectual culture of the candidates, but scarcely as many minutes in ascertaining their heart culture, and what they know of the power of Christ to save from sin, what they know of the power of prayer, and whether and to what extent they are endued with power from on high to win souls to Christ. The whole proceeding on such occasions cannot but leave the impression that human learning is preferred to spiritual unction. Oh! that it were different, and that we were all agreed, practically, now and for ever, to hold fast to the promise of Christ, and never think ourselves or anybody else to be fit for the great work of the Church till we have received a rich enduement of power from on high. I beg of my brethren, and especially my younger brethren, not to conceive of these articles as written in the spirit of reproach. I beg the Churches, I beg the seminaries, to receive a word of exhortation from an old man, who has had some experience in these things, and one whose heart mourns and is weighed down in view of the shortcomings of the Church, the ministers, and the seminaries on this subject. Brethren, I beseech you to more thoroughly consider this matter, to wake up and lay it to heart, and rest not till this subject of the enduement of power from on high is brought forward into its proper place, and takes that prominent and practical position in view of the whole Church that Christ designed it should.

04.06. PREVAILING PRAYER

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 6 PREVAILING PRAYER

Prevailing prayer is that which secures an answer. Saying prayers is not offering prevailing prayer. The prevalence of prayer does not depend so much on quantity as on quality. I do not know how better to approach this subject than by relating a fact of my own experience before I was converted. I relate it because I fear such experiences are but too common among unconverted men.

I do not recollect having ever attended a prayer meeting until after I began the study of law. Then, for the first time, I lived in a neighborhood where there was a prayer meeting weekly.

I had neither known, heard, nor seen much of religion; hence I had no settled opinions about it. Partly from curiosity and partly from an uneasiness of mind upon the subject, which I could not well define, I began to attend that prayer meeting. About the same time I bought the first Bible that I ever owned, and began to read it. I listened to the prayers which I heard offered in those prayer meetings with all the attention that I could give to prayers so cold and formal. In every prayer they prayed for the gift and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Both in their prayers and in their remarks, which were occasionally interspersed, they acknowledged that they did not prevail with God. This was most evident, and had almost made me a skeptic.

Seeing me so frequently in their prayer meeting, the leader, on one occasion, asked me if I did not wish them to pray for me. I replied: "No." I said: "I suppose that I need to be prayed for, but your prayers are not answered. You confess it yourselves." I then expressed my astonishment at this fact, in view of what the Bible said about the prevalence of prayer. Indeed, for some time my mind was much perplexed and in doubt in view of Christ’s teaching on the subject of prayer and the manifest facts before me, from week to week, in this prayer meeting. Was Christ a divine teacher? Did He actually teach what the Gospels attributed to Him? Did He mean what He said? Did prayer really avail to secure blessings from God? If so, what was I to make of what I witnessed from week to week and month to month in that prayer meeting? Were they real Christians? Was that which I heard real prayer, in the Bible sense? Was it such prayer as Christ had promised to answer? Here I found the solution.

I became convinced that they were under a delusion; that they did not prevail because they had no right to prevail. They did not comply with the conditions upon which God had promised to hear prayer. Their prayers were just such as God had promised not to answer. It was evident they were overlooking the fact that they were in danger of praying themselves into skepticism in regard to the value of prayer. In reading my Bible I noticed such revealed conditions as the following:

(a) Faith in God as the answerer of prayer. This, it is plain, involves the expectation of receiving what we ask.

(b) Another revealed condition is the asking according to the revealed will of God. This plainly implies asking not only for such things as God is willing to grant, but also asking in such a state of mind as God can accept. I fear it is common for professed Christians to overlook the state of mind in which God requires them to be as a condition of answering their prayers. For example: In offering the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," it is plain that sincerity is a condition of prevailing with God. But sincerity in offering this petition implies the whole heart and life devotion of the petitioner to the building up of this kingdom. It implies the sincere and thorough consecration of all that we have and all that we are to this end. To utter this petition in any other state of mind involves hypocrisy, and is an abomination. So in the next petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," God has not promised to hear this petition unless it be sincerely offered. But sincerity implies a state of mind that accepts the whole revealed will of God, so far as we understand it, as they accept it in heaven. It implies a loving, confiding, universal obedience to the whole known will of God, whether that will is revealed in His Word, by His Spirit, or in His providence. It implies that we hold ourselves and all that we have and are as absolutely and cordially at God's disposal as do the inhabitants of heaven. If we fall short of this, and withhold anything whatever from God, we "regard iniquity in our hearts," and God will not hear us.

Sincerity in offering this petition implies a state of entire and universal consecration to God. Anything short of this is withholding from God that which is His due. It is "turning away our ear from hearing the law." But what saith the Scriptures? "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." Do professed Christians understand this?

What is true of offering these two petitions is true of all prayer. Do Christians lay this to heart? Do they consider that all professed prayer is an abomination if it be not offered in a state of entire consecration of all that we have and are to God? If we do not offer ourselves with and in our prayers, with all that we have; if we are not in a state of mind that cordially accepts and, so far as we know, perfectly conforms to the whole will of God, our prayer is an abomination. How awfully profane is the use very frequently made of the Lord's Prayer, both in public and in private. To hear men and women chatter over the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," while their lives are anything but conformed to the known will of God is shocking and revolting. To hear men pray, "Thy kingdom come," while it is most evident that they are making little or no sacrifice or effort to promote this kingdom, forces the conviction of bare-faced hypocrisy. Such is not prevailing prayer.

(c) Unselfishness is a condition of prevailing prayer. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas 4:3).

(d) Another condition of prevailing prayer is a conscience void of offense toward God and man. 1Jn 3:20; 1Jn 3:22 : "If our heart (conscience) condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things; if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

Here two things are made plain: first, that to prevail with God we must keep a conscience void of offense; and, second, that we must keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

(e) A pure heart is also a condition of prevailing prayer. Psalm 66 18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

(f) All due confession and restitution to God and man is another condition of prevailing prayer. Pro 28:13 : "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy."

(g) Clean hands is another condition. Psa 26:6 : "I will wash mine hands in innocence, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." 1Ti 6:8 : "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

(h) The settling of disputes and animosities among brethren is a condition. Mat 5:23-24: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift."

(i) Humility is another condition of prevailing prayer. Jas 4:6 : "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

(j) Taking up the stumbling-blocks is another condition. Eze 14:3 : "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Should I be inquired of at all by them?"

(k) A forgiving spirit is a condition. Mat 6:12 : "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; Mat 6:15 : "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

(l) The exercise of a truthful spirit is a condition. Psa 51:6 : "Behold, Thou desireth truth in the inward parts." If the heart be not in a truthful state, if it be not entirely sincere and unselfish, we regard iniquity in our hearts; and, therefore, the Lord will not hear us.

(m) Praying in the name of Christ is a condition of prevailing prayer.

(n) The inspiration of the Holy Spirit is another condition. All truly prevailing prayer is inspired by the Holy Ghost. Rom 8:26-27 : "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This is the true spirit of prayer. This is being led by the Spirit in prayer. It is the only really prevailing prayer. Do professed Christians really understand this? Do they believe that unless they live and walk in the Spirit, unless they are taught how to pray by the intercession of the Spirit in them, they cannot prevail with God?

(o) Fervency is a condition. A prayer, to be prevailing, must be fervent. Jas 5:16 : "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

(p) Perseverance or persistence in prayer is often a condition of prevailing. See the case of Jacob, of Daniel, of Elijah, of the Syrophoenician woman, of the unjust judge, and the teaching of the Bible generally.

(q) Travail of soul is often a condition of prevailing prayer. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." "My little children," said Paul, "for whom I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you." This implies that he had travailed in birth for them before they were converted. Indeed, travail of soul in prayer is the only real revival prayer. If anyone does not know what this is, he does not understand the spirit of prayer. He is not in a revival state. He does not understand the passage already quoted, Rom 8:26-27. Until he understands this agonizing prayer he does not know the real secret of revival power.

(r) Another condition of prevailing prayer is the consistent use of means to secure the object prayed for, if means are within our reach, and are known by us to be necessary to the securing of the end. To pray for a revival of religion, and use no other means, is to tempt God. This, I could plainly see, was the case of those who offered prayer in the prayer meeting of which I have spoken. They continued to offer prayer for a revival of religion, but out of meeting they were as silent as death on the subject, and opened not their mouths to those around them. They continued this inconsistency until a prominent impenitent man in the community administered to them in my presence a terrible rebuke. He expressed just what I deeply felt. He rose, and with the utmost solemnity and tearfulness said: "Christian people, what can you mean? You continue to pray in these meetings for a revival of religion. You often exhort each other here to wake up and use means to promote a revival. You assure each other, and assure us who are impenitent, that we are in the way to hell; and I believe it. You also insist that if you should wake up, and use the appropriate means, there would be a revival, and we should be converted. You tell us of our great danger, and that our souls are worth more than all worlds; and yet you keep about your comparatively trifling employments and use no such means. We have no revival and our souls are not saved." Here he broke down and fell, sobbing, back into his seat. This rebuke fell heavily upon that prayer meeting, as I shall ever remember. It did them good; for it was not long before the members of that prayer meeting broke down, and we had a revival. I was present in the first meeting in which the revival spirit was manifest. Oh! how changed was the tone of their prayers, confessions, and supplications. I remarked, in returning home, to a friend: "What a change has come over these Christians. This must be the beginning of a revival." Yes; a wonderful change comes over all the meetings whenever the Christian people are revived. Then their confessions mean something. They mean reformation and restitution. They mean work. They mean the use of means. They mean the opening of their pockets, their hearts and hands, and the devotion of all their powers to the promotion of the work.

(s) Prevailing prayer is specific. It is offered for a definite object. We cannot prevail for everything at once. In all the cases recorded in the Bible in which prayer was answered, it is noteworthy that the petitioner prayed for a definite object.

(t) Another condition of prevailing prayer is that we mean what we say in prayer; that we make no false pretenses; in short, that we are entirely childlike and sincere, speaking out of the heart, nothing more nor less than we mean, feel, and believe.

(u) Another condition of prevailing prayer is a state of mind that assumes the good faith of God in all His promises.

(v) Another condition is "watching unto prayer" as well as "praying in the Holy Ghost." By this I mean guarding against everything that can quench or grieve the Spirit of God in our hearts.

Also watching for the answer, in a state of mind that will diligently use all necessary means, at any expense, and add entreaty to entreaty. When the fallow ground is thoroughly broken up in the hearts of Christians, when they have confessed and made restitution, if the work be thorough and honest, they will naturally and inevitably fulfill the conditions, and will prevail in prayer. But it cannot be too distinctly understood that none others will. What we commonly hear in prayer and conference meetings is not prevailing prayer. It is often astonishing and lamentable to witness the delusions that prevail upon the subject. Who that has witnessed real revivals of religion has not been struck with the change that comes over the whole spirit and manner of the prayers of really revived Christians? I do not think I ever could have been converted if I had not discovered the solution of the question: "Why is it that so much that is called prayer is not answered?"

04.07. HOW TO WIN SOULS

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 7 HOW TO WIN SOULS

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." 1Ti 4:16.

I beg leave in this article to suggest to my younger brethren in the ministry some thoughts on the philosophy of so preaching the gospel as to secure the salvation of souls. They are the result of much study, much prayer for divine teaching, and a practical experience of many years.

I understand the admonition at the head of this article to relate to the matter, order, and manner of preaching. The problem is, how shall we win souls wholly to Christ? Certainly we must win them away from themselves.

1st. They are free moral agents, of course rational, accountable.

2nd. They are in rebellion against God, wholly alienated, intensely prejudiced, and committed against Him.

3rd. They are committed to self-gratification as the end of their being.

4th. This committed state is moral depravity, the fountain of sin within them, from which flow by a natural law all their sinful ways. This committed voluntary state is their "wicked heart." This it is that needs a radical change.

5th. God is infinitely benevolent, and unconverted sinners are supremely selfish, so that they are radically opposed to God. Their committal to the gratification of their appetites and propensities is known in Bible language as the "carnal mind"; or, as in the margin, "the minding of the flesh," which is enmity against God.

6th. This enmity is voluntary, and must be overcome, if at all, by the Word of God, made effectual by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

7th. The gospel is adapted to this end, and when wisely presented we may confidently expect the effectual cooperation of the Holy Spirit. This is implied in our commission, "Go and disciple all nations, and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

8th. If we are unwise, illogical, unphilosophical, and out of all natural order in presenting the gospel, we have no warrant for expecting divine cooperation.

9th. In winning souls, as in everything else, God works through and in accordance with natural laws. Hence, if we would win souls we must wisely adapt means to this end. We must present those truths and in that order adapted to the natural laws of mind, of thought and mental action. A false mental philosophy will greatly mislead us, and we shall often be found ignorantly working

against the agency of the Holy Spirit.

10th. Sinners must be convicted of their enmity. They do not know God, and consequently are often ignorant of the opposition of their hearts to Him. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," because by the law the sinner gets his first true idea of God. By the law he first learns that God is perfectly benevolent, and infinitely opposed to all selfishness. This law, then, should be arrayed in all its majesty against the selfishness and enmity of the sinner.

11th. This law carries irresistible conviction of its righteousness, and no moral agent can doubt it.

12th. All men know that they have sinned, but all are not convicted of the guilt and ill desert of sin. The many are careless and do not feel the burden of sin, the horrors and terrors of remorse, and have not a sense of condemnation and of being lost.

13th. But without this they cannot understand or appreciate the gospel method of salvation. One cannot intelligently and heartily ask or accept a pardon until he sees and feels the fact and justice of his condemnation.

14th. It is absurd to suppose that a careless, unconvicted sinner can intelligently and thankfully accept the gospel offer of pardon until he accepts the righteousness of God in his condemnation. Conversion to Christ is an intelligent change. Hence the conviction of ill desert must precede the acceptance of mercy; for without this conviction the soul does not understand its need of mercy. Of course, the offer is rejected. The gospel is no glad tidings to the careless, unconvicted sinner.

15th. The spirituality of the law should be unsparingly applied to the conscience until the sinner’s self-righteousness is annihilated, and he stands speechless and self-condemned before a holy God.

16th. In some men this conviction is already ripe, and the preacher may at once present Christ, with the hope of His being accepted; but at ordinary times such cases are exceptional. The great mass of sinners are careless, unconvicted, and to assume their conviction and preparedness to receive Christ, and, hence, to urge sinners immediately to accept Him, is to begin at the wrong end of our work, to render our teaching unintelligible. And such a course will be found to have been a mistaken one, whatever present appearances and professions may indicate. The sinner may obtain a hope under such teaching; but, unless the Holy Spirit supplies something which the preacher has failed to do, it will be found to be a false one. All the essential links of truth must be supplied.

17th. When the law has done its work, annihilated self-righteousness, and shut the sinner up to the acceptance of mercy, he should be made to understand the delicacy and danger of dispensing with the execution of the penalty when the precept of law has been violated.

18th. Right here the sinner should be made to understand that from the benevolence of God he cannot justly infer that God can consistently forgive him. For unless public justice can be satisfied, the law of universal benevolence forbids the forgiveness of sin. If public justice is not regarded in the exercise of mercy, the good of the public is sacrificed to that of the individual. God will never do this.

19th. This teaching will shut the sinner up to look for some offering to public justice.

20th. Now give him the atonement as a revealed fact, and shut him up to Christ as his own sin offering. Press the revealed fact that God has accepted the death of Christ as a substitute for the sinner's death, and that this is to be received upon the testimony of God.

21st. Being already crushed into contrition by the convicting power of the law, the revelation of the love of God manifested in the death of Christ will naturally beget great self-loathing, and that godly sorrow that needeth not to be repented of. Under this showing the sinner can never forgive himself. God is holy and glorious; and he a sinner, saved by sovereign grace. This teaching may be more or less formal as the souls you address are more or less thoughtful, intelligent, and careful to understand.

22nd. It was not by accident that the dispensation of law preceded the dispensation of grace; but it is in the natural order of things, in accordance with established mental laws, and evermore the law must prepare the way for the gospel. To overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the Church with spurious converts. Time will make this plain.

23rd. The truth should be preached to the persons present, and so personally applied as to compel everyone to feel that you mean him or her. As has been often said of a certain preacher: "He does not preach, but explains what other people preach, and seems to be talking directly to me."

24th. This course will rivet attention, and cause your hearers to lose sight of the length of your sermon. They will tire if they feel no personal interest in what you say. To secure their individual interest in what you are saying is an indispensable condition of their being converted. And, while their individual interest is thus awakened, and held fast to your subject, they will seldom complain of the length of your sermon. In nearly all cases, if the people complain of the length of our sermons, it is because we fail to interest them personally in what we say.

25th. If we fail to interest them personally, it is either because we do not address them personally, or because we lack unction and earnestness, or because we lack clearness and force, or certainly because we lack something that we ought to possess. To make them feel that we and that God means them is indispensable.

26th. Do not think that earnest piety alone can make you successful in winning souls. This is only one condition of success. There must be common sense, there must be spiritual wisdom in adapting means to the end. Matter and manner and order and time and place all need to be wisely adjusted to the end we have in view.

27th. God may sometimes convert souls by men who are not spiritually minded, when they possess that natural sagacity which enables them to adapt means to that end; but the Bible warrants us in affirming that these are exceptional cases. Without this sagacity and adaptation of means to this end a spiritual mind will fail to win souls to Christ.

28th. Souls need instruction in accordance with the measure of their intelligence. A few simple truths, when wisely applied and illuminated by the Holy Ghost, will convert children to Christ. I say wisely applied, for they too are sinners, and need the application of the law, as a schoolmaster, to bring them to Christ, that they may be justified by faith. It will sooner or later appear that supposed

conversions to Christ are spurious where the preparatory law work has been omitted, and Christ has not been embraced as a Savior from sin and condemnation.

29th. Sinners of education and culture, who are, after all, unconvicted and skeptical in their hearts, need a vastly more extended and thorough application of truth. Professional men need the gospel net to be thrown quite around them, with no break through which they can escape; and, when thus dealt with, they are all the more sure to be converted in proportion to their real intelligence. I have found that a course of lectures addressed to lawyers, and adapted to their habits of thought and reasoning, is most sure to convert them.

30th. To be successful in winning souls, we need to be observing to study individual character, to press the facts of experience, observation, and revelation upon the consciences of all classes.

31st. Be sure to explain the terms you use. Before I was converted, I failed to hear the terms repentance, faith, regeneration, and conversion intelligibly explained. Repentance was described as a feeling. Faith was represented as an intellectual act or state, and not as a voluntary act of trust. Regeneration was represented as some physical change in the nature, produced by the direct power of the Holy Ghost, instead of a voluntary change of the ultimate preference of the soul, produced by the spiritual illumination of the Holy Ghost. Even conversion was represented as being the work of the Holy Ghost in such a sense as to cover up the fact that it is the sinner's own act, under the persuasions of the Holy Ghost.

32nd. Urge the fact that repentance involves the voluntary and actual renunciation of all sin; that it is a radical change of mind toward God.

33rd. Also the fact that saving faith is heart trust in Christ; that it works by love, it purifies the heart, and overcomes the world; that no faith is saving that has not these attributes.

34th. The sinner is required to put forth certain mental acts. What these are he needs to understand. Error in mental philosophy but embarrasses, and may fatally deceive the inquiring soul. Sinners are often put upon a wrong track. They are put upon a strain to feel instead of putting forth the required acts of will. Before my conversion I never received from man any intelligible idea of the mental acts that God required of me.

35th. The deceitfulness of sin renders the inquiring soul exceedingly exposed to delusion; therefore it behoves teachers to beat about every bush, and to search out every nook and corner where a soul can find a false refuge. Be so thorough and discriminating as to render it as nearly impossible as the nature of the case will admit that the inquirer should entertain a false hope.

36th. Do not fear to be thorough. Do not through false pity put on a plaster where the probe is needed. Do not fear that you shall discourage the convicted sinner, and turn him back, by searching him out to the bottom. If the Holy Spirit is dealing with him, the more you search and probe the more impossible it will be for the soul to turn back or rest in sin.

37th. If you would save the soul, do not spare a right hand, or right eye, or any darling idol; but see to it that every form of sin is given up. Insist upon full confession of wrong to all that have a right to confession. Insist upon full restitution, so far as is possible, to all injured parties. Do not fall short of the express teachings of Christ on this subject. Whoever the sinner may be, let him distinctly understand that unless he forsakes all that he has he cannot be the disciple of Christ. Insist upon

entire and universal consecration of all the powers of body and mind, and of all the property, possessions, character, and influence to God. Insist upon the total abandonment to God of all ownership of self, or anything else, as a condition of being accepted.

38th. Understand yourself, and, if possible, make the sinner understand, that nothing short of this is involved in true faith or true repentance, and that true consecration involves them all.

39th. Keep constantly before the sinner's mind that it is the personal Christ with whom he is dealing, that God in Christ is seeking his reconciliation to Himself, and that the condition of his reconciliation is that he gives up his will and his whole being to God, that he "leave not a hoof behind."

40th. Assure him that "God has given to him eternal life, and this life is in His Son"; that "Christ is made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption"; and that from first to last he is to find his whole salvation in Christ.

41st. When satisfied that the soul intelligently receives all this doctrine, and the Christ herein revealed, then remember that he must persevere unto the end, as the further condition of his salvation. Here you have before you the great work of preventing the soul from backsliding, of securing its permanent sanctification and sealing for eternal glory.

42nd. Does not the very common backsliding in heart of converts indicate some grave defect in the teachings of the pulpit on this subject?

What does it mean that so many hopeful converts, within a few months of their apparent conversion, lose their first love, lose all their fervency in religion, neglect their duty, and live on in name Christians, but in spirit and life worldlings?

43rd. A truly successful preacher must not only win souls to Christ, but must keep them won. He must not only secure their conversion, but their permanent sanctification.

44th. Nothing in the Bible is more expressly promised in this life than permanent sanctification. 1Th 5:23-24 : "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, 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." This is unquestionably a prayer of the apostle for permanent sanctification in this life, with an express promise that He who has called us will do it.

45th. We learn from the Scriptures that "after we believe" we are, or may be, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and that this sealing is the earnest of our salvation. Eph 1:13-14 : "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, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." This sealing, this earnest of our inheritance, is that which renders our salvation sure. Hence, in Eph 4:30, the apostle says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And in 2Co 1:21-22 the apostle says: "Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Thus we are established in Christ and anointed by the Spirit, and also sealed by the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. And this, remember, is a blessing that we receive after that we believe, as Paul has informed us in his Epistle to the Ephesians, above quoted. Now, it is of the

first importance that converts should be taught not to rest short of this permanent sanctification, this sealing, this being established in Christ by the special anointing of the Holy Ghost.

46th. Now, brethren, unless we know what this means by our own experience, and lead converts to this experience, we fail most lamentably and essentially in our teaching. We leave out the very cream and fullness of the Gospel.

47th. It should be understood that while this experience is rare amongst ministers it will be discredited by the Churches, and it will be next to impossible for an isolated preacher of this doctrine to overcome the unbelief of his Church. They will feel doubtful about it, because so few preach it or believe in it; and will account for their pastor's insisting upon it by saying that his experience is owing to his peculiar temperament, and thus they will fail to receive this anointing because of their unbelief. Under such circumstances it is all the more necessary to insist much upon the importance and privilege of permanent sanctification.

48th. Sin consists in carnal-mindedness, in "obeying the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Permanent sanctification consists in entire and permanent consecration to God. It implies the refusal to obey the desires of the flesh or of the mind. The baptism or sealing of the Holy Spirit subdues the power of the desires, and strengthens and confirms the will in resisting the impulse of desire, and in abiding permanently in a state of making the whole being an offering to God.

49th. If we are silent upon this subject, the natural inference will be that we do not believe in it, and, of course, that we know nothing about it in experience. This will inevitably be a stumbling block to the Church.

50th. Since this is undeniably an important doctrine, and plainly taught in the gospel, and is, indeed, the marrow and fatness of the gospel, to fail in teaching this is to rob the Church of its richest inheritance.

51st. The testimony of the Church, and to a great extent of the ministry, on the subject has been lamentably defective. This legacy has been withheld from the Church, and is it any wonder that she so disgracefully backslides? The testimony of the comparatively few, here and there, that insist upon this doctrine is almost nullified by the counter-testimony or culpable silence of the great mass of Christ's witnesses.

52nd. My dear brethren, my convictions are so ripe and my feelings so deep upon this subject that I must not conceal from you my fears that lack of personal experience, in many cases, is the reason of this great defect in preaching the gospel. I do not say this to reproach you; it is not in my heart to do so. It is not wonderful that many of you, at least, have not this experience. Your religious training has been defective. You have been led to take a different view of this subject. Various causes have operated to prejudice you against this blessed doctrine of the glorious gospel. You have not intellectually believed it; and, of course, have not received Christ in His fullness into your hearts. Perhaps this doctrine to you has been a stumbling block and a rock of offense; but I pray you let not prejudice prevail, but venture upon Christ by a present acceptance of Him as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and see if He will not do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you asked or thought.

53rd. No man, saint or sinner, should be left by us to rest or be quiet in the indulgence of any sin. No one should be allowed to entertain the hope of heaven, if we can prevent it, who lives in the indulgence of known sin in any form. Our constant demand and persuasion should be, "Be ye holy, for God is holy." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Let us remember the manner in which Christ concludes His memorable Sermon on the Mount. After spreading out those awfully searching truths before His hearers, and demanding that they should be perfect, as their Father in heaven was perfect, He concludes by assuring them that no one could be saved who did not receive and obey His teachings. Instead of attempting to please our people in their sins, we should continually endeavor to hunt and persuade them out of their sins. Brethren, let us do it, as we would not have our skirts defiled with their blood. If we pursue this course and constantly preach with unction and power, and abide in the fullness of the doctrine of Christ, we may joyfully expect to save ourselves and them that hear us.

Chapter 82

04.08. PREACHER, SAVE THYSELF

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 8 PREACHER, SAVE THYSELF

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." 1Ti 4:16.

I am not going to preach to preachers, but to suggest certain conditions upon which the salvation promised in this text may be secured by them.

1st. See that you are constrained by love to preach the gospel, as Christ was to provide a gospel.

2nd. See that you have the special enduement of power from on high, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

3rd. See that you have a heart, and not merely a head call to undertake the preaching of the gospel. By this I mean, be heartily and most intensely inclined to seek the salvation of souls as the great work of life, and do not undertake what you have no heart to.

4th. Constantly maintain a close walk with God.

5th. Make the Bible your book of books. Study it much, upon your knees, waiting for divine light.

6th. Beware of leaning on commentaries. Consult them when convenient; but judge for yourself, in the light of the Holy Ghost.

7th. Keep yourself pure in will, in thought, in feeling, in word and action.

8th. Contemplate much the guilt and danger of sinners, that your zeal for their salvation may be intensified.

9th. Also deeply ponder and dwell much upon the boundless love and compassion of Christ for them.

10th. So love them yourself as to be willing to die for them.

11th. Give your most intense thought to the study of ways and means by which you may save them. Make this the great and intense study of your life.

12th. Refuse to be diverted from this work. Guard against every temptation that would abate your interest in it.

13th. Believe the assertion of Christ that He is with you in this work always and everywhere, to give you all the help you need.

14th. "He that winneth souls is wise"; and "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and he shall receive." But let him ask in faith." Remember,

therefore, that you are bound to have the wisdom that shall win souls to Christ.

15th. Being called of God to the work, make your calling your constant argument with God for all that you need for the accomplishment of the work.

16th. Be diligent and laborious, "in season and out of season."

17th. Converse much with all classes of your hearers on the question of their salvation, that you may understand their opinions, errors, and wants. Ascertain their prejudices, ignorance, temper, habits, and whatever you need to know to adapt your instruction to their necessities.

18th. See that your own habits are in all respects correct; that you are temperate in all things--free from the stain or smell of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or anything of which you have reason to be ashamed, and which may stumble others.

19th. Be not "light-minded," but "set the Lord always before you."

20th. Bridle your tongue, and be not given to idle and unprofitable conversation.

21st. Always let your people see that you are in solemn earnest with them, both in the pulpit and out of it; and let not your daily intercourse with them nullify your serious teaching on the Sabbath.

22nd. Resolve to "know nothing" among your people "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified"; and let them understand that, as an ambassador of Christ, your business with them relates wholly to the salvation of their souls.

23rd. Be sure to teach them as well by example as by precept. Practice yourself what you preach.

24th. Be especially guarded in your intercourse with women, to raise no thought or suspicion of the least impurity in yourself.

25th. Guard your weak points. If naturally tending to gaiety and trifling, watch against occasions of failure in this direction.

26th. If naturally somber and unsocial, guard against moroseness and unsociability.

27th. Avoid all affectation and sham in all things. Be what you profess to be, and you will have no temptation to "make believe."

28th. Let simplicity, sincerity, and Christian propriety stamp your whole life.

29th. Spend much time every day and night in prayer and direct communion with God. This will make you a power for salvation. No amount of learning and study can compensate for the loss of this communion. If you fail to maintain communion with God, you are "weak as another man."

30th. Beware of the error that there are no means of regeneration, and, consequently, no connection of means and ends in the regeneration of souls.

31st. Understand that regeneration is a moral, and therefore a voluntary change.

32nd. Understand that the gospel is adapted to change the hearts of men, and in a wise presentation of it you may expect the efficient cooperation of the Holy Spirit.

33rd. In the selection and treatment of your texts, always secure the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit.

34th. Let all your sermons be heart and not merely head sermons.

35th. Preach from experience, and not from hearsay, or mere reading and study.

36th. Always present the subject which the Holy Spirit lays upon your heart for the occasion. Seize the points presented by the Holy Spirit to your own mind, and present them with the greatest possible directness to your congregation.

37th. Be full of prayer whenever you attempt to preach, and go from your closet to your pulpit with the inward groanings of the Spirit pressing for utterance at your lips.

38th. Get your mind fully imbued with your subject, so that it will press for utterance; then open your mouth, and let it forth like a torrent.

39th. See that "the fear of man that bringeth a snare" is not upon you. Let your people understand that you fear God too much to be afraid of them.

40th. Never let the question of your popularity with your people influence your preaching.

41st. Never let the question of salary deter you from "declaring the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear."

42nd. Do not temporize, lest you lose the confidence of your people, and thus fail to save them. They cannot thoroughly respect you, as an ambassador of Christ, if they see that you dare not do your duty.

43rd. Be sure to "commend yourself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God."

44th. Be "not a lover of filthy lucre."

45th. Avoid every appearance of vanity.

46th. Compel your people to respect your sincerity and your spiritual wisdom.

47th. Let them not for one moment suppose that you can be influenced in your preaching by any considerations of salary, more or less, or none at all.

48th. Do not make the impression that you are fond of good dinners, and like to be invited out to dine; for this will be a snare to you, and a stumbling-block to them.

49th. Keep your body under, lest after having preached to others, yourself should be a castaway.

50th. "Watch for souls as one who must give an account to God."

51st. Be a diligent student, and thoroughly instruct your people in all that is essential to their salvation.

52nd. Never flatter the rich.

53rd. Be especially attentive to the wants and instruction of the poor.

54th. Suffer not yourself to be bribed into a compromise with sin by donation parties.

55th. Suffer not yourself to be publicly treated as a mendicants or you will come to be despised by a large class of your hearers.

56th. Repel every attempt to close your mouth against whatever is extravagant, wrong, or injurious amongst your people.

57th. Maintain your pastoral integrity and independence, lest you sear your conscience, quench the Holy Spirit, forfeit the confidence of your people, and lose the favor of God.

58th. Be an example to the flock, and let your life illustrate your teaching. Remember that your actions and spirit will teach even more impressively than your sermons.

59th. If you preach that men should offer to God and their neighbor a love service, see that you do this yourself, and avoid all that tends to the belief that you are working for pay.

60th. Give to your people a love service, and encourage them to render to you, not a money equivalent for your labor, but a love reward that will refresh both you and them.

61st. Repel every proposal to get money for you or for Church purposes that will naturally disgust and excite the contempt of worldly but thoughtful men.

62nd. Resist the introduction of tea parties, amusing lectures, and dissipating sociables, especially at those seasons most favorable for united efforts to convert souls to Christ. Be sure the devil will try to head you off in this direction. When you are praying and planning for a revival of God’s work, some of your worldly Church members will invite you to a party. Go not, or you are in for a circle of them, that will defeat your prayers.

63rd. Do not be deceived. Your spiritual power with your people will never be increased by accepting such invitations at such times. If it is a good time to have parties, because the people have leisure, it is also a good time for religious meetings, and your influence should be used to draw the people to the house of God.

64th. See that you personally know and daily live upon Christ.

04.09. INNOCENT AMUSEMENTS

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 9 INNOCENT AMUSEMENTS

We hear much said, and read much, in these days, of indulging in innocent amusements. I heard a minister, some time since, in addressing a large company of young people, say that he had spent much time in devising innocent amusements for the young. Within a few years I have read several sermons and numerous articles pleading for more amusements than have been customary with religious people. With your consent, I wish to suggest a few thoughts upon this subject--first, what are not, and, secondly, what are innocent amusements.

1st. This is a question of morals.

2nd. All intelligent acts of a moral agent must be either right or wrong. Nothing is innocent in a moral agent that is not in accordance with the law and gospel of God.

3rd. The moral character of any and every act of a moral agent resides in the motive or the ultimate reason for the act. This I take to be self-evident and universally admitted.

4th. Now, what is the rule of judgment in this case? How are we to decide whether any given act of amusement is right or wrong, innocent or sinful? I answer:

1st. By the moral law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc., "and thy neighbor as thyself." No intelligent act of a moral agent is innocent or right unless it proceeds from and is an expression of supreme love to God and equal love to man--in other words, unless it is benevolent.

2nd. The Gospel. This requires the same: "Therefore, whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3rd. Right reason affirms the same thing.

Now, in the light of this rule, it is plain that it is not innocent to engage in amusements merely to gratify the desire for amusement. We may not innocently eat or drink to gratify the desire for food or drink. To eat or drink merely to gratify appetite is innocent enough in a mere animal, but in a moral agent it is a sin. A moral agent is bound to have a higher ultimate motive to eat and drink--that he may be strong and healthy for the service of God. God has made eating and drinking pleasant to us; but this pleasure ought not to be our ultimate reason for eating and drinking. So amusements are pleasant, but this does not justify us in seeking amusements to gratify desire. Mere animals may do this innocently, because they are incapable of any higher motive. But moral agents are under a higher law, and are bound to have another and a higher aim than merely to gratify the desire for amusements. Therefore, no amusement is innocent which is engaged in for the pleasure of the amusement, any more than it would be innocent to eat and drink for the pleasure of it. Again, no amusement is innocent that is engaged in because we need amusements. We need food and drink; but this does not justify us in eating and drinking simply because we

need it. The law of God does not say, "Seek whatever ye need because ye need it"; but, "Do all from love to God and man." A wicked man might eat and drink selfishly--that is, to make his body strong to execute his selfish plans--but this eating and drinking would be sin notwithstanding he needed food and drink.

Nothing is innocent unless it proceeds from supreme love to God and equal love to man, unless the supreme and ultimate motive be to please and honor God. In other words, to be innocent, any amusement must be engaged in because it is believed to be at the time most pleasing to God, and is intended to be a service rendered to Him, as that which, upon the whole, will honor Him more than anything else that we can engage in for the time being. I take this to be self-evident. What then? It follows:

1st. That none but benevolent amusements can be innocent. Fishing and shooting for amusement are not innocent. We may fish and hunt for the same reason that we are allowed to eat and drink--to supply nature with aliment, that we may be strong in the service of God. We may hunt to destroy noxious animals, for the glory of God and the interests of His kingdom. But fishing and hunting to gratify a passion for these sports is not innocent. Again, no amusement can be innocent that involves the squandering of precious time, that might be better employed to the glory of God and the good of man. Life is short. Time is precious. We have but one life to live. Much is to be done. The world is in darkness. A world of sinners are to be enlightened, and, if possible, saved. We are required to work while the day lasteth. Our commission and work require dispatch. No time is to be lost. If our hearts are right, our work is pleasant. If rightly performed it affords the highest enjoyment and is itself the highest amusement. No turning aside for amusement can be innocent that involves any unnecessary loss of time. No man that realizes the greatness of the work to be done, and loves to do it, can turn aside for any amusement involving an unnecessary waste of time.

Again, no amusement can be innocent that involves an unnecessary expenditure of the Lord’s money. All our time and all our money are the Lord’s. We are the Lord’s. We may innocently use both time and money to promote the Lord’s interests and the highest interests of man, which are the Lord’s interests. But we may not innocently use either for our own pleasure and gratification. Expensive journeys for our own pleasure and amusement, and not indulged in with a single eye to the glory of God, are not innocent amusements, but sinful. Again, in the light of the above rule of judgment, we see that no form of amusement is lawful for an unconverted sinner. Nothing in him is innocent. While he remains impenitent and unbelieving, does not love God and his neighbor according to God’s command, there is for him no innocent employment or amusement; all is sin. And right here I fear that many are acting under a great delusion. The loose manner in which this subject is viewed by many professors of religion, and even ministers, is surprising and alarming. Some time since, in a sermon, I remarked that there were no lawful employments or innocent amusements for sinners. An aged clergyman who was present said, after service, that it was ridiculous to hold that nothing was lawful or innocent in an impenitent sinner. I replied: "I thought you were orthodox. Do you not believe in the universal necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit?" He replied: "Yes." I added: "Do you believe that an unregenerate soul does anything acceptable to God? Before his heart is changed, does he ever act from a motive that God can accept, in anything whatever? Is he not totally depraved, in the sense that his heart is all wrong, and therefore his actions must be all wrong?" He appeared embarrassed, saw the point, and

subsided.

Whatever is lawful in a moral agent or according to the law of God is right. If anyone, therefore, engages lawfully in any employment or in any amusement, he must do so from supreme love to God and equal love to his neighbor; and is, therefore, not an impenitent sinner, but a Christian. It is simply absurd and a contradiction to say that an impenitent soul does, or says, or omits anything with a right heart. If impenitent, his ultimate motive must necessarily be wrong; and, consequently, nothing in him is innocent, but all must be sinful. What, then, is an innocent amusement? It must be that and that only which not only might be but actually is engaged in with a single eye to God's glory and the interests of His kingdom. If this be not the ultimate and supreme design, it is not an innocent, but a sinful amusement. Now, right here is the delusion of many persons, I fear. When speaking of amusements, they say: "What harm is there in them?" In answering to themselves and others this question, they do not penetrate to the bottom of it. If on the surface they see nothing contrary to morality, they judge that the amusement is innocent. They fail to inquire into the supreme and ultimate motive in which the innocence or sinfulness of the act is found. But apart from the motive no course of action is either innocent or sinful, any more than the motions of a machine or the acts of a mere animal are innocent or sinful. No act or course of action should, therefore, be adjudged as either innocent or sinful without ascertaining the supreme motive of the person who acts. To teach, either directly or by implication, that any amusement of an impenitent sinner or of a backslider is innocent is to teach a gross and ruinous heresy. Parents should remember this in regard to the amusements of their unconverted children. Sabbath school teachers and superintendents who are planning amusements for their Sabbath schools, preachers who spend their time in planning amusements for the young, who lead their flocks to picnics, in pleasure excursions, and justify various games, should certainly remember that, unless they are in a holy state of heart, and do all this from supreme love to God and a design in the highest degree to glorify God thereby, these ways of spending time are by no means innocent, but highly criminal, and those who teach people to walk in these ways are simply directing the channels in which their depravity shall run. For be it ever remembered that, unless these things are indulged in from supreme love to God and designed to glorify Him, unless they are, in fact, engaged in with a single eye to the glory of God, they are not innocent, but sinful amusements. I must say again, and, if possible, still more emphatically, that it is not enough that they might be engaged in as the best way, for the time being, to honor and please God; but they must be actually engaged in from supreme love to God, with the ultimate design to glorify Him. If such, then, is the true doctrine of innocent amusements, let no impenitent sinner and no backslidden Christian suppose for a moment that it is possible for him to engage in any innocent amusement. If it were true, as the aged minister to whom I have referred and many others seem to believe, that impenitent sinners or backsliders can and do engage in innocent amusements, the very engaging in such amusements, being lawfully right and innocent in them, would involve a change of heart in the unconverted, and a return to God in the backslider. For no amusement is lawful unless it be engaged in as a love-service rendered to God and with design to please and glorify Him. It must not only be a love service, but, in the judgment of the one who renders it, it must be the best service that, for the time being, he can render to God--a service that will be more pleasing to Him and more useful to His kingdom than any other that can be engaged in at the time. Let these facts be borne in mind when the question of engaging in amusements comes up for decision. And remember, the question in all such cases is not, "What harm is there in this proposed amusement?" but, "What good can it do?"

"Is it the best way in which I can spend my time?" "Will it be more pleasing to God and more for the interest of His kingdom than anything else at present possible to me?" "If not, it is not an innocent amusement, and I cannot engage in it without sin." The question often arises: "Are we never to seek such amusements?" I answer: It is our privilege and our duty to live above a desire for such things. All that class of desires should be so subdued by living so much in the light of God, and having so deep a communion with Him as to have no relish for such amusements whatever. It certainly is the privilege of every child of God to walk so closely with Him, and maintain so divine a communion with Him, as not to feel the necessity of worldly excitements, sports, pastimes, and entertainments to make his enjoyment satisfactory. If a Christian avails himself of his privilege of communion with God, he will naturally and by an instinct of his new nature repel solicitations to go after worldly amusements. To him such pastimes will appear low, unsatisfactory, and even repulsive. If he is of a heavenly mind, as he ought to be, he will feel as if he could not afford to come down and seek enjoyment in worldly amusements. Surely, a Christian must be fallen from his first love, he must have turned back into the world, before he can feel the necessity or have the desire of seeking enjoyment in worldly sports and pastimes. A spiritual mind cannot seek enjoyment in worldly society. To such a mind that society is necessarily repulsive. Worldly society is insincere, hollow, and to a great extent a sham. What relish can a spiritual mind have for the gossip of a worldly party of pleasure? None whatever. To a mind in communion with God their worldly spirit and ways, conversation and folly is repulsive and painful, as it is so strongly suggestive of the downward tendency of their souls, and of the destiny that awaits them. I have had so marked an experience of both sides of this question that I think I cannot be mistaken. Probably but few persons enjoy worldly pleasure more intensely than I did before I was converted; but my conversion, and the spiritual baptism which immediately followed it, completely extinguished all desire for worldly sports and amusements. I was lifted at once into entirely another plane of life and another kind of enjoyment. From that hour to the present the mode of life, the pastimes, sports, amusements, and worldly ways that so much delighted me before have not only failed to interest me, but I have had a positive aversion to them. I have never felt them necessary to, or even compatible with, a truly rational enjoyment. I do not speak boastingly; but for the honor of Christ and His religion, I must say that my Christian life has been a happy one. I have had as much enjoyment as is probably best for men to have in this life, and never for an hour have I had the desire to turn back and seek enjoyment from anything the world can give. But some may ask: "Suppose we do not find sufficient enjoyment in religion, and really desire to go after worldly amusements. If we have the disposition, is it not as well to gratify it?" "Is there any more sin in seeking amusements than in entertaining a longing for them?" I reply that a longing for them should never be entertained. It is the privilege and therefore the duty of everyone to rise, through grace, above a hungering and thirsting for the fleshpots of Egypt, worldly pastimes and time-wasting amusements. The indulgence of such longings is not innocent. One should not ask whether the longing should be gratified, but whether it should not be displaced by a longing for the glory of God and His kingdom.

Professed Christians are bound to maintain a life consistent with their profession. For the honor of religion, they ought to deny worldly lusts; and not, by seeking to gratify them, give occasion to the world to scoff and say that Christians love the world as well as they do.

If professors of religion are backslidden in heart, and entertain a longing for worldly sports and amusements, they are bound by every consideration of duty and decency to abstain from all outward manifestation of such inward lustings. Some have maintained that we should conform to the ways of the world somewhat at least, enough to show that we can enjoy the world and religion too; and that we make religion appear repulsive to unconverted souls by turning our backs upon what they call their innocent amusements. But we should represent religion as it really is--as living above the world, as consisting in a heavenly mind, as that which affords an enjoyment so spiritual and heavenly as to render the low pursuits and joys of worldly men disagreeable and repulsive. It is a sad stumbling-block to the unconverted to see professed Christians seeking pleasure or happiness from this world. Such seeking is a misrepresentation of the religion of Jesus. It misleads, bewilders, and confounds the observing outsider. If he ever reads his Bible, he cannot but wonder that souls who are born of God and have communion with Him should have any relish for worldly ways and pleasures. The fact is that thoughtful unconverted men have little or no confidence in that class of professing Christians who seek enjoyment from this world. They may profess to have, and may loosely think of such as being liberal and good Christians. They may flatter them, and commend their religion as being the opposite of fanaticism and bigotry, and as being such a religion as they like to see; but there is no real sincerity in such professions on the part of the impenitent. In my early Christian life I heard a Methodist bishop from the South report a case that made a deep impression on my mind. He said there was in his neighborhood a slave holder, a gentleman of fortune, who was a gay and agreeable man, and gave himself much to various field sports and amusements. He used to associate much with his pastor, often invite him to dinner, and to accompany him in his sports and pleasure-seeking excursions of various kinds. The minister cheerfully complied with these requests, and a friendship grew up between the pastor and his parishioner that continued till the last sickness of this gay and wealthy man. When the wife of this worldling was apprised that her husband could live but a short time she was much alarmed for his soul, and tenderly inquired if she should not call in their minister to converse and pray with him. He feelingly replied: "No, my dear; he is not the man for me to see now. He was my companion, as you know, in worldly sports and pleasure-seeking; he loved good dinners and a jolly time. I then enjoyed his society and found him a pleasant companion. But I see now that I never had any real confidence in his piety, and have now no confidence in the efficacy of his prayers. I am now a dying man, and need the instruction and prayers of somebody that can prevail with God. We have been much together, but our pastor has never been in serious earnest with me about the salvation of my soul, and he is not the man to help me now." The wife was greatly affected, and said: "What shall I do, then?" He replied: "My coachman, Tom, is a pious man. I have confidence in his prayers. I have often overheard him pray, when about the barn or stables, and his prayers have always struck me as being quite sincere and earnest. I never heard any foolishness from him. He has always been honest and earnest as a Christian man. Call him."

Tom was called, and came within the door, dropping his hat and looking tenderly and compassionately at his dying master. The dying man put forth his hand, saying: "Come here, Tom. Take my hand. Tom, can you pray for your dying master?" Tom poured out his soul in earnest prayer. I cannot remember the name of this bishop, it was so long ago; but the story I well remember as an illustration of the mistake into which many professors and some ministers fall, supposing that we recommend religion to the unconverted by mingling with them in their pleasures and their running after amusements. I have seen many illustrations of this mistake. Christians

should live so far above the world as not to need or seek its pleasures, and thus recommend religion to the world as a source of the highest and purest happiness. The peaceful look, the joyful countenance, the spiritual serenity and cheerfulness of a living Christian recommend religion to the unconverted. Their satisfaction in God, their holy joy, their living above and shunning the ways and amusements of worldly minds, impress the unconverted with a sense of the necessity and desirableness of a Christian life. But let no man think to gain a really Christian influence over another by manifesting a sympathy with his worldly aspirations.

Now, is this rule a yoke of bondage? I do not wonder that it has created in some minds not a little disturbance. The pleasure loving and pleasure seeking members of the Church regard the rule as impracticable, as a strait jacket, as a bondage. But to whom is it a straitjacket and a bondage? To whom is it impracticable? Surely it is not and cannot be to any who love God with all their heart and their neighbor as themselves. It certainly cannot be so regarded by a real Christian, for all real Christians love God supremely. Their own interests and their own pleasure are regarded as nothing as compared with the interests and good pleasure of God. They, therefore, cannot seek amusements unless they believe themselves called of God to do so. By a law of our nature we seek to please those whom we supremely love. Also, by a law of our nature, we find our highest happiness in pleasing those whom we supremely love; and we supremely please ourselves when we seek not at all to please ourselves, but to please the object of our supreme affection. Therefore, Christians find their highest enjoyment and their truest pleasure in pleasing God and in seeking the good of their fellow-men; and they enjoy this service all the more because enjoyment is not what they seek, but what they inevitably experience by a law of their nature. This is a fact of Christian consciousness. The highest and purest of all amusements is found in doing the will of God. Mere worldly amusements are cold and insipid and not worthy of naming in comparison with the enjoyment we find in doing the will of God. To one who loves God supremely it is natural to seek amusements, and everything else that we do seek, with supreme reference to the glory of God. Why, then, should this rule be regarded as too strict, as placing the standard too high, and as being a strait jacket and a bondage? How, then, are we to understand those who plead so much for worldly amusements? From what I have heard and read upon this subject within the last few years, I have gathered that these pleaders for amusements have thought that there was more enjoyment to be gained from these amusements than from the service of God. They remind me of a sentence that I used to have as a copy when a school-boy: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." They seem to assume that the service of God is work in the sense of being a task and a burden; that to labor and pray and preach to win souls to Christ, to commune with God and perform the duties of religion is so wearisome, not to say irksome, that we need a good many playdays; that the love of Christ is not satisfactory; that we must have frequent resort to worldly amusements to make life tolerable. Christ on one occasion said to His disciples: "Come aside and rest awhile." This is not wonderful when we consider that they were often so thronged as not to have time even to eat their ordinary meals. But it was not amusement that they sought; simply rest from their labors of love, in which labors they must have had the greatest enjoyment.

I often ask myself: "What can it mean that so many of our highly fed and most popular preachers are pleading so much for amusements?" They seem to be leading the Church off in a direction in which she is the most in danger. It is no wonder that lay men and women are easily led in that direction, for such teaching exactly accords with the innumerable temptations to worldliness which

are presented to the Church on every side. The Bible is replete with instruction upon this subject, which is the direct opposite of these pleas for worldly amusements. These teachers plead for fun, hilarity, jesting, plays, and games, and such things as worldly minds love and enjoy; but the Bible exhorts to sobriety, heavenly-mindedness, unceasing prayer, and a close and perpetual walk with God. The Bible everywhere assumes that all real enjoyment is found in this course of life, that all true peace of mind is found in communion with God and in being given up to seek His glory as the constant and supreme end of life. It exhorts us to watchfulness, and informs us that for every idle word we must give account in the Day of Judgment.

It nowhere informs us that fun and hilarity are the source of rational enjoyment; it nowhere encourages us to expect to maintain a close walk with God, to have peace of mind and joy in the Holy Ghost, if we gad about to seek amusements. And is not the teaching of the Bible on this subject in exact accordance with human experience? Do we need to have the pulpit turn advocate of worldly amusements? Is not human depravity strong enough in that direction, without being stimulated by the voice of the preacher? Has the Church worked so hard for God and souls, are Christians so overdone with their exhausting efforts to pull sinners out of the fire, that they are in danger of becoming insane with religious fervor and need that the pulpit and the press should join in urging them to turn aside and seek amusements and have a little fun?

What can it mean? Why, is it not true that nearly all our dangers are on this side? Is not human nature in its present state so strongly tending in these directions that we need to be on our guard, and constantly to exhort the Church not to be led away after amusements and fun, to the destruction of their souls? But to come back to the question: To whom is it a bondage, to be required to have a single eye to the good pleasure and glory of God in all that we do? Who finds it hard to do so? Christ says His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The requirement to do all for the glory of God is surely none other than the yoke of Christ. It is His expressed will. Who finds this a hard yoke and a heavy burden? It is not hard or heavy to a willing, loving mind.

Just the thing here required is natural and inevitable to everyone that truly loves God and is truly devoted to the Savior. What is devotion to Jesus but a heart set upon rendering Him a loving obedience in all things? What is Christian liberty but the privilege of doing that which Christians most love to do that is, in all things to fulfill the good pleasure of their blessed Lord? Turn aside from saving souls to seek amusements! As if there could be a higher and diviner pleasure than is found in laboring for the salvation of souls. It cannot be. There can be no higher enjoyment found in this world than is found in pulling souls out of the fire and bringing them to Christ. I am filled with amazement when I read and hear the appeals to the Church to seek more worldly amusements. Do we need, can we have any fuller and higher satisfaction than is found in a close, serious, loving walk with God and cooperation with Him in fitting souls for heaven?

All that I hear said to encourage the people of God in seeking amusements appears to me to proceed from a worldly, instead of a spiritual state of mind. Can it be possible that a soul in communion with God and, of course, yearning with compassion over dying men, struggling from day to day in agonizing prayer for their salvation, should entertain the thought of turning aside to seek amusement? Can a pastor in whose congregation are numbers of unsaved souls, and amongst whose membership are many worldly-minded professors of religion, turn aside and lead or accompany his Church in a backsliding movement to gain worldly pleasure? There are always

enough in every Church who are easily led astray in that direction. But who are they that most readily fall in with such a movement? Who are ready to come to the front when a picnic, a pleasure excursion, a worldly party, or other pleasure-seeking movements are proposed? Are they, in fact, the class that always attend prayer meetings, that are always in a revival state of mind? Do they belong to the class whose faces shine from day to day with the peace of God pervading their souls? Are they the Aarons and Hurs that stay up the hands of their pastor with continual and prevailing prayer? Are they spiritual members, whose conversation is in heaven and who mind not earthly things? Who does not know that it is the worldly members in the Church who are always ready for any movement in the direction of worldly pleasure or amusement, and that the truly spiritual, prayerful, heavenly-minded members are shy of all such movements? They are not led into them without urging, and weep in secret places when they see their pastor giving encouragement to that which is likely to be so great a stumbling-block to both the Church and to the world.

Pres. Finney, in forwarding his revision of the above tract for publication by the Willard Tract Repository, accompanied it with a note to Dr. Cullis, in which he said:

"The previous pages contain a condensation of three short articles that I published in the Independent. I recollect that the editor of the Advance, and one of the editors of the Independent, both of whom had published what I regard as very loose views, approving and recommending the worldly amusements of Christians, criticized those articles with an asperity that seemed to indicate that they were nettled by them. They so far perverted them as to assert that they taught asceticism, and the prohibition of rest, recreation, and all amusements. I regard the doctrine of this tract as strictly Biblical and true. But, to avoid all such unjust inferences and cavils, add the following lines.

