

# Religion of Public Opinion

by Charles Finney

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*The sermon warns against the dangers of loving the praise of men more than the praise of God, and encourages listeners to follow the true friends of God and man.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 29:25, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:1, Luke 9:26, John 12:43, Romans 12:2, Galatians 1:10, James 4:4, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 2:15-17

**Topics:** "Obedience to God", "Hypocrisy"

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## Description

Charles Finney addresses the dangers of valuing public opinion over God's approval, emphasizing that many professing Christians prioritize their reputation and social acceptance over true devotion to God. He distinguishes between self-love and selfishness, warning that when individuals act primarily to maintain their image, they become hypocrites. Finney urges listeners to examine their motives and actions, challenging them to pursue genuine obedience to God's commands regardless of societal pressures. He calls for a commitment to uphold God's standards, even when it conflicts with popular sentiment, and warns that those who conform to the world will face dire consequences.

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## Transcript

TEXT.--For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. John xii. 43.

THESE words were spoken of certain individuals who refused to confess that Jesus was the Christ, because He was extremely unpopular with the scribes and pharisees, and principal people of Jerusalem.

There is a plain distinction between self-love, or the simple desire of happiness, and selfishness. Self-love, the desire of happiness and dread of misery, is constitutional, it is a part of our frame as God made us and as he intended us to be; and its indulgence, within the limits of the law of God, is not sinful. Whenever it is indulged contrary to the law of God, it becomes sinful. When the desire of happiness or the dread of misery becomes the controlling principle, and we prefer our own gratification to some other greater interest, it becomes selfishness. When to avoid pain or procure happiness, we sacrifice other greater interests, we violate the great law of disinterested benevolence. It is no longer self-love, acting within lawful bounds, but selfishness.

In my last Friday evening Lecture, I described a class of professors of religion, who are moved to perform religious exercises by hope and fear. They are moved sometimes by self-love, and sometimes by selfishness. Their supreme object is not to glorify God, but to secure their own salvation. You will recollect

that this class, and the class I had described before as the real friends of God, and man, agree in many things, and if you look only at the things in which they agree, you cannot distinguish between them. It is only by a close observation of those things in which they differ, that you can see that the main design of the latter class is not to glorify God, but to secure their own salvation. In that way we can see their supreme object developed, and see that when they do the same things, outwardly, which those do whose supreme object is to glorify God, they do them from entirely different motives, and consequently the acts themselves are, in the sight of God, of an entirely different character.

To-night, I design to point out the characteristics of the third class of professing Christians, who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God."

I would not be understood to imply that a mere regard for reputation has led this class to profess religion. Religion has always been too unpopular with the great mass of mankind to render it a general thing to become professing Christians from a mere regard to reputation. But I mean, that where it is not generally unpopular to become a professor of religion, and will not diminish popularity, but will increase it with many, a complex motive operates--the hope of securing happiness in a future world and that it may increase reputation here. And thus many are led to profess religion, when after all, on a close examination it will be seen that the leading object, which is prized beyond any thing else, is the good opinion of their fellow men. Sooner than forfeit this utterly, they would not profess religion. Their profession turns on this. And although they do profess to be sincere Christians, you may see by their conduct, on close examination, that they will do nothing that will forfeit this good opinion of men. They will not encounter the odium that they must, if they were to give themselves up to root sin out of the world.

Observe, that impenitent sinners are always influenced by one of two things, in all that they do that appears like religion. Either they do them out of regard to mere natural principles, as compassion or self-love--principles that are constitutional in them--or from selfishness. They are done either out of regard to their own reputation or happiness, or the gratification of some natural principle in them, that has no moral character; and not from the love of God in them. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

I will now mention several things by which you may detect the true character of the class of persons of whom I have been speaking; who make the praise of men their idol, notwithstanding they profess to love God supremely. And they are things by which you can detect your own true characters, if there are any present who properly belong to this class.

1. They do what the apostle Paul says certain persons did in his day, and for that reason they remained ignorant of the true doctrine; they "measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves."

There are a vast many individuals, who, instead of making Jesus Christ their standard of comparison, and the Bible their rule of life, manifestly aim at no such thing. They show that they never seriously dreamed of making the BIBLE their standard. The great question with them is, whether they do about as many things in religion, and are about as pious as other people, or as the churches around them. Their object is to maintain a respectable profession of religion. Instead of seriously inquiring for themselves, what the Bible really requires, and asking how Jesus Christ would act in such and such cases, they are looking simply at the common run of professing Christians, and are satisfied with doing what is commendable in their estimation. They prove to a demonstration, that their object is not so much to do what the Bible lays down

as duty, as to do what the great mass of professing Christians do--to do what is respectable, rather than what is RIGHT.

