

Prof. Finney's Letters.--No. 37

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney's sermon emphasizes that entire sanctification is rooted in supreme benevolence and obedience to God's law.

Scripture: Matthew 22:37

Topics: "Love and Obedience", "Sanctification"

Description

Charles Finney discusses the concept of entire sanctification, emphasizing that it is rooted in complete obedience to God's law, particularly the command to love God and our neighbors. He clarifies that this love is not merely an emotional response but a voluntary act of benevolence aimed at the highest good of others. Finney asserts that entire sanctification involves a supreme intention to glorify God and promote the well-being of all beings, which aligns with the true meaning of holiness as defined by Scripture. He warns against redefining sanctification to include anything outside of this biblical framework.

Transcript

DEAR BROTHER:

I come now, according to my plan, to show:

VI. WHAT ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IS.

It is agreed on all hands, that entire sanctification consists in entire obedience to the law of God. The great point of inquiry, therefore, is, what is the spirit, or real meaning of the requirement "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself"? Now the love required by the law of God cannot be complacency in the form of an emotion, for the following reasons:

1. Because emotions are involuntary states of mind, and therefore, strictly speaking, without the pale, both of morality and legislation.
2. Because we are required to love our neighbor as ourselves. But whether we are under an obligation to feel complacency at all in our neighbor must depend upon his character. He may be deserving of more or less complacency than ourselves; and certainly the law of God would not require us to exercise complacency toward our neighbor, unless his character were holy. The love which the law of God enjoins must be benevolence, or good-willing.

(1.) Because this is voluntary.

(2.) Because it must be the same kind of love that God exercises towards all men, and the kind of love that must constitute the holiness of God. Certainly it was not complacency in men, that led Him to "give his only begotten Son to die for his enemies."

Entire sanctification, then, must consist in supreme, disinterested benevolence to being. In other words--it consists in willing the highest good of being for its own sake, and supremely intending to live wholly for the promotion of that end. In other words still, it is entire consecration to the glory of God and the good of the universe. But here I must repeat what I have in some of my letters previously said--that there is a grand distinction between the choice of an end or intention and those volitions that are the natural result of this choice, and which are put forth by the will as efforts to secure the end chosen. The thing which the law requires is, the exercise of supreme, perfect benevolence, or willing the good of being as an end. The choice of an end naturally, and while the choice continues, necessarily produces volition, or those causative acts of will which are necessary to secure the proposed end. While the benevolence required by the law is in exercise, corresponding volitions and actions must be. As I said in my last, the agent has power to change his intention, or the benevolent state of his will. But while that benevolent state of will exists, there can be no sin; because that benevolent state of will is the very thing which the law of God requires, and produces corresponding acts and states of mind by a natural necessity. Let it be understood, then, that right ultimate intention--entire consecration to the glory of God and the good of the universe--obedience to the law of God--supreme, disinterested benevolence, all mean the same thing, and either of them expresses the true idea of entire sanctification. To make any thing else than this entire sanctification, is to depart from the Bible, and make holiness consist in something else than obedience to the law of God, or to include in entire sanctification that which the law of God does not require.

Your Brother in the love and

fellowship of the blessed Gospel,

C.G. FINNEY

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