"Let no one say that the doctrine of this tract prohibits all rest, recreation, and amusement whatever. It does not. It freely admits all rest, recreation, and amusement that is regarded, by the person who resorts to it, as a condition and means of securing health and vigor of body and mind with which to promote the cause of God. This tract only insists, as the Bible does, that whether we eat or drink, rest, recreate, or amuse ourselves, all must be done as a service rendered to God. God must be our end. To please Him must be our aim in everything, or we sin."

04.10. HOW TO OVERCOME SIN

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 10 HOW TO OVERCOME SIN In every period of my ministerial life I have found many professed Christians in a miserable state of bondage, either to the world, the flesh, or the Devil. But surely this is no Christian state, for the apostle has distinctly said: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace." In all my Christian life I have been pained to find so many Christians living in the legal bondage described in the seventh Chapter of Romans--a life of sinning, and resolving to reform and falling again. And what is particularly saddening, and even agonizing, is that many ministers and leading Christians give perfectly false instruction upon the subject of how to overcome sin. The directions that are generally given on this subject, I am sorry to say, amount to about this: "Take your sins in detail, resolve to abstain from them, and fight against them, if need be with prayer and fasting, until you have overcome them. Set your will firmly against a relapse into sin, pray and struggle, and resolve that you will not fall, and persist in this until you form the habit of obedience and break up all your sinful habits." To be sure it is generally added: "In this conflict you must not depend upon your own strength, but pray for the help of God." In a word, much of the teaching, both of the pulpit and the press, really amounts to this: Sanctification is by works, and not by faith. I notice that Dr. Chalmers, in his lectures on Romans, expressly maintains that justification is by faith, but sanctification is by works. Some twenty-five years ago, I think, a prominent professor of theology in New England maintained in substance the same doctrine. In my early Christian life I was very nearly misled by one of President Edwards’s resolutions, which was, in substance, that when he had fallen into any sin he would trace it back to its source, and then fight and pray against it with all his might until he subdued it. This, it will be perceived, is directing the attention to the overt act of sin, its source or occasions. Resolving and fighting against it fastens the attention on the sin and its source, and diverts it entirely from Christ.

Now it is important to say right here that all such efforts are worse than useless, and not infrequently result in delusion. First, it is losing sight of what really constitutes sin; and, secondly, of the only practicable way to avoid it. In this way the outward act or habit may be overcome and avoided, while that which really constitutes the sin is left untouched. Sin is not external, but internal. It is not a muscular act, it is not the volition that causes muscular action, it is not an involuntary feeling or desire; it must be a voluntary act or state of mind.

Sin is nothing else than that voluntary, ultimate preference or state of committal to self pleasing out of which the volitions, the outward actions, purposes, intentions, and all the things that are commonly called sin proceed. Now, what is resolved against in this religion of resolutions and efforts to suppress sinful and form holy habits? "Love is the fulfilling of the law." But do we produce love by resolution? Do we eradicate selfishness by resolution? No, indeed. We may suppress this or that expression or manifestation of selfishness by resolving not to do this or that, and praying and struggling against it. We may resolve upon an outward obedience, and work ourselves up to

the letter of an obedience to God’s commandments. But to eradicate selfishness from the breast by resolution is an absurdity. So the effort to obey the commandments of God in spirit--in other words, to attempt to love as the law of God requires by force of resolution is an absurdity. There are many who maintain that sin consists in the desires. Be it so. Do we control our desires by force of resolution? We may abstain from the gratification of a particular desire by the force of resolution. We may go further, and abstain from the gratification of desire generally in the outward life. But this is not to secure the love of God, which constitutes obedience. Should we become anchorites, immure ourselves in a cell, and crucify all our desires and appetites, so far as their indulgence is concerned, we have only avoided certain forms of sin; but the root that really constitutes sin is not touched. Our resolution has not secured love, which is the only real obedience to God. All our battling with sin in the outward life, by the force of resolution, only ends in making us whited sepulchers. All our battling with desire by the force of resolution is of no avail; for in all this, however successful the effort to suppress sin may be, in the outward life or in the inward desire, it will only end in delusion, for by force of resolution we cannot love.

All such efforts to overcome sin are utterly futile, and as unscriptural as they are futile. The Bible expressly teaches us that sin is overcome by faith in Christ. "He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "He is the way, the truth, and the life." Christians are said to "purify their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). And in Acts 26:18 it is affirmed that the saints are sanctified by faith in Christ. In Rom 9:31-32 it is affirmed that the Jews attained not to righteousness "because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." The doctrine of the Bible is that Christ saves His people from sin through faith; that Christ’s Spirit is received by faith to dwell in the heart. It is faith that works by love. Love is wrought and sustained by faith. By faith Christians "overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil." It is by faith that they "quench the fiery darts of the wicked." It is by faith that they "put on the Lord Jesus Christ and put off the old man, with his deeds." It is by faith that we fight "the good fight," and not by resolution. It is by faith that we "stand," by resolution we fall. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. It is by faith that the flesh is kept under and carnal desires subdued. The fact is that it is simply by faith that we receive the Spirit of Christ to work in us to will and to do, according to His good pleasure. He sheds abroad His own love in our hearts, and thereby enkindles ours. Every victory over sin is by faith in Christ; and whenever the mind is diverted from Christ, by resolving and fighting against sin, whether we are aware of it or not, we are acting in our own strength, rejecting the help of Christ, and are under a specious delusion. Nothing but the life and energy of the Spirit of Christ within us can save us from sin, and trust is the uniform and universal condition of the working of this saving energy within us. How long shall this fact be at least practically overlooked by the teachers of religion? How deeply rooted in the heart of man is self-righteousness and self-dependence? So deeply that one of the hardest lessons for the human heart to learn is to renounce self-dependence and trust wholly in Christ. When we open the door by implicit trust He enters in and takes up His abode with us and in us. By shedding abroad His love He quickens our whole souls into sympathy with Himself, and in this way, and in this way alone, He purifies our hearts through faith. He sustains our will in the attitude of devotion. He quickens and regulates our affections, desires, appetites and passions, and becomes our sanctification.

Very much of the teaching that we hear in prayer and conference meetings, from the pulpit and the press, is so misleading as to render the hearing or reading of such instruction almost too painful to be endured. Such instruction is calculated to beget delusion, discouragement, and a practical rejection of Christ as He is presented in the Gospel.

Alas! for the blindness that "leads to bewilder" the soul that is longing after deliverance from the power of sin. I have sometimes listened to legal teaching upon this subject until I felt as if I should scream. It is astonishing sometimes to hear Christian men object to the teaching which I have here inculcated that it leaves us in a passive state, to be saved without our own activity. What darkness is involved in this objection! The Bible teaches that by trusting in Christ we receive an inward influence that stimulates and directs our activity; that by faith we receive His purifying influence into the very center of our being; that through and by His truth revealed directly to the soul He quickens our whole inward being into the attitude of a loving obedience; and this is the way, and the only practicable way, to overcome sin. But someone may say: "Does not the Apostle exhort as follows: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure'? And is not this an exhortation to do what in this article you condemn?" By no means. In the 12th verse of the second Chapter of Philippians Paul says: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

There is no exhortation to work by force of resolution, but through and by the inworking of God. Paul had taught them, while he was present with them; but now, in his absence, he exhorts them to work out their own salvation, not by resolution but by the inward operation of God. This is precisely the doctrine of this tract. Paul had too often taught the Church that Christ in the heart is our sanctification, and that this influence is to be received by faith, to be guilty in this passage of teaching that our sanctification is to be wrought out by resolution and efforts to suppress sinful and form holy habits. This passage of Scripture happily recognizes both the divine and human agency in the work of sanctification. God works in us to will and to do; and we, accepting by faith His inworking, will and do according to His good pleasure. Faith itself is an active and not a passive state. A passive holiness is impossible and absurd. Let no one say that when we exhort people to trust wholly in Christ we teach that anyone should be or can be passive in receiving and cooperating with the divine influence within. This influence is moral, and not physical. It is persuasion, and not force. It influences the free will, and consequently does this by truth, and not by force. Oh! that it could be understood that the whole of spiritual life that is in any man is received direct from the Spirit of Christ by faith, as the branch receives its life from the vine. Away with this religion of resolutions! It is a snare of death. Away with this effort to make the life holy while the heart has not in it the love of God. Oh! that men would learn to look directly at Christ through the Gospel and so close in with Him by an act of loving trust as to involve a universal sympathy with His state of mind. This, and this alone, is sanctification.

04.11. THE DECAY OF CONSCIENCE

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 11 THE DECAY OF CONSCIENCE

I believe it is a fact generally admitted that there is much less conscience manifested by men and women in nearly all the walks of life than there was forty years ago. There is justly much complaint of this, and there seems to be but little prospect of reformation. The rings and frauds and villainies in high and low places, among all ranks of men, are most alarming, and one is almost compelled to ask: "Can nobody be safely trusted?" Now, what is the cause of this degeneracy? Doubtless there are many causes that contribute more or less directly to it, but I am persuaded that the fault is more in the ministry and public press than in any and all things else. It has been fashionable now for many years to ridicule and decry Puritanism.

Ministers have ceased, in a great measure, to probe the consciences of men with the spiritual law of God. So far as my knowledge extends, there has been a great letting down and ignoring the searching claims of God’s law, as revealed in His Word. This law is the only standard of true morality. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The law is the quickener of the human conscience. Just in proportion as the spirituality of the law of God is kept out of view will there be manifest a decay of conscience. This must be the inevitable result. Let ministers ridicule Puritanism, attempt to preach the Gospel without thoroughly probing the conscience with the divine law, and this must result in, at least, a partial paralysis of the moral sense. The error that lies at the foundation of this decay of individual and public conscience originates, no doubt, in the pulpit. The proper guardians of the public conscience have, I fear, very much neglected to expound and insist upon obedience to the moral law. It is plain that some of our most popular preachers are phrenologists. Phrenology has no organ of free will. Hence, it has no moral agency, no moral law and moral obligation in any proper sense of these terms. A consistent phrenologist can have no proper ideas of moral obligation, of moral guilt, blameworthiness, and retribution. Some years since a brother of one of our most popular preachers heard me preach on the text "Be ye reconciled to God." I went on to show, among other things, that being reconciled to God implied being reconciled to the execution of His law.

He called on me the next morning, and among other things said that neither himself nor two of his brothers, whom he named, all preachers, had naturally any conscience. "We have," said he, "no such ideas in our minds of sin, guilt, justice and retribution as you and Father have." "We cannot preach as you do on those subjects." He continued: "I am striving to cultivate a conscience, and I think I begin to understand what it is. But, naturally, neither I nor the two brothers I have named have any conscience." Now, these three ministers have repeatedly appeared in their writings before the public. I have read much that they have written, and not infrequently the sermons of one of them, and have been struck with the manifest want of conscience in his sermons and writings. He is a phrenologist, and, hence, he has in his theological views no free will, no moral agency, and nothing that is really a logical result of free will and moral agency. He can ridicule Puritanism and

the great doctrines of the Orthodox faith; and, indeed, his whole teaching, so far as it has fallen under my eye, most lamentably shows the want of moral discrimination.

I should judge from his writings that the true ideas of moral depravity, guilt, and ill-desert, in the true acceptation of those terms, have no place in his mind. Indeed, as a consistent phrenologist, such ideas have no right in his mind. They are necessarily excluded by his philosophy. I do not know how extensively phrenology has poisoned the minds of ministers of different denominations, but I have observed with pain that many ministers who write for the public press fail to reach the consciences of men. They fail to go to the bottom of the matter and insist upon obedience to the moral law as alone acceptable to God. They seem to me to "make void the law through faith." They seem to hold up a different standard from that which is inculcated in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, which was Christ's exposition of the moral law. Christ expressly taught in that sermon that there was no salvation without conformity to the rule of life laid down in that sermon. True faith in Christ will always and inevitably beget a holy life. But I fear it has become fashionable to preach what amounts to an antinomian gospel. The rule of life promulgated in the Gospel is precisely that of the moral law. These four things are expressly affirmed of true faith--of the faith of the Gospel:

1st. "It establishes the law."

2nd. "It works by love."

3rd. "It purifies the heart."

4th. "It overcomes the world."

These are but different forms of affirming that true faith does, as a matter of fact, produce a holy life. If it did not, it would "make void the law." The true Gospel is not preached where obedience to the moral law as the only rule of life is not insisted upon. Wherever there is a failure to do this in the instructions of any pulpit, it will inevitably be seen that the hearers of such a mutilated Gospel will have very little conscience. We need more Boanerges or sons of thunder in the pulpit. We need men that will flash forth the law of God like livid lightning and arouse the consciences of men. We need more Puritanism in the pulpit. To be sure, some of the Puritans were extremists. But still under their teaching there was a very different state of the individual and public conscience from what exists in these days. Those old, stern, grand vindicators of the government of God would have thundered and lightened till they had almost demolished their pulpits, if any such immoralities had shown themselves under their instructions as are common in these days. In a great measure the periodical press takes its tone from the pulpit. The universal literature of the present day shows conclusively that the moral sense of the people needs toning up, and some of our most fascinating preachers have become the favorites of infidels, skeptics of every grade, Universalists, and the most abandoned characters. And has the offense of the Cross ceased, or is the Cross kept out of view? Has the holy law of God, with its stringent precept and its awful penalty, become popular with unconverted men and women? Or is it ignored in the pulpit, and the preacher praised for that neglect of duty for which he should be despised? I believe the only possible way to arrest this downward tendency in private and public morals is the holding up from the pulpits in this land, with unsparing faithfulness, the whole Gospel of God, including as the only rule of life the perfect and holy law of God. The holding up of this law will reveal the moral depravity of the heart, and the holding forth of the cleansing blood of Christ will cleanse the heart from sin. My beloved brethren

in the ministry, is there not a great want in the public inculcations of the pulpit upon this subject? We are set for the defense of the blessed Gospel and for the vindication of God's holy law. I pray you let us probe the consciences of our hearers, let us thunder forth the law and Gospel of God until our voices reach the capital of this nation, through our representatives in Congress. It is now very common for the secular papers even to publish extracts of sermons. Let us give the reporters of the press such work to do as will make their ears and the ears of their readers tingle. Let our railroad rings, our stock gamblers, our officials of every grade, hear from its pulpit, if they come within the sound, such wholesome Puritanical preaching as will arouse them to better thoughts and a better life. Away with this milk-and-water preaching of a love of Christ that has no holiness or moral discrimination in it. Away with preaching a love of God that is not angry with sinners every day. Away with preaching a Christ not crucified for sin.

Christ crucified for the sins of the world is the Christ that the people need. Let us rid ourselves of the just imputation of neglecting to preach the law of God until the consciences of men are asleep. Such a collapse of conscience in this land could never have existed if the Puritan element in our preaching had not in great measure fallen out.

Some years ago I was preaching in a congregation whose pastor had died some months before. He seemed to have been almost universally popular with his Church and the community. His Church seemed to have nearly idolized him. Everybody was speaking in his praise and holding him up as an example; and yet both the Church and the community clearly demonstrated that they had had an unfaithful minister, a man who loved and sought the applause of his people. I heard so much of his inculcation and saw so much of the legitimate fruits of his teachings that I felt constrained to tell the people from the pulpit that they had had an unfaithful minister; that such fruits as were apparent on every side, both within and without the Church, could never have resulted from a faithful presentation of the Gospel. This assertion would, doubtless, have greatly shocked them had it been made under other circumstances; but, as the way had been prepared, they did not seem disposed to gainsay it.

Brethren, our preaching will bear its legitimate fruits. If immorality prevails in the land, the fault is ours in a great degree. If there is a decay of conscience, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the public press lacks moral discrimination, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the Church is degenerate and worldly, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the world loses its interest in religion, the pulpit is responsible for it. If Satan rules in our halls of legislation, the pulpit is responsible for it. If our politics become so corrupt that the very foundations of our government are ready to fall away, the pulpit is responsible for it. Let us not ignore this fact, my dear brethren; but let us lay it to heart, and be thoroughly awake to our responsibility in respect to the morals of this nation.

04.12. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FAITH

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 12 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FAITH

I have heretofore endeavored to show that sanctification is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Christ, through faith, with and not without the concurrence of our own activity. I now wish to call attention to the nature or psychology of faith as a mental act or state. My theological teacher held that faith was an intellectual act or state, a conviction or firm persuasion that the doctrines of the Bible are true. So far as I can recollect, this was the view of faith which I heard everywhere advanced. When it was objected to this that the intellectual convictions and states are involuntary, and could not be produced by any effort of the will, and, consequently, we cannot be under obligations to exercise faith; and, furthermore, that faith, being an intellectual act or state, could not be virtue, it was replied that we control the attention of the mind by an effort of the will, and that our responsibility lay in searching for that degree of evidence that would convince the intellect; that unbelief was a sin, because it was the inevitable result of a failure to search for and accept the evidence of the truths of revelation; that faith was virtue, because it involved the consent and effort of the will to search out the truth.

I have met with this erroneous notion of the nature of Christian faith almost everywhere since I was first licensed to preach. Especially in my early ministry I found that great stress was laid on believing "the articles of faith," and it was held that faith consisted in believing with an unwavering conviction the doctrines about Christ. Hence, an acceptance of the doctrines, the doctrines, the DOCTRINES of the Gospel was very much insisted upon as constituting faith. These doctrines I had been brought to accept intellectually and firmly before I was converted. And, when told to believe, I replied that I did believe, and no argument or assertion could convince me that I did not believe the Gospel. And up to the very moment of my conversion I was not and could not be convinced of my error. At the moment of my conversion, or when I first exercised faith, I saw my ruinous error. I found that faith consisted not in an intellectual conviction that the things affirmed in the Bible about Christ are true, but in the heart’s trust in the person of Christ. I learned that God’s testimony concerning Christ was designed to lead me to trust Christ, to confide in His person as my Savior; that to stop short in merely believing about Christ was a fatal mistake and inevitably left me in my sins. It was as if I were sick almost unto death, and someone should recommend to me a physician who was surely able and willing to save my life, and I should listen to the testimony concerning him until fully convinced that he was both able and willing to save my life, and then should be told to believe in him, and my life was secure. Now, if I understood this to mean nothing more than to credit the testimony with the firmest conviction, I should reply: "I do believe in him with an undoubting faith. I believe every word you have told me regarding him." If I stopped here I should, of course, lose my life. In addition to this firm intellectual conviction of his willingness and ability, it were essential to apply to him, to come to him, to trust his person, to accept his treatment. When I had intellectually accepted the testimony concerning him with an unwavering belief, the

next and the indispensable thing would be a voluntary act of trust or confidence in his person, a committal of my life to him, and his sovereign treatment in the cure of my disease.

Now this illustrates the true nature or psychology of faith as it actually exists in consciousness. It does not consist in any degree of intellectual knowledge, or acceptance of the doctrines of the Bible. The firmest possible persuasion that every word said in the Bible respecting God and Christ is true, is not faith. These truths and doctrines reveal God in Christ only so far as they point to God in Christ, and teach the soul how to find Him by an act of trust in His person. When we firmly trust in His person, and commit our souls to Him by an unwavering act of confidence in Him for all that He is affirmed to be to us in the Bible, this is faith. We trust Him upon the testimony of God. We trust Him for what the doctrines and facts of the Bible declare Him to be to us. This act of trust unites our spirit to Him in a union so close that we directly receive from Him a current of eternal life. Faith, in consciousness, seems to complete the divine galvanic circle, and the life of God is instantly imparted to our souls. God's life, and light, and love, and peace, and joy seem to flow to us as naturally and spontaneously as the galvanic current from the battery. We then for the first time understand what Christ meant by our being united to Him by faith, as the branch is united to the vine. Christ is then and thus revealed to us as God. We are conscious of direct communion with Him, and know Him as we know ourselves, by His direct activity within us. We then know directly, in consciousness, that He is our life, and that we receive from Him, moment by moment, as it were, an impartation of eternal life. With some the mind is comparatively dark, and the faith, therefore, comparatively weak in its first exercise. They may hold a great breadth of opinion, and yet intellectually believe but little with a realizing conviction. Hence, their trust in Him will be as narrow as their realizing convictions. When faith is weak, the current of the divine life will flow so mildly that we are scarcely conscious of it. But when faith is strong and all-embracing, it lets a current of the divine life of love into our souls so strong that it seems to permeate both soul and body. We then know in consciousness what it is to have Christ's Spirit within us as a power to save us from sin and stay up our feet in the path of loving obedience. From personal conversation with hundreds and I may say thousands of Christian people, I have been struck with the application of Christ's words, as recorded in the fifth Chapter of John, to their experience. Christ said to the Jews: "Ye do search the Scriptures [for so it should be rendered]; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me; and ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." They stopped short in the Scriptures. They satisfied themselves with ascertaining what the Scriptures said about Christ, but did not avail themselves of the light thus received to come to Him by an act of loving trust in His person. I fear it is true in these days, as it has been in the days that are past, that multitudes stop short in the facts and doctrines of the Gospel, and do not by any act of trust in His person come to Him, concerning whom all this testimony is given. Thus the Bible is misunderstood and abused.

Many, understanding the "Confession of Faith" as summarizing the doctrines of the Bible, very much neglect the Bible and rest in a belief of the articles of faith. Others, more cautious and more in earnest, search the Scriptures to see what they say about Christ, but stop short and rest in the formation of correct theological opinions; while others, and they are the only saved class, love the Scriptures intensely because they testify of Jesus. They search and devour the Scriptures because they tell them who Jesus is and what they may trust Him for. They do not stop short and rest in this testimony; but by an act of loving trust go directly to Him, to His person, thus joining

their souls to Him in a union that receives from Him, by a direct divine communication, the things for which they are led to trust Him. This is certainly Christian experience. This is receiving from Christ the eternal life which God has given us in Him. This is saving faith.

There are many degrees in the strength of faith, from that of which we are hardly conscious to that which lets such a flood of eternal life into the soul as to quite overcome the strength of the body. In the strongest exercise of faith the nerves of the body seem to give way for the time being under the overwhelming exercise of the mind. This great strength of mental exercise is perhaps not very common. We can endure but little of God's light and love in our souls and yet remain in the body. I have sometimes felt that a little clearer vision would draw my soul entirely away from the body, and I have met with many Christian people to whom these strong gales of spiritual influence were familiar. But my object in writing thus is to illustrate the nature or psychology and results of saving faith. The contemplation of the attitude and experience of numbers of professed Christians in regard to Christ is truly lamentable and wonderful, considering that the Bible is in their hands. Many of them appear to have stopped short in theological opinions more or less firmly held. This they understand to be faith. Others are more in earnest, and stop not short of a more or less realizing conviction of the truths of the Bible concerning Christ. Others have strong impressions of the obligations of the law, which move them to set about an earnest life of works which leads them into bondage. They pray from a sense of duty; they are dutiful, but not loving, not confiding. They have no peace and no rest, except in cases where they persuade themselves that they have done their duty. They are in a restless agonizing state. Reason they hear, her counsels weigh, And all her words approve And yet they find it hard to obey, And harder still to love.

They read and perhaps search the Scriptures to learn their duty and to learn about Christ. They intellectually believe all that they understand the Scriptures to say about Him; but when Christ is thus commended to their confidence, they do not by an act of personal loving trust in and committal to Him so join their souls to Him as to receive from Him the influx of His life, and light and love. They do not by a simple act of personal loving trust in His person receive the current of His divine life and power into their own souls. They do not thus take hold of His strength and interlock their being with His. In other words, they do not truly believe. Hence, they are not saved. Oh! what a mistake is this. I fear it is very common. Nay, it seems to be certain that it is appallingly common, else how can the state of the Church be accounted for? Is that which we see in the great mass of professors of religion all that Christ does for and in His people, when they truly believe? No, no! There is a great error here. The psychology of faith is mistaken, and an intellectual conviction of the truth of the Gospel is supposed to be faith. And some whose opinions seem to be right in regard to the nature of faith rest in their philosophy and fall short of exercising faith.

Let no one suppose that I under-estimate the value of the facts and doctrines of the Gospel. I regard a knowledge and belief of them as of fundamental importance. I have no sympathy with those who undervalue them and treat doctrinal discussion and preaching as of minor importance, nor can I assent to the teaching of those who would have us preach Christ and not the doctrines respecting Him. It is the facts and doctrines of the Bible that teach us who Christ is, why He is to be trusted, and for what. How can we preach Christ without preaching about Him? And how can we trust Him without being informed why and for what we are to trust Him? The error to which I call attention does not consist in laying too much stress in teaching and believing the facts and doctrines of the Gospel; but it consists in stopping short of trusting the personal Christ for what

those facts and doctrines teach us to trust Him, and satisfying ourselves with believing the testimony concerning Him, thus resting in the belief of what God has said about Him, instead of committing our souls to Him by an act of loving trust. The testimony of God respecting Him is designed to secure our confidence in Him. If it fails to secure the uniting of our souls to Him by an act and state of implicit trust in Him--such an act of trust as unites us to Him as the branch is united to the vine--we have heard the Gospel in vain. We are not saved. We have failed to receive from Him that impartation of eternal life which can be conveyed to us through no other channel than that of implicit trust.

04.13. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Power From On High by Charles G. Finney

CHAPTER 13 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

During my Christian life I have been asked a great many times, in substance, by thoughtful and anxious souls: "What is the mental act or acts and states that God requires of me?" I have found it profitable, and even indispensable, with the commands of God before me, to question consciousness for a satisfactory answer to this question. I have satisfied myself, and, by the help of God, I trust I have aided many others to their satisfaction. Be it understood, then, that by the psychology of righteousness I mean to designate the mental act and state that constitutes righteousness. I will endeavor to develop this in the following order by showing-- I. What righteousness is not.

II. What it is.

III. How we know what righteousness is.

IV. How a sinner may attain to righteousness.

I. What Righteousness Is Not.

1. Righteousness does not consist in the outward life or in any physical or bodily act whatever. All of these acts belong to the category of cause and effect. They are necessitated by an act of the will and have in themselves no moral character whatever.

2. Righteousness does not consist in volition. Volition is an act of will, but necessitated by choice. It is an executive act, and is the product of a purpose or choice. It is designed as a means to an end. It is put forth to control either the attention of the intellect, the states of the sensibility, or the movements of the outward life by force. Volition is both an effect and a cause. It is the effect of a choice, purpose, intention. It is the cause of the outward life and of many of the changes both of the intellect and sensibility. Volition is a doing. Whatever we do we accomplish by the exercise of volition. Volition is not, in the highest sense, a free act, because it is an effect. It is itself caused. Hence, it has no moral character in itself, and moral quality can be predicated of it only as it partakes of the character of its primary cause.

3. Righteousness does not consist in proximate or subordinate choice. I choose an ultimate, supreme end, for its own sake. This choice is not executive. It is not put forth to secure the end, but is simply the choice of an object for its own sake. This is ultimate choice. I purpose, or choose, if possible, to secure this end. This is proximate or subordinate choice. Strictly speaking, this choice belongs also to the category of cause and effect. It results by necessity from the ultimate choice. In the strictest sense, it is not a free act, since it is itself caused. Hence, it has no moral character in itself, but, like volition, derives whatever moral quality it has from its primary cause, or the ultimate choice.

4. Righteousness does not consist in any of the states or activities of the sensibility. By the sensibility I mean that department of the mind that feels, desires, suffers, enjoys. All the states of the sensibility are involuntary, and belong to the category of cause and effect. The will cannot control them directly, nor always indirectly. This we know by consciousness. Since they are caused, and not free, they can have no moral character in themselves, and, like thoughts, volitions, subordinate choices, have no moral quality except that which is derived from their primary cause.

II. What Righteousness Is.

Righteousness is moral rightness, moral rectitude, moral uprightness, conformity to moral law. But what mental act or state is that which the moral law or law of God requires? Law is a rule of action. Moral law requires action--mental action, responsible action, therefore free action. But what particular form of action does moral law require?

Free action is a certain form of action of the will, and this is the only strictly free action. Christ has taught us by His own teaching and through His inspired Prophets and Apostles that the moral law requires love, and that this is the sum of its requirements. But what is this love? It cannot be the involuntary love of the sensibility, either in the form of emotion or affection; for these states of the mind, belonging as they do to the category of cause and effect, cannot be the form of love demanded by the law of God. The moral law is the law of God’s activity, the rule in conformity to which He always acts. We are created in God’s image. His rule of life is therefore ours. The moral law requires of Him the same kind of love that it does of us. If God had no law or rule of action, He could have no moral character. As our Creator and Lawgiver, He requires of us the same love in kind and the same perfection in degree that He Himself exercises. "God is love." He loves with all the strength of His infinite nature. He requires us to love with all the strength of our finite nature. This is being perfect as God is perfect. But what is this love of God as a mental exercise? It must be benevolence or good will. God is a moral agent. The good of universal being is infinitely valuable in itself. God must infinitely well appreciate this. He must see and feel the moral propriety of choosing this for its own sake. He has chosen it from eternity. By His executive volitions He is endeavoring to realize it. The law which He has promulgated to govern our activity requires us to sympathize with His choice, His benevolence, to choose the same end that He does, for the same reason--that is, for its own sake. God’s infinite choice of the good of universal being is righteousness in Him, because it is the choice of the intrinsically and infinitely valuable for its own sake. It is a choice in conformity with His nature and the relations He has constituted. It must be a choice in conformity with His infinitely clear conscience or moral sense.

Righteousness in God, then, is conformity to the laws of universal love or good will. It must be an ultimate, supreme, immanent, efficient preference or choice of the highest good of universal being, including His own. It must be ultimate, in that this good of being is chosen for its own sake. It must be supreme, because it is preferred to everything else. It must be immanent, because it is innate and at the very foundation of all His moral activity. It must be efficient, because, from its very nature, it must energize to secure that which is thus preferred or chosen with the whole strength of his infinite nature. This is right choice, right moral action. The moral quality, then, of unselfish benevolence is righteousness or moral rightness. All subordinate choices, volitions and actions, and states of the sensibility which proceed from this immanent, ultimate, supreme preference or

choice, have moral character in the sense and only for this reason that they proceed from or are the natural product of unselfish benevolence. This ultimate, immanent, supreme preference is the holy heart of a moral agent. Out of it proceeds, directly or indirectly, the whole moral or spiritual life of the individual.

III. How We Know What Righteousness Is.

I answer: By consciousness.

(a) By consciousness we know that our whole life proceeds from ultimate choice or preference.

(b) By consciousness we know that conscience demands perfect, universal love or unselfish benevolence; and, by consequence, it demands all those acts and states of mind and outward courses of life that by a law of our nature proceed from unselfish benevolence.

(c) By consciousness we know that conscience is satisfied with this, demands nothing more, and accepts nothing less.

(d) By consciousness we know that conscience pronounces this to be right, or righteousness.

(e) By consciousness we know that this is obedience to the law of God as revealed in our nature, and that when we render this obedience we are so adjusted in the will of God that we have perfect peace. We are in sympathy with God. We are at peace with God and with ourselves. Short of this we cannot be so. This I understand to be the teaching both of our nature and the Bible. My limits will not allow me to quote Scripture to sustain this view.

IV. How a Sinner May Attain to Righteousness. A sinner is a selfish moral agent. Being selfish, he will, of course, make no other than selfish efforts to become righteous. Selfishness is a state of voluntary committal to the indulgence of the sensibility. While the will is in this state of committal to self-indulgence, the soul will not and cannot put forth any righteous act. The first righteous act possible to an unregenerate sinner is to change his heart, or the supreme ultimate preference of his soul. Without this he may outwardly conform to the letter of God’s law; but this is not righteousness. Without this he may have many exercises and states of mind which he may suppose to be Christian experience; but these are not righteousness. Without a change of heart he may live a perfectly outwardly moral and religious life. All this he may do for selfish reasons; but this is not righteousness. I say again his first righteous act must be to change his heart. To say that he will change this for any selfish reason is simply a contradiction, for the change of heart involves the renunciation of selfishness. How, then, can a sinner change his heart or attain to righteousness? I answer: Only by taking such a view of the character and claims of God as to induce him to renounce his self-seeking spirit and come into sympathy with God. To say nothing here of possibility, the Bible reveals the fact and human consciousness attests the truth that a sinner will never attain to such a view of the claims of God as will induce him to renounce selfishness and sympathize with God without the illuminations of the Holy Spirit. A sinner attains, then, to righteousness only through the teachings and inspirations of the Holy Spirit. But what is involved in this change from sin to righteousness?

(1) It must involve confidence in God, or faith. Without confidence a soul could not be persuaded to change his heart, to renounce self, and sympathize with God.

(2) It must involve repentance. By repentance I mean that change of mind which consists in a renunciation of self-seeking and a coming into sympathy with God.

(3) It involves a radical change of moral attitude in respect to God and our neighbor.

All these are involved in a change of heart. They occur simultaneously, and the presence of one implies the existence and presence of the others. It is by the truths of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit induces this change in sinful man. This revelation of divine love, when powerfully sent home by the Holy Spirit, is an effectual calling. From the above it will be seen that, while a sinner may live a perfectly outwardly moral and religious life, a truly regenerated soul cannot live a sinful life. The new heart does not, cannot sin. This John in his first Epistle expressly affirms. A benevolent, supreme, ultimate choice cannot produce selfish, subordinate choices or volitions. It is possible for a Christian to backslide. If it were not, perseverance would be no virtue. If the change were a physical one, or a change of the very nature of the sinner, backsliding would be impossible and perseverance no virtue. It is objected to this view that backsliding must consist in going back to a selfish, ultimate preference, and, therefore, involve an adverse change of heart. What if it does? Must this not be, indeed, true? Did not Adam and Eve change their hearts from holy to sinful ones? But may a man change his heart back and forth? I answer: Yes; or a sinner could not be required to make to himself a new heart, nor could a Christian sin after regeneration. The idea that the same person can have at the same time both a holy and a sinful heart is absurd in true philosophy, contrary to the Bible, and of most pernicious tendency. When a soul is backslidden, Christ calls upon him to repent and do his first work over again.

Righteousness is sustained in the human soul by the indwelling of Christ through faith and in no other way. It cannot be sustained by purposes or resolutions self-originated and not inwrought by the Spirit of Christ. Through faith Christ first gains ascendancy in the human heart, and through faith He maintains this ascendancy and reigns as king in the soul.

There can be no righteousness in man back of his heart, for nothing back of this can be voluntary; therefore, there can be no righteousness in the nature of man in the sense that implies praise worthiness or virtue.

All outward conformity to the law and commandments of God that does not proceed from Christ, working in the soul by His Holy Spirit, is self-righteousness. All true righteousness, then, is the righteousness of faith or a righteousness secured by Christ through faith in Him.

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Individuals may have the Spirit of God - It is their duty to be filled with the Spirit - Why the Spirit is not obtained - The guilt of those who have not the Spirit of God - The consequences of having the Spirit. - The consequences that will follow not having the Spirit.

LECTURE VIII. - MEETINGS FOR PRAYER.

The design of prayer meetings - The manner of conducting them - Several things that will defeat the design of holding them.

LECTURE IX. - MEANS TO BE USED WITH SINNERS.

On what particular points Christians are to testify for God - The manner in which they are to testify.

LECTURE X. - TO WIN SOULS REQUIRES WISDOM

Are you still there? We still have never received a check from you. Is this a mistake or is it sin? How Christians should deal with careless sinners - How they should deal with awakened sinners, and with convicted sinners.

LECTURE XI. - A WISE MINISTER WILL BE SUCCESSFUL

A right discharge of the duties of a minister requires great wisdom - The amount of success in the discharge of his duties (other things being equal) decides the amount of wisdom employed by him.

LECTURE XII. - HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

Several passages of Scripture ascribe conversion to man - This is consistent with other passages which ascribe conversion to God - Several important particulars in regard to preaching the Gospel.

LECTURE XIII. - HOW CHURCHES CAN HELP MINISTERS.

The importance of the cooperation of the Church in producing and carrying on a revival - Several things which Churches must do, if they would promote a revival and aid their ministers.

LECTURE XIV. - MEASURES TO PROMOTE REVIVALS.

God has established no particular system of measures to be employed - Our present forms of public worship have been arrived at by a succession of new measures.

LECTURE XV. - HINDRANCES TO REVIVALS.

A revival of religion is a great work - Several things which may put a stop to it - What must be done for the continuance of a revival.

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We are to be agreed in prayer - We are likewise to be agreed in everything that is essential to the blessing we seek.

LECTURE XVII. - FALSE COMFORTS FOR SINNERS.

The necessity and design of instructing anxious sinners - Anxious sinners are always seeking comfort - The false comforts that are often administered.

LECTURE XVIII. - DIRECTIONS TO SINNERS.

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Several things to be considered in regard to the hopes of young converts - Several things respecting their making a profession of religion - The importance of having correct instruction given to young converts - What should not be taught - What things are necessary to be taught.

LECTURE XX. - INSTRUCTIONS TO CONVERTS (continued).

Other points on which young converts ought to be instructed - How young converts should be treated by the Church - Some of the evils resulting from defective instruction in the first stages of Christian experience.

LECTURE XXI. - THE BACKSLIDER IN HEART.

What backsliding in heart is not - What it is - What are its evidences - What are its consequences - How to recover from such a state.

LECTURE XXII. - GROWTH IN GRACE.

What grace is - What the injunction to "grow in grace" does not mean - What it does mean - Conditions of growth in grace - What is not proof of growth - What is proof - How to grow in grace.

Chapter 89

05.01. WHAT A REVIVAL OF RELIGION IS

LECTURE I

WHAT A REVIVAL OF RELIGION IS

O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; ill wrath remember mercy. - Hab 3:2.

It is supposed that the prophet Habakkuk was contemporary with Jeremiah, and that this prophecy was uttered in anticipation of the Babylonish captivity. Looking at the judgments which were speedily to come upon his nation, the soul of the prophet was wrought up to an agony, and he cried out in his distress: "O Lord, revive Thy work." As if he had said: "O Lord, grant that Thy judgments may not make Israel desolate. In the midst of these awful years let the judgments of God be made the means of reviving religion among us. In wrath remember mercy."

Religion is the work of man. It is something for man to do. It consists in obeying God. It is man's duty. It is true God induces him to do it. He influences him by His Spirit, because of his great wickedness and reluctance to obey. If it were not necessary for God to influence men, if men were disposed to obey God, there would be no occasion to pray: "O Lord, revive Thy work." The ground of necessity for such a prayer is that men are wholly indisposed to obey; and unless God interpose the influence of His Spirit, not a man on earth will ever obey the commands of God.

A "Revival of Religion" presupposes a declension. Almost all the religion in the world has been produced by revivals. God has found it necessary to take advantage of the excitability there is in mankind, to produce powerful excitements among them, before He can lead them to obey. Men are so sluggish, there are so many things to lead their minds off from religion and to oppose the influence of the Gospel, that it is necessary to raise an excitement among them, till the tide rises so high as to sweep away the opposing obstacles. They must be so aroused that they will break over these counteracting influences, before they will obey God.

Look back at the history of the Jews, and you will see that God used to maintain religion among them by special occasions, when there would be a great excitement, and people would turn to the Lord. And after they had been thus revived, it would be but a short time before there would be so many counteracting influences brought to bear upon them, that religion would decline, and keep on declining, till God could have time, so to speak, to convict them of sin by His Spirit, and rebuke them by His providence, and thus so gain the attention of the masses to the great subject of salvation, as to produce a widespread awakening. Then the counteracting causes would again operate, religion would decline, and the nation would be swept away in the vortex of luxury, idolatry, and pride. There is so little principle in the Church, so little firmness and stability of purpose, that unless it is greatly excited, it will go back from the path of duty, and do nothing to promote the glory of God. The state of the world is still such, and probably will be till the millennium is fully come, that religion must be mainly promoted by means of revivals. How long and how often has the experiment been tried, to bring the Church to act steadily for God, without these periodical

excitements! Many good men have supposed, and still suppose, that the best way to promote religion is to go along uniformly, and gather in the ungodly gradually, and without excitement. But however sound such reasoning may appear in the abstract, facts demonstrate its futility. If the Church were far enough advanced in knowledge, and had stability of principle enough to keep awake, such a course would do. But the Church is so little enlightened, and there are so many counteracting causes, that the Church will not go steadily to work without a special excitement. As the millennium advances, it is probable that these periodical excitements will be unknown. Then the Church will be enlightened, and the counteracting causes removed, and the entire Church will be in a state of habitual and steady obedience to God. Children will be trained up in the way they should go, and there will be no such torrents of worldliness, and fashion, and covetousness, to bear away the piety of the Church, as soon as the excitement of a revival is withdrawn. It is very desirable that the Church should go on steadily in a course of obedience without these excitements. Our nervous system is so strung that any powerful excitement, if long continued, injures our health, and unfits us for duty. If religion is ever to have a pervading influence in the world, this spasmodic religion must be done away with. Indeed, it will then be uncalled for. Christians will not sleep the greater part of the time, and once in a while wake up, and rub their eyes, and bluster about, and vociferate a little while, and then go to sleep again. Then there will be no need that ministers should wear themselves out and kill themselves, by their efforts to roll back the flood of worldly influence that sets in upon the Church. But as yet the state of the Christian world is such, that to expect to promote religion without excitements is unphilosophical and absurd. The great political and other worldly excitements that agitate Christendom, are all unfriendly to religion, and divert the mind from the interests of the soul. Now, these excitements can only be counteracted by religious excitements. And until there is sufficient religious principle in the world to put down irreligious excitements, it is in vain to try to promote religion, except by counteracting excitements. This is true in philosophy, and it is a historical fact.

It is altogether improbable that religion will ever make progress among heathen nations except through the influence of revivals. The attempt is now in making to do it by education, and other cautious and gradual improvements. But so long as the laws of mind remain what they are, it cannot be done in this way. There must be excitement sufficient to wake up the dormant moral powers, and roll back the tide of degradation and sin. And precisely so far as our land approximates to heathenism, it is impossible for God or man to promote religion in such a state of things but by powerful excitements. This is evident from the fact that this has always been the way in which God has done it. God does not create these excitements, and choose this method to promote religion, for nothing, or without reason. Men being so reluctant to obey God, will not act until they are excited. For instance, how many there are who know that they ought to be religious, but they are afraid that if they become pious they will be laughed at by their companions. Many are wedded to idols; others are procrastinating repentance until they are settled in life, or until they have secured some favorite worldly interest. Such persons never will give up their false shame, or relinquish their ambitious schemes, till they are so excited by a sense of quiet and danger they cannot hold back any longer.

These remarks are designated only as an introduction. I shall now proceed with the main design, to show:

I. What a revival of religion is not.

II. What it is. And

III. The agencies employed in promoting it.

I. A REVIVAL IS NOT A MIRACLE.

1. A miracle has been generally defined to be a Divine interference, setting aside, or suspending, the laws of nature. A revival is not a miracle in this sense. All the laws of matter and mind remain in force. They are neither suspended nor set aside in a revival.

2. A revival is not a miracle according to another definition of the term "miracle" - something above the powers of nature. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature. It is just that, and nothing else. When mankind become religious, they are not enabled to put forth exertions which they were unable before to put forth. They only exert powers which they had before, in a different way, and use them for the glory of God.

3. A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means - as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means. There may be a miracle among its antecedent causes, or there may not. The apostles employed miracles simply as a means by which they arrested attention to their message, and established its Divine authority. But the miracle was not the revival. The miracle was one thing; the revival that followed it was quite another thing. The revivals in the apostles' days were connected with miracles, but they were not miracles.

I said that a revival is the result of the right use of the appropriate means. The means which God has enjoined for the production of a revival, doubtless have a natural tendency to produce a revival. Otherwise God would not have enjoined them. But means will not produce a revival, we all know, without the blessing of God. No more will grain, when it is sown, produce a crop without the blessing of God. It is impossible for us to say that there is not as direct an influence or agency from God, to produce a crop of grain, as there is to produce a revival. What are the laws of nature according to which it is supposed that grain yields a crop? They are nothing but the constituted manner of the operations of God. In the Bible, the Word of God is compared to grain, and preaching is compared to sowing the seed, and the results to the springing up and growth of the crop. A revival is as naturally a result of the use of the appropriate means as a crop is of the use of its appropriate means.

I wish this idea to be impressed on your minds, for there has long been an idea prevalent that promoting religion has something very peculiar in it, not to be judged of by the ordinary rules of cause and effect; in short, that there is no connection of the means with the result, and no tendency in the means to produce the effect. No doctrine is more dangerous than this to the prosperity of the Church, and nothing more absurd.

Suppose a man were to go and preach this doctrine among farmers, regarding their sowing of grain. Let him tell them that God is a Sovereign, and will give them a crop only when it pleases Him, and that for them to plow, and plant, and labor, as if they expected to raise a crop, is very wrong, that it amounts to taking the work out of the hands of God, that it is an interference with His Sovereignty, and that there is no connection between the means and the result on which they can

depend. Suppose the farmers should believe such a doctrine? Why, they would starve the world to death.

Just such results would follow on the Church being persuaded that promoting religion is somehow so mysteriously a subject of Divine Sovereignty, that there is no natural connection between the means and the end. In fact, what are the results? Why, generation after generation has gone to hell, while the Church has been dreaming and waiting for God to save them without the use of the means. It has been the devil's most successful means of destroying souls! The connection is as clear in religion as it is when the farmer sows his grain.

There is one fact under the government of God worthy of universal notice and of everlasting remembrance; which is, that the most useful and important things are most easily and certainly obtained by the use of the appropriate means. This is evidently a principle in the Divine administration. Hence, all the necessaries of life are obtained with great certainty by the use of the simplest means. The luxuries are more difficult to obtain; the means to procure them are more intricate, and less certain in their results; while things absolutely hurtful and poisonous, such as alcohol and the like, are often obtained only by torturing nature and making use of a kind of infernal sorcery to procure death-dealing abominations.

This principle holds true in moral government, and as spiritual blessings are of surpassing importance, we should expect their attainment to be connected with great certainly with the use of the appropriate means; and such we find to be the fact. And I fully believe that, could facts be known, it would be found that when the appointed means have been rightly used, spiritual blessings have been obtained with greater uniformity than temporal ones.

II. WHAT A REVIVAL IS.

It presupposes that the Church is sunk down in a backslidden state, and a revival consists in the return of the Church from her backslidings, and in the conversion of sinners.

1. A revival always includes conviction of sin on the part of the Church. Backslidden professors cannot wake up and begin right away in the service of God, without deep searchings of heart. The fountains of sin need to be broken up. In a true revival, Christians are always brought under such conviction; they see their sins in such a light that often they find it impossible to maintain a hope of their acceptance with God. It does not always go to that extent, but there are always, in a genuine revival, deep convictions of sin, and often cases of abandoning all hope.

2. Backslidden Christians will be brought to repentance. A revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God. Just as in the case of a converted sinner, the first step is a deep repentance, a breaking down of heart, a getting down into the dust before God, with deep humility, and a forsaking of sin.

3. Christians will have their faith renewed. While they are in their backslidden state they are blind to the state of sinners. Their hearts are hard as marble. The truths of the Bible appear like a dream. They admit it to be all true; their conscience and their judgment assent to it; but their faith does not see it standing out in bold relief, in all the burning realities of eternity. But when they enter into a revival, they no longer see "men as trees, walking," but they see things in that strong light which will renew the love of God in their hearts. This will lead them to labor zealously to bring

others to Him. They will feel grieved that others do not love God, when they love Him so much. And they will set themselves feelingly to persuade their neighbors to give Him their hearts. So their love to men will be renewed. They will be filled with a tender and burning love for souls. They will have a longing desire for the salvation of the whole world. They will be in an agony for individuals whom they want to have saved - their friends, relations, enemies. They will not only be urging them to give their hearts to God, but they will carry them to God in the arms of faith, and with strong crying and tears beseech God to have mercy on them, and save their souls from endless burnings.

4. A revival breaks the power of the world and of sin over Christians. It brings them to such vantage ground that they get a fresh impulse towards heaven; they have a new foretaste of heaven, and new desires after union with God; thus the charm of the world is broken, and the power of sin overcome.

5. When the Churches are thus awakened and reformed, the reformation and salvation of sinners will follow. Their hearts will be broken down and changed. Very often the most abandoned profligates are among the subjects. Harlots, and drunkards, and infidels, and all sorts of abandoned characters, are awakened and converted. The worst of human beings are softened and reclaimed, and made to appear as lovely specimens of the beauty of holiness.

III. THE AGENCIES EMPLOYED.

Ordinarily, there are employed in the work of conversion three agents and one instrument. The agents are God; some person who brings the truth to bear on the mind; and the sinner himself. The instrument is the truth. There are always two agents, God and the sinner, employed and active in every case of genuine conversion.

1. The agency of God is twofold: by His Providence and by His Spirit.

(a) By His providential government He so arranges events as to bring the sinner's mind and the truth in contact. He brings the sinner where the truth reaches his ears or his eyes. It is often interesting to trace the manner in which God arranges events so as to bring this about, and how He sometimes makes everything seem to favor a revival. The state of the weather and of the public health and other circumstances concur to make everything just right to favor the application of truth with the greatest possible efficacy. How He sometimes sends a minister along just at the time he is wanted! How He brings out a particular truth just at the particular time when the individual it is fitted to reach is in the way to hear!

(b) God's special agency by His Holy Spirit. Having direct access to the mind, and knowing infinitely well the whole history and state of each individual sinner, He employs that truth which is best adapted to his particular case, and then drives it home with Divine power. He gives it such vividness, strength, and power that the sinner quails, and throws down his weapons of rebellion, and turns to the Lord. Under His influence the truth burns its way like fire. He makes the truth stand out in such aspects that it crushes the proudest man down with the weight of a mountain. If men were disposed to obey God, the truth is given with sufficient clearness in the Bible; and from preaching they could learn all that is necessary for them to know. But because they are wholly disinclined to obey it, God makes it clear before their minds, and pours in upon their souls a blaze of convincing light which they cannot withstand; and they yield to it, obey God, and are saved.

2. The agency of men is commonly employed. Men are not mere instruments in the hands of God. Truth is the instrument. The preacher is a moral agent in the work: he acts; he is not a mere passive instrument; he is voluntary in promoting the conversion of sinners.

3. The agency of the sinner himself. The conversion of a sinner consists in his obeying the truth. It is therefore impossible it should take place without his agency, for it consists in acting right. He is influenced to this by the agency of God and by the agency of men. Men act on their fellow-men, not only by language, but by their looks, their tears, their daily deportment. See that impenitent man, who has a pious wife. Her very looks, her tenderness, her solemn, compassionate dignity, softened and molded-into the image of Christ, are a sermon to him all the time. He has to turn his mind away, because it is such a reproach to him. He feels a sermon ringing in his ears all day long.

Mankind are accustomed to read the countenances of their neighbors. Sinners often read the state of a Christian's mind in his eyes. If his eyes are full of levity, or worldly anxiety and contrivance, sinners read it. If they are full of the Spirit of God, sinners read it. The ungodly are often led to conviction simply by, seeing the countenance of Christians. An individual once went into a manufactory to see the machinery. His mind was solemn, as he had been where there was a revival. The people who labored there all knew him by sight, and knew who he was. A young lady who was at work saw him, and whispered some foolish remark to her companion, and laughed. The person stopped and looked at her with a feeling of grief. She stopped; her thread broke - and she was so much agitated that she could not join it. She looked out at the window to compose herself, and then tried again; again and again she strove to recover her self-command. At length she sat down, overcome by her feelings. The person then approached and spoke with her; she soon manifested a deep sense of sin. The feeling spread through the establishment like fire, and in a few hours almost every person employed there was under conviction; so much so that the owner, though a worldly man, was astounded, and requested to have the works stopped and a prayer-meeting held; for he said it was a great deal more important to have these people converted than to have the works go on. And in a few days the owner and nearly all the persons employed in the establishment were hopefully converted. The eye of this individual, his solemn countenance, his compassionate feeling, rebuked the levity of the young woman, and brought her under conviction of sin; and probably in a great measure this whole revival followed from so small an incident.

If Christians themselves have deep feeling on the subject of religion, they will produce deep feeling wherever they go. And if they are cold, or light and trifling, they inevitably destroy all deep feeling, even in awakened sinners.

I knew a case once of an individual who was very anxious, but one day I was grieved to find that her convictions seemed to be all gone. I asked her what she had been doing. She told me she had been spending the afternoon at a certain place, among some professors of religion - not thinking that it would dissipate her convictions to spend an afternoon with professors of religion! But they were trifling and vain people, and her convictions were lost. And no doubt those professors of religion, by their folly, destroyed a soul, for her convictions did not return.

The Church is required to use the means for the conversion of sinners. Sinners cannot properly be said to use the means for their own conversion. The Church uses the means. What sinners do is

to submit to the truth, or to resist it. It is a mistake of sinners, to think they are using means for their own conversion. The whole drift of a revival, and everything about it, is designed to present the truth to your mind, for your obedience or resistance.

REMARKS.

1. Revivals were formerly regarded as miracles. And it has been so by some even in our day. And others have ideas on the subject so loose and unsatisfactory, that if they would only think, they would see their absurdity. For a long time it was supposed by the Church that a revival was a miracle, an interposition of Divine power, with which they had nothing to do, and which they had no more agency in producing than they had in producing thunder, or a storm of hail, or an earthquake. It is only within a few years that ministers generally have supposed revivals were to be promoted, by the use of means designed and adapted specially to that object. It has been supposed that revivals came just as showers do, sometimes in one town, and sometimes in another, and that ministers and Churches could do nothing more to produce them than they could to make showers of rain come on their own town, when they were falling on a neighboring town.

It used to be supposed that a revival would come "about once in fifteen years, when all would be converted that God intended to save," after which the Church must wait until another crop came forward on the stage of life. Finally, the time got shortened down to five years; it was supposed there might be a revival about as often as that!

