

Unbelief--No. 2

by Charles Finney

Unbelief is unreasonable and wicked because it goes against human nature and the evidence of God's character.

Scripture: Psalm 37:5, Matthew 17:20, Mark 16:16, John 5:44, Romans 8:32, 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, Hebrews 3:19, James 1:6, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Unbelief", "Faith in God's Promises"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the unreasonableness of unbelief, emphasizing that it contradicts the natural human inclination to trust testimony and the overwhelming evidence of God's character and promises. He argues that unbelief is not only irrational but also injurious, as it denies God's integrity and undermines the foundation of faith and obedience. Finney highlights the Atonement as the ultimate demonstration of God's love, which should inspire unwavering confidence in His promises. He identifies various causes of unbelief, including selfishness, pride, and a lack of understanding of faith, ultimately calling it the most grievous sin against God. The sermon serves as a powerful reminder of the necessity of faith in experiencing the fullness of God's grace and promises.

Transcript

TEXT.--Heb. 3:19: So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief.

--Mark 16:16: He that believeth not, shall be damned.

I am to show,

III. The unreasonableness of unbelief.

1. It is unreasonable, because confidence in testimony is natural to man. This is a law of his being. And until selfishness comes to take possession of his heart and blind him, in respect to any truth or thing that opposes his will or inclinations, it is one of the easiest and most natural exercises of the human mind, to confide in testimony. This is strikingly manifest in the conduct of very young children.

2. It is unreasonable, because confidence in testimony is one of the easiest and most natural exercises of the mind through every period of life. Society could not exist without it. All the business transactions of the world, turn upon this law of the mind, viz: its confidence in testimony. Every one knows or may know, that no such thing as government, or order, or happiness, could exist in any community without confidence.

3. It is unreasonable, because all evidence is in favor of unlimited and heart-felt confidence in the character and word of God.

4. Creation and Providence confirm the truths of the Bible, and, when properly understood, give forth the same lessons, so far as they go. The heavens above, the earth beneath, every thing within and without us, goes to confirm the proposition, that it is the perfection of reason to place the most unlimited confidence in God.

5. The works of creation and providence, when duly studied and understood, exhibit God in such a light as not only to confirm the testimony of the Bible, but to lead to the conclusion that the Bible means as much as it appears to mean, that God is to be trusted for all that He has promised, and that His promises mean as much as they say.

6. Unbelief is entirely unreasonable, because the atonement is the highest possible demonstration of God's intention to do to every human being all the good He wisely can. Certainly it is the opposite of every thing that is reasonable, to suppose that God should give His only begotten Son to die for men, and then willingly withhold any lesser good which He can wisely bestow upon them. And this is the reasoning and the conclusion of the Apostle: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"

7. In the Atonement alone we have the highest evidence that can be given, of the infinitely great love of God to every one of us--a degree of evidence that demands the most heart-felt confidence in His character, government, word, promises, providence, and carefulness for our temporal and eternal good. Reader, did you ever consider the amount and force of evidence contained in the Atonement, that God really loves you, that He loves you so much as to give His only begotten and well beloved Son to die in your stead? What higher evidence could you ask, expect, or conceive, that any being else loved you, than for him to give his own son to die to preserve your life. And should such a thing take place, would you not consider it the most shocking, unnatural, and abominable conduct conceivable, to withhold confidence in his love for you?

