

Christian Affinity

by Charles Finney

Two people cannot walk together unless they are in agreement, and this agreement is determined by their heart state and affections.

Scripture: Amos 3:3, Matthew 5:14

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Spiritual Affections"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of agreement in heart and spirit for true fellowship among believers, using Amos 3:3 to illustrate that two cannot walk together unless they are in harmony. He explains that mere intellectual agreement on doctrines is insufficient; true unity requires shared affections and spiritual warmth. Finney discusses how differing states of heart affect perceptions of preaching and worship, leading to either harmony or discord among Christians and between believers and non-believers. He warns that lukewarmness and carnal affections can hinder spiritual growth and cause division within the church. Ultimately, he calls for a transformation of the heart to foster genuine agreement and fellowship in Christ.

Transcript

Amos iii.3,--"Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

In the holy Scriptures, we often find a negative thrown into the form of an interrogation. The text is an instance of this kind; so that we are to understand the prophet as affirming that two cannot walk together except they be agreed.

For two to be agreed, implies something more than to be agreed in theory, or in understanding; for we often see persons who agree in theory, but who differ vastly in feeling and practice. Their understandings may embrace the same truths, while their hearts and practice will be very differently affected by them. Saints and sinners often embrace in theory the same religious creed, while it is plain that they differ widely in feeling and practice.

We have reason to believe that holy angels and devils apprehend and embrace intellectually the same truths, and yet how very differently are they affected by them.

These different effects, produced in different minds by the same truths, are owing to the different state of the heart or affections of the different individuals. Or, in other words, the difference in the effect consists in

the different manner in which the person receives these truths, or feels and acts in view of them. It is to be observed, also, that the same things and truths will affect the same mind very differently at different times. This, too, is owing to the different state of the affections at these times. Or rather, this difference consists in the different manner in which the mind acts at these times. All pleasure and pain--all happiness and misery--all sin and holiness--have their seat in, and belong to, the heart or affections. All the satisfaction or dissatisfaction, pain or pleasure, that we feel in view of any truth or thing presented to our minds, depends entirely upon the state of our affections at the time, and consists in these affections. If it fall in with, and excite, and feed pleasurable affections, we are pleased of course; for in these pleasurable affections our pleasure or happiness consists. The higher, therefore, these affections are elevated by the presentation of any thing or any truth to our minds, the greater our pleasure is. But if the thing or truth do not fall in with our affections, it cannot please us; if it be aside from our present state of feeling, and we refuse to change the course of our feelings, we shall either view it with indifference, our affections being otherwise engaged, or if it press upon us, we shall turn from and resist it. If it be not only aside from the subject that now engages our affections, but opposed to it, we shall and must (our affections remaining the same) resist and oppose it.

We not only feel uninterested or displeased and disgusted when a subject different from that which at present engages our affections is introduced, and crowded upon us, but if any thing even upon the same subject that is far above or below our tone of feeling is presented, and if our affections remain the same, and we refuse to be enlisted and brought to that point, we must feel uninterested, and perhaps grieved and offended. If the subject be exhibited in a light that is below our present tone of feeling, we cannot be interested until it come up to our feelings; and if the subject in this cooling, and to us degraded point of view, is held up before our mind, and we struggle to maintain these high affections, we feel displeased because our affections are not fed but opposed. If the subject be presented in a manner that strikes far above our tone of feeling, and our affections grovel and refuse to arise, it does not fall in with and feed our affections, therefore we cannot be interested; it is enthusiasm to us, we are displeased with the warmth in which we do not choose to participate, and the farther it is above our temperature the more we are disgusted.

These are truths to which the experience of every man will testify, as they hold good upon every subject, and under all circumstances, and are founded upon principles incorporated with the very nature of man. Present to the ardent politician his favourite subject in his favourite light, and when it has engaged his affections, touch it with the fire of eloquence, cause it to burn and blaze before his mind, and you delight him greatly. But change your style and tone--let down your fire and feeling--turn the subject over--present it in a drier light--he at once loses nearly all his interest, and becomes uneasy at the descent. Now change the subject--introduce death and solemn judgment--he is shocked and stunned; press him with them, he is disgusted and offended.

