

The Church of Christ at Oberlin, Ohio

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney addresses the Church of Christ at Oberlin, reflecting on his ministry in England and discussing the potential for his pastoral resignation while encouraging prayer and spiritual growth.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:6

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Pastoral Care"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the Church of Christ at Oberlin, Ohio, expressing his deep affection and concern for their spiritual growth while he is away in England. He shares the overwhelming work of grace he has witnessed, with many inquirers and conversions, despite facing challenges such as intemperance and resistance from the ministry. Finney contemplates resigning from his pastoral role to allow the church to find a pastor who can be present and fully dedicated to their needs. He emphasizes that his decision is motivated solely by the best interests of the church and encourages them to seek God's guidance in their next steps. Finney concludes with a heartfelt request for their prayers for him and his wife as they continue their ministry.

Transcript

To The Church of Christ at Oberlin, Ohio

13 June 1850

[MS in Oberlin College Archives 31/4/1]

Tabernacle House. Finsbury. London. England. 13th June 1850.

To the Church of Christ at Oberlin. Ohio. America.

My Dearest Brethren & Sisters.

This is not for Publication through the press.} I have now been absent from you now for more than eight months & have heard with deep interest of the work of grace amongst you since I left. I have thought from month to month of writing to you but so abundant & even overwhelming have been my labors as to forbid my doing so in a manner that should be either satisfactory to myself or useful to you. When I left you I expected to have been with you before this time but the Lord has opened to me a door so wide & effectual in this land & there are withal so many adversaries, & yet such an abundant promise of rich & glorious

results that I dare not leave this field at present.

I am now writing in the former study of Whitfield & live in the house in which he lived, & preach in his pulpit. We have at present not far from one thousand inquirers, & the number is no doubt daily increasing.

Conversions are to all human appearance multiplying rapidly & on every side I see the doors open & the fields white unto the harvest in so much that could I multiply myself one hundred fold I could not meet the demands upon me for spiritual labor. Since I have been in England the ways of God have been truly wonderful towards me. I encountered at first a host of prejudices & misapprehensions but the Lord has opened my way in a marvellous manner. Intemperance is the greatest hindrance to the progress of religion here, of any form of open iniquity, & the aggravation of this evil lies in the fact that the ministry generally resist the temperance reformation. Ecclesiastical bodies when memorialized upon the subject & besought to take action & speak out in favor of reform will not so much as read the memorials. They act as Congress used to do over the subject of Antislavery Petitions.

You can easily understand what must result from such a state

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of things. On this account I have at times been led almost to despair of affecting much in this country of permanent good. But still hope & labor on, & I am happy & grateful to be able to say, not without great reason for encouragement. But the particular reason for this note is to say that it may be for your interest as I am so long absent, that I should resign my Pastoral relation & that you should secure another Pastor who can be steadily with you & devote his whole time to pastoral duties.

You are aware that I have no personal reasons for continuing in my present relation to you. I think I can truly say that from the first my only desire has been to promote your interest & not my own in the relation I have so long sustained to you. My health & my other duties have been such that I have, as you know, often desired to be released from the responsibilities of the relation I sustain[e]d to you as pastor, but still I must acknowledge that when the question was looked at on all hands I have been constrained to agree with you in judgment, that it was not best for me to insist on being excused. I am sure that a regard to your good has hitherto withheld me from insisting upon your receiving my resignation. Your present state may be such as to render it expedient for you to except my resignation & to choose another pastor. If so I beg of you to do so. As heretofore my own concern must be governed by a regard to your interest. If now you can agree upon some one else, & can obtain one who will meet your wants & be assisted in him, I hope by all means you will do so, & receive this letter as my resignation of the pastoral relation.

But if in your judgement it is most for your interest that our relations be left for the present undisturbed, I will as heretofore remain in the relation of your pastor until further developments of providence shall open the way for you to secure a pastor who will meet your wants & one in whom you can unite.

I now expect to return to you as early, at least, as next spring. But Providence may order it otherwise. Most sincerely do I love you all & most earnestly do I beg an interest in your prayers & that you will not fail day & night to bear me and my dear wife upon your hearts at a throne of grace, that we may have years equal to our day & that we may reap an abundant harvest of souls to the glory of our common Lord. I shall be happy to hear that you have taken any action on this commemoration which may seem wisest & best to you. If you can better meet your own wants by accepting this as my resignation, do so by all means, for I say again, & you will belie[v]e me, that I seek your good & not my own & desire you to release me if in your

judgment you can do so consistently with the best interests of religion among you. Dear Wife joins in much love.

Your Pastor & brother, C. G. Finney.

Footnotes:

George Whitefield. Finney spelt the name without an e.

Finney should have written accept here.

i.e. assisted.

i.e. wisest.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/the-church-of-christ-at-oberlin-ohio/>

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