8. The Atonement so illustrates and confirms the love of God to men as to render it in the highest degree reasonable to put the most liberal construction on all His promises of good to them. Let me advert again to 2 Cor. 6:16-18, & 7:1-- "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." I have already said, that from these promises, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people; I will receive you and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters"--the Apostle infers the practicability, of entirely cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Now I would ask, if this is not one of the most reasonable inferences in the world? In the light of the Atonement, and considering the infinitely great love of God, as therein manifested, how much is it reasonable to expect God to mean, in such promises as these? What is naturally and fully implied in these and kindred promises, in view of His infinite love and the bountifulness of His heart as expressed in the Atonement? I do not hesitate to say, that it is in the highest degree unreasonable, in view of these promises alone, to draw any other inference than that which the Apostle

drew from them. And what shall we say of the almost numberless exceeding great and precious promises, that were given for the express purpose of making us partakers of the divine nature? It must be admitted, that they conduct us at once to the conclusion, that it is utterly unreasonable to believe any thing less than that God will "sanctify us, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve us blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

9. The evidence contained in the Atonement, of the infinitely great love of God to us, is, if such a thing be possible, confirmed and strengthened by the great patience and forbearance of God exercised towards this world since the Atonement--His patience, and perseverance in using means to induce mankind to accept the Atonement--His striving by His Spirit, and all the influences He exerts to sanctify and save, seem to pile demonstration upon demonstration of His infinite love and disposition to do us good. And certainly nothing in earth or hell can be conceived of as more unreasonable than unbelief.

10. To stumble at any difficulties which really lie in the way, is utterly unreasonable, for these difficulties are just what we ought to expect, and a moment's consideration would show us that it is naturally impossible it should not be so. We are but in the infancy of our being. It is but a very little that could be, by any possibility, explained to us in this world. There is scarcely a thing in the Universe that does not involve, in minds like ours, mysteries, which we do not and cannot understand. Our own nature, the nature and constitution of every thing around us, present to us mysteries as impenetrable, and difficulties as great, so far as we know, as any of the truths of religion. And yet, on other than religious subjects, we receive testimony, and believe facts, where we cannot comprehend all the philosophy and explanation of them. We are shut up to this necessity in relation to almost every thing in the Universe. And how infinitely unreasonable it is, in the midst of our ignorance of material things, to stumble at difficulties, perplex ourselves with mysteries, and withhold confidence in the testimony of God, simply because the why and the how are not in many instances understood by us.

11. It is vastly unreasonable, not to feel an inward assurance that God's promises shall all be fulfilled. If I owed you a thousand dollars, you might have reason to feel insecure in regard to the payment, and should you come to me and say, I doubt your responsibility, I want to feel at rest upon the subject, and wish you to give me further security, this might be very reasonable. But will you ask further security of God? Who will underwrite for Him? Who or what can make His promises more secure? Would you have a warrantee deed of the Universe, a bond and mortgage, sealed, signed, and delivered, and registered in the court of heaven? Why all this you have and more too. For "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." And now do you say, why, I want to feel in my heart, the assurance that God will fulfill His promises to me. Feel in your heart! Do not the promise and oath of God make you feel in your heart that what He has said shall come to pass? What an infinitely unreasonable and abominable state of mind is this, that can complain of the want of a felt assurance, that the God of infinite truth will not lie? Why, what security can He give? Who can be His bail? Who, or what in the Universe can make His promise more certain?

But suppose you had the bond, and mortgage, and oath of the richest man in America, for a thousand dollars. Would not your neighbors consider you a mad man, if you did not feel in your heart that your debt was secure? Yes, you would be pronounced deranged by every court of law or equity in the land. I recollect to have heard of a case, where a man of wealth became a hypochondriac and made himself continually unhappy, lest himself and family should become paupers. His wealthy connections, to relieve

his mind, offered to secure to him a large amount of money annually, for the support of his family. He replied, "that would be of no avail, that 'riches would take to themselves wings,' that he could put no confidence in any such security." Finally, a commission of lunacy was issued to secure his property, and he pronounced a lunatic, in view of these developments of mind. Now I do not hesitate to say, that his state of mind was almost the perfection of reason, when compared with the infinite unreasonableness and insanity of not feeling the utmost assurance that all the promises of God should be fulfilled. Why, what was there so very unreasonable in the conduct of this man? Why, he refused to trust in human security and responsibility, for the maintenance of his family. Now in one sense this might have been unreasonable, and the court may have done right in pronouncing him a lunatic or an unreasonable man. But if this is insanity, what state of mind is that which cannot confide in the testimony and oath of the infinite and ever blessed God of truth? Why, beloved, if God has promised to maintain your family--if He has told you, "trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed"--if the infinitely faithful God has promised to circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul--if He has promised to "sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve you blameless"--is it not the widest departure from reason that can be conceived of, for you not to feel assured in your heart, that all this shall be done?

