

Letters on Revival--No. 16.

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of special efforts and means to promote revivals in a world filled with public excitement and agitation.

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1, Matthew 9:37

Topics: "Evangelism", "Revival"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the importance of using special means to promote revivals of religion, arguing against the notion that revivals can occur without extra efforts. He emphasizes that while revivals are ultimately the work of God, human efforts are essential to capture the attention of a society that is already in a state of excitement over various issues. Finney warns that neglecting to actively engage in promoting revivals is unphilosophical, especially when the world is agitated by political and moral questions. He calls on ministers and Christians to amplify their efforts and voices to draw people back to God amidst the distractions of the world. The sermon highlights the need for a proactive approach in ministry to effectively lead souls to salvation.

Transcript

TO ALL THE FRIENDS AND ESPECIALLY ALL THE MINISTERS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:

Dear Brethren:

Another thing that has acted very injuriously to the interests of revivals of religion is the false views that have prevailed in relation to the best means of promoting them. And in respect to means, if I have not been mistaken, there is a strong tendency to two opposite and almost equally injurious extremes. On the one hand, many seem to be expecting to promote revivals without the use of any special means whatever. Since revivals are the work of God, they think it enough to follow their ordinary sabbath exercises, with their regular weekly or monthly lectures, occasional prayer-meetings, etc., and leave the event, as they say, with the sovereignty of God, believing these means to be sufficient, or that God can work just as well without any means whatever.

They think it would be equivalent to taking the work out of the hand of God, and attempting to promote revivals in our own strength, to make any other efforts than the ordinary sabbath exercises, to promote the salvation of souls. Now, it appears to me that there is one principle of human nature here overlooked which must be regarded if we would successfully promote the kingdom of God. When any one mind or any

number of minds are excited upon any topic, if you would gain their attention to any other subject, you must use means which are, in their nature, calculated to interest and excite them.

Now the whole nominally christian world are, and have been for the last thirty years, in a state of excitement, tending to a great moral revolution. By moral revolution, I mean, the revolution of opinion, and the consequent revolution of practice. Reform is the order of the day, and many questions of deep interest are arising, one after another, to agitate the public mind, and the providence of God is pressing the whole mass of mind with agitating questions, and producing just about as much excitement as may be healthfully borne.

These questions are political and religious; indeed there is scarcely any subject of deep and fundamental interest to mankind, that has not its advocates, lecturers, and public journals, through which it interests and excites the public mind. This excited state of mind is constantly increasing. Now it is perfectly unphilosophical to expect to so gain upon the attention of mankind, as to promote revivals of religion without making extra and protracted efforts. As the world are using steam-power to promote political agitation and reform, the ministry must "lift up their voices like a trumpet," "cry aloud, and spare not," and must multiply their efforts and their means in proportion to the excited state of the world on their topics, until, by the blessing of God, they gain the attention, and keep it, until the heart is subdued to God.

It may be true that in those places where excitement upon other subjects but little prevails, revivals may be promoted without extra efforts, but if the church is expecting to promote revivals without great, powerful, and protracted efforts, they will find themselves mistaken. The fact that revivals are the work of God, instead of affording a reason for neglecting efforts, is the very reason which renders them indispensable. God does not subvert, but strictly adheres to the laws of mind in building up his kingdom and establishing his government in this world.

For us, therefore, to plod on, and fear to use extra and exciting efforts to promote revivals of religion, while the world is all excitement on other subjects, is unphilosophical and absurd. It is true that great wisdom is needed to guard against indiscretion, and means of an unnecessarily agitating and exciting character, and means that will rather divert attention from the truth, than secure attention to the truth; but means must be used; meetings must be multiplied. Preachers and christians must be themselves excited, and must be able to life their voices above the winds and waves of this world's excitements, until they rivet attention, or they can never sanctify the heart. The erroneous view which stands opposed to this, and which seems to me to be an opposite extreme, I shall consider in a future letter.

Your brother,

C.G. FINNEY

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