Now, this loss of interest in his favourite subject is the natural consequence of taking away from before the mind that burning view of it that poured fire through his affections; this disgust that he feels at the change of the subject, is the natural consequence of presenting something that was at the time directly opposed to the state of his feelings. Unless he chooses to turn his mind as you change the subject, he cannot but be displeased.

A refined musician is listening almost in rapture to the skilful execution of a fine piece of harmony. Throw in discords upon him; he is in pain in a moment. Increase and prolong the dissonance, and he leaves the room in disgust. You are fond of music; but you are at present melancholy--you are in great affliction--you

are inclined to weep--the plaintive tones of an Æolian harp light softly upon your ear, and melt around your heart--your tears flow fast--but now the din of trumpets, drums, and cymbals, and the piercing fife in mirthful quicksteps breaks upon your ear, and drowns the soft breathings of the harp--you feel distressed--you turn away and stop your ears. The plaintive harp touched you in a tender point, it fell in with your feelings; therefore you were gratified. The martial music opposed your state of feeling; you were too melancholy to have your affections elevated and enlivened by it: it therefore necessarily distressed you.

Your heart is glowing with religious feelings--you are not only averse to the introduction of any other subject at that time, but are uninterested with any thing upon the same subject that is far below the tone of your affections. Suppose you hear a cold man preach or pray; while he remains cold, and you are warm with feeling, you are not interested, for your affections are not fed and cherished unless he comes up to your tone; if this does not happen you are distressed, and perhaps disgusted with his coldness. This is a thing of course. Suppose, like Paul, "you have great heaviness and continual sorrow in your heart" for dying sinners; that "the Spirit helpeth your infirmities, making intercessions for you, according to the will of God, with groanings that cannot be uttered:" in this state of mind, you hear a person pray who does not mention sinners--you hear a minister preach who says but little to them, and that in a heartless, unmeaning manner; you are not interested--you cannot be, feeling as you do, but you are grieved and distressed. Suppose you are lukewarm, and carnal and earthly in your affections; you hear one exhort, or pray, or preach, who is highly spiritual and fervent and affectionate; if you cling to your sins, and your affections will not rise; if, through prejudice, or pride, or the earthly and sensual state of your affections, you refuse to kindle and to grasp the subject, although you admit every word he says, yet you are not pleased. He is above your temperature; you are annoyed with the manner and fire and spirit of the man. The higher he rises, if your affections grovel, the farther apart you are, and the more you are displeased. While your heart is wrong the nearer right he is, the more he burns upon you; if your heart will not enkindle, the more you are disgusted.

Now, in both these cases, they whose affections stand at or near the same point with him who speaks or prays, will not feel disturbed, but pleased. Those that are lukewarm will listen to the dull man, and say, "'T is pretty well." Their pleasure will be small, because their affections are low; but, upon the whole, they are pleased. Those who have no affections at the time, will, of course, not feel at all. All who have much feeling, will listen with grief and pain. These would listen to the ardent man with great interest. Let him glow and blaze, and they are in a rapture. But the carnal and cold-hearted, while they refuse to rise, are necessarily disturbed and offended with his fire.

From these remarks we may learn,

First, why persons differing in theory upon doctrinal points in religion, and belonging to different denominations, will often, for a time, walk together in great harmony and affection. It is because they feel deeply, and feel alike. Their differences are in a great measure lost or forgotten, while they fall in with each other's state of feeling; they will walk together while in heart they are agreed.

Again--We see why young converts love to associate with each other, and with those other older saints who have most religious feeling; these walk together because they feel alike.

Again--We see why lukewarm professors and impenitent sinners have the same difficulties with means in revivals of religion. We often hear them complain of the manner of preaching and praying. Their objections

are the same, they find fault with the same things, and use the same arguments in support of their objections. The reason is, that at that time, their affections are nearly the same; it is the fire and the spirit that disturbs their frosty hearts. For the time being they walk together, for in feeling they are agreed.

