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REGENERATION.

A Sermon

Preached on Wednesday Evening, November 21, 1849.

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

(Of America,)

AT THE BOROUGH ROAD CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

No. 1,472.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."--John iii. 7.

I PROPOSE to make some remarks to-night upon the words which I have just read. The passage in connection with which these words are found is, probably, familiar to you all; however I will read it:--"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles, that thou dost, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth were it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Are you a Jewish doctor, and do not understand the doctrine of the new birth? Have you never experienced it? A teacher in Israel, and yet ignorant of this great truth?

In speaking from the words of the text, I propose to show--

I. WHAT THE NEW BIRTH IS NOT.

II. WHAT IT IS.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.

IV. THAT ITS NECESSITY IS A FACT TOO PLAIN TO BE CALLED IN QUESTION, WITH THE LEAST REASON.

I. I begin by stating WHAT THE NEW BIRTH IS NOT, because I am well aware that many persons, who have not well considered the matter, are apt to form very false ideas concerning it. (1.) I observe then, in the first place, that the new birth here spoken of, does not consist in the creation of any new faculty either of mind or of body. Both Christians and sinners have the same powers and faculties both of mind and body, and therefore sinners do not need any new faculties if they would use those which they already possess, in the manner which God requires them to be used. They want no other powers of mind, and no other powers of body, than those which they have; and God requires them to have no other powers than those with which they are created: consequently, the new birth cannot consist in, or imply, the creation of any new powers of either body or mind. (2.) Neither, secondly, does it consist in any change of the capacity or structure of any of the powers of the body or the mind. There is no change in the structure of the human faculties in regeneration, neither does God require any such change: no such thing is necessary. What change, pray, is needed in any power either of mind or body? None! Then, we say that no such change occurs in regeneration, or the new birth. (3.) I remark again, that it does not imply any such change in the feelings of the mind as to produce through them a change in the actions of the mind; that is, a change is not introduced into the sensibilities or feelings, so that persons have new feelings spring up, constituting regeneration. To be sure, there are new feelings arise in the mind; but as I shall yet have occasion to show, these new feelings do not *constitute* regeneration, nor do they *produce*regeneration. (4.) But again: regeneration does not consist in any change in which man is purely passive. I shall have occasion to enlarge upon this presently, but I merely suggest it here, that regeneration or the new birth does not consist in any change in which man is purely passive, in which he has no voluntary agency himself. But, this leads me to notice--

II. In the second place, IN WHAT THE NEW BIRTH DOES CONSIST. I answer (1.) The Scriptures everywhere represent the new birth, or regeneration, to be a *change of character*--a change from sinfulness to holiness. Now, if it be so, there must be some voluntary action on the part of the sinner, or how should there be a change of the moral character, if he is passive and not active in it! What do we mean by moral character, and how is a man's character changed? The character depends upon the will, and when a man's will is changed his character is changed. Regeneration, then, is not involuntary, but a change of *will*, and a change

of *character*--a departing from a state of sinfulness to a state of holiness. How much virtue would there be in involuntary holiness, a state into which man should be brought independently of his own consent, in which he has no agency? Certainly none at all. Regeneration, then, must consist in something in which man's will is something more than passive. It is true, as I shall have occasion to remark, that in regeneration man is a recipient, and a passive recipient, if you will, in a certain sense, of the divine influence; but this divine influence, instead of superseding man's own agency, is only employed in bringing about that change by his own agency, which constitutes regeneration. (2.) I remark again--the Bible represents regeneration as consisting in a change of character, as the beginning of a new and holy life. It is often spoken of as a new creation, but which does not mean the creation, literally, of a new nature; but, as I have said, a change of character. It is not a change in the substance of the soul, or of the body; but only a change in the use of them. Pray how did Adam and Eve pass from a state of holiness to a state of sinfulness? It is admitted, I believe, on all hands, that Adam and Eve were holy before they sinned--that when they sinned, they passed from a state of holiness to a state of sinfulness. Now, this was certainly a change of heart in them. It is impossible that they should have acted thus without their hearts being changed. It is admitted, that there was a total change of moral character. Now, how was it that this change was produced? what power was it that brought them from a state of holiness to a state of sinfulness? Did their conduct imply in them a change of substance, a change of nature, or an involuntary change? The Bible gives us a very clear and plain account of it. When they were holy, they regarded God as supreme, and yielded themselves up to him in voluntary obedience. God had, for certain good reasons, prohibited their eating of a certain fruit. He had given them an appetite for fruit, and there was nothing sinful in their gratifying that appetite with fruit proper for them to eat--fruit not forbidden. They had indulged this appetite many times before with fruits which they were allowed to eat, and had not sinned in so doing. They had a constitutional desire for knowledge; and under certain circumstances, and upon certain conditions, it was lawful to them to gratify this desire and to seek knowledge. Now Satan suggested to Eve that God was selfish in having prohibited them from eating of that fruit which he had forbidden: "For," said he, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." And when Eve saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes, and withal calculated to make one wise, she took of it and did eat, and gave also unto her husband and he did eat. Now, by this act did they change their constitutions or their natures, or simply withdraw their allegiance from God, and, in despite of his requirements, give themselves up to their own appetites in a prohibited manner? Thus, laying more practical stress upon the gratification of their appetites than in obeying God, and esteeming that the highest gratification. Now, observe, their appetites were well enough in themselves; and if they had been regulated by the will of God, all would have been well. But they changed their own hearts: for, what was this but a change in relation to the disposition of their minds? Instead of preferring God's authority to their own gratification, they come to prefer their own gratification to God's authority and the interests of his kingdom. Now, let me ask, What would have been regeneration in Adam and Eve? Suppose God had come to them immediately after they had sinned, and made this requirement of them, that they must be born again. Suppose he had said, "You must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God," and they had inquired, What is it to be born again? What would have been the natural answer for God to make them? That they must have some new faculty, some newly implanted appetites, and undergo a change of nature? What was the matter with their nature, pray? Just but a moment since they were living in holiness and in obedience to God--and now they had simply withdrawn their obedience to him, and yielded themselves to the obedience of their own gratification and appetites. Now, what does God require of them? Why, that they will come back again to the state in which they had been previously--to consecrate themselves again to God. That instead of committing themselves, as they had done by this act, to their own gratification, and that in despite of the authority of God--they should reverse this state of things, and devote themselves again once and for ever to the authority and service of God. I remark, then, that regeneration must consist, doubtless, in a change of the disposition of the mind--a voluntary consecration to God. Observe, that when they withdrew allegiance from God, and committed themselves in the face of God's authority to the gratification of their appetites, this constituted a fundamental change in their characters. Observe, they could not do the thing which they did, without deliberately preferring their own gratification to obedience to God. This committing themselves to sin, then, must have constituted in them an entire change of character. (3.) I remark, again, in other words, that regeneration consists in a change in the ultimate intention, or end of life. The mind, in regeneration, withdraws itself from seeking, as the ultimate disposition and end, the gratification of self, and

choose a higher end than itself. Its disposition is changed from supreme selfishness to an entire devotion of the whole being to the great end for which God lives, and for which he made man to live. Regeneration, then, consists in ceasing to live to sin and for selfishness, and to live to and for God. I shall remark no further on this part of the subject at present, but proceed, thirdly, to notice--

III. SOME THINGS THAT ARE IMPLIED IN THIS CHANGE. (1.) And first, I may say in general, that in regeneration the mind receives new and more impressive views of truth. Men when they are regenerated obtain, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, a clear and vastly more impressive view of their relations to God, of the real nature of sin and of holiness, of their duty to God and the great truths that are indispensably associated with regeneration; and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, as I just remarked, they have new and more impressive perception of these truths. This, I suppose, is implied in it as a *condition of it*. (2.) But again: new views of truth, and of religion are implied as *resulting from it*. For example, when individuals have withdrawn from devotion to themselves and selfish objects, and have devoted themselves to God, they naturally become different people. Before, they viewed everything in a selfish light, and so they acquired a liking for nothing but that which, according to their own views, furthered their selfish ends. They cared not for God even, only so far as they thought he might be useful to them. All their views were selfish. If they feared God at all, it was only because they feared being made miserable by him. Or, if they obeyed him, such obedience was the result of some selfish principle--they hoped to gain some selfish gratification by it. All their views were purely selfish views. Every unregenerate man looks at all things in a selfish light, and all that he imagines will promote his interests, he seeks and loves. But, when a man is born again, he has withdrawn himself from seeking his own interests as the supreme good: he has consecrated himself to God; and, as a necessary result of this, he will sympathise with everything which is calculated to promote the interests of Jehovah's kingdom. The change which has taken place in his mind causes him to have new views and feelings concerning his relation to God, and he now strives to promote God's glory, and extend his kingdom, by making known his will. Before, selfish interests ruled his conduct--self-gratification was his law--and nothing but self interested him. But now, he has come into an entirely different state of mind--he has devoted himself to another end--and he looks upon all things from a different point of view, and their value becomes differently estimated. Now, what constitutes the particular difference between an*un*regenerated and a regenerated man? There is no change in his physical structure either of body or mind. So far as substance is concerned, there is no change: but the attitude of his mind is entirely and radically changed. Now this change of mind will manifest itself in his life; for the *will* controls the *action* of the body. If I *will* to move my arms they must move, unless there is some opposing force stronger than my will. A change in the will necessarily produces a change in the life. (3.) And this leads me to say that a new life results, as a matter of course, from regeneration. A new outward life is not regeneration, but it results from it, as effect from cause. You see a man devoted to God, and now he is engaged in different pursuits to what he was before; or if engaged in the same pursuits he acts from a different spirit. Is he a merchant? When he was a sinner his ruling motive in trade was selfishness--the spirit of self-gratification was supreme in all that he did. But now, his merchandise is God's. The things that he possesses are not his own, he is God's clerk, or steward, and he will not cheat any body, for he knows that God does not want his servants to cheat. He is transacting business for God; and, as he knows in his heart that God hates cheating, he will be honest now of course. It will be natural for him to be honest. If it is not possible for him to be honest, he is not a regenerate man. If his heart be honest his life will be honest. So in everything else. Let it be understood, then, that when regeneration occurs, a man's whole life will be a law of honesty. (4.) But let me say again--another thing implied in regeneration, is a new sort of sympathies and feelings. Before, the feelings and sympathies were all enlisted in one direction, the direction of self. You see a man in this state, and you try to excite him to the performance of some generous action, but you cannot do it unless you can employ selfish motives as a means to accomplish your object. His self-interests are easily excited. Show him how much he can get by acting in the way desired by you, and you may succeed, but not else. All appeals to higher motives will fail. It is remarkable to what an extent this feeling of selfishness will develope itself. Make an appeal to an unregenerate man's benevolence, and your appeal has no effect, because his interests, he thinks, are not concerned in it; but make an appeal to his selfishness, and you can excite the deepest foundation of his being. Talk to him about God, and Christ, and religion, and his relations to God, and his sensibilities are not at all excited--his sympathies do not lie in that direction at all. How unfeeling he is if you tell him of his sins, he does not feel them, and can listen to the enumeration of them without

emotion. But at length his mind is changed, and he now lives for other interests; now instead of being devoted to *self*, he is devoted to *God*, and every thing relating to God and his kingdom reaches his sensibilities and stir up the fountains of feeling in him. Talk to him now about God's glory and the interests of men's souls--spread out the world before him, and shew him the condition of mankind, and rely upon it you will move him! Before, if you expected to get any money from him you must show him the benefit that would in some sort accrue to himself; but now he has made God's interests his own interests, and he sympathises with God, and with Christ, and he has set his heart upon promoting those interests which shall glorify God and benefit men. Now only but show him the great field of Christian enterprise, and you fire his soul with love to men, and fill him with a desire to promote the kingdom and glory of God in the world. He has consecrated himself and all that he has to these objects. I have been struck a great many times with the beautiful process that goes on in the soul, as the Christian grows in grace. Sometimes I have looked upon an old saint, who for many years has been thinking of, and bathing his mind in, the great truths of the gospel, who has had so much communion and sympathy with God, that he has become beautifully and sweetly mellow; so delicate, so kind, and so Christ-like were the feelings he would manifest, that I have many times been charmed and cheered with the character of a fully developed Christian. (5.) But I remark again: that in regeneration a great change takes place in the joys and sorrows, and hopes and fears of the soul that has experienced the change. The joys of such a man are of a new sort. Before, he would rejoice greatly in the prospect of earthly good. Now he rejoices chiefly in seeing and hearing that the work of God is progressing in the land. He will rejoice to be told that God is pouring out his Spirit, and that souls are brought to Christ. This to him is an entirely new sort of joy. Before, he could take up a newspaper, and if it contained any account of a revival of religion, he did not read it; but now when he finds such an article in a newspaper, instead of passing it by, he will eagerly run his eye over the page, and it will produce in him inexpressible joy and delight--his whole being will be moved. So with sorrow, new objects call it forth. He was accustomed to sorrow chiefly when some worldly loss had been sustained, because it stood closely connected with his own interests; but now let him know that some professor has become a backslider from Christ, and he is more grieved at that than all the earthly losses that he ever met with. He is now deeply sorry when he sees professors live in sin, more so than at the worldly troubles and losses that he has ever endured. (6.) Again: Of course regeneration implies repentance for past sin, and implies implicit confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. It implies also peace of mind, which cannot be obtained without repentance and faith in Christ; because the elements of discord are always stirring within the minds of the unregenerate. But when they have withdrawn from the course which their consciences disprove, and have devoted themselves to the end for which they were made, all the workings of their minds harmoniously blend together, and produce peace. There is no remonstrance of conscience against their present course; all the powers and faculties within are in harmony; and in addition, there is fellowship with God, and communion with the Holy Ghost. (You see, my dear hearers, that I can dwell but a few moments on each of these topics.) (7.) Again, let me say, that regeneration implies a state of self-denial. Now I do not mean by self-denial, the breaking off from some outward customs and habits in which you have been accustomed to indulge--that you leave off some showy articles of dress and wear plainer attire; or that you be a little more temperate, or a good deal more temperate; for self-denial does not belong to the outward life, but to the mind. Self-denial is the renunciation of selfishness, and all selfish appetites. Self-denial is not a total denial of our appetites and passions, but our appetites and passions are not to be our law. It is right to eat and drink, but we are to do both to the glory of God, that we may have strength to serve him. So with respect to all our appetites and propensities, they are to be properly employed and made to serve the purposes for which they were bestowed, but we are not to make their gratification the business and end of life. (8.) Lastly, regeneration implies that the mind is come to have new motives of action--I use the term *motive* in the sense of design or intention. This term is used in different senses. We sometimes ask what are a man's *motives* for doing such and such things, when we mean his *reasons* for doing them; and sometimes we mean by the question, to ask what his *design* or *aim* is? In this last sense I use the term *motive*. I say then that the regenerate man now acts from opposite motives to what he did before. This is the great radical change that has taken place, and he is now pursuing a radically different course and end. Before, his own personal gratification and interests, and the gratification and interests of those who were considered to be parts of himself, were the ends for which he lived, moved, and had his being. Whatever he did, it was with a view to this end; everything was radically wrong. Whether he went to meeting, read his Bible, or prayed, the end in view was the promotion of his own interests. No matter what he did, it was sin and only sin continually. But now he has become regenerated; the design of his mind is to

promote other interests, and to pursue a radically different end: he gives himself to God, and lives, and moves, and breathes, and has his being for God and godliness. Now, I appeal to every person in this house, who knows what it is to be regenerated, whether I have not given, in substance, what regeneration is? Suppose, we should take an opposite view, and affirm that regeneration consists in a change of nature! Now, I know that the Bible sometimes speaks of regeneration as a change of nature, but we suppose that such language is figurative. We sometimes say of men, how natural it is for them to do such and such things, when we mean that the man is devoted to this end, whatever it may be. Now, when a man is pursuing another end, we say he is a new man--that is, his way of life is changed--his end of being is changed. But, suppose, that we should say that regeneration is a change of nature, of substance--that something new is infused into the man that becomes united with the substance either of his mind or body, what must be the consequence? Is this change in the moral character? If it is, something which God has created within man and with which man has nothing to do, it cannot imply a change of character. Furthermore, does it imply the power of backsliding from God? Can a man, in such a condition, be a backslider? Can he fall from grace? I am astonished to hear men contend that individuals undergo a change of nature in regeneration, and yet say that they can alter their course, and fall from grace. How is it possible that they can fall from grace? Who has changed their nature back again? Did God or Satan change it? Now it is true, no doubt, of all sinners, that when they have once given themselves up to pursue certain ends their sympathies, feelings, and dispositions, become so corrupted, that they are naturally led to live sinful and selfish lives; and so when a man is regenerated, it becomes a kind of second nature for him to do right: but still, literally, man has not received a change of nature. I proceed to remark, in the next place,

IV. THE NECESSITY OF THIS CHANGE. Its necessity is very strongly insisted on in the text. When Christ taught Nicodemus the necessity of the new birth, he was greatly surprised, and Christ said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." It is no new doctrine that I teach, and you ought, as a doctor in Israel, to know that it is not; no man should marvel at such a plain doctrine, and you least of all. (1.) In considering the necessity of this change, I remark, in the first place, that the unregenerate part of mankind are all selfish. No man could practically deny this, without incurring the charge of insanity; and, if he should proceed to do business upon that assumption, a commission of lunacy would no doubt be appointed to examine him, and who certainly would have no hesitation in bringing in their verdict, that he was not fit to manage his own affairs. The fact is, that all the arrangements of society proceed upon the assumption, which is a fact, that men are devoted to their own interests, and quite regardless of the interests of others. There is no plainer fact in the world than this. Now, do you ask, how it came to pass that men are selfish? Why, the principle grows up with us almost from our birth. As soon as the appetites and passions of children are sufficiently developed to come into exercise, they employ their wills to seek the gratification of their appetites and passions. The will becomes devoted to the gratification of self. Now that God is not selfish, I suppose, will be admitted on all hands; that a selfish mind is not at rest within itself, that men were not made to be selfish, and that no man can be satisfied and happy while he is selfish--that no man can be at peace with himself while he is pursuing solely his own interest. Man is so constituted that the mind of a selfish being cannot be happy. Now, suppose that the inhabitants of heaven were selfish, all their interests would be conflicting, and laws would be needed to restrain them from encroaching upon each other's rights, because their sympathies did not blend. The same difficulties would exist there as here, only in a much higher degree. There would be striving, and crushing, and overreaching; every man would be at war with his brother. Now, such a community as that can never possess heaven. In order to be saved, then--in order to be happy in heaven, men must really experience a radical change in the end for which they live: they must renounce self-interest, and they must recognize God's authority and interests as supreme, and they must love their brother *as* they do themselves. They must set up a common interest, and have a common object of love. Who does not believe that heaven is a place where all is unity and harmony, and where there is no selfishness, and where God's will is the universal law, and where the interest of one is the interest of all. Now it is easy to see that this would just meet the demands of man's being when he is regenerated. Now, just look at a world of selfish beings with all the restraints of law; with ten thousand pulpits preaching against selfishness, with the press groaning with articles against selfishness, with large numbers of colporteurs running hither and thither with Bibles protesting against selfishness, and yet see the immense amount of selfishness that exists in the world, after all. And now, when men are told that they must be born again, they do but smile at it. They don't understand it, they have the gross conception of it that Nicodemus had; they do not consider, that unless there

be a radical change of character, they cannot possess and enjoy heaven. Put a selfish man into heaven, and what will he do there? Why, he will ask, if there is any way of making money, any way of making a speculation to his advantage? Heaven, then, is no place for selfish beings. But how are men to get to heaven? You tell them of this change of heart, and they do not deny but they may need some little change, but they do not see the necessity for a radical change of disposition and character. But it is nevertheless a great truth, that unless men cease to be selfish and become benevolent in their dispositions there is no place for them in heaven; and, if the selfish man could get there, the holiness and benevolence of heaven would be intolerable to him, his selfish nature would cry out against it, for God is not selfish, angels are not selfish, the saints in glory are not selfish. Now, do let me ask you, dear hearers, are you selfish? Have you always lived to please yourselves? and if so, is it not the most self-evident thing in the universe, that unless a change takes place in the end for which you live, that you never can sympathise with the inhabitants of heaven? Suppose that it were possible for you, with a selfish heart, to join in the worship of heaven, to live among those that were not selfish, but perfectly benevolent, what sympathy would you have there? Would it be the delight of your heart to mingle your song with their's? Could you mingle in their joys and find pleasure in their pursuits? Never! Your sensibilities do not lie in that direction, your minds are not there! Your hearts are not there! Methinks that you would need to be confined there, or you would spring over the battlements of heaven, and go down to hell, in order to get out of such holy and benevolent company.

I shall now make a few remarks in closing. (1.) First, you can see what an infinite mistake those person have made who make religion hard and grievous. It is not grievous for a man to pursue that upon which his heart is set. Yet a great many religious professors find it very hard to attend to the duties of religion. I have no heart, they say, to go to church, but I must not stay away, I must not omit this duty, and they do it, but find no relish, no satisfaction in it. Why, friends, you have made a mistake! You have attempted to serve God without giving him your heart! You have attempted to serve the Lord without consecrating yourselves to the great end for which you ought to live! Just let your heart go first, and your life will follow without all this great trouble. If your heart is right, you will not need to put a strong rein upon yourselves to keep you from cheating your neighbour. Your aim will then be to do him good; you will love him as you love yourself. (2.) I remark again, that what individuals need to do it this--turn their minds to God, and to begin a new life; to retrace their steps, to reverse their minds completely, in respect to the great end for which they ought to live. (3.) I remark again; those person who call in question the necessity of the change, which the Bible says is essential, are entirely unreasonable, for I aver that regeneration is as truly a doctrine of natural, as of revealed, religion. Men, by rejecting the Bible, need not suppose that they can reject the doctrine of regeneration. They must either deny the natural state of man, or they must deny that the inhabitants of heaven are holy, before they can reject the doctrine of regeneration. Natural religion itself teaches that some great and radical change is needed; and hence the everlasting restlessness of man. Do we not know that all the pains that men take to engross themselves with worldly objects indicates that they are ill at ease in regard to their moral character and conduct. The fact is, that they do admit the necessity of a radical change in their characters. They never can rest where they are; and hence the Bible represents them as "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." (4.) I remark again; that many persons have got such ideas of regeneration, that when God calls upon them to become new creatures, they wait for God to change their hearts. They expect to have something done to them that shall act like an electric shock, and so they wait, instead of at once breaking away from their selfishness, and coming to Christ. (5.) Again, how divine influence is communicated to men is, the context tells us, very mysterious, but the influence is felt, though not seen. Every Christian knows that he has been born again. He knows that he was thinking of certain truths and gave himself up to their influence, when the Spirit began to operate upon his mind, and reveal the truth to him; and he was so influenced, that his desires and disposition were changed, and he gave himself up wholly to God. (6.) Again; where the truth is apprehended, men have no cause to wait for anything. God requires them to act: "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." Now, when they are waiting for something else, they overlook the fact, that God is just doing the very thing that they need. (7.) In the next place, the mind is highly intelligent in regeneration. The mind must be intelligent in regeneration, or it is not a virtuous act. After regeneration, the mind acts more intelligently than ever it did before; and it may well be so, for that act was the only truly rational of all its acts. The soul now comes to act in view of God's truth, and in harmony with God's will, his interests, and his authority. Is this regeneration, then, to be called fanaticism, mysticism; and to be branded as something unintelligible? I trust, that my hearers will say, No! I will not detain you longer than to ask--If there are those in this house to-night, who have

never been born again, but who see the necessity of it, I ask such, do you see that what you are to do is to cease to live for the end that you are living for, and that you are to live in future to God's glory, and to recognize solely his authority, and set your heart upon him? You must not cleave for salvation to any works of your own, but when God draws you, as he is doing now, you are to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." You are to answer the invitations of God, as Paul answered, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Implying that you recognize Christ's authority, and that whatever Christ tells you to do, you will do. Now, why not make up your mind and come to God at once? There never could be a better time! Why not renounce self now, and make a new heart and a new spirit? Do you ask, can I do that? To be sure you can. Suppose Adam and Eve had asked--Can we make ourselves new hearts? Why, God might have said, Did you not just do it? But, a little while ago, you had holy hearts that were consecrated to me, and you have withdrawn your allegiance from me; and have you not, by that act, just created wicked hearts? This was your own act, and I only require you to undo what you have just done. And now, my dear hearers, I may safely warrant you, that if you will consecrate yourselves to God, God will not condemn you for want of regeneration. But that if you can make up your minds to renounce all your self-interests as the end of life, and freely devote your powers to God, you are safe, you are in a state of regeneration, or call it by what name you will. Remember I am not denying that God has something to do with your regeneration and salvation. It is God that draws you, and your duty is, when he draws, to say, Yes Lord, I consent to take thy dear, easy yoke, and do thy will. I will do it, Lord, and do it now; I do it once for all, and for ever--thy will shall be my everlasting and universal law. Amen.

PLEASING GOD.

A Sermon

Preached on Thursday Evening, November 22, 1849.

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

(Of America,)

AT THE BOROUGH ROAD CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

No. 1,473.

"Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."--Hebrews xi. 5.

IN speaking from these words I shall inquire--

I. WHO GAVE THIS TESTIMONY TO ENOCH?

II. NOTICE THE NATURE OF THE TESTIMONY!

III. CONSIDER HOW THIS TESTIMONY WAS GIVEN!

IV. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH HE MUST HAVE RECEIVED IT, AND UPON WHICH WE MAY OBTAIN SUCH TESTIMONY?

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THIS TESTIMONY!

VI. CONSIDER SOME OF THE REASONS WHY SO FEW SEEM TO HAVE THE TESTIMONY THAT THEY PLEASE GOD?

This is the outline of thought to which I would call your attention, and I suppose that these several points will include subjects on which every thoughtful mind will naturally desire to be informed.

I. Our first inquiry is--WHOSE TESTIMONY WAS IT THAT ENOCH HAD THAT HE PLEASED GOD? Surely it must have been God's testimony, for who *could* give this testimony, but God? If God was pleased with Enoch, and he knew it, how otherwise could he have become possessed of this knowledge but by a revelation from God? And this was doubtless the apostle's meaning, and it was the fact, that Enoch had God's testimony that he pleased him.

II. I inquire, secondly, into THE NATURE OF THIS TESTIMONY. (1.) And I remark first, that it was not simply a *negative*testimony, a mere absence of sin and guilt, and that God was not *dis*pleased with him. It was not a mere absence of anything. A hardened sinner will sometimes have this negative kind of testimony: he may not feel the frown of God, nor have any sense at all of God's displeasure. (2.) The testimony then, that Enoch

had, was a *positive* testimony. God in some way, doubtless, convinced Enoch, and let him understand that he was pleased with him. He indicated the fact that he was pleased with him. Enoch himself had God's testimony that he pleased him.

