

Overwhelming Conviction

by Robert Wurtz II

The sermon emphasizes the importance of revival and conviction in leading people to salvation, using the example of the revival in Rome, New York, led by Charles Finney.

Duration: 46:36

Scripture: Exodus 32:6, Psalm 111:10, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:4, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Hebrews 3:15, James 4:8

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Conviction Of Sin"

Description

In this sermon transcript, Charles Finney recounts a powerful evening service where the conviction of the Holy Spirit was so strong that he considered dismissing the meeting. However, he decided to address the people gently and point them to Christ as their only remedy. The conviction was so intense that Finney could only speak for a few minutes before the people could hardly endure it. He describes the atmosphere as solemn and filled with awe, where everyone felt the presence of God.

Transcript

For this opportunity to be here, God, we're thankful to come together with those, Lord, who desire revival. Lord, we just pray tonight, Lord, that your hand would be upon us. Lord, that your hand would be upon our equipment, that it would be upon our hearts.

Lord, that we would have a desire, Lord, an overwhelming desire to see revival. Lord, I pray for Sermon Index, God, and those that are here tonight, Lord, that you would touch all of our ears and hearts, God, that we would hear. God, that our hearts would be changed by this message.

Lord, something maybe that is said, Lord, from this message from the past, Lord, would touch hearts when we ask these things. In Christ's name, amen. Praise the Lord.

I've entitled our study tonight, Overwhelming Conviction, and we're going to look at some of the accounts of the revival that took place in Rome, New York, around the latter part of 1825. Rome is a city that is situated today in Oneida County, New York. It's about 35,000 people or so.

The city has a long history. Actually, you can trace it back really even to the 1600s, but Fort Stanwyck was built there as a military guard post in the 1700s. As a result, they had begun to build the village of Rome around that.

In the latter part of 1825, the Reverend Moses Jallet, pastor of the Congregational Church in Rome, and one of his assistants heard what the Lord was doing in Western. They came to see what was going on. They were both greatly impressed with what God was doing.

Charles Finney recalls that he could see that the Spirit of God was stirring them up, as he put it, to the very deepest foundations of their minds. After a few days, Mr. Jallet and his associate, Miss H., came up again to see him. Miss H. was a very devout and earnest Christian girl.

On their second trip coming up, Mr. Jallet said to Brother Finney, He said, It seems to me that I have a new Bible. I never before understood the promises as I do now. I never got a hold of them before, he said, and I cannot rest.

My mind is full of the subjects, and the promises are new to me. As I make note here, this is but an example, one example, of the profound effect upon the lives of those who attended the meetings of Charles Finney. I can honestly say that to this very day, the revival accounts and the sermons that are left behind are certainly inspiring, and I believe there is much that we can learn from them by studying them.

Trading Places When the revival was in full strength at Western, Mr. Jallet persuaded Finney to exchange a Sunday with him. Mr. Jallet was going to preach at Western, and Finney was going to preach at Rome. See, Finney consented, but reluctantly.

He didn't want to do this. But on the Saturday before the day of the exchange, while on his way to Rome, he had greatly regretted that he had even consented to make this exchange. You see, he was afraid that Mr. Jallet was going to preach some of his old sermons.

And he knew very well that they could not be adapted to the revival that was going on. See, when God begins to send a revival, there is going to be a fresh word from God. And I believe that people need to be in prayer and seeking God, the ministers in particular, and knowing what God is saying at that moment.

You can't just go back and dig up some old notebooks where you have a bunch of old sermons, some old standbys, and think that God is going to use that. This was Finney's concern. See, he knew that these old sermons of Mr. Jallet's could not be adapted to work in this revival.

But he consented nevertheless to trade places with him. He was going to go and preach in Rome. Mr. Jallet was going to go back to Western and preach where revival was already in progress.

But the people were praying, Finney says, so he felt a bit better knowing that it may stifle the work. It may not stifle the work, rather, but it could in fact hinder it. But nevertheless, God would work and everything would be alright.

He went to Rome and he preached three times on Sunday. See, as Charles Finney preached the word, the word of God took a great effect. He writes that he could see during the day that many of the people's heads were actually down.

And that a great number of the people were bowed down with the great conviction of sin. See, in the morning service he had preached from the text, the carnal mind is enmity against God. And he follows it up with something similar in the afternoon and the evening services.