IV. Causes or occasions of unbelief.

1. Selfishness prevents attention to the evidence of God's character. Men are so taken up with seeking their own private interests as to have very little time for consideration in regard to the real character of God as manifested in the works of creation, providence, and grace. Men in their delirious scramble after their selfish interests almost lose the idea even of the existence of God, and to all practical purposes they often quite do this.
2. The selfishness of men prevents their receiving the idea that God is benevolence. Being conscious of their own selfishness, and witnessing the same principle in all around them, they come to regard all intelligent beings as selfish. It is amazing to see how difficult it is to possess the human mind of the true knowledge of God. God charges mankind with thinking that He is altogether such a one as they are; and to judge others by ourselves is indeed very natural, however presumptuous and blasphemous it may be in respect to God.
3. Consciousness of our own hypocrisy in many things, and the constant developments of insincerity and hypocrisy in almost all around us, naturally begets in us distrust, or a want of confidence in the sincerity and disinterested benevolence of every body.
4. Consciousness of our own and evidence of others unmercifulness, renders it difficult to conceive of the infinite mercy of God.
5. The fact that men seek and think they find their happiness in getting all they can, blinds their minds in regard to the fact, that God's character is directly the reverse of this--that benevolence is His character--that doing, instead of getting good; and that giving instead of receiving good, constitute His happiness. Men cry continually, like the horse-leech, 'Give, give,' and are never satisfied with appropriating to themselves, but God on the other hand, finds His happiness in giving and in pouring out blessings from His infinite fulness upon all that can be persuaded to receive them.
6. Men are naturally unwilling to conceive of God's character as the direct opposite of their own. And this is one cause of their unbelief.

7. Unwillingness to believe whatever rebukes our sin, is another cause of unbelief.

8. A regard to our own reputation, is another fruitful source of unbelief. John 5:44: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Here Christ plainly teaches, that a regard to our own reputation will prevent our receiving and believing the testimony of God.

9. Prejudice is often a fruitful source of unbelief. To pre-judge or make up your mind on any question before you know all the facts, is of course in the highest degree calculated to bar the mind against a knowledge and belief of the truth.

10. Committed pride is another fruitful occasion of unbelief. When a man has committed himself in favor of any error, or against any truth, he is in the greatest danger of never coming to a knowledge of the truth. He will almost of course, reject in unbelief, any light that might correct his darkness.

11. Sensuality is another fruitful source of unbelief. Let any man give himself up to indulgence of his appetites, and his mind will become dark as midnight to all but sensible objects. He will "walk after the sight of his eyes, and the hearing of his ears;" but is never likely to believe or know any thing of God as he ought to know.

12. Confidence in the opinion of those who are themselves unbelieving will of course prevent our believing the testimony of God. This is an amazingly fruitful source of unbelief. There are great multitudes who confide more in men than in God, who suffer their confidence in God to be entirely destroyed or prevented, by the unbelieving evasions of those who profess to have, but who really have not faith in God.

13. The temptations of Satan, as every one knows, are the occasion of much unbelief. By contradicting God and shaking the confidence of our first parents in God, he ruined the world.

14. A want of a clear idea of what faith really is, is another fruitful source of unbelief. Many think that they already believe, because they admit the truths of the gospel, and have no consciousness of positive disbelief. They overlook the fact that faith is the mind's felt, and joyful assurance of the truth of God. They are aware, that they have no felt and conscious assurance. They would think this a very high and rare attainment in religion, to have a felt, clear, conscious assurance, that God's promises would be fulfilled to them. Thus supposing that what really constitutes the faith of the gospel is some very high and rare attainment, they take up with something short, and rest in a state of mind that is the mere absence of felt disbelief.

