

John Campbell

by Charles Finney

The sermon emphasizes the need for revival in the church, which can only be achieved by elevating the standard of holy living and prevailing prayer among Christians.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Holy Living", "Revival"

Description

In his sermon to John Campbell, Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of raising the standard of holy living and fervent prayer among Christians to foster genuine revivals. He argues that without a deep, transformative work within the church, conversions will be superficial and fleeting. Finney warns against the dangers of emotional excitement that lacks true understanding and conviction, advocating instead for a focus on enlightening the conscience and informing the judgment. He believes that when the truth reaches the heart, genuine excitement will naturally follow, leading to lasting spiritual change. Finney's insights call for a deeper commitment to holiness and a more profound engagement with God's truth.

Transcript

To John Campbell

c. April 1850

[Copy in Finney Papers #1458]

Extracts from one or more letters from Finney to Rev. John Campbell, were published in a printed letter entitled Rev. Professor Finney, of Oberlin College, United States, from John Campbell "To the Christian Inhabitants of Finsbury, and of all other Districts of London", dated, 1 May 1850, and printed by William Tyler of London. The date of these extracts must be sometime between 28 March 1850 (the date of Campbell's first letter to Finney), and 1 May 1850 (the date of the leaflet).]

In one of his letters to me, he [Finney] thus expresses himself:

"The thing needed here is to greatly elevate the standard of holy living, and of prevailing prayer among Christians. Unless this can be done, Revivals will be few and far between, as it regards the unconverted, and of an ephemeral character at the best. But let the work deeply search the church—let the truth be unsparingly applied to them, until they are thoroughly broken up in the fountain of their inmost being, and filled with the Holy Spirit, then, and not till then, will the work take on such a type as is needful to beat

down all before it. To convert sinners to a low standard is not what is needed. Christians must go up higher, so that converts shall not be stumbled by them."

...

For some weeks last past, he [Finney] has been with Dr. Redford, in Worcester, by whom I have been favoured with repeated communications, strongly expressive of the great satisfaction he has had both in intercourse and labours of Mr Finney. Mr. James, of Birmingham, bears like testimony. The voice of these two witnesses will suffice at once to prevent the notion arising in any quarter, that Mr. Finney is a mere noisy declaimer. Perhaps no man is less so, or makes a more close appeal to the understanding. His own words, in a letter to myself, will best show this:

"I find that vast misapprehensions prevail on this side of the Atlantic, in regard to the great revivals on the other side. Indeed, I have been astonished to find that many here had failed to gain even a conception of what they were, and supposed they were like the excitement that prevailed in this country under the labours of the Methodist, Mr. Caughey, than which, few things, I am persuaded, are more unlike each other. I fear and dread an unintelligent bluster and excitement. Let burning truth but reach the heart through the conscience, and I fear not any excitement that may result therefrom; but, excite the imagination, and inflame the feelings, without enlightening the conscience and informing the judgment, and the results must be disastrous. This has always been plain to me; and my practice has been uniformly governed by this opinion. I never allow myself to commence with the expectation of immediately bringing the masses into a state of great excitement. If I can but secure a hearing, and prompt attendance, and fixedness of attention, I do not expect truth to fall powerless. I know it will not. Only get the masses interested enough to turn out and hear, and God will surely see that his truth does not return to him void. As light is poured on in a steady increasing blaze, excitement will increase as fast, and be as deep as is desirable."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/john-campbell/>

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