And when Mr. Jallet returned from Western the following day, he did not realize that God was beginning to move with such power. He decided he was going to call for what they would call inquirers. To see if anyone in the congregation was inquiring, for example, about their salvation or about their soul.

And he wanted Charles Finney to be present. Inquirers are people who are anxious about their spiritual condition and may perhaps desire the plan of salvation. This isn't a term that we really use today, but just to give you an idea of some of his language, that's the word they're using.

We must remember that this was at a time when altar calls were not offered after each sermon as we would see it today. We're accustomed to having altar calls given in our services, at least in many services, especially evangelical services. People are offered an opportunity to come forward or whatever the case may be.

But this was a relatively new thing that Charles Finney was, of course, very much responsible for bringing to pass. Charles Finney implemented altar calls as a further expression of what was formerly called sitting in the anxious seat. See, they used to have a few rows of pews that would be toward the front of the church.

As I understand it, the people would come under great conviction if they wanted to inquire about their salvation, they would go up and sit in the front part of the church. Before, when people were concerned about their souls, they would be taken to a back room and they were counseled and then there they were prayed for. The altar call is one method that many scholars attribute directly to Charles Finney.

So we can sort of think Charles Finney for the altar call in the way that at least it's conducted in modern times. Methods of preaching revival that Finney used. See, Finney personally recounts his methods of preaching as follows.

He said this, he said, I have said before that the means that I had used all along thus far in promoting revivals were much prayer, secret and social, in other words, praying in secret and also praying in like prayer groups, public preaching, personal conversation, in other words, like personal witnessing and talking about the things of God and visitation from house to house. And when inquirers became multiplied, I appointed meetings for them and invited those who were inquiring to me for instruction suited to their necessities. These were the means and the only means Charles Finney said that I had used thus far in attempting to secure the conversion of souls.

It's helpful to keep in mind that Charles Finney comparatively was a young Christian when he began to preach revivals and he wasn't a seasoned Christian that had been serving the Lord for 20 years when God began using him. See, God started using Charles Finney almost right off in his Christian walk and he started using him for revivals. See, a meeting for anxious inquirers was held and Mr. DeLay asked Charles Finney to be present and when he arrived back to visit from Western, he found the large sitting room crowded to its utmost capacity.

Finney recounts, Mr. DeLay looked around with surprise and manifest disturbance for he found that the meeting was composed of many of the most intelligent and influential members of his congregation and especially was largely composed of prominent young men in the town. See, you can't always just assume that people are right with God because they come to church. We can't always just assume that because someone may be highly intelligent or knowledgeable about the word that they are really where they need to be.

We spent a little time, he continues, while attempting to converse with them and I soon saw that the feeling was so deep that there was a danger of an outburst of feeling that would become almost uncontrollable. Now this is one of the first portions that we are going to discuss tonight where Charles Finney describes a level of conviction to the place where it would become very difficult. You would really have to be almost controlled by the Holy Spirit just to keep the service itself in control because conviction would be so great.

I therefore said to Mr. DeLay, it will not do to continue this meeting in this shape. I will make some remarks such as they need and I will dismiss them. Nothing had been said or done to create any excitement in this meeting.

The conviction that the people felt was spontaneous. See, the Spirit of God was working with such power that saying anything would make, as Finney put it, the stoutest man writhe on their seats as if a sword had been thrust into their hearts. See, it's near impossible in our day for a person who has never witnessed such a scene to realize what force the truth sometimes exerts under the power of the Holy Ghost.

See, Finney continues, it was indeed a sword. It was a two-edged sword. The pain that it produced when searchingly presented in only a few words of conversation would create a distress that seemed almost unendurable.

See, we have not seen conviction like that. And I believe if we're going to have revival in our day with the level of hardness of heart that we see today and the level of gospel hardness that we see in our times, there is going to have to be tremendous conviction to see that come to pass. Obviously, Mr. Gillette had never saw such conviction and became very disturbed.

Finney says that he turned pale and he called out to him, What shall we do? What shall we do? And Finney said, I put my hands on his shoulder and in a whisper I said, Keep quiet. Keep quiet, Brother Gillette. Finney then addressed the people in as gentle but plain a manner as he could, calling their attention to their only remedy and assuring them that it was a present and an all-sufficient one.

Finney recounts, I pointed them to Christ as the Savior of the world and I kept on this strain as long as they could well endure it, which indeed was only a few minutes. Think about conviction like that. You think about conviction so strong that the man of God is not even able to speak or to preach or to minister because just preaching and ministering creates a situation where the conviction becomes so great that the people cannot hardly endure it.