15. Gluttony, and every species of intemperance, are sure causes of unbelief. They all grieve the Spirit of God. They sensualize and degrade the mind, and bring it into bondage to the flesh.

16. Our selfish will, more than any thing and every thing else, precludes the exercise of faith. The Jews could resist the evidence of miracles. And who has not observed how difficult it is, to beget confidence in any mind, against the will. Indeed the thing is impossible. Confidence is an act of the will itself; and it is often amazing to see what an amount of evidence may be accumulated before the mind, and yet the heart withhold its confidence. The truth is, that men do not believe God, because they will not.

V. The wickedness of unbelief.

1. It is the most unreasonable abomination in the Universe. I mean as I say. There is not so great a perversion of right reason in the whole universe of mind, as unbelief. Should the son of a great prince, who possessed immeasurable wealth, be filled with cares and great anxieties, lest he should want his daily bread, who would not say that this was a vastly unreasonable and ridiculous state of mind. And suppose, to quiet his anxiety, his father gave him a bond and mortgage of all that he possessed, and made him secure by every possible security; notwithstanding which his fears should still prevail, and he should say, "I cannot realize and feel assured in my own mind, that my temporal necessities shall be supplied." Who would not pronounce this to be a most unreasonable state of mind? But how would this begin to compare with the infinite unreasonableness of that state of mind, that complains that it does not realize and cannot feel assured, that all its wants, spiritual and temporal, shall be supplied by God?

2. It is the most injurious sin against God that can be committed. It implies and includes:

(1.) A flat denial of the integrity of His character.

(2.) It is denying His attributes.

(3.) It charges Him with hypocrisy, and actually says to God, "Thou makest high pretensions of love to me--of thine ability and willingness to supply all my wants. Thou professest infinite compassion, and boastest of thine infinite grace. Thou averrest, that thou are able and willing to meet the necessities of my nature--hast given thy pledge and thine oath, and sworn by two immutable things, by which thou sayest it is impossible for thee to lie; and yet, Lord, I do not feel in my heart, that there is a word of truth in all these professions. I have no confidence in them, and do not feel in my mind as if they were true."

(4.) It is plainly charging God with lying, and that too, under oath.

(5.) It is charging Him with infinite folly and inconsistency. Indeed unbelief cannot lodge in any mind, without virtually charging home upon God, the very worst character of any being in the Universe. For when we take into consideration God's promises and professions, how can we possibly exercise unbelief, without virtually charging Him with the very opposite of all His promises and professions.

Take again the illustration of a student, whose father has again and again, by letter, assured him that all his wants should be supplied. Now if these assurances were full, often repeated, and even backed up by an oath, it is easy to see, this son could not doubt or make himself at all uneasy about his temporal support, without calling in question his father's ability or willingness. And now suppose the father had made as multiplied, and great, and various promises as God has; and suppose he had made as great a sacrifice, to promote the well-being of his son as God has to promote our well-being, could any thing be conceived more injurious to the father's feelings and character, than for him to have and manifest no confidence in his father's word.

3. Unbelief has the most injurious tendency of any sin in the Universe:

(1.) To ourselves, unbelief renders all heart-obedience impossible. How can we obey God from the heart, when we have no confidence in Him? All obedience to any government, parental or state government, or to the moral government of God, implies and must necessarily be based upon confidence in the ruler. If private or public confidence is destroyed, just in the same degree is the obedience of the heart rendered impossible.