2. This class of persons do not trouble themselves about elevating the standard of piety around them.

They are not troubled at the fact, that the general standard of piety is so low in the church, that it is impossible to bring the great mass of sinners to repentance. They think the standard at the present time is high enough. Whatever be the standard at the time, it satisfies them. While the real friends of God and man are complaining of the church, because the standard of piety is so low, and trying to wake up the church to elevate the tone of religion, it all seems to this class of persons like censoriousness, and a meddling, uneasy disposition, and as denoting a bad spirit in them. Just as when Jesus Christ denounced the scribes and pharisees and leading professors of his day, they said, "He hath a devil." "Why, he is denouncing our doctors of divinity, and all our best men, and even dares to call the scribes and pharisees hypocrites, and he tells us that except our righteousness shall exceed theirs, we can in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. What a bad spirit he has!"

A large part of the church at the present day have the same spirit, and every effort to open the eyes of the church, and to make Christians see that they live so low, so worldly, so much like hypocrites, that it is impossible the work of the Lord should go on, only excites ill will and occasions reproach. "O," they say, "what a bad spirit he shows, so censorious, and so unkind, surely that is anything but the meek, and kind, and loving spirit of the Son of God." They forget how Jesus Christ poured out his anathemas, enough to make the hills of Judea shake, against those that had the reputation of being the most pious people in that day. Just as if Jesus Christ never said any thing severe to anybody, but just fawned over them, and soothed them into his kingdom. Who does not know that it was the hypocritical spirit exhibited by professors of religion, that roused his soul and moved his indignation, and called forth his burning torrents of denunciation. He was always complaining of the very people who were set up as patterns of piety, and called them hypocrites, and thundered over their heads the terrible words, "HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL!"

It is not wonderful, when so many love the praise of men more than the praise of God, that there should be excitement when the truth is told. They are very well satisfied with the standard of piety as it is, and think that while the people are doing so much for Sabbath schools, and missions, and tracts, that is doing pretty well, and they wonder what the man would have. Alas! alas! for their blindness! They do not seem to know that with all this, the lives of the generality of professing Christians are almost as different from the standard of Jesus Christ as light is from darkness.

3. They make a distinction between those requirements of God that are strongly enforced by public sentiment and those that are not thus guarded.

They are very scrupulous in observing such requirements as public sentiment distinctly favors, while they easily set at nought those which public sentiment does not enforce. You have illustrations, of this on every side. I might mention the Temperance Reformation. How many there are who yield to public sentiment in this matter what they never would yield to God or man. At first they waited to see how it would turn. They resisted giving up of ardent spirits. But when that became popular, and they found that they could do very well with other alcoholic stimulants, they gave it up. But they are determined to yield no further than public sentiment drives them. They show that it is not their object, in joining the Temperance Society, to CARRY OUT the reform, so as to slay the monster, Intemperance, but their object is to maintain a good character.

They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

See how many individuals there are, who keep the Sabbath, not because they love God, but because it is respectable. This is manifest, because they keep it while they are among their acquaintances, or where they are known. But when they get where they are not known, or where it will not be a public disgrace, you will find them traveling on the Sabbath.

All those sins that are reprobated by public opinion this class of persons abstain from, but they do other things just as bad which are not thus frowned on. They do those duties which are enforced by public opinion, but not those that are less enforced. They will not stay away from public worship on the Sabbath, because they could not maintain any reputation for religion at all if they did. But they neglect things that are just as peremptorily enjoined in the word of God. Where an individual habitually disobeys any command of God, he knowing it to be such, it is just as certain as his soul lives, that the obedience he appears to render, is not from a regard to God's authority, or love to God, but from other motives. He does not, in fact, obey any command of God. The Apostle has settled this question. "Whosoever," says he, "Shall keep the whole law and offend in one point is guilty of all," i. e. does not truly keep any one precept of the law. Obedience to God's commands implies an obedient state of the heart, and therefore nothing is obedience that does not imply a supreme regard to the authority of God. Now, if a man's heart is right, then whatever God enjoins he regards as of more importance than anything else. And if a man regards anything else of superior weight to God's authority, that is his idol. Whatever we supremely regard, that is our God--whether it be reputation, or comfort, or riches, or honor, or whatever it is that we regard supremely, that is the God of our hearts. Whatever a man's reason is for habitually neglecting anything he knows to be the command of God, or that he sees to be required to promote the kingdom of Christ, there is demonstration absolute that he regards that as supreme. There is nothing acceptable to God in any of his services. Rest assured, all his religion is the religion of public sentiment. If he neglects anything required by the law of God, because he can pass along in neglect, and public sentiment does not enjoin it, or if he does other things inconsistent with the law of God, merely because public opinion does require it, it is a simple matter of fact, that it is public sentiment to which he yields obedience, in all his conduct, and not a regard to the glory of God.

