

Christian Perfection (2)

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney emphasizes the importance of receiving Christ in all his relations, including as a king, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in order to achieve Christian perfection and sanctification.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, John 15:5, Philippians 3:12

Topics: "Faith vs. Works", "Sanctification"

Description

In his sermon 'Christian Perfection (2)', Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of seeking sanctification through faith rather than works, arguing that many Christians fail to attain perfection because they rely on their own efforts instead of fully embracing Christ in all His roles. He identifies various misconceptions about sanctification, including the belief that one can prepare themselves for Christ through works or that good deeds can earn God's favor. Finney stresses that true sanctification is attainable in this life and requires a complete reliance on Christ as Savior, King, and source of wisdom. He calls for a deeper understanding of Christ's multifaceted role in the believer's life to overcome sin and achieve holiness.

Transcript

TEXT.--"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."--Matthew v. 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.

To-night 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 for ever 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 to-night, 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 every thing, 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 resolutions 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 for ever 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 any thing 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 every thing, 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 any thing, 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 Saviour. So it is with regard to any other defect; he will never conquer it, until you make him see that the infinite fulness 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; every body 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 any thing 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. Every body 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 fulness.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finner/christian-perfection-2/>

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