

Letters on Revival--No. 20.

by Charles Finney

Christians should make special efforts during leisure time to promote the glory of God and labor for God's kingdom, but not at the expense of other duties.

Scripture: Colossians 3:23

Topics: "Devotion to God", "Revival"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the objections to protracted meetings, emphasizing that all time belongs to God and should be used for His glory. He argues that while some may view these meetings as a seasonal effort, they are essential for promoting revivals, especially during times when people have more leisure. Finney encourages Christians to remain devoted to God in all aspects of life, asserting that true religion encompasses both work and worship. He highlights the importance of making extraordinary efforts for conversion and sanctification during seasons of less labor. Ultimately, he calls for a balanced approach to revivals, integrating them into the rhythm of everyday life.

Transcript

OBJECTIONS TO PROTRACTED MEETINGS

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

Dear Brethren:

I designed to have prepared a letter for insertion previous to the one which appeared in the last paper, continuing my remarks on the subject of the use of means to promote revivals. I had said that there were two extremes, and that some were expecting to promote revivals only through the influence of protracted meetings and continuous efforts of that kind; while others were opposed to all such efforts. I also animadverted somewhat upon the tendency of certain Christians to compress nearly all their efforts for the promotion of religion into a few days and weeks of the year when they have little else to do, and do little or nothing for those objects at any other season of the year.

After I had finished that letter it occurred to me that it was liable to misapprehension, and as I said, I had designed to prepare the remarks which I now intend to make to follow that letter immediately. But as the one which appeared in your last was previously written, it has appeared without my fulfilling my intention.

The remarks which I now wish to make are summarily these:

1. All our time is God's.
2. All business is to be done for him.
3. Every thing is to be done in its season. The Sabbath has its peculiar duties, and so has the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the winter. We are just as much required to labor six days as we are to rest on the Sabbath. In other words, all our time is to be devoted to God.

Now it often happens that in certain seasons of the year, most men have much more leisure than at other seasons,--that is, God has much less for them to do with the ordinary labors in which he employs them. The farmer and indeed as a general thing all classes have less of the common business of life to transact in the winter than at other seasons of the year. Now it is highly reasonable and proper, and no doubt duty at such seasons to have our time all employed in something that shall promote the glory of God and the good of his kingdom. It is proper to hold more meetings, to labor more in prayer and visitation and in direct efforts for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of Christians at such seasons than at other seasons when our duties to God plainly call us to till the ground, to gather the fruits of the field, or attend to any of the necessary business of life. To do all duties in their season affords no ground for the accusation that our religion is confined to protracted meetings, is a religion of the winter or of leisure days &c. By itself this affords not a particle of evidence of a spasmodical and intermitting religion, any more than a man's going to church on the Sabbath, and working as God commands him to through the week is evidence that his religion on the Sabbath is selfishness. The fact is a man may labor through the week for the same reason that he goes to meeting on the Sabbath--namely, to obey and glorify God. Nay, he must do this or he has no religion at all. He must be just as devout and just as much consecrated to God in his business as he is in going to meeting, or as he ought to be in going to meeting, or he has no religion at all.

So the farmer, merchant, or mechanic may be and is bound to be just as singly devoted to God,--just as pious and holy in the labors of summer as in attending protracted meetings in the winter. The fact is, he is to do all for God, or in reality he does nothing for God. Unless he acts for the same end in the one case as in the other, and unless he acts in both cases with an eye single to the glory of God, he is not a holy man at all.

Now there is no certainty that a church is selfish because its members hold protracted meetings only at those seasons of the year when their duty to God, to their country, and to their families does not call them to other departments of labor. Whenever they can be spared from other departments of God's work, let them lay their hands to this. If they have any leisure time let them then make extraordinary efforts for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of the church. This is reasonable--this is right, and I see not how this can be neglected without sin.

While then it is true and ought to be lamented that there is no doubt much spasmodical religion, or rather much that professes to be religion connected with and sometimes growing out of protracted meetings, yet it is by no means necessarily true that real Christians have turned aside from their duty in holding protracted meetings at some seasons of the year, and at other seasons of the year being very busy in laboring with their hands, tilling their grounds, plying their trades and serving God and their generation in their secular employments.

I wish therefore that it might be distinctly understood that it is very natural that revivals of religion should prevail at certain seasons of the year when the minds of both saints and sinners are less occupied with the necessary business of life. It is very natural and very important that special efforts should be made at such

seasons, and that revivals of religion should be the result of such efforts.

It is therefore entirely out of place for the opposers of revivals and protracted meetings to object to them that they seldom occur except at those seasons of the year when people have comparatively little else to do. This is as might be expected. This is in a great measure as it should be. While therefore I would recommend, as I did in a former letter, that sufficient efforts should be made during all seasons of the year to keep religion alive in the hearts of Christians and to make aggressive movements upon the kingdom of darkness in the conversion of sinners, I would at the same time recommend and beseech my brethren to encourage the churches to make special and extraordinary efforts at every season of the year when time can be spared from other necessary avocations to attend more particularly to the great work of saving souls.

Your Brother,

C.G. FINNEY

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/letters-on-revival-no-20/>

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