Again--We see why ministers and Christians visiting revivals, often, at first, raise objections to the means used, and cavil, and sometimes takes sides with the wicked. The fact is, coming, as they often do, from regions where there are no religious revivals at the time, they frequently feel reprov'd and annoyed by the warmth and spirit which they witness. The praying, preaching, and conversation, are above their present temperature. Sometimes, prejudice on account of its being amongst a different denomination from them, or prejudice against the preacher or people, or perhaps pride, or envy, or worldliness, or something of the kind, chains down their affections that they do not enter into the spirit of the work. Now, while their hearts remain wrong, they will, of course, cavil; and the nearer right any thing is, the more spiritual and holy, so much the more it must displease them, while their affections grovel. *([footnote]We do not mean to justify any thing that is wrong and unscriptural in the use of means to promote revivals of religion. Nor do we pretend that every thing is right, that may, and often does give offence. We know that many things may exist, and while human nature remains as it is, will exist in revivals, that are to be lamented, and ought, as carefully as possible, to be corrected. But we do hold it as a certain truth, that while any heart is wrong, any thing that falls in with it, and pleases it, must be wrong also, as certainly as that one false weight can be balanced only by another just as false: and while a heart is in this state, the best things will be the most certain to offend. And if this heart, remaining wrong, could be brought in view of a state of things as perfect as heaven, it would blaspheme, and be filled with the torments of hell. The only remedy is to call upon him to "repent and make to him a new heart;" and when he has done this, right things will please him, and not before.)

Again--We see why ministers and private Christians differ about prudential measures. The man who sees and feels the infinitely solemn things of eternity, will necessarily judge very differently of what is prudent or imprudent, in the use of means, from one whose spiritual eye is almost closed. The man whose heart is breaking for perishing sinners, will, of course, deem it prudent, and right, and necessary, to "use great plainness of speech," and to deal with them in a very earnest and affectionate manner. He would deem a contrary course highly imprudent and dangerous and criminal. While he who feels but little for them, and sees but little of their danger, will satisfy himself with using very different means, or using them in a very different manner, and will, of course, entertain very different notions of what is prudent. Hence we see the same person having very different notions of prudence, and consequently practising very differently, at different times. Indeed, a man's notions of what is prudent; as to means and measures in revivals of religion, will depend, and, in a great measure, ought to depend, on the state of his own affections, and the state of feeling with which he is surrounded. For, what would be prudent under some circumstances, would be highly imprudent in others. What would be prudent in one man, might be highly imprudent in another. What would be prudent for a man in a certain state of his affections, and under certain circumstances, would be the height of imprudence, in the same person, in a different state of feeling, and under other circumstances. It is, in most cases, extremely difficult to form, and often very wrong publicly to express, an opinion condemning a measure as imprudent, (which is not condemned by the word of God,) without being in a situation to enter into the feelings and circumstances of the individual and people at the time the measure was adopted. If Christians and ministers would keep these things in mind, a great many uncharitable and censorious speeches would be avoided, and much injury to the cause of truth and righteousness would be prevented.

Again--We see why lukewarm Christians and sinners are not disturbed by dull preaching or praying. It does not take hold on their feelings at all, and therefore does not distress nor offend them. Hence we see that if, in a revival of religion, when cold and wicked hearts are disturbed with plain and pungent dealing, a dull minister is called upon, and preaches to the people, the wicked and cold-hearted will praise his preaching. This shows why, in seasons of revival, we often hear sinners and lukewarm Christians wish that their minister would preach as he used to; that he would be himself again. The reason of this is plain; he did not use to move them, but now his fire and spirit and pungency annoy them, and disturb their carnal slumbers.

Again--We may here learn how to estimate the opinions of ministers and Christians, and our own opinions, when our affections are in a bad state. How does such a man approve of what was said or done? What is his opinion as to means and measures? &c. are questions often asked, and answered, and the answer depended upon as high authority, without any regard to the state of that man's affections at the time. Now, in most cases, we do utterly wrong to place much confidence in our own opinions, or in the opinions of others, as to prudential measures, unless we have evidence of the right state of our or their affections; for it is almost certain, that should our affections alter, we should view things in a different light, and consequently change our opinion. Christians would do well to remember and adopt the resolution of President Edwards, "that he would always act as he saw to be most proper when he had the clearest views of the things of religion."