Mr. Gillette became so agitated that I stepped up to him and, taking him by the arm, I said, Let us pray. We knelt down in the middle of the room, Finney continues, where he had been standing. I led in prayer and in a low, unimpassioned voice interceded with the Savior to interpose His blood then and there and to lead all the sinners to accept the salvation which He offered and to believe to the saving of their souls.

See, the distress of the people deepened every moment. And Finney says, As I could hear their sobs and their sighs, I closed my prayer and I rose up suddenly from my knees. They all arose with me and I said this, Now please, go home without speaking a word to each other.

Try to keep silent and don't break out in any kind of boisterous manifestation of feeling. But go on without saying a word to your room. The conviction became so great upon the people that Finney had to use great wisdom and care just to keep the situation decent and in order.

The people were on the brink of breaking down or going into an all-out outburst. But Finney dismissed them to their rooms. See, this is another great example where modern ministers would feel the need to intervene into God's working or to give an alter call or whatever, but Finney did not.

Finney recalls what happens next. At this moment, a young man by the name of Mr. W., a clerk in Mr. H.'s store, being one of the first young men in the place, nearly so fainted that he fell upon some of the young men that stood near him and all of them partially swooned away and fell together. This had hardly happened that it produced a loud shrieking, but I hushed them down, Finney said, and I said to these young men, please set that door wide open and go out and let all of you retire in silence.

They did as I requested. They did not shriek, but they all went back to their rooms sobbing and sighing, and their sobs and sighs could be heard till they got well out into the street. This Mr. W., to whom I have alluded, which was of course the store clerk, kept silence till he entered the door where he lived, but he could not contain himself any longer.

He shut the door. He fell on the floor and burst out into a loud wailing in view of his awful condition. See, this brought the family all around him in a scattered conviction among the whole of them.

When I think about this particular incident that took place, again I have to go back to the jailer in Paul's day and how talking about how the Scripture talks about our whole family can be saved. You know, when the people in our family and our friends and the people that we work with see the dramatic change in the conversion that takes place in our life, it can bring conviction. God can use that in their life.

And we're seeing a prime example of this in this account that Finney gives. See, God used the broken condition of this man to preach a sermon to his whole family. In light of what they had heard preached and saw in this man, see, God poured out conviction upon them also.

This happened in several homes with different people who would fall under conviction. What a powerful means to bring salvation to an entire house. Think about it.

What a powerful means to bring salvation to a whole house. When the family watched the reaction of this man to what God was doing in themselves, they rightly responded. They became partakers of God's grace.

See, Finney wrote that the people who were converted in this way, people who would be converted in such a way that they saw their sin as for what it was and they fell before the Lord in great humility and great agony before God, would end up with such a joy that they were unable afterwards to contain themselves. See, the joy of the Lord is our strength. But that joy oftentimes flows out of the brokenness that comes when we rightly respond to what God is doing.

Waking up under conviction. Think about this. Waking up under conviction.

Finney recalls the events of the following day. He writes, The next morning, as soon as was fairly day, people began to call at Mr. Gillette's to have us go and visit members of their families whom they represented as being under the greatest conviction. We took a hasty breakfast and we started out.

As soon as we were in the streets, the people ran out from many houses and begged us to go into their homes. As we could only visit but one place at a time, we went into one house and many neighbors would rush in and fill even the largest room. We would stay and give them instruction.

Then he says for a short time, then we'd go to another house and the people would follow us. We found the most extraordinary state of things. Convictions were so deep and universal that we would sometimes go into a house and find some people in a kneeling posture and some prostrate on the floor.

We visited and conversed and prayed in this manner from house to house until noon. Finally, I said to Mr. Gillette, this will never do. We must have a meeting of inquiry.

We cannot go from house to house and we are not meeting the needs of the people at all. He agreed with me, but the question arose, where should we have this meeting? There's a man by the name of Mr. F. who had a hotel that could be used if they could just simply gain permission. Without difficulty, they obtained consent and then went immediately to the public schools with the notice that at one o'clock there was going to be a meeting, a meeting of inquiry, that is, at the hotel.

They went home, they ate dinner and started back for the meeting. Penny Despini describes this scene as he neared the hotel. We saw people hurrying, he says, and some of them were actually running to the meeting.