How is it with you, beloved? Do you habitually neglect any requirement of God, because it is not sustained and enforced by public sentiment? If you are a professor of religion, it is to be presumed you do not neglect any requirement that is strongly urged by public sentiment.--But, how is it with others? Do you not habitually neglect some duties? Do you not live in some practices reputable among men, that you know to be contrary to the law of God? If you do, it is demonstration absolute that you regard the opinions of men more than the judgment of God. Write down your name HYPOCRITE.

4. This class of professors are apt to indulge in some sins when they are away from home, that they would not commit at home.

Many a man who is temperate at home, when he gets to a distance, will toss off his glass of brandy and water at the table, or step up to the bar of a steamboat and call for liquor without shame, or if they are in Europe, they will go to the theater. When I was in the Mediterranean, at Messina, a gentleman one day asked me if I would go to the theater with him. "What! I go to the theater? A minister go to the theater?" Why, said he, you are away from home, and no one would know it. "But would not God know it?" It was plain that he thought, although I was a minister, I could go to the theater when I was away from home. No matter if God knew it, so long as men did not know it. And how should he get that idea, but by seeing

ministers who would do just such things?

5. Another development of the character of these individuals is, that they indulge themselves in secret sin.

I am now speaking of something, by which you may know yourselves. If you allow yourselves in any sins secretly, when you can get along without having any human being know it, know that God sees it, and that he has already written down your name, HYPOCRITE. You are more afraid of disgrace in the eye of mortals, than of disgrace in the eye of God. If you loved God supremely, it would be a small thing to you that any and everybody else knew your sins, in comparison with having them known to God. If tempted to any such thing, you would exclaim, "What! shall I commit sin under the eye of God?"

6. They indulge in secret omissions of duty, which they would not dare to have known to others.

They may not practise any secret sins, or indulge in those secret pollutions that are spoken of, but they neglect those duties, that if they were known to neglect, it would be called disreputable to their Christian character. Such as secret prayer, for instance. They will go to the communion--yes, to the communion!--and appear to be very pious on the Sabbath, and yet, as to private piety, they know nothing of it. Their closet for prayer is unknown to God or man. It is easy to see that reputation is their idol. They dread to lose their reputation more than to offend God.

How is it with you? Is it a fact, that you habitually omit those secret duties, and are more careful to perform your public duties than private ones? Then what is your character? Do you need to be told? They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

7. The conscience of this class of persons seems to be formed on other principles than those of the gospel.

They seem to have a conscience in those things that are popular, and no conscience at all on those things that are not required by public sentiment. You may preach to them ever so plainly, their duty, and prove it ever so clearly, and even make them confess that it is their duty, and yet so long as public sentiment does not require it, and it is not a matter of reputation, they will continue on in the same way as before. Show them a "Thus saith the Lord," and make them see that their course is palpably inconsistent with Christian perfection, and contrary to the interests of the kingdom of Christ, and yet they will not alter. They make it manifest that it is not the requirement of God they regard, but the requirement of public opinion. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

8. This class of persons generally dread, very much, the thought of being considered fanatical.

They are ignorant, practically, of a first principle in religion, that ALL THE WORLD IS WRONG! That the public sentiment of the world is all against God, and that everyone who intends to serve God must in the first instance set his face against the public sentiment of the world. They are to take it for granted, that in a world of rebels, public sentiment is as certainly wrong as that there is a controversy with God. They have never had their eyes open to this fundamental truth, that the world is wrong, and that God's ways are directly over against their ways. Consequently, it is true, and always has been true, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." They shall be called fanatical, superstitious, ultras, and the like. They always have been, and they always will be, as long as the world is wrong.

But this class of persons will never go further than is consistent with the opinions of worldly men. They say they must do this and that in order to have influence over such men. Right over against this is the course

of the true friends of God and man. Their leading aim is to reverse the order of the world, and turn the world upside down, to bring all men to obey God, and all the opinions of men to conform to the word of God, and all the usages and institutions of the world to accord with the spirit of the gospel.