III. The next inquiry is--HOW ARE WE TO SUPPOSE THAT THIS TESTIMONY WAS GIVEN TO HIM. (1.) I observe first that it was not given merely in a providential manner--God did not manifest to Enoch by the course of his providence that he was pleased with him; this has never been the course of God with man. Every one knows that oftimes it is quite impossible to know the moral character of a man by the way in which God deals with him in this world. And this fact completely shows that this world is not the state of retribution, of rewards and punishments. I fear that there are many mistakes made on this subject. The friends of Job, manifestly reasoned wrong on this subject, they supposed, and argued, that God's dealings with Job proved him to be a wicked man; but Job resisted this mode of reasoning, and insisted that they had a false view of the subject. Almost the entire scope of the book of Job goes to establish this point--that God does not by his providence in this world indicate his view of the moral character of man. The Bible in many places affirms this. "He makes his sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good, and his rain to descend upon the just and upon the unjust." The wicked are often exalted whilst the righteous are trodden down and afflicted. Neither in their life nor in their death does God often manifest his views of their character. The Psalmist observed this, and he says, "the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree, they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men, verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency." But he said this before he was well instructed. When he thought to know this it was too painful for him, he stumbled at it, until he went into the house of God, and there he understood the matter. There he saw how God dealt with men according to their characters, that God set the wicked in slippery places, and cast them down at last into destruction. These remarks are designed to illustrate what I have just said--that we are not to suppose that God *providentially* gave this testimony to Enoch. And it is according to the universal observation and testimony of mankind, that God does not show his special pleasure in men by this means. (2.) I remark again: that God must, doubtless, have in some way indicated the fact to the mind of Enoch through his word, by his Spirit. How else could he have made the communication? It must have been either by providence that God revealed to Enoch that he was pleased with him, or it must have been indicated to his mind directly by the Spirit, as I suppose, through his word. It should be borne in mind that at that time the scriptures were not filled up as they are now, and, therefore, the Spirit of God could not, without a direct revelation from heaven, have made any application to his mind of much that is written in the Bible. Yet, doubtless, God did manifest himself to Enoch through his word by his Spirit. And here, let me say, that in all cases where men have this testimony, it must be of this character. It must be that God gives this testimony through his word by his Spirit. (3.) But let me say again: it is done by speaking peace to the soul, giving the soul to understand that God is at peace with it, shedding peace and diffusing it over his soul, giving him the Spirit of adoption, leading him to understand by God's smile on his soul, drawing him into union with himself, and shedding abroad his love in his heart, and thus creating such a state of mind that the individual can clearly understand that he is accepted of God, and that God has pleasure in him. If I had time to dwell upon this part of the subject, I think it would be very easy to show that it is in exact accordance with the experience of every Christian that has ever known anything of experimental religion. Any one that has ever had real communion with God, that has ever known what it is to be drawn into union with God in such a manner as to sympathize so deeply with him as to partake of his holiness, and drink of the river of his pleasures, and so to understand what the mind of God is, as to partake in part of its nature, and understand the nature of the peace which God enjoys. And let me say that there is such a thing as God giving to the mind a sense of justification, in other words, a sense of his approval, so that the mind can have no doubt of it at the time. It perfectly understands its acceptance with God. God so smiles upon the soul, and so sheds himself into the soul, that it seems to breathe an atmosphere of peace, so deep and so calm that it is in no doubt of its acceptance with God, no doubt of being in that state which God is pleased.

IV. In the next place--THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH ENOCH RECEIVED THIS TESTIMONY, AND UPON WHICH EVERY ONE ELSE MAY RECEIVE IT. (1.) The first condition that I notice is, that the individual who will have this testimony must*actually* please God, for God will bear no false testimony. It is not enough that Christ has pleased God, that in some mysterious manner Christ's righteousness is imputed to the man. It is only a mere trueism to say that God is pleased with Christ. In the text it is said that God was pleased with *Enoch*. Now I suppose that we are to understand

something more than this--that God accepted him for Christ's sake. I suppose that we are to understand that God, for Christ's sake, gave him so much of the Holy Spirit as to secure in him a state of mind actually pleasing to God, and that through the Spirit he actually did that which pleased God. We say then that any one who would enjoy this testimony that he pleases God, must be in such a condition of mind as is acceptable to God, and live a life that is pleasing to God. (2.) I remark again: that there must be, as a condition, implicit confidence in God. There is no duty that is so pleasing to God. When Enoch lived, the atonement had not yet been made, but then it was understood that an atonement was to be made. And if this was so, it is certain that he would have had implicit confidence in God as a condition for pleasing him. The Bible affirms that without faith it is impossible to please him; Enoch must therefore have had implicit confidence in God. But what is implicit confidence? I mean by implicit confidence, that he must have abjured all self-confidence, and have cast himself upon God's grace. And in order to this, he must have had some knowledge of the manner in which God expects man to have implicit confidence in his truthfulness, and faithfulness, and mercy. (3.) But let me mention another condition--he must have lived to God. It is said of him in the Old Testament that he walked with God three hundred years, and then was translated, and was not, for God took him. This walking with God implies agreement--for the Bible says, "how can two walk together except they be agreed"--which in Bible language, means, that two cannot walk together except they are agreed. Therefore when it is said that "Enoch walked with God," we are to understand that his will and his heart were at one with God; and if this was true he might well have the testimony that he pleased God. And be it remembered that every one who would please God, and would have this testimony, must do as Enoch did; he must agree to have God's government and no other, he must live for every end for which God lives. (4.) Again: he must set his heart upon pleasing God. No individual will have the testimony that he pleases God unless he really means to please him. A man, I say, who would have the testimony that he pleases God, must have an heart set upon pleasing him, he must regard it as of the greatest importance that he please God, he must give himself to the work of pleasing God as a condition of pleasing him. (5.) Again: Another condition is, that he must not be contented at all to live without the testimony that he pleases God. He must not only *aim* to please him, but must not be content to live without the testimony that he does please him. If he truly aims to please God, and his heart is set upon this, he will not be satisfied without he succeeds in that which he aims to do, that he really does please God. If an individual does aim to obtain this testimony, but if he considers it only of little importance whether he succeeds, of course he will not have it. (6.) I remark again: another condition is, he must believe it possible for him to please God. If he does not believe it possible for him to please God; if he has such an idea of God's requirements that they are so exceedingly strict, and that he requires so much of man, that it is almost hopeless of man to expect to please him, if he has this idea, I say, he need not expect to please him. I have heard many persons talk as if it was the height of presumption to try to please God in this world, as if it would be most dangerous to the soul to indulge in the belief that it could please him. These persons represent God as so infinitely exacting, that the highest angel in heaven might hardly hope to please him--then how could man hope to do it? Now when an individual has this idea--that God requires his creatures to make brick without straw, that he requires of men that which they cannot do, because he does not give them the ability to do it, then he rejects every expectation of pleasing God. When an individual has this idea he is in a state of mind that cannot please God. It is true that God is holy, that his requirements are perfect. It is true that he requires men to love him with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and their neighbours as themselves, but it is also true that his grace is equal to his requirements; and in his requirements he pledges his grace to enable us to perform. It were infinitely strange, not to say unjust, if it were otherwise. (7.) But again: another condition of having this testimony is this--a belief that we may have the testimony--not only that we may please God, but that we may secure his testimony to the fact that we do please him. If we forget the idea that God is willing [slow] to manifest his pleasure, it will no doubt effectually prevent our having the testimony. It is the tendency of sin to prevent the soul enjoying this delightful assurance of its acceptance with God, and the arch enemy of souls is ever ready to prevent us rising to this belief and conviction.

Now, let me pause here, and apply what I have I said to all classes of persons: not only to professed saints, but to those also who are not professed saints. Now, do you really desire the testimony that you please God? Of course, you cannot expect to have it while you remain impenitent. But, may you not enjoy this testimony, if you set your heart upon pleasing God? Yes! you may. To be sure you have not this testimony now, and some of you may say, it will be a great while before I can have it. Why? Will it take you a great while to repent, and set your heart upon obeying God? Oh, no! Well, it is as

important for you to have this testimony as any body else,--then why not say at once, As I can have this testimony by the grace of God, I will not live another day without it. But I would observe, here, that the spirit of self-sacrifice is a condition of having this testimony. Christ lived not to please himself, but to please his Father: and, in order to do this, he was willing to sacrifice everything and his own life also. Now, if any of his followers would have the testimony that they please God, they must have the self-sacrificing spirit of their master. They must be willing to be used up, for the good of his kingdom. They must be willing, as Christ was, to sacrifice even their lives. But, I must hasten to consider

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THIS TESTIMONY. (1.) And, I remark, first: if persons have it not, who are professors of religion, or seriously disposed, the best that can be said of them is, that they live in a state of continual doubt. If they have not the testimony that they do *not* please God, yet they fully admit that they feel such a sense of condemnation as to be as far as possible off from having the testimony that they *do* please him. Now, perhaps, it is so with some of you--that everything condemns you, every sermon that you hear condemns you, your own consciences condemn you, you cannot go into your closet and pray as you feel that you ought: God seems to frown upon you. You have the clearest evidence that you do not please God. Others of you, perhaps, may not be in exactly this state of depression, but your life, to say the best of it, is full of doubts; you have no such evidence that God is pleased with you, as will allow you to rest satisfied. You are the subjects of many doubts, fears, and anxieties. Perhaps, you seldom, if ever, rise higher than to be greatly anxious about yourselves: or, perhaps, you are too careless even to care about it at all. When you have heard some searching preaching, instead of going with clear testimony that you please God, you seldom go further than to get many doubts and perplexities about it. No wonder that you doubt whether you love and please God. If you have not the testimony that you do, you have good reason to doubt: and I beg of you, that unless you have this testimony, not to persuade yourselves that you ought to do other than doubt! The only rational way for you to act is to decide that you do *not* please God. If you do please him, why this state of anxiety? Why this everlasting halting? Is it because God is unwilling to manifest himself to you, although you do please him? Let your own hearts answer the question. (2.) In the next place, as professors of religion, if you have not this testimony, when you are called upon to proclaim the gospel to sinners and pull them out of the fire, you will find that you have so much to think about yourselves as to be able to do nothing for any body else. This is a great and sore evil! In how many thousands of cases have I found sinners becoming inquirers, and going for advice and comfort to the church, but the church was unable to do anything for them, because they were in doubt, whether they were Christians themselves. You ask them to pray for sinners, and they can only say, Lord have mercy on *me*. Now, is not this a great evil? Indeed, it is an evil of the greatest magnitude. Professors of religion, unless they have this testimony, can do but very little for God. I have heard ministers during the time of a Revival, say that they could neither preach nor pray? they had so little evidence of their own acceptance with God that their mouths were shut. What a great evil is this! What can they do for others, when they are in this lamentable condition themselves? They cannot go out and work as men of God ought to work. With what confidence can they preach that which they really do not know that they believe themselves, or hold forth the salvation of which they touch not, taste not, handle not! All such persons are a dead weight upon the cause of God, and hang like millstones round the necks of those who would otherwise pull sinners out of the fire. What minister has not found it true, that when his people were living without knowing that they pleased God, that an immense number of difficulties were thrown in the way of good being done! When the church can only hang upon the minister, they are in a very bad condition. Perhaps it is the case with some of you--that you are hanging like dead weights on the energies and prayers of those who are labouring for the salvation of souls? And it always will be so, if you are without the testimony that you please God. Professors of religion--where are you? what are you doing? If you have not the testimony that you please God, you are stumbling blocks, you misrepresent religion! What do you mean? You profess to be Christians, children of God; then you ought to have the witness of the Spirit, and hold forth the blessedness of such a salvation to others. But, what are really the facts? Alas! alas! in general professors are always complaining of their leanness and their trials. It would seem, to hear them talk, as if God was the hardest master that any body ever had to serve; that he dealt out his pleasures with so sparing a hand as quite to discourage them! How many times have I heard persons say, if such and such a person's religion is the religion of Christ, it may do very well for a death-bed, but not to live in the world with. Must I go mourning all my days and never have any cheerfulness, if so, I am afraid of such a religion! And well they may be. (3.) But, let me say again: that without this testimony you cannot use the promises. How many times have I heard

persons say, if I knew that I was accepted of God, how gladly would I apply to myself such and such promises, but they are meant for the children of God, and I do not know whether I am a child of God or no. O that I did but know that I was a child of God, and I would claim all the promises as mine own. Perhaps this is the language of some of you. Now, the promises may lie in the Bible, and the Bible may rot upon your shelves, and you make no use of them, because you lack the testimony that they belong to you--because you do not know whether you are children of God. (4.) Again: this testimony is indispensable to a rational hope of salvation. What reason has a man to believe that he is personally interested in the salvation of Christ, if he has not this evidence. I know that some persons have a hope that they shall be saved, while they are really living in a state of condemnation. But is this a rational hope? I say, NO; it is not a rational hope. I know that such persons as have it cleave to it, but they have no right to cleave to it, most assuredly. (5.) Again: this testimony is indispensable to peace of mind. No man is at peace till God speaks to him, but when God speaks peace to his soul, he is at peace. But God will not speak peace to his soul till he comes into a state of mind with which God is at peace. (6.) Again: it is indispensable to Christian liberty. Many professors of religion have no conception of Christian liberty. Christian liberty seems to be with them a kind of license that they suppose themselves to have, as resulting from the imputed righteousness of Christ: and as Christ's righteousness is imputed to them, they imagine that they can be personally sinful, and yet acceptable with God. I know that salvation does not depend upon personal holiness; but, without it the man is not a Christian. No man, therefore, possesses Christian liberty, unless he has the testimony that he pleases God. (7.) But I remark again: this testimony is indispensable to Christian cheerfulness. No individual has true cheerfulness without it; the mind will be so oppressed with a sense of guilt that the man can hardly speak a word; from day to day he will go bowed down with a sense of guilt. Real Christian cheerfulness that arises from love, and communion with God and deep sympathy with him, is a kind of cheerfulness which they do not understand who have not this testimony. And, let me say, that it is of the greatest importance that Christians be cheerful, for it recommends their religion to others, and often very materially influences their conduct. Four or five years ago, one of the principal lawyers in the State of Ohio, Judge Andrews, an unconverted man, came to hear me preach; and when I had done, he came and asked me if I would go with him to see an individual that evening. I agreed; and it was to me a great treat indeed. It was a truly Christian woman that we went to see; and, as soon as we were seated, she began to talk with great cheerfulness, and fulness, of what the Lord had done for her soul. Judge Andrews sat and listened with the greatest attention, and by and by a tear trembled in his eye, and the old lady went on conversing with such cheerfulness, that it rivited him, and he sat for three quarters of an hour to hear that woman talk. When we left, he said to me, if this is the religion of Jesus Christ, I am determined that I will not rest till I possess it and know what it is: and there is good reason to believe that he did not rest till he did know what it was by experience. Now, many cases of this kind occur where persons, unconsciously perhaps, influence those around them. How often have I heard men say, when they have seen religion thus cheerfully exhibited, that is the religion for me, that is the religion which meets the demand of our being. Without cheerfulness, a man can scarcely be said to be useful. Let a minister preach to his people without it, and the utmost he will do will be to preach them into condemnation. Said a minister to me, "Brother Finney, tell me what you think is the defect in my ministry; I find that sinners are brought under conviction, but they get no further." I made but a brief answer at the time, but I prepared a sermon in a few days, on the seventh chapter of Romans, contrasting it with the eighth chapter. I showed that the seventh chapter was descriptive of a state of bondage, of law; but, that the eighth was descriptive of the state of Christian liberty. I preached the sermon in the hearing of my brother, and when I had done, he came to me and said, "Brother Finney, if what you have been preaching is true, I do not know anything about religion, for my experience does not go any further than the seventh chapter." Now, said I, you have answered the question that you asked me the other day. You do not know what it is to have liberty, and how can you preach a gospel that you do not understand. The man did not live long in that state. Let me remark here, that it is a mournful fact that the great mass of religious teachers go no further than the seventh chapter of Romans; they can go so far and cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" but they cannot go on to the eighth and say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now, a minister cannot lead

his people further than he goes himself; and, if the people were to get into the liberty of the gospel otherwise than by his means, he would pour cold water upon them, and tell them that they were getting into a strange fanatical state of mind; but how different will it be when the minister has come into this liberty which the gospel is calculated to give. I now come to consider

VI. SOME OF THE REASONS WHY SO FEW PERSONS SEEM TO HAVE THIS TESTIMONY? When I say *few*, I do not mean to say that the whole number is small, for I am happy to know that it is not. Wherever I go I find persons that understand it, and when they hear the sound, they recognize it as the gospel. But taking the great mass, comparatively few know what it is to enjoy this testimony. (1.) The reason why they have it not, is not because it is so hard to please God. His commandments are not grievous, he says. He is not exacting and hard to please. He expects a willing mind in his service, but he does not expect from man that which he hath not, but only that which he hath. If the heart and will is right, God accepts it; and the man who gives his heart and will to God shall have the testimony that he please God. So that when a man has *not* the testimony that he please God, it is not because God is unwilling to manifest his pleasure when he is pleased. Some people seem to think that it is dangerous to praise even virtue itself. Flattery is always dangerous, but condemnation is only just where it is deserved. Take a family, for example, where the children are endeavouring to please their parents, and when they know that they have done their best, if they are not commended, they think that injustice has been done them, and they relax in their efforts, because they conclude that it is impossible to please so as to gain commendation, let them do what they will. Just so with a wife who is always endeavouring to please her husband, and if he is never pleased, the effect is, that she gives up trying, because she sees it is of no use. God in his government supplies this demand of our nature. Let sin be put away from any moral agent, and God loves the agent and manifests his pleasure; it is in his very nature for him to do so. It is but an exception to this rule, that God in a very remarkable and marvellous way hid his face from Christ. Christ was the representative embodiment of sin, and it was necessary that God should make a public demonstration of his hatred of sin, and although Christ was personally holy, since he had become the representative of a sinful race, it was necessary that he should have to utter that agonising cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But ordinarily when any body please God, he has just as much willingness to manifest it as the most indulgent of parents have to commend their children when they do right. Some persons, I know, are unwilling to commend their children, and I know that by such conduct they greatly injure their children. When the wife is not commended for kindness to her husband, or the husband to his wife, or children for dutifulness to their parents, great injustice is done, and an immense amount of injury. (2.) In the next place, the reason why so few have this testimony is, because so few really please God, so few really aim to please him. If they were conscious of being sincerely aiming to please God, they would undoubtedly expect to please him; but being conscious that they do not live for that end, they cannot rationally expect to please him, and of course they cannot expect any manifestation of his pleasure. (3.) But again, another reason that so few have this testimony is, that they consent to live without it. If men consent to live without knowing whether they please or displease God, they will assuredly not have the testimony that they please him. (4.) I remark again, that many do not have it, because they have more regard for the approbation of men than the approbation of God. They care so little about pleasing God, that they have ceased to inquire what will please him, and they will not hesitate to do what they know will displease God rather than displease man. These persons, of course, cannot have the testimony of which we are speaking. (5.) I remark again; that great multitudes of person seems satisfied with mere negative testimony; if they can manage not to have a conscious sense of condemnation they can get along very well. Dearly beloved, as I have gone over these points, have I been stating the history of any of you? You are all strangers to me, and I always feel embarrassed in preaching to persons of whose spiritual state and condition I am ignorant. God only knows, therefore, whether the things spoken to-night meet the case of any of you, or not.

A few remarks will close what I have now to say. (1.) When a soul has once had the testimony that it pleased God and has lost this testimony, it cannot rest without it. Let an individual who once enjoyed the testimony that he pleased God, fall into sin, and such a person will be among the most unhappy and wretched of mankind. (2.) This accounts for the fact, that backsliders in heart are ever the most unhappy of mankind--the man that backslides in heart from God is wretched. I deeply pity the man who is a backslider. I pity the husband who has a backsliding wife--I pity the wife who has a backsliding husband--I pity the children who have backsliding parents--I pity the parents who have backsliding children--I pity the minister who has a backsliding church, and I pity the church who has a backsliding

minister; the effect is, that the backslider in heart is filled with his own ways--he is wretched wherever he is, and the language of his heart will often be--

"O where can rest be found?
Rest, for the weary soul."

Perhaps some of you remember, and often say--

"Those peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still."

When you walked with God and had the testimony that you pleased him. You once enjoyed his testimony, and now you are fallen. Well, let me ask if you are not very uncomfortable in that fallen state? Do not your very dreams torment you? Are you not almost afraid to be alone? Dare you commune with your own heart, and be honest with yourselves? If you are in the condition which I have supposed, you are most unhappy and wretched, wherever you are. You may try to be happy and comfortable, but you never can be till you return to God; but when you have done this, and when God's frown is taken away, and he smiles upon you, then you may have peace. Now will you return? Great as your sins are, will you return? Do you say that your sins are so very great, so that you cannot even lift up your eyes to heaven! Neither could the publican, but he smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." You can do that! If you cannot hold up your head before God, you can get down into the dust, where the Psalmist was when he cried out in the agony of his soul to God and confessed his sin before him. You *can* do that, and the question is will you do it? (3.) I remark again, what I have said to-night to Christians may with equal propriety be applied to anxious sinners. And to such, I say, you can have the testimony that you please God, if you give yourself up to please him. If you renounce your sins and have no fellowship with iniquity, so great is his grace, that through his Son Jesus Christ you may breath the spirit of liberty and of love, and possess the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. If you will but believe; if you will but make up your minds to walk with God, you may know what it is to have the testimony that you please him. Some of you may be ready to say, O, if I could have this testimony, there is nothing that I would not do; there is no part of the world to which I would not go, if I could obtain acceptance with God. Yes, you want to buy it; but, until you will be content to do the will of God, and cast yourselves wholly upon the grace of Christ for it, you will never possess it. You may say, I have thought, desired, and prayed, and avowed my willingness to do anything if I might but obtain acceptance with God. Did it never occur to you that there was much self-righteousness in your desire to do something to obtain this, otherwise than by the means which God has appointed--it was a self-righteous effort. It is not very difficult to come to Christ; why do not you come to him? What say you, may I come to Christ? Can I come to Christ just as I am? Will he accept me? Yes, you may come to him, and he will accept you. Hear what he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you come to Christ, you may have the testimony that you please God; that you believe on him, and cast yourselves upon him, is all God requires of you. And now, you who are professors of religion, and you who are not, is it not best for you one and all to say--"by the grace of God we will have this testimony." What minister, what professor, what sinner, in this house, but will say, "If by the grace of God, it is offered to me, I will have it and enjoy it, or I will die for it. O God, I will accept thy offered mercy. Lord Jesus, I believe thy gospel, and I accept it. You that have the testimony that you please God, I know that in the depth of your emotions you often groan within you, on account of the miserable death in which some persons are that pretend to live: your souls, pray for them, let them pray on, God's spirit is in the midst of you, and now is the time for a resurrection from the dead. What say you sinner? Will you arise from the dead and come forth? Christ calls you, and presents you with his life-giving blood. He puts it even to your lips. Do you dash it away? Do your soul not want the testimony that God is reconciled to you? Do you not desire the testimony that you please God? If you do, then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have the very thing that you require. Now we are going to God in prayer, and what say you, shall we go on your behalf in the name of Christ? Who of you are prepared to go with us to a throne of grace, and cast your souls upon God? What individual now in bondage is willing to be released? Come and sore away from all your unbelief, and cast yourself upon Christ. Empty your vessel--cast it bottom upwards and make it quite empty, and then bring it to Christ, and it shall be filled. Will you come? *Will you come?* WILL YOU COME? Let your heart answer! Let your heart respond! Let it speak out, LORD JESUS MY SOUL HEARS, AND I COME, I COME. Amen.

HEART SEARCHING.

A Sermon

Preached on Tuesday Evening, November 27, 1849,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

(Of America,)

AT THE BOROUGH ROAD CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

No. 1,479.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."--Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

IN speaking from this text I shall of course be obliged to assume many things as true without attempting to prove them. This indeed is almost always the case in preaching. It is taken for granted that certain things are agreed upon both by the speaker and the hearer, and unless this was assumed, we could scarcely preach at all. I shall therefore take it for granted that my audience believe in the existence, and attributes of God, and that they also admit that he exercises a providential government over all the affairs of the universe; and that directly, or indirectly, he is concerned in everything that takes place; either positively in bringing it about, or that when it is about to occur he knows it, and permits it, in order that he may make some use of it. I shall take it for granted that you believe that no event occurs without God either positively causing it, or else permitting it to occur, with a design to make some use of it, and in some way to overrule it for his own glory and the good of man. I cannot of course enter into a discussion upon the Divine perfections, but must assume that my hearers admit that God's providence is in some sense universal, and that it extends to every individual. In speaking from these words I design to show:--

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE SINCERE AND ACCEPTABLE OFFERING OF SUCH A PETITION AS THAT CONTAINED IN THE TEXT?