They were coming from every direction. By the time we were there, the room, though a large one, was crammed to its utmost capacity. Men and women crowded the apartment.

This meeting was very much like the one that we had had the night before. The feeling or the conviction was overwhelming. Some men of the strongest nerves were so cut down by the remarks which were made that they were unable to help themselves and they had to be taken home by their friends.

Think about that. Think about conviction, where people had to be taken home by their friends. This meeting lasted until nearly night.

It resulted in a great number of hopeful conversions and was the means of greatly extending the work on every side. You see, when we think about Holy Ghost conviction today, we think, well, God, this is dealing with someone in the closing two or three minutes of a sermon that is given, but this is not at all the case here with Charles Finney. Not at all.

The people had to be carried out from the meetings. Conviction in the courthouse. When Charles Finney preached that evening, Mr. Gallais appointed a meeting for inquiring for the next morning in the courthouse.

A meeting was held in the morning and again later in the evening. Finney recounts the evening service. He said, The meeting was hardly begun before the conviction deepened so much that to prevent an undesirable outburst of overwhelming feeling, I proposed to Mr. Gallais that we would dismiss the meeting and request the people to go in silence and Christians to spend the evening in secret prayer or in family prayer as might seem most desirable.

Sinners were exhorted not to sleep until they had given their hearts to God. After this, the work became so general that I preached every night, I think, watch this, for twenty nights in succession. Now, this is a man who gets up to preach who doesn't even use notes.

This is a man that often gets up to preach who doesn't even know what sermon text he's getting ready to preach from when he takes the pulpit. This is a man that's nothing for him to preach for two hours at a time and he has preached twenty nights in succession and twice on Sunday. Our prayer meetings during this

time, he said, were held in the church in the daytime.

The meeting was held one part of the day and the meeting for inquiring on the other part. In other words, you would have a prayer meeting and then later there would be a meeting and inquiring in case there were people who wanted to give their life to the Lord and know the plan of salvation, as it were. Every day, if I remember right, after the work had thus commenced, we held a prayer meeting and a meeting for inquiry with preaching in the evening.

So this is three events taking place each day. There was a solemnity throughout the whole place and an awe that made everybody feel that God was there. See, I believe that's the type of revival that I hear when I begin to hear people talk about revival that are really desperate to see God move.

I remember listening to some of the messages that actually the last messages that Leonard Ravenhill probably ever ministered and when you hear him ministering, though he's growing towards or into even his eighties, you can hear the desperation for revival in his voice. And I believe this is what he's talking about. When we hear what Charles Finney is saying, there was a solemnity, he said, throughout the whole place and an awe that made everybody feel that God was there.

That's the type of revival that will bring conviction. That's the type of revival that will change people's hearts. Beginnings of the altar call.

See, Charles Finney believed that when a person was truly converted, they should make a public confession or profession of their faith. This was a departure from previous methods that simply took a kind of a wait-and-see approach. See, Finney believed that a person could be brought to salvation at once after they had gone through the process of conversion.

While under great conviction, the people were often invited to sit in what they called the anxious seat in the front of the meeting place. Then he would occasionally ask the people even to stand up if they intended to serve Christ. Other times, he called them forward once there was some certainty that they had been saved.

See, a term that you'll hear frequently or see frequently when you're studying Finney's works is this term, hopefully converted. Hopefully converted. He never told people, you're saved.

You're good to go. You're alright. You never did this.

I don't find that in studying his writings. What he may say is that the person was hopefully converted. See, not knowing the hearts of men, it is impossible to fully know who was saved.

But upon seeing proofs of repentance and a verifiable and compelling evidence, Finney would consider them hopefully converted. See, a tree is known by its fruit. It is known by its fruit.

Jesus was very clear about this and so was John the Baptist. He felt as though he had been shot. For the latter part of this particular study that we're doing tonight, we're going to look at some pretty strong and I believe moving accounts of revival.

I believe they're some of the most powerful things that I have ever read. See, as this revival continued, ministers came in from neighboring towns and expressed great astonishment at what they saw and heard. Conversions were multiplying so rapidly that there was no way to know who was converted.

Therefore, every evening at the close of the sermon, Finney requested that all who had been converted that day would come forward in front of the pulpit that he might have a conversation with them. They were every night surprised by the number and class of persons that came forward. Finney accounts in another meeting, he says that one of our morning prayer meetings, the lower part of the church was full.