9. They are very intent on making friends on both sides.

They take the middle course always. They avoid the reputation of being righteous over-much, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of being lax or irreligious. It has been so for centuries, that a person could maintain a reputable profession of religion, without ever being called fanatical. And the standard is still so low, that probably the great mass of the Protestant churches are trying to occupy this middle ground. They mean to have friends on both sides. They are not set down as reprobates, on the one hand, nor as fanatics or bigots on the other. They are FASHIONABLE CHRISTIANS! They may be called fashionable Christians for two reasons. One is, that their style of religion is popular and fashionable; and the other is, that they generally follow worldly fashions. Their aim in religion is not to do anything that will disgust the world. No matter what God requires, they are determined to be so prudent as not to bring on them the censures of the world, nor offend the enemies of God. They have manifestly more regard to men than to God. And if they are ever so circumstanced that they must do that which will displease their friends and neighbors, or offend God, they will offend God. If public sentiment clashes with the commands of God, they will yield to public sentiment.

10. They will do more to gain the applause of men than to gain the applause of God.

This is evident from the fact, that they will yield obedience only to those requirements of God which are sustained by public opinion. Although they will not exercise self-denial to gain the applause of God, yet they will exercise great self-denial to gain the applause of men. The men that gave up ardent spirit, because public sentiment rendered it necessary, will give up wine also, whenever a public sentiment sufficiently powerful shall demand it. And not till then.

11. They are more anxious to know what are the opinions of men about them, than to know what is God's opinion of them.

If one of this class is a minister, and preaches a sermon, he is more anxious to know what the people thought of it, than to know what God thought of it. And if he makes any thing like a failure, the disgrace of it with men cuts him ten times more than the thought that he has dishonored God, or hindered the salvation of souls. Just so with an elder, or a member of the church, of this class. If he prays in a meeting, or exhorts, he is more concerned to know what is thought of it than to know how God is pleased.

If such a one has some secret sin found out, he is vastly more distressed about it because he is disgraced than because God is dishonored. Or if he falls into open sin, when he comes to be met with it, he cares as much again about the disgrace as about the sin of it.

They are more anxious about their appearance in the eyes of the world, than in the eyes of God. Females of this character are vastly more anxious, when they go to church, how the body shall appear in the eyes of men than how the heart shall appear in the eyes of God. Such a one will be all the week engaged in getting everything in order, so as to make her person appear to advantage, and perhaps will not spend half an hour in her closet, to prepare her heart to appear before God in His courts. Every body can see, at a glance, what this religion is, the moment it is held up to view. Nobody is at a loss to say what that man or that woman's name is. It is HYPOCRITE. They will go into the house of God, with their heart dark as

midnight, while every thing in their external appearance is comely and decent. They must appear well in the eyes of men, no matter how that part is, on which God fixes his eye. The heart may be dark and disordered and polluted, and they care not, so long as the eye of man detects no blemish.

12. They refuse to confess their sins, in the manner which the law of God requires, lest they should lose reputation among men.

If they are ever required to make confession of more than they think consistent with their reputation, they are more anxious how it will affect their character, than whether God is satisfied.

Search your hearts, you that have made confessions, and see which most affects your minds, the question what God thought of it or what men thought of it. Have you refused to confess what you knew God required, because it will hurt your reputation among men? Will not God judge your hearts? Only be honest now, and let it be answered.

13. They will yield to custom what they know to be injurious to the cause of religion, and to the welfare of mankind.

A striking instance of this is found in the manner of keeping new year's day. Who does not know that the customary manner of keeping new year's day, setting out their wine and their rich cake and costly entertainments, and spending the day as they do, is a waste of money, hurtful to health, and injurious to their own souls and to the interests of religion? And yet they do it. Shall we be told that persons who will do this, when they KNOW it is injurious, supremely love God? I care not who attempts to defend such a custom, it is wrong, and every Christian must know it to be so. And those who persist in it when they know better, demonstrate that a supreme regard to God is not their rule of life.

14. They will do things of doubtful character, or things the lawfulness of which they strongly doubt, in obedience to public sentiment.

You will recollect that on the evening of the first day of the year I took up this subject, and shewed that those who do things of doubtful character, of the lawfulness of which they are not satisfied, are condemned for it in the sight of God.