Again--We learn why churches are sometimes convulsed by revivals of religion. In most churches there are probably more or less hypocrites, who, when revivals are in a measure stripped of animal feeling, and become highly spiritual, are disturbed by the fire and spirit of them, and inwardly, and sometimes openly oppose them. But when a part only of the real Christians in a church awake from their slumbers and become very spiritual and heavenly, and the rest remain carnal and earthly in their affections, the church is in danger of being torn in sunder. For as those who are awake become more engaged, more spiritual and active, the others, if they will not awake, will be jealous and offended, and feeling rebuked by the engagedness of others, will cavil, and find themselves the more displeased, as those that are more spiritual rise farther above them. The nearer to a right state of feeling the engaged ones arrive, the farther apart they are; and as they ascend on the scale of holy feeling, if others will not ascend with them, the almost certain consequence will be that these will descend, until they really have no community of feeling, and can no longer walk together, because they are not agreed. This state of feeling in a church, calls for great searchings of heart in all its members, and although greatly to be dreaded and deeply to be lamented, when it exists, is easily accounted for upon these plain principles of our nature, and is what sometimes will happen, in spite of the sagacity of men or angels to prevent it.

Again--We see why ministers are sometimes unsettled by revivals. It will sometimes happen, without any imprudence on the part of the minister, that many of his church and congregation will not enter into the spirit of a revival. If his own affections get enkindled, and he feels very much for his flock and for the honour of his Master, he will most assuredly press them with truth, and annoy them by his spirit, and pungency, and fire, until he offends them. If they feel wrong, the more powerfully and irresistibly he forces truth upon them, so much the more, of course, unless their feelings alter, he will offend them, and in the end, perhaps, find it expedient to leave them. All this may happen, and be as right and necessary in a minister as it was for Paul to leave places and people, when divers were hardened, and contradicted, and blasphemed, and spoke evil of this way before the multitude.

Another case may occur, where the church and people may awake while the shepherd sleeps and will not awake. This will inevitably alienate their affections from him, and destroy their confidence in him. In either of these cases, they may find themselves unable to walk together, because they are not agreed. In the former case, let the minister obey the command of Christ, and "shake off the dust of his feet, for a testimony against them." In the latter, let the church shake off their sleepy minister; they are better without him than with him. "Wo to the shepherds that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye feed not the flock. Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them." Ezek. xxxiv. 2,3,9,10. President Edwards says--

"Though ministers preach never so good doctrine, and be never so painful and laborious in their work, yet if they show to their people that they are not well affected to this work, but are doubtful and suspicious of it, they will be very likely to do their people a great deal more hurt than good. For the very frame of such a great and extraordinary work of God, if their people were suffered to believe it to be his work, and the example of other towns, together with what preaching they might hear occasionally, would be likely to have a much greater influence upon the minds of their people to awaken and animate them in religion, than all other labours with them. Besides, their minister's opinion will not only beget in them a suspicion of the work they hear of abroad, whereby the mighty hand of God that appears in it, loses its influence upon their minds; but it will also tend to create a suspicion of every thing of the like nature that shall appear among themselves, as being something of the same distemper that is become so epidemical in the land. And what is this, in effect, but to create a suspicion of all vital religion, and to put the people upon talking against and discouraging it, wherever it appears, and knocking it on the head as fast as it rises. We, who are ministers, by looking on this work from year to year with a displeased countenance, shall effectually keep the sheep from their pasture, instead of doing the part of the shepherds by feeding them; and our people had a great deal better be without any settled minister at all, at such a day as this.