(2.) It is in its tendency the most injurious sin to the universe of creatures that can be conceived. It is a most contagious abomination. How easily unbelief prevailed over our first parents, when the serpent suggested to Eve, that God was not sincere in his prohibition. It is truly wonderful to witness the contagious nature of unbelief. Let any one suggest a query and a doubt, or manifest in his conduct, that he has no confidence in God and His promises, and the influence seems to go forth almost with the power of omnipotence. If professors of religion manifest by their careless lives, their unbelief in the guilt and danger of sinners, it seems to act like a charm upon them. The most solemn assertions and threatenings of God are not regarded by them as any thing more than the baseless fabric of a dream. I have often been astonished to see, how the suggestions of unbelief could chill every thing to death, and put down the spirit of prayer and confidence in God, in a revival of religion. Let any one but suggest, under such circumstances, that the revival is going to decline; that God cannot work, because such and such things are in the way--let him but call in question the application or meaning of the promise; and it will be seen how easily confidence can be destroyed, and how unbelief in any case, if it finds vent, will be in a community like the letting out of waters.

4. Unbelief tends to annihilate Gods' influence over the Universe. His influence over mind consists in the estimation in which He is held by moral beings. Where ever there is not a felt confidence in God, His influence over that mind is destroyed. And thus unbelief tends to the complete annihilation of the government of God. One great design of the Atonement was to restore public confidence. Satan had suggested, and our first parents had believed him, that God was selfish, in prohibiting their eating a certain fruit, on the ground that they would "become as gods, knowing good and evil."The Atonement was designed to exhibit in the strongest manner, God's disinterested love to men, that He might restore their confidence in Him, and thus gain dominion over their hearts, for their good and His own glory. In the Atonement He has given the highest evidence that He possibly could give, both of the disinterested nature and infinite degree of his love. But unbelief sets this all aside, and declares after all, that it has no confidence whatever in God. Thus it completely annihilates the power of moral government, and renders the gospel the savor of death unto death. It is a direct refusal to be satisfied with the infinite evidence that God has given of His disinterested love to man. It is virtually saying, "I will not be satisfied with any evidence that God has given or can give, of the integrity of His character. He is not to be trusted. He shall not have my confidence, say or do what He may."

5. Unbelief is the most grievous to God of any sin that can be committed. Suppose a husband should find, that his wife had no confidence at all in him, and suppose him to entertain for her the sincerest affection, and always to have manifested it in every possible way. Now what could be more grievous to his heart than to find that his wife had no confidence in him? If, under these circumstances, a husband would have cause of grief--would have reason to feel deeply injured, and wounded to the very heart; what must be the state of God's feelings, when He sees that His creatures have no confidence in Him, notwithstanding the infinite pains He has taken to secure their confidence, and thereby save their souls.

6. Unbelief "tramples the Son of God under foot, and counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace." It says, I have no confidence in the necessity, or nature, or reality of the Atonement, and as for Jesus Christ, I do not believe that "His blood cleanseth from all sin." I do not feel in my heart, that He is "my wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I in fact do not realizingly believe any such thing.

7. It is the cause of all other sins. A little reflection will convince any one who will look at the subject, that unbelief or the withholding a felt confidence in the character, word, and promises of God, is the cause of

worldly mindedness, and selfishness, under all the forms in which they exist in this world. Let the mind but have a conscious realizing assurance, that all the infinitely interesting things contained in the Bible are realities, and it instantly breaks the power of selfishness and pride, and every other abomination, and delivers the soul up to the entire dominion of truth.

8. It is the setting aside of infinite evidence, and therefore, the greatest conceivable departure from the law of our nature. It has been already remarked, that belief in testimony is natural to man; and the mind in an unperverted state is as yielding as air to the influence of evidence. But what must be the state of that mind that can withhold confidence in God, in the face of all the evidence He has given of the infinite excellence of His character. It is the most outrageous mutiny against the laws of our being, the most abominable setting at nought and turning upside down all of the tendencies of unperverted mind that can be conceived.