15. They are often ashamed to do their duty, and so much ashamed that they will not do it.

Now when a person is so much ashamed to do what God requires as not to do it, it is plain that his own reputation is his idol. How many do you find who are ashamed to acknowledge Jesus Christ, ashamed to reprove sin, in high places or low places, and ashamed to speak out when religion is assailed. If they supremely regarded God, could they ever be ashamed of doing their duty? Suppose a man's wife was calumniated, would he be ashamed to defend his wife? By no means. If his children were abused, would he be ashamed to take their part? Not if he loved them, it would not be shame that would deter him from defending his wife or children. If a man was friendly to the administration of the government of his country, and heard it calumniated, would he be ashamed to defend it? He might not think it expedient to speak, for other reasons; but if he was a true friend to the government, he would not be ashamed to speak in its behalf, any where.

Now such persons as I am speaking of, will not take decided ground when they are among the enemies of truth, where they would be subject to reproach for doing it.--They are very bold for the truth when among its friends, and will make a great display of their courage. But when put to the trial, they will sell the Lord

Jesus Christ, or deny him before his enemies, and put him to open shame, rather than rebuke wickedness or speak out in his cause among his enemies.

16. They are opposed to all encroachments on their self-indulgence, by advancing light on practical subjects.

They are much disturbed by every new proposal that draws on their purses, or breaks in upon their habitual self-indulgence. And you may talk as much, and preach as much in favor of it as you please, there is only one way to reach this kind of people, and that is by creating a new public sentiment. When you have brought over, by the power of benevolence and of conscience, a sufficient number in the community to create a public sentiment in its favor, then they will adopt your new proposals, and not before.

17. They are always distressed at what they call the ultraism of the day.

They are much afraid the ultraism of the present day will destroy the church. They say we are carrying things too far, and we shall produce a reaction. Take, for instance, the Temperance Reformation. The true friends of temperance now know, that alcohol is the same thing, wherever it is found, and that to save the world and banish intemperance, it is necessary to banish alcohol in all its forms. The pinch of the Temperance Reformation has never yet been decided. The mass of the community have never been called to any self-denial in the cause. The place where it will pinch is, when it comes to the question, whether men will exercise self-denial to crush the evil. If they may continue to drink wine and beer, it is no self-denial to give up ardent spirits. It is only changing the form in which alcohol is taken, and they can drink as freely as before. Many friends of the cause, when they saw what multitudes were rushing into it, were ready to shout a triumph. But the real question is not yet tried. And multitudes will never yield, until the friends of God and man can form a public sentiment so strong as to crush the character of every man who will not give it up. You will find many doctors of divinity and pillars of the church, who are able to drink their wine, that will stand their ground, and no command of God, no requirement of benevolence, no desire to save souls, no pity for bleeding humanity, will move such persons, until you can form a public sentiment so powerful as to force them to it, on penalty of loss of reputation. For they love the praise of men.

And it is a query now in my mind, a matter of solemn and anxious doubt, whether in the present low state of piety and decline of revivals of religion in the church, a public sentiment can be formed, so powerful as to do this. If not, we shall be driven back. The Temperance Reformation, like a dam of sand, will be swept away, the floodgates will be opened again, and the world will go reeling--down to hell. And yet thousands of professors of religion, who want to enjoy public respect and at the same time enjoy themselves in their own way, are crying out as if they were in distress at the ultraism of the times!

18. They are often opposed to men, and measures, and things, while they are unpopular and subject to reproach, and when they become popular, fall in with them.

Let an individual go through the churches in any section, and wake them up to a revival of religion, and while he is little known, these persons are not backward to speak against him. But let him go on, and gain influence, and they will fall in and commend him and profess to be his warmest friends. It was just so with Jesus Christ. Before his death, he had a certain degree of popularity.--Multitudes would follow him, as he went through the streets, and cry "Hosanna, Hosanna!" But observe, they never would follow him an atom further than his popularity followed him. As soon as he was arrested as a criminal, they all turned round and began to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

This class of persons, as they set with the tide one way, when a man is reproached, so they will set with the tide the other way, when he comes to be honored. There is only one exception. And that is, when they have become so far committed to the opposition, that they cannot come round without disgrace. And then they will be silent, until another opportunity comes up for letting out the burning fires that are rankling within them.

Very often a revival in a church, when it first begins, is opposed by certain members of the church. They do not like to have such things carried on, they are afraid there is too much animal excitement, and the like. But the work goes on, and by and by, they seem to fall in and go with the multitude. At length the revival is over, and the church grows cold again, and before long you will find this class of persons renewing their opposition to the work, and as the church declines they press their opposition, and perhaps, in the end, induce the church itself to take ground against the very revival which they had so much enjoyed. This is the very way in which individuals have acted in regard to revivals in this country. There are many such cases. They were awed by public sentiment and made to bow down to the revival, while it was in its power, but by and by, as the revival declines, they begin to let out the opposition that is in their hearts, and which was suppressed for a time because the revival was popular.