I have heard a fact in relation to a pastor who entertained this supposition - that a revival might come about once in five years. There had been a revival in his congregation. The next year there was a revival in a neighboring town, and he went there to preach, staying several days, till he became engrossed in the work. He returned home on a Saturday, and went into his study to prepare for the Sabbath. His soul was in agony. He thought how many adult persons there were in his congregation at enmity with God. He reasoned thus: "There are so many still unconverted; so many persons die yearly - such a portion of them unconverted; if a revival does not come under five years, so many adult heads of families will be lost." He put down his calculations on paper, and embodied them in his sermon for the next day, with his heart bleeding at the dreadful picture. As I understood it, he did not do this with any expectation of a revival; but he felt deeply, and poured out his heart to his people; and that sermon awakened forty heads of families, and a powerful revival followed; and so his theory about a revival once in five years was exploded. Thus God has overthrown, generally, the theory that revivals are miracles.

2. Revivals have been greatly hindered by mistaken notions concerning the Sovereignty of God. Many people have supposed God’s Sovereignty to be something very different from what it is. They have supposed it to be such an arbitrary disposal of events, and particularly of the gift of His Spirit, as precluded a rational employment of means for promoting a revival. But there is no evidence from the Bible that God exercises any such sovereignty. There are no facts to prove it, but everything goes to show that God has connected means with the end, through all the departments of His government, in nature and in grace. There is no natural event in which His own agency is not concerned. He has not built the creation like a vast machine that will go on alone, without His further care. He has not retired from the universe, to let it work for itself. That is mere Deism. He exercises a universal superintendence and control. And yet every event in nature has been brought about by means. He administers neither providence nor grace with that sort of

sovereignty that dispenses with the use of means. There is no more sovereignty in the one than in the other.

And yet some people are terribly alarmed at all direct efforts to promote a revival, and they cry out: "You are trying to get up a revival in your own strength. Take care, you are interfering with the Sovereignty of God. Better keep along in the usual course, and let God give a revival when He thinks it is best. God is a Sovereign, and it is very wrong for you to attempt to get up a revival, just because you think a revival is needed."

This is just such preaching as the devil wants. And men cannot do the devil's work more effectually than by preaching up the Sovereignty of God as a reason why we should not put forth efforts to produce a revival.

3. You see the error of those who are beginning to think that religion can be better promoted in the world without revivals, and who are disposed to give up all efforts to produce religious awakenings. Because there are evils arising in some instances out of great excitements on the subject of religion, they are of opinion that it is best to dispense with them altogether. This cannot, and must not be. True, there is danger of abuses. In cases of great religious as well as in other excitements, more or fewer incidental evils may be expected, of course. But this is no reason why revivals should be given up. The best things are always liable to abuses. Great and manifold evils have originated under (but not because of) the providential and moral governments of God. So in revivals of religion, it is found by experience, that in the present state of the world, religion cannot be promoted to any considerable extent without them. The evils which are sometimes complained of, when they are real, are accidental, and of small importance when compared with the amount of good produced by revivals. The sentiment should not be admitted by the Church for a moment, that revivals may be given up. It is fraught with all that is dangerous to the interests of Zion, is death to the cause of missions, and brings in its train the damnation of the world.

4. Finally: I have not commenced this course of Lectures on Revivals to get up a curious theory of my own on the subject. I would not spend my time and strength merely to give instructions, to gratify curiosity, and furnish people with something to talk about. I have no idea of a preaching about revivals. It is not my design to preach so as to have you able to say at the close: "We understand all about revivals now," while you do nothing. Will you follow the instructions I shall give you from the Word of God, and then put them in practice in your own lives? Will you bring them to bear upon your families, your acquaintance, neighbors, and through the city? Or will you spend the time in learning about revivals, and do nothing for them? I want you as fast as you learn anything on the subject of revivals, to put it in practice, and go to work and see if you cannot promote a revival among sinners here. If you will not do this, I wish you to let me know at the beginning, so that I need not waste my strength. You ought to decide now whether you will do this or not. You know that we call sinners to decide on the spot whether they will obey the Gospel. And we have no more authority to let you take time to deliberate whether you will obey God, than we have to let sinners do so. We call on you to unite now in a solemn pledge to God, that you will do your duty as fast as you learn what it is, and to pray that He will pour out His Spirit upon this Church and upon all the city.

05.02. WHEN A REVIVAL IS TO BE EXPECTED

LECTURE II

WHEN A REVIVAL IS TO BE EXPECTED

Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? - Psa 85:6.

The Psalmist felt that God had been very favorable to the people, and while contemplating the goodness of the Lord in bringing them back from the land whither they had been carried away captive, and while looking at the prospects before them, he breaks out into a prayer for a revival of religion: "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" Since God in His providence had re-established the ordinances of His house among them, he prays that there may be a revival of religion to crown the work.

In my first Lecture I attempted to show what a revival of religion is not, what a revival is, and the agencies to be employed in promoting it. The topics to which I now wish to call attention are:

I. When a revival of religion is needed.

II. The importance of a revival when it is needed.

III. When a revival of religion may be expected.

I. WHEN A REVIVAL OF RELIGION IS NEEDED.

1. When there is a want of brotherly love and Christian confidence among professors of religion, then a revival is needed. Then there is a loud call for God to revive His work. When Christians have sunk down into a low and backslidden state, they neither have, nor can have, the same love and confidence toward each other, as when they are all alive, and active, and living holy lives. God loves all men with the love of benevolence, but He does not feel the love of complacency toward any but those who live holy. Christians love each other with the love of complacency, only in proportion to their holiness. If Christian love is the love of the image of Christ in His people, then it can be exercised only where that image really or apparently exists. A person must reflect the image of Christ, and show the spirit of Christ before other Christians can love him with the love of complacency. It is in vain to call on Christians to love one another with the love of complacency, as Christians, when they are sunk down in stupidity. They see nothing in each other to produce this love. It is next to impossible that they should feel otherwise toward each other than they do toward sinners. Merely knowing that they belong to the Church, or seeing them occasionally at the Communion table, will not produce Christian love, unless they see the image of Christ.

2. When there are dissensions, and jealousies, and evil speakings among professors of religion, then there is a great need of a revival. These things show that Christians have got far from God, and it is time to think earnestly of a revival. Religion cannot prosper with such things in the Church, and nothing can put an end to them like a revival.

3. When there is a worldly spirit in the Church. It is manifest that the Church has sunk down into a low and backslidden state, when you see Christians conform to the world in dress, equipage, and "parties," in seeking worldly amusements, and reading novels, and other books such as the world reads. It shows that they are far from God, and that there is great need of a revival of religion.

4. When the Church finds its members falling into gross and scandalous sins, then it is time to awake and cry to God for a revival of religion. When such things are taking place as give the enemies of religion an occasion for reproach, it is time to ask of God: "What will become of Thy great Name?"

5. When there is a spirit of controversy in the Church or in the land, a revival is needful. The spirit of religion is not the spirit of controversy. There can be no prosperity in religion where the spirit of controversy prevails.

6. When the wicked triumph over the Churches, and revile them, it is time to seek for a revival of religion.

7. When sinners are careless and stupid, it is time Christians should bestir themselves. It is as much their duty to awake as it is for the firemen to do so when a fire breaks out in the night in a great city. The Church ought to put out the fires of hell which are laying hold of the wicked. Sleep! Should the firemen sleep and let the whole city burn down, what would be thought of such firemen? And yet their guilt would not compare with the guilt of Christians who sleep while sinners around them are sinking stupidly into the fires of hell.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF A REVIVAL IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. A revival of religion is the only possible thing that can wipe away the reproach which covers the Church, and restore religion to the place it ought to have in the estimation of the public. Without a revival, this reproach will cover the Church more and more, until it is overwhelmed with universal contempt. You may do anything else you please, and you may change the aspects of society in some respects, but you will do no real good; you only make it worse without a revival of religion. You may go and build a splendid new house of worship, and line your seats with damask, put up a costly pulpit, and get a magnificent organ, and everything of that kind, to make a show and dash, and in that way you may procure a sort of respect for religion among the wicked, but it does no good in reality. It rather does hurt. It misleads them as to the real nature of religion; and so far from converting them, it carries them farther away from salvation. Look wherever they have surrounded the altar of Christianity with splendor, and you will find that the impression produced is contrary to the true nature of religion. There must be a waking up of energy on the part of Christians, and an outpouring of God’s Spirit, or the world will laugh at the Church.

2. Nothing else will restore Christian love and confidence among Church members. Nothing but a revival can restore it, and nothing else ought to restore it. There is no other way to wake up that love of Christians for one another which is sometimes felt, when they have such love as they cannot express. You cannot have such love without confidence; and you cannot restore confidence without such evidence of piety as is seen in a revival. If a minister find he has lost in any degree the confidence of his people, he ought to labor for a revival as the only means of regaining their confidence.

I do not mean that his motive in laboring for a revival should be merely to regain the confidence of his people, but that a revival through his instrumentality(and ordinarily nothing else) will restore to him the confidence of the praying part of his people. So if an elder or private member of the Church finds his brethren cold towards him, there is but one way to restore it. It is by being revived himself, and pouring out from his eyes and from his life the splendor of the Image of Christ. This spirit will catch and spread in the Church; confidence will be renewed, and brotherly love prevail again.

3. At such a time a revival of religion is indispensable to avert the judgments of God from the Church. I his would be a strange preaching if revivals were only miracles. and if the Church has no more agency in producing them than it has in producing a thunderstorm. We could not then say to the Church: "Unless there is a revival you may expect judgments." The fact is, Christians are more to blame for not being revived, than sinners are for not being converted. And if they are not awakened, they may know assuredly that God will visit them with His judgments.

How often God visited the Jewish Church with judgments because they would not repent and be revived at the call of His prophets! How often have we seen Churches, and even whole denominations, cursed with a curse, because they would not wake up and seek the Lord, and pray: "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

4. Nothing but a revival of religion can preserve such a Church from annihilation. A Church declining in this way cannot continue to exist without a revival. If it receives new members, they will, for the most part, be made up of ungodly persons. Without revivals there will not ordinarily be as many persons converted as will die off in a year. There have been Churches in this country where the members have died off, and, since there were no revivals to convert others in their place, the Church has "run out," and the organization has been dissolved.

A minister told me he once labored as a missionary in Virginia, on the ground where such a man as Samuel Davies once shone like a flaming torch; and that Davies' Church was so reduced as to have but one male member, and he, if I remember right, was a colored man. The Church had got proud, and was "run out." I have heard of a Church in Pennsylvania, that was formerly flourishing, but neglected revivals, and it became so reduced that the pastor had to send to a neighboring Church for a ruling elder when he administered the Communion.(Why not, in such a case, let any member of the Church, male or female, distribute the elements? Is it indispensable to have an elder?)

5. Nothing but a revival of religion can prevent the means of grace from doing a great injury to the ungodly. Without a revival they will grow harder and harder under preaching, and will experience a more horrible damnation than they would if they had never heard the Gospel. Your children and your friends will go down to a much more horrible fate in hell, in consequence of the means of grace, if there are no revivals to convert them to God. Better were it for them if there were no means of grace, no sanctuary, no Bible, no preaching, than to live and die where there is no revival. The Gospel is the savor of death unto death, if it is not made a savor of life unto life.

6. There is no other way in which a Church can be sanctified, grow in grace, and be fitted for heaven. What is "growing in grace"? Is it hearing sermons and getting some new notions about religion? No; no such thing.

The Christian who does this, and nothing more, is getting worse and worse, more and more hardened, and every week it is more difficult to rouse him up to duty.

III. WHEN A REVIVAL MAY BE EXPECTED.

1. When the providence of God indicates that a revival is at hand. The indications of God's providence are sometimes so plain as to amount to a revelation of His will. There is a conspiring of events to open the way, a preparation of circumstances to favor a revival, so that those who are looking out can see that a revival is at hand, just as plainly as if it had been revealed from heaven. Cases have occurred in this country where the providential manifestations were so plain that those who were careful observers felt no hesitation in saying that God was coming to pour out His Spirit and grant a revival. There are various ways for God so to indicate

His will to a people; sometimes by giving them peculiar means, sometimes by peculiar and alarming events, sometimes by remarkably favoring the employment of means, or by the state of the public health.

2. When the wickedness of the wicked grieves and humbles and distresses Christians. Sometimes Christians do not seem to mind anything about the wickedness around them. Or, if they do talk about it, it is in a cold, and callous, and unfeeling way, as if they despaired of a reformation: they are disposed to scold sinners - not to feel the compassion of the Son of God for them. But sometimes the conduct of the wicked drives Christians to prayer, breaks them down, and makes them sorrowful and tender-hearted, so that they can weep day and night, and instead of scolding the wicked they pray earnestly for them. Then you may expect a revival. Indeed, it is begun already.

Sometimes the wicked will get up an opposition to religion. And when this drives Christians to their knees in prayer to God, with strong crying and tears, you may be certain there is going to be a revival. The prevalence of wickedness is no evidence at all that there is not going to be a revival. That is often God's time to work. When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him. Often the first indication of a revival is that the devil gets up something new in opposition. This will invariably have one of two effects. It will either drive Christians to God, or it will drive them farther away from God, to some carnal policy or other that will only make things worse. Frequently the most outrageous wickedness of the ungodly is followed by a revival. If Christians are made to feel that they have no hope but in God, and if they have sufficient feeling left to care for the honor of God and the salvation of the souls of the impenitent, there will certainly be a revival. Let hell boil over if it will, and spew out as many devils as there are stones in the pavement, if it only drives Christians to God in prayer - it cannot hinder a revival. Let Satan "get up a row," and sound his horn as loud as he pleases; if Christians will only be humbled and pray, they shall soon see God's naked arm in a revival of religion. I have known instances where a revival has broken in upon the ranks of the enemy, almost as suddenly as a clap of thunder, and scattered them, taken the ringleaders as trophies, and broken up their party in an instant.

3. A revival may be expected when Christians have a spirit of prayer for a revival. That is, when they pray as if their hearts were set upon it.

Sometimes Christians are not engaged in definite prayer for a revival, not even when they are warm in prayer. Their minds are upon something else; they are praying for something else - the

salvation of the heathen and the like - and not for a revival among themselves. But when they feel the want of a revival, they pray for it; they feel for their own families and neighborhoods; they pray for them as if they could not be denied. What constitutes a spirit of prayer? Is it many prayers and warm words? No.

Prayer is the state of the heart. The spirit of prayer is a state of continual desire and anxiety of mind for the salvation of sinners. It is something that weighs them down. It is the same, so far as the philosophy of mind is concerned, as when a man is anxious for some worldly interest. A Christian who has this spirit of prayer feels anxious for souls. It is the subject of his thoughts all the time, and makes him look and act as if he had a load on his mind. He thinks of it by day, and dreams of it by night.

This is properly "praying without ceasing." His prayers seem to flow from his heart liquid as water: "O Lord, revive Thy work." Sometimes this feeling is very deep; persons have been bowed down so that they could neither stand nor sit. I can name men in this State, of firm nerves, who stand high in character, who have been absolutely crushed with grief for the state of sinners. The feeling is not always so great as this, but such things are much more common than is supposed. In the great revivals in 1826, they were common.

This is by no means enthusiasm. It is just what Paul felt when he said: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth." This travail of soul is that deep agony which persons feel when they lay hold on God for such a blessing, and will not let Him go till they receive it. I do not mean to be understood that it is essential to a spirit of prayer that the distress should be so great as this. But this deep, continual, earnest desire for the salvation of sinners is what constitutes the spirit of prayer for a revival.

When this feeling exists in a Church, unless the Spirit is grieved away by sin, there will infallibly be a revival of Christians generally, and it will involve the conversion of sinners to God. A clergyman once told me of a revival among his people, which commenced with a zealous and devoted woman in the Church. She became anxious about sinners, and gave herself to praying for them; she prayed, and her distress increased; and she finally came to her minister and talked with him asking him to appoint an anxious inquirers' meeting, for she felt that one was needed. The minister put her off, for he felt nothing of any such need. The next week she came again, and besought him again to appoint such a meeting. She knew there would be somebody to come, for she felt as if God was going to pour out His Spirit. The minister once more put her off. And finally she said to him: "If you do not appoint the meeting I shall die, for there is certainly going to be a revival." The next Sabbath he appointed a meeting, and said that if there were any who wished to converse with him about the salvation of their souls, he would meet them on such an evening. He did not know of one, but when he went to the place, to his astonishment he found a large number of anxious inquirers. Now, do not you think that woman knew there was going to be a revival? Call it what you please, a new revelation or an old revelation, or anything else. I say it was the Spirit of God that taught that praying woman there was going to be a revival. "The secret of the Lord" was with her, and she knew it. She knew God had been in her heart, and filled it so full that she could contain no longer.

Sometimes ministers have had this distress about their congregations, so that they felt as if they could not live unless they saw a revival.

Sometimes elders and deacons, or private members of the Church, men or women, have the spirit of prayer for a revival of religion, so that they will hold on and prevail with God, till He pours out His Spirit. The first ray of light that broke in upon the midnight which rested on the Churches in Oneida County, in the fall of 1825, was from a woman in feeble health, who, I believe, had never been in a powerful revival. Her soul was exercised about sinners. She was in an agony for the land. She did not know what ailed her, but she kept praying more and more, till it seemed as if her agony would destroy her body. At length she became full of joy, and exclaimed. "God has come! God has come! There is no mistake about it, the work is begun, and is going all over the region." And sure enough the work began, and her family were all converted, and the work spread all over that part of the country. Now, do you think that woman was deceived? I tell you, no. She knew she had prevailed with God in prayer.

Generally there are but few professors of religion who know anything about this spirit of prayer which prevails with God. I have been amazed to see such accounts as are often published about revivals, as if the revival had come without any cause - nobody knew why or wherefore. I have sometimes inquired into such cases; when it had been given out that nobody knew anything about it until one Sabbath they saw by the faces of the congregation that God was there, or they saw it in their conference-room, or prayer-meeting, and were astonished at the mysterious Sovereignty of God in bringing in a revival without any apparent connection with means.

Now mark me. Go and inquire among the obscure members of the Church and you will always find that somebody had been praying for a revival, and was expecting it - some man or woman had been agonizing in prayer for the salvation of sinners, until the blessing was gained. It may have found the minister and the body of the Church fast asleep, and they would wake up all of a sudden, like a man just rubbing his eyes open, running round the room, pushing things over, and wondering where all the excitement comes from. But though few knew it, you may be sure there had been somebody on the watch-tower, constant in prayer till the blessing came. Generally, a revival is more or less extensive, as there are more or less persons who have the spirit of prayer.

4. Another sign that a revival may be expected is when the attention of ministers is especially directed to this particular object, and when their preaching and other efforts are aimed particularly at the conversion of sinners. Most of the time the labors of ministers are, it would seem, directed to other objects. They seem to preach and labor with no particular design to effect the immediate conversion of sinners, and then it need not be expected that there will be a revival under their preaching. There never will be a revival till somebody makes particular efforts for this end. But when the attention of a minister is directed to the state of the families in his congregation, and when his heart is full of feeling of the necessity of a revival, and he puts forth the proper efforts for this end, then you may be prepared to expect a revival. As I have explained, the connection between the right use of means for a revival, and a revival, is as philosophically sure as between the right use of means to raise grain, and a crop of wheat. I believe, in fact, it is more certain, and that there are fewer instances of failure. The effect is more certain to follow. Probably the law connecting cause and effect is more undeviating in spiritual than in natural things, and so there are fewer exceptions. The paramount importance of spiritual things makes it reasonable that it should be so.

Take the Bible, the nature of the case, and the history of the Church all together, and you will find fewer failures in the use of means for a revival than in farming or any other worldly business. In worldly affairs there are sometimes cases where counteracting causes annihilate all a man can do. In raising grain, for instance, there are cases which are beyond the control of man, such as drought, hard winter, worms, and so on. So in laboring to promote a revival, there may things occur to counteract it, something or another suddenly diverting the public attention from religion, which may baffle every effort. But I believe there are fewer such cases in the moral than in the natural world. I have seldom seen an individual fail when he used the means for promoting a revival in earnest, in the manner pointed out in the Word of God. I believe a man may enter on the work of promoting a revival with as reasonable an expectation of success as he can enter on any other work with an expectation of success - with the same expectation as the farmer has of a crop when he sows his grain. I have sometimes seen this tried and succeed under circumstances the most forbidding that can be conceived.

The great revival at Rochester 10 began under the most disadvantageous circumstances that could well be imagined. It seemed as though Satan had interposed every possible obstacle to a revival. The three Churches were at variance. One had no minister: one was divided and was about to dismiss its minister. An elder of the third Presbyterian Church had brought a charge against the pastor of the first Church. After the work began, one of the first things was, the great stone Church gave way and created a panic. 11 Then one of the Churches went on and dismissed their minister right in the midst of it. Many other things occurred, so that it seemed as if the devil were determined to divert public attention from the subject of religion. But there were a few remarkable cases of the spirit of prayer, which assured us that God was there, and we went on; and the more Satan opposed, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up the standard higher and higher, till finally a wave of salvation rolled over the place.

5. A revival of religion may be expected when Christians begin to confess their sins to one another. At other times they confess in a general manner, as if they are only half in earnest. They may do it in eloquent language, but it does not mean anything. But when there is an ingenuous breaking down, and a pouring out of the heart in confession of sin, the flood-gates will soon burst open, and salvation will flow over the place.

A revival may be expected whenever Christians are found willing to make the sacrifices necessary to carry it on. They must be willing to sacrifice their feelings, their business, their time, to help forward the work.

Ministers must be willing to lay out their strength, and to jeopardize their health and life. They must be willing to offend the impenitent by plain and faithful dealing, and perhaps offend many members of the Church who will not come up to the work. They must take a decided stand with the revival, be the consequences what they may. They must be prepared to go on with the work even though they should lose the affections of all the impenitent, and of all the cold part of the Church. The minister must be prepared, if it be the will of God, to be driven away from the place. He must be determined to go straight forward, and leave the entire event with God.

I knew a minister who had a young man laboring with him in a revival. The young man preached pretty plain truth and the wicked did not like him.

They said: "We like our minister and we wish to have him preach." They finally said so much that the minister told the young man: "Such and such a person, who gives so much towards my support, says so-and-so; Mr. A. also says so, and Mr. B. likewise. They think it will break up the society if you continue to preach, and I think you had better not preach any more." The young man went away, but the Spirit of God immediately withdrew from the place and the revival stopped short. The minister, by yielding to the wicked desires of the ungodly, drove Him away, being afraid that the devil would drive him away from his people. So by undertaking to satisfy the devil he offended God. And God so ordered events that in a short time the minister had to leave his people after all. He undertook to go between the devil and God, and God dismissed him.

So the people, also, must be willing to have a revival, let the sacrifice be what it may. It will not do for them to say: "We are willing to attend so many meetings, but we cannot attend any more." Or: "We are willing to have a revival if it will not disturb our arrangements about our business, or prevent our making money." I tell you, such people will never have a revival till they are willing to do anything, and sacrifice anything, that God indicates to be their duty. Christian merchants must feel willing to lock up their stores for six months, if it is necessary to carry on a revival. I do not mean that any such thing is called for, or that it is their duty to do so. But if there should be such a state of feeling as to call for it, then it would be their duty and they ought to be willing to do it. They ought to be willing to do it at the call of God, for He can easily burn down their stores if they do not. In fact, I should not be sorry to see such a revival in New York, as would make every merchant in the city lock up his store till spring, and say that he had sold goods enough and would now give up his whole time to leading sinners to Christ.

7. A revival may be expected when ministers and professors are willing to have God promote it by whatsoever instruments He pleases. Sometimes ministers are not willing to have a revival unless they can have the management of it, or unless their agency can be conspicuous in promoting it. They wish to prescribe to God what He shall direct and bless, and what men He shall put forward. They will have no new measures. they cannot have any of this "new-light" 12 preaching, or of these evangelists that go about the country preaching! They have a good deal to say about God being a Sovereign, and that He will have revivals come in His own way and time. But then He must choose to have it just in their way or they will have nothing to do with it. Such men will sleep on until they are awakened by the judgment trumpet, without a revival, unless they are willing that God should come in His own way - unless they are willing to have anything or anybody employed that will do the most good.

8. Strictly I should say that when the foregoing things occur, a revival, to some extent, already exists. In truth a revival should be expected whenever it is needed. If we need to be revived it is our duty to be revived. If it is duty it is possible, and we should set about being revived ourselves, and, relying on the promise of Christ to be with us in making disciples always and everywhere, we ought to labor to revive Christians and convert sinners, with a confident expectation of success. Therefore, whenever the Church needs reviving, it ought and may expect to be revived, and to see sinners converted to Christ. When those things are seen which are named under the foregoing heads, let Christians and ministers be encouraged and know that a good work is already begun. Follow it up.

REMARKS.

1. Brethren, you can tell from our subject, whether you need a revival or not, in your Church or in your city, and whether you are going to have one or not. Elders of the Church, men, women, any of you, and all of you - what do you say? Do you need a revival? Do you expect to have one?

Have you any reason to expect one? You need not be in any mist about it, for you know, or can know if you will, whether you have any reason to look for a revival.

2. You see why you have not a revival. It is only because you do not want one. Because you are neither praying for it, nor feeling anxious for it, nor putting forth efforts for it. I appeal to your own consciences: Are you making these efforts now, to promote a revival? You know, brethren, what the truth is about it. Will you stand up and say that you have made efforts for a revival and have been disappointed - that you have cried to God: "Wilt Thou not revive us?" and that God would not do it?

3 Do you wish a revival? Will you have one? if God should ask you this moment, by an audible voice from heaven, "Do you want a revival?" would you dare to say: "Yes"? If He were to ask: "Are you willing to make the sacrifices?" would you answer: "Yes"? And if He said: "When shall it begin?" would you answer: "Let it begin tonight - let it begin here - let it begin in my heart NOW"? Would you dare to say so to God, if you should hear His voice tonight?

Chapter 91

05.03. HOW TO PROMOTE A REVIVAL

LECTURE III

HOW TO PROMOTE A REVIVAL

Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you. - Hos 10:12.

The Jews were a nation of farmers, and it is therefore a common thing in the Scriptures to refer for illustrations to their occupation, and to the scenes with which farmers and shepherds are familiar. The prophet Hosea addresses them as a nation of backsliders; he reproves them for their idolatry, and threatens them with the judgments of God. I have shown in my first Lecture what a revival is not, what it is, and what are the agencies to be employed in promoting it; and in my second, when it is needed, its importance, and when it may be expected. My design in this Lecture is to show how a revival is to be promoted.

A revival consists of two parts: as it respects the Church, and as it respects the ungodly. I shall speak on this occasion of a revival in the Church. Fallow ground is ground which has once been tilled, but which now lies waste, and needs to be broken up and mellowed, before it is suited to receive grain. I shall show, as it respects a revival in the Church:

I. What it is to break up the fallow ground, in the sense of the text.

II. How it is to be performed.

I. WHAT IS IT TO BREAK UP THE FALLOW GROUND?

To break up the fallow ground is to break up your hearts, to prepare your minds to bring forth fruit unto God. The mind of man is often compared in the Bible to ground, and the Word of God to seed sown therein, the fruit representing the actions and affections of those who receive it. To break up the fallow ground, therefore, is to bring the mind into such a state that it is fitted to receive the Word of God. Sometimes your hearts get matted down, hard and dry, till there is no such thing as getting fruit from them till they are broken up, and mellowed down, and fitted to receive the Word. It is this softening of the heart, so as to make it feel the truth, which the prophet calls breaking up your fallow ground.

II. HOW IS THE FALLOW GROUND TO BE BROKEN UP?

It is not by any direct efforts to feel. People fall into a mistake on this subject, from not making the laws of mind the object of thought. There are great errors on the subject of the laws which govern the mind. People talk about religious feeling as if they could, by direct effort, call forth religious affection. But this is not the way the mind acts. No man can make himself feel in this way, merely by trying to feel. The feelings of the mind are not directly under our control. We cannot by willing, or by direct volition, call forth religious feelings. We might as well think to "call spirits from the vastly deep." They are purely involuntary states of mind. They naturally and necessarily exist in

the mind under certain circumstances calculated to excite them. But they can be controlled indirectly. Otherwise there would be no moral character in our feelings, if there were not a way to control them. One cannot say: "Now I will feel so-and-so towards such an object." But we can command our attention to it, and look at it intently, till the proper feeling arises. Let a man who is away from his family bring them up before his mind, and will he not feel? But it is not by saying to himself: "Now I will feel deeply for my family." A man can direct his attention to any object, about which he ought to feel and wishes to feel, and in that way he will call into existence the proper emotions. Let a man call up his enemy before his mind, and his feelings of enmity will rise. So if a man thinks of God, and fastens his mind on any parts of God's character, he will feel - emotions will come up by the very laws of mind.

If he is a friend of God, let him contemplate God as a gracious and holy Being, and he will have emotions of friendship kindled in his mind. If he is an enemy of God, only let him get the true character of God before his mind, and look at it, and fasten his attention on it, and then his bitter enmity will rise against God, or he will break down and give his heart to God.

If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, and make your minds feel on the subject of religion, you must go to work just as you would to feel on any other subject. Instead of keeping your thoughts on everything else, and then imagining that by going to a few meetings you will get your feelings enlisted, go the common-sense way to work, as you would on any other subject. It is just as easy to make your minds feel on the subject of religion as it is on any other. God has put these states of mind under your control. If people were as unphilosophical about moving their limbs as they are about regulating their emotions, you would never have reached this meeting.

If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts: examine and note the state of your minds, and see where you are. Many never seem to think about this. They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether they are doing well in religion or not; whether they are gaining ground or going back; whether they are fruitful, or lying waste. Now you must draw off your attention from other things, and look into this. Make a business of it. Do not be in a hurry. Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts, and see where you are: whether you are walking with God every day, or with the devil; whether you are serving God or serving the devil most; whether you are under the dominion of the prince of darkness, or of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To do all this, you must set yourself to work to consider your sins. You must examine yourselves. And by this I do not mean that you must stop and look directly within to see what is the present state of your feelings.

That is the very way to put a stop to all feeling. That is just as absurd as it would be for a man to shut his eyes on the lamp, and try to turn his eyes inward to find whether there was any image painted on the retina.

The man complains that he does not see anything! And why? Because he has turned his eyes away from the objects of sight. The truth is, our moral feelings are as much an object of consciousness as our senses. And the way to find them out is to go on acting, and employing our minds. Then we can tell our moral feelings by consciousness, just as I could tell my natural feelings by consciousness if I should put my hand in the fire.

Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character. Look back over your past history. Take up your individual sins one by one, and look at them. I do not mean that you should just cast a glance at your past life, and see that it has been full of sins, and then go to God and make a sort of general confession, and ask for pardon. That is not the way. You must take them up one by one. It will be a good thing to take a pen and paper, as you go over them, and write them down as they occur to you. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books; and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one; and as far as you can come at them, they ought to be reviewed and repented of one by one. Now begin, and take up first what are commonly, but improperly, called Sins of Omission.

1. Ingratitude. Take this sin, for instance, and write down under that head all the instances you can remember wherein you have received favors from God for which you have never exercised gratitude. How many cases can you remember? Some remarkable providence, some wonderful turn of events, that saved you from ruin. Set down the instances of God's goodness to you when you were in sin, before your conversion, for which you have never been half thankful enough; and the numerous mercies you have received since. How long the catalogue of instances, where your ingratitude has been so black that you are forced to hide your face in confusion! Go on your knees and confess them one by one to God, and ask forgiveness. The very act of confession, by the laws of suggestion, will bring up others to your memory. Put down these. Go over them three or four times in this way, and see what an astonishing number of mercies there are for which you have never thanked God.

2. Want of love to God. Think how grieved and alarmed you would be if you discovered any flagging of affection for you in your wife, husband, or children; if you saw another engrossing their hearts, and thoughts, and time. Perhaps in such a case you would well-nigh die with a just and virtuous jealousy. Now, God calls Himself a jealous God; and have you not given your heart to other loves and infinitely offended Him?

3. Neglect of the Bible. Put down the cases when for perhaps weeks, or longer, God's Word was not a pleasure. Some people, indeed, read over whole chapters in such a way that they could not tell what they had been reading. If so, no wonder that your life is spent at random, and that your religion is such a miserable failure.

4. Unbelief. Recall the instances in which you have virtually charged the God of truth with lying, by your unbelief of His express promises and declarations. God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Now, have you believed this? Have you expected Him to answer?

Have you not virtually said in your hearts, when you prayed for the Holy Spirit: "I do not believe that I shall receive?" If you have not believed nor expected to receive the blessing which God has expressly promised, you have charged Him with lying.

5. Neglect of prayer. Think of the times when you have neglected secret prayer, family prayer, and prayer meetings; or have prayed in such a way as more grievously to offend God than to have omitted it altogether.

6. Neglect of the means of grace. When you have suffered trifling excuses to prevent your attending meetings, have neglected and poured contempt upon the means of salvation, merely

from disrelish of spiritual duties.

7. The manner in which you have performed those duties. That is, with want of feeling and want of faith, in a worldly frame of mind, so that your words were nothing but the mere chattering of a wretch who did not deserve that God should feel the least care for him. When you have fallen down upon your knees and "said your prayers" in such an unfeeling and careless manner that if you had been put under oath five minutes after you could not have said for what you had been praying.

8. Want of love for the souls of your fellow-men.. look round upon your friends and relatives, and remember how little compassion you have felt for them. You have stood by and seen them going right to hell, and it seems as though you did not care if they did go. How many days have there been, in which you did not make their condition the subject of a single fervent prayer, or evince an ardent desire for their salvation?

9. Want of care for the heathen. Perhaps you have not cared enough for them to attempt to learn their condition; perhaps not even to take a missionary magazine. Look at this, and see how much you really care for the heathen, and set down honestly the real amount of your feelings for them, and your desire for their salvation. Measure your desire for their salvation by the self-denial you practice, in giving of your substance to send them the Gospel. Do you deny yourself even the hurtful superfluities of life, such as tea, coffee, and tobacco? Do you retrench your style of living, and scruple not to subject yourself to any inconvenience to save them? Do you daily pray for them in private? Are you laying by something to put into the treasury of the Lord when you go up to pray? If you are not doing these things, and if your soul is not agonized for the poor benighted heathen, why are you such a hypocrite as to pretend to be a Christian? Why, your profession is an insult to Jesus Christ!

10. Neglect of family duties. Think how you have lived before your family, how you have prayed, what an example you have set before them.

What direct efforts do you habitually make for their spiritual good? What duty have you not neglected?

11. Neglect of social duties.

12. Neglect of watchfulness over your own life. In how many instances you have hurried over your private duties, and have neither taken yourself to task, nor honestly made up your accounts with God; how often have you entirely neglected to watch your conduct, and, having been off your guard, have sinned before the world, and before the Church, and before God!

13. Neglect for watch over your brethren. How often have you broken your covenant that you would watch over them in the Lord! How little do you know or care about the state of their souls! And yet you are under a solemn oath to watch over them. What have you done to make yourself acquainted with them? In how many of them have you interested yourself, to know their spiritual state? Go over the list, and wherever you find there has been a neglect, write it down. How many times have you seen your brethren growing cold in religion, and have not spoken to them about it?

You have seen them beginning to neglect one duty after another, and you did not reprove them, in a brotherly way. You have seen them falling into sin, and you let them go on. And yet you pretend

to love them. What a hypocrite! Would you see your wife or child going into disgrace, or into the fire, and hold your peace? No, you would not. What do you think of yourself, then, to pretend to love Christians, and to love Christ, while you can see them going into disgrace, and say nothing to them?

14. Neglect of self -denial. There are many professors who are willing to do almost anything in religion, that does not require self-denial. But when they are required to do anything that requires them to deny themselves - oh, that is too much! They think they are doing a great deal for God, and doing about as much as He ought in reason to ask, if they are only doing what they can do just as well as not; but they are not willing to deny themselves any comfort or convenience whatever for the sake of serving the Lord. They will not willingly suffer reproach for the name of Christ.

Nor will they deny themselves the luxuries of life, to save a world from hell. So far are they from remembering that self-denial is a condition of discipleship that they do not know what self-denial is. They never have really denied themselves a riband or a pin for Christ and the Gospel. Oh, how soon such professors will be in hell! Some are giving of their abundance, and are giving much, and are ready to complain that others do not give more; when, in truth, they do not themselves give anything that they need, anything that they could enjoy if they kept it. They only give of their surplus wealth; and perhaps that poor woman who puts in her mite, has exercised more self-denial than they have in giving thousands From these we now turn to Sins of Commission.

1. Worldly mindedness. What has been the state of your heart in regard to your worldly possessions? Have you looked at them as really yours - as if you had a right to dispose of them as your own, according to your own will? If you have, write that down. If you have loved property, and sought after it for its own sake, or to gratify lust or ambition, or a worldly spirit, or to lay it up for your families, you have sinned, and must repent.

2. Pride. Recollect all the instances you can, in which you have detected yourself in the exercise of pride. Vanity is a particular form of pride. How many times have you detected yourself in consulting vanity about your dress and appearance? How many times have you thought more, and taken more pains, and spent more time about decorating your body to go to Church, than you have about preparing your mind for the worship of God? You have gone caring more as to how you appeared outwardly in the sight of mortal man, than how your soul appeared in the sight of the heart-searching God. You have, in fact, set up yourself to be worshiped by them, rather than prepared to worship God yourself. You sought to divide the worship of God’s house, to draw off the attention of God’s people to look at your pretty appearance. It is in vain to pretend now, that you do not care anything about having people look at you. Be honest about it. Would you take all this pains about your looks if every person were blind?

3. Envy. Look at the cases in which you were envious of those whom you thought were above you in any respect. Or perhaps you have envied those who have been more talented or more useful than yourself. Have you not so envied some, that you have been pained to hear them praised? It has been more agreeable to you to dwell upon their faults than upon their virtues, upon their failures than upon their success. Be honest with yourself; and if you have harbored this spirit of hell, repent deeply before God, or He will never forgive you.

4. Censoriousness. Instances in which you have had a bitter spirit, and spoken of Christians in a manner devoid of charity and love; of charity, which requires you always to hope the best the case will admit, and to put the best construction upon any ambiguous conduct.

5. Slander. The times you have spoken behind people's backs of the faults, real or supposed, of members of the Church or others, unnecessarily, or without good reason. This is slander. You need not lie to be guilty of slander: to tell the truth with the design to injure is to slander.

6. Levity. How often have you trifled before God as you would not have dared to trifle in the presence of an earthly sovereign? You have either been an atheist, and forgotten that there was a God, or have had less respect for Him, and His presence, than you would have had for an earthly judge.

7. Lying. Understand now what lying is. Any species of designed deception. If the deception be not designed, it is not lying. But if you design to make an impression contrary to the naked truth, you lie. Put down all those cases you can recollect. Do not call them by any soft name.

God calls them LIES, and charges you with LYING, and you had better charge yourself correctly. How innumerable are the falsehoods perpetrated every day in business, and in social intercourse, by words, and looks, and actions, designed to make an impression on others, for selfish reasons that is contrary to the truth!

8. Cheating. Set down all the cases in which you have dealt with an individual, and done to him that which you would not like to have done to you. That is cheating. God has laid down a rule in the case: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

That is the rule. And if you have not done so you are a cheat. Mind, the rule is not that you should do "what you might reasonably expect them to do to you": for that is a rule which would admit of every degree of wickedness. But it is: "As ye WOULD they should do to you."

9. Hypocrisy. For instance, in your prayers and confessions to God. Set down the instances in which you have prayed for things you did not really want. And the evidence is, that when you have done praying, you could not tell for what you had prayed. How many times have you confessed sins that you did not mean to break off, and when you had no solemn purpose not to repeat them? Yes, have confessed sins when you knew you as much expected to go and repeat them, as you expected to live.

10. Robbing God. Think of the instances in which you have misspent your time, squandering the hours which God gave you to serve Him and save souls, in vain amusements or foolish conversation, in reading novels or doing nothing; cases where you have misapplied your talents and powers of mind; where you have squandered money on your lusts, or spent it for things which you did not need, and which did not contribute to your health, comfort, or usefulness. Perhaps some of you have laid out God's money for tobacco. I will not speak of intoxicating drink, for I presume there is no professor of religion here that would drink it, and I hope there is not one that uses that filthy poison, tobacco. Think of a professor of religion using God's money to poison himself with tobacco!

11. Bad temper. Perhaps you have abused your wife, or your children, or your family, or servants, or neighbors. Write it all down.

12. Hindering others from being useful. Perhaps you have weakened their influence by insinuations against them. You have not only robbed God of your own talents, but tied the hands of somebody else. What a wicked servant is he who not only loiters himself but hinders the rest! This is done sometimes by taking their time needlessly; sometimes by destroying Christian confidence in them. Thus you have played into the hands of Satan, and not only showed yourself an idle vagabond, but prevented others from working.

If you find you have committed a fault against an individual and that individual is within your reach, go and confess it immediately, and get that out of the way. If the individual you have injured is too far off for you to go and see him, sit down and write him a letter and confess the injury. If you have defrauded anybody, send the money, the full amount and the interest.

Go thoroughly to work in all this. Go now. Do not put it off; that will only make the matter worse. Confess to God those sins that have been committed against God, and to man those sins that have been committed against man. Do not think of getting off by going round the stumbling-blocks. Take them up out of the way. In breaking up your fallow ground, you must remove every obstruction. Things may be left that you think little things, and you may wonder why you do not feel as you wish to feel in religion, when the reason is that your proud and carnal mind has covered up something which God required you to confess and remove. Break up all the ground and turn it over. Do not "balk" it, as the farmers say; do not turn aside for little difficulties; drive the plow right through them, beam deep, and turn the ground up, so that it may all be mellow and soft, and fit to receive the seed and bear fruit "an hundredfold."

When you have gone over your whole history in this way, thoroughly, if you will then go over the ground the second time, and give your solemn and fixed attention to it, you will find that the things you have put down will suggest other things of which you have been guilty, connected with them, or near them. Then go over it a third time, and you will recollect other things connected with these. And you will find in the end that you can remember can amount of history, and particular actions, even in this life, which you did not think you would remember in eternity. Unless you take up your sins in this way, and consider them in detail, one by one, you can form no idea of the amount of them. You should go over the list as thoroughly, and as carefully, and as solemnly, as you would if you were just preparing yourself for the Judgment.

As you go over the catalogue of your sins, be sure to resolve upon present and entire reformation. Wherever you find anything wrong, resolve at once, in the strength of God, to sin no more in that way. It will be of no benefit to examine yourself, unless you determine to amend in every particular that which you find wrong in heart, temper, or conduct.

If you find, as you go on with this duty, that your mind is still all dark, cast about you, and you will find there is some reason for the Spirit of God to depart from you. You have not been faithful and thorough. In the progress of such a work you have got to do violence to yourself and bring yourself as a rational being up to this work, with the Bible before you, and try your heart till you do feel. You need not expect that God will work a miracle for you to break up your fallow ground. It is to be done by means.

Fasten your attention to the subject of your sins. You cannot look at your sins long and thoroughly and see how bad they are, without feeling, and feeling deeply. Experience fully proves the benefit

of going over our history in this way. Set yourself to the work now; resolve that you never will stop till you find you can pray. You never will have the Spirit of God dwelling in you till you have unraveled this whole mystery of iniquity, and spread out your sins before God. Let there be this deep work of repentance and full confession, this breaking down before God, and you will have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can bear up under.

The reason why so few Christians know anything about the spirit of prayer is because they never would take the pains to examine themselves properly, and so never knew what it was to have their hearts all broken up in this way.

You see I have only begun to lay open this subject. I want to lay it out before you, in the course of these lectures, so that if you will begin and go on to do as I say, the results will be just as certain as they are when a farmer breaks up a fallow field, and mellows it, and sows his grain. It will be so, if you will only begin in this way and hold it on till all your hardened and callous hearts break up.

REMARKS.

1. It will do no good to preach to you while your hearts are in this hardened, and waste, and fallow state. The farmer might just as well sow his grain on the rock. It will bring forth no fruit. This is the reason why there are so many fruitless professors in the Church, and why there is so much outside machinery and so little deep-toned feeling. Look at the Sabbath-school, for instance, and see how much machinery there is and how little of the power of godliness. If you go on in this way the Word of God will continue to harden you, and you will grow worse and worse, just as the rain and snow on an old fallow field make the turf thicker and the clods stronger.

2. See why so much preaching is wasted, and worse than wasted. It is because the Church will not break up their fallow ground. A preacher may wear out his life, and do very little good, while there are so many "stony-ground" hearers, who have never had their fallow ground broken up. They are only half converted, and their religion is rather a change of opinion than a change of the feeling of their hearts. There is mechanical religion enough but very little that looks like deep heart-work.

3. Professors of religion should never satisfy themselves, or expect a revival, just by starting out of their slumbers, and blustering about, and talking to sinners. They must get their fallow ground broken up. It is utterly unphilosophical to think of getting engaged in religion in this way.

If your fallow ground is broken up, then the way to get more feeling is to go out and see sinners on the road to hell, and talk to them, and guide inquiring souls, and you will get more feeling. You may get into an excitement without this breaking up; you may show a kind of zeal, but it will not last long, and it will not take hold of sinners, unless your hearts are broken up. The reason is, that you go about it mechanically, and have not broken up your fallow ground.

4. And now, finally, will you break up your fallow ground? Will you enter upon the course now pointed out and persevere till you are thoroughly awake? If you fail here, if you do not do this, and get prepared, you can go no farther with me. I have gone with you as far as it is of any use to go until your fallow ground is broken up. Now, you must make thorough work upon this point, or all I have further to say will do you little good.

Nay, it will only harden, and make you worse. If, when next Lecture-night arrives it finds you with unbroken hearts, you need not expect to be benefitted by what I shall say. If you do not set about

this work immediately I shall take it for granted that you do not mean to be revived, that you have forsaken your minister, and mean to let him go up to battle alone. If you do not do this, I charge you with having forsaken Christ, with refusing to repent and do your first works. But if you will be prepared to enter upon the work, I propose, God willing, in the next Lecture, to lead you into the work of saving sinners.

05.04. PREVAILING PRAYER

LECTURE IV

PREVAILING PRAYER

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.- Jas 5:16.

There are two kinds of means requisite to promote a revival: the one to influence man, the other to influence God. The truth is employed to influence men, and prayer to move God. When I speak of moving God, I do not mean that God's mind is changed by prayer, or that His disposition or character is changed. But prayer produces such a change in us as renders it consistent for God to do as it would not be consistent for Him to do otherwise. When a sinner repents, that state of feeling makes it proper for God to forgive him. God has always been ready to forgive him on that condition, so that when the sinner changes his feelings and repents, it requires no change of feeling in God to pardon him. It is the sinners repentance that renders His forgiveness proper, and is the occasion of God's acting as he does. So when Christians offer effectual prayer, their state of feeling renders it proper for God to answer them. He was never unwilling to bestow the blessing - on the condition that they felt aright, and offered the right kind of prayer.

Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival, as much so as truth is. Some have zealously used truth to convert men, and laid very little stress on prayer. They have preached, and talked, and distributed tracts with great zeal, and then wondered that they had so little success. And the reason was, that they forgot to use the other branch of the means, effectual prayer. They overlooked the fact that truth, by itself, will never produce the effect, without the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit is given in answer to prayer.

Sometimes it happens that those who are the most engaged in employing truth are not the most engaged in prayer. This is always unhappy. For unless they have the spirit of prayer (or unless some one else has), the truth, by itself will do nothing but harden men in impenitence. Probably in the Day of Judgment it will be found that nothing is ever done by the truth, used ever so zealously, unless there is a spirit of prayer somewhere in connection with the presentation of truth.

Others err in the reverse direction. Not that they lay too much stress on prayer. But they overlook the fact that prayer might be offered for ever, by itself, and nothing would be done. Because sinners are not converted by direct contact of the Holy Ghost, but by the truth, employed as a means.

To expect the conversion of sinners by prayer alone, without the employment of truth, is to tempt God.

Our subject being Prevailing Prayer, I propose: -

I. To show what is effectual or prevailing prayer.

II. To state some of the most essential attributes of prevailing prayer.

III. To give some reasons why God requires this kind of prayer.

IV. To show that such prayer will avail much.

I. WHAT PREVAILING PRAYER IS.

Effectual, prevailing prayer, does not consist in benevolent desires alone

1. Benevolent desires are doubtless pleasing to God. Such desires pervade heaven and are found in all holy beings. But they are not prayer. Men may have these desires as the angels and glorified spirits have them. But this is not the effectual, prevailing prayer spoken of in the text. Prevailing prayer is something more than this.

2. Prevailing, or effectual prayer, is that prayer which attains the blessing that it seeks. It is that prayer which effectually moves God. The very idea of effectual prayer is that it effects its object.

II. ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF PREVAILING PRAYER.

I cannot detail in full all the things that go to make up prevailing prayer.

But I will mention some things that are essential to it; some things which a person must do in order to prevail in prayer.

1. He must pray for a definite object. He need not expect to offer such prayer if he prays at random, without any distinct or definite object. He must have an object distinctly before his mind. I speak now of secret prayer. Many people go away into their rooms alone "to pray," simply because "they must say their prayers." The time has come when they are in the habit of going by themselves for prayer - in the morning, or at noon, or at whatever time of day it may be. But instead of having anything to say, any definite object before their mind, they fall down on their knees and pray for just what comes into their minds - for everything that floats in the imagination at the time, and when they have done they can hardly tell a word of what they have been praying for. This is not effectual prayer. What should we think of anybody who should try to move a Legislature so, and should say: "Now it is winter, and the Legislature is in session, and it is time to send up petitions," and should go up to the Legislature and petition at random, without any definite object? Do you think such petitions would move the Legislature?

A man must have some definite object before his mind. He cannot pray effectually for a variety of objects at once. The mind is so constituted that it cannot fasten its desires intensely upon many things at the same time.

All the instances of effectual prayer recorded in the Bible are of this kind.

Wherever you see that the blessing sought for in prayer was attained, you will find that the prayer which was offered was prayer for that definite object.

2. Prayer, to be effectual, must be in accordance with the revealed will of God. To pray for things contrary to the revealed will of God, is to tempt God. There are three ways in which God’s will is revealed to men for their guidance in prayer.

(a) By express promises or predictions in the Bible, that He will give or do certain things; promises in regard to particular things, or in general terms, so that we may apply them to particular things.

For instance, there is this promise: "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

(b) Sometimes God reveals His will by His Providence. When He makes it clear that such and such events are about to take place, it is as much a revelation as if He had written it in His Word. It would be impossible to reveal everything in the Bible. But God often makes it clear to those who have spiritual discernment that it is His will to grant such and such blessings.

(c) By His Spirit. When God's people are at a loss what to pray for, agreeable to His will, His Spirit often instructs them. Where there is no particular revelation, and Providence leaves it dark, and we know not what to pray for as we ought, we are expressly told that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," and "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom 8:26). A great deal has been said on the subject of praying in faith for things not revealed. It is objected that this doctrine implies a new revelation. I answer that, new or old, it is the very revelation that Jehovah says He makes. It is just as plain here as if it were now revealed by a voice from heaven, that the Spirit of God helps the people of God to pray according to the will of God, when they themselves know not what they ought to pray for. "And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:27); and He leads Christians to pray for just those things, "with groanings which cannot be uttered." When neither the Word nor Providence enables them to decide, let them be "filled with the Spirit," as God commands them to be. He says: "Be filled with the Spirit"

(Eph 5:18). And He will lead their minds to such things as God is willing to grant.

3. To pray effectually you must pray with submission to the will of God.

Do not confound submission with indifference. No two things are more unlike. I once knew an individual come where there was a revival. He himself was cold, and did not enter into the spirit of it, and had no spirit of prayer; and when he heard the brethren pray as if they could not be denied, he was shocked at their boldness, and kept all the time insisting on the importance of praying with submission; when it was as plain as anything could be that he confounded submission with indifference.

Again, do not confound submission in prayer with a general confidence that God will do what is right. It is proper to have this confidence that God will do right in all things. But this is a different thing from submission. What I mean by submission in prayer is, acquiescence in the revealed will of God. To submit to any command of God is to obey it.

Submission to some supposable or possible, but secret, decree of God is not submission. To submit to any dispensation of Providence is impossible till it comes. For we never can know what the event is to be, till it takes place.

Take a case: David, when his child was sick, was distressed, and agonized in prayer, and refused to be comforted. He took it so much to heart that when the child died his servants were afraid to tell him. But as soon as he heard that the child was dead, he laid aside his grief, and arose, and asked for food, and ate and drank as usual. While the child was yet alive he did not know what was the will of God, and so he fasted and prayed, and said: "Who can tell whether God will be

gracious to me, that my child may live"? He did not know but that his prayer, his agony, was the very thing on which it turned, whether the child was to live or not. He thought that if he humbled himself and entreated God, perhaps God would spare him this blow. But as soon as God's will appeared, and the child was dead, he bowed like a saint. He seemed not only to acquiesce, but actually to take a satisfaction in it. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me"(2Sa 12:15-23). This was true submission. He reasoned correctly in the case. While he had no revelation of the will of God he did not know but that the child's recovery depended on his prayer. But when he had a revelation of the will of God he submitted. While the will of God is not known, to submit, without prayer, is tempting God. Perhaps, and for aught you know, the fact of your offering the right kind of prayer may be the thing on which the event turns. In the case of an impenitent friend, the very condition on which he is to be saved from hell may be the fervency and importunity of your prayer for that individual.

4. Effectual prayer for an object implies a desire for that object commensurate with its importance. If a person truly desires any blessing, his desires will bear some proportion to the greatness of the blessing. The desires of the Lord Jesus Christ for the blessing He prayed for were amazingly strong, amounting even to agony. If the desire for an object is strong, and is a benevolent desire, and the thing is not contrary to the will and providence of God, the presumption is that it will be granted. There are two reasons for this presumption:

(a) From the general benevolence of God. If it is a desirable object; if, so far as we can see, it would be an act of benevolence in God to grant it, His general benevolence is presumptive evidence that He will grant it.