9. It is the most horrible exhibition of prejudice that the universe any where presents, or ever witnessed. But for the appalling exhibition of the facts in the case, it would seem utterly incredible that mankind should not be entirely satisfied, and universally and continually exercise the most implicit confidence in the word, and character, and promises of God. We sometimes witness very shocking exhibitions of prejudice, in one human being towards another, insomuch that the prejudiced mind can really believe nothing good of him against whom the prejudice is entertained. Whatever appears to be fair, he suspects of hypocrisy; and accounts for any appearance of goodness, in any and every way, rather than admit the reality. Every one feels that there are few more hateful exhibitions of the human character than this. But how infinitely detestable is that state of mind that is so given up to prejudice against God, as at once to set aside the infinite weight of testimony in His favor and to withhold all practical and heartfelt confidence in His word and oath?

10. God has done all that the nature of the case admits, to secure and even compel the exercise of confidence in Him. Suppose some mischievous mind to have introduced rebellion into a human government, by insinuations that had destroyed the confidence of the people in their ruler. And suppose, that while he had the power to overcome and crush, and slay them all at once, he should notwithstanding so pity them as to give his only begotten and well beloved son to atone for their sins. Suppose he had made every exhibition of his disinterested love that could be made, and yet, confidence was withholden, and his revolted subjects continued to maintain their pernicious distrust in his character. Well might he ask, "what more could I have done that I have not done to secure the confidence of this people. I have laid down my life to do you good, and how is it that ye do not believe?" For one might think it impossible, that unbelief should have a place in this world, after all the manifestations of God's love that have been made to it. But O, what shall we say, when we find not only the heathen world, but the Christian world, and even the Christian Church, withholding confidence in God, and manifesting the most shocking unbelief, in regard to His providence and word? What more can God do to secure public and individual confidence? What higher evidence can He give? or, in His own emphatic language, "What more can I do for my vineyard that I have not done?"

11. Unbelief is eminently a willful sin. It is a matter of common observation, that it is exceedingly hard to make men believe what they are unwilling to believe. And when the will is strongly opposed to any truth it is next to impossible to retain the confidence of the mind in that truth. But what must be the strength of depravity in that heart--what must be the power of prejudice, what invincible strength must there be in the opposition of that will, when the confidence of the mind is not secured by infinite evidence; when the mind can look over the whole field and see mountains of evidence piled upon mountains, and yet feel not a

particle of inward confidence and resting of heart in the character and word of the blessed God.

The influence of the will in modifying our belief, on almost any subject, is strikingly illustrated in a great many ways. A drunkard does not believe that alcohol is poison. A Universalist does not believe that there is any hell. An epicure does not believe that his innutricious condiments are injurious to his health. A tea and coffee drinker will not believe that those substances are injurious. And it is often striking to observe the amount of influence which the will has in modifying the opinions of men. And when we come to speak of the faith of the gospel, which implies and includes volition, it is self-evident that there can be no faith where the will does not yield. And to talk of an unwilling faith is to speak of an unwilling willingness. The truth is that men are not influenced by evidence in cases where their will is opposed to the truth. They are stubborn and rebellious, not convinced, not humbled, and their confidence not gained, let God say what He will.

REMARKS.

1. One unbelieving soul may do immense evil; especially if he be a minister of the gospel. How easy it is for a blind minister to keep his congregation for ever in darkness, in regard to the meaning of the gospel and the fulness of the salvation provided.
2. A mind under the influence of unbelief, is a very dangerous interpreter of the word of God. Without faith, no man discovers the true meaning of the Bible. Nor can he by any possibility discover its spiritual import, without the state of mind which is always implied in a right understanding of the word of God.
3. The Church is robbed of its inheritance by unbelief. Inasmuch as the promises are conditioned upon faith, and cannot in their own nature be fulfilled where there is not faith, how immense is the evil of unbelief in the Church of God? Gospel rest and salvation lie before them in all their fulness, completeness of Christian character in Christ Jesus, and the sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, are proffered to them and urged with infinite sincerity upon them; but all are rejected through unbelief. Those who are unbelieving in regard to the fulness of Christ's salvation, take away the key of knowledge. They neither enter into gospel rest themselves, and those that would enter they hinder; especially is this true of those ministers who call in question the attainability of entire consecration to God in this life.
4. Unbelief is the last sin that deserves any commiseration. And yet it is very generally whined over, as if it were a calamity rather than a crime.
5. An unlearned but spiritual mind will understand the Bible, much more readily than learned unbelief.
6. A spiritual mind is learned in spiritual things; and a mind may know much about other things, and have no spiritual discernment, in respect to the truth of God.
7. It is often distressing to see a man who thinks himself learned, look with a kind of contempt upon the opinions of those whom he considers unlearned in respect to the real meaning of the Bible.
8. Faith sees the doctrine of entire sanctification abundantly revealed in the word of God. And when once the attention of the mind is directed to the examination of this question, it has often appeared wonderful to me, that any one should doubt whether this is a doctrine of revelation. I have already remarked upon the inference which Paul drew, from the last verses of the sixth chapter of 2d Corinthians: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Wherefore come