"We who are in this sacred office had need to take heed what we do, and how we behave ourselves at this time; a less thing in a minister will hinder the work of God, than in others. If we are very silent, or say but little about the work, in our public prayers and preaching, or seem carefully to avoid speaking of it in our conversation, it will be interpreted by our people, that we who are their guides, to whom they are to have their eye for spiritual instruction, are suspicious of it; and this will tend to raise the same suspicions in them; and so the forementioned consequences will follow. And if we really hinder and stand in the way of the work of God, whose business above all others it is to promote it, how can we expect to partake of the glorious benefits of it? And, by keeping others from the benefit, we shall keep them out of heaven; therefore those awful words of Christ to the Jewish teachers, should be considered by us, Matt. xxiii.13. 'Wo unto you, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.' If we keep the sheep from their pasture, how shall we answer it to the great Shepherd, who has bought the flock with his precious blood, and has committed the care of them to us? I would humbly desire of every minister that has thus long remained disaffected to this work, and has had contemptible thoughts of it, to consider whether he has not hitherto been like Michael, without any child, or at least in a great measure barren and unsuccessful in his work: I pray God it may not be a perpetual barrenness, as hers was."

Again--We may see that carnal professors and sinners have no difficulty with animal feeling. It is not uncommon in revivals of religion to hear a great deal of opposition made to what they term animal feeling. That much of this kind of feeling is sometimes excited in revivals of religion is not denied, nor is it strange, nay, it is impossible that real religious affections should be excited to any considerable degree, without exciting the animal sympathies and sensibilities; and to wonder at this, or to object to a revival on this account, is palpably absurd. But, in most cases, it is not the animal feeling that can give offence, for so far as these feelings are concerned, there is a perfect community of feeling between saints and sinners, and carnal and spiritual Christians. Sinners have as much animal feeling as saints: cold professors have as much of the animal as warm and spiritual Christians. So far, then, as animal feeling goes, they can all sympathize, and indeed we often see that they do. Adopt a strain of exhortation or preaching that is calculated to awaken mere sympathy and animal feeling, and you will soon see that there is a perfect community of feeling among cold and warm hearted Christians and sinners; they will all weep and seem to melt, and no one will be offended, and I may add, no one will be convicted or converted. But change your style, and become more spiritual and holy in your matter, and throw yourself out in an ardent and powerful manner, in direct appeal to the conscience and the heart--their tears will soon be dried, the carnal and cold hearted will become uneasy, and soon find themselves offended. So far as animal feeling goes, they walk together, for in this they are agreed; but as soon as feeling becomes spiritual and holy, they can go together no farther; for here they are not, (and while sinners remain impenitent, and cold hearts remain cold,) they cannot be, agreed.

Again--We may see why impenitent sinners cannot like pure revivals of religion. It is because God is in them. They hate God, and this is the reason why God commands them to make to themselves a new heart. This is the reason, and the only reason, why sinners need a new heart. Now, while they are under the influence of "a carnal mind, which is enmity against God," they do, and must, self-evidently, hate every thing like God, precisely in proportion as they see it to bear his image. Hence we see, that the more a revival is stripped of animal feeling and of every thing wrong, the more it will necessarily offend wrong hearts. The more of God, and the less of human imperfection, there is to be seen in them, the more they will and must excite the enmity of carnal hearts.

Again. We learn how to estimate apparent revivals where there is no opposition from the wicked. If persons under the dominion of a carnal mind do not oppose, it must be owing to one of three causes. 1st. Either they are so convicted that they dare not openly oppose; (and even then they are opposed in heart;) or, 2dly, there is nothing of the Holy Spirit in them; or 3dly, which often happens, from an injudicious application of means to the sympathies of the multitude, the operations of the Holy Spirit are kept out of the sinner's view and covered up in the rubbish of animal feeling. Any thing that keeps out of the sinner's view the work of the Holy Spirit, tends to prevent opposition. And every thing that exposes to the sinner's view the hand of God, will certainly excite the opposition of his unregenerate heart. That excitement, therefore, which does not call out the opposition of the wicked and wrong hearted, is either not a revival of religion at all, or it is so conducted that sinners do not see the finger of God in it.