(b) If you find yourself exercised with benevolent desires for any object, there is a strong presumption that the Spirit of God is exciting these very desires, and stirring you up to pray for that object, so that it may be granted in answer to prayer. In such a case no degree of desire or importunity in prayer is improper. A Christian may come up, as it were, and take hold of the hand of God. See the case of Jacob, when he exclaimed, in an agony of desire: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me" (Gen 32:26) Was God displeased with his boldness and importunity? Not at all; but He granted him the very thing he prayed for.

So in the case of Moses. God said to him: "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation" (Exo 32:10). What did Moses do? Did he stand aside and let God do as He said? No; his mind runs back to the Egyptians, and he thinks how they will triumph. "Wherefore should the Egyptians say, For mischief did He bring them out?" It seemed as if he took hold of the uplifted hand of God, to avert the blow. Did God rebuke him and tell him he had no business to interfere? No; it seemed as if He was unable to deny anything to such importunity, and so Moses stood in the gap, and prevailed with God.

Prevailing prayer is often offered in the present day, when Christians have been wrought up to such a pitch of importunity and such a holy boldness afterwards when they looked back upon it, they were frightened and amazed at themselves, to think they should have dared to exercise such importunity with God. And yet these prayers have prevailed, and obtained the blessing. And many of these persons, with whom I am acquainted, are among the holiest persons I know in the world

5. Prayer, to be effectual, must be offered from right motives. Prayer should not be selfish, but should be dictated by a supreme regard for the glory of God. A great deal is offered from pure selfishness. Women sometimes pray for their husbands, that they may be converted, because, they say: "It would be so much more pleasant to have my husband go to Church with me," and all that. And they seem never to lift up their thoughts above self at all. They do not seem to think how their husbands are dishonoring God by their sins, nor how God would be glorified in their conversion. So it is very often with parents. They cannot bear to think that their children should be lost. They pray for them very earnestly indeed. But if you talk with them upon the subject they are very tender about it and tell you how good their children are - how they respect religion, and how they are, indeed, "almost Christians now"; and so they talk as if they were afraid you would hurt their children by simply telling them the truth. They do not think how such amiable and lovely children are dishonoring God by their sins; they are only thinking what a dreadful thing it will be for them to go to hell. Unless their thoughts rise higher than this, their prayers will never prevail with a holy God.

The temptation to selfish motives is so strong that there is reason to fear a great many parental prayers never rise above the yearnings of parental tenderness. And that is the reason why so many prayers are not answered and why so many pious, praying parents have ungodly children. Much of the prayer for the heathen world seems to be based on no higher principle than sympathy. Missionary agents and others are dwelling almost exclusively upon the six hundred millions of heathens going to hell, while little is said of their dishonoring God. This is a great evil, and until the Church learns to have higher motives for prayer and missionary effort than sympathy for the heathen, her prayers and efforts will never amount to much.

6. Prayer, to be effectual, must be by the intercession of the Spirit. You never can expect to offer prayer according to the will of God without the Spirit. In the first two cases, it is not because Christians are unable to offer such prayer, where the will of God is revealed in His Word or indicated by His providence. They are able to do it, just as they are able to be holy. But the fact is, that they are so wicked that they never do offer such prayer, unless they are influenced by the Spirit of God. There must be a faith, such as is produced by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost.

7. It must be persevering prayer. As a general thing, Christians who have backslidden and lost the spirit of prayer, will not get at once into the habit of persevering prayer. Their minds are not in a right state, and they cannot fix their thoughts so as to hold on till the blessing comes. If their minds were in that state in which they would persevere till the answer came, effectual prayer might be offered at once, as well as after praying ever so many times for an object. But they have to pray again and again, because their thoughts are so apt to wander away and are so easily diverted from the object.

Most Christians come up to prevailing prayer by a protracted process. Their minds gradually become filled with anxiety about an object, so that they will even go about their business sighing out their desires to God.

Just as the mother whose child is sick goes round her house sighing as if her heart would break. And if she is a praying mother, her sighs are breathed out to God all the day long. If she goes out of the room where her child is, her mind is still on it; and if she is asleep, still her thoughts are on it,

and she starts in her dreams, thinking that perhaps it may be dying. Her whole mind is absorbed in that sick child. This is the state of mind in which Christians offer prevailing prayer.

For what reason did Jacob wrestle all night in prayer with God? He knew that he had done his brother Esau a great injury, in getting away the birthright, a long time before. And now he was informed that his injured brother was coming to meet him with an armed force, altogether too powerful to contend with. And there was great reason to suppose that Esau was coming with a purpose of revenge. There were two reasons then why Jacob should be distressed. The first was that he had done this great injury and had never made any reparation. The other was that Esau was coming with a force sufficient to crush him. Now what does he do? He first arranges everything in the best manner he can to placate and meet his brother: sending his present first, then his property, then his family, putting those he loved most farthest behind. And by this time his mind was so exercised that he could not contain himself. He goes away alone over the brook and pours out his very soul in an agony of prayer all night.

And just as the day was breaking, the Angel of the Covenant said: "Let me go"; and Jacob's whole being was, as it were, agonized at the thought of giving up, and he cried out: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

His soul was wrought up into an agony, and he obtained the blessing, but he always bore the marks of it, and showed that his body had been greatly affected by this mental struggle. This is prevailing prayer.

Now, do not deceive yourselves with thinking that you offer effectual prayer, unless you have this intense desire for the blessing. I do not believe in it. Prayer is not effectual unless it is offered up with an agony of desire. The apostle Paul speaks of it as a travail of the soul. Jesus Christ, when he was praying in the garden, was in such an agony that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luk 22:44). I have never known a person sweat blood; but I have known a person pray till the blood started from his nose. And I have known persons pray till they were all wet with perspiration, in the coldest weather in winter. I have known persons pray for hours, till their strength was all exhausted with the agony of their minds. Such prayers prevailed with God.

This agony in prayer was prevalent in President Edwards' day, in the revivals which then took place. It was one of the great stumbling blocks in those days to persons who were opposed to the revival, that people used to pray till their body was overpowered with their feelings. I will give a paragraph of what President Edwards says on the subject, to let you see that this is not a new thing in the Church, but has always prevailed wherever revivals prevailed with power. It is from his "Thoughts on Revivals":

"We cannot determine that God shall never give any person so much of a discovery of Himself, not only as to weaken their bodies, but to take away their lives. It is supposed by very learned and judicious divines, that Moses' life was taken away after this manner, and this has also been supposed to be the case with some other saints.

"If God gives a great increase of discoveries of Himself and of love to Him, the benefit is infinitely greater than the calamity, though the life should presently after be taken away....

"There is one particular kind of exercise and concern of mind that many have been empowered by, that has been especially stumbling to some; and that is, the deep concern and distress that they have been in for the souls of others. I am sorry that any put us to the trouble of doing that which seems so needless, as defending such a thing as this. It seems like mere trifling in so plain a case, to enter into a formal and particular debate, in order to determine whether there be anything in the greatness and importance of the case that will answer and bear a proportion to the greatness of the concern that some have manifested. Men may be allowed, from no higher a principle than common ingenuousness and humanity, to be very deeply concerned, and greatly exercised in mind, at seeing others in great danger of no greater a calamity than drowning or being burned up in a house on fire. And if so, then doubtless it will be allowed to be equally reasonable, if they saw them in danger of a calamity ten times greater, to be still much more concerned: and so much more still, if the calamity were still vastly greater. And why, then, should it be thought unreasonable and looked upon with a very suspicious eye, as if it must come from some bad cause, when persons are extremely concerned at seeing others in very great danger of suffering the wrath of Almighty God to all eternity? And besides, it will doubtless be allowed that those that have very great degrees of the Spirit of God, that is, a spirit of love, may well be supposed to have vastly more of love and compassion to their fellow creatures than those that are influenced only by common humanity.

"Why should it be thought strange that those that are full of the Spirit of Christ should be proportionally in their love to souls, like Christ? - who had so strong a love for them, and concern for them, as to be willing to drink the dregs of the cup of God's fury for them; and at the same time that He offered up His blood for souls, offered up also, as their High Priest, strong crying and tears, with an extreme agony, wherein the soul of Christ was, as it were, in travail for the souls of the elect; and, therefore in saving them He is said to 'see of the travail of His soul.' As such a spirit of love to, and concern for, souls was the spirit of Christ, so it is the spirit of the Church; and therefore the Church, in desiring and seeking that Christ might be brought forth in the world, and in the souls of men, is represented (Rev 12:1-2) as 'a woman crying, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.' The spirit of those that have been in distress for the souls of others, so far as I can discern, seems not to be different from that of the apostle, who travailed for souls, and was ready to wish himself accursed from Christ for others (Rom 9:3). Nor from that of the Psalmist (Psa 119:53): 'Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law.' And (Psa 119:136): 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.' Nor from that of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 4:19): 'My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because Thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.' And so Jer 9:1, and Jer 13:17, and Isa 22:4. We read of Mordecai, when he saw his people in danger of being destroyed with a temporal destruction (Est 4:1), that he 'rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry.' And why then should persons be thought to be distracted when they cannot forbear crying out at the consideration of the misery of those that are going to eternal destruction?

I have quoted this to show that this thing was common in the great revivals of those days. It has always been so in all great revivals, and has been more or less common in proportion to the greatness, and extent, and depth of the work. It was so in the great revivals in Scotland, and

multitudes used to be overpowered, and some almost died, by the depth of their agony.

So also, prayer prevailed at Cambuslang, 1741-2, in the revival under William McCulloch and Whitefield. When Whitefield reached Cambuslang he immediately preached, on the braeside, to a vast congregation (on a Tuesday at noon). At six o'clock he preached again, and a third time at nine. Then McCulloch took up the parable and preached till one in the morning, and still the people were unwilling to leave. So many were convicted, crying to God for mercy, that Whitefield described the scene as "a very field of battle." On the ensuing Communion Sunday, Whitefield preached to twenty thousand people; and again on the Monday, when, he said: "you might have seen thousands bathed in tears, some at the same time wringing their hands, others almost swooning, and others crying out and mourning over a pierced Savior. It was like the Passover in Josiah's time." On the voyage from London to Scotland, prior to this campaign, Whitefield had "spent most of his time on board ship in secret prayer." (See Gledstone's "George Whitefield, M.A., Field Preacher.")

8. If you mean to pray effectually, you must pray a great deal. It was said of the Apostle James that after he was dead it was found that his knees were callous, like a camel's knees, by praying so much. Ah, here was the secret of the success of those primitive ministers! They had callous knees!

9. If you intend prayer to be effectual, you must offer it in the name of Christ. You cannot come to God in your own name. You cannot plead your own merits. But you can come in a name that is always acceptable.

You all know what it is to use the name of a man. If you should go to the bank with a draft or note, endorsed by John Jacob Astor, that would be giving you his name, and you know you could get the money from the bank just as well as he could himself. Now, Jesus Christ gives you the use of His name. And when you pray in the name of Christ the meaning of it is, that you can prevail just as well as He could Himself, and receive just as much as God's well beloved Son would if He were to pray Himself for the same things. But you must pray in faith.

10. You cannot prevail in prayer without renouncing all your sins. You must not only recall them to mind, and repent of them, but you must actually renounce them, and leave them off, and in the purpose of your heart renounce them all for ever.

11. You must pray in faith. You must expect to obtain the things for which you ask. You need not look for an answer to prayer, if you pray without any expectation of obtaining it. You are not to form such expectations without any reason for them. In the cases I have supposed, there is a reason for the expectation. In case the thing is revealed in God's Word, if you pray without an expectation of receiving the blessings, you just make God a liar. If the will of God is indicated by His providence, you ought to depend on it, according to the clearness of the indication, so far as to expect the blessing if you pray for it. And if you are led by His Spirit to pray for certain things, you have as much reason to expect those things to be done as if God had revealed it in His Word.

But some say: "Will not this view of the leadings of the Spirit of God lead people into fanaticism?" I answer that I know not but many may deceive themselves in respect to this matter. Multitudes have deceived themselves in regard to all the other points of religion. And if some people should think they are led by the Spirit of God, when it is nothing but their own imagination, is that any reason why those who know that they are led by the Spirit should not follow the Spirit? Many

people suppose themselves to be converted when they are not. Is that any reason why we should not cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ? Suppose some people are deceived in thinking they love God, is that any reason why the pious saint who knows he has the love of God shed abroad in his heart should not give vent to his feelings in songs of praise? Some may deceive themselves in thinking they are led by the Spirit of God. But there is no need of being deceived. If people follow impulses, it is their own fault. I do not want you to follow impulses. I want you to be sober minded, and follow the sober, rational leadings of the Spirit of God. There are those who understand what I mean, and who know very well what it is to give themselves up to the Spirit of God in prayer.

III. WHY GOD REQUIRES SUCH PRAYER.

I will state some of the reasons why these things are essential to effectual prayer. Why does God require such prayer, such strong desires, such agonizing supplications?

1. These strong desires strongly illustrate the strength of God’s feelings.

They are like the real feelings of God for impenitent sinners. When I have seen, as I sometimes have, the amazing strength of love for souls that has been felt by Christians, I have been wonderfully impressed with the amazing love of God, and His desires for their salvation. The case of a certain woman, of whom I read, in a revival, made the greatest impression on my mind. She had such an unutterable compassion and love for souls, that she actually panted for breath. What must be the strength of the desire which God feels, when His Spirit produces in Christians such amazing agony, such throes of soul, such travail - God has chosen the best word to express it: it is travail - travail of the soul.

I have seen a man of as much strength of intellect and muscle as any man in the community fall down prostrate, absolutely overpowered by his unutterable desires for sinners. I know this is a stumbling block to many; and it always will be as long as there remain in the Church so many blind and stupid professors of religion. But I cannot doubt that these things are the work of the Spirit of God. Oh, that the whole Church could be so filled with the Spirit as to travail in prayer, till a nation should be born in a day!

It is said in the Word of God that "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth" (Isa 66:8). What does that mean? I asked a professor of religion this question once. He was taking exception to our ideas of effectual prayer, and I asked what he supposed was meant by Zion’s travailing.

"Oh," said he, "it means that as soon as the Church shall walk together in the fellowship of the Gospel, then it will be said that Zion travels! This walking together is called traveling." Not the same term, you see.

2. These strong desires that I have described are the natural results of great benevolence and clear views regarding the danger of sinners. It is perfectly reasonable that it should be so. If the women who are present should look up yonder and see a family burning to death in a fire and hear their shrieks, and behold their agony, they would feel distressed, and it is very likely that many of them would faint away with agony. And nobody would wonder at it, or say they were fools or crazy to feel so much distressed at such an awful sight. It would be thought strange if there were not some expressions of powerful feeling. Why is it any wonder, then, if Christians should feel as I have described when they have clear views of the state of sinners, and the awful danger they are

in? The fact is, that those individuals who never have felt so have never felt much real benevolence, and their piety must be of a very superficial character. I do not mean to judge harshly, or to speak unkindly, but I state it as a simple matter of fact; and people may talk about it as they please, but I know such piety is superficial. This is not censoriousness, but plain truth.

People sometimes "wonder at Christians having such feelings." Wonder at what? Why, at the natural, and philosophical, and necessary results of deep piety towards God, and deep benevolence towards man, in view of the great danger they see sinners to be in.

3. The soul of a Christian, when it is thus burdened, must have relief. God rolls this weight upon the soul of a Christian, for the purpose of bringing him nearer to Himself. Christians are often so unbelieving that they will not exercise proper faith in God till He rolls this burden upon them so heavily that they cannot live under it, but must go to Him for relief. It is like the case of many a convicted sinner. God is willing to receive him at once, if he will come right to Him, with faith in Jesus Christ. But the sinner will not come. He hangs back, and struggles, and groans under the burden of his sins, and will not throw himself upon God, till his burden of conviction becomes so great that he can live no longer; and when he is driven to desperation, as it were, and feels as if he were ready to sink into hell, he makes a mighty plunge, and throws himself upon God’s mercy as his only hope. It was his duty to come before. God had no delight in his distress, for its own sake.

So, when professors of religion get loaded down with the weight of souls, they often pray again and again, and yet the burden is not gone, nor their distress abated, because they have never thrown it all upon God in faith.

But they cannot get rid of the burden. So long as their benevolence continues, it will remain and increase; and unless they resist and quench the Holy Ghost, they can get no relief, until, at length, when they are driven to extremity, they make a desperate effort, roll the burden upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and exercise a child-like confidence in Him. Then they feel relieved; then they feel as if the soul they were praying for would be saved. The burden is gone, and God seems in kindness to soothe the mind with a sweet assurance that the blessing will be granted. Often, after a Christian has had this struggle, this agony in prayer, and has obtained relief in this way, you will find the sweetest and most heavenly affections flow out - the soul rests sweetly and gloriously in God, and rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Do any of you think that there are no such things now in the experience of believers? If I had time, I could show you, from President Edwards and other approved writers, cases and descriptions just like this. Do you ask why we never have such things here? I tell you it is not at all because you are so much wiser than Christians are in rural districts, or because you have so much more intelligence or more enlarged views of the nature of religion, or a more stable and well regulated piety. I tell you, no; instead of priding yourselves in being free from such extravagances, you ought to hide your heads, because Christians in the city are so worldly, and have so much starch, and pride, and fashion, that they cannot come down to such spirituality as this. I wish it could be so. Oh, that there might be such a spirit in this city and in this Church! I know it would make a noise if we had such things done here. But I would not care for that. Let them say, if they please, that the folks in Chatham Chapel 20 are getting deranged. We need not be afraid of that, if we live near enough to God to enjoy His Spirit in the manner I have described.

4. These effects of the spirit of prayer upon the body are themselves no part of religion. It is only that the body is often so weak that the feelings of the soul overpower it. These bodily effects are not at all essential to prevailing prayer; but are only a natural or physical result of highly excited emotions of the mind. It is not at all unusual for the body to be weakened, and even overcome, by any powerful emotion of the mind, on other subjects besides religion. The doorkeeper of Congress, in the time of the Revolution, fell down dead on the reception of some highly cheering intelligence. I knew a woman in Rochester who was in a great agony of prayer for the conversion of her son-in-law. One morning he was at an anxious meeting, and she remained at home praying for him. At the close of the meeting he came home a convert, and she was so rejoiced that she fell down and died on the spot. It is no more strange that these effects should be produced by religion than by strong feeling on any other subject.

It is not essential to prayer, but is the natural result of great efforts of the mind.

5. Doubtless one great reason why God requires the exercise of this agonizing prayer is, that it forms such a bond of union between Christ and the Church. It creates such a sympathy between them. It is as if Christ came and poured the overflowings of His own benevolent heart into His people, and led them to sympathize and to cooperate with Him as they never do in any other way. They feel just as Christ feels - so full of compassion for sinners that they cannot contain themselves. Thus it is often with those ministers who are distinguished for their success in preaching to sinners; they often have such compassion, such overflowing desires for their salvation, that these are shown in their speaking, and their preaching, just as though Jesus Christ spoke through them. The words come from their lips fresh and warm, as if from the very heart of Christ. I do not mean that He dictates their words; but He excites the feelings that give utterance to them. Then you see a movement in the hearers, as if Christ Himself spoke through lips of clay.

6. This travailing in birth for souls creates also a remarkable bond of union between warm-hearted Christians and the young converts. Those who are converted appear very dear to the hearts that have had this spirit of prayer for them. The feeling is like that of a mother for her first-born. Paul expresses it beautifully when he says: "My little children!" His heart was warm and tender to them. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again" - they had backslidden, and he has all the agonies of a parent over a wandering child - "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"

(Gal 4:19); "Christ, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). In a revival, I have often noticed how those who had the spirit of prayer, loved the young converts. I know this is all so much algebra to those who have never felt it. But to those who have experienced the agony of wrestling, prevailing prayer, for the conversion of a soul, you may depend upon it, that soul, after it is converted, appears as dear as a child is to the mother. He has agonized for it, received it in answer to prayer, and can present it before the Lord Jesus Christ, saying: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me" (Isa 8:18. See also Heb 2:13).

7. Another reason why God requires this sort of prayer is, that it is the only way in which the Church can be properly prepared to receive great blessings without being injured by them. When the Church is thus prostrated in the dust before God, and is in the depth of agony in prayer, the blessing does them good. While at the same time, if they had received the blessing without this deep prostration of soul, it would have puffed them up with pride. But as it is, it increases their holiness, their love, their humility.

IV. SUCH PRAYER WILL AVAIL MUCH.

The prophet Elijah mourned over the declensions of the house of Israel, and when he saw that no other means were likely to be effectual, to prevent a perpetual going away into idolatry, he prayed that the judgments of God might come upon the guilty nation. He prayed that it might not rain, and God shut up the heavens for three years and six months, till the people were driven to the last extremity. And when he sees that it is time to relent what does he do? See him go up to the mountain and bow down in prayer. He wished to be alone; and he told his servant to go seven times, while he was agonizing in prayer. The last time, the servant told him that a little cloud had appeared, like a man's hand, and he instantly arose from his knees - the blessing was obtained. The time had come for the calamity to be turned back. "Ah, but," you say, "Elijah was a prophet." Now, do not make this objection. They made it in the apostle's days, and what does the apostle say? Why he brought forward this very instance, and the fact that Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves, as a case of prevailing prayer, and insisted that they should pray so too (1Ki 17:1, 1Ki 18:41-45; Jas 5:17).

John Knox was a man famous for his power in prayer, so that Queen Mary of England used to say that she feared his prayers more than all the armies of Europe. And events showed that she had reason to do it. He used to be in such an agony for the deliverance of his country, that he could not sleep. He had a place in his garden where he used to go to pray.

One night he and several friends were praying together, and as they prayed, Knox spoke and said that deliverance had come. 21 He could not tell what had happened, but he felt that something had taken place, for God had heard their prayers. What was it? Why, the next news they had was, that Mary was dead!

Take a fact which was related in my hearing by a minister. He said that in a certain town there had been no revival for many years; the Church was nearly extinct, the youth were all unconverted, and desolation reigned unbroken. There lived in a retired part of the town, an aged man, a blacksmith by trade, and of so stammering a tongue that it was painful to hear him speak. On one Friday, as he was at work in his shop, alone, his mind became greatly exercised about the state of the Church and of the impenitent. His agony became so great that he was induced to lay by his work, lock the shop door, and spend the afternoon in prayer.

He prevailed, and on the Sabbath called on the minister and desired him to appoint a "conference meeting." After some hesitation, the minister consented; observing however, that he feared but few would attend. He appointed it the same evening at a large private house. When evening came, more assembled than could be accommodated in the house. All were silent for a time, until one sinner broke out in tears, and said, if any one could pray, would he pray for him? Another followed, and another, and still another, until it was found that persons from every quarter of the town were under deep conviction. And what was remarkable was, that they all dated their conviction at the hour that the old man was praying in his shop. A powerful revival followed. Thus this old stammering man prevailed, and as a prince had power with God.

REMARKS.

1. A great deal of prayer is lost, and many people never prevail in prayer, because, when they have desires for particular blessings, they do not follow them up. They may have desires,

benevolent and pure, which are excited by the Spirit of God; and when they have them, they should persevere in prayer, for if they turn off their attention, they will quench the Spirit. When you find these holy desires in your minds:

(a) Do not quench the Spirit;

(b) Do not be diverted to other objects. Follow the leadings of the Spirit till you have offered that "effectual fervent prayer" that "availeth much" (Jas 5:16).

2. Without the spirit of prayer, ministers will do but little good. A minister need not expect much success unless he prays for it. Sometimes others may have the spirit of prayer and obtain a blessing on his labors. Generally, however, those preachers are the most successful who have most of the spirit of prayer themselves.

3. Not only must ministers have the spirit of prayer, but it is necessary that the Church should unite in offering that effectual fervent prayer which can prevail with God. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it" (Eze 36:37).

Now I have only to ask you, in regard to what I have set forth: "Will you do it?" Have you done what I said to you at the last Lecture? Have you gone over your sins, and confessed them, and got them all out of the way?

Can you pray now? And will you join and offer prevailing prayer that the Spirit of God may come down here?

Chapter 93

05.05. THE PRAYER OF FAITH

LECTURE V

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them . - Mark 11:24.

These words have been by some supposed to refer exclusively to the faith of miracles. But there is not the least evidence of this. That the text was not designed by our Savior to refer exclusively to the faith of miracles, is proved by the connection in which it stands. If you read the chapter, you will see that Christ and His apostles, as they returned from their place of retirement in the morning, faint and hungry, saw a fig tree at a little distance. It looked very beautiful, and doubtless gave signs of having fruit on it; but when they came nigh, they found nothing on it but leaves. And Jesus said: "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it" (Mark 11:14).

"And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.

"And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursed is withered away.

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

"For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith"(Mark 11:20-23).

Then follow the words of the text: "Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Our Savior was desirous of giving His disciples instructions respecting the nature and power of prayer, and the necessity of strong faith in God. He therefore stated a very strong case, a miracle - one so great as the removal of a mountain into the sea. And He tells them, that if they exercise a proper faith in God, they might do such things. But His remarks are not to be limited to faith merely in regard to working miracles, for he goes on to say:

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (25, 26).

Does that relate to miracles? When you pray, you must forgive. Is that required only when a man wishes to work a miracle? There are many other promises in the Bible nearly related to this, and speaking nearly the same language, which have been all disposed of in this way, as referring to the faith employed in miracles. Just as if the faith of miracles was something different from faith in God!

In my last Lecture I dwelt upon the subject of Prevailing Prayer; and you will recollect that I passed over the subject of faith in prayer very briefly, because I wished to reserve it for a separate discussion. The subject of the present Lecture, then, is The Prayer of Faith. I propose to show:É

I. That faith is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer.

II. What it is that we are to believe when we pray.

III. When we are bound to exercise this faith, or to believe that we shall receive the thing we ask for

IV. That this kind of faith in prayer always does obtain the blessing sought.

I also propose:

V. to explain how we are to come into the state of mind in which we can exercise such faith; and,

VI. to answer several objections, which are sometimes alleged against these views of prayer.

I. FAITH AN INDISPENSABLE CONDITION.

That this is so will not be seriously doubted. There is such a thing as offering benevolent desires, which are acceptable to God as such, that do not include the exercise of faith in regard to the actual reception of those blessings. But such desires are not prevailing prayer, the prayer of faith.

God may see fit to grant the things desired, as an act of kindness and love, but it would not be properly in answer to prayer. I am speaking now of the kind of faith that ensures the blessing. Do not understand me as saying that there is nothing in prayer that is acceptable to God, or that even obtains the blessing sometimes, without this kind of faith. But I am speaking of the faith which secures the very blessing it seeks. To prove that faith is indispensable to prevailing prayer, it is only necessary to repeat what the apostle James expressly tells us: "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" (Jas 1:5-6).

II. WHAT WE ARE TO BELIEVE WHEN WE PRAY.

1. We are to believe in the existence of God. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" - and in His willingness to answer prayer - "that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6). There are many who believe in the existence of God, but do not believe in the efficacy of prayer. They profess to believe in God, but deny the necessity or influence of prayer.

2. We are to believe that we shall receive - something - what? Not something, or anything, as it happens; but some particular thing we ask for. We are not to think that God is such a Being, that if we ask a fish He will give us a serpent; or if we ask bread, He will give us a stone. But he says: "What things so ever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." With respect to the faith of miracles, it is plain that the disciples were bound to believe they should receive just what they asked for - that the very thing itself should come to pass.

That is what they were to believe. Now, what ought men to believe in regard to other blessings? Is it a mere loose idea, that if a man prays for a specific blessing, God will by some mysterious Sovereignty give something or other to him, or something to somebody else, somewhere?

When a man prays for his children's conversion, is he to believe that either his children will be converted or somebody else's children - it is altogether uncertain which? No, this is utter nonsense, and highly dishonorable to God. We are to believe that we shall receive the very things that we ask for.

III. WHEN ARE WE BOUND TO MAKE THIS PRAYER?

When are we bound to believe that we shall have the very things we pray for? I answer "When we have evidence of it." Faith must always have evidence. A man cannot believe a thing, unless he sees something which he supposes to be evidence. He is under no obligation to believe, and has no right to believe, a thing will be done, unless he has evidence. It is the height of fanaticism to believe without evidence. The kinds of evidence a man may have are the following:

1. Suppose that God has especially promised the thing. As, for instance, when God says He is more ready to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than parents are to give bread to their children. Here we are bound to believe that we shall receive it when we pray for it. You have no right to put an if, and say, "Lord, if it be Thy will, give us Thy Holy Spirit." This is to insult God. To put an if into God's promise, where God has put none, is tantamount to charging God with being insincere. It is like saying: "O God, if Thou art in earnest in making these promises, grant us the blessing we pray for."

I heard of a case where a young convert was the means of teaching a minister a solemn truth on the subject of prayer. She was from a very wicked family, but went to live at a minister's house. While there she was hopefully converted. One day she went to the minister's study while he was there - a thing she was not in the habit of doing; and he thought there must be something the matter with her. So he asked her to sit down, and kindly inquired into the state of her religious feelings. She then told him that she was distressed at the manner in which the older Church members prayed for the Spirit. They would pray for the Holy Spirit to come, and would seem to be very much in earnest, and plead the promises of God, and then say: "O Lord, if it be Thy will, grant us these blessings for Christ's sake." She thought that saying "If it be Thy will," when God had expressly promised it was questioning whether God was sincere in His promises. The minister tried to reason her out of it, and he succeeded in confounding her. But she was distressed and filled with grief, and said: "I cannot argue the point with you, sir, but it is impressed on my mind that it is wrong, and dishonoring to God." And she went away, weeping with anguish. The minister saw she was not satisfied, and it led him to look at the matter again; and finally he saw that it was putting in an if where God had put none, but where He had revealed His will expressly; and he saw that it was an insult to God. Thereupon he went and told his people they were bound to believe that God was in earnest when He made them a promise. And the spirit of prayer came down upon that Church, and a most powerful revival followed.

2. Where there is a general promise in the Scriptures which you may reasonably apply to the particular case before you. If its real meaning includes the particular thing for which you pray, or if you can reasonably apply the principle of the promise to the case, there you have evidence.

For instance, suppose it is a time when wickedness prevails greatly, and you are led to pray for God’s interference. What promise have you? Why, this one: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa 59:19). Here you see a general promise, laying down a principle of God’s administration, which you may apply to the case before you, as a warrant for exercising faith in prayer. And if the inquiry is made as to the time in which God will grant blessings in answer to prayer, you have this promise: "While they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa 65:24).

There are general promises and principles laid down in the Bible which Christians might make use of, if they would only think. Whenever you are in circumstances to which the promises or principles apply, there you are to use them. A parent finds this promise: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (Psa 103:17-18). Now, here is a promise made to those who possess a certain character. If any parent is conscious that this is his character, he has a rightful ground to apply it to himself and his family. If you are this character, you are bound to make use of this promise in prayer, and believe it, even to your children’s children.

I could go from one end of the Bible to the other, and produce an astonishing variety of texts that are applicable as promises; enough to prove, that in whatever circumstances a child of God may be placed, God has provided in the Bible some promise, either general or particular, which He can apply, that is precisely suited to his case. Many of God’s promises are very broad, on purpose to cover much ground. What can be broader than the promise in our text: "What things so ever ye desire when ye pray"? What praying Christian is there who has not been surprised at the length and breadth and fullness, of the promises of God, when the Spirit has applied them to his heart? Who that lives a life of prayer has not wondered at his own blindness, in not having before seen and felt the extent of meaning and richness of those promises, when viewed under the light of the Spirit of God? At such times he has been astonished at his own ignorance, and found the Spirit applying the promises and declarations of the Bible in a sense in which he had never before dreamed of their being applicable.

The manner in which the apostles applied the promises, and prophecies, and declarations of the Old Testament, places in a strong light the breadth of meaning, and fullness, and richness of the Word of God. He that walks in the light of God’s countenance, and is filled with the Spirit of God as he ought to be, will often make an appropriation of promises to himself, and an application of them to his own circumstances, and the circumstances of those for whom he prays, that a blind professor of religion would never dream of making.

3. Where there is any prophetic declaration that the thing prayed for is agreeable to the will of God. When it is plain from prophecy that the event is certainly to come, you are bound to believe it, and to make it the ground for your special faith in prayer. If the time is not specified in the Bible, and there is no evidence from other sources, you are not bound to believe that it shall take place now, or immediately. But if the time is specified, or if the time may be learned from the study of the prophecies, and it appears to have arrived, then Christians are under obligation to understand and apply it, by offering the prayer of faith. For instance, take the case of Daniel, in regard to the return of the Jews from captivity. What does he say? "I Daniel understood by books the number of the

years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan 9:2). Here he learned from books; that is, he studied his Bible, and in that way understood that the length of the captivity was to be seventy years.

What does he do then? Does he sit down upon the promise, and say: "God has pledged Himself to put an end to the captivity in seventy years, and the time has expired, and there is no need of doing anything"? Oh, no.

He says: "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan 9:3). He set himself at once to pray that the thing might be accomplished. He prayed in faith. But what was he to believe? What he had learned from the prophecy. There are many prophecies yet unfulfilled, in the Bible, which Christians are bound to understand, as far as they are capable of understanding them, and then make them the basis of believing prayer. Do not think, as some seem to do, that because a thing is foretold in prophecy it is not necessary to pray for it, or that it will come whether Christians pray for it or not. God says, in regard to this very class of events, which are revealed in prophecy: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Eze 36:37).

4. When the signs of the times, or the providence of God, indicate that a particular blessing is about to be bestowed, we are bound to believe it. The Lord Jesus Christ blamed the Jews, and called them hypocrites, because they did not understand the indications of Providence. They could understand the signs of the weather, and see when it was about to rain, and when it would be fair weather; but they could not see, from the signs of the times, that the time had come for the Messiah to appear, and build up the house of God. There are many professors of religion who are always stumbling and hanging back whenever anything is proposed to be done.

They always say: "The time has not come - the time has not come"; when there are others who pay attention to the signs of the times, and who have spiritual discernment to understand them. These pray in faith for the blessing, and it comes.

5. When the Spirit of God is upon you, and excites strong desires for any blessing, you are bound to pray for it in faith. You are bound to infer, from the fact that you find yourself drawn to desire such a thing while in the exercise of such holy affections as the Spirit of God produces, that these desires are the work of the Spirit. People are not apt to desire with the right kind of desires, unless they are excited by the Spirit of God. The apostle refers to these desires, excited by the Spirit, in his Epistle to the Romans, where he says: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). Here, then, if you find yourself strongly drawn to desire a blessing, you are to understand it as an intimation that God is willing to bestow that particular blessing, and so you are bound to believe it. God does not trifle with His children. He does not go and excite in them a desire for one blessing, to turn them off with something else. But He excites the very desires He is willing to gratify. And when they feel such desires, they are bound to follow them out till they get the blessing.

IV. THIS KIND OF FAITH ALWAYS OBTAINS THE OBJECT.

The text is plain here, to show that you shall receive the very thing prayed for. It does not say: "Believe that ye shall receive, and ye shall either have that or something else equivalent to it." To prove that this faith obtains the very blessing that is asked, I observe:

1. That otherwise we could never know whether our prayers were answered. We might continue praying and praying, long after the prayer was answered by some other blessing equivalent to the one for which we asked.

2. If we are not bound to expect the very thing we ask for, it must be that the Spirit of God deceives us. Why should He excite us to desire a certain blessing when He means to grant something else?

3. What is the meaning of this passage: "If his son ask bread, will he give him a stone"? (Mat 7:9). Does not our Savior rebuke the idea that prayer may be answered by giving something else? What encouragement have we to pray for any thing in particular, if we are to ask for one thing and receive another? Suppose a Christian should pray for a revival here - he would be answered by a revival in China! Or he might pray for a revival, and God would send the cholera or an earthquake! All the history of the Church shows that when God answers prayer He gives His people the very thing for which their prayers are offered. God confers other blessings, on both saints and sinners, which they do not pray for at all. He sends His rain both upon the just and the unjust. But when He answers prayer, it is by doing what they ask Him to do. To be sure, He often more than answers prayer. He grants them not only what they ask, but often connects other blessings with it.

4. Perhaps a difficulty may be felt about the prayers of Jesus Christ.

People may ask: "Did not He pray in the garden for the cup to be removed, and was His prayer answered?" I answer that this is no difficulty at all, for the prayer was answered. The cup He prayed to be delivered from was removed. This is what the apostle refers to when he says: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard in that He feared" (Heb 5:7).

Some have supposed that He was praying against the cross, and begging to be delivered from dying on the cross! Did Christ ever shrink from the cross? Never. He came into the world on purpose to die on the cross, and He never shrank from it. But He was afraid He should die in the garden before He came to the cross. The burden on His soul was so great, and produced such an agony that He felt as if He was at the point of dying.

His soul was sorrowful even unto death. But the angel appeared unto Him, strengthening Him. He received the very thing for which He asked; as He says: "I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John 11:42). 22 But there is another case which is often brought up, that of the apostle Paul praying against the "thorn in the flesh." He says: "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." And the Lord answered him: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2Co 12:7-9). It is the opinion of Dr. Clarke and others, that Paul’s prayer was answered in the very thing for which he prayed; that "the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan," of which he speaks, was a false apostle who had distracted and perverted the Church at Corinth; that Paul prayed against his influence, the Lord answering him by the assurance: "My grace is sufficient for thee."

But admitting that Paul's prayer was not answered by the granting of the particular thing for which he prayed, in order to make out this case as an exception to the prayer of faith, they are obliged to assume the very thing to be proved; and that is, that the apostle prayed in faith. There is no reason to suppose that Paul would always pray in faith, any more than that any other Christian does. The very manner in which God answered him shows that it was not in faith. He virtually tells him: "That thorn is necessary for your sanctification, and to keep you from being exalted above measure, I sent it upon you in love, and in faithfulness, and you have no business to pray that I should take it away. LET IT ALONE.

There is not only no evidence that Paul prayed in faith, but a strong presumption that he did not. From the record it is evident that he had nothing on which to repose faith. There was no express promise, no general promise that could be applicable - no providence of God, no prophecy, no teaching of the Spirit, that God would remove this thorn; but the presumption was that God would not remove it, since He had given it for a particular purpose. The prayer appears to have been selfish, praying against a mere personal influence. This was not any personal suffering that retarded his usefulness, but, on the contrary, it was given him to increase his usefulness by keeping him humble; and because on some account he found it inconvenient and mortifying, he set himself to pray out of his own heart, evidently without being led to do so by the Spirit of God. Could Paul pray in faith without being led by the Spirit of God, any more than any other man? And will any one undertake to say that the Spirit of God led him to pray that this might be removed, when God Himself had given it for a particular purpose, which purpose could be answered only as the "thorn" continued with him?

Why, then, is this made an exception to the general rule laid down in the text, that a man shall receive whatsoever he asks in faith? I was once amazed and grieved, at a public examination at a Theological Seminary, to hear them "darken counsel by words without knowledge" on this subject.

This case of Paul, and that of Christ just adverted to, were both of them cited as instances to prove that the prayer of faith would not be answered in the particular thing for which they prayed. Now, to teach such sentiments as these, in or out of a Theological Seminary, is to trifle with the Word of God, and to break the power of the Christian ministry. Has it come to this, that our grave doctors in our seminaries are employed to instruct Zion's watchmen to believe and teach that it is not to be expected that the prayer of faith is to be answered in the granting of the object for which we pray? Oh, tell it not in Gath, nor let the sound reach Askelon!

What is to become of the Church while such are the views of its gravest and most influential ministers? I would be neither unkind nor censorious, but, as one of the ministers of Jesus Christ, I feel bound to bear testimony against such a perversion of the Word of God.

5. It is evident that the prayer of faith will obtain the blessing, from the fact that our faith rests on evidence that to grant that thing is the will of God. Not evidence that something else will be granted, but that this particular thing will be. But how, then, can we have evidence that this thing will be granted, if another thing is to be granted? People often receive more than they pray for. Solomon prayed for wisdom, and God granted him riches and honor in addition. So, a wife sometimes prays for the conversion of her husband, and if she offers the prayer of faith, God may not only grant that blessing, but convert her child, and her whole family

Blessings seem sometimes to "hang together," so that if a Christian gains one he gets them all.

V. HOW WE ARE TO COME INTO THIS STATE OF MIND.

That is to say, the state of mind in which we can offer such prayer. People often ask: "How shall I offer such prayer? Shall I say: 'Now I will pray in faith for such and such blessings'?" No, the human mind is not moved in this way. You might just as well say: "Now I will call up a spirit from the bottomless pit."

1. You must first obtain evidence that God will bestow the blessing. How did Daniel make out to offer the prayer of faith? He searched the Scriptures. Now, you need not let your Bible lie on a shelf, and expect God to reveal His promises to you. "Search the Scriptures," and see where you can get either a general or special promise, or a prophecy, on which you can plant your feet. Go through your Bible, and you will find it full of such precious promises, which you may plead in faith.

A curious case occurred in one of the towns in the western part of the State of New York. There was a revival there. A certain clergyman came to visit the place, and heard a great deal said about the Prayer of Faith. He was staggered at what they said, for he had never regarded the subject in the light in which they did. He inquired about it of the minister that was laboring there. The minister requested him, in a kind spirit, to go home and take his Testament, look out the passages that refer to prayer, and go round to his most praying people and ask them how they understood these passages. He did so, going to his praying men and women, reading the passages, without note or comment, and asking what they thought. He found that their plain common sense had led them to understand these passages and to believe that they meant just what they say. This affected him; then, the fact of his presenting the promises before their minds awakened the spirit of prayer in them, and a revival followed.

I could name many individuals who have set themselves to examine the Bible on this subject, who, before they got half through with it, have been filled with the spirit of prayer. They found that God meant by His promises just what a plain, common-sense man would understand them to mean. I advise you to try it. You have Bibles; look them over, and whenever you find a promise that you can use, fasten it in your mind before you go on; and you will not get through the Book without finding out that God's promises mean just what they say.

2. Cherish the good desires you have. Christians very often lose their good desires by not attending to this; and then their prayers are mere words, without any desire or earnestness at all. The least longing of desire must be cherished. If your body were likely to freeze, and you had even the least spark of fire, how you would cherish it! So, if you have the least desire for a blessing, let it be ever so small, do not trifle it away. Do not lose good desires by levity, by censoriousness, by worldly-mindedness. Watch and pray.

3. Entire consecration to God is indispensable to the prayer of faith. You must live a holy life, and consecrate all to God - your time, talents, influence - all you have, and all you are, to be His entirely. Read the lives of pious men, and you will be struck with this fact, that they used to set apart times to renew their covenant, and dedicate themselves anew to God; and whenever they have done so, a blessing has always followed immediately. If I had President Edwards' works here, I could read passages showing how it was in his days.

4. You must persevere. You are not to pray for a thing once and then cease, and call that the prayer of faith. Look at Daniel. He prayed twenty-one days, and did not cease till he had obtained the blessing. He set his heart and his face unto the Lord, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; and he held on three weeks, and then the answer came. And why did not it come before? God sent an Archangel to bear the message, but the devil hindered him all this time. See what Christ says in the Parable of the Unjust Judge, and the Parable of the Loaves. What does He teach us by them? Why, that God will grant answers to prayer when it is importunate. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" (Luk 18:7.)

5. If you would pray in faith, be sure to walk every day with God. If you do, He will tell you what to pray for. Be filled with His Spirit, and He will give you objects enough to pray for. He will give you as much of the spirit of prayer as you have strength of body to bear.

Said a good man to me: "Oh, I am dying for the want of strength to pray!

My body is crushed, the world is on me, and how can I forbear praying?" I have known that man go to bed absolutely sick, for weakness and faintness, under the pressure. And I have known him pray as if he would do violence to Heaven, and then have seen the blessing come as plainly in answer to his prayer as if it were revealed, so that no person would doubt it any more than if God had spoken from heaven. Shall I tell you how he died? He prayed more and more; he used to take the map of the world before him, and pray, and look over the different countries and pray for them, till he absolutely expired in his room, praying. Blessed man! He was the reproach of the ungodly, and of carnal, unbelieving professors; but he was the favorite of Heaven, and a prevailing prince in prayer.

VI. OBJECTIONS BROUGHT AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE.

1. "It leads to fanaticism and amounts to a new revelation." Why should this be a stumbling-block? They must have evidence to believe, before they can offer the prayer of faith. And if God should give other evidence besides the senses, where is the objection? True, there is a sense in which this is a new revelation; it is making known a thing by His Spirit. But it is the very revelation which God has promised to give. It is just the one we are to expect, if the Bible is true; that when we know not what we ought to pray for, according to the will of God, His Spirit helps our infirmities, and teaches us. Shall we deny the teaching of the Spirit?

2. It is often asked: "Is it our duty to offer the prayer of faith for the salvation of all men?" I answer: "No," for that is not a thing according to the will of God. It is directly contrary to His revealed will. We have no evidence that all will be saved. We should feel benevolently to all, and, in itself considered, desire their salvation. But God has revealed that many of the human race shall be damned, and it cannot be a duty to believe that all shall be saved, in the face of a revelation to the contrary. In Christ’s prayer in John 17:1-26, He expressly said: "I pray not for the world, but for those Thou hast given me" (John 17:9).

3. But some ask: "If we were to offer this prayer for all men, would not all be saved?" I answer: "Yes, and so they would be saved, if they would all repent. But they will not."

4. But you ask: "For whom are we to pray this prayer? We want to know in what cases, for what persons, and places, and at what times, we are to make the prayer of faith." I answer, as I have

already answered: "When you have evidence - from promises, or prophecies, or providences, or the leadings of the Spirit - that God will do the things for which you pray."

5 "How is it that so many prayers of pious parents for their children are not answered? Did you not say there was a promise which pious parents may apply to their children? Why is it, then, that so many pious, praying parents have had impenitent children, who have died in their sins?" Grant that it is so, what does it prove? "Let God be true, but every man a liar"

(Rom 3:4). Which shall we believe, that God's promise has failed, or that these parents did not do their duty? Perhaps they did not believe the promise, or did not believe there was any such thing as the prayer of faith.

Wherever you find a professor who does not believe in any such prayer, you find, as a general thing, that he has children and domestics yet in their sins.

6. "Will not these views lead to fanaticism? Will not many people think they are offering the prayer of faith when they are not?" That is the same objection that Unitarians make against the doctrine of regeneration - that many people think they have been born again when they have not. It is an argument against all spiritual religion whatever. Some think they have it when they have not, and are fanatics. But there are those who know what the prayer of faith is, just as there are those who know what spiritual experience is, though it may stumble cold-hearted professors who know it not. Even ministers often lay themselves open to the rebuke which Christ gave to Nicodemus: "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10.)

REMARKS.

1. Persons who have not known by experience what the prayer of faith is, have great reason to doubt their own piety. This is by no means uncharitable. Let them examine themselves. It is to be feared that they understand prayer as little as Nicodemus did the New Birth. They have not walked with God, and you cannot describe it to them, any more than you can describe a beautiful painting to a blind man.

2. There is reason to believe that millions are in hell because professors have not offered the prayer of faith. When they had promises under their eye, they have not had faith enough to use them. The signs of the times, and the indications of Providence, were favorable, perhaps, and the Spirit of God prompted desires for their salvation. There was evidence enough that God was ready to grant a blessing, and if professors had only prayed in faith, God would have granted it; but He turned it away, because they could not discern the signs of the times.

3. You say: "This leaves the Church under a great load of guilt." True, it does so; and no doubt multitudes will stand up before God, covered all over with the blood of souls that have been lost through their want of faith. The promises of God, accumulated in their Bibles, will stare them in the face, and weigh them down to hell.

4. Many professors of religion live so far from God, that to talk to them about the prayer of faith, is all unintelligible. Very often the greatest offense possible to them, is to preach about this kind of prayer.

5. I now want to ask professors a few questions. Do you know what it is to pray in faith? Did you ever pray in this way? Have you ever prayed till your mind was assured the blessing would come - till you felt that rest in God, that confidence, as if you saw God come down from heaven to give it to you? If not, you ought to examine your foundation. How can you live without praying in faith? How do you live in view of your children, while you have no assurance whatever that they will be converted? One would think you would go deranged. I knew a father who was a good man, but had erroneous views respecting the prayer of faith; and his whole family of children were grown up, without one of them being converted. At length his son sickened, and seemed about to die. The father prayed, but the son grew worse, and seemed sinking into the grave without hope. The father prayed, till his anguish was unutterable. He went at last and prayed (there seemed no prospect of his son surviving) so that he poured out his soul as if he would not be denied, till at length he got an assurance that his son would not only live but be converted; and that not only this one, but his whole family would be converted to God. He came into the house, and told his family his son would not die. They were astonished at him. "I tell you," said he, "he will not die. And no child of mine will ever die in his sins." That man’s children were all converted, years ago.

What do you think of that? Was that fanaticism? If you believe so, it is because you know nothing about the matter. Do you pray so? Do you live in such a manner that you can offer such prayer for your children? I know that the children of professors may sometimes be converted in answer to the prayers of somebody else. But ought you to live so? Dare you trust to the prayers of others, when God calls you to sustain this important relation to your children?

Finally; see what combined effort is made to dispose of the Bible. The wicked are for throwing away the threatenings of the Bible, and the Church the promises. And what is there left? Between them, they leave the Bible a blank. I ask it in love: "What is our Bible good for, if we do not lay hold of its precious promises, and use them as the ground of our faith when we pray for the blessing of God?" You had better send your Bibles to the heathen, where they will do some good, if you are not going to believe and use them. I have no evidence that there is much of this prayer now in this Church, or in this city. And what will become of them? What will become of your children? - your neighbors? - the wicked?

05.06. THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

LECTURE VI

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. - Rom 8:26-27.

My last Lecture but one was on the subject of Effectual Prayer; in which I observed that one of the most important attributes of effectual or prevailing prayer is FAITH. This was so extensive a subject that I reserved it for a separate discussion. And accordingly my last Lecture was on the subject of Faith in Prayer, or, as it is termed, the Prayer of Faith. It was my intention to discuss the subject in a single Lecture. But as I was under the necessity of condensing so much on some points, it occurred to me, and was mentioned by others, that there might be some questions which people would ask, that ought to be answered more fully, especially as the subject is one on which there is so much darkness. One grand design in preaching is to exhibit the truth in such a way as to answer the questions which would naturally arise in the minds of those who read the Bible with attention, and who want to know what it means, so that they can put it in practice. In explaining the text, I propose to show:

I. What Spirit is here spoken of: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."

II. What that Spirit does for us.

III. Why He does what the text declares Him to do.

IV. How He accomplishes it.

V. The degree in which He influences the minds of those who are under His influence.

VI. How His influences are to be distinguished from the influences of evil spirits. or from the suggestions of our own minds.

VII. How we are to obtain this agency of the Holy Spirit.

VIII. Who have a right to expect to enjoy His influences in this matter - or for whom the Spirit does the things spoken of in the text.

I. WHAT SPIRIT IS SPOKEN OF.

Some have supposed that the Spirit spoken of in the text means our own spirit - our own mind. But a little attention to the text will show plainly that this is not the meaning. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities" would then read, "Our own spirit helpeth the infirmities of our own spirit" - and "Our own spirit maketh intercession for our own spirit." You can make no sense of it on that supposition. It is

evident from the manner in which the text is introduced that the Spirit referred to is the Holy Ghost.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:13-16). And the text is plainly speaking of the same Spirit.

II. WHAT THE SPIRIT DOES.

He intercedes for the saints. "He maketh intercession for us," and "helpeth our infirmities," when "we know not what to pray for as we ought." He helps Christians to pray "according to the will of God," or for the things that God desires them to pray for.

III. WHY IS THE HOLY SPIRIT THUS EMPLOYED?

Because of our ignorance. Because we know not what we should pray for as we ought. We are so ignorant both of the will of God, revealed in the Bible, and of His unrevealed will, as we ought to learn it from His providence.

Mankind are vastly ignorant both of the promises and prophecies of the Bible, and blind to the providence of God. And they are still more in the dark about those points of which God has said nothing but through the leadings of His Spirit. I have named these four sources of evidence on which to ground faith in prayer - promises, prophecies, providences, and the Holy Spirit. When all other means fail of leading us to the knowledge of what we ought to pray for, the Spirit does it.

IV. HOW DOES HE MAKE INTERCESSION?

In what mode does He operate, so as to help our infirmities?

1. Not by superseding the use of our faculties. It is not by praying for us, while we do nothing. He prays for us by exciting our faculties. Not that He immediately suggests to us words, or guides our language. But He enlightens our minds, and makes the truth take hold of our souls. He leads us to consider the state of the Church, and the condition of sinners around us. The manner in which He brings the truth before the mind, and keeps it there till it produces its effect, we cannot tell. But we can know as much as this - that He leads us to a deep consideration of the state of things; and the result of this, the natural and philosophical result, is, deep feeling.

When the Spirit brings the truth before a man’s mind there is only one way in which he can keep from deep feeling. That is, by turning away his thoughts, and leading his mind to think of other things. Sinners, when the Spirit of God brings the truth before them, must feel. They feel wrong, as long as they remain impenitent. So, if a man is a Christian, and the Holy Spirit brings the subject into warm contact with his heart, it is just as impossible he should not feel as it is that your hand should not feel if you put it into the fire. If the Spirit of God leads a man to dwell on things calculated to excite overpowering feelings regarding the salvation of souls, and he is not excited thereby, it proves that he has no love for souls, nothing of the Spirit of Christ, and knows nothing about Christian experience.

2. The Spirit makes the Christian feel the value of souls and the guilt and danger of sinners in their present condition. It is amazing how dark and stupid Christian often are about this. Even Christian parents let their children go right down to hell before their eyes, and scarcely seem to exercise a single feeling, or put forth an effort to save them. And why?

Because they are so blind to what hell is, so unbelieving about the Bible, so ignorant of the precious promises which God has made to faithful parents. They grieve the Spirit of God away - and it is in vain to make them pray for their children, while the Spirit of God is away from them.