I arose and was making some remarks to the people when an unconverted man, a merchant, came into the meeting. He came along until he found a seat in front of me near to where I was speaking. He had sat but a few moments, but a few moments, when he fell from his seat as if he had been shot.

He writhed and groaned in a terrible manner. I stepped to the pew door and saw that he was altogether in agony of mind. A skeptical doctor sat near him.

He stepped up out of the slip, came and examined this man who was thus distressed. He felt his pulse and examined him for a few minutes. He said nothing, but then he turned away.

He leaned his head against the post that supported the gallery and manifested a great agitation. He said afterward that he saw at once that it was distress of mind and it took away his skepticism entirely. He was soon after himself, hopefully converted.

We engaged in prayer for the man who fell in the pew. Before he left the house, I believe, his anguish had passed away and he rejoiced in Christ. Then he tells of another story about another physician, another doctor, a very amiable man, but he was a skeptic that had a little daughter and a praying wife, little H as he called her, a girl perhaps eight or nine years old.

She was strongly convicted of her sin and her mother was greatly interested in her state of mind, but her father was, of course, quite indignant. He said to his wife, the subject of religion is too high for me. I never could understand it.

And do you tell me that a little child understands it so to be intelligently convicted of sin? He said, I do not believe it. I know better. I cannot endure it.

It is fanaticism. It is madness. Nevertheless, the mother of the child held fast in prayer.

The doctor made these remarks with a good deal of spirit and immediately he took his horse, went several miles to see a patient, and on his way he afterwards remarked, the issue took possession of his mind in such a manner that it was all opened up to his understanding and the whole plan of salvation by Christ was so clear to him that he saw that a child could understand it. He wondered that it had ever seemed such a mystery to him. He regretted exceedingly that he had said what he had to his wife about his daughter and he felt to make haste to get home that he might take it all back.

He soon came home a new man. He told his wife what had passed in his mind, encouraged his daughter, the Lach, to come to Christ, and both father and daughter have since been earnest Christians and have lived long and have done much good. You know, that is one of the most moving accounts of somebody turning their life to Christ that I can really ever remember reading.

Here was a young child that was under conviction of sin. A lot of people think, well, you know, children aren't old enough. I have to disagree with that.

There comes a time when God can move on them and there are a lot of people who have served God from their childhood, and in this case, turned the life of her own father around. God used that to even bring him to Christ. Judgment at the doors during real revival, and we're going to change gears a bit here.

Judgment at the doors during great revival or a real revival. When the Spirit of God is near, it is dangerous to get out alive. The priests found this out in the Old Testament, and Ananias and Sapphira found it out in the New Testament.

Perhaps one of the great reasons revival tarries is that people do not reverence the presence of God. See, I talked about this at the end of last year, I believe it was. I told our whole congregation, I said that I believe that if we could get to a place where people would truly reverence and fear the Lord in the house and stop taking the things of God so lightly and move into that position, God would begin to move in our church.

He would move like never before. Have you ever stopped to consider, have you ever stopped to consider that maybe God is showing mercy by withdrawing from our midst? Have you ever thought of that? When God comes near, He will judge sin. He will call people out of a whirlwind, as it were, and He will demand answers.

He will shout sins from the housetops, or He will smite people dead for their secret sin, right where they stand. When pride arises in men's hearts as it did in Herod in the book of Acts, the angel of the Lord will stand near and smite them for simply not giving God the glory. There's another thing that happens.

God does not get the glory for the things that He does, and it's a great hindrance to seeing a revival. Job learned a fearful lesson, what it was like to have a confrontation with God. God told him, Stand on your feet like a man.

I will question you. Job 38.3 As a matter of fact, God told him that twice in that passage from Job 38 on to Job chapter 41. We forget that this is the same Christ who told the church at Thyatira He would smite their children with death and He would cast the fornicators into a bed of great tribulation if they would not repent.

You see, God is an awesome God. The King James uses that word terrible. He is an awesome God.

And until we realize this, there will either be no revival or revival will bring with it all manner of judgments the likes of which we have none beheld. I believe that. I believe that when God's presence is near, judgment is swift.

Charles Finney offers us a glimpse once again as he does many times into what happens when people get out of line during a genuine revival. Here we read, But in this revival, as in others that I have known, God did some terrible things in righteousness. On one Sunday while I was there, as we came out of the pulpit and were about to leave the church, a man came in haste, a Mr. Gallet and myself, and requested us to go to a certain place saying that a man had fallen down dead there.