II. NOTICE SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD ANSWERS REQUESTS OF THIS KIND.

"Search me O God," says the Psalmist, "and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I. I INQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE SINCERE AND ACCEPTABLE OFFERING OF SUCH A REQUEST, AS THIS, TO GOD? (1.) First it must imply the realization of the omniscience of God. When David penned this Psalm he was in a state of mind that deeply realized the omnipresence of God, and the searchings of his eye. He begins the Psalm by saying, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and know me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; and thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whether shall I go from thy Spirit? or whether shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." I have read these verses to show that the Psalmist, at the time of offering this petition, was under a deep impression of the omnipresence, and omniscience of God, and the searching blaze of his eye throughout his whole being. And I suppose that this is always the state of mind of every individual when he asks God to search him. The very request implies the belief, that God understands his real heart, and is able to search him. (2.) Again: an acceptable offering of such a request as this, implies a sense of the moral purity, or holiness of God. Observe, he prays to be searched--that his whole being may be exposed, to see if there was any iniquity within him, and that he might be led in the way everlasting. It is plainly implied that he had such a sense of the purity of God, as to be convinced that God was infinitely opposed to all iniquity. (3.) It implies in the next place the necessity of being perfectly pure himself. An individual that offers such a petition as this, does not, and cannot, offer it without this conviction. (4.) Again: an acceptable offering of this petition must imply, a thorough wakefulness of mind to one's moral or spiritual state. It must be that he is in a very honest, searching, state of mind himself--thoroughly in earnest to know all about himself: he is wide awake to his own spiritual condition and heartily desires that all his errors may be rectified. (5.) Again: it implies an intense anxiety to be perfect as God would have him to be--conformed to the holy will of God. Observe, he prays that his heart may be searched to see if there was anything wicked within, and to be led in the way everlasting, which plainly implies that he was willing to be led to abandon all iniquity. An individual who makes such a request as this must have an intense

longing of mind to be entirely delivered from the dominion of iniquity. (6.) Again: this request, to be acceptable, must also imply, I suppose, that the individual offering it, is not at the time conscious of living in sin--conscious of indulging in any known sin. Now the Psalmist would not have made such a request as this, if he had been at the time indulging in sin: he would surely not have asked God to search him to see if there was any wickedness in him, if he was at the same time conscious of indulging in known sin. Had this been the case he could not have made such a request as this without downright hypocrisy. (7.) But again: the acceptable offering of such a petition as this implies the assumption, on the part of the petitioner, that he needs to be deeply tried--penetrated with the light of truth to the deepest recesses of his soul. When an individual offers such a petition, he assumes that there may be such things about him as he has himself overlooked, and he asks for the scrutiny of God's eye to search it out, and to apply such tests as that he may see it. (8.) Again: the acceptable offering of such a petition, implies a willingness to be subjected to any process of searching that God may see to be needful. He does not point out any particular way in which he desires to be searched, and tried, but he leaves that to the Divine discretion--he only asks that it may be done, without attempting to dictate how it shall be done. When we ask to be searched, without any real design to be searched, there is an inclination to dictate the way in which it shall be done, but this is not an acceptable way of offering such a petition. The time and manner of the searching must be left entirely to the Divine discretion. Let the thing be done! Let God do as seemeth him good! This is the state of mind in which the prayer must be offered. (9.) Again: an acceptable offering of such a petition, implies of course, that the petitioner is really willing to have the petition answered, and will not resist any process through which God causes him to pass as the means by which he is answered. I pass now to consider secondly--

II. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD ANSWERS REQUESTS OF THIS KIND. And I observe, first: by his Spirit and by the application of his truth. By these means light often shines into the mind, so as to give individuals such a view of themselves as without this searching they never would have had. But, while it is true that God often searches in this way, and has done so in all ages, yet it is by no means the *only* way in which he searches the human mind: nay, it is certain that he much more frequently searches individuals in other ways. Observe: God's object in searching is not to inform himself respecting us, but to discover us to ourselves, for he knows well all about the state of our minds, our spiritual latitude and longitude: what we are in our present state, and what sort of characters we should develope under any, and all circumstances. Consequently, God, in bringing us out to our own view must apply such tests to us, as shall assist in this development so as to let us see ourselves as he himself sees us. In order to do this--make us understand ourselves, and those around understand us--God answers such petitions as these, by means of his *Providence without*, and by his *Spirit within*; and, observe, these never contradict one another. God is working without by his Providence, bringing us into various states and circumstances for the development of character, and then comes by his Spirit, and presents it to our minds when it is developed. But I said that I should notice some of the ways in which God answers these petitions, and I will do so. (1.) For example, he often suffers things to occur that really will show to us, and to those around us, what sort of *tempers* we have. For instance, people speak against us, and the way in which we bear their accusations show what our tempers are. Now when we pray to be searched, God often applies such tests as this: he allows us to be defamed, and spoken against, in order to try the state of our minds and show whether we posses the virtue of meekness, or whether we will say that we do well to be angry. Now, perhaps, some of you have had such a test as this applied to you this very day. Some one has said or written something of you of a disagreeable and injurious tendency; well, let me ask, what state of mind did it develope? Did it develope the meekness and gentleness of Christ, or did it make you angry? Perhaps you had been praying that you might be searched, and God caused your character to be developed that you, and that those around you, might see it; and what sort of character was it, hearer? (2.) Again: God often arranges matters so that we are treated with neglect--perhaps, sinfully so--by those about us. Now God does not prevent this, but suffers it to be done. He could have interposed to prevent it, but did not: well, how does this effect us? it developed the state of mind that we were in. And what was the real state of mind that it brought out? Did it make us angry and manifest an unholy temper, or otherwise? Perhaps God allows us to be treated with manifest injustice, and when thus tried do we manifest the Spirit of Christ? Do we find working in us the temper that was manifested by Christ on such occasions? Remember, that it is written, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Now we should be exceedingly ignorant of ourselves if none of these tests were applied. When persons have nothing to try them, they are in great danger of deceiving themselves; but

when persons are tried, then their real disposition, and the temper of their minds are developed. Let me ask, has somebody cheated you? has some one taken advantage of you--has injustice been done you--has some one refused you honest wages, or repudiated a just debt? Well, under these painful circumstances, what spirit did you manifest? Did you find the Spirit of Christ within you? Mark! these are Providences occurring to search you that you might understand yourselves, and that those around you might understand you. Perhaps you have been misunderstood, and misrepresented; well, how have you borne it? Perhaps you have been treated disrespectfully by those who are under particular obligations to you; well, how did you bear it? Did your indignation rise--did you manifest an un-Christ-like spirit? or did you find the Spirit of Christ was in you? You prayed to be searched, and in answer to your prayer, your children or domestics, or those related to you, and who are under particular obligations to you, treated you in a very improper manner--directly the reverse to what you had a right to expect from them--perhaps your domestic servants or those otherwise in your employ, have done that which is exceedingly wrong. Now admit that all this was very wrong and exceedingly provoking, what has been the effect upon yourself? What has it taught you? and what has it taught those who witnessed the development? Has it brought out your state of mind? Doubtless, it has; and if it was not outwardly manifest, what were the feelings within? Some one, perhaps, has contradicted you! Can you bear contradiction? Do you bear it well? Were you patient under it? Did you act as Christ would have acted under the circumstances--or did you behave un-Christ-like? Perhaps, in your business this day, some of those whom you employ have not attended to their duty, or have destroyed your property--and all this might have been exceedingly wrong, and highly provoking. But, let me ask, what spirit did you manifest to them who had done the wrong? Such a spirit as Christ would have manifested? What has been the result of such an occurrence? Observe, these things never occur by accident: God designs that every one of them should develope our characters--that they should try us and prove what there is in us, and bring it out on to the field of our own consciences, and reveal to us the springs of action within us. Now when these tests of your character and disposition have been applied, what has been the result? Did you find that you were nothing but the same old sinner yet? That instead of finding Christ within you, and his temper developing itself, you found the old man with his deceitful lusts? (3.) I remark again, on this part of our subject: How often when individuals pray to be searched, and tried, God gives them opportunities in their business to prove if they love their neighbours as themselves--or whether they will speculate with a view to make all they can out of their neighbours, and adopt any means to this end that will not subject them to any criminal charge, or ruin them in a business point of view. God tries them to see if they will really consult their brother's interest as well as their own--to see if they will share the profits where there is any money to be made; or whether they will be disposed to dip their hands as deeply in their neighbours pockets as they can without losing their character for honesty. Now God often tries men in this way. He will often give them opportunities to take some advantage in the way of trade. A man who is in want of a loan of money comes to an individual that professes to be a Christian, and who is quite able to lend it, but he pretends, that to acceed to the request and oblige his friends, he shall have to make great sacrifices; when, at the same time, he really means that his friends shall have the money if he will but give an exorbitant interest for it, and good security. This is a searching for him. He finds a neighbour in trouble; how does he act? Does he come right out like a Christian man and help his neighbour, as Christ and the apostles would have done, had they been placed in similar circumstances? Now, whenever cases of this kind occur, they are golden opportunities for us to know ourselves, and are designed to search us to the bottom of our hearts. (4.) But again: oftentimes, God so arranges it, that individuals can take advantage of others, without danger to their own reputations. They are very cautious not to take advantage when their is danger, they have no design to ruin themselves. But, sometimes, there is little or no danger to their business characters by being dishonest, and now is the time of trial when an individual has no selfish reasons for being honest. A man may be naturally dishonest, but he will not take advantage when it is likely to hurt himself: but when this is not the case--when he can be honest or dishonest, without injury to his business character, then is the time for a man to try himself, and see whether it is the love of God or the fear of man that actuates him. Suppose that an individual has, in change at your store, paid too much, and it is never likely to be found out, or suppose you have found something in the street, and you can keep it, or restore it as you please: now these are searchings from God; and how completely such circumstances show to men what their true character for honesty is. The honest man would no more take, and appropriate, the mistaken change, than he would cut his own throat; nor keep the articles found in the street any more than he would leap into the fire. Now suppose, that instead of finding the Spirit of Christ manifesting itself, he developed the opposite spirit, and has to resort

to some selfish reasonings to quiet his conscience, and make himself appear an honest man. Well, it is written upon him, Mene, Mene, Tekel--weighed in the balances and found wanting. (5.) Again: God often allows men to accumulate property that they may have an opportunity to extend the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth; he tries them to see if they will do it or not. Professors of Christianity acknowledge themselves to be but stewards for God--that everything they possess is his; and, consequently, is at his disposal. Now is it a fact, that these men act in harmony with their professons? Well, God often tries them to see if they are acting the hypocrite or no. (6.) Again: God in his providence often causes us to suffer losses by bad debts, or by fire, or by some such means, just to see whether we will think and speak of these losses as being *our* losses--whether we regard these losses as God's or our own. As professors of religion, we profess that everything is God's, and that we are only stewards. Well, look at a professor who once had large property to manage, by some means he lost it all, and he goes about saying, that *he* has sustained such and such great losses, and proves by such conduct that he acted hypocritically in professing that he believed it to be God's property, and that he was only the steward of it. Suppose a clerk, whose master had sustained heavy losses, should go about and complain that *he* had sustained the losses, how absurd and untrue it would be. When we are in possession of property, we may profess that it belongs to God, and even deceive ourselves into the belief that we are sincere in our professions, but when a loss occurs, it often shows to us that we did not regard it as God's, but our own. (7.) Again: he will develope our temper to us, and enable us to see whether we are impatient, or otherwise; and he will show us whether we are ambitious--whether we desire to climb and scramble up some height, from which we can look down with scorn or contempt upon our fellows. (8.) Again: God oftimes gives us opportunities of self-display, to see whether we will display self; and, on the other hand, he often denies us such opportunities, to see if we will murmur and be envious of those who have. Many persons will be found often speaking against display, when they have not the means to indulge in it; they will be very loud in their censures upon other professors who ride in their coaches, and furnish their houses in a superior style--but give these declaimers the means of doing the same, and see what they will do--see if they will not imitate, and perhaps act more extravagantly, than those whom they before condemned. A little while ago, they were very piously complaining of display, but now they have the means of doing the same thing, and they do it; so that it was not principle, that caused them to speak as they did, but simply because they could not indulge in those things themselves, they pretended to be greatly grieved with others for doing so. (9.) But again: Sometimes God will deny individuals many things, to see if they will be satisfied with the providence of God. Do they bear poverty well, or are they envious at the rich? Are they in their poverty what Christ would have been in their circumstances? Thus riches and poverty, sickness and health, and a thousand other things, are sent to try men, and prove to themselves, and to those around them, what their real state is. (10.) God oftimes try us to see if we are self-willed--to see if our wills are ready to submit to his will; or whether we shall make ourselves unhappy and wretched because God so wills respecting us. How often is it the case that individuals do not know whether they are self-willed; so long as the providence of God seem to pet them they are very pious, and can talk about submission with the greatest apparent sincerity; but let God just drive across their path: lay his hand upon them: blow their schemes to the winds of heaven: and see whether they will talk of submission then; see whether they are self-willed, or whether as little children they will instantly submit. Can they say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, thou knowest that I am not haughty; surely, I have behaved myself as a child weaned of its mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." Blessed man! when he was tried, he says, "Surely I have behaved as a child that is weaned of its mother." Probably, most of you have had opportunities of knowing by actual observation what this means--perhaps you have seen a self-willed child ready to wrestle with everybody, but what a great change comes over it, when its will is subdued. God often in his providence tries individuals, but who, instead of being a weaned child have been as an *un*weaned child; instead of being able to say as the Psalmist did, are obliged to confess, "I have been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" restive, self-willed, domineering, and ready to make war upon God. Most of the persons, to whom I address myself to-night have doubtless, passed through such scenes as these. Now, let me ask, how have they affected you? What was the state of mind that you discovered in yourselves? God was searching you, applying the tests that should infallibly show what was the working in your minds. (11.) But, let me say again: it is oftimes of the greatest importance for God to introduce measures to show if we are disappointed at any course that he adopts towards us. When the man is devoted to God, he is willing that everything which he possesses, and his own life also, should be devoted in any way that God should choose. If he is in a right state of mind, he will not be disappointed at any providence,

believing that everything occurs by the will of God; and, this being the case, all must be right and conduce to their real good. Now when circumstances occur to disappoint us, if we will not allow ourselves to be disappointed, we may understand and conclude, that our will is such as it ought to be. (12.) Again: God often tries us to see if we idolise our friends; he visits them with affliction, or the loss of property, to try whether our affections and love are set as much upon God as upon our friends. You recollect the case of Eli, when he was informed of what had occurred to his family: he said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Now it is a great thing for individuals to have opportunities occur in the providence of God to try them. There is, no doubt, a meaning in all things that God is perpetually bestowing upon us: and the very things that we are apt to regard as evil things, when we are in a bad state of mind, are working for our good. But let a man be in a right state of mind, and he will not object to be thoroughly tried, for he knows that the grace of God will be given to assist him to bear the trial. He can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." And how much good the trial does him. It is good for him to be searched and tried and stripped; if need be, of property, health, friends, and all else, no matter what, for these individuals have the satisfaction of feeling the grace of God spring up in their hearts, and it shines forth on all around them. My design is, as you perceive, to pass very rapidly over an outline, which I beg you to fill up by looking back from time to time at what is occurring around you. What has occurred to-day to try you? Say, how did it if affect you? Keep an eye upon this to-morrow, and remember that God is searching you to try your temper and state of mind. Perhaps, you are a Christian mother and your child is unruly and unreasonable, how does this effect you? Do you know that God is suffering this to see whether you will be patient or not? (13.) But again: How often will God try us to see whether we are really willing to lose the good opinion of the world--to lose the respect and confidence of our friends, and to lose cast in society for the truth's sake. Some man, perhaps, has been cast down from the heights of society, and has become poor, and loses friends and reputation; how now is he effected? Does this trial cause him to shine forth a holy man, caring but little how men regard him, if so be that the event is for his spiritual good, and the honour of God? Indeed everything that passes in society--new fashions--new style of dress--new colours--are constantly developing the state of our minds. Are our minds intent upon these things? Or to what extent do they affect us? It is often interesting to see how such things will effect Christian professors, and others also. The design of God in this dispensation is to make all classes of men understand themselves--whether they be professors of religion or not. Thus he says of the church in ancient days, "Forty years have I led thee in the wilderness to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no." (14.) But again, let me say, that oftimes he will introduce dispensations that may severely test Christian professors, and prove whether they love God supremely. Now I have observed that there are many professors of religion who profess to love God supremely, who will stand by in silence while God's name is blasphemed by men who seek to bring dishonour upon his name and to subvert his kingdom; but these same professors, if any word is spoken against themselves, are in the greatest excitement. They can see contempt, and abuse, heaped upon God without exhibiting, or even feeling, much grief--or being able to sympathise with the Psalmist, when he said, "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law." Now do they think that the Psalmist expressed himself in a manner that was not true? No, surely! Wickedness took place before his eyes, and how did it affect him? Why he tells us, and tells God himself how it affected him, "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved." Now nothing is more common, than for God to suffer wickedness to occur before the eyes of professors, to see what state of mind it will develope. To see whether they are more devoted to their own characters than the honour of God. Now whenever these things occur the fact is revealed whether we love God or ourselves supremely.

But I must hasten to make a few remarks, and close. (1.) The first remark that I make is this--men do not always realise what is implied in the prayers which they offer to God. They offer requests to God without seeming to realise what is implied in the requests which they offer. For example, they pray to be searched, but they do not understand what is implied in such a request? Do they know for what they are asking? People, in making requests, ought to understand for what they ask! And what may be necessary as a condition of receiving an answer. (2.) Again: men often receive answers to their prayers without recognizing the answers. They are praying, but looking in another direction--they have their own thoughts about the manner in which they expect God to answer. For example, how many persons have offered the prayer which is contained in our text; and they have an idea in their minds that the searching would take place when they were in their closets--not thinking that it was really

impossible for God to do this. Now when persons pray with this idea, they do not recognize the answer to their prayers, because they come in a different direction to that in which they are looking. Perhaps some of you have received such answers to your prayers as have wholly confounded you. You have prayed to be searched, and instead of having the inward light that you expected, you find yourselves in such a state as if the spirit of Satan was developing itself within you. (3.) But let me say again, that person oftimes resist the answers to their prayers. It is no doubt true that God frequently answers petitions, in a certain sense, even when they are not offered in a right spirit, and perhaps the answers are intended expressly to show that they were not offered aright. For example, an individual prays to be searched, and God searches him to show that he is not able to be searched. Professors pray that they may be searched, and the minister comes forward with their portraits drawn full length and hold them out to their view. Now just look at them! they cannot bear it? What is the matter with them? They prayed but a few days before, that they might be searched, and now see the effect of the searching! I am just reminded of a fact that once occurred under my own notice. A Presbyterian church, in the centre of New York, had existed for many years without a revival of religion, till it was in danger of becoming extinct. I went there for the purpose of merely spending a night. The members of the church were holding a prayer meeting. I declined to take the lead of the meeting, being a stranger, so one of the elders led the meeting: he began by reading a long Psalm, or hymn, and they sung it; and he then read a passage of scripture and did what he called pray--he doled out a long talk to God, in which he said a great many things about their state and condition, how long they had been so, and that they had met there every week for many years to pray, &c. Another hymn was sung, and another leader did the same as the first. They had about three such prayers, when one of the elders desired that I would make some remarks before the meeting closed. I complied with the request, and took their prayers as my text. I asked them plainly if it was understood that the meeting was called to mock God? They had met together once a week for many years, and had confessed their sins, but they had never forsaken them, and what was that but mockery? I took up each man's prayers separately, and pointed to him, while I remarked--if what that man said is true, he is a hypocrite! I then took another one's prayer, and said to him, now you are certainly a hypocrite too, if what you said in your prayer is true--that is self-evident. Well, they looked so angry, that I did not know but they would get up and leave the house, yet I did not spare them. I just threw their prayers back in their faces, and charged them with holding a prayer meeting to mock God. They turned and twisted about in their seats for some time, and were most uneasy, till at length one of the elders fell forward in tears, saying, "it's all true, it's all true." This was the commencement of a revival, which in a few weeks spread throughout the neighbourhood. These men had not understood that they did but mock God while they pretended to hold a prayer meeting--they asked to be searched, and God searched them in a way that they did not expect. As I said, persons will often pray to be searched without understanding what is included in the answer. Just take up their own confessions sometimes, and ask them if they mean what they say? and tell them if you are guilty of what you say you are, what wicked men you are, and you will certainly be lost unless you repent immediately. Just adopt this course, and you will soon see whether they are willing to be searched, whether they are in earnest. (4.) I remark again, that all the trials of saints are in answer to their prayers--are sent to try them. Sometimes this fact is not recognised, and sometimes when persons do recognise this, they are really afraid to be searched. I have known persons afraid to have spiritual blessings bestowed upon them, lest the trial attending the bestowal should be too severe. A woman said to me once, "I am afraid to ask the Lord to sanctify me, for if he does I am fully persuaded that he will take my husband from me." Well now, although it is not often the case that persons understand so distinctly the state of their minds in this respect, yet there is no doubt that persons oftimes really fear that God should introduce some sanctifying dispensation, lest he should deeply wound them in some tender part--perhaps deprive them of friends, of children, or perhaps even of their own characters. (5.) But I remark again, that these things which try the unregenerated part of mankind are often in answer to the prayers of the saints. The saints pray that God will convert the sinners, and God adopts the means that are needed to this end, and the means that are adopted perhaps were little anticipated, and are not always recognised as answers to prayer. It comes to pass oftimes that individuals need to lose their character, their friends, or their property--they are so hedged in, that God must adopt some stringent measures in order to bring them into a right state of mind and cause his truth to operate upon them. (6.) Again: saints who ask to be searched must be willing to suffer anything which God sees fit to lay upon them--they must make up their minds to submit to any dispensations of his providence. (7.) Again: saints should be prepared to receive answers to prayer in their own persons. Perhaps God lays them on a bed of

sickness just when they had some very great object in view. Well it is intended for their good, therefore they ought not to repine nor murmur, but receive with thankfulness the good that is intended for them. (8.) Again I remark, that it is necessary that these trials should be awarded us, for it will not do that God should always feed his children on sweetmeats. We need severe discipline: it makes us good soldiers. A mere silken religion that passes through no trials has little efficiency in it. These providential trials take away the dross and tin, and make us strong in the Lord. How lovely is the character of the Christian who has patiently endured the trials through which he has had to pass. He becomes like a weaned child, and quiets himself under all the dispensations of providence: he receives every thing as bestowed upon him from his father. I might add a great many other things, but I must close by saying--the more holy Christians become the more sincere, and earnest are they to have their whole character, and being, completely searched, developed, and cleansed: and the more needful they find it to lay their whole heart before him, and ask him that his providence may search it, and purify it on every side, until he is satisfied with his own work. Christians, are you in the habit of asking the Lord to satisfy himself; to do that which shall bring you into a condition that will please him? Do you not long for the pruning knife to be applied, and to be purged of all your selfishness and everything that is offensive to God, so that you may stand before him as a young child in meekness and love, while he looks upon you and says, this is my handiwork, and it is very good. Ask God to search you then, and do not be afraid to have it done. Look upon all the trials of life as coming from your heavenly Father, in order that if you are really self-deceived you may know it, and if you are not, that you may grow up into the likeness of the Son of God. Amen.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD UPON EARTH.

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 12, 1850,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

OF AMERICA,

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS.

No. 1,517.

"Thy kingdom come."--Matthew vi. 10.

YOU will instantly recognise this petition as being one of those contained in what is generally denominated "the Lord's Prayer." In considering these words I propose briefly to explain,--

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN AN ACCEPTABLE OFFERING OF THIS PETITION TO GOD.

III. THAT THE STATE OF MIND THAT CAN ACCEPTABLY OFFER THIS PETITION TO GOD, IS UNIVERSALLY BINDING UPON ALL MEN.

IV. THAT IT IS ALSO A CONDITION OF SALVATION.

I. *What is meant by the kingdom of God*.

In some respects there are two ideas concerning the kingdom of God. One class of divines suppose that the kingdom of God is purely spiritual; others suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ will reign personally upon the earth, that when he comes a second time, it will be to set up his kingdom in this world, and reign here in his visible presence. These two classes, however, agree in this--that his kingdom must be spiritual, whether outward and visible or not; in either case he can reign over man no further then he reigns in their hearts. A spiritual kingdom must be set up in the soul--the Divine law must be written in the heart. If the Lord Jesus Christ should come and dwell visibly in London, walk in its streets, and mix with its people, and be here as truly as the Lord Mayor is, what would it advantage the people unless they were converted and truth prevailed in their hearts? Unless the laws of his kingdom were written in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, the people of London would be none the better for the Lord Jesus Christ's living amongst them. Therefore, whether the Lord Jesus Christ come and reign personally or not, his kingdom will be established and his dominion extended by the same means that it is now. When persons pray, therefore, "thy kingdom come," if they pray sincerely,

they pray that there may be universal holiness in the earth--that this kingdom of grace may be set up in all hearts, and that Christ should exercise universal influence over the minds of men. I am to notice--

II. *What is implied in an acceptable offering of this petition to God*.

And here let me say that it was not part of the design of our Lord Jesus to give his disciples merely a form of prayer, the words of which they might repeat without knowing or caring what they meant or said; he did not give this prayer to be repeated over as a ceremony merely, without significance or interest. There is no greater profanity in the universe than to gabber it over in such a manner as it is frequently used. The Lord Jesus gave this prayer to be understood, and that the petition should be offered with sincerity and with faith, and in a certain state of mind. Who can doubt this? Did he intend to teach his disciples and his people in after-ages to be hypocrites? No, indeed! Did he intend them to offer insincere worship? No, indeed! Then he must have designed that they should offer these petitions with sincerity. Now, the question is, what is implied in sincerity? When is a man sincere in offering this petition to God? What are the characteristics and elements of sincerity? What is implied in being sincere? 1. I observe, first, that a sincere and acceptable offering of this petition implies repentance of past sins,--for sin rejects God, and tramples down his laws. No man who lives in sin can offer this prayer without gross hypocrisy--that's very clear; the man who rejects Christ and tramples on his laws, lives in sin, and cannot offer such a prayer as this acceptably. It implies, then, repentance and renunciation of all sin. 2. It implies confidence in God: observe, it is a petition to God, that his kingdom may come. Now, if an individual have not implicit confidence in the character and wisdom of God, in the perfection of his government, and in all the provisions of his kingdom, why should he pray it may come? Now, it is not enough that a man believes as a mere speculation that God is good, that his law is good, that his kingdom is what it should be; the devil knows this as well as anybody else. It is not enough that a man should admit intellectually that these things are so, but he must confide in God with his whole heart: to offer this petition acceptably he must really have heart-confidence in God's existence, in his wisdom, in his universal right to legislate for the world, in the perfection and wisdom of his government; he must have full confidence in God, I say, ere he can offer this petition acceptably--this is very certain. 3. Another thing implied in the acceptable offering of this petition is, that the heart obeys the law of God. An individual, for example, who does not in his heart submit to God's law, cannot pray that his kingdom may come, for what would he mean by that? That others may obey it, that others may submit to Christ's authority, that God's law may be set up in others' hearts, but not in his own. He cannot pray acceptably thus. The petitioner must have the law of God set up in his own heart, and his own life must be governed by it. But this leads me to say, 4. That, inasmuch as man's outward life is always of necessity, by a law of his nature, as his heart is, it implies an obedient life as well as an obedient heart. The term "heart" is used in various senses in the Scriptures--but whenever it is used in the sense that implies virtue, it means the Will. We say of those whose will is devoted to God, that their hearts are right--they are devoted to God, consecrated to him. Now, if we consider the heart as the will--and that is the sense in which I now use the term--the will governs the outward life; and if this will, or heart, devotes itself to the will of God, and yields itself up to obedience to the law of God, the outward life must be in conformity with the law of God, so far as it is understood. Let no man say, then, that his heart is better than his life. Let no man say that his heart has received the kingdom of God, while his outward life disobeys it. 5. Sincerity in offering this petition implies universal sympathy with God. By this I mean, first, that the petitioner really does sympathise with the great end which God is endeavouring to secure through the instrumentality of his law, and by the government of his kingdom. Now, government, remember, is not an end, but a means; neither is God's government an end, but a means. He proposes to ensure certain great ends by means of his government and his kingdom. Now, when a man prays that God's kingdom may come, to be sincere in his petition, he must fully sympathise with the end which is sought to be accomplished, and on which God has set his heart, which is his own glory, and the interests of his kingdom. A man, to offer this petition acceptably--"thy kingdom come," must understand this to be the great end, and set his heart upon it; to this he must consecrate his being, as the end on which God has set his heart. But it also implies, secondly, sympathy with God in reference to the means by which he is endeavouring to secure this great and glorious end. Again, sympathy with God implies a real and hearty aversion to all that stands in the way of the progress of his kingdom--all sin, in every form and in every shape. The individual that is not deeply and thoroughly opposed to sin, does not want God's kingdom to come; for God's kingdom would destroy all the works of the devil, would destroy sin in every form and degree. Those who offer this petition in sincerity, virtually pray that all sin may cease. Now, how can a man who does not cease from sin himself present such

a petition as this? How can he pray for God's kingdom to come, while he is violating the known laws of that kingdom? If a man be not opposed to all sin, he cannot offer this petition acceptably. 6. It is plain that sincerity in offering this petition must imply supreme attachment to the King, his law and government. Observe, the petition does not express a *partial* attachment to the kingdom of God, but is an expression of *entire* agreement with God in reference to his kingdom--a universal submission, a universal attachment to the King and his entire administration. Every one, I think, will say that no man is or can be sincere in offering this petition, if he is not heartily and devotedly attached to the King and his government--to every principle and precept of his holy law and Gospel, and to his entire administration. 7. A sincere offering of this petition implies a sympathy with all the means that are used to establish this kingdom in the earth--to establish it in the hearts and souls of men. Now, if an individual prays that this kingdom may come, he prays that men may be made holy, as the condition of their being made happy, and of their being saved. Now, the man who does not truly love the souls of men, and desire their salvation, never offers this petition in sincerity; in order to do this, he must care for the souls of men. 8. It implies a supreme desire that God's kingdom may come. It is one thing for an individual to say "thy kingdom come," and another thing for him supremely to desire that it may come. It is common for a man to ask in words for what he does not deeply and sincerely desire; but I said that a man, to offer this prayer acceptably, must deeply, and sincerely, and supremely desire that God's kingdom may come. But, if a man is in bondage to his own lusts, and desires their gratification supremely, no one in this house, I presume, would affirm that such a man could offer this petition acceptably. Now, I suppose that, to offer this petition acceptably, there must be a supreme desire for the object prayed for; that no desire shall be allowed to prevail over this; that no merely selfish enjoyment or selfish indulgence shall have a chief place in the heart. Let me ask any one of you this question,--Suppose you should see a man on his knees offering this petition, and if you knew, at the same time, that he was a self-indulgent man, not willing to make any sacrifices, or hardly any, to promote the interests of this kingdom, spending ten times more on his own lusts than he gave to the cause of Christ, how could any of you believe that such a man was sincere in offering such a prayer? Such a man, if he uses this petition, virtually says,--"Lord, let thy kingdom come without my exercising any self-denial; let Providence enrich me, but let me keep all I get: let thy kingdom come, but let me seek my own gratifications." Now, if a man should pray in words in this way, you would say it is little less than blasphemy! But he might not say this in words for very shame; yet, suppose he *said*, "let thy kingdom come," and *acted* quite the opposite to any such desire, would his prayer be any the better? 9. But not only does an acceptable offering of this petition imply supreme desire--that is, with [out] more influence than other desires--but it implies also, that the mind is supremely devoted to the end for which it prays; the voluntary power of the will devotes itself, and devotes the whole being, to the promotion of this end. Now, suppose we should hear a man pray in this way--"Lord, let thy kingdom come, if it can come without my being devoted to its interests; let thy kingdom come, if it can come without my ever giving my heart, time, energies, property, possessions, sympathies, and prayers, to promote it; I will say let thy kingdom come, but I will go on in my own way, and do nothing to promote it or hasten its approach:" you would say that this is not an acceptable offering of this petition. I suppose that none of you are disposed to deny that an acceptable offering of this petition does really imply that the heart is truly and sincerely devoted to the kingdom of God. 10. An acceptable offering of this petition must imply self-denial. Now, please to understand what I mean by self-denial; remember, it is not the forsaking of one gratification for another: it sometimes happens that men forsake the gratification of one appetite in order that they may gratify another. Persons may deny themselves in a great many respects, and yet be guilty of much selfishness. Suppose a man be avaricious, and love money, his heart is supremely set upon acquiring it, and hoarding it up. That man may be very frugal in his expenditure--he may be very much disgusted with many who spend money for their own gratification; this avaricious man may deny himself many things; he may go so far as to deny himself the comforts of life, as misers do, and berate everybody who do otherwise; but the man is selfish nevertheless: the love of money prevails over the love of everything else--his heart is set upon that. What people call self-denial, is often no self-denial at all; self-love is very frequently at the bottom, after all. But real self-denial consists in this--an individual's refusing to live to please himself; to promote his own profit and interests, as distinguished from God's kingdom; who refuses to do anything simply and entirely for self. It implies that an individual ceases from self and consecrates himself to God; lives to please God and not himself, and sympathises with nothing whose ultimate end is not to serve and glorify God. Now, when a man who does not deny himself offers this petition to God, what does he mean? He is a rebel against God, opposed to his law. Why does he want God's kingdom