3. He leads Christians to understand and apply the promises of Scripture.

It is wonderful that in no age have Christians been able fully to apply the promises of Scripture to the events of life, as they go along. This is not because the promises themselves are obscure. But there has always been a wonderful disposition to overlook the Scriptures, as a source of light respecting the passing events of life. How astonished the apostles were at Christ's application of so many prophecies to Himself! They seemed to be continually ready to exclaim: "Astonishing! Can it be so? We never understood it before!" Who, that has witnessed the manner in which the apostles, influenced and inspired by the Holy Ghost, applied passages of the Old Testament to Gospel times, has not been amazed at the richness of meaning which they found in the Scriptures? So it has been with many a Christian; while deeply engaged in prayer he has seen that passages of Scripture are appropriate which he never thought of before as having any such application.

I once knew an individual who was in great spiritual darkness. He had retired for prayer, resolved that he would not desist till he had found the Lord. He kneeled down and tried to pray. All was dark, and he could not pray. He rose from his knees, and stood awhile; but he could not give it up, for he had promised that he would not let the sun go down before he had given himself to God. He knelt again; but was all dark, and his heart was as hard as before. He was nearly in despair, and said in agony: "I have grieved the Spirit of God away, and there is no promise for me. I am shut out from the presence of God." But his resolution was formed not to give over, and again he knelt down. He had said but a few words when this passage came into his mind, as fresh as if he had just read it: "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). He saw that though this promise was in the Old Testament, and addressed to the Jews, it was still as applicable to him as to them. And it broke his heart, like the hammer of the Lord, in a moment.

And he prayed, and rose up happy in God.

Thus it often happens when professors of religion are praying for their children. Sometimes they pray, and are in darkness and doubt, feeling as if there were no foundation for faith, and no special promises for the children of believers. But while they have been pleading, God has shown them the full meaning of some promise, and their soul has rested on it as on His mighty arm. I once heard of a widow who was greatly exercised about her children, till this passage was brought powerful to her mind: "Thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let Thy widows trust in Me" (Jer 49:11). She saw it had an extended meaning, and she was enabled to lay hold of it, as it were, with her hands. She prevailed in prayer, and her children were converted. The Holy Spirit was sent into the world by the Savior to guide His people, and instruct them and bring things to

their remembrance, as well as to convince the world of sin.

4. The Spirit leads Christians to desire and pray for things of which nothing is specifically said in the Word of God. Take the case of an individual. That God is willing to save is a general truth. So it is a general truth that He is willing to answer prayer. But how shall I know the will of God respecting that individual - whether I can pray in faith according to the will of God for the conversion and salvation of that individual, or not?

Here the agency of the Spirit comes in to lead the minds of God's people to pray for those individuals, and at those times, when God is prepared to bless them. When we know not what to pray for, the Holy Spirit leads the mind to dwell on some object, to consider its situation, to realize its value, and to feel for it, and pray, and "travail in birth," till the person is converted. This sort of experience, I know, is less common in cities than it is in some parts of the country, because of the infinite number of things which in cities divert the attention and grieve the Spirit.

I have had much opportunity to know how it has been in some districts. I was acquainted with an individual who used to keep a list of persons for whom he was especially concerned; and I have had the opportunity to know a multitude of persons, for whom he became thus interested, who were immediately converted. I have seen him pray for persons on his list when he was literally in an agony for them; and have sometimes known him call on some other person to help him pray for such a one. I have known his mind to fasten thus on an individual of hardened, abandoned character, and who could not be reached in any ordinary way. In a town in a north part of this State, where there was a revival, there was a certain individual who was a most violent and outrageous opposer. He kept a tavern, and used to delight in swearing at a desperate rate, whenever there were Christians within hearing, on purpose to hurt their feelings. He was so bad that one man said he believed he should have to sell his place, or give it away, and move out of town, for he could not live near a man who swore so. This good man of whom I was speaking passed through the town, and, hearing of the case, was very much grieved and distressed for the individual. He took him on his praying list. The case weighed on his mind when he was asleep and when he was awake. He kept thinking about the ungodly man, and praying for him for days. And, the first we knew of it, the tavern keeper came into a meeting, got up and confessed his sins, and poured out his soul. His barroom immediately became the place where they held prayer meetings. In this manner the Spirit of God leads individual Christians to pray for things which they would not pray for, unless they were led by the Spirit; and thus they pray for things "according to the will of God."

Great evil has been done by saying that this kind of influence amounts to a new revelation. Many people will be so afraid of it, if they hear it called a new revelation, that they will not stop to inquire what it means, or whether the Scriptures teach it or not. The plain truth of the matter is, that the Spirit leads a man to pray; and if God leads a man to pray for an individual, the inference from the Bible is, that God designs to save that individual. If we find, by comparing our state of mind with the Bible, that we are led by the Spirit to pray for an individual, we have good evidence to believe that God is prepared to bless him.

5. By giving to Christians a spiritual discernment respecting the movements and developments of Providence. Devoted, praying Christians often see these things so clearly, and look so far ahead, as greatly to stumble others. They sometimes almost seem to prophesy. No doubt persons may be

deluded, and sometimes are, by leaning to their own understanding when they think they are led by the Spirit. But there is no doubt that a Christian may be made to discern clearly the signs of the times, so as to understand, by Providence, what to expect, and thus to pray for it in faith. Thus they are often led to expect a revival, and to pray for it in faith, when nobody else can see the least signs of it.

There was a woman in New Jersey, in a place where there had been a revival. She was very positive there was going to be another. She wanted to have "conference meetings" appointed. But the minister and elders saw nothing to encourage it, and would do nothing. She saw they were blind, and so she went forward, and got a carpenter to make seats for her, for she said she would have meetings in her own house; there was certainly going to be a revival. She had scarcely opened her doors for meetings, before the Spirit of God came down with great power, and these sleepy Church members found themselves surrounded all at once with convicted sinners.

They could only say: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and we knew it not" (Gen 28:16). The reason why such persons as this praying woman understand the indication of God’s will is not because of the superior wisdom that is in them, but because the Spirit of God leads them to see the signs of the times. And this, not by revelation; but they are led to see that converging of providences to a single point which produces in them a confident expectation of a certain result.

V. THE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE.

In what degree are we to expect the Spirit of God to affect the minds of believers? The text says: "The Spirit maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered." The meaning of this I understand to be, that the Spirit excites desires too great to be uttered except by groans - making the soul too full to utter its feelings by words, so that the person can only groan them out to God, who understands the language of the heart.

VI. DISTINGUISHING THE INFLUENCES.

How are we to know whether it is the Spirit of God that influences our minds, or not?

1. Not by feeling that some external influence or agency is applied to us.

We are not to expect to feel our minds in direct physical contact with God.

If such a thing can be, we know of no way in which it can be made sensible. We know that we exercise our minds freely, and that our thoughts are exercised on something that excites our feelings. But we are not to expect a miracle to be wrought, as if we were led by the hand, sensibly, or like something whispered in the ear, or any miraculous manifestation of the will of God.

Individuals often grieve the Spirit away, because they do not harbor Him and cherish His influences. Sinners often do this ignorantly. They suppose that if they were under conviction by the Spirit, they should have such-and-such mysterious feelings - a shock would come upon them which they could not mistake. Many Christians are so ignorant of the Spirit’s influences, and have thought so little about having His assistance in prayer, that when they have such influences they do not know it, and so do not yield to them, and cherish them. We are sensible of nothing in the case, only the movement of our own minds. There is nothing else that can be felt. We are merely sensible that our thoughts are intensely employed on a certain subject.

Christians are often unnecessarily misled and distressed on this point, for fear they have not the Spirit of God. They feel intensely, but they know not what makes them feel. They are distressed about sinners; but should they not be distressed, when they think of their condition? They keep thinking about them all the time, and why should they not be distressed?

Now the truth is, that the very fact that you are thinking upon them is evidence that the Spirit of God is leading you. Do you not know that the greater part of the time these things do not affect you so? The greater part of the time you do not think much about the case of sinners. You know their salvation is always equally important. But at other times, even when you are quite at leisure, your mind is entirely dark, and vacant of any feeling for them. But now, although you may be busy about other things, you think, you pray, and feel intensely for them, even while you are about business that at other times would occupy all your thoughts. Now, almost every thought you have is: "God have mercy upon them!" Why is this?

Why, their case is placed in a strong light before your mind. Do you ask what it is that leads your mind to exercise benevolent feelings for sinners, and to agonize in prayer for them? What can it be but the Spirit of God?

There are no devils that would lead you so. If your feelings are truly benevolent, you are to consider it as the Holy Spirit leading you to pray for things according to the will of God.

2. "Try the spirits" by the Bible. People are sometimes led away by strange fantasies and crazy impulses. If you compare them faithfully with the Bible, you never need be led astray. You can always know whether your feelings are produced by the Spirit’s influences, by comparing your desires with the spirit and temper of religion, as described in the Bible.

The Bible commands you to "try the spirits." "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1Jn 4:1-21; 1Jn 3:1-24; 1Jn 2:1-29; 1Jn 1:1-10).

VII. HOW SHALL WE GET THIS INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT?

1. It must be sought by fervent, believing prayer. Christ says: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luk 11:13). Does any one say, I have prayed for it, and it does not come? It is because you do not pray aright. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas 4:3). You do not pray from right motives. A professor of religion, and a principal member in a Church, once asked a minister what he thought of his case; he had been praying week after week for the Spirit, and had not found any benefit. The minister asked: what was his motive in praying?

He replied that "he wanted to be happy." He knew those who had the Spirit were happy, and he wanted to enjoy his mind as they did. Why, the devil himself might pray so! That is mere selfishness. The man, when this was shown him, at first turned away in anger. He saw that he had never known what it was to pray. He was convinced he was a hypocrite, and that his prayers were all selfish, dictated only by a desire for his own happiness. David prayed that God would uphold him by His free Spirit, that he might teach transgressors and turn sinners to God. A Christian should pray for the Spirit that he may be the more useful and glorify God more; not that he himself may be more happy. This man saw clearly where he had been in error, and he was converted.

Perhaps many here have been making just the same mistake. You ought to examine and see if your prayers are not tinctured with selfishness.

2. Use the means adapted to stir up your minds on the subject, and to keep your attention fixed there. If a man prays for the Spirit, and then diverts his mind to other objects; if he uses no other means, but goes away to worldly objects, he tempts God, he swings loose from his object, and it would be a miracle if he should get what he prays for. How is a sinner to get conviction? Why, by thinking of his sins. That is the way for a Christian to obtain deep feeling - by thinking upon the object. God is not going to pour these things on you without any effort of your own. You must cherish the slightest impressions. Take the Bible, and go over the passages that show the condition and prospects of the world. Look at the world, look at your children, and your neighbors, and see their condition while they remain in sin; then, persevere in prayer and effort till you obtain the blessing of the Spirit of God to dwell in you. This was the way, doubtless, that Dr. Watts came to have the feelings which he has described in his hymn:

My thoughts on awful subjects dwell, Damnation and the dead; What horrors seize the guilty soul Upon a dying bed!

Look, as it were, through a telescope that will bring it up near to you; look into hell, and hear them groan; then turn the glass upwards and look into heaven, and see the saints there, in their white robes, with their harps in their hands, and hear them sing the song of redeeming love; and ask yourself: "Is it possible that I should prevail with God to elevate the sinner there?" Do this, and if you are not a wicked man, and a stranger to God, you will soon have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can sustain.

3. You must watch unto prayer. You must keep a look-out, and see if God grants the blessing when you ask Him. People sometimes pray, and never look to see if the prayer is granted. Be careful also, not to grieve the Spirit of God. Confess and forsake your sins. God will never lead you as one of His hidden ones, and let you into His secrets, unless you confess and forsake your sins. Be not always confessing and never forsaking, but confess and forsake too. Make redress wherever you have committed an injury. You cannot expect to get the spirit of prayer first, and repentance afterwards. You cannot fight it through so. Professors of religion, who are proud and unyielding, and justify themselves, never will force God to dwell with them.

4. Aim to obey perfectly the written law. In other words, have no fellowship with sin. Aim at being entirely above the world; "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat 5:48). If you sin at all, let it be your daily grief. The man who does not aim at this, means to live in sin. Such a man need not expect God’s blessing, for he is not sincere in desiring to keep all His commandments.

VIII. FOR WHOM DOES THE SPIRIT INTERCEDE.

The answer is that "He maketh intercession for the saints," for all saints, for any who are saints.

REMARKS.

1. Why do you suppose it is that so little stress is laid on the influences of the Spirit in prayer, when so much is said about His influences in conversion? Many people are amazingly afraid the Spirit’s influences will be left out. They lay great stress on the Spirit’s influences in converting sinners. But

how little is said, how little is printed, about His influence in prayer! How little complaining there is that people do not make enough of the Spirit's influence in leading Christians to pray according to the will of God! Let it never be forgotten that no Christian ever prays aright, unless led by the Spirit. He has natural power to pray, and so far as the will of God is revealed, is able to do it; but he never does, unless the Spirit of God influences him; just as sinners are able to repent, but never do, unless influenced by the Spirit.

2. This subject lays open the foundation of the difficulty felt by many persons on the subject of the Prayer of Faith. They object to the idea that faith in prayer is a belief that we shall receive the very things for which we ask, and insist that there can be no foundation or evidence upon which to rest such a belief.

In a sermon upon this subject a writer brings toward this difficulty, and presents it in its full strength. "I have," says he, "no evidence that the thing prayed for will be granted, until I have prayed in faith; because, praying in faith is the condition upon which it is promised. And, of course, I cannot claim the promise, until I have fulfilled the condition.

Now, if the condition is that I am to believe I shall receive the very blessing for which I ask, it is evident that the promise is given upon the performance of an impossible condition, and is, of course, a mere nullity.

The promise would amount to just this: You shall have whatsoever you ask, upon the condition that you first believe that you shall receive it.

Now I must fulfill the condition before I can claim the promise. But I can have no evidence that I shall receive it until I have believed that I shall receive it. This reduces me to the necessity of believing that I shall receive it, before I have any evidence that I shall receive it - which is impossible."

The whole force of this objection arises out of the fact that the Spirit's influences are entirely overlooked, which He exerts in leading an individual to the exercise of faith. It has been supposed that the passage in Mark 11:22-24, with other kindred promises on the subject of the Prayer of Faith, relate exclusively to miracles. But suppose this were true. I would ask: "What were the apostles to believe, when they prayed for a miracle?

Were they to believe that the precise miracle would be performed for which they prayed?" It is evident that they were. In the verses just alluded to, Christ says: "For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Here it is evident, that the thing to be believed, and which they were not to doubt in their heart, was that they should have the very blessing for which they prayed. Now the objection above stated, lies in all its force against this kind of faith, when praying for the performance of a miracle. If it be impossible to believe this in praying for any other blessing, it was equally so in praying for a miracle. I might ask: "Could an apostle believe that the miracle would be wrought, before he had fulfilled the condition, inasmuch as the condition was, that he should believe that he should receive that for which he prayed?" Either the promise is a nullity and a deception, or there is a possibility of performing the condition.

Now, as I have said, the whole difficulty lies in the fact that the Spirit's influences are entirely overlooked, and that faith which is of the operation of God, is left out of the question. If the objection is goods against praying for any object, it is as good against praying in faith for the performance of a miracle. The fact is, that the Spirit of God could give evidence, on which to believe that any particular miracle would be granted; could lead the mind to a firm reliance upon God, and trust that the blessing sought would be obtained. And so at the present day He can give the same assurance, in praying for any blessing that we need.

Praying is the same thing, whether you pray for the conversion of a soul, or for a miracle. Faith is the same thing in the one case as in the other; it only terminates on a different object; in the one case on the conversion of a soul, and in the other on the performance of a miracle. Nor is faith exercised in the one more than in the other without reference to a promise; and a general promise may with the same propriety be applied to the conversion of a soul as to the performance of a miracle. And it is equally true in the one case as the other, that no man ever prays in faith without being influenced by the Spirit of God. And if the Spirit could lead the mind of an apostle to exercise faith in regard to a miracle, He can lead the mind of another Christian to exercise faith in regard to receiving any other blessing, by a reference to the same general promise.

Should any one ask: "When are we under an obligation to believe that we shall receive the blessing for which we ask?" I answer -

(a) When there is a particular promise, specifying the particular blessing: as where we pray for the Holy Spirit. This blessing is particularly named in the promise, and here we have evidence, and we are bound to believe, whether we have any Divine influence or not: just as sinners are bound to repent whether the Spirit strives with them or not, their obligation resting not upon the Spirit's influences, but upon the powers of moral agency which they possess; upon their ability to do their duty. And while it is true that not one of them ever will repent without the influences of the Spirit, still they have power to do so, and are under obligation to do so whether the Spirit strives with them or not. So with the Christian. He is bound to believe where he has evidence. And although he never does believe, even where he has an express promise, without the Spirit of God, yet his obligation to do so rests upon his ability, and not upon the Divine influence.

(b) Where God makes a revelation by His providence, we are bound to believe in proportion to the clearness of the providential indication.

(c) So where there is a prophecy, we are bound also to believe. But in neither of these cases do we, in fact, believe, without the Spirit of God.

But where there is neither promise, providence, nor prophecy, on which we are to repose our faith, we are under no obligation to believe, unless, as I have shown in this discourse, the Spirit gives us evidence, by creating desires, and by leading us to pray for a particular object. In the case of those promises of a general nature, where we are honestly at a loss to know in what particular cases to apply them, it may be considered rather as our privilege than as our duty, in many instances, to apply them to particular cases; but whenever the Spirit of God leads us to apply them to a particular object, then it becomes our duty so to apply them. In this case, God explains His own promise, and shows how He designed it should be applied. Our obligation, then, to make this application, and to believe in reference to this particular object, remains in full force.

3. Some have supposed that Paul prayed in faith for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, and that it was not granted. But they cannot prove that Paul prayed in faith. The presumption is all on the other side, as I have shown in a former Lecture. He had neither promise, nor prophecy, nor providence, nor the Spirit of God, to lead him to believe. The whole objection goes on the ground that the apostle might pray in faith without being led by the Spirit. This is truly a short method of disposing of the Spirit's influences in prayer. Certainly, to assume that he prayed in faith, is to assume, either that he prayed in faith without being led by the Spirit, or that the Spirit of God led him to pray for that which was not according to the will of God.

I have dwelt the more on this subject, because I want to have it made so plain that you will be careful not to grieve the Spirit. I want you to have high ideas of the Holy Ghost, and to feel that nothing good will be done without His influences. No praying or preaching will be of any avail without Him. If Jesus Christ were to come down here and preach to sinners, not one would be converted without the Spirit. Be careful, then, not to grieve Him away, by slighting or neglecting His heavenly influences when He invites you to pray.

4. In praying for an object, it is necessary to persevere till you obtain it.

Oh, with what eagerness Christians sometimes pursue a sinner in their prayers, when the Spirit of God has fixed their desires on him! No miser pursues gold with so fixed a determination.

5. The fear of being led by impulses has done great injury, by not being duly considered. A person's mind may be led by an ignis fatuus. But we do wrong if we let the fear of impulses lead us to resist the good impulses of the Holy Ghost. No wonder Christians have not the spirit of prayer, if they are unwilling to take the trouble to distinguish; but will reject or resist all impulses, and all leadings of invisible agents. A great deal has been said on the subject of fanaticism, that is very unguarded, and that causes many minds to reject the leadings of the Spirit of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit or God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14). And it is our duty to "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1Jn 4:1). We should insist on a close scrutiny, and an accurate discrimination. There must be such a thing as being led by the Spirit. And when we are convinced it is of God, we should be sure to follow - follow on, with full confidence that He will not lead us wrong.

6. We see from this subject the absurdity of using set forms of prayer. The very idea of using a form rejects, of course, the leadings of the Spirit.

Nothing is more calculated to destroy the spirit of prayer, and entirely to darken and confuse the mind, as to what constitutes prayer, than to use forms. Forms of prayer are not only absurd in themselves, but they are the very device of the devil to destroy the spirit and break the power of prayer. It is of no use to say the form is a good one. Prayer does not consist in words. And it matters not what the words are if the heart is not led by the Spirit of God. If the desire is not enkindled, the thoughts directed, and the whole current of feeling produced and led by the Spirit of God, it is not prayer. And set forms are, of all things, best calculated to keep an individual from praying as he ought.

7. The subject furnishes a test of character. "The Spirit maketh intercession" - for whom? For the saints. Those who are saints are thus exercised. If you are saints you know by experience what it is to be thus exercised; or, if you do not, it is because you have grieved the Spirit of God so that

He will not lead you. You live in such a manner that this Holy Comforter will not dwell with you, nor give you the spirit of prayer. If this is so, you must repent. Do not stop to settle whether you are a Christian or not, but repent, as if you never had repented. Do your first works. I do not take it for granted that you are a Christian, but go, like a humble sinner, and pour out your heart unto the Lord. You never can have the spirit of prayer in any other way.

8. It is important to understand this subject:-

(a) In order to be useful. Without this spirit there can be no such sympathy between God and you, that you can either walk with God or work with God. You need to have a strong beating of your heart with His, or you need not expect to be greatly useful.

(b) As being important to your sanctification. Without such a spirit you will not be sanctified, nor will you understand the Bible, and therefore you will not know how to apply it to your case. I want you to feel the importance of having God with you all the time. If you live as you ought, He says He will come unto you, and make His abode with you, and sup with you, and you with Him.

9. If people know not the spirit of prayer, they are very apt to be unbelieving in regard to the results of prayer. They do not see what takes place, or do not see the connection, or do not see the evidence. They are not expecting spiritual blessings. When sinners are convicted, they conclude that such are merely frightened by terrible preaching. And when people are converted, they feel no confidence, saying: "We will see how they turn out."

10. Those who have the spirit of prayer know when the blessing comes. It was just so when Jesus Christ appeared. Those ungodly doctors did not know Him. Why? Because they were not praying for the redemption of Israel. But Simeon and Anna knew Him. How was that? Mark what they said, how they prayed, and how they lived. They were praying in faith, and so they were not surprised when He came (Luk 2:25-38). So it is with the Christians of whom I speak. If sinners are convicted or converted, they are not surprised at it. They are expecting just such things. They know God when He comes, because they are looking out for His visits.

11. There are three classes of persons in the Church who are liable to error, or have left the truth out of view, on this subject.

(a) Those who place great reliance on prayer, and use no other means.

They are alarmed at any special means, and talk about your "getting up a revival."

(b) Over against these are those who use means, and pray, but never think about the influences of the Spirit in prayer. They talk about prayer for the Spirit, and feel the importance of the Spirit in the conversion to sinners, but do not realize the importance of the Spirit in prayer. And their prayers are all cold talk, nothing that anybody can feel, or that can take hold of God.

(c) Those who have certain strange notions about the Sovereignty of God, and are waiting for God to convert the world without prayer or means.

There must be in the Church a deeper sense of the need of the spirit of prayer. The fact is, that, generally, those who use means most assiduously, and make the most strenuous efforts for the salvation of men, and who have the most correct notions of the manner in which means should be

used for converting sinners, also pray most for the Spirit of God, and wrestle most with God for His blessing. And what is the result?

Let facts speak, and say whether these persons do or do not pray, and whether the Spirit of God does not testify to their prayers, and follow their labors with His power.

12. Nothing will produce an excitement and opposition so quickly as the spirit of prayer. If any person should feel burdened with the case of sinners, so as to groan in his prayer, some become nervous, and he is visited at once with rebuke and opposition! From my soul I abhor all affectation of feeling where none exists, and all attempts to work one's self up into feeling, by groans. But I feel bound to defend the position, that there is such a thing as being in a state of mind in which there is but one way to keep from groaning; and that is, by resisting the Holy Ghost. I was once present where this subject was discussed. It was said that "groaning ought to be discountenanced." The question was asked, in reply: Whether God cannot produce such a state of feeling, that to abstain from groaning is impossible? The answer was: "Yes, but He never does." Then the apostle Paul was egregiously deceived when he wrote about groanings that cannot be uttered. Edwards was deceived when he wrote his book upon revivals.

Revivals are all in the dark. Now, no man who reviews the history of the Church will adopt such a sentiment. I do not like this attempt to shut out, or stifle, or keep down, or limit, the spirit of prayer. I would sooner cut off my right hand than rebuke the spirit of prayer, as I have heard of its being done by saying: "Do not let me hear any more groaning!"

I hardly know where to end this subject. I should like to discuss it a month, indeed, till the whole Church could understand it, so as to pray the prayer of faith. Beloved, I want to ask you: Do you believe all this? Or do you wonder that I should talk so? Perhaps some of you have had some glimpses of these things. Now, will you give yourselves up to prayer, and live so as to have the spirit of prayer, and have the Spirit with you all the time? Oh, for a praying Church! I once knew a minister who had a revival fourteen winters in succession. I did not know how to account for it, till I saw one of his members get up in a prayer meeting and make a confession.

"Brethren," said he, "I have been long in the habit of praying every Saturday night till after midnight, for the descent of the Holy Ghost among us. And now, brethren," and he began to weep, "I confess that I have neglected it for two or three weeks." The secret was out. That minister had a praying Church. Brethren, in my present state of health, I find it impossible to pray as much as I have been in the habit of doing, and yet continue to preach. It overcomes my strength. Now, shall I give myself up to prayer, and stop preaching? That will not do. Now, will not you, who are in health, throw yourselves into this work, and bear this burden, and give yourselves to prayer, till God shall pour out His blessing upon us?

05.07. ON BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

LECTURE VII

ON BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

Be filled with the Spirit. - Eph 5:18.

Several of my Lectures have been on the subject of Prayer, and the importance of having the spirit of prayer - of the intercession of the Holy Ghost. Whenever the necessity and importance of the Spirit's influences are held forth, there can be no doubt that persons are in danger of abusing the doctrine, and perverting it to their own injury. For instance: when you tell sinners that without the Holy Spirit they never will repent, they are very liable to pervert the truth, and understand by it that they cannot repent, and therefore are under no obligation to do it until they feel the Spirit. It is often difficult to make them see that all the "cannot" consists in their unwillingness, and not in their inability. So again, when we tell Christians that they need the Spirit's aid in prayer, they are very apt to think they are under no obligation to pray the prayer of faith until they feel the influences of the Spirit. They overlook their obligation to be filled with the Spirit, and wait for the spirit of prayer to come upon them without asking, and thus they tempt God.

Before we come to consider the other department of means for promoting a revival - that is, the means to be used with sinners - I wish to show that, if you live without the Spirit, you are without excuse. Obligation to perform duty never rests on the condition that we shall have the influence of the Spirit, but on the powers of moral agency. We, as moral agents, have the power to obey God, and are perfectly bound to obey; and the reason that we do not is, that we are unwilling. The influences of the Spirit are wholly a matter of grace. If they were indispensable to enable us to perform duty, the bestowment of them would not be a gracious act, but a mere matter of common justice. Sinners are not bound to repent because they have the Spirit's influence, or because they can obtain it, but because they are moral agents, and have the powers which God requires them to exercise. So in the case of Christians. They are not bound to pray in faith because they have the Spirit (except in those cases where His influences in begetting the desire constitute the evidence that it is God's will to grant the object of desire), but because they have evidence. They are not bound to pray in faith at all, except when they have evidence as the foundation of their faith. They must have evidence from promises, or principles, or prophecy, or providence. And where they have evidence independent of His influences, they are bound to exercise faith, whether they have the Spirit's influence or not. They are bound to see the evidence, and to believe. The Spirit is given, not to enable them to see or believe, but because without the Spirit they will not look, or feel, or act, as they ought.

I purpose to show, from the text:

I. That Christians may be filled with the Spirit of God

II. That it is their duty to be filled with the Spirit.

III. Why they are not filled with the Spirit.

IV. The guilt of those who have not the Spirit of God, to lead their minds in duty and prayer.

V. The consequence that will follow if they are filled with the Spirit.

VI. The consequences if they are not.

I. YOU MAY HAVE THE SPIRIT.

Not because it is a matter of justice for God to give you His Spirit, but because He has promised to give His Spirit to those that ask. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luk 11:13) If you ask for the Holy Spirit, God has promised to answer.

But again, God has commanded you to have the Spirit. He says in the text: "Be filled with the Spirit." When God commands us to do a thing, it is the highest possible evidence that we can do it. For God to command is equivalent to an oath that we can do it. He has no right to command, unless we have power to obey. There is no stopping short of the conclusion that God is tyrannical, if He commands that which is impracticable.

II. IT IS YOUR DUTY TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

1. It is your duty because you have a promise of it.

2. Because God has commanded it.

3. It is essential to your own growth in grace that you should be filled with the Spirit.

4. It is as important as it is that you should be sanctified.

5. It is as necessary as it is that you should be useful and do good in the world.

6. If you do not have the Spirit of God in you, you will dishonor God, disgrace the Church, and be lost.

III. WHY MANY DO NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT.

There are some, even professors of religion, who will say: "I do not know anything about all this, I never had any such experience; either it is not true, or I am all wrong." No doubt you are all wrong, if you know nothing about the influence of the Spirit. I want to present you with a few of the reasons that may prevent you from being filled with the Spirit.

1. It may be that you live a hypocritical life. Your prayers are not earnest and sincere. Not only is your religion a mere outside show, without any heart, but you are insincere in your intercourse with others. Thus you do many things to grieve the Spirit, so that He cannot dwell with you.

A minister was once boarding in a certain family, and the lady of the house was constantly complaining that she did not "enjoy" religion, and nothing seemed to help her. One day some ladies called to see her, and, protesting that she was very much offended because they had not called before, she pressed them to stay and spend the day, and declared she could not consent to let them go. They excused themselves, and left the house; and as soon as they were gone she

told her servant that she wondered these people had so little sense as to be always troubling her and taking up her time! The minister heard it, and immediately rebuked her, and told her she ought to see why she did not "enjoy" religion. It was because she was in the daily habit of insincerity that amounted to downright lying. And the Spirit of Truth could not dwell in such a heart.

2. Others have so much levity that the Spirit will not dwell with them.

The Spirit of God is solemn, and serious, and will not dwell with those who give way to thoughtless levity.

3. Others are so proud that they cannot have the Spirit. They are so fond of dress, high life, equipage, fashion, etc., that it is no wonder they are not filled with the Spirit. And yet such persons will pretend to be at a loss to know why it is that they do not "enjoy" religion!

4. Some are so worldly minded, love property so well, and are trying so hard to get rich, that they cannot have the Spirit. How can He dwell with them when all their thoughts are on things of the world, and all their powers absorbed in procuring wealth? And when they get money they are pained if pressed by conscience to do something with it for the conversion of the world. They show how much they love the world in all their intercourse with others. Little things show it. They will screw down a poor man, who is doing a little piece of work for them, to the lowest penny. If they are dealing on a large scale, very likely they will be liberal and fair, because it is for their advantage. But if it is a person they care not about a laborer, or a mechanic, or a servant - they will grind him down to the last fraction, no matter what the work is really worth; and they actually pretend to make it a matter of conscience, that they cannot possibly give any more. Now, they would be ashamed to deal so with people of their own rank, because it would be known and injure their reputation; but God knows it, and has it all written down, that they are covetous and unfair in their dealings, and will not do right, only when it is for their interest. Now, how can such professors have the Spirit of God? It is impossible.

There are multitudes of such things, by which the Spirit of God is grieved. People call them "little" sins, but God will not call them little. I was struck with this thought, when I saw a little notice in The Evangelist. The publishers stated that they had many thousands of dollars in the hands of subscribers, which sums were justly due, but that it would cost them as much as it was worth to send an agent to collect the money. I suppose it is so with other religious papers, that subscribers either put the publisher to the trouble and expense of sending an agent to collect his due, or else they cheat him out of it. There is, doubtless, a large amount of money held back in this way by professors of religion, just because it is in such small sums, or because they are so far off that they cannot be sued. And yet these people will pray, and appear very pious, and wonder why they do not "enjoy" religion, and have the Spirit of God! It is this looseness of moral principle, this want of conscience about little matters, that grieves away the Holy Ghost.

5. Others do not fully confess and forsake their sins, and so cannot enjoy the Spirit’s presence. They will confess their sins in general terms, perhaps, and are ready always to acknowledge that they are sinners. Or they will confess partially some particular sins. But they do it reservedly, proudly, guardedly, as if they were afraid they should say a little more than is necessary; that is, when they confess to men. They do it in a way which shows that, instead of bursting forth from an ingenuous heart, the confession is wrung from them, by conscience gripping them. If they have

injured any one, they will make a partial recantation, which is hard-hearted, cruel, and hypocritical, and then they will ask: "Now, brother, are you satisfied?" We know that it is very difficult for a person who has been wronged to say, in such a case, that he is not satisfied even if the confession is cold and heartless. But I tell you, God is not satisfied.

He knows whether you have gone to the full length of honest confession, and taken all the blame that belongs to you. If your confessions have been constrained and wrung from you, do you suppose you can cheat God?

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but who so confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Pro 28:13). "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luk 14:11). Unless you come quite down, and confess your sins honestly, and remunerate where you have done injury, you have no right to expect the spirit of prayer.

6. Others are neglecting some known duty, and that is the reason why they have not the Spirit. One does not pray in his family, though he knows he ought to do so, and yet he is trying to get the spirit of prayer!

There is many a young man who feels in his heart he ought to prepare for the ministry, but who has not the spirit of prayer because he has some worldly object in view which prevents his devoting himself to the work.

He has known his duty, refuses to do it, and yet is praying for direction from the Spirit of God! He cannot have it.

Another has neglected to make a profession of religion. He knows his duty, but he refuses to join the Church. He once had the spirit of prayer, but, neglecting his duty, he grieved the Spirit away. And now he thinks, if he could once more enjoy the light of God’s countenance, and have his evidences renewed, he would do his duty, and join the Church. And so he is trying to bring God over to his terms, to grant him His presence. He need not expect it. You will live and die in darkness, unless you are willing first to do your duty, before God manifests Himself as reconciled to you.

It is in vain to say, you will come forward if God will first show you the light of His countenance. He never will do it as long as you live; He will let you die without it, if you refuse to do your duty.

I have known women who felt that they ought to talk to their unconverted husbands, and pray with them; but they neglected it, and so they got into the dark. They knew their duty and refused to do it; they "went round it," and there they lost the spirit of prayer.

If you have neglected any known duty, and thus lost the spirit of prayer, you must yield first. God has a controversy with you; you have refused obedience to God, and you must retract. You may have forgotten it, but God has not, and you must set yourself to recall it to mind and repent.

God never will yield or grant you His Spirit, till you repent. Had I an omniscient eye now, I could call the names of the individuals in this congregation, who have neglected some known duty, or committed some sin, that they have not repented of, and now they are praying for the spirit of prayer, but they cannot succeed in obtaining it.

To illustrate this I will relate a case. A good man - an elder in the western part of this State, had been a long time an earnest Christian, and he used to talk to the sleepy Church with which he was connected. Presently the Church grew offended and got out of patience, so that many told him they wished he would let them alone, and that they did not think he could do them any good. He took them at their word, and they all "went to sleep" together, remaining so two or three years. Then a minister came among them, and a revival commenced; but this elder seemed to have lost his spirituality. He who used to be forward in a good work now held back.

Everybody thought it unaccountable. Finally, as he was going home one night, the truth of his situation flashed upon his mind, and, for a few minutes, he went into absolute despair. At length his thoughts were directed back to that sinful resolution to let the Church alone in her sins.

He felt that no language could describe the blackness of that sin. He realized at that moment what it was to be lost, and to find that God had a controversy with him. He saw that it was a bad spirit which had led him to that weak resolution; the same that caused Moses to say: "Ye rebels" (Num 20:10). He humbled himself on the spot, and God poured out His Spirit on him. Perhaps some of you are just in this situation. You have said something provoking or unkind to some person. Perhaps it was peevishness to a servant who was a Christian. Or perhaps it was speaking censoriously of a minister or some other person. Perhaps you have been angry because your opinions have not been taken, or your dignity has been encroached upon. Search thoroughly, and see if you cannot find out the sin. Perhaps you have forgotten it. But God has not forgotten it, and never will forgive your unchristian conduct until you repent. God cannot overlook it. What good would it do to forgive while the sin is rankling in your heart?

7. Perhaps you have resisted the Spirit of God. Perhaps you are in the habit of resisting the Spirit. You resist conviction. In preaching, when something has been said that reached your case, your heart has risen up against it. Many are willing to hear plain and searching preaching, so long as they can apply it all to other people; a misanthropic spirit makes them take a satisfaction in hearing others searched and rebuked; but, if the truth touches them, they directly cry out that the preaching is "personal" and "abusive." Is this your case?

8. The fact is that you do not, on the whole, desire the Spirit. This is true in every case in which you do not have the Spirit. Let me not be mistaken here. I want that you should carefully discriminate. Nothing is more common than for people to desire a thing on some accounts, which they do not choose on the whole. A person may see, in a shop window, an article which he desires to purchase; accordingly he goes in and asks the price, and thinks of it a little, yet on the whole concludes not to purchase it. He desires the article, but does not like the price, or does not like to be at the expense, so that, upon the whole, he prefers not to purchase it. So, persons may on some accounts desire the Spirit of God; from a regard to the comfort and joy of heart which He brings. If you know what it is by former experience to commune with God, and how sweet it is to dissolve in penitence and to be filled with the Spirit, you cannot but desire a return of those joys. And you may set yourself to pray earnestly for it, and to pray for a revival of religion. But, on the whole, you are unwilling it should come. You have so much to do that you cannot attend to it. Or it will require so many sacrifices that you cannot bear to have it. There are some things you are not willing to give up. You find that if you wish to have the Spirit of God dwell with you, you must lead a different life; you must give up the world; you must make sacrifices; you must break off from your

worldly associates, and make confession of your sins. And so, on the whole, you do not wish to have the Spirit come, unless He will consent to dwell with you and let you live as you please. But that He will never do.

9. Perhaps you do not pray for the Spirit; or you pray and use no other means, or pray and do not act consistently with your prayers. Or you use means calculated to resist them. Or you ask, and as soon as He comes and begins to affect your mind, you grieve Him right away, and will not walk with Him.

IV. THE GREAT GUILT OF NOT HAVING THE SPIRIT.

1. Your guilt is just as great as the authority of God is great, which commands you: "Be filled with the Spirit. God commands it, and it is just as much a disobedience of God's commands, as it would be to swear profanely, or steal, or commit adultery, or break the Sabbath. Think of that. And yet there are many people who do not blame themselves at all for not having the Spirit. They even think themselves quite pious Christians, because they go to prayer meetings, and partake of the sacrament, and all that, though they live year after year without the Spirit of God. Now you see that the same God who says: "Do not get drunk," says also: "Be filled with the Spirit."

You all say, if a man is a habitual murderer, or a thief, he is no Christian.

Why? Because he lives in habitual disobedience to God. So, if he swears, you have no charity for him. You will not allow him to plead that his heart is right, and that words are nothing; that God does not care anything about words. You would think it outrageous to have such a man in the Church, or to have a company of such people pretend to call themselves a Christian Church. And yet they are not a whit more absolutely living in disobedience to God than you are, who live without the spirit of prayer and without the presence of God.

2. Your guilt is equal to all the good you might do if you were possessed by the Spirit of God in as great a measure as it is your duty to be, and as you might be. You, elders of this Church, how much good might you do if you had the Spirit! And you, Sunday school teachers, how much good you might do; and you, Church members, too, if you were filled with the Spirit you might do vast good, infinite good. Well, your guilt is just as great.

Here is a blessing promised, and you can have it by doing your duty. You are entirely responsible to the Church and to God for all this good that you might do. A man is responsible for all the good he can do.

3. Your guilt is further measured by all the evil which you do in consequence of not having the Spirit. You are a dishonor to religion. You are a stumbling block to the Church, and to the world; and your guilt is enhanced by all the various influences you exert. And it will prove so in the Day of Judgment.

V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING THE SPIRIT.

1. You will be called eccentric; and probably you will deserve it. Probably you will really be eccentric. I never knew a person who was filled with the Spirit that was not called eccentric. And the reason is that such people are unlike other folk. There is therefore the best of reasons why such persons should appear eccentric. They act under different influences, take different views,

are moved by different motives, led by a different spirit. You are to expect such remarks. How often I have heard the remark respecting such-and-such persons: "He is a good man - but he is rather eccentric." I have sometimes asked for the particulars; in what does his eccentricity consist? I hear the catalogue, and it amounts to this, that he is spiritual.

Make up your mind for this, to be "eccentric." There is such a thing as affected eccentricity. Horrible! But there is such a thing as being so deeply imbued with the Spirit of God that you must and will act so as to appear strange and eccentric, to those who cannot understand the reasons of your conduct.

2. If you have much of the Spirit of God, it is not unlikely you will be thought deranged, by many. We judge men to be deranged when they act differently from what we think to be according to prudence and common sense, and when they come to conclusions for which we can see no good reasons. Paul was accused of being deranged by those who did not understand the views of things under which he acted. No doubt Festus thought the man was crazy, that "much learning had made him mad." But Paul said: "I am not mad, most noble Festus" (Acts 26:24-25). His conduct was so strange, so novel, that Festus thought it must be insanity.

But the truth simply was, he saw the subject so clearly that he threw his whole soul into it. Festus and the rest were entirely in the dark in respect to the motive by which he was actuated. This is by no means uncommon.

Multitudes have appeared, to those who had no spirituality, as if they were deranged. Yet they saw good reasons for doing as they did. God was leading their minds to act in such a way that those who were not spiritual could not see the reasons. You must make up your mind to this, and so much the more, as you live the more above the world and walk with God.

3. If you have the Spirit of God, you must expect to feel great distress in view of the condition of the Church and of the world. Some spiritual epicures ask for the Spirit because they think He will make them so perfectly happy. Some people think that spiritual Christians are always free from sorrow. There never was a greater mistake. Read your Bibles, and see how the prophets and apostles were always groaning and distressed, in view of the state of the Church and of the world. The apostle Paul says he was "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (2Co 4:10). "I protest," says he, "I die daily" (1Co 15:31). You will know what it is to sympathize with the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with. Oh, how He agonized in view of the state of sinners! How He travailed in soul for their salvation! The more you have of His spirit, the more clearly will you see the state of sinners, and the more deeply you will be distressed about them. Many times you will feel as if you could not live in view of their situation; your distress will be unutterable.

4. You will be often grieved with the state of the ministry. Some years since I met a woman belonging to one of the Churches in this city. I inquired of her the state of religion here. She seemed unwilling to say much about it, made some general remarks, and then choked, and her eyes filled, and she said: "Oh, our minister’s mind seems to be very dark!" Spiritual Christians often feel like this, and often weep over it. I have seen much of it, having often found Christians who wept and groaned in secret, to see the darkness in the minds of ministers in regard to religion, the earthliness, and fear of man; but they dared not speak of it lest they should be denounced and

threatened, and perhaps turned out of the Church. I do not say these things censoriously, to reproach my brethren, but because they are true. And ministers ought to know that nothing is more common than for spiritual Christians to feel burdened and distressed at the state of the ministry. I would not wake up any wrong feelings towards ministers, but it is time it should be known that Christians do often get spiritual views of things, and their souls are kindled up, and then they find that their minister does not enter into their feelings, that he is far below the Standard of what he ought to be, and in spirituality is far below some of the members of his Church.

This is one of the most prominent and deeply-to-be-deplored evils of the present day. The piety of the ministry, though real, is so superficial, in many instances, that the spiritual people of the Church feel that ministers do not, cannot, sympathize with them, The preaching does not meet their wants; it does not feed them. The ministers have not depth enough of religious experience to know how to search and wake up the Church; how to help those under temptation, to support the weak, to direct the strong.

When a minister has gone with a Church as far as his experience in spiritual exercises goes, there he stops; and until he has a renewed experience, until he is reconverted, his heart broken up afresh, and he set forward in the Divine life and Christian experience, he will help them no more. He may preach sound doctrine, and so may an unconverted minister; but, after all, his preaching will want that searching pungency, that practical bearing, that unction which alone will reach the case of a spiritually minded Christian. It is a fact over which the Church is groaning, that the piety of young men suffers so much in the course of their education, that when they enter the ministry, however much intellectual furniture they may possess, they are in a state of spiritual babyhood.

They want nursing; they need rather to be fed, than to undertake to feed the Church of God.

5. If you have much of the Spirit of God, you must make up your mind to have much opposition, both in the Church and the world. Very likely the leading men in the Church will oppose you. There has always been opposition in the Church. So it was when Christ was on earth. If you are far above their state of feeling, Church members will oppose you. If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must expect persecution (2Ti 3:12). Often the elders and even the minister will oppose you, if you are filled with the Spirit of God.

6. You must expect very frequent and agonizing conflicts with Satan. Satan has very little trouble with those Christians who are not spiritual, but lukewarm, and slothful, and worldly-minded. And such do not understand what is said about spiritual conflicts. Perhaps they will smile when such things are mentioned. And so the devil lets them alone. They do not disturb him, nor he them. But spiritual Christians, he understands very well, are doing him a vast injury, and therefore he sets himself against them. Such Christians often have terrible conflicts. They have temptations that they never thought of before: blasphemous thoughts, atheism, suggestions to do deeds of wickedness, to destroy their own lives, and the like. And if you are spiritual you may expect these terrible conflicts.

7. You will have greater conflicts with yourself than you ever thought of.

You will sometimes find your own corruptions making strange headway against the Spirit. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal 5:17). Such a Christian is often thrown into consternation at the power of his own corruptions. One of the Commodores in the

United States Navy was, as I have been told, a spiritual man; his pastor told me he had known that man lie on the floor and groan a great part of the night, in conflict with his own corruptions, and to cry to God, in agony, that He would break the power of the temptation. It seemed as if the devil was determined to ruin him, and his own heart, for the time being, was almost in league with the devil.

8. But, you will have peace with God. If the Church, and sinners, and the devil, oppose you, there will be One with whom you will have peace. Let you who are called to these trials. and conflicts. and temptations, and who groan, and pray, and weep, and break your hearts, remember this consideration: your peace, so far as your feelings towards God are concerned, will flow like a river.

9. You will likewise have peace of conscience, if you are led by the Spirit.

You will not be constantly goaded and kept on the rack by a guilty conscience. Your conscience will be calm and quiet, unruffled as the summer's lake.

10. If filled with the Spirit, you will be useful. You cannot help being useful. Even if you were sick and unable to go out of your room, or to converse, and saw nobody, you would be ten times more useful than a hundred of those common sort of Christians who have no spirituality. To give you an idea of this, I will relate an anecdote. A pious man in the western part of this State, was suffering from consumption. He was a poor man, and was ill for years. An unconverted merchant in the place, who had a kind heart, used to send him now and then some things for his comfort, or for his family. He felt grateful for the kindness, but could make no return, as he wanted to do. At length he determined that the best return he could make would be to pray for the man's salvation. So he began to pray, and his soul kindled, and he got hold of God. No revival was taking place there, but, by and by, to the astonishment of everybody, this merchant came right out on the Lord's side. The fire kindled all over the place; a powerful revival followed, and multitudes were converted.

This poor man lingered in this way for several years, and died. After his death, I visited the place, and his widow put into my hands his diary.

Among other entries was this: "I am acquainted with about thirty ministers and Churches." He then went on to set apart certain hours in the day and week to pray for each of these ministers and Churches, and also certain seasons for praying for different missionary stations. Then followed, under different dates, such facts as these: "Today I have been enabled to offer what I call the prayer of faith for the outpouring of the Spirit on - Church, and I trust in God there will soon be a revival there."

Under another date he had written: "I have today been able to offer what I call the prayer of faith for - Church, and trust there will soon be a revival there." Thus he had gone over a great number of Churches, recording the fact that he had prayed for them in faith that a revival might soon prevail among them.

Of the missionary stations, if I recollect right, he mentioned in particular one at Ceylon. I believe the last place mentioned in his diary, for which he offered the prayer of faith, was the place in which he lived. Not long after, the revival commenced, and went over the region of country, nearly, I believe, if not quite, in the order in which the places had been mentioned in his diary; and in due time news came from Ceylon that there was a revival of religion there. The revival in his own town

did not commence till after his death. Its commencement was at the time when his widow put into my hands the document to which I have referred. She told me that he was so exercised in prayer during his sickness, that she often feared he would "pray himself to death." The revival was exceedingly great and powerful in all the region, and the fact that it was about to prevail had not been hidden from this servant of the Lord. According to His Word, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Psa 25:14). Thus, this man, too feeble in body to go out of his house, was yet more useful to the world and the Church of God than all the heartless professors in the country. Standing between God and the desolations of Zion, and pouring out his heart in believing prayer, "as a prince he had power with God and with men, and prevailed" (Gen 32:28).

11. If you are filled with the Spirit, you will not find yourselves distressed, and galled, and worried, when people speak against you. When I find people irritated and fretting at any little thing that touches them, I am sure they have not the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ could have everything said against Him that malice could invent, and yet not be in the least disturbed by it. If you mean to be meek under persecution, and exemplify the temper of the Savior, and honor religion in this way, you need to be filled with the Spirit.

12. You will be wise in using means for the conversion of sinners. If the Spirit of God is in you, He will lead you to use means wisely, in a way adapted to the end, and to avoid doing hurt. No man who is not filled with the Spirit of God is fit to be employed in directing the measures adopted in a revival. His hands will be "all thumbs," unable to take hold, and he will act as if he had not common sense. But a man who is led by the Spirit of God will know how to time his measures aright, and how to apportion Divine truth so as to make it tell to the best advantage.

13. You will be calm under affliction; not thrown into confusion or consternation when you see the storm coming over you. People around will be astonished at your calmness and cheerfulness under heavy trials, not knowing the inward supports of those who are filled with the Spirit.

14. You will be resigned in death; you will always feel prepared to die, and not afraid to die; and after death you will be proportionately more happy for ever in heaven.

VI. THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

1. You will often doubt, in such a case, and reasonably so whether you are a Christian. You will have doubts, and you ought to have them, for the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God, and if you are not led by the Spirit, what reason have you to think that you are a son? You will try to make a little evidence go a great way to bolster up your hopes; but you cannot do it, unless your conscience is seared as with a hot iron. You cannot help being plunged often into painful doubt about your state (Rom 8:9; 2Co 13:5).

2. You will always be unsettled in your views about the prayer of faith.

The prayer of faith is something so spiritual, so much a matter of experience and not of speculation, that unless you are spiritual yourselves you will not understand it fully. You may talk a great deal about the prayer of faith, and for the time get thoroughly convinced regarding it. But you will never feel so settled on it as to retain the same position of mind concerning it, and in a little while you will be all uncertainty again. I knew a curious instance in a brother minister. He told me: "When I have the Spirit of God and enjoy His presence, I believe firmly in the prayer of faith; but

when I have Him not, I find myself doubting whether there is any such thing, and my mind is full of objections." I know, from my own experience, what this is, and when I hear persons raising objections to that view of prayer which I have presented in these Lectures, I understand very well what their difficulty is, and have often found it impossible to satisfy their minds, while they are so far from God; when, at the same time, they would understand it themselves without argument, whenever they experienced it.

3. If you have not the Spirit, you will be very apt to stumble at those who have. You will doubt the propriety of their conduct. If they seem to feel a good deal more than yourself, you will be likely to call it "animal feeling."

You will perhaps doubt their sincerity when they say they have such feelings You will say: "I don't know what to make of Brother Such-a-one; he seems to be very pious, but I do not understand him, I think he has a great deal of animal feeling." Thus you will be trying to censure them, for the purpose of justifying yourself.

4. You will be had in reputation with the impenitent, and with carnal professors. They will praise you, as "a rational, orthodox, consistent Christian." You will be just in the frame of mind to walk with them, because you are agreed.

5. You will be much troubled with fears about fanaticism. Whenever there are revivals, you will see in them "a strong tendency to fanaticism," and will be full of fears and anxiety.

6. You will be much disturbed by the measures that are used in revivals. If any measures are adopted, that are decided and direct, you will think they are all "new," and will stumble at them just in proportion to your want of spirituality. You do not see their appropriateness. You will stand and cavil at the measures, because you are so blind that you cannot see their adaptedness, while all heaven is rejoicing in them as the means of saving souls.

7. You will be a reproach to religion. The impenitent will sometimes praise you because you are so much like themselves, and sometimes laugh about you because you are such a hypocrite.

8. You will know but little about the Bible.

9. If you die without the Spirit, you will fall into hell. There can be no doubt about this. Without the Spirit you will never be prepared for heaven.

REMARKS.

1. Christians are as guilty for not having the Spirit, as sinners are for not repenting.

2. They are even more so. As they have more light, they are so much the more guilty.

3. All beings have a right to complain of Christians who have not the Spirit. You are not doing work for God, and He has a right to complain. He has placed His Spirit at your disposal, and if you have not the Spirit, God has a right to look to you and to hold you responsible for all the good you might otherwise do. You are sinning against all heaven, for you ought to be adding to the happy ranks of the redeemed. Sinners, the Church, and ministers, all have a right to complain.

4. You are an obstacle in the way of the work of the Lord. It is in vain for a minister to try to work over your head. Ministers often groan and struggle, and wear themselves out in vain, trying to do good where there is a people who live so that they do not have the Spirit of God. If the Spirit is poured out at any time, the Church will grieve Him right away. Thus, you may tie the hands and break the heart of your minister, and break him down, and perhaps kill him, because you will not be filled with the Spirit.

5. You see the reason why Christians need the Spirit, and the degree of their dependence upon Him.

6. Do not tempt God by "waiting" for His Spirit, while using no means to procure His presence.

7. If you mean to have the Spirit, you must be childlike, and yield to His influences - just as yielding as air. If He is drawing you to prayer, you must quit everything to yield to His gentle strivings. No doubt you have sometimes felt a desire to pray for some object, and you have put it off and resisted, until God left you. If you wish Him to remain, you must yield to His softest leadings, watch to learn what He would have you do and yield yourself up to His guidance.

8. Christians ought to be willing to make any sacrifice to enjoy the presence of the Spirit. Said a woman in high life (a professor of religion): "I must either give up hearing such-and-such a minister [naming him] preach, or I must give up my gay company." She gave up the preaching and stayed away. How different from another case - that of a woman in the same rank of life - who heard the same minister preach, and went home resolved to abandon her gay and worldly manner of life. She changed her whole mode of dress, of equipage, of living, and of conversation; so that her gay and worldly friends were soon willing to leave her to the enjoyment of communion with God, and free to spend her time in doing good.