I was engaged in conversation with somebody and Mr. Gallet went alone. When I was through with that conversation, I went to his house and he soon returned and related this fact. Three men who had been opposing the revival had met that Sunday day and spent the day in drinking and ridiculing of this work.

They went on in this way until one of them fell suddenly down dead. When Mr. Gallet arrived at the house and the circumstances were related to him, he said that there is no doubt but that this man had been

stricken down by God and has been sent to hell. You think of the fearsomeness of that.

You think about people just falling over dead because they are opposing what God is trying to do. Even the Jewish man Gamaliel had the good sense to know that you don't want to fight against the working of God. And if there is a genuine revival taking place, we need to keep ourselves in check.

See, his companions were speechless. They could say nothing. For it was evident to them that their conduct had brought upon him this awful stroke of divine indignation.

Then he believed that it was God's judgment that had come upon him. And as you study his autobiography, you'll find several accounts where people suddenly fell over dead who were opposing revivals. Great fear came upon the people and many were saved.

As the revival proceeded, it gathered in nearly the whole population. Nearly every one of the lawyers, the merchants, the physicians, and almost all the principal men, and indeed nearly all the adult population of the village, the account says, were brought in, especially those who belonged to Mr. Gillette's congregation. He said to me before I left, so far as my congregation is concerned, the millennium has come already.

My people are all converted. Of all my past labors, I have not a sermon that is suited at all to my congregation. That's a word there.

He said, of all my past labors, I do not have a sermon that is even suited to my congregation, for they are all Christians. Mr. Gillette afterward reported that during the 20 days that I spent at Rome, then he said, there were 500 conversions in that town. 500 people that were hopefully converted.

The revival spreads. During the progress of this revival, a good deal of excitement sprung up also in Utica, and some ridiculed the revival at Rome. Mr. E., who lived at Rome, was a very prominent citizen and was regarded as standing at the head of society there.

He was a point of wealth and intelligence, but he was skeptical, or perhaps, Finney said, I should say, he held Unitarian views. He was a very moral and respectable man. He held his peculiar views, unobtrusively saying very little to anybody about them.

Finney recounts, the first Sunday I preached there, Mr. H. was present, and he was so astonished as he afterwards told me at my preaching that he had made up his mind that he was not going to come again. He went home and said to his family, that man is mad. I would not be surprised if this man set the town on fire.

He stayed away from the meeting for two weeks, but in the meantime, the work becomes so great as to confound his skepticism, and he was in a state of great perplexity. He was president of the bank at Utica and used to go down to attend the weekly meeting of the directors. On one of these occasions, one of the directors began to rally him on the state of the things in Rome, as if they were all running mad there.

Mr. H. remarked, gentlemen, say what you will, but there is something very remarkable in the state of things in Rome. Certainly no human power or eloquence has produced what we see there. I cannot understand it.

You say it will soon subside? No doubt the intensity of feeling that is now in Rome must soon subside, or the people will become insane. But gentlemen, he said, there is no accounting for the state of feeling by any philosophy unless there was something divine in it. See, this man here obviously didn't even know the Lord, but he had the good sense to realize that men do not speak like this and bring about these types of results that God had to be working.

Preaching without fear or favor, Finney continues, after Mr. H. stayed away from the meeting about two weeks, a few of us assembled one afternoon to make him the special subject of prayer. The Lord gave us a strong faith while we were praying for him. We felt the conviction that the Lord was going to work out in his soul that evening.

He came to the meeting. When he came into the house, Mr. Gillette whispered to me, as he sat in the pulpit, he said, Brother Finney, Mr. H. has come. I hope you'll not say anything that's going to offend him.

No, said I, but I will not spare him. In those days, I was obliged to preach altogether without premeditation. In other words, he didn't even think about what he was going to preach when he got up to the pulpit.

Listen to this, for I did not have even an hour in a week which I could take to arrange my thoughts in advance. I chose my subject and preached. The word took a powerful hold and as I hoped and intended, it took a powerful hold on Mr. H. himself.

I think it was that very night when I requested the close of the meeting. All those who had been converted that day and evening to come forward and report themselves that Mr. H. was one who came deliberately and solemnly forward. He reported himself as having given his heart to God.

He appeared humble and penitent and I have always supposed was truly converted to Christ. And you gotta keep in mind that Finney's accounts of revival were written decades after the fact. Looking back, he said, I've always supposed that he was truly converted.