to come? Let no selfish man, then--no man who lives in any form of self-pleasing, suppose that he can offer this prayer acceptably. 11. It implies, on the part of those who offer this prayer, a real and whole-hearted embarking of their all with God in this great enterprise. If we offer it sincerely, it implies that we have come into such sympathy with him as to embark ourselves, body and soul, for time and eternity, our characters and affections, our all, in making common cause with God in the advancement of the interests of his kingdom. Now, I think it cannot be doubted that all this is included in a sincere offering of the prayer, "thy kingdom come." Take the case of an earthly prince desiring to establish a kingdom--true patriotism consists in sincerely seeking the promotion of the aim of the prince. The fact is plain, that the acceptable offering of this petition must imply that those who offer it have given themselves up to the promotion of this object; that they have embarked their all in this great enterprise; that for this end thy live, move, and have their being. 12. Let me say again, that it implies a fear towards whatever would be calculated to retard the progress of this kingdom. Persons in a right state of mind hate everything that would hinder the advancement of this kingdom, because they have set their hearts on its establishment. Sin and every form of evil is loathsome to them, because it retards the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. It is a law of man's being which makes him quiveringly, tremblingly alive to any interests on which he has set his heart, and causes him to be keen-sighted, and ever on the watch to remove anything that stands in the way of the progress of that upon which his hopes are so deeply set. Now, be it remembered this law of mind invariably shows itself in religious, as well as in worldly matters; it does do so, and must. 13. I observe, in the next place, that those who offer this petition sincerely, manifest grief and indignation at whatever is contrary to God's will. If they see an error, but which does not involve sin, they are grieved; but if it involves sin, they feel indignation. I do not mean malicious indignation, but a benevolent, a holy, a compassionate indignation. 14. Lastly, under this head, I observe that a right offering of this petition implies the joyful exercise of an economy in our lives, whether of time, talents, influence, or whatever else we possess; there is a joyful economising of everything for the promotion of this end. Now, who does not know that when men set their hearts upon any great object, that just in proportion to their attachment to that object will be their devotedness to it--just in that proportion are they cheerful, eager, and ready in using every economy for the promotion of this object--they husband everything for the promotion of that end. As an illustration of this, let me notice an affecting circumstance that occurred within my own knowledge. A woman, who was a slave in one of the southern states of America, had escaped from her bondage, but she had left her husband and children in slavery: the master of these individuals offered to sell them their time, and let them go free. This poor woman gave herself up to earn the money to redeem them; and it was very affecting to see how she toiled, and denied herself even the necessaries of life, in order to secure their liberty. Nothing daunted her; no hardship discouraged her; in the cold, when the snow was on the ground, you might see her working, with but little clothing, and her feet bare; if you gave her a pair of shoes or a garment, she would soon sell them, to get money to increase the fund which was to secure the liberation of her husband and children. Now, this poor creature practised economy for the promotion of the great end she had in view; I do not say that was wise economy in her case, for she nearly sacrificed her own life to it. Now, you mothers can understand and appreciate this woman's conduct; if you had husbands, sons, or daughters in slavery, would you not do as she did? This woman had no love for money, or for anything, only as it sustained a relation to the one great end on which her heart was set. This circumstance illustrates, I say, most powerfully this great principle, that whenever our hearts are supremely set upon any object, we count everything dear as it sustains a relation to, and secures that object; and he, therefore, who prays sincerely, "thy kingdom come," must have his heart so set upon the object as to exercise a joyful and perpetual economy, with an especial reference to that end.

III. *The state of mind that can acceptably offer this petition, is universally binding upon men--all the moral agents of our race*.

The heathen themselves, by virtue of their own nature, know that there is a God, and that this God is good. They know that they ought to love their neighbours as themselves, and to love God supremely. The Bible teaches us that the light of nature, which they possess, leaves them wholly without excuse, if they do not love and obey their Creator. To believe and embrace the Gospel, then, is an universal duty. This you will all admit, and, therefore, I need not enlarge upon it.

IV. *This state of mind is a condition of salvation*.

Understand me, my hearers, I do not mean that it is a ground of acceptance with God--that is not what I mean: I do not mean that men are saved by their own righteousness--that on this ground they will be accepted of God. I know, and you know, that men are to be saved by the righteousness of Christ, and not by their own

righteousness; therefore, when I say that this state of mind is a condition of salvation, I mean what I say--it is a *condition* as distinct from a *ground*; a condition in the sense that a man cannot be saved without being in this state of mind, but that this state of mind is not the *ground* of salvation. "All have sinned, and" therefore "come short of the glory of God." First, to be in this state of mind is a *natural* condition of salvation. Could anybody that cannot offer this petition be happy in heaven? What would such a man do in heaven? God has perfect dominion there. Now, unless an individual is in a state of mind that he can sincerely, acceptably, and prevailing offer this petition to God, unless it be the natural expression of his heart, what possible enjoyment could he have in heaven? None whatever. Secondly, it is *governmentally* a condition of salvation. Every attribute of God in his moral government of the universe forbids any man to enter heaven who cannot present this petition acceptably to God. But we cannot further enlarge.

Let us now conclude with a few remarks. 1. This state of mind is not only a condition of salvation in the sense in which I have mentioned, but it is also a state of mind that must always be a condition of prevailing with God in prayer. Now, let me ask, Can any man expect to prevail with God if he is in a state of opposition to him, or not in the state of mind I have already described? While in a state of rebellion, while resisting God's authority, not having the heart in sympathy with God, not desiring the kingdom of God to come, how can an individual expect to have his prayer answered? No, neither this nor any other petition--that is very plain. It is true that God hears the young ravens when they cry--a mere cry of distress. And even when Satan himself prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ that he might not be sent out of the country, but that he might go into the herd of swine, his petition was granted; but the devil was not in a state of mind for prevailing, in the sense of offering prevailing prayer to God. I speak now of a state of mind that can secure the things promised, and this must be the state of mind in which a petitioner can acceptably offer the Lord's prayer--he must be within the meaning of the injunction of Christ's promise, as a condition upon which he has promised to hear and answer. 2. We can see from this subject why it is that prayer is often repeated by the petitioner, and is so seldom answered. God is "the hearer of prayer," not of hypocritical utterances in which the heart does not unite. Such prayers are not heard, because, in truth, they are not prayers at all. Individuals may repeat the Lord's Prayer every day, ten times a-day, and the more frequently they repeat it, the more they grieve the Spirit of God, and expose themselves to God's righteous indignation. 3. Those who offer this prayer acceptably are universal and very liberal contributors to the great cause of missions, and zealous supporters of all those various societies whose aim is to extend Christ's kingdom in the earth. By this I do not mean to say that these persons are always in a condition to give large amounts; but they will be cheerful and large contributors according to their means. And why? For the same reason that the slave mother was a cheerful and large contributor to that upon which she had set her heart, because their hearts are set upon the coming of Christ's kingdom in all its fulness, and power, and blessedness. I know that some may not be able to contribute more than their two mites, but I know, also, that they can give even this little with a full heart and a liberal hand. In a congregation to which I preached several years, in the city of New York, there was a woman named Dina, who had been brought up a slave, and continued a slave until she was forty years old and incapable of work; but although so poor, she always gave a quarter of a dollar--about a shilling--every Sabbath, to assist in meeting the current expenses of the congregation, and other things to which the money was applied. This was a free church; all the seats were free to every one. When Dina was asked how she could afford to give so much, she replied that the first quarter of a dollar which was given her in the week she laid by till the next Sabbath, for the purposes of the sanctuary. "I live upon God every day," she said, "and I know he will give me what I want." At the monthly missionary meeting, also, a box was carried round, and individuals put in their money, wrapped up in a piece of paper, with their names written upon it. Constantly, among the rest, was Dina's name written on a paper, enclosing a dollar. One of the collectors asked her if she really meant to put in so much as a dollar, and with some surprise, she replied, "Why, it's only a dollar--it's only a dollar; can't I give a dollar a-month." This poor woman seemed to have no interest in anything, only as it bore upon the advancement and interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Now, it must be that individuals who can really offer the Lord's Prayer, and mean it, will prayerfully do everything they can towards promoting his kingdom. 4. This leads me to say again,--The end for which a man lives will always reveal itself in his life; his sympathies will lie in the direction in which his efforts tend, and the reverse. If a man sincerely offers this petition, he will do everything in his power to spread a knowledge of the Gospel among men, and so extend the Saviour's reign upon earth. 5. The true Christian finds it "more blessed to give than to receive;" for example, the slave mother

never felt so happy as when she was paying the price of her husband's and children's release. When she gave that money to the master, she felt it much more blessed to give than to receive; a great deal more blessed than to have spent it to please herself, to gratify her own appetites. Impenitent men are greatly deceived when they profess that Christians feel it a great sacrifice, a great trial, to be asked to contribute of their substance for the promotion of religion. I have known impenitent men keep away from God's house because they felt it to be such a hardship to be called upon to give to a collection; and I have even heard professors of religion talk in that way, and have abstained from going to meeting when there was a collection, because they did not like to be dunned. Now, what sort of a conception have such men of religion? Why, they know nothing about it. Suppose that a number of men were to meet together for the originating and carrying out of some object of business or benevolence, which they professed to have deeply at heart, and that when they came together, they found that money must be subscribed by each of them, and they were to say that it was a great and intense abomination to be called upon to give money,--what would you think of their sincerity? But would they act thus? Why, no, they would be anxious to give of their substance, in order that the object which they had at heart might be realised. The real Christian never gives grudgingly, but thankfully and joyfully. When you have dropped your contribution into the box, Christian, don't your heart go away echoing, "God bless it! God bless it!" And if you have nothing to give yourself, you will pray for a blessing on the contributions of others. A collection will now be taken up for the London Missionary Society, before we close this morning's service, and another, for the same purpose, will be made in the evening; but I trust no person will stay away on that account. Amen.

THE SPIRITUAL CLAIMS OF LONDON.

A Sermon

Delivered on Wednesday Evening, May 29, 1850,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

OF THE OBERLIN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, UNITED STATES,

TO THE MEMBERS AND VISITORS OF THE CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION SOCIETY,

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."--Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

IN speaking from these words, I propose to show--

I. TO WHOM THESE WORDS WERE ADDRESSED;

II. WHAT THEY MEAN;

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THEM;

IV. THE CONDITIONS OF OBEYING THIS INJUNCTION;

V. WHY THE WORK IS NOT DONE.

I. *To whom these words were addressed*. Undoubtedly these words were first addressed to Christ's immediate disciples; but I suppose no one will imagine that the spirit of these words was confined to them. It cannot be supposed that Christ expected the Apostles themselves to do all this work alone. No doubt this commission was given to the Church of Christ as such. The spirit of these words, then, from the very nature of the case, was addressed to the Church of Christ of every age; and not only to the Church as a body, but to particular individuals of the Church.

II. *What these words mean*. If you will read the margin of your Bibles, you will see that the translation is, Make disciples, or Christians, of all nations. This is no doubt the true meaning. Not merely teach all nations, but disciple them; make them disciples, or Christians. The injunction is this, Go and convert all the nations of the earth; make Christians of them; "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with alway, even unto the end of the world." I pass over these thoughts very rapidly, because I suppose all my hearers will at once admit that the spirit

of this injunction is addressed to the Church of Christ as such; and if to the Church collectively, of course to each minister and member of the Church in particular: and that the Spirit of this injunction is binding upon every Christian in the world to whom this language may come.

III. *What is implied in this injunction*. 1. The injunction itself implies the ability of the Church to do what Christ requires. Every command of God implies this,--that those to whom the command is given have ability to obey it. This every individual must, I think, admit,--that when God enjoins anything, the very injunction itself implies the ability to perform in those to whom the command is given. Understand me; I do not mean by this that we have ability to fulfil this command of God without Christ; but observe the promise, "Lo! I am with you ALWAY;" not sometimes and in some places, but always and everywhere. Of course, this is implied, that if Christ is with us*always*, he is with us *everywhere*. It is implied, then, that with Christ's strength, and with his presence, the Church is able to all that he requires her to do. 2. Another thing implied is this, that it is the *mission* of the Church to effect the conversion of the world. Now, let me say, if the Church is required to convert the world, you are required to convert London--that part of the world where you reside. In other words, you are to take your part in the work; God requires nothing more than that you should do just what you are able to do, through the presence and agency of Christ. But let me repeat what I have just said. We are to understand that Christ, by this injunction, has made it the business of the Church to convert the world; consequently, it is the great mission of Christians in every locality to secure the conversion of those in their immediate neighbourhoods, and as many others as they can, but by no means to forget their own families, connexions, and localities; their business is to convert and lead these to Christ. 3. This injunction implies that this is their first, great, and only business in the world. I do not mean that preaching the Gospel is the only business of the Church, for books and tracts must be prepared and printed, and many other things done which are included in this requirement and essential to its fulfilment; but remember, all things are to be done to this end. Christians are to eat and drink, labour and rest, for the glory of God. They are to do all with the view of fulfilling this command of God--make it their whole business to secure this great object. It implies, then, that the Church are to be a band of missionaries; that every individual of the Church is a missionary; that the spirit of Christ is essentially a missionary spirit; that every individual in every locality is to regard himself as a missionary of Christ, placed there for the purpose of securing the salvation of those around him. It is said in the Bible that you are "the light of the world,"--set there that you may exhibit the light of truth, and be an example to those around you. You are "the salt of the earth,"--scattered broad-cast among the people, to preserve them from putrefaction.

IV. *Notice some of the conditions by which the true spirit of this injunction may be complied with*. 1. Confidence in the presence, and in the ready and effectual co-operation of Christ. What do you suppose Christ intended by saying, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world?" For what purpose did Christ make this promise if he did not mean, Lo! I am with you for the effectual helping of you to do what I have commanded you? Now, I suppose when Christ said these words, "Lo! I am with you always even to the end of the world," he would have us to understand this, which is the spirit of the promise: do this work, and mind, you shall not be straitened in me; you shall receive all the help you need from me. I will be with you in this thing; my heart is with you, my power is with you, my presence is with you, and my sympathies are all with you, always and everywhere. Is not this the meaning? What else can be meant by these words? Now, I suppose no Christian will deny that this is the meaning of the words, and the very meaning that Christ intended to convey to us. Now, if so, we must believe it. Everything that Christ has said is to be received in faith; in order that it may be effectual, it must be received in faith; therefore, I observe as the first condition upon which the Church can ever secure the conversion of the world, or individuals can convert those around them, we must believe that Christ is with us. Now, it is generally admitted, that Christ is in some sense with his Church; but he is only with his Church so far as he is there personally with the individuals who compose that Church, in their efforts to secure, and do what he requires of them. We are to believe this, have confidence in the fact that he is present to help us by his spirit, always present with us, and ready to sympathise, and co-operate with us for the securing of the great end which we are commanded to accomplish. 2. Once more: I regard this as a fundamental condition of success; a realising reliance on, and appropriation of this truth by the Church of Christ. Where this is not realised and appropriated, I believe there is little power to convert men from their sins. 3. Again: Another condition of success is that we thoroughly believe that in Christ's strength we are able to go up and take possession of the land. There must be the conviction and the realisation of the fact, by the Church, that she is able to do what Christ has commanded her to do: that

Christians are able to accomplish the end at which he has told them to aim. This truth stands out blazing on the pages of inspiration that the Church is able to convert the world, and that he shall ultimately possess the land. 4. Another condition of success in this great enterprise, is the devotion of the whole Church to this work. This enterprise cannot be accomplished by a few of the members of the Church, while the rest of them stand right in the way. Every indolent member is a hindrance in the way of good being done. That individual who is not engaged in the work stands right in the way, and will often undo as much as the others can effect; therefore the body of the Church, the whole membership of the Church, must come up to this work. If, now, the entire body of the Church of this City of London were to come up to this work, and engage in it with ardour, take hold of it in faith, believing that in Christ's strength they are able to possess the land, what a vast revival of religion would you witness in this city. 5. Once more, a thorough realisation of individual responsibility in this work is indispensable to success. A vast multitude of professors of religion feel but little personal responsibility. But if the masses of the people are ever to be converted, the entire membership of the Church must become alive to this fact, that they are individually accountable for the conversion of their fellow-creatures. Every one will see, if he reflects upon it, that this must be a condition of success on a large scale. Now, if you ask me what I suppose to be the greatest difficulty in the way of success, in the extension of religion, in any locality, I would reply, the unbelief and want of right spirit and agency on the part of professors in that locality. They are not in a state in which they can realise their own responsibility; and they have not confidence in the Gospel. Now, while this is the case with them, they are hindering, instead of advancing, the Gospel, in their midst. 6. Another indispensable condition of success is this, there must be sympathy with Christ in love to souls. Those who would undertake this work must enter into Christ's sympathies, feel as he felt and feels for sinners, pity them as he pities them, blame them as he blames them; take God's part against them as he does, and yet stand in such a relation as to sympathise both with God and man; addressing themselves to the work as Christ and the Apostles addressed themselves to the work. It is a very remarkable fact that those Christians in every age of the Church who have entered into sympathy both with God and man, have been those whose efforts have told most upon the world. The Lord Jesus Christ is a beautiful, perfect, specimen of this; he sympathised most intensely with the holiness of God, and yet he felt most tenderly for the distressed and guilty condition of fallen man. He was full of zeal for the purity of the Divine government; he was always ready to sacrifice his life, as he did sacrifice it, to honour the law; still he was full of compassion, kindness, and love, to all classes and conditions of men, whatever might be their forlorn and suffering condition. He stood between God and man, and sympathised, not with the sins of men, but with the infirmities and sufferings of their nature--all that in an any way affected their well-being. He stood in such a relation as to be an example to us; he sympathised both with God and man. The primitive Church caught the same spirit, for although his personal intercourse with them had ceased, he continued to be with them through the agency of his Spirit; and thus they possessed the same idea, and practised the same course of conduct. They came into habits of deep sympathy with God in their love for souls. They counted not their lives dear unto them, if by any means they might save souls; and the spoiling of their goods in this enterprise, they took joyfully, counting themselves honoured in having to suffer for his name and cause. They laid themselves without reserve on the altar, and this was the secret of their success. Now, beloved brethren, the conditions of success are the same now as then. If there is to be many converted, there must be a spirit of fervent prayer, and a large development of this sympathy of which I have been speaking, in the souls of Christ's ministers, the same as in the days of the Apostles. If you ask me, What is the reason of the want of success now? I say, the great reason is, because the spirit with which Christ and the Apostles began this work is not developed in the Church, and in individual members of the Church, to such an extent as to move the world--this is the reason of the difficulty. It is not that the Gospel is different. The Gospel is just the same now as it was in the days when the Apostles preached it; it will have just the same power in our hands that it had in the hands of the Apostles. Some persons speak as if they supposed that in the mouths of uninspired men the Gospel could not be expected to produce such great effects as when the Apostles preached it. But why, pray? What has inspiration to do with it? Inspiration revealed the Gospel; taught men to write what they have recorded; which record we have, and the same spirit which indited it, to explain it. Wherein, then, are we deficient? Depend upon it, friends, if we have the same spirit of love and confidence, with the same sympathy which they had both with God and man, the Gospel will be as powerful in our hands as it was in the hands of the Apostles. Since I have been a Christian myself, I have seen many hundreds of instances in which wonderful success in winning souls to Christ has attended those who have had the qualifications of which I have been speaking--

sympathy with God and man. But I cannot now enter into these details or even mention these instances, in one lecture. I should like to deliver a course of lectures to this Society, instead of one, that I might direct your attention to these things. 7. Again: another condition of the success of the Churches in any given locality, is this--they must enter into sympathy with Christ, in respect to his spirit of self-sacrifice for the promotion of this work. The spirit of the Gospel is essentially a spirit of self-denial; and rely upon it, when this spirit is developed in the Church she will succeed in making great progress in this work. In order to great success there must be the same willingness to lay everything upon the altar, that was manifested by Christ, his Apostles, and the Primitive Church. Jesus laid everything upon the altar, in order to save men; and we must count nothing dear to us that can be given up for the promotion of this great object. 8. Another indispensable condition to success is the entire consecration of the ministry to this work. The ministers of Christ bear a very important relation to this work, but they are not required to accomplish it all themselves. They are like the officers in an army; instead of attempting to do all the fighting themselves, they direct the energies of others. Ministers are the officers in Christ's great army, who are fighting against sin, and seeking to win dominion for their Master: they take an important and leading part in the work, but by no means are they to be expected to do all the fighting themselves, any more than officers are in any army in the world. 9. I said there must be entire consecration to this work; and let me add further, that unless they manifest a true spirit of consecration, they will be stumbling-blocks to the rest of the Church. It is indispensable that they should show themselves to be men given up to this work, absolutely,--men possessing the true spirit of self-sacrifice, sympathising with God and man; and that they are on the altar in this matter. Without this, the masses in any locality will never be moved, and the minister will be a hindrance in the way of good being done. I do not know what may be the condition of the ministry here in London, and therefore I speak not personally, but I speak a general truth when I say, that if Christians do not see that their ministers are heart and soul in this work, that they are ready to sacrifice anything to promote it, they are, and must be, stumbling-blocks in the way of good being done. In order to be greatly useful, these men, whom God has placed in such a position, must let everybody see that they are heart and soul in this work, that they have laid their all upon the altar, that they count not their comfort, their reputation, their salary, nor even their lives dear unto themselves in comparison to moving the masses of mankind and bringing them to God. 10. Another indispensable condition of success is this: Lay men and women must cease to lay down one rule for their minister and another for themselves. They must conduct themselves by the same rule, and be upon the altar, too, in their respective spheres of labour. Instead of criticising their ministers, and finding fault with them, they must work under his direction and assistance. If the membership of the Church just suppose that they can put their responsibility upon the ministers, they are entirely mistaken. Suppose that the ministers come into the pulpits Sunday after Sunday, and labour, and toil, and weep, and pray, and the sinners sit and listen to the solemn and awful truths which come from the preacher's lips, and feel that they are solemn and awful realities; but suppose in the same place there is a multitude of careless professors of religion who show by their conduct that they don't believe what has been preached, what stumbling-blocks are they in the way of the conversion of these sinners, who would otherwise, in all probability, be converted! By their conduct they seem to say, "We don't believe in the truth of what our minister says in the pulpit--it is all very well for Sunday, and he is paid to believe and teach these things, but we don't concern ourselves about them." How many times, when ministers have poured out all their heart before a congregation, have sinners been roused, and felt their hearts start up in fear, and their hair to stand on end, in consequence of what they have heard; they are deeply impressed. The congregation begins to move out, the professors of religion laugh and shake hands with each other, and going home they converse upon indifferent subjects, just as if they had not been hearing of those great and eternal realities; and seem to say by all their words, actions, and looks, "Don't you be alarmed, you see we are not at all alarmed, and we have heard more about these things than ever you did; these things may be very well for the Sabbath, and fit for the pulpit, but there is no truth in them." No wonder that sinners are unconverted! The membership of the Churches must be made to feel their individual responsibility, they must come into sympathy with Christ, and with the minister so far as he sympathises with Christ, and labour with him for the conversion of souls. Let them understand that they must cease to apply one rule to the minister, another to themselves; let them feel their individual responsibility, and come right out and consecrate themselves for the work, and lay their all upon God; and then we shall see a great revival of true religion in our midst. 11. Another indispensable condition of success is, that our religion must begin at home, with our children and those immediately under our influence; and then we must seek the conversion of those whom, next

to these, we can most readily reach and influence. When individuals are themselves converted, let them next secure the conversion of their children and those around them; and if they did this, they would create around them a little green and refreshing spot like that around the Siloam well, and its delightful soul-cheering and holy influence would soon be felt on every side. Let it be understood that persons must begin at home, and with those immediately around them, and then the influence must necessarily extend further. This must not only be felt to be true of ministers, but of everybody professing godliness. Let them each lay hold on their next friend, and bring him to Christ. 12. Another condition of success is this. The Church, and every individual member of the Church, must realise the guilt and danger of sinners. Let them look at it, and dwell upon it as they ought, and not turn their minds away from it. I have often thought that the reason why there is so little distress in the Church with respect to the state of sinners is, that Christians do not like to consider their real guilt and danger. They do not stir up their minds to a consideration of the real state of their children and their neighbours around them. Now, let me say, if persons are ever to be stirred up to take hold upon this subject, they must think upon it; and if they are ever to come into sympathy with God and man, they must attend to this subject; the mind must dwell upon it. 13. Once more: another condition of success is this--the members of the Church must cease to operate so much by proxy as they now do. The fact is, there is a very great and fatal tendency in Christians to do this, the great business of their lives, by proxy. They hire a minister, and pay a pound or two towards the support of a missionary, or a colporteur, and fancy that they have done the whole of their duty. Now, it is true that much good is to be done by ministers, missionaries, colporteurs, district visitors, and others in their several departments, but the Church membership must be wholly engaged if there is to be a large measure of success. The personal exertion of every Christian is needful and imperative; personal influence, personal conversation, prayer, and intelligent warning must be a condition of success in this great enterprise. I have never known this species of effort to be employed in any locality without an immediate and glorious result. I do not believe, in the history of the world, that the membership of any Church, in any part of the world, have engaged in this work in a right spirit, and from proper motives, without the success being such as to astonish themselves, it has been so far above all that they had expected. I say that every individual should be personally engaged in making known the Gospel, but I do not mean that they can give up their entire time to this work, but I do mean to say that very much more time might be employed by professors in this work than is at present, and immense good might result from it. 14. Another condition of success is: the Church must cease to neglect her duty, and then charge the failure upon the sovereignty of God. Some people talk as if want of success was to be ascribed to some mysterious sovereignty of God. It will do for us to talk of the sovereignty of God when we have done our duty, but not before. Why, what would you think of a man who should neglect to sow his field, and then, because at the time of harvest he had no crop, should ascribe it to the sovereignty of God? Or what would you think of a man who so shamefully neglected his business as to become a bankrupt, and then charge it to the sovereignty of God? Why, you would see the absurdity and wickedness of it at once. If the farmer tills and sows his land properly and wisely, and then God should send a blight upon it, so be it; but until he has done his duty in the spirit of dependence upon God, let him cease to talk, as if the want of a crop was the result of some mysterious sovereignty of God. So with Christians, they must cease to neglect their duty before they talk of the sovereignty of God hindering the conversion of sinners. 15. Again: professors of religion must cease to suppose that they do their duty, when they do not live in the true spirit of the Gospel. For example, suppose a minister should go into the pulpit from ambitious motives, that his chief desire should be to secure a great name for himself; and suppose this minister should say when he got home, "Well, I have preached so many times to-day, and I have done my duty." He preaches with a cold and unbelieving heart, and with little or no sympathy with Christ, little of no faith in the efficacy of the Gospel; and then can go home and say, "Well, whatever the result, I have done my duty;" and thus the want of success which is sure to follow such preaching, is thrown carelessly and wickedly upon God. "I have done my duty." No! You have not done your duty, even if you have preached the Gospel in all its truth, unless you have done it from a right motive, and in the spirit of the Gospel. If there are ministers present, let me say, that I am not affirming that you do any of these things, and preach the Gospel from wrong and impure motives, for I know you not; but I would call your attention to this, my brethren, for neither you nor I preach the Gospel in the spirit in which we ought to preach it, although we may preach the truth, and nothing but the truth, if we do not preach it in the spirit, and with the faith that Christ requires. Suppose our hearers should come to meeting and hear the Gospel, but not obey it, not believe it, and should then go home and say, "Well, we have been to meeting, and so we have done our duty." Nay! they