Hence we see, that the more pure and holy the means are that are used to promote a revival of religion, the more they are stripped of human infirmity and sympathy, and the more like God they are, so much the more, of necessity, will they excite the opposition of all wrong hearts. For, while a man's heart is wrong upon any subject, it is self-evident that he cannot heartily approve of what is right upon that subject, for this would involve a contradiction. It would be the same as to say that he could feel both right and wrong upon the same subject at the same time.

Hence it appears, that other things being equal, those means, and that preaching, both as to matter and manner, which call forth most of the native enmity of the heart, and that are most directly over against wrong hearts, are nearest right. ^{*(footnote]}Let it not be thought that we advocate or recommend preaching, or using other means, with design to give offence. Nor that we suppose that the gospel cannot be preached, and that means cannot be used in a wrong spirit, and in a manner that is highly objectionable, and may justly give offence. All such things are to be condemned. But still we do insist that holy things are offensive to unholy hearts, and while hearts remain unholy, they cannot be pleased but with that which is unholy like themselves. The understanding may approve, the conscience may approve, but the heart will not, and, remaining unholy, cannot approve of that which is holy. If, therefore, a sinner who is under the dominion of a "carnal mind," which is "enmity against God," is pleased with preaching, it must be either because the character of God is not faithfully exhibited, or the sinner is prevented from apprehending it in its true light, by inattention, or by being so taken up with the style and manner as to overlook the offensiveness of the matter. If, therefore, the matter of preaching is right, and the sinner is pleased, there is something defective in the manner; either a want of earnestness, or holy unction, or something else, prevents the sinner from seeing, what preaching ought to show him, that he hates God and his truth).

Hence, we see the folly of those who are labouring to please persons whose affections are in a wrong state upon religious subjects. They cannot be pleased with any thing right and holy while their hearts are in this wrong state, for this we have just seen would involve a contradiction.

This shows why so much wrong feeling is often stirred up in revivals of religion.

It is the natural effect of pure revivals to stir up wrong feeling in wrong hearts. Revivals of religion on earth, stir up wrong feeling in hell; they will disturb the same spirit, and stir up the same feelings, whenever they come in contact with rebellious hearts, whether in the church or out of it. Wherever the Holy Spirit comes, or is seen to operate, the opposite spirit is disturbed of course. A great degree of right and holy feeling among saints, will naturally stir up a great degree of unholy and wicked feeling in all those hearts that are determinately wrong. The more right and holy feeling there is, the more wrong and unholy feeling there will be, of course, unless sinners and carnal professors bow and submit. They cannot walk together, because they are not agreed; and the more holy and heavenly the saints become in their affections and conduct, the farther apart they will be, until the light of eternity will set them in feeling and affections, as far asunder as heaven and hell.

This shows that the difference between heaven and hell, as it regards moral character, and happiness and misery, consists in the different state of the hearts or affections of their respective inhabitants.

This demonstrates, beyond all contradiction, that sinners cannot be saved unless they are born again. In other words, it is plainly impossible, in the nature of things, that sinners should walk and be happy with saints and holy angels, without an entire change in their affections. Sinners cannot walk with the saints here. As soon as the saints cease to walk "after the course of this world," sinners think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot, "speaking evil of them." As soon as Christians awake and become spiritual and active, holy, and heavenly, and break off from their vain and wicked associations with the world, sinners are uniformly distressed and offended. They try to imagine that it is something wrong in the saints, and in revivals, that offends them. But the truth is, it is the little that is right in the saints, and that in which there is the most of God in revivals, that offends them most. And were the saints as holy as angels are, or as holy as they will be in heaven, sinners must of course be so much the farther

from having any community of feeling with them; and as saints rise in holiness, and sinners sink in sin, they will go farther and farther apart forever and ever.

I remark, lastly, that this shows why the lives and preaching of the prophets of Christ, and his apostles, and the revivals of the early ages of the church, met with so much more violent opposition from carnal professors of religion, and from ungodly sinners, than is offered to preachers and revival in these days.

