

# Mediatorship of Christ

by Charles Finney

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*Christ fulfills the role of mediator between God and men by possessing the necessary qualifications and fulfilling the conditions necessary for reconciliation.*

**Scripture:** John 3:16, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 5:1, Romans 10:9-10, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Ephesians 2:18, Colossians 1:20, 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 9:15

**Topics:** "Reconciliation with God", "Mediatorship of Christ"

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## Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the vital role of Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity, explaining that a mediator reconciles conflicting parties and is essential when a controversy exists. He outlines the qualifications necessary for a mediator, including understanding the controversy, possessing the confidence of both parties, and being willing to fulfill the conditions for reconciliation. Finney applies these principles to Christ, illustrating how His dual nature as both God and man uniquely qualifies Him to mediate between the offended God and sinful humanity. He urges listeners to accept Christ's mediatorial work and fulfill the conditions of repentance and faith for salvation, highlighting the urgency of making a decision regarding their relationship with God.

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## Transcript

TEXT--1 Tim. 2:5: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

In discussing this subject, I shall--

I. SHOW WHAT A MEDIATOR IS.

II. SOME THINGS IMPLIED IN THE EXISTENCE OF THAT OFFICE.

III. WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF MEDIATOR.

IV. ON WHAT CONDITIONS THE END OF THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE CAN IN ANY CASE BE ACCOMPLISHED.

V. APPLY THESE PRINCIPLES TO CHRIST AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN.

I. Show what a mediator is.

1. A mediator is one who undertakes to bring about a reconciliation between contending parties. If there be no controversy, there is no room for a mediator, and no reason for the existence of such an office.

2. A mediator is not an arbitrator. An arbitrator is one to whose judgment both the law and the facts are submitted, for adjudication, in a case of right. A mediator is one who interposes in behalf of the offending party, and undertakes to bring the parties into a state of reconciliation, where the fact, or question of right, is already decided, and the thing to be accomplished is to remove difficulties, fulfill conditions, and effect a reconciliation, upon the acknowledged principles of right, or public justice.

II. Some things implied in the existence of that office.

1. The existence of the mediatorial office implies the existence of two or more parties.

2. That a controversy exists between them.

3. That there is some difficulty in the way of their adjusting their own difficulties in proper person. This difficulty may arise:

(1.) Out of an indisposition in one or all the parties to adjust their differences; or,

(2.) It may arise out of the inability of the offending party to make the satisfaction which is rendered indispensable by the relations and circumstances of the offending party.

III. Essential qualifications for the office of mediator.

1. A mediator must be in circumstances to understand the whole controversy, in all its bearings and tendencies.

2. He must possess the confidence of all the parties. If he has not their confidence, they will not voluntarily submit the question in dispute to his mediatorial adjustment. Therefore the confidence of the parties is indispensable to his success.

3. He must sustain such relations to the parties, as to be the suitable person to discharge the functions of that office.

4. He must be both able and willing to fulfill all the indispensable conditions of the reconciliation.

IV. On what conditions the end of the mediatorial office can, in any case, be accomplished.

1. He must be consecrated to the office by the consent of parties.

2. The consent of the mediator to undertake and accomplish the work of bringing about a reconciliation.

3. The acceptance, by the parties, of the conditions proposed by the mediator.

4. The actual fulfillment of these conditions by the parties.

V. These principles applied to Christ, as mediator between God and men.

1. I said, the office implies the existence of two parties. Both parties are mentioned in the text: on the one hand, Jehovah--on the other, man as a race. These are the parties, between whom Christ is appointed to act as mediator.

2. I said, the existence of a mediator implies, that a controversy is existing between the parties. That there is a controversy between God and men, is one of the most notorious facts in the universe. It is impossible, that God should approve the conduct of mankind. It cannot be, that He does not disapprove, and that He is not highly displeased with the course of conduct pursued by our race. He cannot but know what the conduct of mankind is. He cannot but approve or disapprove their conduct. For Him to approve their conduct would be to be as bad as they are. He cannot possibly be a virtuous being, unless He highly and infinitely abhor the selfishness of mankind.