have tempted God, instead of doing their duty. Let us, then, cease to talk about religion or duty, unless we come to our duty with right motives, and perform it in a right spirit. When we have done this, we may cast the results upon God, assured that Christ will complete the work which we have thus begun--for he says, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." 16. Another condition of success is this: the Church must come out from the world and show herself, and let it be known that God has a people in the world. Let there be a visible and plain distinction, that people may see that they are actuated by a different spirit, and living for a different end: they must appear to be what God says they are, "a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This is to be plainly seen as an indispensable condition of eminent success. 17. The stumbling-blocks, which have been produced by a worldly spirit, must be taken out of the way. If we have manifested an unkind, or unjust, or unchristian spirit, in our families, in our neighbourhoods, or in our business relations; anything that caused men to stumble; led them to doubt our Christianity, or gave them reason to doubt whether there was any truth in religion at all,--I say we must take these stumbling-blocks up, we must take them out of the way; we must confess our sins and forsake them, and show, by our constant anxiety for the souls of our children and our neighbours, that we have faith in our religion, and desire them to participate in its blessings. As an illustration, let me mention a fact which occurred in America. An elder of a Presbyterian Church, one of the most respectable men of the town where he lived, and was thought by his neighbours to be a very religious man, as he attended to the forms of religion very regularly; but still there was a deal of formality about him, and but little of the powerful life-giving energy of religion. This man had a large family of sons and daughters at the time of which I am speaking, men and women grown, and yet none of them were converted. One day he was walking alone, a little way from his house, when he became very seriously impressed with the thought that his family were not converted, and questioned himself as to the reason; and he was forcibly struck with the conviction that he had never entered into the subject with them in such a manner as that they should be able to realise their guilt and danger; and as he continued to reflect upon this, such was his agony that he trembled fearfully, and the perspiration rolled down his face. He started off for his house, and before he could get there he fairly ran. When he reached the house he inquired in a very excited voice for one and another of his children; hearing the tones and manner in which their father was speaking, the family were soon assembled to learn what could be the matter. When they were all come together, the father fell upon his knees, and made confession to them and to God, and prayed for their souls. It so affected the whole family that in a very short time they were all converted. Now, I could tell you of multitudes of cases similar to this, where individuals have come to see that they have not done their duty, but have resolved to do it, and obtained a blessed result. 18. Again: if the Church will succeed in this matter, she must be willing to be searched and reproved; and the language of every member must be, "Search me, O search me, and try my heart, and see what evil there is in me; and lead me in the way that is everlasting." They must be intensely desirous to know what is essential to this great work, and to be made fit for its accomplishment. There must be deep self-examination, and a determination to do whatever is necessary to be done. 19. The Church must cease to grieve the Holy Spirit by her selfishness and self- indulgence. The fact is, persons are often complaining that they want the Spirit, while they are grieving the Spirit by their self-indulgent practices. While in this state it is naturally impossible for them to have the Spirit dwelling in their hearts. Many individuals grieve the Holy Spirit, and yet they are not conscious of it. They live in a great many forms of self-indulgence, and complain of the absence of the Spirit, and yet do not know wherein they are in fault. Are not ministers often very guilty in this respect? My design is not to reprove ministers where reproof is not needed; but I must be faithful. Oh, brethren, take care not to grieve the Holy Spirit! Watch your thoughts, and be careful of all your actions, and separate yourselves from worldly men and worldly influences as much as you can, in order that you may the more effectually help forward the work of God. 20. The spirit of caste must be got rid of. By the spirit of caste I mean the spirit that seems to overlook the fact that men are brethren. From the very nature of things, I know there will be different stations in society, and which probably will always exist to a greater or less extent; and those which are proper I do not condemn; but there is an improper feeling and spirit too much prevalent among many in the higher walks of life, which prevents their doing good to those below them in station. I have been astonished sometimes to see the aversion of many professors of religion to descend to the lower class of society to do them good. Now, you know that this was not the case with Jesus Christ, whose constant aim it was to benefit and bless the poor; and he even went to this class for the men whom he chose for his apostles, to carry the Gospel to the world. I cannot enlarge upon this now; but you all know that in every locality there is a spirit of caste that misrepresents the Christian religion,

and does an immense injury to the great mass of the lower classes in consequence. Christians, while they should faithfully rebuke their vices and reprove them for their sins, should also deeply sympathise with them in their poverty, and pity their distresses; and this is the way to win their hearts and lead them to the Saviour. The most flimsy infidelity takes possession of their minds, just in proportion to the seeming sympathy of the infidel teachers with their wants and necessities. They know how to appreciate such kindness; and the fact is, there is a great want of deep and intense sympathy on the part of the Christian Church with the masses of the poorer classes. Let this state of things be altered; let them get the impression, let it be once understood, that Christians are living to do them good in every way, and they will prefer Christianity to infidelity. It is not meant that Christians, in showing their sympathy should take such a part as to connive at their intemperance or sin in any form; but let the Christian seek to win them from vice, and persuade them to give up their intemperance in every form and degree; seek their welfare, temporal and spiritual, and a blessed result will follow. I have been astonished many times to see what a want of this spirit is to be found in different localities; and, in consequence, the mass of mankind are carried away with the most flimsy and absurd infidelity, because Christians fail to take any deep sympathy and interest in them. Now, if you are parents, let your families see that you earnestly desire their conversion to God. If you are a master, and have many persons under your influence, let them see that you have an earnest desire for their good, that you are vastly more desirous of securing their soul's salvation than their services in your business. The power of such conduct will be very great; it will move them--there is no mistake about it. But I must pass rapidly over these thoughts. 21. The Churches must be willing to be searched, and must help to search each other. Several years since, the students of one of my theological classes came to me for advice, as to the best plan they could adopt to assist each other in the best possible way to prepare for the ministry. I advised them to have a weekly meeting to search each other, to open their hearts to each other; and, furthermore, to privately tell each other their faults, and in the most fraternal manner try to reform everything that was wrong in their hearts, spirit, habits, and manners; in all and everything to make the most holy self-denial; and to unite in prayer for each other. They did this in several classes, and just in proportion as they have been faithful to each other, have I had the satisfaction of seeing them become prosperous and godly men, scattered about over our great country, with hearts full of love and faith, prosecuting the great work to which Christ has called them. Those classes that did most for each other in the way which I have named, have succeeded best, since they entered the ministry, in winning souls to Christ. Thus, I say, the Churches of Christ must be willing to be searched, they must search each other by all possible fidelity, kindness, and brotherly love. 22. Once more, all parties must realise their true responsibility. Every individual must remember that he is to be a missionary. We speak of missionaries as if they were men only who were sent to preach the Gospel to the heathen, or were connected with some Society for spreading the Gospel at home, forgetting often that every Christian is a missionary, or ought to be. 23. A high standard of piety is an indispensable condition to success in this work: there will never be any very great success in this city, or in any other locality, if the standard of piety be not greatly elevated in the Churches. In those localities that I have known, where great revivals of religion have taken place, the standard of piety has been raised higher and higher from time to time. Some person speak of revivals as if they were mere temporary excitements; that after revivals there has been declension, which has left the standard of religion lower than it was before the revival took place. Now, so far as my experience goes, I never knew such a state of things as that; if it was really a revival of religion, and Christians have got the standard of piety elevated in their own hearts, they will get a new development of spiritual life, from the brightness of which they may afterwards decline; but they will never go back so far as they were before. I have known persons pass through another and another revival; but at every succeeding revival they have had a higher development of spiritual life within them. Now, I stand not here to charge you with being hypocrites or backsliders, but I say, if you are to move the masses, and be the means of numerous conversions, you must have a higher standard of piety, a higher development of spiritual life. This must be! I will take your present standard at any given point, and say, from that point, whatever it may be, your piety must be greatly elevated; and just in that proportion will you be able to reach and influence those around you. If there are any ministers who sustain such a position before their people as not move their hearts, let me tell them that they never will move them, until they themselves have a higher development of spiritual life. Visitors, tract distributors, and all other labourers in this work, let me tell you--and you will, of course, not be offended with me when I tell you--that there must be a more thorough development of Christ in you; it must manifest itself in your looks, manners, and voice, that every man with whom you meet may be satisfied that you are sincere. A man by only looking at you can tell whether you are in earnest.

The tone of your voice will often reveal the state of your heart. A man might go through the streets of the city calling, Fire! fire! in such tones that nobody would believe him. Now, you must speak about religion in such tones that people will believe you, or you will fail to make any impression. If you speak about religion in such a way as to lead men to suppose that you don't yourself believe what you are saying, it is impossible for you to get persons to believe what you say. You must be so much in earnest that your earnestness cannot be concealed. Whitfield used to stand in this pulpit, and let me ask what was the secret of his power? His earnestness. Everybody knew that he was in earnest. All men felt, they could not but feel, that he was in solemn earnest, and so they listened and were saved. Let the Church awake up from sleep, and show herself to be in earnest, and when she has done this, if she fails, then talk of the sovereignty of God, and not before.

Leaving the answer to the question, Why the work is not done? till next Wednesday evening. I close with asking--1. Are you, my dear brethren, prepared to comply with these conditions? What do you say, brethren? What do I say? Are you willing to lay your life on the altar? Am I willing? I think I can say, as honestly as I can say anything, Yes, I am. 2. Now, beloved, let us come to this work asking, Why am I not more useful, why cannot I do more for God? There is a great mistake somewhere? Where is it?

CHRIST MAGNIFYING THE LAW.

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 19, 1850,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

OF AMERICA

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS.

"The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law and make it honourable."--Isaiah xlii. 21.

IN speaking from these words, I propose to consider--

I. OF WHOM THE PROPHET IS SPEAKING.

II. WHY HE SHOULD MAGNIFY THE LAW AND MAKE IT HONOURABLE.

III. HOW HE SHALL DO THIS. And then conclude with some inferences and remarks.

I. *Of whom the prophet is speaking*. I believe it is agreed that these words are spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ: I know not that this is called in question. It is said, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake," the person spoken of here, then, is our Lord Jesus Christ. The next inquiry is--

II. *Why he should magnify the law and make it honourable; and what law is this?* 1. Here let me remark, that very much of the infidelity and scepticism in the world has originated in this fact, that so many men have never attained to clear conceptions of what the law of God really is, and its relation to themselves; they generally look no farther than the letter of the law, entirely overlooking its spirit; and regarding it as emanating simply from the arbitrary will of God, and that he can dispense with the execution of it at pleasure. To make myself understood, I must give you my idea of the true nature of the moral law which is here spoken of. We have the letter of this law in the table of what are called the ten commandments; and indeed all the preceptive parts of the Bible may be regarded as simply explanatory of this law, as the principle contained in it applies to the outward conduct of human life. A just conception of the spirit of the moral law will show us that it originated in the eternal and immutable nature of God. From all eternity, God necessarily possessed an existence, and with that existence certain attributes--natural attributes. He possessed omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and so forth. Now, there must have been some way in which it became him, from

his very nature, to use these attributes; these attributes he possessed necessarily, and eternally, and there must be some way in which his intelligence must affirm that these attributes ought to be used. Now, observe, when we understand truly the spirit of the moral law, our reason affirms that all creatures are under obligation to exercise universal obedience to it. The moral law, then, is this--the eternal affirmation of God's own mind in respect to what course of conduct is proper in himself and in all moral agents; it is the eternal and necessary affirmation of the Divine reason and conscience as to how the attributes of any moral agent ought to be used. It is a necessary idea in God's mind, and in the mind of all moral agents: for example, no man can doubt that God's eternal reason must have affirmed that he ought to be benevolent. Who can doubt that selfishness or malevolence in God would have been sin in him? If God had been selfish and malevolent instead of being benevolent, that would have been sin in him; and why? Because God is a moral agent. Men are moral agents, and they have a nature which necessarily leads them to affirm this. The benevolence of God is really his virtue: and why? Because the exercise of benevolence is in compliance with that rule of conduct which was becoming in God to pursue; his reason affirmed his own obligation to it. Now, I have thought sometimes, that persons entirely overlook the fact that God is himself a moral agent, and the subject of moral obligation as really as they are. Some people startle at this, lest it should be thought derogatory to God's character; but if this were not so, God could not be virtuous: as he is a moral agent, he must be under moral obligation. The moral law was not given to God by any other being, for he is "a law unto himself"--his own eternal reason and conscience affirming that the carrying out of the principles of benevolence would be right in him, and of course the opposite wrong. When, therefore, God acts according to the moral law, he acts in compliance with an eternal law of his own nature, by which he was led to determine his own conduct, as the condition of his own happiness, and as the condition of the happiness of all moral agents. Let it be understood, then, that the moral law did not originate in God's arbitrary will; it lay further back--in a necessary law of his own eternal consciousness; as a rule of action it was prescribed to him by his own consciousness. This law is also prescribed to us by our own consciousness as well as enforced by the authority of God; and if we possessed none to legislate for us, and while possessing the same nature that we now do, our consciousness would have prescribed this rule of action to us--affirming that we ought to be benevolent. If the arbitrary will of God had originated this law, he could dispense with it at his pleasure; he could change the nature of virtue and vice, he could make that which is now virtue vice, and that which is now vice virtue, simply by altering his law; but does any one think that God could do this? Now, God never can change the nature of virtue and vice, and he claims no such power. This law having originated thus, and not by God's arbitrary will, it is binding upon us, as moral agents, by the very laws of our being. God created us moral agents like himself, and thus made this law obligatory upon us, enjoined it upon us by his own authority, and made it obligatory, also, by a law of our own nature. Now, the spirit of this law requires universal and perfect benevolence to God and man. By benevolence I mean love, with reference to the law of God and to the universe; this is what God's law requires of all moral agents. Now, observe, this law is as unalterable as God's own nature is--he did not create it, neither can he alter it in the least degree; he did not create it any more than he created himself--it never began to be any more than God did himself. Originating in his own self-existing nature, his own reason must have eternally recognised it as the course of action to be pursued by him; and thus it is plain that this law can never be repealed by him, and made less obligatory in reference to himself, or us--it can never undergo any change in its requirements, and can never be dispensed with in any case whatever. 2. Again: this law is infinitely valuable in the ends which it aims to secure. It is naturally impossible for moral agents to be happy unless they are virtuous, and virtue consists in obeying this eternal law. All virtue consists in perfect love--this is virtue in all moral agents. Now, in no further than this law is conformed to can there be happiness amongst men. Virtue is the basis of happiness, properly so called, in God or in anybody else. This law, then, aims to secure and promote all that creates happiness, as the condition of the happiness of God and of his creatures. I suppose that the things which I am affirming this morning will be admitted by all who hear me as self-evident truth; the mind of every moral agent must affirm them to be true, by a law of our own nature we affirm it, that they are true, that they must be true; for example, benevolence was proper and becoming in God, therefore obligatory upon him; and the opposite course would have been wrong--mind, I am not supposing that such a thing ever was or ever will be; but I am only supposing that if such a thing were possible, that God was not a good but a wicked being. Hence every moral agent will affirm that the moral law is a law which God imposed upon himself, and that it did not originate in his own arbitrary will--that its obligations can never be dispensed with in any case, neither repealed nor altered in any particular. Again: every moral agent, also, must

affirm that this law must be of infinite value, because it aims to secure an infinitely valuable end. 3. The true spirit of this law can never be violated. There may be exceptions to the letter of the law, but not to the Spirit--nobody possesses any power to make the slightest exceptions to the spirit of the moral law; but as I just now said, to the letter of the law there may be exceptions. The law prohibits any work being done on the Sabbath, and yet the priests were allowed to do the work of the sanctuary on that day without violating the spirit of the command. All labour was prohibited, but works of necessity and mercy were nevertheless allowed, and even required. These were exceptions to the letter of the moral law, but not to its spirit; to which there can be no exception. Again: the transgression of the moral law by any human being, is a public denial of its obligation. It is a denial of the propriety, necessity, or justice of its being law at all, and that it is unworthy of being so. 4. Again: let us look at the necessity that Christ should magnify the law and make it honourable. Mankind had denied the obligation of this law, publicly and most blasphemously denied it. Now, observe, if any other than a public act, for forgiving sin, and setting aside the penalty of this law, had been adopted, if no regard had been paid to its vindication, God would have sanctioned and completed the dishonour. The law had been denied, man had denied its justice, and now suppose God should come forth and set aside the execution of the law, and make a universal offer of pardon without taking any notice of this dishonour to the law by any public act whatever, would not this have been to dishonour the law. Now, man in a most direct and emphatic manner had come right out in the face of the whole universe and denied that it was obligatory, that it was just, proper, necessary, and reasonable; and let me say that by their actual transgression they had denied the power of the law in a higher sense than they could by mere words. Now, if God very good-naturedly had said, "Well, no matter, I will forgive you, only be sorry," and had taken no notice of the dishonour that had been done to the law, would this have been to magnify the law and make it honourable? would it not have been rather, on the part of God, by a most public and emphatic act, just to sanction the horrible dishonour that had been done to his law? To have thus acted, every one will see, would have been unjust to himself, unjust to the law, and unjust to the universe, and ruinous to all parties--and therefore it never could be. 5. Again: two things, then, must be done if men were to be saved at all. First, something must be done to honour this law, and to honour it as thoroughly as it had been dishonoured: second, something must be done to restore men to obedience as a condition of their being pardoned; something that must restore them to that state of virtue, love, and confidence which the law required. These two things must be done, to save the law from dishonour and the universe from ruin. Observe, the law had been disgraced in some way, therefore the degraded law must be made honourable. Man had been rebellious, he must be made obedient as a condition of the first proposition. 6. This leads me to say that both precept and penalty must be vindicated: both had been denied, both had been dishonoured. Now, it is easy to see that this could be done by no subject of the government; a mere creature could not magnify either the precept or the penalty of this law. It is easy to see that the lawgiver must provide for both, as the condition of its being proper in him to set aside the execution of the penalty in the case of sinners. Now, this law may be honoured either by its penalty being executed on the offender, or it may by honoured by some substitute taking the sinner's place, if one could be found. 7. Again, I inquire, how can God honour the law? Here again, we have an important light shed upon the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ, and upon the necessity of his possessing two natures in order to perform the work that was assigned him. The obedience of any mere creature could not be a sufficient vindication of this law. Great multitudes of the whole race had denied its propriety and justice. Now, if any mere creature had come forth and obeyed it, this would not have been to sufficiently honour the law which had been dishonoured by myriads. Now, it is very easy to see that if Christ possessed two natures, human and Divine, that he would be precisely in a position to magnify the law and make it honourable. Officially, and before the universe, he obeyed the law in both his natures; recognising its obligation as respects God and all moral agents. It is thus shown to be the rule of God's conduct, as well as the rule of our conduct; it is a rule which God imposed upon himself, and as really obligatory upon himself as upon us. Now, no mere creature, by obeying this law, could show its obligation upon Jehovah himself. But when man denied its obligation, Jehovah himself came forth, in the presence of the universe, and acknowledged its obligation, by recognising it in his two natures--one the nature of man, who had denied its obligation; and in this nature he obeyed every jot and tittle of it--"Heaven and earth," he said, "shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Heaven and earth were not so steadfast as this law. Thus we see that in these two natures Christ fully obeyed the law, and though it had been trampled upon and degraded, lifted it up high as the throne of Jehovah. 8. Again: we say that the suffering of one who sustained no other relation to God than that of a mere creature,

could not vindicate the justice of the law, or the penalty that it denounced against sin; but the Lord Jesus Christ, by taking two natures, and by the public sacrifice of the human nature on the altar of public justice, in vindication of this law, and as a substitution for the execution of its penalty, for the legitimate subject of it, did what none but himself could do. Christ, we say, suffered the penalty of this law, but in some sense he suffered it not as sinners would--as they must have done; he could not feel the bitterness and remorse which is a part of the lawful penalty awarded to those who commit sin; but he magnified this law, and made it honourable, for he sustained at once a relation to the lawgiver, and to those who had denied the obligation of the law. How beautifully, then, in these two natures united, could he vindicate the law, and thoroughly honour it in every particular.

There is great difficulty in any government exercising mercy towards rebels, and this is especially felt in such a government as that of God; and a little reflection on this will lead to the conclusion that an atonement was absolutely necessary. 9. Our Lord Jesus Christ by his life completely illustrated the true spirit of the law. He must magnify the law and make it honourable; and he asserted its universal obligation in his life, which was a perpetual illustration of what the law required of human beings. He ever manifested the true spirit of this law. He thus lived among mankind, taught them what they ought to be, and what they would be if they thoroughly obeyed the law of God; what sort of a thing society would be if all men obeyed the law of God; what men would be; what children and youth would be--how obliging, and kind, and holy. Now, by his life he calls upon us, and says, "Suppose all men were as you see me; suppose all men possessed the same simple-heartedness, the same truthfulness, the same regard for God's honour, and regard for the happiness of others,--would society be what it is? The whole race have denied the propriety of this law; but I give you a proof of its excellency by showing in my life what the state of society would be if it were obeyed. I obey it in every respect. You deny the propriety and goodness of this law; but if it were illustrated in each individual life as it is in mine, what would there be lacking in any society in heaven or upon earth?" Thus, then, God, by this his living teacher, condemns sin, shows the importance of the law, and its absolute perfection. 10. Again: Christ thus, by his life, declared and illustrated the great and unspeakable necessity of this law. He not only expounded its meaning, and gave himself up to teach the Jews and the world its real meaning, but in every way he contended for its reasonableness, beauty, necessity, and immutability in all things. Thus Christ illustrated, both in his life and preaching, this Divine and immutable law of God. Who can doubt that he was all the law required him to be? 11. Again: we may say that he taught, that mercy without satisfaction being made to its insulted majesty was not possible; and he undertook the work of satisfaction--to magnify the law and make it honourable. I cannot enlarge further on this part of the subject.

A few remarks and inferences will close what I have to say. 1. The intention of the Gospel is by no means to repeal the law. "Do we, then, make void the law through faith?" said the apostle; "God forbid; yea, we establish the law." By his life and death, Christ honoured the law; and thus himself furnished the means of rebuking the rebellious lives of sinners. The spirit of the law pervades the Gospel, and they infinitely mistake the subject who suppose that the moral law is not part of the Gospel. This is the way to make Christ the minister of sin. This is to array Christ against the moral law; for how could he by abrogating the law make it honourable? This would be to weaken the law. Do not mistake me: I do not mean that men are to be saved by their own righteousness--that they are to be restored to happiness by the law, as the ground of their acceptance with God. I mean no such thing as this; but what I do mean is, that this is a condition of their forgiveness, --they must break off their rebellion, and become submissive and obedient to its authority. A man who has once violated a law can never be justified by it; this is both naturally and governmentally impossible. But there must be obedience to the law as a condition of forgiveness for past sins and offences. 2. Again: this is implied in the exercise of saving faith. No faith is saving but that which works by love. No faith is justifying faith that is not sanctifying faith. No hope is a good hope but that which leads its possessor to purify himself even as Christ is pure. There are persons who suppose that the Gospel abrogates the moral law, and that they are going to be saved by faith without love; they are Antinomians, and they know nothing of the true way of salvation. They ought to understand at once that the law is an essential part of the Gospel. Let me be understood: I do not mean that universal and perfect obedience to the law is a condition of being saved by the Gospel; but I do mean that under the Gospel we have the same rule of life that they have in heaven. The law there is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength," and this is as truly our rule of duty here as it is in heaven. The Gospel enjoins this love, and makes it obligatory upon us. That faith which is saving faith is the result of this love; and this love,

when rightly understood, is indispensable to virtue. 3. Again: Christ still honours the law by continuing to require its fulfilment as a condition of saving those for whom he died. He requires them first to confess and renounce their sins, and thus acknowledge the propriety of the law. The law is not evil; and those who continue in sin dishonour the law. They must repent; they must justify the law, and condemn themselves; they must, by a public act, renounce their sins--the act of renunciation must be as public as the act of rebellion. They must reverence the law; they must subscribe to it; they must obey it; they must exercise the love that it requires;--this is his condition of saving those for whom he hath already died. Even in the days of the Apostles people began to have a wrong idea on this subject. The false idea that the law and the Gospel were opposed to each other, doubtless, took possession of their minds, because the Apostles so largely insisted upon the necessity of justification by faith. But the Apostles had no such meaning. The Jews had supposed that sinners were to be saved by obedience to the moral and ceremonial law; their religion was a religion of mere outward morality. That was the condition of the Jews as a nation. I do not mean that all the Jews had this view; for, doubtless, there were many who understood the true nature of the law--understood that the moral law required love and confidence in God; they also knew that the ceremonial law was figurative of the atonement, which was to be at some future day made clear to men; pious and devout men understood this, but the Jews, as a nation, almost without exception, had no idea of the spiritual character of the law, and their teachers taught a different doctrine altogether--they taught that men would be saved by mere outward morality, by abstaining from those things that were in the ceremonial law forbidden as wrong, and by keeping the letter of the commandments written in the two tables of stone. Now, observe, the Apostles sought to show them that they entirely misunderstood the conditions of salvation. Christ had taught this, and after Christ's ascension, the Apostles enlarged upon what he had taught--illustrating their position by his death and resurrection, the ceremonial law, the tabernacle, and so on, insisting upon it that men were to be saved by faith in Christ. Upon this there were some who misunderstood what he Apostles intended, which was this, that they were to be justified by faith in Christ, which works by love, as opposed to all legal works. The Apostle Paul, who wrote chiefly on this subject, did not mean to say that they would be saved without love to the law, for he insisted upon it that the faith which was essential to salvation was that "faith which works by love." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." He did not mean to say that a man could be saved without obedience to the law, without love. Men were, he said, to be justified by that faith in Christ which works by love, in opposition to any works of their own. He did not mean to teach that men were justified on the ground of love and obedience to the law, but he meant this, that they were justified entirely by Christ, by what Christ had done; that they were to expect forgiveness on the *ground* of what Christ had done; but upon the *condition* that they should believe in him and love him.