out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now the faith of Paul instantly recognized in these promises, which he quoted from the Old Testament, the truth that entire sanctification is attainable in this life; and immediately adds--"Having therefore these promises, dearly, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here, then, Paul saw a sufficient guaranty for the belief of this doctrine, and that to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," was, by the grace of God, put entirely within our reach. Now if Paul could draw such an inference as this, from these promises, (and who, when they consider what is implied in the promises, can say that his inference was not legitimate?) what shall we say of that mind, who can look over all the exceeding great and precious promises which have been given, that we might be made partakers of the divine nature, and yet see nothing to inspire the confidence, that a state of entire sanctification in this life, is in such a sense attainable, as to make its attainment a reasonable object of pursuit?

9. No man rightly understands and believes the Bible, who is living in the indulgence of any known sin. There are multitudes, who seem to be trying to maintain a state of spirituality, whole in some things, and perhaps in many things, they are not entirely upright in their lives. They do not walk according to the best light they have, and are yet trying to exercise faith and keep up spiritual intercourse with God. The thing is naturally and for ever impossible. Spiritual mindedness and disobedience are direct contraries. It is absurd to expect to have communion with God, and yet live in the indulgence of any known sin.

10. Many think they have faith, who are yet conscious that they have no inward, felt confidence or assurance of mind, in regard to the word and promises of God. They are not conscious of a direct doubting or a disbelieving, what God has said; but are in that state of mind, that, while it does not deny directly and consciously, yet has no felt, practical confidence in the truth of God.

11. The lowest degree of real faith has, for a long time, been looked upon as a rare attainment in piety. That state of mind in which a person feels a confident assurance, that God's promises shall be fulfilled; that state of mind, that views the truth of God as a reality; has been looked upon, and spoken of, as evidencing a high degree of spirituality; when, in fact, such a state of mind is essential to the exercise of real faith.

12. In view of this subject, and of the present state of the Church, is it wonderful that Christ inquired, "When I come shall I find faith upon the earth?"

13. No one believes who finds it hard to love. True 'faith works by love.' Love is the natural and certain result of living faith.

14. No one believes who finds it hard to repent. Can he find it difficult to repent of his sins, who sees the death of Christ to be a reality?

15. No one believes, who has not the spirit of thanksgiving and praise. Multitudes of individuals suppose themselves to believe, who rarely, if ever, are exercised with a spirit of thanksgiving and of praise to God. Can it be possible that any mind can believe, and have a realizing sense of the infinite love, and truth, and grace of God, and yet have no heart to praise Him?

16. No one believes, who find it difficult to pray. Can a man who has a realizing sense of the state of the world and of the Church, and of the willingness and ability of God to bless mankind, restrain prayer? Will

not his very breath be prayer, devotion, and praise? Will not his very heart within him be liquid as water? Will not his bowels of compassion yearn mightily, over a dying world? And will not his soul stand in a continual attitude of thanksgiving, and praise, and supplication?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/unbelief-no-2/>

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