Nor can it be possible, that selfish men, remaining selfish, love God. They are hostile to God, because He is so holy as to require of them entire benevolence, on pain of eternal death. This He ought to require. Nothing less than this can He require and be virtuous. But, for this very requirement, men hate Him; and because they hate Him for his goodness, He must certainly, and, if He be a good being, must necessarily abhor them. But the actual state of things in the world shows, that the world is full of blasphemous opposition to the government of God, on the one hand, and that, on the other hand, God is sweeping the nations, from time to time, with the besom of destruction. It is manifestly open, outrageous war, between God and men--God exercising as much forbearance all along as the nature of the case admits--while men, encouraged by his forbearance, are pushing their desperate opposition in the most fool-hardy and blasphemous manner. To maintain, that there is no controversy between God and men, is to deny one of the most universally evident facts that exists in the universe.

3. I said, that the existence of a mediator implies a difficulty in the way of their coming together and adjusting their own matters in difference, and that this difficulty might arise out of an indisposition in one or both the parties to have the matter adjusted, or out of the relation of the parties to each other. Hence, I observe:

(1.) The necessity of a mediator between God and men did not arise out of any unmerciful disposition on the part of God, or any disinclination on his part to pardon sin, if it could be safely done in consistency with the stability of his government. God is love, and of course infinitely disposed to do good whenever He wisely can. It is absurd to say, that an infinitely benevolent being should not be merciful in his disposition, and that He should not actually exercise mercy in the pardon of crime, whenever it can be done consistently with the public interest.

(2.) But on the part of man, there actually is, and always has been, a most pertinacious indisposition to have this matter adjusted, and to become reconciled to God. Therefore, if they ever are to be reconciled, some one must undertake the mediatorial office, who is able to bring about the requisite change in the temper of their mind towards God.

(3.) A difficulty arose out of the relation of the parties to each other, or rather, out of God's relations to the universe. As God is the law-giver, public justice demanded, either that He should execute the law when it was violated, or provide a substitute, that would as effectually sustain the government, as the execution would do. Hence, from the relation of God to the universe, it is plain, that He must exact a condition as indispensable to effecting a reconciliation between Him and men; which condition mankind could not fulfill. The necessity, then, of a mediator, was two-fold:

(a) To meet the demands of public justice, and provide a substitute for the execution of law upon mankind. And,

(b) To subdue the selfish and turbulent spirit of the offending party--to humble mankind, make them willing to confess, repent, and be reconciled to God.

4. I said, a mediator must possess a nature and be in circumstances to understand the whole controversy, in all its bearings and tendencies. Now Christ had the omniscience of God, together with the experience of a man, and was, therefore, the only being in the universe who, in the same sense, could understand the precise attitude of affairs between God and men. As God, He knew and had always known the precise adaptedness of the law to the nature and circumstances of mankind. He had seen sin at its first entrance into the world; and beginning with the first human pair, He had seen it, like a fountain opened in a mountain, running and spreading itself as it advanced, first a rill, then a brook, next a river, and finally an ocean, extending through all the ranks of mankind, and filling the earth, and finally pouring the immense stream of human population over the vast cataract of death, to be swallowed up in the dreadful vortex of damnation.

As man, He had the experience of a man--knew all the difficulties in the way of rendering perfect obedience to the moral law, under circumstances of the severest temptation. If any allowance should be made under the government of God for sin, in the circumstances in which mankind were placed, the man Christ Jesus had the opportunity to know, and must of necessity have tested the question in his own personal experience.

5. I said, a mediator must sustain such relations to the parties, as to be the person to whom the office naturally belongs.

(1.) Christ sustained to the universe the relation of an Executive Magistrate. It was therefore his duty to execute the law, or to provide a substitute for its execution. That He sustains this relation to the universe is evident from his own assertions. It is said of Him, "The government is upon his shoulder," that "He is head over all things to the Church," that "all power in heaven and earth is in his hands," that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," that "He will judge the world," and distribute the rewards of eternity. He commissions ambassadors, which none can do but the Supreme Executive Magistrate. These, with many other considerations that might be adduced, render it certain that Christ sustains to the universe the relation of the Supreme Executive. It therefore belonged to Him either to execute the law, or to provide such a substitute for its execution as fully to meet the demands of public justice.