9. You see from this, that it must be very difficult for those in fashionable life to go to heaven. What a calamity to be in such circles! Who can enjoy the presence of God in them?

10. See how crazy those are who are scrambling to get up to these circles, enlarging their houses, changing their style of living, their dress, and their furniture. It is like climbing up to the mast-head to be thrown off into the ocean. To enjoy God, you must come down, not go up there. God is not there, among all the starch and flattery of high life.

11. Many professors of religion are as ignorant of spirituality as Nicodemus was of the New Birth. They are ignorant, and I fear unconverted. If anybody talks to them about the spirit of prayer, it is all algebra to them. The case of such professors is awful. How different was the character of the apostles! Read the history of their lives, read their letters, and you will see that they were always spiritual, and walked daily with God. But now how little is there of such religion! "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luk 18:8.) Set some of these professors to work in a revival, and they do not know what to do, for they have no energy, no skills and make no impression. When will professors of religion set themselves to work, filled with the Spirit? If I could see this Church filled with the Spirit, I would ask nothing more to move this whole mighty mass of minds around us. Not two weeks would pass before the revival would spread all over this city.

05.08. MEETINGS FOR PRAYER

LECTURE VIII

MEETINGS FOR PRAYER

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that these shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. - Mat 18:19.

HITHERTO , in treating of the subject of PRAYER, I have confined my remarks to secret prayer. I am now to speak of social prayer, or prayer offered in company, where two or more are united in praying. Such meetings have been common from the time of Christ, and it is probable that God's people have always been in the habit of making united supplication, whenever they had the privilege. The propriety of the practice will not be questioned here. I need not dwell now on the duty of social prayer. Nor is it my design to discuss the question, whether any two Christians agreeing to ask any blessing, will be sure to obtain it. My object is to make some remarks on Meetings for Prayer, noting:

I. The design of prayer meetings.

II. The manner of conducting them.

III. Several things that will defeat the design of holding them.

I. THE DESIGNS OF PRAYER MEETINGS.

1. One design of assembling several persons together for united prayer, is to promote union among Christians. Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together. Never do they love one another so well as when they witness the outpouring of each other's hearts in prayer. Their spirituality begets a feeling of union and confidence, highly important to the prosperity of the Church. It is doubtful whether Christians can ever be otherwise than united, if they are in the habit of really praying together. And where they have had hard feelings and differences among themselves, these are all done away by uniting in prayer. The great object is gained, if you can bring them really to unite in prayer; if this can be done, the difficulties vanish.

2. To extend the spirit of prayer. God has so constituted us, and such is the economy of His grace, that we are sympathetic beings, and communicate our feelings to one another. A minister, for instance, will often, as it were, breathe his own feelings into his congregation. The Spirit of God that inspires his soul, makes use of his feelings to influence his hearers, just as much as He makes use of the words he preaches. So He makes use of the feelings of Christians. Nothing is more calculated to beget a spirit of prayer than to unite in social prayer with one who has the spirit himself; unless this one should be so far ahead that his prayer will repel the rest. His prayer will awaken them, if they are not so far behind as to revolt at it and resist it. If they are anywhere near the standard of his feelings, his spirit will kindle, and burn, and spread all around. One individual who obtains the spirit of prayer will often arouse a whole Church, and extend the same spirit

through the whole, so that a general revival follows.

3. Another grand design of social prayer, is to move God. Not that it changes the mind and feelings of God. When we speak of "moving" God, as I have said in a former Lecture, we do not mean that prayer alters the will of God. But when the right kind of prayer is offered by Christians, they are in such a state of mind that it becomes proper for God to bestow a blessing. They are then prepared to receive it, and He gives because He is always the same, and always ready and happy to show mercy. When Christians are united, and praying as they ought, God opens the windows of heaven, and pours out His blessing till there is not room to receive it (Mal 3:10).

4. Another important design of prayer meetings is the conviction and conversion of sinners. When properly conducted, they are eminently calculated to produce this effect. Sinners are apt to be solemn when they hear Christians pray. Where there is a spirit of prayer, sinners must feel.

An ungodly man (a universalist) once said respecting a certain minister: "I can bear his preaching very well; but when he prays, I feel awfully - as if God were coming down upon me." Sinners are often convicted by hearing prayer. A young man of distinguished talents said, concerning a certain minister to whom, before his conversion, he had been very much opposed:

"As soon as he began to pray, I began to be convicted; and if he had continued to pray much longer, I should not have been able to hold myself back from Christ." Just as soon as Christians begin to pray as they ought, sinners then know that they pray, and begin to feel awfully. They do not understand what spirituality is, because they have no experience of it. But when such prayer is offered, they know there is something in it; they know God is in it, and it brings them near to God; it makes them feel awfully solemn, and they cannot bear it. And not only is it calculated to impress the minds of sinners, but when Christians pray in faith, the Spirit of God is poured out, and sinners are melted down and converted on the spot.

II. THE MANNER OF CONDUCTING PRAYER MEETINGS.

1. It is often well to open a prayer meeting by reading a short portion of the Word of God, especially if the person who takes the lead of the meeting, can call to mind any portion that will be applicable to the object or occasion, and that is impressive, and to the point. If he has no passage that is applicable, he had better not read any at all. Do not drag in the Word of God to make up part of the meeting as a mere matter of form.

This is an insult to God. It is not well to read any more than is applicable to the subject before the meeting or the occasion. Some people think it always necessary to read a whole chapter, though it may be ever so long, and have a variety of subjects. It is just as impressive and judicious to read a whole chapter as it would be for a minister to take a whole chapter for his text, when his object was to make some particular truth bear on the minds of his audience. The design of a prayer meeting should be to bring Christians to the point, to pray for a definite object. Wandering over a large field hinders and destroys this design.

2. It is proper that the person who leads should make some short and appropriate remarks, calculated to explain the nature of prayer, and the encouragements we have to pray, and to bring the object to be prayed for directly before the minds of the people.

A man can no more pray without having his thoughts concentrated than he can do anything else. The person leading should therefore see to this, by bringing up before their minds the object for which they came to pray. If they came to pray for any object, he can do this. And if they did not, they had better go home. It is of no use to stay there and mock God by pretending to pray when they have nothing on earth to pray for.

After stating the object, he should bring up some promise or some principle, as the ground of encouragement to expect an answer to their prayers. If there is any indication of Providence, or any promise, or any principle in the Divine government, that affords a ground of faith, let him call it to mind, and not let them be talking out of their own hearts at random, without knowing any solid reason for expecting an answer. One reason why prayer meetings mostly accomplish so little, is because there is so little common sense exercised about them. Instead of looking round for some solid footing on which to repose their faith, people come together and pour forth words, and neither know nor care whether they have any reason to expect an answer. If they are going to pray about anything concerning which there can be any doubt or any mistake, in regard to the ground of faith, they should be shown the reason there is for believing that their prayers will be heard and answered. It is easy to see that, unless something like this is done, three-fourths of them will have no idea of what they are doing, or of the ground on which they should expect to receive what they pray for.

3. In calling on persons to pray it is always desirable to let things take their own course, wherever it is safe. If it can be left so with safety, let those pray who are most inclined to pray. It sometimes happens that even those who are ordinarily the most spiritual, and most proper to be called on, are not, at the time, in a suitable frame; they may be cold and worldly, and only freeze the meeting. But if you let those pray who desire to pray, you avoid this. But often this cannot be done with safety, especially in large cities, where a prayer meeting might be liable to be interrupted by those who have no business to pray; some fanatic or crazy person, some hypocrite or enemy, who would only make a noise. In most places, however, the course may be taken with perfect safety. Give up the meeting to the Spirit of God. Those who desire to pray, let them pray. If the leader sees anything that needs to be set right, let him remark, freely and kindly, and put it right, and then go on again. Only he should be careful to time his remarks, so as not to interrupt the flow of feeling, or to chill the meeting, or to turn the thoughts of the people from the proper subject.

4. If it is necessary to name the individuals who are to pray, it is best to call first on those who are most spiritual; and, if you do not know who they are, then choose those whom you would naturally suppose to be most "alive." If they pray at the outset, they will be likely to spread the spirit of prayer through the meeting, and elevate the tone of the whole.

Otherwise, if you call on those who are cold and lifeless, they will be likely to diffuse a chill. The only hope of having an efficient prayer meeting is when at least a part of the Church is spiritual, and infuses its spirit into the rest. This is the very reason why it is often best to let things take their course, for then those who have the most feeling are apt to pray first, and give character to the meeting.

5. The prayers should always be very short. When individuals suffer themselves to pray long they forget that they are only the mouth of the congregation, and that the congregation cannot be expected to sympathize with them, so as to feel united in prayer, if they are long and tedious, and

go all around the world, and pray for everything they can think of.

Commonly, those who pray long in a meeting do so, not because they have the spirit of prayer, but because they have not. Some men will spin out a long prayer in telling God who and what He is, or they pray out a whole system of divinity. Some preach; others exhort the people - till everybody wishes they would stop, and God wishes so, too, most undoubtedly. They should keep to the point, and pray for what they came to pray for, and not follow the imagination of their own foolish hearts all over the universe.

6. Each one should pray for some one object. It is well for every individual to have one object for prayer; two or more may pray for the same thing, or each for a separate object. If the meeting is convened to pray for some specific thing, let them all pray for that. If its object is more general, let them select their subjects, according as they feel interested. If one feels particularly disposed to pray for the Church, let him do it. If the next feels disposed to pray for the Church, he may do so, too. Perhaps the next will feel inclined to pray for sinners; let him do it, and as soon as he has got through let him stop. Whenever a man has deep feeling, he always feels on some particular point, and if he prays about that, he will speak out of the abundance of his heart, and then he will naturally stop when he is done.

7. If, in the progress of the meeting, it becomes necessary to change the object of prayer, let the leader state the fact, and explain it in a few words.

If the object is to pray for the Church, or for backsliders, or sinners, or the heathen, let him state it plainly, and then turn it over and hold it up before them, till he brings them to think and feel deeply before they pray. Then he should state to them the grounds on which they may repose their faith in regard to obtaining the blessings for which they pray, if any such statement is needed, and so lead them right up to the Throne, and let them take hold of the hand of God. This is according to the philosophy of the mind. People always do it for themselves when they pray in secret, if they really mean to pray to any purpose. And so it should be in prayer meetings.

8. It is important that the time should be fully occupied, so as not to leave long seasons of silence, which make a bad impression, and chill the meeting. I know that sometimes Churches have seasons of silent prayer.

But in those cases they should be specially requested to pray in silence, so that all may know why they are silent. This often has a most powerful effect, where a few moments are spent by a whole congregation in silence, while all lift up their thoughts to God. This is very different from having long intervals of silence because there is nobody to pray. Every one feels that such a silence is like the cold damp of death over the meeting.

9. It is exceedingly important that he who leads the meeting should press sinners who may be present to immediate repentance. He should earnestly urge the Christians who are present, to pray in such a way as to make sinners feel that they are expected to repent immediately. This tends to inspire Christians with compassion and love for souls. The remarks made to sinners are often like pouring fire upon the hearts of Christians, to awaken them to prayer and effort for the conversion of the unsaved. Let them see and feel the guilt and danger of sinners right among them, and then they will pray.

III. THINGS WHICH MAY DEFEAT THE PRAYER MEETING.

1. When there is an unhappy want of confidence in the leader, there is no hope of any good. Whatever may be the cause, whether he is to blame or not, the very fact that he leads the meeting will cast a damp over it, and prevent all good. I have witnessed it in Churches, where there was some offensive elder or deacon (perhaps justly deemed offensive; perhaps not) set to lead, and the meeting would die under his influence. If there is a want of confidence in regard to his piety, or in his ability, or in his judgment, or in anything connected with the meeting, everything he says or does will fall to the ground. The same thing often takes place where the Church has lost confidence in the minister.

2. Where the leader lacks spirituality, there will be a dryness and coldness in his remarks and prayers; everything will indicate his want of unction, and his whole influence will be the very reverse of what it ought to be. I have known Churches where a prayer meeting could not be sustained, and the reason was not obvious, but those who understood the state of things knew that the leader was so notorious for his want of spirituality that he would inevitably freeze a prayer meeting to death. In many Churches the elders are so far from being spiritual men that they always freeze a prayer meeting. And at the same time they are often amazingly jealous for their dignity, and cannot bear to have anybody else lead the meeting. If any member that is spiritual takes the lead, they will take him to task for it, saying: "Why, you are not an elder; you ought not to lead a prayer meeting in the presence of an elder!" And thus they stand in the way, while the whole Church is suffering under their blighting influence.

A man who knows he is not in a spiritual frame of mind has no business to conduct a prayer meeting - he will kill it. There are two reasons. First, he will have no spiritual discernment, and will know neither what to do, nor when to do it. A person who is spiritual can see the movements of Providence, and can feel the Spirit of God, and understand what He is leading them to pray for, so as to time his subjects, and take advantage of the state of feeling among Christians. He will not overthrow all the feeling in a meeting by introducing things that are incongruous or ill-timed. He has spiritual discernment to understand the leadings of the Spirit, and His workings on those who pray; and to follow on as the Spirit leads. Suppose an individual leads who is not spiritual, that there are two or three prayers, and the spirit of prayer arises, but the leader, having no spiritual discernment to see it, makes some remarks on another point, or reads a piece out of some book that is as far from the feeling of the meeting as the North Pole! What they are called to pray for may be just as evident to the praying people present as if the Son of God Himself had come into the meeting and named the subject; but the leader will overthrow it all, because he is so stupid that he does not know the indications of the meeting.

And then, if the leader is not spiritual, he will very likely be dull and dry in his remarks, and in all his exercises. He will give out a long hymn in a dreamy manner, and then read a long passage of Scripture, in a tone so cold that he will spread a wintry pall over the meeting, and it will be dull, as long as his cold heart is placed in front of the whole thing.

3. A want of suitable talents in the leader. If he is wanting in the talents which are fitted to make a meeting useful, if he can say nothing, or if his remarks are so out of the way as to produce levity or contempt, or if they have nothing in them that will impress the mind, or are not guided by good sense, or are not appropriate, he will injure the meeting. A man may be pious, but so weak that his

prayers do not edify, but rather disgust. When this is so, he had better keep silence.

4. Sometimes the benefit of a prayer meeting is defeated by a bad Spirit in the leader. For instance, where there is a revival, and great opposition, if a leader gets up in a prayer meeting and speaks of instances of opposition, and comments upon them, and thus diverts the meeting away from the object, he knows not what spirit he is of. Its effect is always ruinous to a prayer meeting. Let a minister in a revival come out and preach against the opposition, and he will infallibly destroy the revival, and turn the hearts of Christians away from their proper object. Let the man who is set to lead the Church be careful to guard his own spirit, lest he should mislead the Church, and diffuse a wrong temper. The same will be true, if any one who is called upon to speak or pray, introduces in his remarks or prayers anything controversial, impertinent, unreasonable, unscriptural, ridiculous, or irrelevant. Any of these things will quench the tender breathings of the spirit of prayer, and destroy the meeting.

5. Persons coming late to the meeting. This is a very great hindrance. When people have begun to pray, and their attention is fixed, and they have shut their eyes and closed their ears, to keep out everything from their minds, in the midst of a prayer somebody will come bolting in and walk through the room. Some will look up, and all have their minds interrupted for the moment. Then they all get fixed again, and another comes in, and so on. I suppose the devil would not care how many Christians went to a prayer meeting, if they would only go after the meeting had begun. He would be glad to have ever so many go "scattering along" in such a way, dodging in very piously and distractingly.

6. When persons make cold prayers and cold confessions of sin, they are sure to quench the spirit of prayer. When the influences of the Spirit are enjoyed, in the midst of the warm expressions that are flowing forth, let an individual come in who is cold, and pour out his cold breath like the damp of death, and it will make every Christian who has any feeling want to get out of the meeting.

7. In some places it is common to begin a prayer meeting by reading a tong portion of Scripture. Then the deacon or elder gives out a long hymn. Next, they sing it. Then he prays a long prayer, praying for the Jews, and the fullness of the Gentiles, and many other objects that have nothing to do with the occasion of the meeting. After that perhaps he reads a long extract from some book or magazine. Then they have another long hymn and another long prayer, and then they go home.

I once heard an elder say that a Church had kept up a prayer meeting so many years, and yet had experienced no revival. The truth was, that the officers of the Church had been accustomed to carry on the meetings in just such a dignified way, and their dignity would not allow anything to be altered. No wonder there was no revival! Such prayer meetings are enough to hinder a revival. And if ever so many revivals should commence, the prayer meeting would destroy them. There was a prayer meeting once in this city, as I have been told, where there appeared to be some feeling, and some one every reasonably proposed that they should have two or three prayers in succession, without rising from their knees. One dignified man present opposed it, and said that they never had done so, and he hoped there would be no innovations! He did not approve of innovations. That was the last of the revival! Such persons have their prayer meetings stereotyped, and are determined not to turn out of their track, whether they receive blessing or not. To allow any such thing would be "a new measure," and they never like "new measures"!

8. A great deal of singing often injures a prayer meeting. The agonizing spirit of prayer does not lead people to sing. There is a time for everything; a time to sing, and a time to pray. But if I know what it is to travail in birth for souls, Christians never feel less like singing than when they have the spirit of prayer for sinners.

When singing is introduced in a prayer meeting, the hymns should be short, and so selected as to bring out something solemn; some striking words, such as the Judgment Hymn, and others calculated to produce an effect on sinners; or something that will produce a deep impression on the minds of Christians; but not that joyful kind of singing that makes everybody feel comfortable, and turns off the mind from the object of the prayer meeting.

I once heard a celebrated organist produce a remarkable effect in a protracted meeting. The organ was a powerful one, and the double bass pipes were like unto thunder. The hymn was given out that had these lines:

See the storm of vengeance gathering over the path you dare to tread; Hear the awful thunder rolling, Loud and louder over your head.

When he came to these words, we first heard the distant roar of thunder; then it grew nearer and louder, till at the word "louder," there was a crash that seemed almost to overpower the congregation. Such things in their proper place do good. But common singing dissipates feeling. It should always be such as will not take away feeling, but deepen it.

Often a prayer meeting is injured by calling on the young converts to sing joyful hymns. This is highly improper in a prayer meeting. It is no time for them to let feeling flow away in joyful singing, while so many sinners around them, and their own former companions, are going down to hell. A revival is often put down by the Church and the minister giving themselves up to singing with young converts. Thus, by stopping to rejoice when they ought to feel more and more deeply for sinners, they grieve away the Spirit of God, and they soon find that their agony and travail of soul are gone.

9. Introducing subjects of controversy into prayer will defeat a prayer meeting. Nothing of a controversial nature should be introduced into prayer, unless it is the object of the meeting to settle that thing.

Otherwise, let Christians come together in their prayer meetings, on the broad ground of offering united prayer for a common object. And let controversies be settled somewhere else.

10. Great pains should be taken, both by the leader and others, to watch narrowly the leadings of the Spirit of God. Let them not quench the Spirit for the sake of praying according to the regular custom. Avoid everything calculated to divert attention away from the object. All affectation of feeling should be particularly guarded against. If there is an affectation of feeling, most commonly others see and feel that it is affectation, not reality. At any rate, the Spirit of God knows it, and will be grieved. On the other hand, all resistance to the Spirit will equally destroy the meeting.

Not infrequently it happens that there are some so cold that if any one should break out in the spirit of prayer, they would call it fanaticism, and perhaps display opposition.

11. If individuals refuse to pray when they are called upon, it injures a prayer meeting. There are some people who always pretend they have no gift. Women sometimes refuse to take their turn in prayer, and pretend they have not ability to pray. But if any one else should say so, they would be offended! Suppose they should learn that any other person had made such a remark as this: "Do not ask her to pray, she cannot pray, she has not talent enough": would they like it? So with a man who pretends he has no gift; let any one else report that "he has not talent enough to make a decent prayer," and see if he will like it. The pretense is not sincere; it is all a sham.

Some say they cannot pray in their families; they have no gift. But a person could not offend one of them more than to say: "He cannot pray a decent prayer before his own family." The retort would be: "Why, So-and-so talks as if he thought nobody else had any gifts but himself."

People are not apt to have such a low opinion of themselves. I have often seen the curse of God follow such professors. They have no excuse. God will take none. The man has got a tongue to talk to his neighbors, and he can talk to God if he has any heart for it. You will see their children unconverted: their son has a curse; their daughter - tongue cannot tell.

God says He will pour out His fury on the families that call not on His name. I could mention a host of facts to show that God MARKS with His disapprobation and curse those who refuse to pray when they ought.

Until professors of religion will repent of this sin, and take up this cross (if they choose to call praying "a cross"), they need not expect a blessing.

12. Prayer meetings are often too long. They should always be dismissed while Christians have feeling, and not be spun out until all feeling is exhausted, and the spirit of prayer is gone.

13. Heartless confessions injure a meeting. People confess their sins but do not forsake them. Every week they will make the same confession. Why, they have no intention to forsake their sins! It shows plainly that they do not mean to reform. All their religion consists in these confessions. Instead of getting a blessing from God thereby they will get only a curse.

14. Injury is also done when Christians spend all the time in praying for themselves. They should have done this in their own homes. When they come to a prayer meeting, they should be prepared to offer effectual intercessions for others. If Christians pray at home as they ought, they will feel like praying for sinners. If, however, their private prayers are exclusively for themselves, they will not get the spirit of prayer. I have known men shut themselves up for days to pray for themselves, and never get any life, because their prayers were all selfish. But if such people will just forget themselves, and throw their hearts abroad, and pray for others, it will wake up such a feeling, that they will be able to pour forth their hearts in prayer. And then they can go to work for souls. I knew an individual in a revival, who shut himself up seventeen days, and prayed as if he would have God come to his terms; but it would not do, and therefore he went out to work, and immediately he had the Spirit of God in his soul.

It is well for Christians to pray for themselves, and confess their sins, and then throw their hearts abroad, till they feel as they ought.

15. Prayer meetings are often defeated by the want of appropriate remarks. The things are not said which are calculated to lead them to pray.

Perhaps the leader has not prepared himself; or perhaps he has not the requisite talents to lead the Church out in prayer, or he does not lead their minds to dwell on the appropriate topics of prayer.

16. It is a hindrance, when individuals who are justly obnoxious are forward in speaking and praying. Such persons are sometimes very much set upon taking part. They say it is their duty to get up and testify for God on all occasions. They will say, they know they are not able to edify the Church, but nobody else can do their duty, and they wish to testify.

Perhaps the only place they ever did testify for God was in a prayer meeting; their lives, out of the meeting, testify against God. They had better keep still.

17. When persons take part whose illiteracy is so pronounced as to cause disgust among people of taste and intelligence, attention is diverted. I do not mean to imply that it is necessary that a person should have a liberal education, in order to lead in prayer. All persons of common education, especially if they are in the habit of praying, can lead in prayer, if they have the spirit of prayer. But there are some persons who use expressions so absurd and illiterate as to disgust every intelligent mind. The feeling of disgust is an involuntary thing, and when a disgusting object is before the mind, the feeling is irresistible. Piety will not keep a person from feeling it. The only way is to take away the object. Such persons may feel grieved at not being called upon to take part, but it is better that they should be kindly told the reason, than that the prayer meeting should be regularly injured, and rendered ridiculous.

18. A want of union in prayer mars the meeting; that is, when one leads, but the others do not follow, for they are thinking of something else. Their hearts do not unite, do not say: "Amen." It is as bad as if one person should make a petition and another remonstrate against it. It is as though one asks God to do a thing, and the others ask Him not to do it, or to do something else.

19. Neglect of secret prayer is yet another hindrance. Christians who do not pray in secret cannot unite with power in a prayer meeting, and cannot have the spirit of prayer.

REMARKS.

1. A badly conducted prayer meeting often does more hurt than good. In many Churches, the general manner of conducting prayer meetings is such that Christians have not the least idea of the design or the power of such meetings. It is such as tends to keep down rather than to promote pious feeling and the spirit of prayer.

2. A prayer meeting is an index to the state of religion in a Church. If the prayer meeting is neglected, or the spirit of prayer is not manifested, you know of course that religion is in a low condition. Let me go into the prayer meeting, and I can always see the state of religion which prevails in the Church.

3. Every minister ought to know that if the prayer meetings are neglected, all his labors are in vain. unless he can get Christians to attend the prayer meetings, all else that he can do will not improve the state of religion.

4. A great responsibility rests on him who leads a prayer meeting. If the meeting be not what it ought to be, if it does not elevate the state of religion, he should go seriously to work and see what

is the matter, and get the spirit of prayer, and prepare himself to make such remarks as are calculated to do good and set things right. A leader has no business to lead prayer meetings, if he is not prepared, both in head and heart, to do this.

5. Prayer meetings are the most difficult meetings to sustain - as, indeed, they ought to be. They are so spiritual that unless the leader be peculiarly prepared, both in heart and mind, they will dwindle. It is in vain for the leader to complain that members of the Church do not attend. In nine cases out of ten it is the leader's fault that they do not attend. If he felt as he ought, they would find the meeting so interesting that they would attend as a matter of course. If he is so cold, and dull, and lacking in spirituality, as to freeze everything, no wonder people do not come to the meeting.

Church officers often complain and scold because people do not come to the prayer meeting, when the truth is, they themselves are so cold that they freeze to death everybody who does come.

6. Prayer meetings are most important meetings for the Church. It is highly important for Christians to sustain the prayer meetings, in order to

(a) promote union, (b) increase brotherly love, (c) cultivate Christian confidence, (d) promote their own growth in grace, and (e) cherish and advance spirituality.

7. Prayer meetings should be so numerous in the Church, and be so arranged, as to exercise the gifts of every member - man or woman. Every one should have the opportunity to pray, and to express the feelings of his heart. The sectional prayer meetings are designed to do this. And if they are too large to allow of it, let them be divided, so as to bring the entire mass into the work, to exercise all gifts, and diffuse union, confidence, and brotherly love, through the whole.

8. It is important that impenitent sinners should attend prayer meetings. If none come of their own accord, go out and invite them. Christians ought to take great pains to induce their impenitent friends and neighbors to come to prayer meetings. They can pray better for impenitent sinners when they have them right before their eyes. I have known women's prayer meetings exclude sinners from the meetings. And the reason was, they were so proud that they were ashamed to pray before sinners. What a spirit! Such prayers will do no good. They insult God. You have not done enough, by any means, when you have gone to the prayer meeting yourself. You cannot pray if you have invited no sinner to go. If all the members have neglected their duty so, and have gone to the prayer meeting, and taken no sinners along with them, no subjects of prayer - what have they come for?

9. The great object of all the means of grace is to aim directly at the conversion of sinners. You should pray that they may be converted there.

Do not pray that they may be merely awakened and convicted, but that they may be converted on the spot. No one should either pray or make any remarks, as if he expected a single sinner would go away without giving his heart to God. You should all make the impression on his mind, that NOW he must submit. And if you do this, while you are yet speaking God will hear.

If Christians made it manifest that they had really set their hearts on the conversion of sinners, and were bent upon it, and prayed as they ought, there would rarely be a prayer meeting held without souls being converted; and sometimes every sinner in the room. That is the very time, if ever, that

sinners should be converted in answer to those prayers. I do not doubt but that you may have sinners converted in every sectional prayer meeting, if you do your duty. Take them there, take your families, your friends, or your neighbors there with that design; give them the proper instruction, if they need instruction, and pray for them as you ought, and you will save their souls. Rely upon it, if you do your duty, in a right manner, God will not keep back His blessing, but the work will be done.

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Chapter 97

05.09. MEANS TO BE USED WITH SINNERS

LECTURE IX

MEANS TO BE USED WITH SINNERS

Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen . - Isa 43:10.

I the text it is affirmed of the children of God, that they are His witnesses. In several preceding Lectures I have been dwelling on the subject of prayer, or on that department of means for the promotion of a revival, which is intended to move God to pour out His Spirit. I am now to commence the other department, dealing with the means to be used for the conviction and conversion of sinners.

It is true, in general, that persons are affected by the subject of religion in proportion to their conviction of its truth. Inattention to religion is the great reason why so little is felt concerning it. No being can look at the great truths of religion, as truths, and not feel deeply concerning them. The devil cannot. He believes and trembles. Angels in heaven feel, in view of these things. God feels! An intellectual conviction of truth is always accompanied with feeling of some kind.

One grand design of God in leaving Christians in the world after their conversion is that they may be witnesses for God. It is that they may call the attention of the thoughtless multitude to the subject, and make them see the difference in the character and destiny of those who believe the Gospel and those who reject it. This inattention is the grand difficulty in the way of promoting religion. And what the Spirit of God does is to awaken the attention of men to the subject of their sin and the plan of salvation. Miracles have sometimes been employed to arrest the attention of sinners, and in this way miracles may become instrumental in conversion - although conversion is not itself a miracle, nor do miracles themselves ever convert anybody. They may be the means of awakening.

Miracles are not always effectual even in that. And if continued or made common, they would soon lose their power. What is wanted in the world is something that can be a sort of omnipresent miracle, able not only to arrest attention but to fix it, and keep the mind in warm contact with the truth, till it yields.

Hence we see why God has scattered His children everywhere, in families and among the nations. He never would suffer them to be altogether in one place, however agreeable it might be to their feelings. He wishes them scattered. When the Church at Jerusalem herded together, neglecting to go forth as Christ had commanded, to spread the Gospel all over the world, God let loose a persecution upon them and scattered them abroad, and then they "went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

In examining the text, I purpose to inquire:

I. On what particular points Christians are to testify for God.

II. The manner in which they are to testify.

I. ON WHAT POINTS ARE CHRISTIANS TO TESTIFY?

Generally, they are to testify to the truth of the Bible. They are competent witnesses to this, for they have experience of its truth. The experimental Christian has no more need of external evidence to prove the truth of the Bible to his mind, than he has to prove his own existence. The whole plan of salvation is so fully spread out and settled in his conviction, that to undertake to reason him out of his belief in the Bible would be a thing as impracticable as to reason him out of the belief in his own existence. Men have tried to awaken a doubt of the existence of the material world, but they cannot succeed. No man can doubt the existence of the material world. To doubt it is against his own consciousness. You may use arguments that he cannot answer, and may puzzle and perplex him, and shut his mouth; he may be no logician or philosopher, and may not be able to detect your fallacies. But, what he knows, he knows.

So it is in religion. The Christian is conscious that the Bible is true. The veriest child in religion knows by his experience the truth of the Bible. He may hear objections from infidels, that he never thought of, and that he cannot answer, and he may be confounded; but he cannot be driven from his ground. He will say: "I cannot answer you, but I know the Bible is true." It is as if a man should look in a mirror, and say: "That is my face."

The question is put to him: "How do you know it is your face?" "Why," he replies, "by its looks." So when a Christian sees himself drawn and pictured forth in the Bible, he sees the likeness to be so exact, that he knows it is true.

More particularly, Christians are to testify to:

1. The immortality of the soul. This is clearly revealed in the Bible.

2. The vanity and unsatisfying nature of all earthly good.

3. The satisfying nature and glorious sufficiency of religion.

4. The guilt and danger of sinners. On this point they can speak from experience as well as from the Word of God. They have seen their own sins, and they understand more of the nature of sin, and the guilt and danger of sinners.

5. The reality of hell, as a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.

6. The love of Christ for sinners.

7. The necessity of a holy life, if we think of ever getting to heaven.

8. The necessity of self denial, and of living above the world.

9. The necessity of meekness, heavenly mindedness, humility, and integrity.

10. The necessity of an entire renovation of character and life, for all who would enter heaven.

These are the subjects on which they are to be witnesses for God. And they are bound to testify in such a way as to constrain men to believe the truth.

II. HOW ARE THEY TO TESTIFY?

By precept and example. On every proper occasion by their lips, but mainly by their lives. Christians have no right to be silent with their lips; they should "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine"

(2Ti 4:2). But their main influence as witnesses is by their example.

They are required to be witnesses in this way, because example teaches with so much greater force than precept. This is universally known.

"Actions speak louder than words." But where both precept and example are brought to bear, the greatest amount of influence is brought to bear upon the mind. As to the manner in which they are to testify; the way in which they should bear witness to the truth of the points specified; in general - they should live in their daily walk and conversation, as if they believed the Bible.

1. As if they believed the soul to be immortal, and as if they believed that death was not the termination of their existence, but the entrance into an unchanging state. They ought to live so as to make this impression upon all around them. It is easy to see that precept without example will do no good. All the arguments in the world will not convince mankind that you really believe this, unless you live as if you believe it. Your reasoning may be unanswerable, but if you do not live accordingly, your practice will defeat your arguments. They will say you are an ingenious sophist, or an acute reasoner, and perhaps admit that they cannot answer you; but then they will say: it is evident that your reasoning is all false, and that you know it is all false, because your life contradicts your theory. Or they will say that, if it is true, you do not believe it, at any rate. And so all the influence of your testimony goes to the other side.

2. Against the vanity and unsatisfying nature of the things of this world.

The failure to testify in this is the great stumbling block in the way of mankind. Here the testimony of God’s children is needed more than anywhere else. Men are so struck with the objects of sense, and so constantly occupied with them, that they are very apt to shut out eternity from their minds. A small object that is held close to the eye, may shut out the distant ocean. So the things of the world, that are near, appear so magnified in their minds, that they overlook everything else. One important design in keeping Christians in the world is, to teach people on this point, practically. But suppose professors of religion teach the vanity of earthly things by precept, and contradict it in practice? Suppose the women are just as fond of dress, and just as particular in observing all the fashions, and the men as eager to have fine houses and equipages, as the people of the world; who does not see that it would be quite ridiculous for them to testify with their lips, that this world is all vanity, and its joys unsatisfying and empty? People feel the absurdity, and this shuts up the lips of Christians. They are ashamed to speak to their neighbors, while they cumber themselves with these gewgaws, because their daily conduct testifies, to everybody, the very reverse. How it would look for certain Church members, men or women, to go about among the common people, and talk to them about the vanity of the world! Who would believe what they said?

3. To the satisfying nature of religion. Christians are bound to show, by their conduct, that they are actually satisfied with the enjoyments of religion, without the pomps and vanities of the world; that the joys of religion and communion with God keep them above the world. They are to manifest that

this world is not their home. Their profession is, that heaven is a reality and that they expect to dwell there for ever. But suppose they contradict this by their conduct, and live in such a way as to prove that they cannot be happy unless they have a full share of the fashion and show of the world; and that as for going to heaven, they would much rather remain on earth than die and go there! What does the world think, when it sees a professor of religion just as much afraid to die as an infidel?

Such Christians perjure themselves - they swear to a lie, since their testimony amounts to this, that there is nothing in religion for which a person can afford to live above the world.

4. Regarding the guilt and danger of sinners. Christians are bound to warn sinners of their awful condition, and exhort them to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on everlasting life. But who does not know that the manner of doing this is everything? Sinners are often struck under conviction by the very manner of doing a thing. There was a man once very much opposed to a certain preacher. On being asked to specify some reason, he replied: "I cannot bear to hear him, for he says the word 'HELL' in such a way that it rings in my ears for a long time afterwards."

He was displeased with the very thing that constituted the power of speaking that word. The manner may be such as to convey an idea directly opposite to the meaning of the words. A man may tell you that your house is on fire in such a way as to make directly the opposite impression, and you will take it for granted that it is not your house that is on fire. The watchman might cry out: "Fire! fire!" in such a way that everybody would think he was either drunk or talking in his sleep.

Go to a sinner, and talk with him about his guilt and danger; and if in your manner you make an impression that does not correspond, you in effect bear testimony the other way, and tell him he is in no danger. If the sinner believes at all that he is in danger of hell, it is wholly on other grounds than your saying so. If you live in such a way as to show that you do not feel compassion for sinners around you; if you show no tenderness, by your eyes, your features, your voice; if your manner is not solemn and earnest, how can they believe you are sincere?

Woman, suppose you tell your unconverted husband, in an easy, laughing way: "My dear, I believe you are going to hell"; will he believe you? If your life is gay and trifling, you show that you either do not believe there is a hell, or that you wish to have him go there, and are trying to keep off every serious impression from his mind. Have you children that are unconverted? Suppose you never say anything to them about religion, or when you talk to them it is in a cold, hard, dry way, conveying the impression that you have no feeling in the matter; do you suppose they believe you? They do not see the same coldness in you in regard to other things. They are in the habit of seeing all the mother in your eye, and in the tones of your voice, your emphasis, and the like, and feeling the warmth of a mother's heart as it flows out from your lips on all that concerns them. If, then, when you talk to them on the subject of religion, you are cold and trifling, can they suppose that you believe it? If your deportment holds up before your child this careless, heartless, prayer less spirit, and then you talk to him about the importance of religion, the child will go away and laugh, to think you should try to persuade him there is a hell.

5. To the love of Christ. You are to bear witness to the reality of the love of Christ, by the regard you show for His precepts, His honor, His kingdom. You should act as if you believed that He died for the sins of the whole world, and as if you blamed sinners for rejecting His great salvation.

This is the only legitimate way in which you can impress sinners with the love of Christ. Christians, instead of this, often live so as to make the impression on sinners that Christ is so compassionate that they have very little to fear from Him. I have been amazed to see how a certain class of professors want ministers to be always preaching about the love of Christ.

If a minister urges Christians to be holy, and to labor for Christ, they call it "legal" preaching. They say they want to hear the Gospel. Well, suppose you present the love of Christ. How will they bear testimony in their lives? How will they show that they believe it? Why, by conformity to the world they will testify, point-blank, that they do not believe a word of it, and that they care nothing at all for the love of Christ, only to have it for a cloak, that they can talk about it, and so cover up their sins. They have no sympathy with His compassion, and no belief in it as a reality, and no concern for the feelings of Christ, which fill His mind when He sees the condition of sinners.

6. To the necessity of holiness in order to enter heaven. It will not do to depend on talking about this. They must live holy. The idea has so long prevailed that we "cannot be perfect here," that many professors do not so much as seriously aim at a sinless life. They cannot honestly say that they even so much as really meant to live without sin. They drift along before the tide, in a loose, sinful, unhappy, and abominable manner, at which, doubtless, the devil laughs, because it is, of all others, the surest way to hell.

7. To the necessity of self-denial, humility, and heavenly-mindedness.

Christians ought to show, by their own example, what the religious walk is which is expected of men. That is the most powerful preaching, after all, and the most likely to have influence on the impenitent, which shows them the great difference between themselves and Christians. Many people seem to think they can make men fall in with religion best by bringing religion down to their standard. As if the nearer you bring religion to the world, the more likely the world will be to embrace it. Now all this is as wide as the poles are asunder from the true philosophy about making Christians. But it is always the policy of carnal professors. And they think they are displaying wonderful sagacity, and prudence, by taking so much pains not to scare people at the mighty strictness and holiness of the Gospel. They argue that if you exhibit religion to mankind as requiring such a great change in their manner of life, such innovations upon their habits, such a separation from their old associates, why, you will drive them all away. This seems plausible at first sight. But it is not true. Let professors live in this lax and easy way, and sinners say: "Why, I do not see but I am about right, or at least so near right that it is impossible God should send me to hell only for the difference between me and these professors. It is true, they do a little more than I do; they go to the Communion table, and pray in their families, and a few suchlike little things, but these details cannot make any such great difference as between heaven and hell." No, the true way is, to exhibit religion and the world in strong contrast, or you can never make sinners feel the necessity of a change. Until the necessity of this fundamental change is embodied and held forth in strong light, by example, how can you make men believe they are going to be sent to hell if they are not wholly transformed in heart and life?

This is not only true in philosophy, but it has been proved by the history of the world. Now, I was reading a letter from a missionary in the East, who writes to this effect: that "a missionary must be able to rank with the English nobility, and so recommend his religion to the respect of the natives." He must get away up above them, so as to show a superiority, and thus impress them with

respect! Is this the way to convert the world?

You can no more convert the world in this way than by blowing a ram’s horn. What did the Jesuits do? They went about among the people in the daily practice of self-denial, teaching, and preaching, and praying, and laboring; mingling with every caste and grade, and bringing down their instructions to the capacity of every individual. In that way their religion spread over the vast empire of Japan. I am not saying anything in regard to the religion they taught. I speak only of their following the true policy of missions, by showing, by their lives, a wide contrast with a worldly spirit.

If Christians attempt to accommodate religion to the worldliness of men, they render the salvation of the world impossible. How can you make people believe that self-denial and separation from the world are necessary, unless you practice them?

8. Again, they are to testify by meekness, humility, and heavenly-mindedness. The people of God should always show a temper like the Son of God, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. If a professor of religion is irritable, ready to resent an injury, to fly in a passion, and to take the same measures as the world does to get redress, by going to law and the like - how is he to make people believe there is any reality in a change of heart! He cannot recommend religion while he has such a spirit.

If you are in the habit of resenting injurious conduct; if you do not bear it meekly, and put the best construction upon it, you contradict the Gospel.

Some people always show a bad spirit, ever ready to put the worst construction upon what is done, and to take fire at any little thing. This shows a great want of that charity which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1Co 13:7). But if a man always shows meekness under injuries, it will confound gainsaying.

Nothing makes so solemn an impression upon sinners, and bears down with such tremendous weight on their consciences, as to see a Christian, truly Christ-like, bearing affronts and injuries with the meekness of a lamb.

It cuts like a two-edged sword.

I will mention a case to illustrate this. A young man abused a minister to his face, and reviled him in an unprecedented manner. The minister possessed his soul in patience, and spoke mildly in reply, telling him the truth pointedly, but yet in a very kind manner. This only made him the more angry, and at length he went away in a rage, declaring that he was "not going to stay and bear this vituperation," as if it were the minister, instead of himself, that had been scolding. The sinner went away, but with the arrows of the Almighty in his heart; and in less than half an hour he followed the minister to his lodgings in intolerable agony, wept, begged forgiveness, and broke down before God, and yielded up his heart to Christ. This calm and mild manner was more overwhelming to him than a thousand arguments. Now, if that minister had been thrown off his guard, and answered harshly, no doubt he would have ruined the soul of that young man. How many of you have defeated every future effort you may make with your impenitent friends or neighbors, in some such way as this? On some occasion you have shown yourself so irascible that you have sealed up your own lips, and laid a stumbling block over which that sinner will stumble into hell. If you have done it in any instance, do not sleep till you have done all you can to retrieve the mischief.

9. Finally, they are to testify to the necessity for entire honesty in a Christian. Oh, what a field opens here for remark! It extends to all the departments of life. Christians need to show the strictest regard to integrity in every department of business, and in all their intercourse with their fellow men. If every Christian would pay a scrupulous regard to honesty, and always be conscientious to do exactly right, it would make a powerful impression, on the minds of people, of the reality of religious principle.

A lady was once buying some eggs in a store, and the clerk made a miscount and gave her one more than the number. She saw it at the time, but said nothing, and after she got home it troubled her. Feeling that she had acted wrongly, she went back to the young man and confessed it, and paid the difference. The impression of her conscientious integrity went to his heart like a sword. It was a great sin in her in concealing the miscount, because the temptation was so small; for if she would cheat him out of an egg, it showed that she would cheat him out of his whole store, if she could do it without being found out. But her prompt and humble confession showed an honest conscience.

I am happy to say, there are some men who conduct their business on this principle of integrity. The wicked hate them for it, railing against them, and vociferating in barrooms that they will never buy goods of such-and-such individuals; that such a hypocrite shall never touch a dollar of their money, and all that; and then they will go right away and buy of them, because they know they will be honestly dealt with. Suppose that all Christians could be equally trusted: what would be the consequence?

Christians would run away with the business of the city. The Christians would soon do the business of the world. The great argument which some professed Christians urge, that if they do not do business upon the common principle, of stating one price and taking another, they cannot compete with men of the world, is all false - false in philosophy, false in history. Only make it your invariable rule to do right, and do business upon principle, and you control the market. The ungodly will be obliged to conform to your standard. It is perfectly in the power of Christians to regulate the commerce of the world, if they will only themselves maintain perfect integrity.

Again, if Christians will do the same in politics they will sway the destinies of nations, without involving themselves at all in the base and corrupting strife of parties. Only let Christians generally determine to vote for no man who is not an honest man, and a man of pure morals; only let it be known that Christians are united in this, whatever may be their difference in political sentiments, and no man would be put up for election who was not such a character. In three years it would be talked about in taverns, and published in newspapers, when any man set up as a candidate for office: "What a good man he is - how moral - how pious!" and the like. And any political party would no more set up a known Sabbath-breaker, or a gambler, or a profane swearer, or a rum-seller, as their candidate for office, than they would set up the devil himself for President of the United States. The carnal policy of many professors, who undertake to correct politics by such means as wicked men employ, and who are determined to vote with a party, let the candidate be ever so profligate, is all wrong - wrong in principle, contrary to philosophy and common sense, and ruinous to the best interests of mankind. The dishonesty of the Church is cursing the world. I am not going to preach a political sermon; but I want to show you that if you mean to impress men favorably to your religion by your lives, you must be honest, strictly honest, in business, politics,

and everything you do. What do you suppose those ungodly politicians, who know themselves to be playing a dishonest game in carrying an election, think of your religion, when they see you uniting with them? They know you are a hypocrite!

REMARKS.

1. It is unreasonable for professors of religion to wonder at the thoughtlessness of sinners. Everything considered, the carelessness of sinners is not wonderful. We are affected by testimony, and only by that testimony which is received by our minds. Sinners are so taken up with business, pleasure, and the things of the world, that they will not examine the Bible to find what religion is. Their feelings are excited only on worldly subjects, because these only are brought into warm contact with their minds. The things of the world make, therefore, a strong impression. But there is so little to make an impression on their minds in respect to eternity, and to bring religion home to them, that they do not feel on the subject. If they examined the subject, they would feel. But they do not examine it, nor think upon it, nor care for it. And they never will, unless God's witnesses rise up and testify. But inasmuch as the great body of Christians so live, as, by their conduct, to testify on the other side, how can we expect that sinners will feel rightly upon the subject? Nearly all the testimony and all the influence that comes to their minds tends to make them feel the other way. God has left His cause here before the human race, and left His witnesses to testify in His behalf; and, behold, they turn round and testify the other way! Is it any wonder that sinners are careless?

2. We see why it is that preaching does so little good; and how it is that so many sinners get Gospel-hardened. Sinners that live under the Gospel are often supposed to be Gospel-hardened; but only let the Church wake up and act consistently, and they will feel. If the Church were to live one week as if they believed the Bible, sinners would melt down before them.

Suppose I were a lawyer, and should go into court and spread out my client's case. The issue is joined; I make my statements, tell what I expect to prove, and then call my witnesses. The first witness takes his oath, and then rises up and contradicts me to my face. What good will all my pleading do? I might address the jury for a month, and be as eloquent as Cicero; but so long as my witnesses contradict me, all my pleading will do no good. Just so it is with a minister who is preaching in the midst of a cold, stupid, and God-dishonoring Church. In vain does he hold up to view the great truths of religion, when every member of the Church is ready to witness that he lies. Why, in such a Church, the very manner of the people in going out of the aisles contradicts the sermon. They press out as cheerful and as easy, bowing to one another, and whispering together, as if nothing were the matter. If the devil should come in and see the state of things, he would think he could not better the business for his interest.

Yet there are ministers who will go on in this way for years, preaching to a people who, by their lives, contradict every word that is said. And these ministers think it their duty to do so. Duty! For a minister to preach to a Church that is undoing all his work, contradicting all his testimony, and that will not alter! No. Let him shake off the dust from his feet for a testimony, and go to the heathen, or to new settlements. The man is wasting his energies, and wearing out his life, and just rocking the cradle for a sleepy Church, which is testifying to sinners that there is no danger.

Their whole lives are a practical assertion that the Bible is not true. Shall ministers continue to wear themselves out so? Probably not less than ninety-nine-hundredths of the preaching in this country is lost, because it is contradicted by the Church. Not one truth in a hundred, that is preached, takes effect, because the lives of the professors declare that it is not so.

3. It is evident that the standard of Christian living must be raised, or the world will never be converted. If we had, scattered all over the world, a minister to every five hundred souls, and every child in a Sabbath school, and every young person in a Bible class, you might have all the machinery you want; but, if the Church members should contradict the truth by their lives, no revival would be produced.

They never will have a revival in any place while the whole Church in effect testifies against the minister. Often it is the case that where there is the most preaching, there is the least religion, because the Church contradicts the preaching. I never knew means fail of a revival where Christians live consistently. One of the first things is to raise the standard of religion, so as to embody the truth of the Gospel in the sight of all men.

Unless ministers can get their people to wake up, and act as if religion were true, and back their testimony by their lives, in vain will be the attempt to promote a revival.

Many Churches are depending on their minister to do everything. When he preaches, they will say: "What a great sermon that was! He is an excellent minister. Such preaching must do good. We shall have a revival soon, no doubt." And all the while they are contradicting the preaching by their lives. I tell you, if they are depending on preaching alone to carry on the work, they must fail. Let an apostle rise from the dead, or an angel come down from heaven and preach, without the Church to witness for God, and it would have no effect. The novelty might produce a certain kind of interest for a time, but as soon as the novelty was gone, the preaching would have no saving effect, while contradicted by the witnesses.

4. Every Christian makes an impression by his conduct, and witnesses either for one side or the other. His looks, dress, whole demeanor, make a constant impression on one side or the other. He cannot help testifying for or against religion. He is either gathering with Christ, or scattering abroad.

At every step you tread on chords that will vibrate to all eternity. Every time you move, you touch keys whose sound will reecho all over the hills and dales of heaven, and through all the dark caverns and vaults of hell.

Every movement of your lives, you are exerting a tremendous influence that will tell on the immortal interests of souls all around you. Are you asleep, while all your conduct is exerting such an influence?

Are you going to walk in the street? Take care how you dress. What is that on your head? What does that gaudy ribbon, and those ornaments upon your dress, say to every one who meets you? They make the impression that you wish to be thought pretty. Take care! You might just as well write on your clothes; "No truth in religion!" They say: "Give me dress; Give me fashion; Give me flattery, and I am happy!" The world understands this testimony as you walk the streets. You are living "epistles, known and read of all men" (2Co 3:2). If you show pride, levity, bad temper, it is

like tearing open the wounds of the Savior.

How Christ might weep to see professors of religion going about hanging up His cause to contempt at the corners of streets. Only let the "women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1Ti 2:9-10); only let them act consistently, and their conduct will tell on the world - heaven will rejoice and hell groan at their influence. But oh! let them display vanity; try to be pretty; bow down to the goddess of fashion; fill their ears with ornaments, and their fingers with rings: let them put feathers in their hats and clasps upon their arms; lace themselves up till they can hardly breathe; let them put on their "round tires like the moon," "walking and mincing as they go" (Isa 3:18; Isa 3:16), and their influence is reversed: heaven puts on the robes of mourning, and hell may hold a jubilee!

5. It is easy to see why revivals do not prevail in a great city. How can they? Just look at God's witnesses, and see what they are testifying to!

They seem to be agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, and to lie to the Holy Ghost! They make their vows to God, to consecrate themselves wholly to Him, then they go bowing down at the shrine of fashion - and next they wonder why there are no revivals! It would be more than a miracle to have a revival under such circumstances. How can a revival prevail here? Do you suppose I have such a vain imagination of my own ability, as to think I can promote a revival by my preaching, merely, while you live on as you do? Do you not know that so far as your influence goes, many of you are right in the way of a revival? Your spirit and deportment produce an influence on the world against religion. How shall the world believe religion, when the witnesses are not agreed among themselves? You contradict yourselves; you contradict one another; you contradict your minister; and the sum of the whole testimony is, there is no need of being pious.

Do you believe the things I have been preaching are true, or are they the ravings of a disturbed mind? If they are true, do you recognize the fact that they have reference to you? You say, perhaps: "I wish some of the rich Churches could hear it!" But I am not preaching to them; I am preaching to you. My responsibility is to you, and my fruits must come from you.

Now, are you contradicting it? What is the testimony on the leaf of the record that is now sealed for the Judgment, concerning this day? Have you manifested a sympathy with the Son of God, when His heart is bleeding in view of the desolations of Zion? Have your children, your clerks, your servants seen it to be so? Have they seen a solemnity on your countenance, and tears in your eyes, in view of perishing souls?

Finally, I remark that God and all moral beings have great reason to complain of this false testimony. There is ground to complain that God's witnesses turn and testify point-blank against Him. They declare by their conduct that there is no truth in the Gospel. Heaven might weep and hell rejoice to see this. Oh, how guilty! Here you are, going to the Judgment, red all over with blood. Sinners are to meet you there; those who have seen how you live, many of them already dead, and many others whom you will never see again upon earth. What an influence you have exerted!

Perhaps hundreds of souls will meet you in the Judgment Day and curse you (if they are allowed to speak) for leading them to hell, by practically denying the truth of the Gospel. What will become

of this city, and of the world, when the Church is united in practically testifying that God is a liar? They testify by their lives, that if they make a profession and live a moral life, that is religion enough. Oh, what a doctrine of devils is that! It is enough to ruin the whole human race!

05.10. TO WIN SOULS REQUIRES WISDOM

LECTURE X

TO WIN SOULS REQUIRES WISDOM

He that winneth souls is wise. - Pro 11:30.

T HE most common definition of wisdom is, that it is the choice of the best end and the selection of the most appropriate means for the accomplishment of that end. "He that winneth souls," God says, "is wise." The object of this Lecture is to direct Christians in the use of means for accomplishing their infinitely desirable end, the salvation of souls. I shall confine my attention to the private efforts of individuals for the conversion and salvation of men. On another occasion, perhaps, I shall use the same text in speaking of what is wise in the public preaching of the Gospel, and the labors of ministers. In giving some directions to aid private Christians in this work, I propose to show Christians:

I. How they should deal with careless sinners.

II. How they should deal with awakened sinners.

III. How they should deal with convicted sinners.

I. DEALING WITH CARELESS SINNERS.

1. In regard to the time. It is important that you should select a proper time to try to make a serious impression on the mind of a careless sinner.

