

Letters on Revival--No. 18.*

by Charles Finney

To promote revivals of religion, ministers must avoid creating prejudices in the church and preach with candor and charity.

Scripture: Matthew 7:1, James 2:1

Topics: "Prejudice in the Church", "Revival of Religion"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the detrimental effects of prejudice within the church that hinder the revival of religion. He emphasizes that such biases, often fostered by ministers, prevent true communion with God and obstruct the grace necessary for spiritual growth. Finney warns that these prejudices can arise against various subjects, including moral reforms and theological differences, leading to a lack of candidness and charity in judgment. He calls for ministers to avoid inciting prejudices among their congregations to promote genuine revivals of faith. Ultimately, he stresses the importance of thorough and charitable examination in all matters of faith.

Transcript

THE IMPOLICY OF SPASMODIC EFFORTS

[Continued from No. 17--Ed.]

To All The Friends And Especially All The Ministers Of Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Dear Brethren:

Before I proceed farther on the subject of my last letter, I wish to call the attention of the brethren to an evil, which seems to me to have greatly grieved the Spirit of God, and to be at present a very effectual barrier to the promotion of revivals of religion. I have already alluded to it in a former letter, but wish more distinctly to dwell on it here. The evil to which I alluded is this--an amount of prejudice has been excited against revival men and measures, that has greatly grieved the Spirit of God. It does not seem to me to have been sufficiently considered, that a mind under the influence of prejudice cannot have communion with God, and consequently cannot prevail in prayer, cannot appropriate the grace that is essential to our living in such a manner as to honor God. Now it cannot be denied that a course has been taken that has filled the church throughout the length and breadth of the land with a variety of prejudices that are eating out the piety of the churches and preventing the promotion of revivals. Ministers have in many instances,

doubtless without designing such a result, been instrumental in creating prejudices in the minds of their churches, that have shut them out from communion with God. They are in an uncandid state of mind; they are committed and unwilling to hear with both ears and then judge.

These prejudices extend to a great many subjects in some churches. Great prejudices are excited against the cause of abolition, moral reform, revival men and measures, protracted meetings, New and Old School Theology, sanctification, or anti-sanctification. Now it matters little whether the prejudices are in favor of what is really truth or against it. If they be really prejudices, and the mind be committed and in an uncandid state it effectually shuts the soul out from God. Prejudice is pre-judging a question. And pre-judgment is what Christ intended to prohibit and forbid. He did not design to teach that we should have no decided opinion, and form no unwavering judgment in respect to cases, questions, and characters on which we may be called to decide; but that we should not judge without a candid, thorough, and charitable examination in every case.

Now, ministers of a certain combative temperament are, without being aware of it, doing little else than preaching their people into the exercise of a host of prejudices that promote anything but their real piety. I have been shocked oftentimes on witnessing the prejudice evinced by ministers themselves, and by professors of all denominations.

Now, brethren, if we would promote revivals of religion among our people, we must fear to excite prejudices among them on any subject. They are naturally enough prone to prejudices--to rush into one sided judgments without our helping them into this ungodly state of mind by our preaching. If we come out and warn them against this thing, and that thing, and the other thing, denounce anti-slavery, moral reform, and even colonization, or any thing else in a spirit and manner that creates prejudices, we may think ourselves doing God service, and may please ourselves when we behold our people very zealous for what we suppose to be truth; we may form and guard their orthodoxy until they have zeal enough to encompass sea and land to make proselytes to their opinions; and when we have done we shall perceive that they are only making their converts two fold more the children of hell than themselves.

Your brother,

C.G. FINNEY

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