As God, He was infinitely concerned to secure the stability of his government, and the virtue of the universe.

Being also man, and sustaining the same relation to men that He did to God, rendered it peculiarly proper, that He should interpose his influence with his Father, who in this respect sustained the relation of the law-giver, in behalf of his fellow-men.

6. I said, a mediator must possess the confidence of both parties. That Christ actually possesses the confidence of the Father, we have the fullest assurance in the Father's own assertions: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." That He deserves the confidence of men will be questioned by none but infidels. And I may farther say, that He actually possesses the confidence of every man who is benefitted by his mediatorial interposition. Every one knows, that faith, or confidence in Christ, is every where in the Bible insisted on, as wholly indispensable to being interested in his salvation. So that, as a matter of fact, the mediator must and does possess the confidence of all the parties who are to

be, or can be benefitted by his interposition.

7. I said, a mediator must be able and willing to fulfill the indispensable conditions of reconciliation. Christ being God, and sustaining to the universe the relation of the Executive Magistrate, He could, by offering his own person, more than satisfy the demands of public justice; that is--his death, as their substitute, would be a higher evidence of his regard to the law, and determination not to relinquish its claims, than would be the infliction of its penalty on all mankind. Public justice demands, that the law should be sustained, for the protection of public and private interests. Law is public property, and every subject of any government is interested in the execution of any law, when its penalty is incurred. The very establishment of government is a pledge, on the part of the law-giver, that he will protect the public interests, and do all that the nature of the case admits, to secure public virtue and happiness; or, in other words, to secure universal respect and obedience to the laws. The execution of the penalty is designed and calculated to prevent future breaches of the law--to secure respect and obedience to the law, by demonstrating both the intention and the ability of the law-giver--to redeem his pledge and protect the public interests. Now who cannot see, that if the law-giver himself will consent to suffer as the substitute of his guilty subjects, it will do much more to sustain his government, to create confidence, love, and energetic attachment to him, than merely to execute the law upon the offenders? Mercy must not, and in a perfect government cannot be exercised, and the penalty of law set aside, without such a satisfaction made to public justice as will be equivalent to the execution of the law.

Let me illustrate this, by supposing a mighty earthly sovereign at the head of an immense army, and marching to effect some all-important object. Discipline in his army is altogether indispensable. Therefore, his orders must be most rigorously enforced, or insubordination will defeat the enterprise. But on one occasion he issues an order, against which a whole regiment rebel. Now what shall be done? It is a valuable regiment. The sovereign pities them, and yet abhors their disobedience. Either his authority must cease, that regiment must be put to the sword, or some governmental expedient must be devised, that will as effectually secure future obedience as the execution of the law would do. An order is issued for the whole army to form a hollow square. In the center of this a vast scaffold is erected, over which an immense velvet pall is thrown. The implements of punishment are prepared. The whole army with trailed arms and standards dragged in dust, muffled drums, and solemn death marches, are gathered, as they suppose, to witness the execution of the rebellious regiment. They wait in breathless expectation, for the order for the regiment to be put to death. In the mean time, this regiment is drawn out and paraded by itself alone around the scaffold. Every thing is gloomy. Sorrow fills every countenance. Every heart is heaving. Deep sighs are heard on every side, and the whole mass of mind is heaving with excitement, and agonized with the dismal prospect. At this moment, the sovereign, attended by his guards, is seen to ride within the square. He dismounts, lays aside his royal robes, uncovers his head, and arrays himself in the humble attire of a servant. Every eye is upon him. Unutterable astonishment and wonder fill every mind. No one can imagine what is now to be done. Leaving his attendants behind him, he meekly ascends the scaffold, unattended, unarmed, and thus addresses the rebellious regiment: "You have disobeyed my orders. You deserve to die! But my compassions bleed over you. To wholly set aside the penalty which you deserve, simply upon your bare repentance and return to duty--I cannot, dare not, and must not offer you forgiveness on any such conditions. My authority must be sustained. Discipline in my army is wholly indispensable. So much do I regard public justice, that sooner should heaven and earth pass away than I would set aside the execution of law, in a manner that would weaken my authority. But on the other hand, so much do I compassionate your case--so much do I love and pity you, that for the sake of being able to offer you a pardon, upon conditions that will not destroy the discipline of my army, I am willing, and about

to suffer in your stead."