Now, the mistake against which I am endeavouring to guard you, has prevailed, more or less, from the days of the Apostles till the present time. This mistake early began to develop itself, and James, by his Epistle, designed to correct this mistake. It has been thought that the Epistle of James contradicts the Epistle of Paul, but nothing is further from the truth. James insisted upon men having faith which works by love--practical faith, that makes them holy. The Apostle Paul says, men are not justified by works, but both agree that personal holiness is a condition of salvation--not a ground, but a condition. 4. Again: multitudes of persons, in every age of the Church, have been found, who have seemed to array the Gospel against the law, as if the moral law had been abrogated. Let me illustrate what I mean. In one of the cities of the United States, where a revival took place some few years since, a lady who belonged to an episcopal church in that city, came to me and said, "I am distressed with the state of things in our Church; the ladies of that Church are so conformed to the world in their habits of dress, and in their frivolous and light conduct, that I went to our minister about it, and told him how much I was grieved; and what do you think he said to me? 'I consider that these ladies are among the most pious members of my church; the reason why they act as they do is, they do not rely upon their own works, they expect to be saved alone by the merits of Christ.'" Now, what sort of an idea had these people, and this minister, of the Gospel, of the way of salvation? Just think of this; these people were living worldly, selfish, self-indulgent lives, and yet they expected to be saved by the merits of Christ. They supposed that the righteousness of Christ was imputed to them in such a sense; that they could personally conform to the world, and yet be saved. Personally, like all other sinners, and yet by an imputed righteousness that did not imply any personal holiness, they could be saved. What is this but Antinomianism? And what is this but the religion of great multitudes of persons? You urge them to holiness of life, and this is not preaching the Gospel to them; you urge them to obedience, to self-denial, and to live lives

worthy of their high vocation, and this imply no Gospel,--this is urging men to a holiness of their own!

Now, my beloved hearers, wherever you see such a spirit as that, you may be sure there is something wrong. To be sure, men are to be accepted and justified on the ground of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done; but mark, only upon the condition of their *personally*accepting him, giving him their hearts, yielding themselves up to obedience. 5. Again: sinners, by faith, must honour the law which they have dishonoured. Suppose Christ should honour the law, but should not require us to pay any regard to his atonement, by repentance and faith, as a condition of our salvation, could we honour the law thus? If God would not pardon sin unless Christ died, neither will he forgive any human being who does not repent of sin and accept Christ personally. Have mankind trampled on the law, and has Christ made an atonement, and does God intend to save men without any reference to this atonement? Never! God will never forgive sin without faith and repentance. Nothing can be more certain. It is as certain that God will never consent to dishonour the law, as it is that Christ has made an atonement for sin, and thus honoured the law. He will never stop short and save sinners, because they are sceptical, proud, and self-righteous enough to reject the atonement. I tell you there is no hope of this. Let all persons who reject the atonement, and expect to be saved without Christ, know that so certain as God will never consent to dishonour his law, so certain will he never forgive them unless they recognise Christ! Why should he do so?

But as I have to preach again this evening, I will not remark further this morning.

THE PROMISES OF GOD

A SERMON

Preached on Friday Evening, May 17, 1850

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." -2 Pet. 1.4.

In speaking from these words I propose briefly to consider--

I. THE NATURE.

II. THE CONDITION, AND

III. THE USE OF THE PROMISES OF GOD.

The Nature of the Promises.

(1.) By a law of our nature we affirm the truthfulness of God. How remarkable is the fact, that the question is always by those who dispute a divine revelation, whether God *has* spoken at all, and never whether *what* He has spoken is *true*. The inquiry I say is *whether*God has spoken and *what* He has spoken; and when it is once settled that God has spoken and made promises to man, we affirm by a law of our nature, that what He has promised must be true. The promises, however, are not to be regarded as the foundation of our confidence in God, for this foundation lies further back in the revelation which He has made in the laws of our own mind. Our confidence in the promise of any being cannot be the result of the promise itself--we have confidence in the promise of any being in proportion as we have confidence in his character; therefore our natures affirm that God cannot lie, that he must be a God of truth--no man ever honestly doubted it, no man can honestly doubt it. One of the elements of the idea of God is that of His perfection--His entire truthfulness. The promises, therefore, I observe, are to be regarded as the revelation of God's will in respect to granting us certain things. God might be good and yet not give us many things which he has promised to give us; for example, God might be good and yet not pardon our sin--*justice* is as much an attribute of goodness as *mercy* is. We could not have known unless He had revealed the fact, whether perfect goodness would allow Him to forgive us our sins, or to give us many things which He has promised us; and, therefore, His promises are designed to reveal to us that will, and to make known to us the fact, that His goodness will allow Him to grant us certain favors, and that it is in accordance with goodness to give us those things that He has promised.

Hence His promises are given on the condition of our faith and that we pray for forgiveness. These promises are then not a ground of faith, but are given on condition of our faith.

(2.) Many of the promises are of a general character, which when you desire and believingly pray for, you shall receive. Persons may appropriate these promises under certain circumstances to themselves. General promises are ordinarily rendered available to us, as needed by us--when we pray for them understanding what we mean--by the Holy Spirit of God leading us to lay hold and appropriate them to ourselves as promises meant for us.

(3.) Promises are made to classes of persons also--it is remarkable to what an extent this is true. There are special promises made to magistrates, ministers, fathers, mothers, widows, orphans--to all classes of persons. There are also promises made to persons in various states of mind, such as "Come unto me all ye that weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." With respect to these, I observe, that when we have ascertained to what class we belong, we may understand that God has promised these things to us by name--for instance, "Come unto me all ye that weary," if we can say that we belong to that class we may understand the promise, "I will give thee rest," as given to us as truly as if it had been first revealed to us, or made for us alone, just the same as if God had called us by name and told us to come to him. The same with respect to widows and orphans who may appropriate the promises belonging to them without any hesitation, just as if they had for the time been revealed to them by name--it is of great importance for all persons to understand this. I shall have occasion in another part of my discourse briefly to allude to this thought again.

(4.) The promises are made in and through and for Christ--they are all made for a governmental valuable consideration paid by Christ. Let me explain myself. God has in an important sense given the world to Christ, and he is represented as having all fullness in him. As Christ became the Redeemer of mankind, God has given him "all power in heaven and in earth," to govern it by the use of those means and appliances that are essential to secure the great end he has in view: Christ having, as I said, paid for it a governmental valuable consideration. Let me not be misunderstood: He has done that by which he has made a perfect satisfaction to the government of God. God's law had been violated, its justice, its equity, and its propriety had been publicly denied and trampled upon by mankind--the majesty of this law must be vindicated, the government of God demanded this--it was unsafe and also unjust for man to be forgiven unless the majesty of the law was asserted. Those who had broken the law could not be forgiven consistently with the rest of the universe, for the law that had been broken was public property--every moral agent in the universe was interested in the vindication of this law; the strength and efficiency, the power and the glory, should by no means be impaired--for the safety of the universe depended upon its being preserved.

Now Christ came forth and publicly vindicated the honor of this law, by paying over to the government of God an equivalent for the offenses and sins which man had committed; he suffered the penalty in order that the guilty might be pardoned. Christ, I say, offered to the government of God an equivalent for the execution of the law upon the offender; and, in consequence of what he has done, God has promised to bless those who deserved cursing. Now observe, that all the promises of God are represented as being to Christ, and as being in Him; yea, and in him, amen, to the glory of God the Father. Christ magnified the law and made it honorable, so that it consisted with the honor of this law and the justice of God that sinners--rebels against his government--should through Christ be pardoned their offenses. Let it always be understood, friends, that these promises are, in the spirit of them, really made to Christ and to Christ's people, to those whom he regards as part of himself, those for whom he came into the world, and those for whom he died.

(5.) The promises are, therefore, to be considered something in the light of certificates of deposit: as if Christ had made the deposit for us, and allowed us to present our drafts--these promises--and to take away that which God has promised to give, and for which he has received from Christ, a valuable consideration. We may regard, then, these promises as drafts or checks which we take and present, and in return receive of the great blessings which God has promised by him, and through him, and on his account.

(6.) Again: with respect to the promises, many of them were made in the time of Old Testament Saints, not for their immediate use, the drafts were not due, but to be believed and pleaded at a future period. Anyone who will take the trouble to examine the Bible in this respect will find this to be the fact, that many of the promises were not in the present tense, but referred to the advent of the Messiah, and were to become due after his appearing. Turn, if you please, to the 31st chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, and read the 31st to the 34th verse. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the

hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." This promise was made to the church, and of course to each individual member of the church: which was not to be pleaded at the time it was given, but which became due at a future period. The apostle who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, quotes this promise from Jeremiah, and says that the day had come for its fulfillment. It was made to be believed in its relation to a future time, and the age of the gospel was the time at which it was to be believed. All these promises are to be regarded as due in this sense--their fulfillment may be expected in our own days.

I cannot take the time which would be required to quote a great many passages in illustration of my meaning, but must rely upon your general knowledge of that particular class of promises, to which I have just referred.

(7.) Again: with respect to the promises, they have their letter and their spirit. Many of the promises under the Old Testament dispensation seem to refer chiefly to temporal blessings, but only in the letter; for these promises, as applied in the New Testament, have a deep spiritual meaning. The promises of the Old Testament very commonly speak of worldly prosperity as the reward of the righteous, when, as it appears from the way in which they are applied in the New Testament, a great deal more than mere worldly prosperity and advancement was really meant --spiritual blessings, great and abundant, were really in the spirit of these promises, crouched under language that seemed to promise temporal prosperity only.

(8.) Let me say again, that many of the promises of the Old Testament were made to the Jews--the children of Israel--as if Israelites alone had been meant: whereas the New Testament abundantly shows us, that these promises had a very much larger sense--that they also applied to the Gentiles--and to the church under the Protestant--the Christian--dispensation. For example, the promise I have just quoted from Jeremiah, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." Now this promise was more extensive in its application than was at first supposed--it referred to both Jews and Gentiles--to all the spiritual Israel of God, in all ages future from the age in which it was first spoken.

(9.) Again: I remark, that where promises are made to the church, persons should not overlook the fact that they are also applicable to particular individual members of the church. Sometime since, conversing with a brother minister in respect to the promises, he said, that he did not know of any particular promises made to parents on behalf of their children. I quoted some of them, such as, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Again: "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." But, said the minister, these were made to the church and not to individuals. Well, but brother, I replied, of what worth are they to the church if they are not meant for individual members of the church? If they are meant for the church in general, they must be meant for every member in particular. Did God intend to trifle with men? He gave promises to his church to be sure, but not that any individual member of that church should avail himself of the same. This is a mistake, brethren. God's promises are made to all His children, and to every one of them in particular, we must not lose ourselves in the mass. The feeling is too much abroad among Christians, that God's promises are made to everybody in general, but to nobody in particular. Very much of this I have found as I have for many years been passing from place to place. Because the promises are made to masses and classes, they are thought not to be available to particular individuals. How would this be in any other case? Suppose, for example, a great famine was in this city, that the people had no provisions; and, suppose that the government should issue a proclamation to all persons who were hungry and needy, telling them that they might, by applying at a certain place, secure provisions to supply their wants; now suppose the proclamation was general in its character, do you think that any individual who was starving would hesitate to go to the store, because the invitation was to everybody, and not addressed to particular individuals? No, indeed. Every individual who was in want, would say, I may go, because I belong to the class intended. Now if people fail to understand these promises, they may lay and rot in the Bible, and never be of any use to them. How many parents have unconverted children and unruly children, because they neglect to avail themselves of the promises of God.

(10.) The promises made to the Patriarchs, Abraham, for instance, have a letter and a spirit; they were intended principally to apply to the children of Israel, but now they apply to all, whether Jews or Gentiles. I might make a great many other similar remarks, but must proceed to notice

II. *The conditions of the promises.*

(1.) From the very nature of the promises, there must be certain conditions annexed to them all.

(2.) When a condition is once expressed it is always implied: for example, take this case, when God has promised particular blessings to 'his church, ' He concludes by saying, in one instance, Nevertheless, I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do these things for them, and thus in all cases we have conditions annexed to His promises, and unless these conditions are complied with, we cannot obtain the promises, although many of them seem to be given unconditionally; but wherever a condition is not expressed it is implied. Take another case, when God sent the children of Israel captive into Babylon, He promised them that in seventy years they should find deliverance. Now Daniel understood this! The promise, when taken by itself, would seem to indicate that nothing was to be done by the people in the way of prayer and supplication to effect their deliverance, or as a condition of this prayer being fulfilled. But Daniel was led to examine the prophets and to read the promises, and he found that the seventy years were expired but the people were still in bondage, and he found that the reason of this was that the promise had not been fully comprehended--he learnt that the promise was made on condition of prayer and supplication being offered to God; consequently, he set himself to confess his own sins and the sins of the people, and to pray, fast, and humble himself before God. This will illustrate what I mean. Now when it has once been said that God will be inquired of to do these things for us--to fulfil His promises--it must be understood as an unalterable condition of His fulfilling the promises--that we will ask Him to do so.

(3.) Again: We are informed that faith in His promises is a condition of their fulfillment, that no man need expect to receive anything of the Lord, unless he asks in faith--this is one of the principles of the government of God: we must ask for those things which we need, and we must ask for them in faith; for it is of little use that we pray without this. God has said that unless we pray in faith we shall not have the blessing. In all the promises of God this is implied as a condition on which we are to receive them--again and again we are told, without faith, it is in vain for us to expect the fulfillment of His promises.

(4.) Again: There are many conditions which are naturally necessary; for example, suppose that God should promise that you should not starve with hunger, of course it implies that you should be willing to eat the food provided for you; and you would tempt God if you should neglect to eat, and yet think that His promise, that you should not die with hunger, would be fulfilled. So when he has promised spiritual blessings, the employment of means, towards the accomplishment of the end, is always implied as a condition of our receiving them. We must appropriate the means, and so put ourselves in a position to receive the promises, or we tempt God by expecting their fulfillment.

(5.) Again: There are certain conditions that are not only naturally, but governmentally necessary: for example, we are required to offer our petitions in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is, I say, a governmental necessity for God requiring us to recognize Christ as the medium through which we receive these things. It is very easy to see that the same reason which required an atonement to be made for sin, required that we should recognize that atonement: the same law that made it necessary that Christ should die for us, required that His death should be recognized by us, as the condition of our receiving the blessings promised through this medium. It was governmentally necessary that Christ should die for the safety of the government; that Christ should die to establish God's law as the condition of our receiving the blessing of pardon; now it is just as governmentally necessary that in our petitions to God we should recognize our governmental relation to him; that we should remember the sacredness of the divine character, and that we should approach him solely through Christ, making mention of his name. But I must not enlarge on this part of the subject. We now pass to consider and specify some things in regard to--

The use of the promises.

(1.) I observe, that in using the promises regard is always to be had to the attributes of the promiser. His ability is infinite, and his willingness is also infinite--these things are always to be taken into account. Now if human beings promise us any thing, in ever such strong language, we are at liberty to doubt whether we shall ever possess the things promised, having in view the capacity of the promiser. Thus you see we must interpret promises made to us in the light of the attributes of him who promises. It is very common for men in very strong language to promise that which we do not expect them to perform, and which indeed they

cannot. Suppose a physician says that he will restore his patient to perfect health: it would be unfair to understand him to mean literally what he says. If the physician recover the patient from the disease under which he is laboring, and restore him to comfortable health, it is all that can be expected of him. But whatever promise God makes he is perfectly able to perform it. We are always, therefore, to have respect to the attributes of him who makes the promise.

(2.) Again: We are to have respect to his relations to us, and our relations to him. The promises of a father to a child may be construed much more liberally than if they were made to a stranger in whom he had no particular interest, and to whom he sustained no relation.

(3.) Again: We are to have respect to his interest in us: and God has revealed in many ways, His great interest in us. For example, look at the things he has done for His children, the fact that He has given Christ to die for them, is alone more than sufficient to prove his infinite interest in them; but in addition to this, on every hand, this same fact is revealed--and the great things which He has done for us clearly proves that He is able to fulfil all His promises. We are surrounded by innumerable evidences of the highest order of his great interest in us, His great love for us, His great readiness to do for us above all that we can ask or think. Consider what He has already done, when we were enemies to him He withheld not from us His only and well--beloved Son! Then surely He will not withhold anything else from us. If He freely gave from His bosom His own Son--the greatest treasure that He had--"shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

If God give so great a blessing shall he withhold the less? No, surely no! In indulging such a thought we do him wrong and we do ourselves wrong; we must not overlook these facts as the highest possible evidence that all the promises are made in good faith; and God's infinite readiness to give the things that He has promised. It might have appeared incredible if God had told us beforehand that He would give Christ to die for us. It would have appeared wonderful! We should have exclaimed, can it be possible? Infidels not think it impossible. What! God give His co-equal Son to die for us? We cannot believe it! Now Christians understand it and believe it; and certainly since he has done this, we should look at this fact--never leave it out of view, when we come to the promises. All unbelief should vanish when we remember that "when we were enemies Christ died for us," and shall we not recognize in this fact, that He is willing, freely, largely, bountifully, to give us all other things that we want. By this gift of his Son, God has confirmed to us the promises stronger than he could have done by an unsupported oath.

(4.) Again: God not only confirmed His promise by an oath, that we might have strong consolation, but by all His conduct He has shown us His entire sincerity in making these promises, and His readiness to fulfil them.

(5.) We should not forget the design of the promises--that they are intended to meet every demand of our being.

(6.) We must not forget to construe the language of the promises as meaning as much as the language used in commands. For example, when it is said (Deut. XXX. 6.) "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live," we are to understand this promise as covering as much ground as a command. We are to construe the language in the promises just the same as the language used in the commands. We are not to suppose that language found in commands is to be stretched to the utmost; but when found in the promises to be regarded as not meaning so much. Now it is common in the church, both in writing and in printing, and in conversation, to construe language when used in command, in its widest sense. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," is made to mean all it can possibly imply--mind I do not find fault with this, for I suppose it is to be so construed--but when the same language is to be found in the promises it is construed to mean much less than the language really implies.

Take another instance. When the apostle says, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that called you who also will do it," we are to interpret this language as liberally as if it had been used in the language of command. We must not trifle with these promises, and so restrict their meaning as to imply that they pledge but little, and that little in a most vague and general manner. If we would receive the blessings of the promises, we must understand what it is they promise us.

(7.) Again: we should in using the promises, always remember to fulfil the conditions on which they are promised to be granted. If we plead the promises of God, and do not fulfil their conditions, we tempt God: for example, suppose you were to plead the promise that God would forgive sin on the condition of repentance, and you were impenitent and did not repent, why you tempt God. Suppose a cold-hearted professor of religion should plead that promise in respect to backsliders,

when they return from their backsliding, and should expect to be forgiven while he continues to go on in worldly-mindedness, why he would be tempting God. Fulfil the conditions first and then plead the promises.

(8.) Again: although conditions may not be expressed in connection with every promise, yet conditions are implied.

(9.) Again: The promises were made to be used--they were made to be used by God's children, by all who will believe them and appropriate them. They were not made to lay concealed in a gilt-edged Bible, but to be read, understood, and used. The fact is, the Bible is like a book of checks put into the hands of the needy, and we are to use them when we want anything: thus God has given promises to every class and description of persons; and these promises were given not to be hoarded up, but to be used--we are to draw liberally and freely upon the divine bounty for all the blessings that we need. I became acquainted with one of the most remarkable men that ever I knew in the city of New York: he was forty-five years old, a farmer, and an unlettered man. After his conversion, he had remarkable faith and confidence in God. He sold his farm and took his wife--he had no children--and traveled through various parts of the country, preaching the gospel and laboring to promote revivals of religion. He was a man of very humble talents, yet wherever he went there was always a revival of religion in consequence of his labors. This man labored in New Jersey in a most remarkably successful manner. After many years he called upon me in the City of New York: after spending a little while in conversation, he proposed to pray: we knelt down together, and he prayed like a little child, "Our Father, thou hast given us great and precious promises, but what are they good for, unless they are to be believed;" and so he went on just like a little child, and really it was so perfectly apparent that he believed all the promises, that I never forget the impression which his great faith made upon my mind. I could at once comprehend the secret of all his great usefulness: he had such confidence in God's promises, he realized to such an extent that God had made all His promises in good faith, and on purpose to be used by His children, and he availed himself of them with all freedom and with all boldness. He came to God, as a child would come to its father, fully believing that God would fulfil all His promises--this was the secret of his usefulness.

If Christians will but understand and get the impression deeply imbedded in their own minds, that these promises are regarded by God as their inheritance, given them to be used by them under all the circumstances in which they find themselves placed, they would often much better understand the meaning of the apostle, when he says, "whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises."

(9.) In the next place, in using the promises we should never forget that they are given to us in Christ, because he paid for them a governmental valuable consideration, and we therefore have a gracious title to them. Don't let me be misunderstood. We had no demand upon God anything, because we had forfeited His favor by our sins: but it has pleased God to make certain gracious promises to us in regard to what Christ has done, and in him given us a gracious title to them; therefore, we can claim them, not in our own name but in the name of Christ. I love to take this view of the promises of God, that if I am his child, they are all pledged to me in Christ Jesus.

(10.) Again: the promises are available to us, if we will only comply with the simple condition of believing, and if we will plead them in the name and for the sake of Christ.

(11.) Every command of God, when properly understood, is to be regarded as implying a promise. If God has required us to do anything whatever, we may always understand the very requirement as implying the promise of sufficient grace to assist us in the performance of the thing required. All needful strength and grace is pledged to us in Christ Jesus.

(12.) Again: promises were designed to secure our sanctification: and the will of God is, that we should make full, free, and thorough use of them to secure this end. On this I cannot dwell.

A few remarks must close what I have to say.

(1.) It is very important to notice the manner in which Christ and his apostles quoted the promises of the Old Testament. Take your reference Bibles when you read the New Testament, and see how the promises of the Old Testament were quoted by inspired writers, they will enable you to judge much more properly of the real intention and meaning of the promises of God; you will thus be able to see the promises in their fullness, and spiritual application.

(2.) The promises of God are valued by persons in proportion as they know themselves; they ask proportion to the sense of their wants.

(3.) Again: searching preaching lead men to apply to the promises--when the wound is probed, then the plaster is applied.

(4.) Again: very much preaching is thrown away upon persons who are never sensible of their sins. Suppose an individual should proclaim through the streets that he

had found a remedy for the cholera; if the cholera was not here persons would not be very eager in applying for the remedy. They would say, they were very glad there was a remedy, because other people might want it, but they did not. The medicine might rot in the shops before the people would avail themselves of it, if they believed there was no danger. Exhibit the gospel, and tell the people of the promises--they will not let the gospel take hold of them, not apply the promises, because they do not feel their need. You will hear people say, yes it is a gracious gospel, I will avail myself of it someday. But sin has taken possession of them, and they never lay hold of this remedy--this great salvation.

(5.) If Christians would at once believe, and apply the promises, meet God on the ground that He has promised to meet them, they would find in their own experience how much value there is in prayer, and how powerfully they can prevail with God. They would find that there was a cheerfulness and willingness on God's part to meet them at every point. Many individuals plead the promises without fulfilling their conditions, and then they lose their faith in the promises, because they are not fulfilled in their experiences. The reason of this is because they have not fulfilled the required conditions. I have no doubt but it is a common thing for men to pray themselves out of all confidence in prayer, because they fail to fulfil the conditions on which God has promised them. How general is it that we find professors of religion have but very little confidence in prayer; and why is this? Because they have come to regard prayer as a duty, rather than as something that can prevail with God. Brethren, if you would enjoy communion with God, and prevail with Him, you must look upon prayer as something more than a duty. You must take hold of prayer, as a sure instrument by which you *can* move God's hand, His arm, and His heart, and then you *will* do it. Amen.

WHY LONDON IS NOT CONVERTED

A SERMON

Delivered on Wednesday Evening, June 5th, 1850

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY

OF THE OBERLIN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, UNITED STATES,

TO THE MEMBERS AND VISITORS OF THE CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION SOCIETY,

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

I commenced last week the discussion of the subject which is not to engage our attention. As you know, then intimated, in the first place, that this command, in its spirit, was given to the Church of Christ in all ages, and to each individual member of that Church; secondly, that its true meaning is, that Christians are to go forth and make disciples, or Christians, of all nations; thirdly, I endeavored to show what was implied by this command; and fourthly, dwelt upon some of the conditions of obeying this injunction; and reserved till this evening because I had not then time to enter upon it, the fifth proposition, **WHY THE WORK IS NOT DONE**. What are some of the things which stand in the way, that have hindered, and are hindering, the accomplishment of this work.

1. I must pass very rapidly over the thoughts that I have to present to you; and begin first by saying that the Churches for a long time have practically forgotten that the conversion of the world is the great business assigned them--the great and only business they have in the world; they have practically forgotten that, and have come to suppose that they have very much the same business in the world as other men. They have ceased to regard the conversion of men as their peculiar, great, and only business in the world; for they are, evidently, living for other ends, and for the promotion of other objects. I do not mean by this that every Christian is to sustain professionally the office of a minister; but I say that the whole Church are required to become missionaries--each man and each woman is to become a missionary.

Now, at our foreign missionary stations, and in our home missions, there are various kinds of work to be done; but we expect those whom we send out to foreign lands, or those engaged at home, that they shall give

themselves up to the work and labor for that end to which they are appointed. We don't expect our missionaries to go abroad to enrich themselves by engaging in trade and commerce, or to concern themselves about these matters at all, only so far as it is necessary for the promotion of their great object--the salvation of men and the glory of God.

Now, do you suppose that the impression made upon the world by the Church is, that they are a company of missionaries whose great and only business is to convert the world to Christ? Is this the impression that the world has with reference to the Church? Do you suppose that the world has got this impression--that the entire Church are missionaries, living for nothing else but to convert the world? Or does the world no longer understand that all the Church are missionaries? Do you believe that the people of London are under the impression that the Christians in London are a band of missionaries whose great and only object is to convert men? Or is the impression on the opposite side, that they are not living for this end, but are seeking to enrich themselves and their families by every means that they can adopt, just as other people are? Which impression is the Church making upon London?

Now, it is easy to see, if the Church have forgotten their mission, if they have ceased to make the world understand that they are living for them and God--if they live so much like other people that the world can see, and cannot mistake, that they are living for selfish ends, there is no cause for wonder at the Church's want of success. If the Church is to be successful, the world must understand that every Christian is a missionary--every man and woman professing Christianity is a missionary, and that their business is to convert men to God, that this is the great and only end for which they live. *When the world understand this, the work of conversion will go forward and not before.*

How was it in the primitive Church? Did the primitive Church make this impression upon the world? Yes, they did! And if the Church will now do the same, she shall succeed even as that Church did. The primitive Church understood that they were a band of missionaries, that their business in the world was to convert the world. But how long is it since the impression has ceased to be made that this is the real great, and only business of the Church? It is now come to be regarded as a professional employment to teach religion and convert men: ministers themselves think so, and speak as if it were so; and hardly anybody now thinks differently.

The Church does not dream that it is their work to convert men; and the ministers do not think that it belongs to anybody but themselves; they regard themselves as set apart for this end--to teach religion professionally. But let me say, that while this state of things exists, and the Church continues to forget its mission, *the Church is the great stumbling-block in the way of the conversion of the world.* This is the great difficulty--this is the great hindrance to the conversion of men. I shall have occasion to advert to this again.

2. Another reason why the work has not been done long ago, and is not now going rapidly forward, is, *the Church is seeking to be***COMFORTABLE** *rather than* **USEFUL**. The great mass of professors are making their own *comfort*, temporal and spiritual, the great end for which they live. And ministers, very generally, do not lay themselves out to be useful, but are seeking chiefly to be comfortable. The prevailing disposition of the minds of both the Church and the ministry is to be comfortable rather than useful. Now, does this conduct harmonize with the conduct of Jesus Christ? His whole life, from beginning to end, testifies to the contrary; he lived not to please himself, but labored, and toiled, and suffered for the glory of God and the good of man. Everybody could see what his great object was.

3. But, let me say, that the Church not having secured this end, it has come to pass, as might have been supposed, that Christians *have failed to be either useful or comfortable*. The highest comfort of a Christian lies in doing his duty; and if Christians have neglected this, there is no wonder that they have failed to be either comfortable or useful. The Church should understand that their great and only concern is to do the work which God has required of them; and that the doing of this is indispensable to their real comfort. But the Church has forgotten this, and has been selfishly seeking her own comfort rather than her usefulness, and no wonder that she has failed to be either happy or useful. In her hands, the Gospel has failed to be consoling to herself or powerful in the conversion of men. A great mistake has been committed; Christians have been drawn aside from their proper work, and are living so much to themselves that they have libelled Christianity, and have not exhibited it in its living power, either as a peace-giving religion or a religion that has power with God and man.