It has been just so in regard to the cause of missions, in a degree, and if any thing should turn up, unfavourable to missions, so as to break the present power of public sentiment in their favor, you would find plenty of these fair weather supporters turning to the opposition.

19. If any measure is proposed to promote religion, they are very sensitive and scrupulous not to have any thing done that is unpopular.

If they live in a city, they ask what will the other churches think of such a measure? And if it is likely to bring reproach on their church or their minister, in view of the ungodly, or in view of the other churches, they are distressed about it. No matter how much good it will do, or how many souls it will save, they do not want to have any thing done to injure the respectability of their church.

20. This class of persons never aim at forming a public sentiment in favor of perfect godliness.

The true friends of God and man are always aiming at forming public sentiment, and correcting public sentiment on all points where it is wrong. They are set, with all their hearts, to search out all the evils in the world, and to reform the world, and drive out iniquity from the earth. The other class are always following public sentiment as it is, and feeling after the course of the tide, to go that way, shrinking back from everything that goes in the face of public sentiment. And they are ready to brand as imprudent, or rash, any man or any thing, that goes to stem the tide of public sentiment and turn it the other way.

#### REMARKS.

1. It is easy for persons to take credit for their sins, and make themselves believe certain things are acts of piety, which are in fact only acts of hypocrisy.

They do the things that outwardly pertain to piety, and they give themselves credit for being pious, when their motives are all corrupt and hollow, and not one of them drawn from a supreme regard to God's authority. This is manifest from the fact that they do nothing except where God's requirements are backed up by public sentiment.--Unless you aim to do ALL your duty, and yield obedience in every thing, the piety for which you claim credit is mere hypocrisy, and is in fact sin against God.

2. There is a great deal more apparent piety in the church, than there is real piety.
3. There are many things which sinners suppose are good, but which are abominable in the sight of God.
4. But for the love of reputation and the fear of disgrace, how many there are in the church, who would break out into open apostacy.

How many are there here, who know you would break out into open vice, were it not for the restraints of public sentiment, the fear of disgrace, and the desire to gain the credit of virtue? Where a person is virtuous from a regard to the authority of God, whether public sentiment favor it or frown upon it, that is true piety. If otherwise, they have their reward. They do it for the sake of gaining credit in the eyes of men, and they gain it. But if they expect any favor at the hand of God, they will assuredly be disappointed. The only reward which HE will bestow upon such selfish hypocrites is, that they may be damned.

And now I wish to know how many of you will determine to do your duty, and all your duty, according to the will of God, let public sentiment be as it may? Who of you will agree to take the Bible for your rule, Jesus Christ for your pattern, and do what is RIGHT, in all cases, whatever man may say or think? Every one that is not willing to take this ground must regard himself as a stranger to the grace of God. He is by no means in a state of justification. If he is not resolved upon doing what he knows to be right, let public sentiment be as it may, it is proof positive that he loves the praise of men more than the praise of God.

And let me say to the impenitent sinners present--You see what it is to be a Christian. It is to be governed by the authority of God in all things, and not by public sentiment, to live not by hopes and fears, but by supreme consecration of yourself unto God. You see that if you mean to be religious, you must count the cost. I will not flatter you. I will never try to coax you to become religious, by keeping back the truth. If you mean to be Christians, you must give yourselves wholly up to Christ. You cannot float along to heaven on the waves of public sentiment. I will not deceive you on this point.

Do you ask, sinner, what is to become of all these professors of religion, who are conformed to the world, and who love the praise of men more than the praise of God? I answer--They will go to hell, with you, and with all other hypocrites. Just as certain as that the friendship of the world is in enmity with God.

Wherefore, come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, saith the Lord, I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. And now, who will do it? In the church and among sinners, who will do it? Who? Who is on the Lord's side? Who is willing to say, "We will no longer go with the multitude to do evil, but are determined to do the will of God, in all things whatsoever, and let the world think or say of us as it may." As many of you as are now willing to do this, will signify it by rising in your places before the congregation, and will then kneel down, while prayer is offered, that God would accept and seal your solemn covenant to obey God henceforth in everything, through evil report and through good report.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/religion-of-public-opinion/>

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