So saying, he uncovers his shoulders and receives upon his naked back one hundred stripes, until the blood flows down and stains the pall beneath his feet. Indeed he suffers, until a universal wail is heard--the army refuses to look on. They cover their faces, and cry out in agony, until he bids the executioner stay his hand. He resumes his garments, bows to the army, and retires to his quarters. Now what think you, would be the effect of a transaction like this upon the discipline of his army? Who would dare thereafter to rebel, and which of that rebellious regiment, or who, of his whole army, would not instantly die, to protect their sovereign, or rather than disobey him.

Now the design of Christ was, to satisfy the demands of public justice, at once to demonstrate the infinite compassion of God for his rebellious subjects, and at the same time his unalterable determination to sustain his government and enforce obedience to his law--to protect and bless the innocent--to punish and destroy the guilty. And his relation to the universe was such, that his death, I may say, was an infinitely higher expression of his compassion, on the one hand, and of his justice on the other, than could have been given in his execution of the law upon sinners.

8. I said, the mediator must be not only able, but willing to make any sacrifice necessary in order to remove the obstacles out of the way of such reconciliation. The Atonement has been looked upon by many, as an incredible doctrine, and aside from right apprehensions of the moral character of God, it is altogether the most incredible thing in the universe. That God should consent to suffer for man, would beggar all credibility, but for the fact, that his whole moral character is love or benevolence. When this is well considered--and it is a truth taught by all the works, and all the ways of God--the doctrine of Atonement is altogether the most reasonable and credible doctrine that can be conceived. If He is benevolence, it is certain, that He must be disposed to exercise mercy. But if He is benevolence, it is also certain, that He would exercise mercy with a due regard to public justice, and upon such conditions as not to endanger his authority. If God is love, it must be certain, that if infinite wisdom could devise a plan, whereby the ends of public justice might be consistent with the offer of pardon, He would not hesitate to adopt that plan, although it might call Him to the exercise of great self-denial. If his suffering in their stead a less amount than must necessarily be inflicted upon them, would not only render it proper to offer them mercy, but would prevail to bring them to repentance and make them virtuous, his being love would render it certain, that such would be the course of conduct He would pursue. Christ, then, was not only able but willing to offer his human nature a sacrifice to public justice. His human nature being taken into union with his divine nature, became a part of Himself. His blood was, therefore, the blood of God. His Atonement was the Atonement of God, in offering up his human nature unto death, that He might give to man eternal life.

9. I said, the parties must consent that He should sustain to them this relation; or, in other words, that He should be consecrated to this office by consent of parties. The Father, who is the offended party, has nominated and sent forth his own Son, and proposed that He should act as Mediator between God and men. He has consented to accept what He has done as satisfactory on the part of the government of God, as wholly removing out of the way, on the part of the divine government, every objection to a universal offer of pardon to all that will repent and return to their duty. And now the question is submitted to you, to every sinner, whether you will consent on your part to receive Christ as your Mediator. This you are to do by faith. Are you willing to do it?

10. I said, that another condition, upon which the accomplishment of the great object of Christ depends, is the actual fulfillment of the conditions decreed by Him as indispensable to the effecting of this reconciliation. These are on your part, sinner:

(1.) Repentance, or an unqualified turning yourselves, both in heart and life, from all iniquity, and making a consecration of your whole being to God and his service for ever.

(2.) Faith in Christ's Atonement, as the foundation of your pardon and acceptance with God.

(3.) Your perseverance in holiness, or true obedience, to the end of life.