4. This leads me to say again: in thus doing, *the Church has failed to develop a full and true idea of what religion is.* Professors generally are not possessed of a true idea of religion. In hundreds, and I may say thousands, of instances I have been told by professing Christians, who have been many years in Christian society, "I never before got a true idea of religion; I see now that I have made a mistake in supposing that religion consists in

merely doing my duty lest I should be damned. I used to do my duty, or what I conceived to be my duty, in order that I might be saved; but I never got the idea that religion consisted in living for the salvation of souls and the glory of God."

Now, if Christians live without a true idea of what real religion is, what impression can the world get of the religion of Jesus Christ? The impression made upon the world will be, that the religion of Jesus is, in itself, essentially the same as it is manifested by his professed followers. What other idea can the world get? Now, do you suppose that, if Jesus had lived to promote his own personal comfort and to please himself, anybody would have got the impression that he was living for the salvation of men--that his great aim was to bring them to God? Would this have been the impression made upon his immediate disciples, and would the effect of this have been developed in their minds and manifested in their actions. But, the fact is, the great idea that stood boldly and prominently out in the minds of his disciples and apostles was, that he did not live to himself, but solely and entirely for the promotion of the object which he came on earth to accomplish. He laid himself upon the altar most unreservedly, and his immediate disciples did the same, and the spirit of self-sacrifice was communicated to all around them; and the work of conversion went forward gloriously; wave after wave of salvation flowed over every land; and, in consequence, in a comparatively few years, they had accomplished wonderful things; and if they had possessed our facilities--our Printing Press, our Electric Wires, our Steam Power, and a thousand things that we possess--with their faith, with their energy, and with their devotion, they would in a few years have converted the world to God. But the Church has failed to do this; the Church has not even made the people understand what the religion of Christ is. If the apostles had had our facilities, do you suppose that they would have failed to make the people understand in what the religion of their Lord and Master consisted? Do you suppose that they would not have possessed the land long ago? But somehow or the other, the Church has really failed to secure this object. What is the cause of this? Why has the Church failed to accomplish her great and only mission upon earth? Has the promise run out which says, "Lo! I am with you alway even unto the end of the world?" Has the Church lost her hold upon Christ, or has the promise of Christ expired? Brethren, which is it?

5. Let me say again: the Church have relinquished their own personal, individual efforts. They have sadly neglected to come into personal contact with sinners in order that they might bring them to the Savior. Men are dying, and being eternally lost, on every side; but they put forth no personal efforts to save them. The mass of professors, as you know, make no direct personal efforts at all. Perhaps many of you who have attended these services in this chapel have not spent a single hour in seeking to get people to come and hear me; you have never spoken a word about these meetings, or by your personal effort induced any one to come. Perhaps ninety-nine out of every hundred of professing Christians have relinquished all personal efforts--do nothing for anybody by personal effort--never try to convert a soul by this means; they do not go to their friends and neighbors and say, "Won't you come with me to the meeting" and inquire about their souls, and how they get on. And these persons not only do nothing, but they stand right in the way of others; and they do a great deal of harm by giving those around them a false impression concerning religion.

Suppose a Christian lives in an impenitent family, and says nothing about his religion; what is the impression upon the minds of the family? They will, of course, suppose that he thinks his religion of no particular consequence--not very valuable, or he would certainly speak of it and recommend it to them.

In the city of Philadelphia, some years since, a young man served his time as a clerk to an elder of a Presbyterian church. In the course of time, this young man married and set up in business, and was very prosperous in all his undertakings. His wife attended some religious services which were held in the city, and became deeply anxious about her soul. Her husband observed that there was something the matter with her, and he very kindly inquired what it was that troubled her mind. Said she, "My dear husband, I am in my sins, and so are you; and both of us are on the way to hell." "Why, my dear," said he, "what have you done to talk in this manner,--'on the way to hell! ' What have you done, pray? I don't think there is any cause for you to be alarmed, or to talk in this manner." "Well," said she, "my dear I did not think you were an infidel; I thought you did believe in religion." "So I do, in some sense," he replied; "but you remember I lived with Mr. So-and-So, and elder of the Presbyterian church, and he was always very kind to me, and gave me very good advice about my business; and I cannot believe that, if he thought I had been on the way to hell, he would not have told me so; but I assure you he never told me any such thing. If he believed I was going to such an awful place as hell, I am sure he would have warned and counseled me; but he never did think of the kind, and therefore it is impossible that it can be true."

Now, how reasonable was such an inference? This professedly Christian man never said anything to the young man, and he might well doubt that he was in such imminent danger. Such professors say by their conduct, which is more powerful than words, that they do not believe the Bible to be true. Before I proceed further, I would ask the professors in this congregation, What sort of an impression do you make on those around you who are in their sins? Is it such as to make them believe that they are in danger of losing their souls? What is the impression that your servants get? What is the impression your clerks get? What is the impression your workmen get? What is the impression those around you get? Is it such an impression as will lead them to believe in the truth and excellency of the religion you profess?

Let me ask you, Do you believe that the conduct of the Christian people of London is such as to leave the conviction on the minds of those by whom they are surrounded that their souls are in danger? I don't know. I ask. What do you think? Do you individually manifest concern for the souls of the impenitent among you? If you do not, then you give a virtual and strong testimony against religion. You virtually say, "We have tried it, and don't believe it; we don't believe that your souls are in danger, for we feel no concern about you."

Just take the following cases as an illustration, which occurred in one of the cities of America. Some individuals were in the habit of attending what are called Conference Meetings, where Christians met together to pray and exhort each other. An unconverted man, but who was anxious about his soul, frequently attended these religious meetings. One evening he was outside, and heard them talking of the danger in which souls were placed, and saying that unless there was more prayer and more devotion on the part of Christians, these sinners would die in their sins and would go to Hell; and when he could bear it no longer, he burst into the room where these christians were sitting, and, with tears streaming from his eyes, said, "Christians, what do you mean? You tell us that our souls are in danger of being lost for ever, that you have power to prevail with God, and that unless you wake up and do your duty, you have no reason to believe that there will ever be a revival of religion, or that these souls, now in a perishing condition, will be saved. Now, what can you mean? You have met here time after time, and yet things remain as before. Now, either you don't believe what you say, or you don't care if we go to Hell." And with tears he implored them, if they believed what they said, to wake up and do their duty, and save the souls of the perishing.

6. But let me say again: *There is a strong disposition on the part of both ministers and laymen to consider the work of the conversion of souls to be the peculiar office of the ministry.* It seems to be thought that ministers have been chosen and delegated by the Church to perform the work which Christ has assigned to the Church. Ministers are to have a place in this work, and a prominent place, but they are not to take the work out of the hands of the Church. They are the officers of Christ's great army; they are to lead on the sacramental hosts of God's elect to the great battle against sin. But what is the case now? Why, the army have turned aside, and sent the officers to do all the fighting. The soldiers have grounded their arms, and paid the officers to go up single handed against the enemy, and do all the fighting alone. But, let me tell you that in this way the work will never be accomplished.

Now, so far as my own experience has gone, especially in my own country, in many parts of which I have labored very extensively, the ministers take this work upon themselves, and manifest a jealousy of lay effort. I can remember the time when ministers objected to a layman being asked to pray in the presence of a minister. They took all the work of converting souls, and did not like anybody else to do it; they manifested a jealousy of all lay effort.

Now, instead of this, their duty is to train up the entire laity to work for God and souls--the whole Church should be engaged in efforts to promote religion. Ministers much teach their people to work as well as feed them. If the people do not work, the food will do them no good, but it will greatly injure them. They may eat well; but if they do not work it well not digest. Feed them with highly seasoned food, and give them nothing to do, and it will cause surfeit and dyspepsia. If they have nothing to do, they will become stumbling-blocks. If they eat and have no exercise, they will become monsters. The people, then, must have something to do in this work; if it is ever to be done. The entire Church must be marshalled into one great army: every man and every woman must each have a part. The women have been too much overlooked, as if they could do nothing; but this is a mistake; and forming, as they do, so large a part of the Church members--in most places they form the majority--their services should be fully employed. They can do much, at least, for their own sex.

7. *The unbelief of professors stands greatly in the way of the conversion of London.* Now, this unbelief comes out in various forms. First, it manifests itself in the *little concern evinced for the salvation of sinners.* Now, how wonderful and shocking it is, that so little apparent concern is felt by professors of religion for the

impenitent around them. They manifest much more concern about their temporal interests; they are quiveringly, tremblingly alive to cases of sickness or temporal distress; but for the souls of men they manifest no such anxiety. They say that sinners are dying in great numbers and going to hell; but they can eat, and sleep, and enjoy themselves, without apparently one pulsation of agony respecting them. Now how is this? Why, it is the result of their shocking unbelief. I have said to myself thousands of times, "What little hold has the Gospel upon the great mass of the members of the Christian Church; they talk about the awful condition of men, and that they are constantly losing their souls, but their conduct belies their words."

Secondly, This unbelief manifests itself in *the slight interest that is felt in the conversion* of sinners. How shocked have I been many times, when sinners have been converted, to see the great indifference that has been manifested by professors of religion; they seemed to have no interest in it; they seemed to regard it as of little moment, not of much importance. Now, just think how shocking this is, and of the effect which such conduct must have upon the impenitent. Now, just suppose that the son of some very humble person should be adopted into the royal family, and thus become the heir-apparent to the throne and crown of the kingdom; why, how excited the family would be! What a wonderful thing! How much they would talk about it! The fact that a poor child had been adopted by the king, and that in due course he was to have the crown, would get talked about everywhere, and what an excitement the people would be in about it! "Is it possible?" they would exclaim; and they would try and get a sight of the young man who was to be king; and those who knew him would point him out, and say, "That is the young man who is adopted into the royal family, and is to be king."

Now, a sinner who has been converted from the error of his ways, is adopted into God's family; and it is said of him that he shall be a king and a priest forever. Now, who cares for that? Who cares to ascertain whether it is true? Who cares to hear about it? Who cares to tell of it? Suppose the child of professing parents is converted, do they care to tell their neighbors of it, and give glory to God on account of it? Now, how shocking is this! And, let me ask, would this be so if professors of religion looked upon the conversion of a sinner as a wonderful thing? And is it not so? A sinner, born of God! plucked as a brand from burning! made an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ! Is there nothing wonderful and glorious in all this? Now, if this was believed by the Church, they would should for joy when a sinner was converted; and only conceive what effect such conduct would have upon the wicked and impenitent around them!

Thirdly, Another manifestation of unbelief is that *there is but little confidence in the power of prayer*. As there is so little faith in the efficacy of prayer, there is but little practice of prayer; no wonder, then, that the Church does not succeed.

Fourthly, There is but little confidence in the promise of this text, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." As a matter of fact, the Church does not expect the world to be converted. Ministers preach without expecting their sermons to take effect; and when sinners are converted, they can hardly believe it. Many professors of religion, and ministers, too, have got into such a state of unbelief, that if God should strike a sinner right down before their eyes, they would not believe it. I have sometimes been afraid to preach in the presence of a number of unbelieving, cold-hearted professors, lest they should commit the unpardonable sin. I remember well, at one place where I was preaching, an elder of a Presbyterian Church stood close by the pulpit; and as I was preaching, the Word took hold with great power on many persons in the congregation, and the Spirit of God struck one sinner right down at the feet of this elder. And what did he do? Why he said to the penitent sinner, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" He thought the work of the Spirit had been the work of the devil. Now, Mark; I have kept my eye upon that man for years; and ever since that solemn occasion, he has been just like a withered stock; and this was his condition when I last saw him. It seems as if the fires of Heaven had singed and burnt him; and there he stands, a withered stock as black as charcoal. As thus it must ever be: if professors have no confidence in prayer, a blight will come upon them, and they will not believe when they see a sinner converted by the mighty power of God. These persons have very little confidence in the power of the Gospel. When persons are converted they will not believe that it is conversion at all: they will ascribe the effect to anything but the power of God. I have often seen fearful illustrations of unbelief in professors of religion. When sinners are converted they will doubt whether they are really converted, and try to account for the effect produced, and ascribe it to any cause rather than to the great power of God.

Now, when the Church have any faith in the power of the Gospel, and have any confidence in prayer, they will always be expecting conversions, and be prepared for them at any moment. They will not doubt the power of God, nor, when it is manifested in the cutting down of sinners, begin to cavil and seek to ascribe the effect to

some other cause. I have known unbelief, both in ministers and Churches, to be so great that they had no confidence in sudden conversions. In theory they would believe, or rather profess to believe, that a sinner might be converted at any moment; but when it actually took place, they would not believe it. They could have no confidence in the conversion of an individual who gave full evidence of it, if his conversion had been sudden and recent.

I have known such apply for Church membership, and they have been turned away; they have gone to the minister, with tears of joy and gratitude on account of their conversion--the gladness of their hearts would be beaming in their faces, as they told of the great things which God had done for their souls. "Why how long have you been under this impression?" says the minister. Perhaps the reply would be a week, or only a few days. "Oh," says the minister, "I have no confidence in it, then!" *Why no confidence, pray?* I ask again, **WHY NO CONFIDENCE?** I recollect once being present with a minister when an individual called to see him about her soul. "How long have you been in this state? When were you first impressed?" "Last Sunday, under the sermon you preached." "Oh," said he, "I have *no confidence in it!*" Now, mark, this man professed to believe in sudden conversion, that it was an instantaneous work, and he preached that doctrine, and yet he had " no confidence in it?" Brethren, there is a wonderful sight of infidelity in the Church with respect to the truth of God taking immediate effect; and if it comes, they are not prepared for it. They do not expect that God will do what he says He will, neither will they acknowledge His hand when He does do it--they insult God, and grieve the Holy Spirit. Now, this fearful state of things must cease to be, before the world will be converted.

8. Again: Another difficulty in the way of sinners being converted, is *the low standard of piety which is insisted upon in professing Christians*. I do not mean to say that ministers do not occasionally come out and urge a holy life, and even a perfect life; but do they preach it so uniformly and so earnestly, as to leave the impression upon the Church that they are really expected to abandon the world, to separate themselves from worldly society and worldly amusements, and devote themselves wholly to God? Is this the impression the ministers of London make upon their congregations? I do not know; but I am afraid they do not. But if they do, there is still something wanting. I suppose every minister believes that he makes some impression, but I believe that in order to do this he must preach a high standard of piety, and by his own living manifestation of what he preaches, it must be felt that this standard is insisted upon--that all must come right up to it.

Some ministers preach the whole Gospel, but in such unequal proportions that they fail to produce a proper effect upon their people. The fact is, they are afraid of appearing to be uncharitable, and so individuals are allowed to maintain a hope and standing in the Church, who in their lives do not differ from any decently moral man. Now, while such persons are allowed to have a hope of eternal life, and to maintain a creditable standing in the Church; while ministers allow them to believe that they are Christians, they will always remain stumbling blocks; their own standard of piety will never be elevated, and they will prevent others being converted. The fact is, it is no charity to let men believe themselves to be Christians, when after all you cannot tell whether they are Christians or not. You do business with them, you have familiar intercourse with them, you live with them; but you cannot see their Christianity , or in what they differ from other men; yet how many of this class of persons become members of Churches, and thus deceive themselves and scandalize the religion they profess. The effect of this is to make both the Church and the world confound things which differ, and to prevent either knowing what true religion really is. A higher standard of piety must be pressed home upon the Church, from the pulpit, the press, and by everyone who is engaged in any department of Christian labor. Professors must not be allowed to count themselves christians unless they separate themselves from all iniquity, and come out and show themselves; and live in such a way as to be easily and unmistakable distinguished from the world.

9. Again: Another difficulty in the way of success is to be attributed to the *wrong views which many professors have, in relation to the***DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.** It is too much the custom for ministers to insist upon one particular truth, or to look at a truth in some of its aspects only, and thus, upon the whole, the true idea of the Gospel is lost sight of, and a false impression is made.

Now, I find nothing more frequent than wrong views of election and Divine sovereignty. Many persons have this idea, that election and Divine sovereignty have a peculiar relation to religion; and in respect to religion they take an entirely different attitude. God is a sovereign, and "if we are elected we shall be saved," says one; Why not say so when your child is sick, and not go for the doctor? Is it not as true that God is a sovereign in the one case as well as in the other? Don't you believe that the day of your child's death is appointed? and don't you believe that it cannot die

before the time appointed, and that it will not live a moment beyond it? Why make yourself uneasy or unhappy about it, then? I ask again, why not apply the sovereignty of God to everything else as well as to religion and the soul? Suppose I am passing through the country, and I notice a farm where there is no spring crops; the hedges are broken down, and the ground is in just the same state as it was left last fall: and presently I see the farmer, and I say to him, "Why, friend how is this: no spring crop? How do you expect a harvest?" And suppose he should reply, "Why don't you believe in the sovereignty of God? Don't you believe in God's Divine purposes? Don't you believe that it is already settled in the Divine mind whether I shall have a crop? Do you suppose that I could alter any of these things? Do you imagine that I could make one hair black or white?"

Now, this surely would be to apply the doctrine, which is true, in a perfectly false manner. And is it not applied equally falsely very frequently in reference to religion? Now, who does not believe that *everything* in relation to mankind and the world is just as much decreed, as the salvation or damnation of men? Why, then, apply the sovereignty of God to the one and not to the other! Let me tell you that our responsibilities are just as great, and we are just as free to do our duty, as if the sovereignty of God had nothing whatever to do with our salvation. This is my view, and I make no compromise in stating it--I never do--I dare not; for I dare not throw the blame upon God that sinners are not converted. Antinomianism has been substituted for the Gospel in many instances. The fact is, many persons have lost sight of the fact that the Gospel was designed to save men *from* sin and not *in* it. This is the Gospel of salvation; but I shall not now enlarge upon it, as I have to speak upon this subject on Friday evening.

10. This leads me to say, in the next place, that *the selfish efforts of sects and congregations has done much, and is doing much, to hinder this work.* I mean this--the spirit which leads men to seek the interests of a particular sect or congregation in preference to the salvation of men. Men of this spirit seek the interests of a certain sect, aim chiefly to fill a certain house, and support a certain minister: they have very little interest in hearing of a revival in a neighboring congregation, or of any kind of success at any place but their own. With such a spirit as this, how can there be any large success? It is not love to God and souls which calls forth their efforts, but love of self. I will relate a fact in illustration. In the city of Philadelphia, a lady was invited to attend a prayer-meeting for a revival of religion in the city, but she refused to go, saying, "I shall not go to pray for the city; but *if you will pray for our congregation, I will.* Now, there are many persons who have this feeling in their hearts, but who do not dare speak out, and say what they mean.

11. Again: Another great hindrance in the way of success is this--*the unbelief of the Church has been such that professors have become discouraged by their own experience.* They have prayed in such a spirit of distrust in God, or from wrong motives, that their prayers, as a natural and necessary consequence, have not been answered, and they have come at least to doubt the reality of religion, because their own experience has been such a series of disappointments. If these individuals should speak right out, they would say, "O Lord, thou hast promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask thee; and that thou art more ready to do it, than we are to give good gifts to our children; but I don't believe it! I have asked for the Holy Spirit a thousand times, but I never received it, and therefore I cannot believe to be true that thou art willing to give it to those who ask. I am always ready to give good gifts to my children if they ask for them; and I am sure that I should not allow them to continue asking anything of me so long as I have asked for the Holy Spirit, without satisfying their requests: therefore I don't believe thy promise." Now, if they should dare to speak right out, this would be their language, for it is their inward feeling. They have pleaded the promises, perhaps for a long time, until they come to doubt their truth. The language of their hearts is, "God has given these promises, but I don't believe them, for I never had them realized in my own experience." Now, I ask the reason of this. Why, they have failed to fulfil the conditions of the promises, and this is the reason they have not been fulfilled in their experience. If you have a spirit of unbelief in your hearts, it would be much better to tell the Lord so at once.--Tell him you don't believe the promises, or that prayer is of any avail. I knew a man once who did this. He said--"O Lord Jesus, thou hast promised such and such things to them that ask thee; but I cannot believe it; it is contrary to my experience. I am a father; and when my children ask of me that which they need, I am always ready to supply their wants: but, O Lord, thou knowest that I have asked scores of times for the Holy Spirit, but have never got it.

Now, how can I believe it is in thy heart to give it?" Now, when this man spoke out thus honestly what was in his heart God gave him to see in five minutes the reason his prayers had so failed. He had neither believed that his prayers would be answered nor had right motives in asking for the Holy Spirit. He was fundamentally faulty. He had asked much, but it was in order that he might

consume it upon his lusts. He had prayed without faith and from sinful motives. But when he came before the Lord in sincerity, and opened fully the state of his heart, the Lord immediately poured out such a spirit upon him that he rose from his knees a new man. If, when you preach the Gospel, you do not expect it to take effect, or, when you pray, that your prayers will be answered, you become a stumbling-block to yourself and others.

Now, unless this great evil is put away from you, the world will go on as it has been, and is going on; and it will get worse rather than better. The spirituality of the Church is too low to make any impression upon the world sufficient for it to realize the true value of religion. God says of the Church, "Ye are my witnesses;" this is what they ought to be, but they are become *false* witnesses. Like the spies who brought an evil report of the land, they make a false impression upon the world; and see the result! God had brought Israel through the wilderness up to the borders of the promised land, and he said, "Go up and possess it." And Moses sent men to spy out the Land, who brought back an evil report of the land, saying that the people were giants, and that the cities were walled cities, reaching even unto heaven; therefore it was in vain to think of possessing the land: and the people rebelled against God, because they believed the testimony of the false witnesses; and the Lord aware that they should not enter the land, because of their unbelief; but Caleb and Joshua, because they were of another spirit, were permitted to enjoy that good land which the Lord had promised them.

Now, brethren, is it not the case, that at the present moment ministers are testifying on one side, and the Church on the other--500 to 1. Are not the Churches saying that they do not believe religion is what they expected it was. They have tried it, they say, and it will not answer. This, I say, is the testimony of their lives; they virtually tell the people that they have tried religion, and find that it is hardly worth having. You see a minister preaching with energy, faithfulness, and earnest longing for the souls of men; but the members of his Church are so cold and worldly-minded, that they effectually neutralize his efforts; and he has frequently to groan within himself at their indifference. By their conduct, they are saying to sinners, in reference to the solemn truths which have been uttered, and which perhaps have impressed their consciences--"Don't you be concerned; don't you be afraid; you have no cause to believe what the minister has been saying. It is his profession to say these things, and they are all very well in the pulpit, but they are of no particular consequence." And thus they hinder the work of conversion! Who can wonder that London and the world is not converted? Unless the whole Church is awake and in earnest, very little good will be done; but if Christians will become alive to their responsibilities, and go among the masses of the people, and use every possible means to bring them to public worship, a great spiritual awakening must be the result. Manifest great concern for their souls, and take no excuse as a justification for their neglect of religion.

If they say they have not a seat, tell them that they shall have yours, and you will stand up; just be thoroughly in earnest; and see how you can tell upon the minds of the people. If all who are now here would adopt this plan, this house might be crowded every time that I preach; and why should it not be so?

The Church of which I was for some time pastor in New York, used to move out in a mass, and invite the people to come, and hear the preaching, and by this means they filled the house right up, every night; and when the preaching was over, they distributed themselves about, and those who had been affected by the sermon were kindly taken by the button and conversed with, and it was no uncommon thing for me, when I went from the pulpit, to find the vestry full of anxious inquirers. At one period I preached twenty evenings in succession in New York, and 500 persons were converted, which amounted to twenty-five every night; and I never had to discipline a single one of them, although our terms of membership were so stringent and severe, that they would have excluded one-half of the members of other Churches.

Let the Churches in London, as a body, pray in faith, and labor devotedly, and this city will be moved. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. And let me tell you, that the mass of mankind will never be moved, and there will never be a revival in any Church, till religion is a living power in the hearts of those who profess to be Christ's disciples. The Church needs a fresh anointing. Only let the ministry be anointed afresh--let the Church be anointed afresh--let them pray in the Spirit, labor in the Spirit, preach in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and every day they will shed a mighty, holy, and hallowed influence on the world around, and its power will be such as to compel men to believe that there is a reality in religion, and the world will soon be converted to God. Amen.

GREAT CITIES - WHAT HINDERS THEIR CONVERSION?

A SERMON

In behalf of the Christian Instruction Society

Delivered on Wednesday Evening, June 12, 1850

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY

OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, UNITED STATES

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

I don't know that it is necessary to take a new text; I have been requested, on this occasion, to dwell upon "the obstacles presented by great cities to the spread of the Gospel." In so doing, I shall consider--

I. THE GREAT OBSTACLE, WHICH IS COMMON TO ALL PLACES AND ALL TIMES.

II. I SHALL CALL ATTENTION TO SOME OBSTACLES WHICH ARE PECULIAR TO GREAT CITIES.

III. I SHALL STATE THE CONDITIONS OF OVERCOMING THESE OBSTACLES.

If we were going about any particular business, the first thing is, of course, to understand what it is we are going about. What, therefore, is the evil we aim at correcting? What is moral depravity? This is necessary to be understood, for it is everywhere to be found; it is common to all humanity, to all times, and to all places. Human nature is substantially the same in every age and nation, in this respect. Although existing, in its outward development, in a great variety of forms, nevertheless, in all cases, it resolves itself into a simple unit. Unless people understand this, they will go about matters in such a way as to fail. I should like to enlarge on this single thought, but we must now proceed to inquire, " *What is the difficulty to be overcome?"*

Let me say, then, that all sin may be said to resolve itself into this--a spirit of devotion to self. It is generally believed, I suppose, that our first parents, when they sinned, fell into a state of total alienation from God. What was the particular thing they did? They withdrew their devotion from God, in order to gratify themselves, in spite of His authority. He told them they might eat of every tree in the garden, save one. He designed to throw a restraint upon them, for the sake of subduing their wills--developing and strengthening their virtue; but then they withdrew their allegiance from God, and set up to be gods themselves! The tempter said, "Ah! though God said, Of every tree of the garden mayest thou eat, except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; thou mayest eat even of that, and in the day in which thou dost eat thereof thou shalt **NOT** surely die, but ye shall be as gods, knowing good from evil!" Of this, when Eve saw it, she partook. What constituted the great evil of this? It was not only disobedience to God's expressed commands, but it was sinning simply for the sake of their own personal gratification. Instead of seeking the honor, and obeying the commands of the Almighty, they withdrew themselves from God, and devoted themselves to the promotion of their own interests, in despite of God. Now, this is the sin of all mankind, for they withhold their allegiance from God, and devote themselves to themselves. "Selfishness" is a word which may express the will of sin, if properly understood. It matters not at all which of the propensities overrules the rest, and leads the mind into bondage. Sin consists in man's giving himself up to himself--to his own gratification, and seeking his own pleasure and profit. This develops itself in a great variety of ways. In one man, one propensity entices the will to seek its particular gratification; in another, another. This gratification of the various propensities--this devotion of the will and of the being to pleasing self in some way or other-is the great evil of the world. Now, whatever makes strong and powerful appeals to these propensities, are obstacles to be overcome. The thing to be done, is to withdraw man from himself, and to bring him to God. Our first parents set up to be gods for themselves. Now, if they had come back, and consecrated themselves to God, yielding up their whole being to obey Him, and seeking His interest and His glory--to have done this, would have been to have returned to God. There must be begun in us that devotion to God which constitutes piety. We must forsake ourselves; for virtue, or holiness, resolves itself into a unit as much as sin does, and the mind devoted to self, is a mind totally depraved; while the mind devoted to God--seeking his glory, and yielding itself up to be influenced by Him--this is a pious mind. Now, to induce men to cease altogether to live to and for themselves, and to live to God, is to restore them to a position in which they can be happy. A great many persons seem to talk, as if in this, and in all great cities, the people were very peculiar. Now, the peculiarity is not with the people, but it is with the circumstances which make the selfishness, which takes one development in one place, and another in another. The fact is, great cities are the very hot--beds of those influences which make such strong appeals to these propensities, yielding the mind up to which, constitute sin. The appetite for food or drink, when inordinate, is not a constitutional appetite, but the will seeking gratification; whereas the Almighty forbids us to give ourselves up to obey and seek the gratification of these propensities, instead of subordinating every one of them to the will and glory of God.