For if you fail of selecting the most proper time, very probably you will be defeated. True, you may say that it is your duty at all times to warn sinners, and try to awaken them to think of their souls. And so it is; yet if you do not pay due regard to the time and opportunity, your hope of success may be very doubtful.

(a) It is desirable, if possible, to address a person who is careless, when he is disengaged from other employments. In proportion as his attention is taken up with something else, it will be difficult to awaken him to religion.

People who are careless and indifferent to religion are often offended, rather than benefitted by being called off from important and lawful business. For instance, a minister perhaps goes to visit the family of a merchant, or mechanic, or farmer, and finds the man absorbed in his business; perhaps he calls him off from his work when it is urgent, and the man is uneasy and irritable, and feels as if it were an intrusion. In such a case, there is little room to expect any good. Notwithstanding it is true that religion is infinitely more important than all his worldly business, and he ought to postpone everything to the salvation of his soul, yet he does not feel it; for if he did, he would no longer be a careless sinner; and therefore he regards it as unjustifiable, and gets offended. You must take him as you find him, a careless, impenitent sinner, and deal with him

accordingly. He is absorbed in other things, and very apt to be offended, if you select such a time to call his attention to religion.

(b) It is important to take a person, if possible, at a time when he is not strongly excited with any other subject. Otherwise he will be in an unfit frame to be addressed on the subject of religion. In proportion to the strength of that excitement would be the probability that you would do no good. You may possibly reach him. Persons have had their minds arrested and turned to religion in the midst of a powerful excitement on other subjects. But it is not likely.

(c) Be sure that the person is perfectly sober. It used to be more common than it is now for people to drink spirits every day, and become more or less intoxicated. Precisely in proportion as they are so, they are rendered unfit to be approached on the subject of religion. If they have been drinking beer, or cider, or wine, so that you can smell their breath, you may know there is but little chance of producing any lasting effect on them. I have had professors of religion bring to me persons whom they supposed were under conviction (people in liquor are very fond of talking upon religion); but as soon as I came near enough to smell the breath of such persons, I have asked: "Why do you bring this drunken man to me?"

"Why," they have replied, "He is not drunk, he has only been drinking a little." Well, that little has made him a little drunk! The cases are exceedingly rare where a person has been truly convicted, who had any intoxicating liquor in him.

(d) If possible, where you wish to converse with a man on the subject of salvation, take him when he is in a good temper. If you find him out of humor, very probably he will get angry and abuse you. Better let him alone for that time, or you will be likely to quench the Spirit. It is possible you may be able to talk in such a way as to cool his temper, but it is not likely. The truth is, men hate God; and though their hatred be dormant, it is easily excited; and if you bring God fully before their minds when they are already excited with anger, it will be so much the easier to arouse their enmity to open violence.

(e) If possible, always take an opportunity to converse with careless sinners when they are alone. Most men are too proud to be conversed with freely respecting themselves in the presence of others, even their own family. A man in such circumstances will brace up all his powers to defend himself, while, if he were alone, he would melt down under the truth. He will resist the truth, or try to laugh it off, for fear that, if he should manifest any feeling, somebody will go and report that he is thinking seriously about religion.

In visiting families, instead of calling all the family together at the same time to be talked to, the better way is to see them all, one at a time. There was a case of this kind. Several young ladies, of a proud, gay, and fashionable character, lived together in a fashionable family. Two men were strongly desirous to get the subject of religion before them, but were at a loss how to accomplish it, for fear the ladies would combine to resist every serious impression. At length they took this course: they called and sent up their card to one of the young ladies by name. She came down, and they conversed with her on the subject of her salvation, and, as she was alone, she not only treated them politely, but seemed to receive the truth with seriousness. A day or two after they called, in like manner, on another; and then on another; and so on, till they had conversed with every one separately. In a little time the ladies were all, I believe, hopefully converted. The

impression made on one was followed up with the others; so that one was not left to exert a bad influence over the rest.

There was a pious woman who kept a boardinghouse for young gentlemen; she had twenty-one or two of them in her house, and at length she became

very anxious for their salvation. She made it a subject of prayer, but saw no seriousness among them. At length she saw that there must be something done besides praying, and yet she did not know what to do.

One morning, after breakfast, as the rest were retiring, she asked one of them to stop a few minutes. She took him aside, and conversed with him tenderly on the subject of religion, and prayed with him. She followed up the impression made, and pretty soon he was hopefully converted. Then she spoke to another, and so on, taking one at a time, and letting none of the rest know what was going on, so as not to alarm them, till all these young men were converted to God. Now, if she had brought the subject before the whole of them together, very likely they would have turned it all into ridicule; or perhaps they would have been offended and left the house, and then she could have had no further influence over them. But taking one alone, and treating him respectfully and kindly, he had no such motive for resistance as arises out of the presence of others.

(f) Try to seize an opportunity to converse with a careless sinner, when the events of Providence seem to favor your design. If any particular event should occur, calculated to make a serious impression, be sure to improve the occasion faithfully.

(g) Seize the earliest opportunity to converse with those around you who are careless. Do not put it off from day to day, thinking a better opportunity will come. You must seek an opportunity, and if none offers, make one. Appoint a time or place, and get an interview with your friend or neighbor, where you can speak to him freely. Send him a note; go to him on purpose; make it look like a matter of business - as if you were in earnest in endeavoring to promote his soul’s salvation. Then he will feel that it is a matter of importance, at least in your eyes. Follow it up till you succeed, or become convinced that, for the time, nothing more can be done.

(h) If you have any feeling for a particular individual, take an opportunity to converse with that individual while this feeling continues. If it is a truly benevolent feeling, you have reason to believe the Spirit of God is moving you to desire the salvation of his soul, and that God is ready to bless your efforts for his conversion. In such a case, make it the subject of special and importunate prayer, and seek an early opportunity to pour out all your heart to him, and bring him to Christ.

2. In regard to the manner of doing all this:

(a) When you approach a careless individual, be sure to treat him kindly.

Let him see that you address him, not because you seek a quarrel with him, but because you love his soul, and desire his best good in time and eternity. If you are harsh and overbearing in your manner, you will probably offend him, and drive him farther off from the way of life.

(b) Be solemn. Avoid all lightness of manner or language. Levity will produce anything but a right impression. You ought to feel that you are engaged in a very solemn work, which is going to affect

the character of your friend or neighbor, and probably determine his destiny for eternity.

Who could trifle and use levity in such circumstances, if his heart were sincere?

(c) Be respectful. Some seem to suppose it necessary to be abrupt, and rude, and coarse, in their intercourse with the careless and impenitent. No mistake can be greater. The apostle Peter has given us a better rule on the subject, where he says: "Be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing" (1Pe 3:8-9). A rude and coarse style of address is only calculated to create an unfavorable opinion both of yourself and of your religion.

(d) Be sure to be very plain. Do not suffer yourself to cover up any circumstance of the person's character, and his relations to God. Lay it all open, not for the purpose of offending or wounding him, but because it is necessary. Before you can cure a wound, you must probe it to the bottom.

Keep back none of the truth, but let it come out plainly before him.

(e) Be sure to address his conscience. Unless you address the conscience pointedly, you get no hold of the mind at all.

(f) Bring the great and fundamental truths to bear upon the person's mind.

Sinners are very apt to run off upon some pretext, or some subordinate point, especially one of sectarianism. For instance, if the man is a Presbyterian, he will try to turn the conversation on the points of difference between Presbyterians and Methodists. Or he will fall foul of "old school" divinity. Do not talk with him on any such point. Tell him the present business is to save his soul, and not to settle controverted questions in theology. Hold him to the great fundamental points, by which he must be saved or lost.

(g) Be very patient. If he has a real difficulty in his mind, be very patient till you find out what it is, and then clear it up. If what he alleges is a mere cavil, make him see that it is a cavil. Do not try to answer it by argument, but show him that he is not sincere in advancing it. It is not worth while to spend your time in arguing against a cavil; make him feel that he is committing sin to plead it, and thus enlist his conscience on your side.

(h) Be careful to guard your own spirit. There are many people who have not good temper enough to converse with those who are much opposed to religion. And such a person wants no better triumph than to see you angry. He will go away exulting because he has "made one of these saints mad."

(i) If the sinner is inclined to entrench himself against God, be careful not to take his part in anything. If he says he cannot do his duty, do not take sides with him, or say anything to countenance his falsehood; do not tell him he cannot, or help him to maintain himself in the controversy against his Maker. Sometimes a careless sinner will commence finding fault with Christians; do not take his part, do not side with him against Christians.

Just tell him he has not their sins to answer for: he had better see to his own concerns. If you agree with him, he feels that he has you on his side.

Show him that it is a wicked and censorious spirit that prompts him to make these remarks, and not a regard for the honor of the religion or the laws of Jesus Christ.

(j) Bring up the individual’s particular sins. Talking in general terms against sin will produce no results. You must make a man feel that you mean him. A minister who cannot make his hearers feel that he means them, cannot expect to accomplish much. Some people are very careful to avoid mentioning the particular sins of which they know the individual to be guilty, for fear of hurting his feelings. This is wrong. If you know his history, bring up his particular sins; kindly, but plainly; not to give offense, but to awaken conscience, and give full force to the truth.

(k) It is generally best to be short, and not spin out what we have to say.

Get the attention as soon as you can to the very point; say a few things and press them home, and bring the matter to an issue. If possible, get them to repent and give themselves to Christ at the time. This is the proper issue. Carefully avoid making an impression that you do not wish them to repent NOW.

(l) If possible, when you converse with sinners, be sure to pray with them. If you converse with them, and leave them without praying, you leave your work undone.

II. THE MANNER OF DEALING WITH AWAKENED SINNERS.

Be careful to distinguish between an awakened sinner, and one who is under conviction. When you find a person who feels a little on the subject of religion, do not take it for granted that he is convicted of sin, and thus omit to use means to show him his sin. Persons are often awakened by some providential circumstance; as sickness, thunderstorm, pestilence, death in the family, disappointment, or the like; or directly by the Spirit of God; so that their ears are open, and they are ready to hear on the subject of religion with attention and seriousness, and some feeling. If you find a person awakened, no matter by what means, lose no time to pour in light upon his mind. Do not be afraid, but show him the breadth of the Divine law, and the exceeding strictness of its precepts. Make him see how it condemns his thoughts and life. Search out his heart, find what is there, and bring it up before his mind, as far as you can. If possible, melt him down on the spot. When once you have got a sinner’s attention, very often his conviction and conversion are the work of a few moments. You can sometimes do more in five minutes, than in years - or a whole lifetime - while he is careless or indifferent.

I have been amazed at the conduct of those cruel parents, and other heads of families, who will let an awakened sinner be in their families for days and weeks, and not say a word to him on the subject. They say: "If the Spirit of God has begun a work in him, He will certainly carry it on!"

Perhaps the person is anxious to converse, and puts himself in the way of Christians, as often as possible, expecting they will converse with him, and they do not say a word. Amazing! Such a person ought to be looked out immediately, as soon as he is awakened, and a blaze of light be poured into his mind without delay. Wherever you have reason to believe that a person within your reach is awakened, do not sleep till you have poured in the light upon his mind, and have tried to bring him to immediate repentance. Then is the time to press the subject with effect.

In revivals, I have often seen Christians who were constantly on the look-out to see if any persons appeared to be awakened; as soon as they saw any one begin to manifest feeling under preaching they would mark him, and (as soon as the meeting was over) invite him to a room, and converse and pray with him - if possible not leaving him till he was converted.

A remarkable case of this kind occurred in a town at the West. A merchant came to the place from a distance, to buy goods. It was a time of powerful revival, but he was determined to keep out of its influence; and so he would not go to any meeting at all. At length he found everybody so much engaged in religion that it met him at every turn; and he got vexed, and vowed that he would go home. There was so much religion there, he said, that he could do no business, and would not stay. Accordingly he booked his seat for the coach, which was to leave at four o'clock the next morning.

As he spoke of going away, a gentleman belonging to the house, who was one of the young-converts, asked him if he would not go to a meeting once before he left town. He finally consented, and went to the meeting. The sermon took hold of his mind, but not with sufficient power to bring him into the Kingdom. He returned to his lodgings, and called the landlord to bring his bill. The landlord, who had himself recently experienced religion, saw that he was agitated. He accordingly spoke to him on the subject of religion, and the man burst into tears. The landlord immediately called in three or four young converts, and they prayed, and exhorted him; and at four o'clock in the morning, when the coach called, he went on his way rejoicing in God! When he got home he called his family together, confessed to them his past sins, avowed his determination to live differently, and prayed with them for the first time. It was so unexpected that it was soon noised abroad; people began to inquire, and a revival broke out in the place. Now, suppose these Christians had done as some do, been careless, and let the man go off, slightly impressed? It is not probable he ever could have been saved. Such opportunities are often lost for ever, when once the favorable moment is passed.

III. THE MANNER OF DEALING WITH CONVICTED SINNERS.

By a convicted sinner, I mean one who feels himself condemned by the law of God, as a guilty sinner. He has so much instruction as to understand something of the extent of God's law, and he sees and feels his guilty state, and knows what his remedy is. To deal with these often requires great wisdom.

1. When a person is convicted, but not converted, and remains in an anxious state, there is generally some specific reason for it. In such cases it does no good to exhort him to repent, or to explain the law to him. He knows all that; he understands these general points; but still he does not repent. There must be some particular difficulty to overcome. You may preach, and pray, and exhort, till doomsday, and not gain anything.

You must, then, set yourself to inquire what is that particular difficulty. A physician, when he is called to a patient, and finds him sick with a particular disease, first administers the general remedies that are applicable to that disease. If they produce no effect, and the disease still continues, he must examine the case, and learn the constitution of the individual, and his habits, diet, manner of living, etc., and see what the matter is that the medicine does not take effect. So it is with the case of a sinner convicted but not converted. If your ordinary instructions and exhortations fail, there must be a difficulty. The particular difficulty is often known to the individual himself, though he keeps it concealed. Sometimes, however, it is something that has escaped even his own observation.

(a) Sometimes the individual has some idol, something which he loves more than God, which prevents him from giving himself up. You must search out and see what it is that he will not give up. Perhaps it is wealth; perhaps some earthly friend; perhaps gay dress or gay company, or some favorite amusement. At any rate, there is something on which his heart is so set that he will not yield to God.

(b) Perhaps he has done an injury to some individual that calls for redress, and he is unwilling to confess it, or to make a just recompense. Now, until he will confess and forsake this sin, he can find no mercy. If he has injured the person in property or character, or has abused him, he must make it up. Tell him frankly that there is no hope for him till he is willing to confess it, and to do what is right.

(c) Sometimes there is some particular sin which he will not forsake. He pretends it is only a small one; or tries to persuade himself it is no sin at all. No matter how small it is, he can never get into the Kingdom of God till he gives it up. Sometimes an individual has seen it to be a sin to use tobacco, and he can never find true peace till he gives it up. Perhaps he is looking upon it as a small sin. But God knows nothing about small sins in such a case. What is the sin? It is injuring your health, and setting a bad example; and you are taking God's money (which you are bound to employ in His service) and spending it for tobacco. What would a merchant say if he found one of his clerks in the habit of going to the money drawer, and taking money enough to keep him in cigars? Would he call it a small offense? No; he would say the clerk deserved to be sent to the State prison. I mention this particular sin, because I have found it to be one of the things to which men who are convicted will hold on, although they know it to be wrong, and then wonder why they do not find peace.

(d) See if there is some work of restitution which he is bound to do.

Perhaps he has defrauded somebody in trade, or taken some unfair advantage, contrary to the golden rule of doing as you would be done by, and is unwilling to make satisfaction. This is a very common sin among merchants and men of business. I have known many melancholy instances, where men have grieved away the Spirit of God, or else have been driven well-nigh to absolute despair, because they were unwilling to give satisfaction where they have done such things. Now it is plain that such persons never can have forgiveness until they make restitution.

(e) They may have entrenched themselves somewhere, and fortified their minds in regard to some particular point, which they are determined not to yield. For instance, they may have taken strong ground that they will not do a particular thing. I knew a man who was determined not to go into a certain grove to pray. Several other persons during the revival had gone into the grove, and there, by prayer and meditation, given themselves to God. His own clerk had been converted there. The lawyer himself was awakened, but he was determined that he would not go into that grove. He had powerful convictions, and went on for weeks in this way, with no relief. He tried to make God believe that it was not pride that kept him from Christ; and so, when he was going home from meeting he would kneel down in the street and pray. And not only that, but he would look round for a mud-puddle in the street, in which he might kneel, to show that he was not proud. He once prayed all night in his parlor - but he would not go into the grove. His distress was so great, and he was so wroth with God, that he was strongly tempted to make away with himself, and actually threw away his knife for fear he should cut his throat. At length he concluded he would go into the

grove and pray; and as soon as he got there he was converted, and poured out his full heart to God.

So, individuals are sometimes entrenched in a determination that they will not go to a particular meeting (perhaps the inquiry meeting, or some prayer-meeting); or they will not have a certain person to pray with them; or they will not take a particular seat, such as the "anxious seat." They say they can be converted just as well without yielding this point, for religion does not consist in going to a particular meeting, or taking a particular attitude in prayer, or a particular seat. This is true; but by taking this ground they make it the material point. And so long as they are entrenched there, and determined to bring God to their terms, they never can be converted. Sinners will often yield anything else, and do anything else, and do anything in the world, but yield the point upon which they have taken a stand against God. They cannot be humbled, until they yield this point, whatever it is. And if, without yielding, they get a hope, it will be a false hope.

(f) Perhaps he has a prejudice against some one (a member of the Church, perhaps), on account of some faithful dealing with his soul; and he hangs on this, and will never be converted till he gives it up. Whatever it be, you should search it out, and tell him the truth, plainly and faithfully.

(g) He may feel ill-will towards some one, or be angry, and cherish strong feelings of resentment, which prevent him from obtaining mercy from God. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26).

(h) Perhaps he entertains some errors in doctrine, or some wrong notions respecting the thing to be done, or the way of doing it, which may be keeping him out of the Kingdom. Perhaps he is waiting for God to do something to him before he submits - in fact, is waiting for God to do for him what God has required the sinner to do himself.

He may be waiting for more conviction. People often do not know what conviction is, and think they are not under conviction when in fact they are under powerful conviction. They often think nothing is conviction unless they have great fears of hell. But the fact is, individuals often have strong convictions, who have very little fear of hell. Show them what is the truth, and let them see that they have no need to wait.

Perhaps he may be waiting for certain feelings, which he has heard somebody else had before obtaining mercy. This is very common in revivals where some one of the first converts has told of remarkable experiences. Others who are awakened are very apt to think they must wait for just such feelings. I knew a young man thus awakened; his companion had been converted in a remarkable way, and this one was waiting for just such feelings. He said he was "using the means, and praying for them," but he finally found that he was a Christian, although he had not been through the course of feeling which he expected.

Sinners often lay out a plan of what they expect to feel, and how they expect to be converted, and in fact lay out the work for God, determined that they will go in that path or not at all. Tell them this is all wrong; they must not lay out any such path beforehand, but let God lead them as He sees to be the best. God always leads the blind by a way they know not.

There never was a sinner brought into the Kingdom through such a course of feeling as he expected. Very often they are amazed to find that they are in, and have had no such exercises as they expected.

It is very common for persons to be waiting to be made subjects of prayer, or for some other particular means to be used, or to see if they cannot make themselves better. They are so wicked, they say, that they cannot come to Christ. They want to try, by humiliation, and suffering, and prayer, to fit themselves to come. You will have to hunt them out of all these refuges. It is astonishing into how many corners they will often run before they will go to Christ. I have known persons almost deranged for the want of a little correct instruction.

Sometimes such people think their sins are too great to be forgiven, or that they have grieved the Spirit of God away, when that Spirit is all the while convicting them. They pretend that their sins are greater than Christ's mercy, thus actually insulting the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes sinners get the idea that they are given up of God, and that now they cannot be saved. It is often very difficult to beat persons off from this ground. Many of the most distressing cases I have met with have been of this character.

In a place where I was laboring in a revival, one day before the meeting commenced, I heard a low, moaning, distressing, unearthly noise. I looked and saw several women gathered round the person who made it. They said she was a woman in despair. She had been a long time in that state. Her husband was a drunkard. He had brought her to the meeting-place, and had gone himself to the tavern. I conversed with her, saw her state, and realized that it was very difficult to reach her case. As I was going to commence the meeting she said she must go out, for she could not bear to hear praying or singing. I told her she must not go, and asked the ladies to detain her, if necessary, by force. I felt that, if the devil had hold of her, God was stronger than the devil, and could deliver her. The meeting began, and she made some noise at first. But presently she looked up. The subject was chosen with special reference to her case, and as it proceeded her attention was gained, her eyes were fixed - I never shall forget how she looked - her eyes and mouth open, her head up - and how she almost rose from her seat as the truth poured in upon her mind. Finally, as the truth knocked away every foundation on which her despair had rested, she shrieked out, put her head down, and sat perfectly still till the meeting was over. I went to her, and found her perfectly calm and happy in God. I saw her long afterwards, and she still remained in that state of rest. Thus Providence led her where she never expected to be, and compelled her to hear instruction adapted to her case. You may often do incalculable good by finding out precisely where the difficulty lies, and then bringing the truth to bear on that point.

Sometimes persons will strenuously maintain that they have committed the unpardonable sin. When they get that idea into their minds, they will turn everything you say against themselves. In some such cases, it is a good way to take them on their own ground, and reason with them in this way: "Suppose you have committed the unpardonable sin, what then? It is reasonable that you should submit to God, and be sorry for your sins, and break off from them, and do all the good you can, even if God will not forgive you. Even if you go to hell, you ought to do this." Press this thought until you find they understand and consent to it.

It is common for persons in such cases to keep their eyes on themselves; they will shut themselves up, and keep looking at their own darkness, instead of looking away to Christ. Now, if you can take their minds off from themselves, and get them to think of Christ, you may draw them away from brooding over their own present feelings, and get them to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel.

2. Be careful, in conversing with convicted sinners, not to make any compromise with them on any point where they have a difficulty. If you do, they will be sure to take advantage of it, and thus get a false hope.

Convicted sinners often get into a difficulty, in regard to giving up some darling sin, or yielding some point where conscience and the Holy Ghost are at war with them. And if they come across an individual who will yield the point, they feel better, and are happy, and think they are converted.

The young man who came to Christ was of this character. He had one difficulty, and Jesus Christ knew just what it was. He knew he loved his money; and instead of compromising the matter and thus trying to comfort him, he just put His finger on the very place and told him: "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me" (Mat 19:21). What was the effect? Why, the young man "went away sorrowful." Very likely, if Christ had told him to do anything else, he would have felt relieved, and would have got a hope; would have professed himself a disciple, joined the Church, and gone to hell.

People are often amazingly anxious to make a compromise. They will ask such questions as this: Whether you do not think a person may be a Christian, and yet do such-and-such things? Or: If he may be a Christian and not do such-and-such things? Now, do not yield an inch to any such questions. The questions themselves may often show you the very point that is laboring in their minds. They will show you that it is pride, or love of the world, or something of the kind, which is preventing them from becoming Christians.

Be careful to make thorough work on this point - the love of the world. I believe there have been more false hopes built on wrong instructions here, than in any other way. I once heard a Doctor of Divinity trying to persuade his hearers to give up the world; but he told them: "If you will only give it up, God will give it right back to you. He is willing that you should enjoy the world." Miserable! God never gives back the world to a Christian, in the same sense that He requires a convicted sinner to give it up. He requires us to give up the ownership of everything to Him, so that we shall never again for a moment consider it as our own. A man must not think he has a right to judge for himself how much of his property he shall lay out for God. One man thinks he may spend seven thousand dollars a year to support his family; he has a right to do it, because he has the means of his own. Another thinks he may lay up fifty or a hundred thousand dollars. One man said, the other day, that he had promised he never would give any of his property to educate young men for the ministry; so, when he is applied to, he just answers: "I have said I never will give to any such object, and I never will." Man! did Jesus Christ ever tell you to act so with His money? Has he laid down any such rule?

Remember, it is His money you are talking about, and if He wants it to educate ministers, you withhold it at your peril. Such a man has yet to learn the first principle of religion, that he is not his own, and that the money which he "possesses" is Jesus Christ’s.

Here is the great reason why the Church is so full of false hopes. Men have been left to suppose they could be Christians while holding on to their money. And this has served as a clog to every enterprise. It is an undoubted fact, that the Church has funds enough to supply the world with Bibles, and tracts, and missionaries, immediately. But the truth is, that professors of religion do not believe that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Every man supposes he has a right to decide what appropriation he shall make of his own money. And they have no idea that Jesus Christ shall dictate to them on the subject.

Be sure to deal thoroughly on this point. The Church is now filled up with hypocrites, because people were never made to see that unless they made an entire consecration of all to Christ - all their time, all their talents, all their influence - they would never get to heaven. Many think they can be Christians, and yet dream along through life, and use all their time and property for themselves, only giving a little now and then, just to save appearances, and when they can do it with perfect convenience. But it is a sad mistake, and they will find it so, if they do not employ their energies for God. And when they die, instead of finding heaven at the end of the path they are pursuing, they will find hell there.

In dealing with a convicted sinner, be sure to drive him away from every refuge, and not leave him an inch of ground to stand on so long as he resists God. This need not take a long time to do. When the Spirit of God is at work striving with a sinner, it is easy to drive him from his refuges.

You will find the truth will be like a hammer, crushing wherever it strikes.

Make clean work with it, so that he shall give up all for God.

Make the sinner see clearly the nature and extent of the Divine law, and press the main question of entire submission to God. Bear down on that point as soon as you have made him clearly understand what you aim at, and do not turn off upon anything else.

Be careful, in illustrating the subject, not to mislead the mind so as to leave the impression that a selfish submission will answer, or a selfish acceptance of the Atonement, or a selfish giving up to Christ and receiving Him, as if a man were making a good bargain, giving up his sins, and receiving salvation in exchange. This is mere barter, and not submission to God. Leave no ground in your explanations or illustrations, for such a view of the matter. Man's selfish heart will eagerly seize such a view of religion, if it be presented, and very likely close in with it, and thus get a false hope.

REMARKS.

1. Make it an object of constant study, and of daily reflection and prayer, to learn how to deal with sinners so as to promote their conversion. It is the great business on earth of every Christian, to save souls. People often complain that they do not know how to take hold of this matter. Why, the reason is plain enough; they have never studied it. They have never taken the proper pains to qualify themselves for the work. If people made it no more a matter of attention and thought to qualify themselves for their worldly business, than they do to save souls, how do you think they would succeed? Now, if you are thus neglecting the main business of life, what are you living for? If you do not make it a matter of study, how you may most successfully act in building up the Kingdom of Christ, you are acting a very wicked and absurd part as a Christian.

2. Many professors of religion do more harm than good, when they attempt to talk to impenitent sinners. They have so little knowledge and skill, that their remarks rather divert attention than increase it.

3. Be careful to find the point where the Spirit of God is pressing a sinner, and press the same point in all your remarks. If you divert his attention from that, you will be in great danger of destroying his convictions. Take pains to learn the state of his mind, what he is thinking of, how he feels, and what he feels most deeply upon, and then press that chief point thoroughly. Do not divert his mind by talking about anything else. Do not fear to press that point for fear of driving him to distraction. Some people fear to press a point to which the mind is tremblingly alive, lest they should injure the mind, notwithstanding that the Spirit of God is evidently debating that very point with the sinner. This is an attempt to be wiser than God. You should clear up the point, throw the light of truth all around it, and bring the soul to yield, and then the mind will be at rest.

4. Great evils have arisen, and many false hopes have been created, by not discriminating between an awakened, and a convicted, sinner. For the want of this, persons who are only awakened are immediately pressed to submit - "you must repent," "submit to God" - when they are in fact neither convinced of their guilt, nor instructed so far as even to know what submission means. This is one way in which revivals have been greatly injured - by indiscriminate exhortations to repent, unaccompanied by proper instruction.

5. Anxious sinners are to be regarded as being in a very solemn and critical state. They have, in fact, come to a turning-point. It is a time when their destiny is likely to be settled for ever. Christians ought to feel deeply for them. In many respects their circumstances are more solemn than those of the Judgment. Here their destiny is settled. The Judgment Day reveals it.

And the particular time when It is done is when the Spirit is striving with them. Christians should remember their awful responsibility at such times.

The physician, if he knows anything of his duty, sometimes feels himself under a very solemn responsibility. His patient is in a critical state, where a little error will destroy life, and hangs quivering between life and death. If such responsibility should be felt in relation to the body, what awful responsibility should be felt in relation to the soul, when it is seen to hang trembling on a point, and its destiny is now to be decided. One false impression, one indiscreet remark, one sentence misunderstood, a slight diversion of mind, may wear him the wrong way, and his soul be lost.

Never was an angel employed in a more solemn work, than that of dealing with sinners who are under conviction. How solemnly and carefully then should Christians walk, how wisely and skillfully work, if they do not wish to be the means of the loss of a soul!

Finally, if there is a sinner in this house, let me say to him: "Abandon all your excuses. You have been told tonight that they are all in vain. This very hour may seal your eternal destiny. Will you submit to God tonight - NOW?"

Chapter 99

05.11. A WISE MINISTER WILL BE SUCCESSFUL

LECTURE XI

A WISE MINISTER WILL BE SUCCESSFUL

He that winneth souls is wise. - Pro 11:30.

I lectured last, from the same text, on the methods of dealing with sinners by "private" Christians. My object at this time is to take up the more public means of grace, with particular reference to the duties of Ministers.

As I observed in my last Lecture, wisdom is the choice and pursuit of the best end by the most appropriate means. The great end for which the Christian ministry is appointed, is to glorify God in the salvation of souls.

In speaking on this subject I propose to show:

I. That a right discharge of the duties of a minister requires great wisdom.

II. That the amount of success in the discharge of his duties (other things being equal) decides the amount of wisdom employed by him in the exercise of his office.

I. THE RIGHT DISCHARGE OF MINISTERIAL DUTY.

1. A right discharge of the duties of a minister requires great wisdom: I. On account of the opposition it encounters. The very end for which the ministry is appointed is one against which is arrayed the most powerful opposition of sinners themselves. If men were willing to receive the Gospel, and there were nothing needed to be done but to tell the story of Redemption, a child might convey the news. But men are opposed to the Gospel. They are opposed to their own salvation, in this way. Their opposition is often violent and determined. I once saw a maniac who had formed designs against his own life, and he would exercise the utmost sagacity and cunning to effect his purpose. He would be so artful as to make his keepers believe he had no such design, that he had given it all up; he would appear mild and sober, but the instant the keeper was off his guard he would lay hands on himself. So, sinners often exercise great cunning in evading all the efforts that are made to save them. In order to meet this dreadful cunning, and overcome it, so as to save men, ministers need a great amount of wisdom.

2. The particular means appointed to be employed in the work, show the necessity of great wisdom in ministers. If men were converted by an act of physical omnipotence, creating some new taste, or something like that, and if sanctification were nothing but the same physical omnipotence rooting out the remaining roots of sin from the soul, it would not require so much sagacity and skill to win souls. Nor would there then be any meaning in the text. But the truth is that regeneration and sanctification are to be effected by moral means - by argument, and not by force. There never was, and never will be, any one saved by anything but truth as the means.

Truth is the outward means, the outward motive presented first by man and then by The Holy Spirit. Take into view the opposition of the sinner himself, and you see that nothing, after all, short of the wisdom of God and the moral power of the Holy Spirit, can break down this opposition, and bring him to submit Still, the means are to be used by men - means adapted to the end, and skillfully used. God has provided that the work of conversion and sanctification shall in all cases be done by means of that kind of truth, applied in that connection and relation, which is fitted to produce such a result.

3. He has the powers of earth and hell to overcome, and that calls for wisdom. The devil is constantly at work, trying to prevent the success of ministers, laboring to divert attention from the subject of religion, and to get the sinner away from God and lead him down to hell. The whole framework of society, almost, is hostile to religion. Nearly all the influences which surround a man, from his cradle to his grave, are calculated to defeat the design of the ministry. Does not a minister, then, need great wisdom to conflict with the powers of darkness and the whole influence of the world, in addition to the sinner's own opposition?

4. The same is seen from the infinite importance of the end itself. The end of the ministry is the salvation of the soul. When we consider the importance of the end, and the difficulties of the work, who will not say with the apostle: "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2Co 2:16.)

5. He must understand how to wake up the professing Christians, and thus prevent them from hindering the conversion of sinners. This is often the most difficult part of a minister's work, and requires more wisdom and patience than anything else. Indeed, to do this successfully, is a most rare qualification in the Christian ministry. It is a point where almost all ministers fail. They know not how to wake up the Church, and raise the tone of piety to a high standard, and thus clear the way for the work of conversion. Many ministers can preach to sinners very well, but gain little success, while the counteracting influence of the Church resists it all, and they have not skill enough to remove the difficulty. There is only here and there a minister in the country who knows how to probe the Church when it is in a cold, backslidden state, so as effectually to awaken the members and keep them awake. The members of the Church sin against such light, that when they become cold it is very difficult to rouse them up. They have a form of piety which wards off the truth, while at the same time it is just that kind of piety which has no power or efficiency. Such professors are the most difficult individuals to arouse from their slumbers. I do not mean that they are always more wicked than the impenitent. They are often employed about the machinery of religion, and pass for very good Christians, but they are of no use in a revival.

I know ministers are sometimes amazed to hear it said that Churches are not awake. No wonder such ministers do not know how to wake a sleeping Church. There was a young licentiate heard Brother Foote the other day, in this city, pouring out truth, and trying to waken up the Churches; and he knew so little about it that he thought Mr. Foote was abusing the Churches. So perfectly blind was he that he really thought the Churches in New York were all awake on the subject of religion. So, some years ago, there was a great controversy and opposition raised, because so much was said about the Churches being asleep. It was all truth, yet many ministers knew nothing about it, and were astonished to hear such things said. When it has come to this, that ministers do not know when the Church is asleep, no wonder we have revivals! I was invited once to preach at a certain place. I asked the minister what was the state of the

Church. "Oh," said he, "to a man they are awake." I was delighted at the idea of laboring in such a Church, for it was a sight I had never yet witnessed, to see every single member awake in a revival. But when I got there I found them sleepy and cold, and I doubt whether one of them was awake.

Here is the great difficulty in keeping up revivals, to keep the Church thoroughly awake and engaged. It is one thing for members to get up in their sleep and bluster about and run over each other; and a widely different thing for them to have their eyes open, and their senses about them, and be wide awake, so as to know how to work for Christ.

6. He must know how to see the Church to work, when it is awake. If a minister attempts to go to work singly, calculating to do it all himself, it is like attempting to roll a great stone up a hill, alone. The Church can do much to help forward a revival. Churches have sometimes had powerful revivals without any minister. But when a minister has a Church that is awake, and knows how to set his people to work, and how to sit at the helm, and guide them, he may feel strong, and oftentimes may find that they do more than he does himself in the conversion of sinners.

7. In order to be successful, a minister needs great wisdom to know how to keep the Church to the work. Often the Church seems just like an assembly of children. You set children to work, and they appear to be all occupied, but as soon as your back is turned, they will stop and go to play. The great difficulty in continuing a revival, lies here. And to meet it requires great wisdom. To know how to break them down again, when their hearts get lifted up because they have had such a great revival; to wake them up afresh when their zeal begins to flag; to keep their hearts full of zeal for the work; these are some of the most difficult things in the world. Yet if a minister would be successful in winning souls, he must know when they first begin to get proud, or to lose the spirit of prayer; when to probe them, and how to search them; in fact, how to keep the Church in the field, gathering the harvest of the Lord.

8. He must understand the Gospel. But you will ask: "Do not all ministers understand the Gospel?" I answer that they certainly do not all understand it alike, for they do not all preach alike.

9. He must know how to divide it, so as to bring forward the particular truths, in that order, and at such times, as will be calculated to produce a given result. A minister should understand the philosophy of the human mind, so as to know how to plan and arrange his labors wisely. Truth, when brought to bear upon the mind, is in itself calculated to produce corresponding feelings. The minister must know what feelings he wishes to produce, and how to bring to bear such truth as is calculated to produce those feelings. He must know how to present truth which is calculated to humble Christians, or to make them feel for sinners; or to awaken sinners, or to convert them.

Often, when sinners are awakened, the ground is lost for want of wisdom in following up the blow. Perhaps a rousing sermon is preached Christians are moved, and sinners begin to feel, and yet, the next Sabbath, something will be brought forward that has no connection with the state of feeling in the congregation, and that is not calculated to lead the mind on to the exercise of repentance, faith, or love. It shows how important it is that a minister should understand how to produce a given impression, at what time it may and should be done, and by what truth, and how to follow it up till the sinner is broken down and brought in.

A great many good sermons that are preached, are lost for the want of a little wisdom on this point. They are good sermons, and calculated, if well timed, to do great good; but they have so little connection with the actual state of feeling in the congregation, that it would be more than a miracle if they should produce a revival. A minister may preach in this random way till he has preached himself to death, and never produce any great results.

He may convert here and there a scattered soul; but he will not move the mass of the congregation unless he knows how to follow up his impressions - so to execute a general plan of operations as to carry on the work when it is begun. He must not only be able to blow the trumpet so loud as to start the sinner up from his lethargy, but when he is awakened, he must lead him by the shortest way to Jesus Christ; and not, as soon as sinners are roused by a sermon, immediately begin to preach about some remote subject that has no tendency to carry on the work.

10. To reach different classes of sinners successfully requires great wisdom on the part of a minister. For instance, a sermon on a particular subject may impress a particular class of persons among his hearers.

Perhaps they will begin to look serious, or to talk about it, or to cavil about it. Now, if the minister is wise, he will know how to observe those indications, and to follow right on, with sermons adapted to this class, until he leads them into the Kingdom of God. Then, let him go back and take another class, find out where they are hid, break down their refuges, and follow them up, till he leads them also, into the Kingdom. He should thus beat about every bush where sinners hide themselves, as the voice of God followed Adam in the garden: ADAM, WHERE ART THOU? till one class of hearers after another is brought in, and so the whole community converted. Now, a minister must be very wise to do this. It never will be done till a minister sets himself to hunt out and bring in every class of sinners in his congregation - the old and young, male and female, rich and poor.

11. A minister needs great wisdom to get sinners away from their present refuge of lies, without forming new hiding-places for them. I once sat under the ministry of a man who had contracted a great alarm about heresies, and was constantly employed in confuting them. And he used to bring up heresies that his people had never heard of. He got his ideas chiefly from books, and mingled very little among the people to know what they thought. And the result of his labors often was, that the people would be taken with the heresy, more than with the argument against it.

The novelty of the error attracted their attention so much that they forgot the answer. And in that way he gave many of his people new objections against religion, such as they had never thought of before. If a man does not mingle enough with mankind to know how people think nowadays, he cannot expect to be wise to meet their objections and difficulties.

I have heard a great deal of preaching against Universalists, that did more harm than good, because the preachers did not understand how Universalists of the present day reason. When ministers undertake to oppose a present heresy, they ought to know what it actually is, at present. It is of no use to misrepresent a man’s doctrines to his face, and then try to reason him out of them. He will say of you: "That man cannot argue with me on fair grounds; he has to misrepresent my doctrines in order to confute me." Great harm is done in this way. Ministers do not intend to misrepresent their opponents; but the effect of it is, that the poor miserable creatures who hold

these errors go to hell because ministers do not take care to inform themselves what are their real errors. I mention this to show how much wisdom a minister must have to meet the cases that occur.

12. Ministers ought to know what measures are best calculated to aid in accomplishing the great end of their office, the salvation of souls. Some measures are plainly necessary. By measures, I mean the things which should be done to secure the attention of the people, and bring them to listen to the truth. Erecting buildings for worship, visiting from house to house, etc., are "measures," the object of which is to get the attention of people to the Gospel. Much wisdom is requisite to devise and carry forward all the various measures that are adapted to favor the success of the Gospel.

What do politicians do? They get up meetings, circulate handbills and pamphlets, blaze away in the newspapers, send ships about the streets on wheels with flags and sailors, send conveyances all over the town, with handbills, to bring people up to the polls - all to gain attention to their cause, and elect their candidate. All these are their "measures," and for their end they are wisely calculated. The object is to get up an excitement, and bring the people out. They know that unless there can be an excitement it is in vain to push their end. I do not mean to say that their measures are pious, or right, but only that they are wise, in the sense that they are the appropriate application of means to the end.

The object of the ministry is to get all the people to feel that the devil has no right to rule this world, but that they ought all to give themselves to God, and "vote in" the Lord Jesus Christ as the Governor of the universe.

Now, what shall be done? What measures shall we take? Says one: "Be sure and have nothing that is new." Strange! The object of our measure is to gain attention, and you must have something new. As sure as the effect of a measure becomes stereotyped, it ceases to give attention, and then you must try something new. You need not make innovations in everything. But whenever the state of things is such that anything more is needed, it must be something new, otherwise it will fail. A minister should never introduce innovations that are not called for. If he does, they will embarrass him. He cannot alter the Gospel; that remains the same. But new measures are necessary, from time to time, to awaken attention, and bring the Gospel to bear upon the public mind. And a minister ought to know how to introduce new things, so as to create the least possible resistance or reaction. Mankind are fond of form in religion. They love to have their religious duties stereotyped, so as to leave them at ease; and they are therefore inclined to resist any new movement designed to rouse them up to action and feeling. Hence it is all-important to introduce new things wisely, so as not to give needless occasion for resistance.

13. Not a little wisdom is sometimes needed by a minister to know when to put a stop to new measures. When a measure has novelty enough to secure attention to the truth, ordinarily no other new measure should be introduced. You have secured the great object of novelty. Anything more will be in danger of diverting the public mind away from the great object, and fixing it on the measures themselves. And then, if you introduce novelties when they are not called for, you will go over so large a field that, by and by, when you really want something new, you will have nothing else to introduce, without doing something that will give too great a shock to the public mind. The Bible has laid down no specific course of measures for the promotion of revivals of religion, but

has left it to ministers to adopt such as are wisely calculated to secure the end. And the more sparing we are of our new things, the longer we can use them, to keep public attention awake to the great subject of religion. By a wise course this may undoubtedly be done for a long series of years, until our present measures will, by and by, have sufficient novelty in them again to attract and fix public attention. And so we shall never want for something new.

14. A minister, to win souls, must know how to deal with careless, with awakened, and with anxious sinners, so as to lead them right to Christ in the shortest and most direct way. It is amazing to see how many ministers there are who do not know how to deal with sinners, or what to say to them in their various states of mind. A good woman in Albany told me, that when she was under concern she went to her minister, and asked him to tell her what she must do to get relief. He said that God had not given him much experience on the subject, and advised her to go to a certain deacon, who perhaps could tell her what to do. The truth was, he did not know what to say to a sinner under conviction, although there was nothing peculiar in her case. Now, if you think this minister a rare case, you are quite deceived. There are many ministers who do not know what to say to sinners.

A minister once appointed an anxious meeting, which he duly attended, but instead of going round to speak to the individuals, he began to ask them the catechism question: "Wherein doth Christ execute the office of a priest?" About as much in point to a great many of their minds as anything else.

I know a minister who held an anxious meeting, and went to attend it with a written discourse, which he had prepared for the occasion. This was just as wise as it would be if a physician, going out to visit his patients, should sit down at leisure and write all the prescriptions beforehand. A minister needs to know the state of mind of individuals, before he can know what truth it will be proper and useful to administer. I say these things, not because I love to do it, but because truth and the object before me, require them to be said. And such instances as I have mentioned are by no means rare.

A minister should know how to apply truth to all the situations in which he may find dying sinners going down to hell. He should know how to preach, how to pray, how to conduct prayer meetings, and how to use all the means for bringing the truth of God to bear upon the kingdom of darkness. Does not this require wisdom? And who is sufficient for these things?

II. SUCCESS PROPORTIONATE TO WISDOM.

The amount of a minister’s success in winning souls (other things being equal) invariably decides the amount of wisdom he has exercised in the discharge of his office.

1. This is plainly asserted in the text. "He that winneth souls is wise."

That is, if a man wins souls, he does skillfully adapt means to the end, which is, to exercise wisdom. He is the more wise, by how much the greater is the number of sinners that he saves. A blockhead may, indeed, now and then, stumble on such truth, or such a manner of exhibiting it, as to save a soul. It would be a wonder indeed if any minister did not sometimes have something, in his sermons that would meet the case of some individual. But the amount of wisdom is to be decided, other things being equal, by the number of cases in which he is successful in converting

sinners.

Take the case of a physician. The greatest quack may now and then stumble upon a remarkable cure, and so get his name up with the ignorant.

But sober and judicious people judge of the skill of a physician by the uniformity of his success in overcoming disease, the variety of diseases he can manage, and the number of cases in which he is successful in saving his patients. The most skillful saves the most. This is common sense. It is the truth. And it is just as true in regard to success in saving souls, and true in just the same sense.

2. This principle is not only asserted in the text, but it is a matter of fact, a historical truth, that "He that winneth souls is wise." He has actually employed means adapted to the end, in such a way as to secure the end.

3. Success in saving souls is evidence that a man understands the Gospel, and understands human nature; that he knows how to adapt means to his end; that he has common sense, and that kind of tact, that practical discernment, to know how to get at people. And if his success is extensive, it shows that he knows how to deal, in a great variety of circumstances, with a great variety of characters, who are all the enemies of God, and to bring them to Christ. To do this requires great wisdom.

And the minister who does it shows that he is wise.

4. Success in winning souls shows that a minister not only knows how to labor wisely for that end, but also that he knows where his dependence is.

Fears are often expressed respecting those ministers who are aiming most directly and earnestly at the conversion of sinners. People say: "Why, this man is going to work in his own strength; one would imagine he thinks he can convert souls himself." How often has the event showed that the man knew very well what he was about, and knew where his strength was, too.

He went to work to convert sinners so earnestly, just as if he could do it all himself; but that was the very way he should do. He ought to reason with sinners and plead with them, as faithfully and as fully as if he did not expect any interposition of the Spirit of God. But whenever a man does this successfully, it shows that, after all, he knows he must depend for success upon the Spirit of God alone.

There are many who feel an objection against this subject, arising out of the view they have taken of the ministry of Jesus Christ. They ask us: "What will you say of the ministry of Jesus Christ - was not He wise?"

I answer: "Yes, infinitely wise." But in regard to His alleged "want of success" in the conversion of sinners, you will observe the following things:

(a) That His ministry was vastly more successful than is generally supposed. We read in one of the sacred writers, that after His resurrection and before His ascension, "He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (1Co 15:6). If so many as five hundred brethren were found assembled together at one place, we judge that there must have been a vast number of them scattered over

the country.

(b) Another circumstance to be observed is that His public ministry was very short, less than three years.

(c) Consider, too, the peculiar design of His ministry. His main object was to make Atonement for the sins of the world. It was not aimed so much at promoting revivals. The "dispensation of the Spirit" was not yet given. He did not preach the Gospel so fully as His apostles did afterwards. The prejudices of the people were so fixed and violent that they would not bear it. That He did not, is plain from the fact that even His apostles, who were constantly with Him, did not understand the Atonement. They did not get the idea that He was going to die; and consequently, when they heard that He was actually dead, they were driven to despair, and thought the thing was all gone by, and their hopes blown to the winds. The fact was that He had another object in view, to which everything else was made to yield; and the perverted state of the public mind, and the obstinate prejudices prevailing, showed why results were not seen any more in the conversion of sinners. The state of public opinion was such that they finally murdered Him for what He did preach.

Many ministers who have little or no success are hiding themselves behind the ministry of Jesus Christ, as if He were an unsuccessful preacher.

Whereas, in fact, He was eminently successful, considering the circumstances in which He labored. This is the last place, in all the world, where a minister who has no success should think of hiding himself.

REMARKS.

1. A minister may be very learned and yet not wise. There are many ministers possessed of great learning; they understand all the sciences, physical, moral, and theological; they may know the dead languages, and possess all learning, and yet not be wise in relation to the great end about which they are chiefly employed. Facts clearly demonstrate this. "He that winneth souls is wise."

2. An unsuccessful minister may be pious as well as learned, and yet not wise. It is unfair to infer that because a minister is unsuccessful, therefore he is a hypocrite. There may be something defective in his education, or in his mode of viewing a subject, or of exhibiting it, or such a want of common sense, as will defeat his labors, and prevent his success in winning souls, while he himself may be saved, "yet so as by fire."

3. A minister may be very wise, though he is not learned. He may not understand the dead languages, or theology in its common acceptation; and yet he may know just what a minister of the Gospel wants most to know, without knowing many other things. A learned minister, and a wise minister, are different things. Facts in the history of the Church in all ages prove this. It is very common for Churches, when looking out for a minister, to aim at getting a very learned man. Do not understand me to disparage learning. The more learned the better, if he is also wise in the great matter he is employed about. If a minister knows how to win souls, the more learning he has the better. But if he has any other kind of learning, and not this, he will infallibly fail of achieving that which should be the end of his ministry.

4. Want of success in a minister (other things being equal) proves

(a) That he never was called to preach, but has taken it up out of his own head; or

(b) That he was badly educated, and was never taught the very things he needs most to know; or

(c) If he was called to preach, and knows how to do his duty, he is too indolent and too wicked to do it.

5. Those are the best educated ministers who win the most souls.

Ministers are sometimes looked down upon, and called very ignorant, because they do not know the sciences and languages; although they are very far from being ignorant of the great thing for which the ministry is appointed. This is wrong. Learning is important, and always useful. But after all, a minister may know how to win souls to Christ, without great learning; and he has the best education for a minister, who can win the most souls to Christ.

6. There is evidently a great defect in the present mode of educating ministers. This is a SOLEMN FACT, to which the attention of the whole Church should be distinctly called, that the great mass of young ministers who are educated accomplish very little.

When young men come out of the seminaries, are they fit to go into a revival? Look at a place where there has been a revival in progress, and a minister is wanted. Let them send to a theological seminary for a minister.

Will he enter into the work, and sustain it, and carry it on? Seldom. Like David with Saul’s armor, he comes in with such a load of theological trumpery, that he knows not what to do. Leave him there for two weeks, and the revival is at an end. The Churches know and feel that the greater part of these young men do not know how to do anything that needs to be done for a revival, and the complaint is made that the young ministers are so far behind the Church. You may send all over the United States, to theological seminaries, and find but few young ministers fitted to carry forward the work. What a state of things!

There is a great defect in educating ministers. Education ought to be such, as to prepare young men for the peculiar work to which they are destined.

But instead of this, they are educated for anything else. The grand mistake is this: that the mind is directed too much to irrelevant matters; it is carried over too wide a field, so that attention is diverted from the main thing and the young men get cold in religion. When, therefore, they get through their course, instead of being fitted for their work, they are unfitted for it.

Under a pretense of disciplining the mind, attention is in fact scattered, so that when the young men come to their work, they are awkward, and know not how to take hold, or how to act, to win souls. This is not universally the case, but too often it is so.

It is common for people to talk loudly and largely about "an educated ministry." God forbid that I should say a word against an educated ministry! But what do we mean by an education for the ministry? Do we mean that they should be so educated, as to be fitted for the work? If they are so educated, the more education the better. Let education be of the right kind, teaching a young man the things he needs to know, and not the very things he does not need to know. Let them be educated for the work.

Do not let education be such, that when young men come out, after spending six, eight, or ten years in study, they are not worth half as much as they were before they went. I have known young men come out after what they call "a thorough course," who could not manage a prayer meeting, so as to make it profitable or interesting. An elder of a Church in a neighboring city, informed me of a case in point. A young man, before he went to the seminary, had labored as a layman with them, conducting their prayer meetings, and been exceedingly useful among them. After he had been to the seminary, they sent for him and desired his help; but, oh, how changed! He was so completely transformed, that he made no impression; the members soon began to complain that they would "die" under his influences; and he left, because he was not prepared for the work.

It is common for those ministers who have been to the seminaries, and are now useful, to affirm that their course of studies there did them little or no good, and that they had to unlearn what they had there learned, before they could effect much. I do not say this censoriously, but it is a solemn fact, and in love I must say it.

Suppose you were going to make a man a surgeon in the navy. Instead of sending him to the medical school to learn surgery, would you send him to the nautical school, to learn navigation? In this way, you might qualify him to navigate a ship, but he is no surgeon. Ministers should be educated to know what the Bible is, and what the human mind is, and how to bring the one to bear on the other. They should be brought into contact with mind, and made familiar with all the aspects of society. They should have the Bible in one hand, and the map of the human mind in the other, and know how to use the truth for the salvation of men.

7. A want of common sense often defeats the ends of the Christian ministry. There are many good men in the ministry, who have learning, and talents of a certain sort, but they have no common sense to win souls.

8. We see one great defect in our theological schools. Young men are confined to books, and shut out from intercourse with the common people, or contact with the common mind. Hence they are not familiar with the mode in which common people think. This accounts for the fact that some plain men, who have been brought up to business, and are acquainted with human nature, are ten times better qualified to win souls than those who are educated on the present principle, and are in fact ten times as well acquainted with the proper business of the ministry. These are called "uneducated men." This is a grand mistake. They are not learned in science, but they are learned in the very things which they need to know as ministers. They are not ignorant ministers, for they know exactly how to reach the mind with truth. They are better furnished for their work, than if they had all the machinery of the schools.

I wish to be understood. I do not say, that I would not have a young man go to school. Nor would I discourage him from going over the field of science. The more the better, if together with it he learns also the things that the minister needs to know, in order to win souls - if he understands his Bible, and understands human nature, and knows how to bring the truth to bear, and how to guide and manage minds, and to lead them away from sin and lead them to God.

9. The success of any measure designed to promote a revival of religion, demonstrates its wisdom; with the following exceptions:

(a) A measure may be introduced for effect, to produce excitement, and be such that when it is looked back upon afterwards, it will seem nonsensical, and appear to have been a mere trick. In that case, it will react, and its introduction will have done more harm than good.