Corporate conviction, corporate conviction and we're winding down. Charles Finney tells of the overwhelming conviction that existed over the entire town when he preached. He describes the situation saying the stated things in the village and in the neighborhood roundabout was such that no one could come into the village without feeling awestruck and with the impression that God was there in a peculiar and wonderful way.

As an illustration of this, Finney says, I will relate an incident. The sheriff of the county resided in Utica. There were two courthouses in the county, one in Rome and the other in Utica.

Consequently, the sheriff, B by name, had much business in Rome. He afterwards told me that he had heard of the stated things in Rome and he, together with the others, had a good deal of laughing in the hotel where he boarded about what they had heard. But one day it was necessary for him to go to Rome.

He said that he was glad to have business there for he wanted to see for himself what it was that people so talked about and what the stated things really was in Rome. He drove on in his one horse sleigh and he told me without any particular impression upon his mind at all until he crossed what is called the old canal, a place about a mile, I think, Finney says, from the town. He said as soon as he crossed the old canal a strange impression came over him and all so deep that he could not shake it off.

He felt as if God pervaded the whole atmosphere. He said that this increased the whole way until he came to the village. He stopped at Mr. F's hotel and the hostler came out and took his horse.

He observed, he said, that the hostler looked just as he himself felt as if he was afraid to speak. He went into the house and found a gentleman there with whom he had business. He said that they were manifestly all much impressed.

They could hardly even attend to their business. He said that several times in the course of the short time he was there that he had to get up from the table abruptly and go over to the window and look out to try to divert his own attention or to keep himself from weeping. He observed, he said, that everybody else appeared to feel just as he did.

Such an awe, such a solemnity, such a state of things he had never had any conception of before. He hastened through with his business and returned to Utica, but, as he said, never to speak lightly of the work at Rome again. A few weeks later at Utica he was hopefully converted, the circumstances of which, he says, I will relate in a later place.

In closing, in closing, I just would like to say this. In an atmosphere where God is, there is no tolerance for sin. God will bring great conviction before he sends judgment.

God is not just the loving God, he's also the living God. And I'm reminded of the passage in Hebrews. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

What would it be to fall into the hands of the one who is able, after destroying the body, to cast the eternal soul into incomprehensible everlasting torments? Because of the fear of the Lord, Scripture says, men depart from evil. Do we fear him? Or do we have an ungodly humanism? Are we willing to get about our lives in such a way that God could actually show up, as it were? When the priest was going into the Holy of Holies, God gave the strictest instruction about it. How he was to do it, even to the very details of the clothing.

How much more ought we to go into our lives and set them in order in accordance with God's word so that God once again can move among us? Or will we be like Israel, who would rather just veil the glory because the people prefer to, as the Scripture said, eat and drink and rise up to play? Will we hear his voice? Or will we harden our hearts as in the day of provocation? We need the greatest outpouring of the Holy Ghost in the history of the church, I believe. Who will fear him? Who will fear him and reverence him enough that he will once again make his affidavit, his abode, among us? Heavenly Father, Lord, I just want to close tonight. Lord, your word said, because of the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Lord, it is rightly so that we preach about your love, about your grace, but you're not just the loving God, you're the living God. And God forbid that we would ever fall into your hands of judgment.

Lord, I pray that you would put it upon our hearts to go through and search out our lives, God, to get rid of the things, Lord, from our lives that are hindering revival. Lord, revival begins with me. It don't begin with my neighbor.

It begins in my heart, in my life. Turn the searchlight of your Holy Spirit on. Search me out, O God, if there be any unclean thing in me or in those, God, that would hear this message.

Lord, we pray tonight, God, for an outpouring of your spirit and conviction. Lord, I pray that churches will begin to get themselves to a place where you can pour out your glory. Because of the truth, God, when you are present, you will not tolerate sin.

Judgment will be swift. And Father, God, I pray for Sermon Index just now and for those that are listening to this message. Lord, I pray that somehow someone would be touched by this word tonight.

God, I pray that you would reach out and you would challenge us, God, to walk upright before you, to spend that time in prayer. God, we would just ask that you would also protect as we pray. God, Sermon Index, Lord, and the servers and the files, God bless, I pray, Brother Greg and those who attend the forum, the moderators.

Lord, I pray, God, that you would just anoint us all, Lord, with your spirit and power and great grace. We ask these favors in Christ's name. Amen.

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