It is not to be denied, that the saints in those days "had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

It is not and cannot be denied, that the preaching of the prophets, of Christ and his apostles, and of primitive ministers, was opposed with great bitterness by many professed saints, and by multitudes of ungodly sinners, more than that of any preacher of the present day. Nor is it to be concealed, that professors of religion were often leaders in this opposition--that they stirred up the Romans to crucify Jesus, and afterwards to persecute and destroy his saints, and crucify his apostles. That even the religious teachers, and learned doctors of the law, endeavoured to prejudice the multitude against the Saviour, and to prevent their listening to his discourses; "He hath a devil and is mad," said they, "why hear ye him?" They led the way in opposing the apostles in the revivals in which they were engaged. We must admit, too, that those revivals made a great deal of noise in the world, insomuch, that the apostles were accused of "turning the world upside down;" and that sinners were often greatly hardened by the preaching of Christ and his apostles; "were filled with great wrath," and opposed with such bitterness, that Christ told his apostles to "let them alone." In some places where the apostles preached, "divers were" so "hardened," that they "contradicted and blasphemed, and spake evil of this way," insomuch that the apostles were forced to leave, and go to other places, and sometimes to leave under very humiliating circumstances, but just escaping with their lives. Now these are facts that we need not blush to meet, as they are easily accounted for, upon the principle contained in the text, and illustrated in this discourse. All these things afford no evidence that the prophets, and Christ and his apostles, were imprudent and unholy men; that their preaching was too overbearing and severe; or that there was something wrong in the management of revivals in those days. The fact is, that the prophets were so much more holy in their lives, and so much bolder, and more faithful in delivering their messages; that Christ was so much more searching, and plain, and pungent, and personal in his preaching, and so entirely "separate from sinners" in his life; the apostles were so pungent and plain in their dealing with sinners and professed saints, and so self-denying and holy in their lives, that carnal professors and ungodly sinners could not walk with them. The means that were then used to promote revivals were more holy and free from alloy than they now are. There was less of mere sympathy, and of that hypocritical suavity of manner, and of those embellishments of language, that are calculated and designed to court the applause of the ungodly. "Renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully," they preached, "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom," but "with great plainness of speech," so that the ungodly, in the church and out of it, were filled with wrath.

Stephen was so holy and searching in his address, that the elders of Israel "gnashed upon him with their teeth." But this is no evidence that he was imprudent. The fact that the revivals of the present day are much more silent and gradual in their progress, than they were on the day of Pentecost, and at many other times and places, and create much less noise and opposition among cold professors and ungodly sinners, does not prove that the theory of revivals is better understood now than it was then, nor that those

ministers and Christians who are engaged in these revivals are more prudent than the apostles and primitive Christians; and to suppose this, would evince great spiritual pride in us. Nor are we to say that the human heart is changed, or that the character of God is become less offensive "to the carnal mind." No! the fact is, the prophets and Christ and his apostles and the primitive saints, were more holy, more bold and active, more plain and pungent in their preaching, less conformed to this crazy world; in one word, they were more prudent and more like heaven than we are; these are the reasons why they were more hated than we are, why their preaching and praying gave so much more offence than ours. Revivals, in their days, were more free from carnal policy, and that management that tends to keep out of the sinner's views the naked hand of God: these are the reasons why they made so much more noise than the revivals that we witness in these days, and stirred up so much of earth and hell to oppose them, that they convulsed and turned the world upside down. It was known then, that "men could not serve God and mammon." It was seen to be true, that "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." It was understood then, that if "ministers pleased men, they were not the servants of Christ." The church and world could not walk together, for then they were not agreed. Let us not be puffed up, and imagine that we are prudent and wise, and have learned how to manage carnal professors and sinners, whose "carnal mind is enmity against God," so as not to call forth their opposition to truth and holiness, as Christ and his apostles did. But let us know that if they have less difficulty with us, and with our lives and preaching, than they had with theirs, it is because we are less holy, less heavenly, less like God than they were. If we walk with the lukewarm and ungodly, or they with us, it is because we are agreed. For two cannot walk together except they be agreed.

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