This is a summary statement of the indispensable conditions, upon the fulfillment of which depends your eternal salvation. And now what do you say? It is in vain for you to pretend to consent to the mediatorial office and character of Christ unless you consent to and fulfill the conditions imposed by Him upon you, as indispensable to your being justified through Him. This, I say, is a question for you to decide. No one can decide it for you. God, on his part, has consented. Christ as Mediator, has thrown the door wide open before you, and stands as a daysman between you and the throne of God. He, as it were, lays his hand on both the parties. The Father has committed to Him the adjustment of this difficulty, on the part of the divine government. Now will you commit to Him the keeping of your soul? Will you submit yourself to his government and control? Will you give your case into his hands, to be advocated, managed, and adjusted by Him? Will you consecrate your whole being to God, and from this time know, and prove by your own conduct, that the controversy between you and God is at an end? Now, therefore, "as an ambassador for Christ, I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

#### REMARKS.

1. In the light of this subject you see the disinterested love of Christ. O how infinitely wonderful, that He should consent to undertake such an office as this, fully knowing as He did the immense sacrifice to which it would call Him--the immense amount of shame, persecution, agony, and death; and for what? For Himself?--to promote some selfish interest? No! But from disinterested love to you and me. What an exhibition of self-denial, his whole life being only an accumulation of sufferings, reproach, ridicule, and opposition. How great his mental agonies must have been. In the midst of a world created by Him, and yet ruining themselves with their blasphemous opposition to Him!

2. From this subject you can see for what we are to trust Christ as Mediator:

(1.) We are to look to Him for sanctification, for that measure of grace that will thoroughly cleanse us from all our sins.

(2.) We are to look to Him for justification, that is, pardon and acceptance in respect to all our past sins.

(3.) We are to look to Him for preserving grace, to quicken and sustain us to the end.

3. You see from this subject, what it is to be a Christian. It is heartily to consent to the mediatorial work of Christ, and to comply with the conditions upon which he offers to save.

4. From this subject you can see the security of the saints. The controversy between them and God is at an end. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And now what shall be able to separate them from the love of Christ? "What shall we then say to these things? If God be

for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. From this subject also we see the certainty of the final damnation of all unbelievers. Why, sinner, by your rejection of Christ--the controversy between you and God, so far from being ended, is only made worse. Your guilt and final damnation are awfully aggravated, by your rejection of the mediatorial interference of Christ.

6. How infinitely foolish and mad are the saying and expectation of some, that if Christ has made an Atonement sufficient for all, that all will be saved, as a thing of course. Why, sinner, it would be just as reasonable, if you were starving, and invited to a feast, to which you obstinately refused to go, for you to affirm that the provision was ample, had actually been made, enough for all, so that no one need to famish with hunger; that therefore it mattered not whether you went to the feast or not. Why, sinner! are you crazy? Can it be possible, that the mediatorial work of Christ will save you without your own consent? Surely it cannot be. It is virtually and for ever impossible.

7. From this subject you see the wickedness and danger of delay. Sinner, God urges now upon you the obligation and necessity of instantly deciding, whether you will consent to this plan of salvation or not. This may be the last opportunity you will ever have, to make your salvation sure. Now what do you say? Do you call heaven and earth to witness, and to record on your soul, that you now, in the presence of God, of angels, and of men, from the inmost recesses of your being, consent to the mediatorial work of Christ, and accept the conditions of salvation? Do you so decide? And is the response of your heart, 'So help me God!'

8. From this subject we can see the meaning of the context, which has been, in some instances, much perverted. The apostle begins the chapter by saying: "I exhort, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

From this passage it has been inferred by some, that all men will inevitably be saved. But the plain meaning of this passage, when taken together, is, that God desires the salvation of all men. The word rendered will, may with equal propriety be rendered desire, as it often is. God really desires the salvation of all men, as a thing desirable in itself; and has therefore set forth his Son to be a mediator between Himself and mankind in general, "who has given Himself a ransom for all, to be testified (or, as in the original, a testimony or witness,) in due time." He was given as a witness or testimony of the righteousness and infinite love of God to dying men, "So that God may be just and still justify him that

believeth in Jesus."

Now, sinner, you have before you as condensed and simple an exhibition of the gospel as I can give you in one discourse. Will you accept it, or do you reject it? "I call heaven and earth to record this day upon your soul, that I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." Therefore, choose this day, and O, choose life, that you may live!

And Christian, do you see your privilege? Do you see your obligation to Christ? Do you see your dependence upon Him? Do you understand your security in Him? Why you are to ask in his name? Why you are to approach God through Him? Do you understand the gospel? Then cleave to the Mediator, that the river of life may flow continually through your soul!

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