(b) Measures may be introduced, and the revival be very powerful, and the success be attributed to the measures, when in fact, it was other things which made the revival powerful, and these very measures may have been a hindrance. The prayers of Christians, and the preaching, and other things, may have been so well calculated to carry on the work, that it has succeeded in spite of these measures.

(c) But when the blessing evidently follows the introduction of the measure itself, the proof is unanswerable, that the measure is wise. It is profane to say that such a measure will do more harm than good. God knows about that. His object is, to do the greatest amount of good possible. And of course He will not add His blessing to a measure that will do more harm than good. He may sometimes withhold His blessing from a measure that is calculated to do some good, because it will be at the expense of a greater good. But he never will bless a pernicious proceeding. There is no such thing as deceiving God in the matter. He knows whether a given measure is, on the whole, wise or not. He may bless a course of labors notwithstanding some unwise or injurious measures. But if He blesses the measure itself, it is rebuking God to pronounce it unwise. He who undertakes to do this, let him look to the matter.

10. It is evident that much fault has been found with measures which have been pre-eminently and continually blessed of God for the promotion of revivals. If a measure is continually or usually blessed, let the man who thinks he is wiser than God, call it in question. TAKE CARE how you find fault with God!

11. Christians should pray for ministers. Brethren, if you felt how much ministers need wisdom to perform the duties of their great office with success, and how insufficient they are of themselves, you would pray for them a great deal more than you do; that is, if you cared anything for the success of their labors. People often find fault with ministers, when they do not pray for them. Brethren, this is tempting God; for you ought not to expect any better ministers, unless you pray for them. And you ought not to expect a blessing on the labors of your minister, or to have your families converted by his preaching, when you do not pray for him. And so for others, for the waste places, and the heathen: instead of praying all the time, only that God would send out more laborers, you have need also to pray that God would make ministers wise to win souls, and that those He sends out may be properly educated, so that they shall be scribes well instructed in the kingdom of God.

12. Those laymen in the Church who know how to win souls are to be counted wise. They should not be called "ignorant laymen"; and those Church members who do not know how to convert sinners, and who cannot win souls, should not be called wise - as Christians. They are not wise Christians; only "he that winneth souls is wise." They may be learned in politics, in all sciences, or they may be skilled in the management of business, or other things, and they may look down on those who win souls, as nothing but plain, simple-hearted and ignorant men. If any of you are inclined to do this, and to undervalue those who win souls, as being not so wise and cunning as you are, you deceive yourselves. They may not know some things which you know; but they know those things which a Christian is most concerned to know, and which you do not.

It may be illustrated by the case of a minister who goes to sea. He may be learned in science, but he knows not how to sail a ship. And he begins to ask the sailors about this thing and that, and what this rope is for, and the like. "Why," say the sailors, "these are not ropes, we have only one rope in a ship; these are the rigging; the man talks like a fool." And so this learned man becomes a laughing-stock, perhaps, to the sailors, because he does not know how to sail a ship. But if he were to tell them one half of what he knows about science, perhaps they would think him a conjurer, to know so much. So, learned students may understand their Latin very well, and may laugh at the humble Christian, and call him ignorant, although he may know how to win more souls than five hundred of them.

I was once distressed and grieved at hearing a minister bearing down upon a young preacher, who had been converted under remarkable circumstances, and who was licensed to preach without having pursued a regular course of study. This minister, who was never, or at least very rarely, known to convert a soul, bore down upon the young man in a very lordly, censorious manner, depreciating him because he had not had the advantage of a liberal education - when, in fact, he was instrumental in converting more souls than any five hundred ministers like the one who criticized him.

I would say nothing to undervalue, or lead any to undervalue, a thorough education for ministers. But I do not call that a thorough education, which they receive in our colleges and seminaries. It does not fit them for their work. I appeal to all experience, whether our young men in seminaries are thoroughly educated for the purpose of winning souls. Do THEY DO IT?

Everybody knows they do not. Look at the reports of the Home Missionary Society. If I recollect right, in 1830, the number of conversions in connection with the labors of the missionaries of that society did not exceed five to each missionary. I believe the number has increased since, but is still exceedingly small to what it would have been had they been fitted, by a right course of training, for their work. I do not say this to reproach them, for, from my heart, I pity them; and I pity the Church for being under the necessity of supporting ministers so trained, or of having none at all. They are the best men the Missionary Society can obtain.

I suppose I shall be reproached for saying this. But it is too true and too painful to be concealed. Those fathers who have the training of our young ministers are good men, but they are ancient men, men of another age and stamp from what is needed in these days, when the Church and world are rising to new thought and action. Those dear fathers will not, I suppose, see with me in this; and will perhaps think hardly of me for saying it; but it is the cause of Christ. Some of them are getting back toward second childhood, and ought to resign, and give place to younger men, who are not rendered physically incapable, by age, of keeping pace with the onward movements of the Church. And here I would say, that to my own mind it appears evident, that unless our theological professors preach a good deal, mingle much with the Church, and sympathize with her in all her movements, it is morally, if not naturally, impossible, that they should succeed in training young men to the spirit of the age. It is a shame and a sin, that theological professors, who preach but seldom, who are withdrawn from the active duties of the ministry, should sit in their studies and write their Letters, advisory or dictatorial, to ministers and Churches who are in the field, and who are in circumstances to judge what needs to be done. The men who spend all, or at least a portion, of their time in the active duties of the ministry, are the only men who are able to judge of what is

expedient or inexpedient, prudent or imprudent, as to measures, from time to time. It is as dangerous and ridiculous for our theological professors, who are withdrawn from the field of conflict, to be allowed to dictate, in regard to the measures and movements of the Church, as it would be for a general to sit in his bedchamber and attempt to order a battle.

Two ministers were one day conversing about another minister, whose labors were greatly blessed - in the conversion of some thousands of souls. One of them said: "That man ought not to preach any more; he should stop and go to - (a theological seminary which he named), and proceed through a regular course of study." He said the man had "a good mind, and if he were thoroughly educated, he might be very useful." The other replied: "Do you think he would be more useful for going to that seminary? I challenge you to show by facts that any are more useful who have been there. No, sir, the fact is, that since this man has been in the ministry, he has been instrumental in converting more souls than all the young men who have come from that seminary in the time."

Finally: I wish to ask, who among you can lay any claim to the possession of this Divine wisdom? Who among you, laymen? Who among you, ministers? Can any of you? Can I? Are we at work, wisely, to win souls?

Or are we trying to make ourselves believe that success is no criterion of wisdom? It is a criterion. It is a safe criterion for every minister to try himself by. The amount of his success, other things being equal, measures the amount of wisdom he has exercised in the discharge of his office.

How few of you have ever had wisdom enough to convert so much as a single sinner? Do not say: "I cannot convert sinners. How can I convert sinners? God alone can convert sinners." Look at the text: "He that winneth souls is wise," and do not think you can escape the sentence. It is true that God converts sinners. But there is a sense, too, in which ministers convert them. And you have something to do; something which, if you do it wisely, will ensure the conversion of sinners in proportion to the wisdom employed. If you never have done this, it is high time to think about yourselves, and see whether you have wisdom enough to save even your own souls.

Men! Women! You are bound to be wise in winning souls. Perhaps already souls have perished, because you have not put forth the wisdom which you might, in saving them. The city is going to hell. Yes, the world is going to hell, and must go on, till the Church finds out what to do, to win souls. Politicians are wise. The children of this world are wise; they know what to do to accomplish their ends, while we are prosing about, not knowing what to do, or where to take hold of the work, and sinners are going to hell.

05.12. HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

LECTURE XII

HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

He that winneth souls is wise. - Pro 11:30.

One of the last remarks in my last Lecture was this, that the text ascribes conversion to men. Winning souls is converting men. I now design to show that:

I. Several passages of Scripture ascribe conversion to men; and that:

II. This is consistent with other passages which ascribe conversion to God.

III. I also purpose to discuss several further particulars which are deemed important, in regard to the preaching of the Gospel, and which show that great practical wisdom is necessary to win souls to Christ.

I. THE BIBLE SCRIBES CONVERSION TO MEN.

There are many passages which represent the conversion of sinners as the work of men. In Dan 12:3 it is said: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Here the work is ascribed to men. So also in 1Co 4:15 : "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." Here the apostle explicitly tells the Corinthians that he made them Christians, with the Gospel, or truth, which he preached.

Again, in Jas 5:19-20, we are taught the same thing. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

I might quote many other passages, equally explicit. But these are sufficient abundantly to establish the fact, that the Bible does actually ascribe conversion to men.

II. THE BIBLE ASCRIBES CONVERSION TO GOD.

Here let me remark that to my mind it often appears very strange that men should ever suppose there was an in consistency here, or that they should ever have overlooked the plain common sense of the matter. How easy it is to see that there is a sense in which God converts them, and another sense in which men convert them.

The Scriptures ascribe conversion to four different agencies - to men, to God, to the truth, and to the sinner himself. The passages which ascribe it to the truth are the largest class. That men should ever have overlooked this distinction, and should have regarded conversion as a work performed exclusively by God, is surprising. So it is that any difficulty should ever have been felt on the subject, or that people should ever have professed themselves unable to reconcile these

several classes of passages.

The Bible speaks on this subject, precisely as we speak on common subjects. There is a man who has been very ill. How natural it is for him to say of his physician: "That man saved my life." Does he mean to say that the physician saved his life without reference to God? Certainly not, unless he is an infidel. God made the physician, and He made the medicine too. And it never can be shown but that the agency of God is just as truly concerned in making the medicine take effect to save life, as it is in making the truth take effect to save a soul. To affirm the contrary is downright atheism. It is true, then, that the physician saved him; and it is also true that God saved him.. It is equally true that the medicine saved his life, and also that he saved his own life by taking the medicine; for the medicine would have done no good if he had not taken it.

In the conversion of a sinner, it is true that God gives the truth efficiency to turn the sinner to God. He is an active, voluntary, powerful agent, in changing the mind. But the one who brings the truth to the sinner's notice is also an agent. We are apt to speak of ministers and other men as only instruments in converting sinners. This is not exactly correct. Man is something more than an instrument. Truth is the mere unconscious instrument. But man is more: he is a voluntary, responsible agent in the business. In a sermon, I have illustrated this idea by the case of an individual standing on the banks of Niagara.

"Suppose yourself to be standing on the banks of the Falls of Niagara. As you stand upon the verge of the precipice, you behold a man, lost in deep reverie, approaching its verge, unconscious of his danger. He approaches nearer and nearer, until he actually lifts his foot to take the final step that shall plunge him in destruction. At this moment, you lift your warning voice above the roar of the foaming waters, and cry out: 'Stop!' The voice pierces his ear, and breaks the charm that binds him; he turns instantly upon his heel; all pale and aghast he retires, quivering, from the verge of death. He reels and almost swoons with horror; turns, and walks slowly to the hotel; you follow him; the manifest agitation in his countenance calls numbers around him; and on your approach he points to you, and says: 'That man saved my life.' Here he ascribes the work to you; and certainly there is a sense in which you had saved him. But, on being further questioned, he says: "'Stop!" How that word rings in my ears. Oh, that was to me the word of life!' Here he ascribes it to the word that aroused him, and caused him to turn.

"But on conversing still further, he says: 'Had I not turned at that instant, I should have been a dead man.' Here he speaks of it (and truly) as his own act. But you directly hear him say: 'Oh, the mercy of God! If God had not interposed, I should have been lost!' Now, the only defect in this illustration is this: In the case supposed, the only interference on the part of God was a providential one; and the only sense in which the saving of the man's life is ascribed to Him, is in a providential sense. But in the conversion of a sinner there is something more than the providence of God employed; for here, not only does the providence of God so order it, that the preacher cries: 'Stop!' but the Spirit of God urges the truth home upon him with such tremendous power as to induce him to turn."

Not only does the minister cry: "Stop!" but through the living voice of the preacher, the Spirit cries: "Stop!" The preacher cries: "Turn ye, why will ye die?" The Spirit sends the expostulation home with such power that the sinner turns. Now, in speaking of this change, it is perfectly proper to say, that the Spirit turned him; just as you would say of a man who had persuaded another to change

his mind on the subject of politics, that he had converted him, and brought him over. It is also proper to say that the truth converted him; as, in a case when the political sentiments of a man were changed by a certain argument, we should say that argument brought him over. So, also, with perfect propriety, may we ascribe the change to the preacher, or to him who had presented the motives; just as he would say of a lawyer who had prevailed in his argument with a jury: "He has won his case; he has converted the jury." It is also with the same propriety ascribed to the individual himself whose heart is changed; we should say that he has changed his mind, he has come over, he has repented. Now it is strictly true, and true in the most absolute and highest sense; the act is his own act, the turning is his own turning, while God by the truth has induced him to turn; still it is strictly true that he has turned, and has done it himself. Thus you see the sense in which it is the work of God; and also the sense in which it is the sinner's own work.

The Spirit of God, by the truth, influences the sinner to change, and in this sense is the efficient Cause of the change. But the sinner actually changes, and is therefore himself, in the most proper sense, the author of the change. There are some, who, on reading their Bibles, fasten their eyes on those passages that ascribe the work to the Spirit of God, and seem to overlook those which ascribe it to man, and speak of it as the sinner's own act. When they have quoted Scripture to prove it is the work of God, they seem to think they have proved that it is that in which man is passive, and that it can in no sense be the work of man.

Some time ago a tract was written, the title of which was, "Regeneration, the Effect of Divine Power." The writer goes on to prove that the work is wrought by the Spirit of God; and there he stops. Now it had been just as true, just as philosophical, and just as scriptural, if he had said that conversion was the work of man. It is easy to prove that it is the work of God, in the sense in which I have explained it. The writer, therefore, tells the truth, so far as he goes; but he has told only half the truth. For while there is a sense in which it is the work of God, as he has shown, there is also a sense in which it is the work of man, as we have just seen. The very title to this tract is a stumbling block. It tells the truth, but it does not tell the whole truth. And a tract might be written upon this proposition that "Conversion, or regeneration, is the work of man" which would be just as true, just as Scriptural, and just as philosophical, as the one to which I have alluded. Thus the writer, in his zeal to recognize and honor God as concerned in this work, by leaving out the fact that a change of heart is the sinner's own act, has left the sinner strongly entrenched, with his weapons in his rebellious hands, stoutly resisting the claims of his Maker, and waiting passively for God to make him a new heart. Thus you see the consistency between the requirement of the text, and the declared fact that God is the author of the new heart. God commands you to make you a new heart, expects you to do it; and, if ever it is done, you must do it.

And let me tell you, sinner, if you do not do it you will go to hell; and to all eternity you will feel that you deserved to be sent there for not having done it.

III. GOSPEL PREACHING AND SOUL WINING.

I shall now advert to several important particulars growing out of this subject, as connected with preaching the Gospel, and which show that great practical wisdom is indispensable to win souls to Christ.

1. In regard to the matter of preaching.

(a) First, all preaching should be practical. The proper end of all doctrine is practice. Anything brought forward as doctrine, which cannot be made use of as practical, is not preaching the Gospel. There is none of that sort of preaching in the Bible. That is all practical. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:16-17).

A vast deal of preaching in the present day, as well as in past ages, is called doctrinal, as opposed to practical preaching. The very idea of making this distinction is a device of the devil. And a more abominable device Satan himself never devised. You sometimes hear certain men talk a wonderful deal about the necessity of "indoctrinating the people." By which they mean something different from practical preaching; teaching them certain doctrines, as abstract truths, without any particular reference to practice. And I have known a minister in the midst of a revival, while surrounded with anxious sinners, leave off laboring to convert souls, for the purpose of "indoctrinating" the young converts, for fear somebody else should indoctrinate them before him. And there the revival stops!

Either his doctrine was not true, or it was not preached in the right way.

To preach doctrines in an abstract way, and not in reference to practice, is absurd. God always brings in doctrine to regulate practice. To bring forward doctrinal views for any other object is not only nonsense; it is wicked.

Some people are opposed to doctrinal preaching. If they have been used to hear doctrines preached in a cold, abstract way, no wonder they are opposed to it. They ought to be opposed to such preaching. But what can a man preach, who preaches no doctrine? If he preaches no doctrine, he preaches no Gospel. And if he does not preach it in a practical way, he does not preach the Gospel. All preaching should be doctrinal, and all preaching should be practical. The very design of doctrine is to regulate practice. Any preaching that has not this tendency is not the Gospel. A loose, exhortatory style of preaching may affect the passions, and may produce excitement, but will never sufficiently instruct the people to secure sound conversions. On the other hand, preaching doctrine in an abstract manner may fill the head with notions, but will never sanctify the heart or life.

(b) Preaching should be direct. The Gospel should be preached to men, and not about men. The minister must address his hearers. He must preach to them about themselves, and not leave the impression that he is preaching to them about others. He will never do them any good, further than he succeeds in convincing each individual that he is the person in question.

Many preachers seem very much afraid of making the impression that they mean anybody in particular. They are preaching against certain sins - not that these have anything to do with the sinner; they would by no means speak as if they supposed any of their hearers were guilty of these abominable practices. Now this is anything but preaching the Gospel.

Thus did not the prophets, nor Christ, nor the apostles. Nor do those ministers do this, who are successful in winning souls to Christ.

(c) Another very important thing to be regarded in preaching is, that the minister should hunt after sinners and Christians, wherever they may have entrenched themselves in inaction. It is not the design of preaching to make men easy and quiet, but to make them ACT. It is not the design, in calling in a physician, to have him give opiates, and so cover up the disease and let it run on till it works death; but to search out the disease wherever it may be hidden, and to remove it. So, if a professor of religion has backslidden, and is full of doubts and fears, it is not the minister's duty to quiet him in his sins, and comfort him, but to hunt him out of his errors and backslidings, and to show him just where he stands, and what it is that makes him full of doubts and fears.

A minister ought to know the religious opinions of every sinner in his congregation. Indeed, a minister in the country is inexcusable if he does not. He has no excuse for not knowing the religious views of all his congregation, and of all that may come under his influence. How otherwise can he preach to them? How can he know how to bring forth things new and old, and adapt truth to their case? How can he hunt them out unless he knows where they hide themselves? He may ring changes on a few fundamental doctrines - Repentance and Faith, and Faith and Repentance - till the Day of Judgment, and never make any impression on many minds. Every sinner has some hiding place, some entrenchment, where he lingers. He is in possession of some darling LIE, with which he is quieting himself. Let the minister find it out, and get it away, either in the pulpit or in private, or the man will go to hell in his sins, and his blood will be found on the minister's skirts.

(d) Another important thing to observe is, that a minister should dwell most on those particular points which are most needed. I will explain what I mean.

Sometimes he may find a people who have been led to place great reliance on their own resolutions. They think they can consult their own convenience, and by-and-by they will repent, when they are ready, without any concern about the Spirit of God. Let him take up these notions, and show that they are entirely contrary to the Scriptures. Let him show that if the Spirit of God is grieved away, by and by, when it shall be convenient for the sinner to repent, he will have no inclination.

The minister who finds these errors prevailing, should expose them. He should hunt them out, and understand just how they are held, and then preach the class of truths which show the fallacy, the folly, and the danger of these notions.

So, on the other hand, he may find a people who have such views of Election and Sovereignty, as to think they have nothing to do but to wait for "the moving of the waters." Let him go right over against them, urge upon them their ability to obey God, show them their obligation and duty, and press them with that until he brings them to submit and be saved.

They have got behind a perverted view of these doctrines, and there is no way to drive them out of the hiding place, but to set them right on these points. Wherever a sinner is entrenched, unless you pour light upon him there, you will never move him. It is of no use to press him with those truths which he admits, however plainly they may in fact contradict his wrong notions. He supposes them to be perfectly consistent, and does not see the inconsistency, and therefore it will not move him, or bring him to repentance.

I have been informed of a minister in New England, who was settled in a congregation which had long enjoyed little else than Armenian preaching, and the congregation themselves were chiefly Armenians. Well, this minister, in his preaching, strongly insisted on the opposite points, Election, Divine Sovereignty, Predestination, etc. The consequence was, as might have been expected where this was done with ability, that there was a powerful revival. Some time afterwards this same minister was called to labor in another field, in this State, where the people were all on the other side, and strongly tinctured with Antinomianism. They had got such perverted views of Election and Divine Sovereignty, that they were continually saying they had no power to do anything, but must wait God's time. Now, what does the minister do, but immediately go to preaching the doctrine of Election. And when he was asked how he could think of preaching the doctrine of Election so much to that people, when it was the very thing that lulled them to a deeper slumber, he replied: "Why, that is the very class of truths by which I had such a great revival in -"; not considering the difference in the views of the people. You must take things as they are; find out where sinners lie, pour in truth upon them there, and START THEM OUT from their refuges of lies. It is of vast importance that a minister should find out where the congregation is, and preach accordingly.

I have been in many places in times of revival, and I have never been able to employ precisely the same course of preaching in one as in another.

Some are entrenched behind one refuge, and some behind another. In one place, Christians will need to be instructed; in another, sinners. In one place, one set of truths; in another, another set. A minister must find out where people are, and preach accordingly. I believe this is the experience of all preachers who are called to labor from field to field.

(e) If a minister means to promote a revival, he should be very careful not to introduce controversy. He will grieve away the Spirit of God. In this way, probably, more revivals are put down than in any other. Look back upon the history of the Church from the beginning, and you will see that ministers are generally responsible for grieving away the Spirit and causing declensions by controversy. It is the ministers who bring forward controversial subjects for discussion, and by and by they get very zealous on the subject, and then get the Church into a controversial spirit, and so the Spirit of God is grieved away.

If I had time to go over the history of the Church from the days of the apostles, I could show that all the controversies that have taken place, and all the great declensions in religion, too, are chargeable upon ministers. I believe the ministers of the present day are responsible for the present state of the Church, and it will be seen to be true at the judgment. Who does not know that ministers have been crying out "Heresy," and "New Measures," and talking about the "Evils of Revivals," until they have got the Church all in confusion? Oh, God, have mercy on ministers! They talk about their days of fasting and prayer, but are these the men to call on others to fast and pray? They ought to fast and pray themselves. It is time that ministers should assemble together, and fast and pray over the evils of controversy, for they have caused it. The Church itself would never get into a controversial spirit, unless led into it by ministers. The body of Church members are always averse to controversy, and would keep out of it, only they are dragged into it by ministers. When Christians are revived they are not inclined to meddle with controversy, either to read or hear it.

But they may be told of such and such "damnable heresies" that are afloat, till they get their feelings enlisted in controversy, and then farewell to the revival. If a minister, in preaching, finds it necessary to discuss particular points about which Christians differ in opinion, let him BY ALL MEANS avoid a controversial spirit and manner of doing it.

(f) The Gospel should be preached in those proportions, that the whole Gospel may be brought before the minds of the people, and produce its proper influence. If too much stress is laid on one class of truths, the Christian character will not have its due proportions. Its symmetry will not be perfect. If that class of truths be almost exclusively dwelt upon, that requires great exertion of intellect, without being brought home to the heart and conscience, it will be found that the Church will be indoctrinated in those views, but will not be awake, and active, and efficient in the promotion of religion. If, on the other hand, the preaching be loose, indefinite, exhortatory, and highly impassioned, the Church will be like a ship with too much sail for her ballast. It will be in danger of being swept away by a tempest of feeling, when there is not sufficient knowledge to prevent its being carried away with every wind of doctrine. If Election and Sovereignty are too much preached, there will be Antinomianism in the Church, and sinners will hide themselves behind the delusion that they can do nothing. If, on the other hand, doctrines of ability and obligation be too prominent, they will produce Arminianism, and sinners will be blustering and self-confident.

When I entered the ministry, there had been so much said about Election and Sovereignty, that I found it was the universal hiding place, both of sinners and of Christians, that they could not do anything, or could not obey the Gospel. And wherever, I went, I found it indispensable to demolish these refuges of lies. And a revival would in no way have been produced or carried on, but by dwelling on that class of truths, which hold up man’s ability, and obligation, and responsibility.

It was not so in the days when President Edwards and Whitefield labored.

Then, the Churches in New England had enjoyed little else than Armenian preaching, and were all resting in themselves and their own strength. These bold and devoted servants of God came out and declared those particular doctrines of grace, Divine Sovereignty and Election, and they were greatly blessed. They did not dwell on these doctrines exclusively, but they preached them very fully. The consequence was that because in those circumstances revivals followed from such preaching, the ministers who followed continued to preach these doctrines almost exclusively. And they dwelt on them so long that the Church and the world got entrenched behind them, waiting for God to come and do what He required them to do; and so revivals ceased for many years.

Now, and for years past, ministers have been engaged in hunting them out from these refuges. And here it is all-important for the ministers of this day to bear in mind that if they dwell exclusively on Ability and Obligation, they will get their hearers back on the old Armenian ground, and then they will cease to promote revivals. Here are ministers who have preached a great deal of truth, and have had great revivals, under God.

Now, let it be known and remarked, that the reason is, they have hunted sinners out from their hiding places. But if they continue to dwell on the same class of truths till sinners hide themselves behind such preaching, another class of truths must be preached. And then if they do not change their mode, another pall will hang over the Church, until another class of ministers shall arise and

hunt sinners out of those new retreats.

A right view of both classes of truths, Election and Free-agency, will do no hurt. They are eminently calculated to convert sinners and strengthen saints. It is a perverted view that chills the heart of the Church, and closes the eyes of sinners in sleep. If I had time, I would remark on the manner in which I have sometimes heard the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty, Election, and Ability preached. They have been exhibited in irreconcilable contradiction, the one against the other. Such exhibitions are anything but the Gospel, and are calculated to make a sinner feel anything rather than his responsibility to God. By preaching truth in proper proportions, I do not mean mingling all things together in the same sermon, in such a way that sinners will not see their connection or consistency. A minister once asked another: "Why do you not preach the doctrine of Election?" "Because," said the other, "I find sinners here are entrenched behind Inability." The first then said he once knew a minister who used to preach Election in the forenoon and Repentance in the afternoon. But, bringing things together that confound the sinner's mind, and overwhelm him with a fog of metaphysics, is not wise preaching. When talking of Election, the preacher is not talking of the sinner's duty. It has no relation to the sinner's duty. Election belongs to the government of God. It is a part of the exceeding richness of the grace of God. It shows the love of God - not the duty of the sinner. And to bring Election and Repentance together in this way is diverting the sinner's mind away from his duty. It has been customary, in many places, for a long time, to bring the doctrine of Election into every sermon. Sinners have been commanded to repent, and told that they could not repent, in the same sermon. A great deal of ingenuity has been exercised in endeavoring to reconcile a sinner's "inability" with his obligation to obey God.

Election, Predestination, Free-agency, Inability, and Duty, have all been thrown together in one promiscuous jumble. And, with regard to many sermons, it has been too true, as has been objected, that ministers have preached: "You can and you cannot, you shall and you shall not, you will and you will not, and you will be lost if you do not!" Such a mixture of truth and error, of light and darkness, has confounded the congregation, and been the fruitful source of Universalism and every species of infidelity and error.

(g) It is of great importance that the sinner should be made to feel his guilt, and not left to the impression that he is unfortunate. I think this is a very prevalent fault, particularly in books on the subject. They are calculated to make the sinner think more of his sorrows than of his sins, and feel that his state is rather unfortunate than criminal. Perhaps most of you have seen a lovely little book, recently published, entitled "Todd's Lectures to Children." It is exquisitely fine, and happy in some of its illustrations of truth. But it has one very serious fault. Many of its illustrations, I may say most of them, are not calculated to make a correct impression respecting the guilt of sinners, or to make them feel how much they have been to blame. This is very unfortunate. If the writer had guarded his illustrations on this point, so as to make them impress sinners with a sense of their guilt, I do not see how a child could have read through that book and not have been converted. Multitudes of the books written for children, and for adults too, within the last twenty years, have run into this mistake to an alarming degree. They are not calculated to make the sinner condemn himself. Until you can do this, the Gospel will never take effect.

(h) A prime object with the preacher must be to make present obligation felt. I have talked, I suppose, with many thousands of anxious sinners.

And I have found that they had never before felt the pressure of present obligation. The impression is not commonly made by ministers in their preaching that sinners are expected to repent NOW. And if ministers suppose they make this impression, they deceive themselves. Most commonly any other impression is made upon the minds of sinners by the preacher than that they are expected now to submit. But what sort of a Gospel is this? Does God authorize such an impression? Is this according to the preaching of Jesus Christ? Does the Holy Spirit, when striving with the sinner, make the impression upon his mind that he is not expected to obey now? Was any such impression produced by the preaching of the apostles? How does it happen that so many ministers now preach, so as, in fact, to make an impression on their hearers that they are not expected to repent now? Until the sinner's conscience is reached on this subject, you preach to him in vain. And until ministers learn how to preach so as to make the right impression, the world never can be converted. Oh, to what an alarming extent does the impression now prevail among the impenitent, that they are not expected to repent now, but must wait God's time!

(i) Sinners ought to be made to feel that they have something to do, and that is, to repent; that it is something which no other being can do for them, neither God nor man; and something which they can do, and do now. Religion is something to do, not something to wait for. And they must do it now, or they are in danger of eternal death.

(j) Ministers should never rest satisfied, until they have ANNIHILATED every excuse of sinners. The plea of "inability" is the worst of excuses. It slanders God so, charging Him with infinite tyranny, in commanding men to do that which they have no power to do. Make the sinner see and feel that this is the very nature of his excuse. Make the sinner see that All pleas in excuse for not submitting to God are acts of rebellion against Him.

Tear away the last LIE which he grasps in his hand, and make him feel that he is absolutely condemned before God.

(k) Sinners should be made to feel that if they now grieve away the Spirit of God, it is very probable that they will be lost forever. There is infinite danger of this. They should be made to understand why they are dependent on the Spirit, and that it is not because they cannot do what God commands, but because they are unwilling. They are so unwilling that it is just as certain they will not repent without the Holy Ghost, as if they were now in hell, or as if they were actually unable. They are so opposed and so unwilling, that they never will repent in the world, unless God sends His Holy Spirit upon them.

Show them, too, that a sinner under the Gospel, who hears the truth preached, if converted at all, is generally converted young; and if not converted while young, he is commonly given up of God. Where the truth is preached, sinners are either Gospel-hardened or converted. I know some old sinners are converted, but they are rather exceptions, and by no means common.

2. I wish to make a few remarks on the manner of preaching.

(a) It should be conversational. Preaching, to be understood, should be colloquial in style. A minister must preach just as he would talk, if he wishes fully to be understood. Nothing is more calculated to make a sinner feel that religion is some mysterious thing that he cannot understand than this formal, lofty style of speaking which is so generally employed in the pulpit. The minister ought to do as the lawyer does when he wants to make a jury understand him perfectly. He uses a

style perfectly colloquial.

This lofty, swelling style will do no good. The Gospel will never produce any great effects until ministers talk to their hearers, in the pulpit, as they talk in private conversation.

(b) It must be in the language of common life. Not only should it be colloquial in its style, but the words should be such as are in common use.

Otherwise they will not be understood. In the New Testament you will observe that Jesus Christ invariably uses words of the most common kind.

The language of the Gospel is the plainest, simplest, and most easily understood of any language in the world.

For a minister to neglect this principle is wicked. Some ministers use language that is purely technical in preaching. They think to avoid the mischief by explaining the meaning fully at the outset; but this will not answer. It will not effect the object in making the people understand what he means. If he should use a word that is not in common use and that people do not understand, his explanation may be very full, but the difficulty is that people will forget his explanations, and then his words are so much Greek to them. Or if he uses a word in common use, but employs it in an uncommon sense, giving his special explanations, it is no better; for the people will soon forget his special explanations, and then the impression actually conveyed to their minds will be according to their common understanding of the word. And thus he will never convey the right idea to his congregation. It is amazing how many men of thinking minds there are in congregations, who do not understand the most common technical expressions employed by ministers, such as regeneration, sanctification, etc.

Use words that can be perfectly understood. Do not, for fear of appearing unlearned, use language which the people do not understand. The apostle says: "If I know not the meaning... he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me" (1Co 14:11). And: "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1Co 14:8). In the apostle’s days there were some preachers who were marvelously proud of displaying their command of language, and showing off the variety of tongues they could speak, which the common people could not understand. The apostle rebukes this spirit sharply, and says: "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1Co 14:19).

I have sometimes heard ministers preach, even when there was a revival, when I have wondered what that part of the congregation would do, who had no dictionary. So many phrases were brought in, manifestly to adorn the discourse, rather than to instruct the people, that I have felt as if I wanted to tell the man: "Sit down, and do not confound the people’s minds with your barbarian preaching, that they cannot understand."

(c) Preaching should be parabolical. That is, illustrations should be constantly used, drawn from incidents, real or supposed. Jesus Christ constantly illustrated His instructions in this way. He would either advance a principle and then illustrate it by a parable - that is, a short story of some event, real or imaginary - or else He would bring out the principle in the parable. There are millions of facts that can be used to advantage, and yet very few ministers dare to use them, for fear

somebody will reproach them. "Oh," says somebody, "he actually tells stories!"

Tells stories! Why, that is the way Jesus Christ preached. And it is the only way to preach. Facts, real or supposed, should be used to show the truth. Truths not illustrated, are generally just as much calculated to convert sinners as a mathematical demonstration. Is it always to be so?

Shall it always be a matter of reproach, when ministers follow the example of Jesus Christ in illustrating truths by facts? Let them still do it, however much the foolish reproach them as story-telling ministers! They have Jesus Christ and common sense on their side.

(d) The illustrations should be drawn from common life, and the common business of society. I once heard a minister illustrate his ideas by the manner in which merchants transact business. Another minister who was present made some remarks to him afterwards. He objected to this illustration particularly, because, he said, it was too familiar, and was "letting down the dignity of the pulpit." He said all illustrations in preaching should be drawn from ancient history, or from an elevated source, that would keep up the dignity of the pulpit. Dignity indeed! Just the language of the devil. He rejoices in it. Why, the object of an illustration is to make people see the truth, not to bolster up pulpit dignity.

A minister whose heart is in the work does not use an illustration in order to make people stare, but to make them see the truth. If he brought forward his illustrations from ancient history, it could not make the people see; it would not illustrate anything. The novelty of the thing might awaken their attention, but they would lose the truth itself. For if the illustration itself be a novelty, the attention will be directed to this fact as a matter of history, and the truth itself, which it was designed to illustrate, will be lost sight of. The illustration should, if possible, be a matter of common occurrence, and the more common the occurrence the more sure it will be not to fix attention upon itself, but to serve as a medium through which the truth is conveyed.

The Savior always illustrated His instructions by things that were taking place among the people to whom He preached, and with which their minds were familiar. He descended often very far below what is now supposed to be essential to support the dignity of the pulpit. He talked about hens and chickens, and children in marketplaces, and sheep and lambs, and shepherds and farmers, and husbandmen and merchants. And when He talked about kings (as in the marriage of the King’s son, and the nobleman that went into a far country to receive a Kingdom), He made reference to historical facts that were well known among the people at the time. The illustration should always be drawn from things so common that the illustration itself will not attract attention away from the subject, but that people may see, through it, the truth illustrated.

(e) Preaching should be repetitious. If a minister wishes to preach with effect, he must not be afraid of repeating whatever he may see is not perfectly understood by his hearers. Here is the evil of using a written sermon. The preacher preaches right along just as he has written it down, and cannot observe whether he is understood or not. If he should interrupt his reading, and attempt to catch the countenances of his audience, and to explain where he sees they do not understand, he grows confused. If a minister has his eyes on the people to whom he is preaching, he can commonly tell by their looks whether they understand him. If he sees that they do not understand any particular point, let him stop and illustrate it; and if they do not understand one illustration, let him give another, and make it clear to their minds before he goes on. But those who write their

sermons go right on, in a regular consecutive train, just as in an essay or a book, failing, through want of repetition, to make the audience fully comprehend their points.

During a conversation with one of the first advocates in America, he expressed the view that when preachers experience difficulty in making themselves understood, it arises from the fact that they do not repeat their points sufficiently. Said he: "In addressing a jury, I always expect that whatever I wish to impress upon their minds, I shall have to repeat at least twice; and often I repeat it three or four times, and even as many, times as there are jurymen before me. Otherwise, I do not carry their minds with me, so that they can feel the force of what comes afterwards." If a jury, under oath, called to decide on the common affairs of this world, cannot apprehend an argument, unless there is so much repetition, how is it to be expected that men will understand the preaching of the Gospel without it? In like manner the minister ought to turn an important thought over and over before his audience, till even the children understand it perfectly. Do not say that so much repetition will create disgust in cultivated minds. It will not disgust. This is not what disgusts thinking men. They are not weary of the efforts a minister makes to be understood. The fact is, the more simple a minister's illustrations are, and the more plain he makes everything, the more men of mind are interested. I know, in fact, that men of the first minds often get ideas they never had before, from illustrations which were designed to bring the Gospel down to the comprehension of a child. Such men are commonly so occupied with the affairs of this world, that they do not think much on the subject of religion, and they therefore need the plainest preaching, and they will like it.

(f) A minister should always feel deeply upon his subject, and then he will suit the action to the word, and the word to the action, so as to make the full impression which the truth is calculated to make. He should be in solemn earnest in what he says. I heard a most judicious criticism on this subject: "How important it is that a minister should feel what he says.

Then his actions will, of course, correspond to his words. If he undertakes to make gestures, his arms may go like a windmill, and yet make no impression." It is said to require the utmost stretch of art on the stage for the actors to make their hearers feel. The design of elocution is to teach this skill. But if a man feels his subject fully, he will naturally do it. He will naturally do the very thing that elocution laboriously teaches. See any common man in the streets who is earnest in talking; see with what force he gestures. See a woman or a child in earnest - how natural! To gesture with their hands is as natural as it is to move their tongue and lips: it is the perfection of eloquence.

No wonder that a great deal of preaching produces so little effect. Gestures are of more importance than is generally supposed. Mere words will never express the full meaning of the Gospel. The manner of saying it is almost everything. I once heard a remark made, respecting a young minister's preaching, which was instructive. (He was uneducated, in the common sense of the term, but well educated to win souls.) It was said of him: "The manner in which he comes in, and sits in the pulpit, and rises to speak, is a sermon of itself. It shows that he has something to say that is important and solemn." That man's manner of saying some things I have known to move the feelings of a whole congregation, when the same things said in a prosy way would have produced no effect at all.

A fact which was stated upon this subject by one of the most distinguished professors of elocution in the United States, ought to impress ministers. (The man was an unbeliever.) He said: "I have

been fourteen years employed in teaching elocution to ministers, and I know they do not believe the Christian religion. Whether the Bible is true or not, I know these ministers do not believe it. I can demonstrate that they do not. The perfection of my art is to teach them to speak naturally on this subject. I go to their studies, and converse with them, and they speak eloquently. I say to them: 'Gentlemen, if you will preach naturally, just as you speak on any other subject in which you are interested, you do not need to be taught. That is just what I am trying to teach you. I hear you talk on other subjects with admirable force and eloquence. Then I see you go into the pulpit, and you speak and act as if you do not believe what you are saying.' I have told them, again and again, to talk in the pulpit as they naturally talk to me. Yet I cannot make them do it; and so I know they do not believe the Christian religion."

I have mentioned this to show how universal it is, that men will gesture right, if they feel right. The only thing in the way of ministers being natural speakers is, that they do not DEEPLY FEEL. How can they be natural in elocution, when they do not feel?

(g) A minister should aim to convert his congregation. But, you will ask: Does not all preaching aim at this? No. A minister always has some aim in preaching, but most sermons were never aimed at converting sinners. And if sinners were converted under them, the preacher himself would be amazed. I once heard a story bearing on this point. There were two young ministers who had entered the ministry at the same time. One of them had great success in converting sinners; the other, none. The latter inquired of the other, one day, what was the reason of this difference. "Why," replied his friend, "the reason is, that I aim at a different end from you in preaching. My object is to convert sinners, but you aim at no such thing; and then you put it down to the Sovereignty of God that you do not produce the same effect, when you never aim at it. Take one of my sermons and preach it, and see what the effect will be." The man did so, and preached the sermon, and it did produce effect. He was frightened when sinners began to weep; and when one came to him after meeting to ask what he should do, the minister apologized to him, and said: "I did not aim to wound you, I am sorry if I have hurt your feelings!" Oh, horrible!

(h) A minister must anticipate the objections of sinners, and answer them.

What does the lawyer do, when pleading before a jury? (Oh, how differently from human causes is the cause of Jesus Christ pleaded!) It was remarked by a lawyer, that the cause of Jesus Christ had the fewest able advocates of any cause in the world. And I partly believe it. Does not a lawyer go along in his argument in a regular train, explaining anything that is obscure, and anticipating the arguments of his antagonist? If he did not, he would lose his case, to a certainty. But ministers often leave one difficulty and another untouched. Sinners who hear them feel a difficulty, and never know how to remove it, and perhaps the minister never takes the trouble to know that such a difficulty exists. Yet he wonders why his congregation is not converted, and why there is no revival. How can he wonder at it, when he has never hunted up the difficulties and objections that sinners feel, and removed them?

(i) If a minister means to preach the Gospel with effect, he must be sure not to be monotonous. If he preaches in a monotonous way, he will preach the people to sleep. Any monotonous sound, great or small, if continued, disposes people to sleep. The falls of Niagara, the roaring of the ocean, or any sound ever so great or small, has this effect naturally on the nervous system. And a minister cannot be monotonous in preaching, if he feels what he says.

(j) A minister should address the feelings enough to secure attention, and then deal with the conscience, and probe to the quick. Appeals to the feelings alone will never convert sinners. If the preacher deals too much in these, he may get up an excitement, and have wave after wave of feeling flow over the congregation, and people may be carried away as with a flood, and rest in false hopes. The only way to secure sound conversions, is to deal faithfully with the conscience. If attention flags at any time, appeal to the feelings again, and rouse it up; but do your work with conscience.

(k) If he can, it is desirable that a minister should learn the effect of one sermon, before he preaches another. What would be thought of the physician who should give medicine to his patient, and then give it again and again, without trying to learn the effect of the first? A minister never will be able to deal with sinners as he ought, till he can find out whether his instruction has been received and understood, and whether the difficulties in sinners' minds are cleared away, and their path open to the Savior, so that they need not go on stumbling and stumbling till their souls are lost.

REMARKS.

1. We see why so few of the leading minds in many communities are converted.

Until the late revivals, professional men were rarely reached by preaching, and they were almost all infidels at heart. People almost understood the Bible to warrant the idea that they could not be converted. The reason is obvious. The Gospel had not been commended to the conscience of such men. Ministers had not reasoned so as to make that class of mind see the truth of the Gospel, and feel its power; consequently such persons had come to regard religion as something unworthy of their notice.

Of late years, however, the case is altered, and in some places there have been more of this class of persons converted, in proportion to their numbers, than of any other. That is because they were made to understand the claims of the Gospel. The preacher grappled with their minds, and showed them the reasonableness of religion. And when this is done, it is found that this class of mind is more easily converted than any other.

They have so much better capacity to receive an argument, and are so much more in the habit of yielding to the force of reason, that as soon as the Gospel gets a fair hold of their minds, it breaks them right down, and melts them down at the feet of Christ.

2. Before the Gospel takes general effect, we must have a class of extempore preachers, for the following reasons:

(a) No set of men can stand the labor of writing sermons and doing all the preaching which will be requisite.

(b) Written sermons are not calculated to produce the requisite effect. Such preaching does not present the truth in right shape.

It is impossible for a man who writes his sermons to arrange his matter, and turn and choose his thoughts, so as to produce the same effect as when he addresses the people directly, and makes them feel that he means them. Writing sermons had its origin in times of political difficulty. The

practice was unknown in the apostles' days. No doubt written sermons have done a great deal of good, but they can never give to the Gospel its great power.

Perhaps many ministers have been so long trained in the use of notes, that they had better not throw them away. Perhaps they would make bad work without them. The difficulty would not be for want of mind, but from wrong training. The bad habit is begun with the schoolboy, who is called to "speak his piece." Instead of being set to express his own thoughts and feelings in his own language, and in his own natural manner, such as Nature herself prompts, he is made to commit another person's writing to memory, and then he mouths it out in a stiff and formal way. And so when he goes to college, and to the seminary, instead of being trained to extempore speaking, he is set to write his piece, and commit it to memory.

I would pursue the opposite course from the beginning. I would give him a subject, and let him first think, and then speak his thoughts. Perhaps he will make mistakes. Very well, that is to be expected in a beginner. But he will learn. Suppose he is not eloquent, at first. Very well, he can improve.

And he is in the very way to improve. This kind of training alone will raise up a class of ministers who can convert the world.

But it is objected to extemporaneous preaching, that if ministers do not write, they will not think. This objection will have weight with those men whose habit has always been to write down their thoughts. But to a man of different habit, it will have no weight at all.

The mechanical labor of writing is really a hindrance to close and rapid thought. It is true that some extempore preachers have not been men of thought. But so it is true that many men who write sermons are not men of thought. A man whose habits have always been such, that he has thought only when he has put his mind on the end of his pen, will, of course, if he lays aside his pen, at first find it difficult to think; and if he attempts to preach without writing, will, until his habits are thoroughly changed, find it difficult to throw into his sermons the same amount of thought, as if he conformed to his old habit of writing. But it should be remembered that this is only on account of his having been trained to write, and having always habituated himself to it. It is the training and habit that render it so difficult for him to think without writing. Will anybody pretend to say that lawyers are not men of thought? That their arguments before a court and jury are not profound and well digested? And yet every one knows that they do not write their speeches.

I have heard much of this objection to extempore preaching ever since I entered the ministry. It was often said to me then, in answer to my views of extempore preaching, that ministers who preached extemporaneously would not instruct the Churches, that there would be a great deal of sameness in their preaching, and they would soon become insipid and repetitious for want of thought. But every year's experience has ripened the conviction on my mind, that the reverse of this objection is true. The man who writes least, may, if he pleases, think most, and will say what he does think in a manner that will be better understood than if it were written; and that, just in the proportion that he lays aside the labor of writing, his body will be left free to exercise, and his mind to vigorous and consecutive thought.

The great reason why it is supposed that extempore preachers more frequently repeat the same thoughts in their preaching, is because what they say is, in a general way, more perfectly

remembered by the congregation, than if it had been read. I have often known preachers who could repeat their written sermons once in a few months, without the fact being recognized by the congregation. But the manner in which extempore sermons are generally delivered is so much more impressive, that the thoughts cannot in general be soon repeated without being remembered.

We shall never have a set of men in our halls of legislation, in our courts of justice, and in our pulpits, who are powerful and overwhelming speakers, and can carry the world before them, till our system of education teaches them to think, closely, rapidly, consecutively, and till all their habits of speaking in the schools are extemporaneous. The very style of communicating thought, in what is commonly called a good style of writing, is not calculated to leave a deep impression. It is not laconic, direct, pertinent. It is not the language of nature.

In delivering a sermon in this essay style of writing, it is impossible that nearly all the fire of meaning, and power of gesture, and looks, and attitude, and emphasis, should not be lost. We can never have the full meaning of the Gospel, till we throw away our written sermons.

3. A minister’s course of study and training for his work should be exclusively theological.

I mean just as I say. I am not now going to discuss the question whether all education ought not to be theological. But I say education for the ministry should be exclusively so. But you will ask: Should not a minister understand science? I would answer: Yes; the more the better. I would that ministers might understand all science. But it should all be in connection with theology. Studying science is studying the works of God. And studying theology is studying God.

Let a scholar be asked, for instance, this question: "Is there a God?" To answer it, let him ransack the universe, let him go out into every department of science to find the proofs of design, and in this way to learn the existence of God. Let him ransack creation to see whether there is such a unity of design as evinces that there is one God. In like manner, let him inquire concerning the attributes of God, and His character. He will learn science here, but will learn it as a part of theology. Let him search every field of knowledge to bring forward his proofs. What was the design of this plan? What was the end of that arrangement? See whether everything you find in the universe is not calculated to produce happiness, unless perverted.

Would the student’s heart get hard and cold in study, as cold and hard as college walls, if science were pursued in this way? Every lesson brings him right up before God, and is, in fact, communion with God, which warms his heart, and makes him more pious, more solemn, more holy. The very distinction between classical and theological study is a curse to the Church, and a curse to the world. The student spends four years in college at classical studies, with no God in them; and then three years in the seminary, at theological studies; and what then? Poor young man! Set him to work, and you will find that he is not educated for the ministry at all.

The Church groans under his preaching, because he does not preach with unction, or with power. He has been spoiled in training.

4. We learn what revival preaching is. All ministers should be revival ministers, and all preaching should be revival preaching; that is, it should be calculated to promote holiness. People say: "It is very well to have some men in the Church, who are revival preachers, and who can go about and

promote revivals; but then you must have others to indoctrinate the Church." Strange! Do they know that a revival indoctrinates the Church faster than anything else? And a minister will never produce a revival if he does not indoctrinate his hearers. The preaching I have described is full of doctrine, but it is doctrine to be practiced. And that is revival preaching.

5. There are two objections sometimes brought against the kind of preaching which I have recommended.

(a) That it is letting down the dignity of the pulpit to preach in this colloquial, lawyer-like style. They are shocked at it. But it is only on account of its novelty, and not for any impropriety there is in the thing itself. I heard a remark made by a leading layman in regard to the preaching of a certain minister. He said it was the first preaching he had ever heard, that he understood, and the minister was the first he had heard who spoke as if he believed his own doctrine, or meant what he said. The layman further said that when first he heard the minister preach - as if he really meant what he said - he came to the conclusion that such a preacher must be crazy! But, eventually, he was made to see that it was all true, and then he submitted to the truth, as the power of God for the salvation of his soul.

What is the dignity of the pulpit? What an idea, to see a minister go into the pulpit to sustain its dignity! Alas, alas! During my foreign tour, I heard an English missionary preach exactly in that way. I believe he was a good man, and out of the pulpit he would talk like a man who meant what he said. But no sooner was he in the pulpit than he appeared like a perfect automaton - swelling, mouthing, and singing, enough to put all the people to sleep. And the difficulty seemed to be that he wanted to maintain the dignity of the pulpit.

(b) It is objected that this preaching is theatrical. The Bishop of London once asked Garrick, the celebrated actor, why it was that actors, in representing a mere fiction, should move an assembly, even to tears, while ministers, in representing the most solemn realities, could scarcely obtain a hearing. The philosophical Garrick well replied: "It is because we represent fiction as reality, and you represent reality as a fiction." This is telling the whole story. Now, what is the design of the actor in a theatrical representation? It is so to throw himself into the spirit and meaning of the writer, as to adopt his sentiments, and make them his own: to feel them, embody them, throw them out upon the audience as a living reality.

Now, what is the objection to all this in preaching? The actor suits the action to the word, and the word to the action. His looks, his hands, his attitudes, and everything, are designed to express the full meaning of the writer.

Now, this should be the aim of the preacher. And if by "theatrical" be meant the strongest possible representation of the sentiments expressed, then the more theatrical the sermon is, the better. And if ministers are too stiff, and the people too fastidious, to learn even from an actor, or from the stage, the best method of swaying mind, of enforcing sentiment, and diffusing the warmth of burning thought over a congregation, then they must go on with their prosing, and reading, and sanctimonious starch. But let them remember, that while they are thus turning away and decrying the art of the actor, and attempting to support the "dignity of the pulpit," the theaters can be thronged every night. The common sense of the people will be entertained with that manner of speaking, and sinners will go down to hell.

6. A congregation may learn how to choose a minister. When a vacant Church is looking out for a minister, there are two leading points on which attention is commonly fixed:

1. That he should be popular.

2. That he should be learned. These are very well. But the point that should be the first in their inquiries is: "Is he wise to win souls?" No matter how eloquent a minister is or how learned, no matter how pleasing and how popular is his manners, if it is a matter of fact that sinners are not converted under his preaching, it shows that he has not this wisdom, and your children and neighbors will go down to hell under his preaching.

I am happy to know that many Churches will ask this question about ministers, and if they find that a minister is destitute of this vital quality, they will not have him. And if ministers can be found who are wise to win souls, the Churches will have such ministers. It is in vain to contend against it, or to pretend that they are not well educated, or not learned, or the like. It is in vain for the schools to try to force down the throats of the Churches a race of ministers who are learned in everything but what they most need to know.

It is very difficult to say what needs to be said on this subject, without being in danger of begetting a wrong spirit in the Church towards ministers. Many professors of religion are ready to find fault with ministers when they have no reason; insomuch, that it becomes very difficult to say of ministers what is true, and what needs to be said, without one’s remarks being perverted and abused by this class of professors. I would not, for the world, say anything to injure the influence of a minister of Christ, who is really endeavoring to do good. But, to tell the truth will not injure the influence of those ministers who, by their lives and preaching, give evidence to the Church that their object is to do good, and win souls for Christ. This class of ministers will recognize the truth of all that I have said, or wish to say. They see it all and deplore it. But if there be ministers who are doing no good, who are feeding themselves and not the flock, such ministers deserve no influence. If they are doing no good, it is time for them to betake themselves to some other profession.

They are but leeches on the very vitals of the Church, sucking out its heart’s blood. They are useless, and worse than useless. And the sooner they are laid aside and their places filled with those who will exert themselves for Christ, the better.

7. Finally. It is the duty of the Church to pray for us, ministers. Not one of us is such as he ought to be. Like Paul, we can say: "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2Co 2:16.) But who among us is like Paul? Where will you find such ministers as Paul? They are not here. We have been wrongly educated, all of us. Pray for the schools, and colleges, and seminaries. And pray for young men who are preparing for the ministry.

Pray for ministers, that God would give them this wisdom to win souls.

And pray that God would bestow upon the Church the wisdom and the means to educate a generation of ministers who will go forward and convert the world. The Church must travail in prayer, and groan and agonize for this. This is now the pearl of price to the Church - to have a supply of the right sort of ministers. The coming of the millennium depends on having a different sort of ministers, who are more thoroughly educated for their work. And this we shall have so sure

as the promise of the Lord holds good. Such a ministry as is now in the Church will never convert the world, but the world is to be converted, and therefore God intends to have ministers who will do it. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest" (Luk 10:2).

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