I pass on, then, in the next place, to inquire into *some of the difficulties* in the way of securing the end I have just named, namely, the subjugation of selfishness. Scarcely any of these difficulties are peculiar to great cities, in the sense that they do not exist at all in other places--for almost all of them exist in most places;--but the peculiarity is, that they exist in a multiplied form in great cities. Things in the way in great cities, may be expressed thus:--Great cities expose men to most aggravated forms of temptation. Don't let me be supposed to assert, that these things don't exist in other places: but that they do really exist in a most intense degree in great cities.

This subject might be divided, for the sake of being condensed into a single sermon--for a month would scarcely suffice to go right into the detail, and to make it take hold of the mind of the people--I shall, therefore, just name the things, and show what the difficulties are, and who are guilty of these things. I said, for the sake of classification and condensation, I may regard these aggravated forms of temptation under different heads. 1. *The temptations which are peculiar to the Church.* 2. Those which are *peculiar to the world*, as distinct from the Church. 3. Those which are *common to both*. I don't mean to say, that this classification is so distinct as not to run these divisions into one another; but I have taken them simply for the sake of condensation.

1. *The obstacles which are peculiar to the Church of Christ*. Here, after all, is to be found the great evil, and I must begin where I am pained to have to begin, but where I must begin, or I should fail to touch the very core of the difficulty. What I have to say on this subject may fall far short of hitting the right nail on the head, because I am so much of a stranger in London and England; I shall speak, therefore, of things as I have observed them in the great cities of America. Now, I have resided in all the great cities of America, and I presume that these things are to be found in all the great cities of Christendom, to a greater or less degree. First, then, I have said I shall notice the temptations peculiar to the Church of Christ; and first of all, to the ministers of the Church. For, after all, if the difficulties did not act on the pulpits, on the ministers who occupy them--that is, if the ministers were left unshackled, unbiased--they would, after all, lead the sacramental hosts of God's elect to overcome these difficulties, and that in every great town throughout all Christendom. I don't mean the temptations of ministers are the only things in the way, but as all the root of the matter lies in them--for Satan knows right well, that if he can pervert and corrupt that source--if he can do anything to beget an unfaithful ministry, he can do the rest well enough; therefore it is his policy, in some way or other, to render the pulpit powerless; and just so far as he succeeds in doing this, he gains his end. Here are temptations too numerous to mention, except just to be glanced at.

And, first, ministers in great cities are more intensely tempted than in other places, to seek popularity with worldly men. Such men exist more in great cities than anywhere else. This is one of the great temptations which often takes effect--seeking popularity with worldly men. Everyone can see, when a man yields to these, he has bound a fetter upon his own spirit--he has tied his own heart, if he allows himself to do this; the fact is, that the pulpit is muzzled, and the minister, as far as his influence is concerned, is about ruined. In order to obtain popularity with the worldly great, the ministers of great cities are tempted to aim at excellence in scholarship and oratory, and to let these, and a multitude of other things, get dominion over the mind. They are tempted to aim at getting connected with their Churches and congregations, the worldly great.

Now, what is the influence of this upon him? Why, of course, he is come into such relations to these men, that he will, without being aware of the extent to which he does it, he will temporize--he will denounce sin in the abstract from the pulpit, but no one's sin in particular. In great cities, ministers are tempted to be vehement in denouncing sin, but no particular sin. They do not say what sin of character they are reproving. It is nobody, and no sin in particular. They take care, however, to imply that they don't mean their own congregation--they don't mean that. I know that ofttimes there are influences of this kind so powerfully exerted upon them, that it should lead Christians to pray for their ministers a thousand times more than they do. If they knew the policy of the devil, who wishes to bribe to silence the minister, and make him afraid to do his duty--afraid to rebuke the wickedness in high places--the Church would lie on her face, if she has any piety.

Ministers in great cities are tempted to avoid giving offence to worldly men, even to worldly professors of religion. In fact, some ministers lose caste with their brethren, because they do not keep "good" congregations. Worldly professors of religion are generally found to be rich, luxurious, great, intelligent; they not only endanger his loss of character, but of usefulness. Such temptations are very great. Again, ministers in great cities are tempted to aim at pleasing, rather than disturbing their worldly hearers. The thing they ought to do, is to aim at disturbing all classes of their hearers who are living in sin, and at rendering them as unhappy as possible in their sin, and thus hunting it out of them. Instead of aiming to please them, they

should endeavor to make them anything but pleased with themselves. They shape things to please, when they ought to aim at creating agony in their minds, too great to be endured without submission to God. Another great evil is, the want of union among ministers in these respects. One feels he must not stir in this matter, because others do not. He says, If I offend so and so, he will go to join other Church, where he will be received immediately.

Now, if all would unite to hunt such men, it would be different. Many say, If I could only have the co-operation of my brethren--if all would agree to spare no pains to arouse to a sense of their danger every class of mankind, especially the worldly great and luxurious, then I could stand; but I cannot do it alone. Another temptation of ministers in great cities is, that even professors of religion are often extremely fastidious. They want peculiar ministers. They have itching ears--even professors of religion want such teachers as will not probe them too deeply, or hunt them out of their sins. They want ministers to please them, and the ungodly who belong to their rank in society. I have often known professors regretting that their ministers said anything to offend such and such a wealthy individual. They might possibly expostulate with him for this, but more probably they will go and speak against him behind his back, and thus cripple his influence; thus his own Church will not say, God speed to him--will not say, We will stand by you. No! They throw out hints about being "so personal," and all this, which cripples his hands, and completely discourages his heart. There are multitudes of such things as these in great cities.

But let me say again, ministers in great cities are tempted to neglect the wants of the masses of the people, both in and out of the pulpit. I have observed in our country, that there is a great deficiency in this respect. The sermons are framed, not so much to meet the wants of the masses, as those of certain individuals in the higher walks of society, and of advanced education. They aim at pleasing such persons, instead of coming down to the masses of the people, and suiting their pulpit instructions to them. It is, no doubt, true, that sermons directed to the masses, are, for efficiency, even more acceptable to the educated and higher classes of society then any other. The fact is, that the senators, and other great men, would be more affected by sermons addressed to the commonest people in the congregation, or even to children, than by some efforts to amuse and please themselves. Yet in great cities ministers are tempted, and to a great extent yield to the temptation, to neglect, both in and out of the pulpit, to sympathize with, adapt themselves to, and aim at the salvation of the masses. They rather aim at a few individuals, and aim, moreover, in such a manner as rarely to hit even them. Flattery causes them very often to temporize; they are often flattered by their hearers, and then they don't like to deal faithfully with them. Ministers are often drawn in by dining with such persons, and in various other ways come into such relations with persons in high places--they suffer themselves to be drawn into such relations with them--that they neither can, nor dare, after that, be faithful with them. It is easy to see that these things have a direct influence on the minister, and are a serious evil--a worm at the root--at the very vitals--which must be overcome.

One word more on this head. A great difficulty, every one knows, who has thoroughly investigated the subject, is, that ministers are tempted to *indefiniteness* in their statements. They temporize in this way--they don't fail to denounce sin, but they do fail to denounce the particular sin of their particular hearers. There is a great temptation to neglect to make people feel that they mean them. The temptation is to temporize so as to denounce sin in the aggregate; but while they do this, they may preach about other people's sins, and the congregation may go with them. They may thunder from the pulpit against such and such people's sins, and the congregation may join with them. The wickedest man on earth will denounce lying, and every kind of injustice and wickedness, and everybody's practice and sin, except his own. But if a minister denounces sin in the abstract, and does not make you feel that "I mean you," he fails. What is done, after all? Why, you might fill this city and the world with such ministers, and do but little, almost no good. I must not enlarge upon this. There are materials enough, painful as they are, to fill a volume, instead of occupying the few moments I am able to devote to them in this sermon.

2. The difficulties presented by the membership of the Churches. These, too, are far too numerous to be detailed in one sermon. First, they are strongly tempted to secure to their churches the attendance of ungodly, but wealthy men. I have often noticed, that if our people were preparing to build a church--or chapel, as you call it here--they were tempted to have an undue regard for wealthy and influential men. They build the chapel in a locality which will be agreeable to them. They employ a minister of such a character as will suit them. They must have a popular man, but, unfortunately, he is popular in the bad sense of the term. There are many men popular, but in very different ways. Some are popular for usefulness to the poor; others for getting the support of the rich, to which they are tempted at every step. Now,

all this grieves the Spirit of God, and renders their efforts ineffectual. Such men never attain their end; they sacrifice all for the sake of getting in worldly men, and getting fitted up an appropriate place of worship--getting some mighty scholar, some mighty orator, or some mighty anything else, except a mighty good man. They arrange everything in such a way as not to displease or offend, but to please and consult rich men, whether good or bad. I have often known the question to come up, whether a revival effort should be made in the great cities of our country, when neither minister nor Church dare consent, because, were they to do so, many of their rich men would take offence. Neither minister nor Church dare introduce any searching measures to secure the salvation of the world around them. Things must be done with caution, lest they disturb such men in their congregations, who, by exercising their worldly influence, are the greatest curses the Church can have.

But let me say again, another great difficulty, and one of the greatest difficulties, in the way of promoting religion in great cities, is the effect of competitions in business--the Church undertaking to compete with worldly men in business. Worldly men have worldly motives, worldly rules, worldly business maxims. They transact business in a certain way. Now, professors of religion think they cannot compete with them, without similar dealings, and therefore fall, one after another, into a state of mind in which they are not useful--a state of perfect bondage to the world, by endeavoring to compete with worldly men in the business of their city. How many have I known rendered weak and inefficient, and stumbling-blocks, by falling under this temptation! These individuals are shorn of their strength and influence, as Christians. But I cannot go into details as to the operations of this, which would carry me too far out of my way. But who does not know that the business operations of our cities are hot-beds of temptations in this respect? I have heard Christians say, in great cities, "We must give up our attempts at competing with these men in business, or we must ruin our souls." One of the first merchants in New York said to me, "I must abandon my business, or ruin my soul." Now, every one can see that this is the case. They are sure to lose their efficient piety. It may be easily shown that this is a mistake, even in a commercial point of view, if they carried out Gospel principles in their business transactions, they would command the confidence of all classes; so much so, that the people would say, "Go to that man, for then we shan't be cheated. He always has one price for his articles, a fair and honorable price, and nothing more. He never covers matters up, but deals straight out." This is a place of policy, after all, even in a commercial and business point of view. But the difficulty is, to make Christians believe this. Now, let any one try this, till his neighbors know, and it becomes to be known throughout the city, that he will not take advantage of anyone--that he may be trusted--that he tells the exact truth--let this be known throughout the city, and let me ask how many clerks will that man want, in less than five years, to do his business? Who would go to a man who was likely to cheat him, when there was one he could go to, who would be certain not to cheat? Persons are tempted to suppose, that if this is done, they cannot compete with worldly men. It is a mistake--a mistake fatal to piety, and constitutes one of the principal difficulties in the way of promoting religion in great cities. In business transactions, members of Christian Churches become ensnared; and these, by their example, often place a fearful stumbling-block in the way of the world. They suffer themselves to be carried along contrary to their convictions of duty, and contrary to the spontaneous declarations of their consciences, contrary to the express injunctions of the Bible; and hence, they frequent places, and allow themselves to do things, merely because public sentiment, and the customs of society, seem to demand it.

Now, whatever causes a cloud to get between the Christian's heart and God--whatever shuts out from his soul the direct light of God's countenance--is fatal to the interests of the Church and of religion; and these influences, which thus becloud the soul, and get between God and it, are so manifested in great cities, that the Church is crippled, the salt loses its savour, the light of the world becomes darkness--and how gross that darkness is!

I would enlarge upon this point--the things that grieve the Spirit of God--were it not that, on Friday evening, I shall preach on quenching and grieving the Spirit. But let me say again, another difficulty in the way is, that Christians are tempted to unbelief in the possibility of the conversion of great cities. I have scarcely entered a great city since I have been in the ministry, where it was not thought, by both ministers and Christians, that great cities, and especially *their* great city, could not be converted. I have been told, that I did not understand the peculiar difficulties of great cities. I do not say, that there is no such thing. They are great; but they can be overcome. They should not discourage the Church, but lead it to perceive what great efforts must be made, and how much they are dependent upon God. Is anything too hard for God? Why, yes; they say so; they say, "If God should make the windows of heaven to open, it could not be." This is the language of their hearts. This has been said in London again and again, by one and

another. But one of the great difficulties is, your unbelief, which limits God, that he cannot do His many mighty works, because of your unbelief. All other matters are but difficulties, in so far as they produce this result--in so far as they crush faith in God--they don't believe God's arm will be made bare, or that Christ is able to take captive the masses around them, and subject them to His dominion. The extent of this unbelief is frightful. The ministry say it cannot be done. They don't say it right out in preaching, but multitudes talk just as if such things were impossibilities. Now, is this always to be so? Is the Church always to believe that great cities, on account of the aggravated and intense forms in which temptations exist there, will not be converted? Cannot we remove this unbelief of the Church, and beget a confidence in the Church that it can be done? If we can do this, then the great difficulty is overcome. But there are a multitude of other things, almost numberless, which serve constantly to grieve the Spirit, and, consequently, to suppress and to kill the faith of the people of God.

Let me say again, when this spirit has once taken possession of, and comes to be indulged, it aggravates itself by a natural law. For example, suppose ministers and Churches have an impression that great cities cannot be expected to be moved, they will not work in such a manner as can be expected to make them move. On the contrary, year after year will tend to establish and strengthen them in their unbelief; for, beginning to say, "It cannot be done," their energies are crippled--it is not done; and its not being done, makes them say still further, "It cannot be done;" and thus the evil, instead of correcting, but aggravates and perpetuates itself. This is true to such an alarming extent in many of our great cities, that I can see clearly that great masses of professing Christians despair of the conversion of these great cities, and, therefore, they must naturally despair of the *conversion of the world*. The worldly influences which have been brought to bear upon them have produced these disastrous results.

The next thing I have to say, is, what are the stumbling-blocks in the way of conversion of the ungodly? 1. The business habits of the Church--(it is a curious retributive law of God's kingdom)--the business habits of the ungodly draw the Church astray to a great extent. They fall into these ungodly habits. Their selfishness has taken effect to some extent, and what is the result? The Church is now a snare to them. They snared the Church, and now the worldly business habits of the Church snare them. So far as experience has gone, there is no such great stumbling-block so powerful as this. Many persons are engaged in kinds of business which the ungodly know are purely selfish. If professors act in this way, what will their clerks say? Who does not know that the ungodly in the employment of such men are stumbled by their conduct? Again, the self-indulgent habits of the Church, into which they are drawn by the worldly influences to which they are subjected, have a reactionary tendency on the people generally. Again, the manifested unbelief and cowardice of the Church, are great evils in the great cities. Professors of religion are shorn of their strength in great cities, they are afraid to be faithful, they cower down before the ungodly, and their influence. This is the great stumbling block; it is thus, then, as I said before, that, by a natural retributive law of the government of God, that if the world lays a snare for the Church, just so far as they succeed in ensnaring the Church, will they ensnare themselves. They bring down their violent dealings on their own head; it is easy to see that this is the natural action of things. But I must notice only a few things which are common to all classes.

First, for example, the temptations to intemperance and licentiousness. The appeals which are made, on every hand, to the weaknesses of human nature, all the ingenuity of science--earth and hell would seem to have been ransacked in order to develop to the utmost these propensities, to draw them out, and to compel the will to yield itself up thereto. As you walk the streets everywhere these things meet the eye, and strike the ear. The whole thing seems to have been molded, as it were, by some infernal agency. Temptations are presented alike to old and young, both sexes, and all classes of society. As you go round the city you perceive there are bands with trumpets before the tippling houses, getting the people to stop and hear the music--getting them to do this, and then, of course, they want something to drink. All sorts of things are contrived to entice people to these tippling houses--to get people to this place, and that place, to this lecture and that lecture, to this banquet of music and that banquet of wine. In short, who does not know that in our great cities it seems as if these things were set together as close as type. They thrust something into every nook. To arrest attention, the streets are placarded with all sorts of huge notices. But this is not enough; they send men to carry on their shoulders notices of the same baneful description. And, again, men drive about the city with these notices posted on great vans. Now, only think! the whole place is swarmed with them. Wherever you go you see them, and feel their influences. These are all so many *stimuli* tending to develop the love of sin--selfishness, to tempt the will to indulge the appetite. These things are seen on every hand, and as the Christian walks the streets, he must either hold constant

communication with God, or yield himself up to temptation.

III. I must notice some of the **conditions of overcoming these great evils.**

1. The great want is, then, *a heart supremely and singly set on overcoming these obstacles*. It is a very trite and commonplace saying, but is very true, that, "Where there's a will, there's a way." Wherever there's a will there's a way, to the actual accomplishment of all that God requires. If He requires that the Church should convert the world, and He does,--if there's a will there's a way. The thing is, then, for the Church to make up her mind to do it.

2. The next thing to be done is to *lay aside this ungodly unbelief*, and have confidence that God's Almighty arm can do it. What is this great mountain before Zerubbabel? What are such difficulties as these to the Almighty? Oh! do God the honor to believe He is able, for if anything can be done to overcome the unbelief of the Church, the world may be saved. What can be done, my dear brethren, to get out of your mind the difficulties which you think of so much, till your hearts are discouraged? You cannot do, or expect to do, anything, while you suffer your heads to hang down, and are ready to faint with discouragement.

3. *Union* is an indispensable condition. The devil will tell you the thing cannot be done, but you must not believe it. Ministers must lay aside all party differences, and unite against the common enemy. Christians must lay aside their sectional views and prejudices, and assail the common enemy of God and man. Let us forget that we belong to this or that Church, let us lost sight of this, and go up in an unbroken mass to the work.

4. We must study the movements of the *enemy*. We must act as wisely as they act; the children of this world are wiser in their generation than "the children of light." Yet, they did not choose a better end, but better means--more appropriate means; God will require the use of means in proportion to the existence of means. We are not to expect a miracle to be performed, where we have sufficient evidence to establish the Gospel without it. For example, if there was no trace of evidence to establish the truth of the Gospel, we might expect the performance of miracles--we might expect that God would accommodate himself to such a state of things; but, where there are means, God expects them to be used, and we must, therefore, adapt them wisely to the end. We must not expect that God will overrule and act aside his own laws; we must study those laws, study how to counteract the efforts which the devil is making, to bring men into bondage within the Church, and to ruin those who are without the Church.

But let me say again, the efforts of the Church must be set over against the efforts of the world. You see how men advertise the worldly amusements; they move the whole city with their advertisements, they make everybody understand clearly who and what they are, and what they are going to do. Now, were the Church but as zealous in getting people to hear the Gospel as the world is in getting them to its amusements, why, every Church in the city would be filled with worshippers and hearers. Christians should oppose their efforts to those of their enemies, and God's means would surely prevail over the means of the devil.

Truth is mightier than error, God is stronger then Satan, but Satan is allowed to take the field almost alone. He wields the press, and makes it groan in exciting and drawing men in the wrong direction. Now, if God's children were really awake, they would come forth and devote

their money, their talents, and all their influence, to searching out ways and means of putting them on the right track, and opposing the ways and means of wicked men; they would lift up their hearts in prayer, and soon would they see the mighty truths of Jehovah prevailing over the masses round about them.

But, let me say again, there must be a great deal more done to interest the masses. The masses must be sympathized with, there must be references to them in sermons and everything that is done. The world is carrying the masses away, we must reclaim them. While the world is running away with the masses, the Church is satisfying herself with securing the support and attendance of the great, while the masses fail to be converted, or even interested. There must be much more prayer and self-denial. Now, who does not know, from the nature of the case, and from the history of the Church, and from the world, that intemperance is going on to ruin our great cities; till Christians deny themselves, touch not, taste not, handle not, there can be no hope of saving the masses from going down to destruction. As you walk along the streets and see the men and women, and even the little children, sitting before the tippling houses, you should say, and resolve that, as God lives, and you live, anything you can do in this respect--any self-denial you can make, you are willing to submit to, in order that you may lead the way. I have been pained to see the slowness of British Christians in this respect. I have heard them say, that teetotallers make it their religion. Now, I think there is some danger of making "drinking a little" a religion, too. I

know some who, when they have drunk "just a little," can pray, or sing, or do anything else well. When I was a young man I taught a school and boarded in a family, where the man came home three times a-week half intoxicated. Now, I noticed that on these occasions he used to pray very earnestly, and at no other time did he pray at all. I have thought of this many times, when I have seen ministers take "just a little to assist them." The Lord deliver me from such a snare as this!

But I cannot enlarge. Do you not believe that if the entire membership of the Churches were to lift up their voices against the drinking customs of this country, and if the ministers were to head them, that they would not exert a mighty influence in counteracting them? You must believe it! shall it be that any branch of reform which is indispensable, shall not be embraced by Christians? It is indispensable that you must be reformers throughout, you must reform yourselves; and if you cannot reform men without total abstinence, you must be ready to imitate the apostolic example--neither to eat meat, or do anything whereby thy brother is stumbled, offended, or made weak. Now, this man well nigh shook the world. Well might he say, that *he* would do it; the secret of his success was, that he would deny himself anything under heaven which he considered would stand in the way of his saving souls of men; he went so far as to say, that he could wish himself accursed for his kinsmen after the flesh. By this, he meant to say, that he would almost be separated from his own salvation. He did not mean to say he would be damned, but that he could submit to anything to save his dear brethren.

I can only say, that every reform must be carried out in this way. You persuade men to desist from drinking, but do not do it yourselves. How inconsistent! Why do you not say, I abstain for your sake, I give up these things which I can lawfully use; but as you abuse them, I take off my hand. Christ did many things for the sake of his disciples which would not otherwise have been incumbent upon him. One great thing he did--he died for their sakes. Are you ready to act in this spirit? Are you ready to take the lead in every branch of reform, and to go up having washed your hands of every unclean thing? Set your business transactions right! If you are engaged in a wicked business, put it away! If you have cheated any man, make restitution and come forth; wash your hands, and strengthen your hearts in God; go up to the work, and **IT SHALL BE DONE!**

CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Evening, May 19, 1850

BY THE REV. C. G.FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, AMERICA,

At the Tabernacle, moorefields.

"For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." I Tim. 2:5

In speaking from these words I propose to show:--

I. What a mediator is.

II. What is implied in the office of a mediator.

III. What are some of the indispensable qualifications for a mediator.

IV. The conditions of success in the execution of the office of mediator.

V. Apply these things to Christ as the mediator between God and man.

I. *What is a Mediator?* A Mediator is one who undertakes to effect a reconciliation between parties who have some matter of difference.

II. *What is implied in the office of a Mediator?*

1. The existence of the office of a Mediator, always implies that there are two or more parties, and that some controversy exists between them.

2. It implies that there is some obstacle in the way of their coming together and reconciling their own matters in difference. If there be no obstacle in the way of doing this, there is no necessity for the interposition of a Mediator. The existence of the office, therefore, implies that there are parties between whom there is some matter in controversy, and that some difficulty is in the way of their adjusting their own differences.

3. The relation of the parties to each other may be the cause of the difficulty. God is a Sovereign, and if his subjects should take up arms against him, there would be immense impropriety in treating with them, while they continued in this rebellious and hostile position. There is a necessity for some third person to interpose if any reconciliation is ever to be effected. The Sovereign cannot treat with his subjects while they have weapons in their hands;--they must first return to their duty and lay down their arms, or he cannot have any intercourse with them.

4. The state of mind in which one or both parties may be, may prevent their coming together. There may be prejudice, misapprehension, or enmity in the minds of one or both parties. And when this is the case they

cannot come together and adjust their matters of difference. This may lay the foundation for the necessity of an interposition of a Mediator.

5. Again: There may be some condition upon which the offended party must insist, from his relations and the circumstances of the case; which condition it may be impossible for the offender to fulfill. On this account it may be necessary for a third person to interpose, and fulfill for the offender what he cannot fulfill for himself, as a condition of the reconciliation to be brought about, between the parties. Either of the reasons, or all of them, may exist and require the interposition of a Mediator.

III. *What are some of the indispensable qualifications for a Mediator?* 1. He must be the common friend of the parties between whom the controversy exists. By this we mean, that he should sustain such a relation to both parties, that they can wholly confide in him. 2. He must be able to fulfill, or secure the fulfilling, of any such conditions as are necessary to be fulfilled, in order to bring about the reconciliation, or he will not meet with success. He must have both willingness and ability to make any personal sacrifice, to which the nature of the undertaking calls him. If the nature of the undertaking be such that he cannot bring about an adjustment of the difficulty without making some personal sacrifice, he must be able and willing to make the necessary sacrifice, whatever it may be. We now come to consider--

IV. *Some of the conditions of success in the execution of the office of Mediator.* I observe, that of course the above qualifications are necessary; and, further, I observe, that success must depend upon the consent of the parties.

1. First, the Mediator himself must consent to sustain the relation, and to take upon himself the office.

2. And then, the parties must consent, for the Mediator can do nothing to bind the parties without their own consent and sanction to it; for there may be two or more parties between whom there is some controversy, and this controversy cannot be adjusted, unless the parties between whom there is some controversy, and this controversy cannot be adjusted, unless the parties between whom there exists the difference consent to any arrangement that may be proposed. The Mediator himself may propose some terms to effect an agreement; but only so far as the parties consent to the Mediator's terms, can he succeed in his object. Just in so far, and no further, as they give the matter up into his hands, can he bring about the reconciliation. This matter in difference cannot be set right by any authority, by any man, or by any means whatever, that shall seek to supersede the necessity of the consent of the parties themselves. I am now prepared to proceed, and

V. *Apply these things to Christ as the Mediator between God and man.* It is said in the Bible that Jesus Christ is a Mediator between God and man; this is plainly expressed, and we understand what it must mean. God addresses men in human language, he always uses that language which we can understand. I once heard a remark of this kind gravely made by a man who had been hearing a sermon on the atonement, in which the governmental view of it had been exhibited and enforced,--"Ah," said he, "you cannot explain spiritual things by natural things; you cannot explain the government of God by any human government or human transactions." Now, when I heard this remark, I could not forbear saying, "What a pity that God did not know that when he wrote the Bible." Cannot explain spiritual things by natural things! What a pity God did not take that into account when he wrote the Bible, where such illustrations are so abundantly introduced. But surely if God has seen fit to use such means to illustrate and explain his meaning to us, it is also permitted to us to do the same.

In the remarks that I have made this evening, I have shown you what a Mediator is, what is implied in the office of a Mediator, what are some of the indispensable qualifications for a Mediator, and what are the conditions of his success; and now we are farther to apply these remarks to the case before us.

1. I said that a Mediator is one who undertakes to reconcile parties to each other between whom there is some matter in controversy. In the text, these parties are shown to be God and men--God on one side, and all the race of mankind on the other. That there is a matter in controversy between God and man, is one of the most palpable facts which lies on the surface of history: everybody knows it to be true; it is a fact as plain as that man exists upon the earth; every man feels it in his own consciousness; and if he is in a right state of mind, he would as soon think of questioning it as he would his own existence. Everybody must be aware of the fact that they do not live in a way that pleases God. What idea should we have of God if we supposed that he was satisfied and pleased with the conduct of the great mass of mankind? If God be a good being, he must be displeased with their conduct? Who can doubt this?

2. Again: God manifests this displeasure which he feels, in thousands of ways. To be sure, he tempers his anger with great kindness, and suffers long with the perversities, follies, and sins of mankind, yet how often

has this world's history shown that God is angry with its inhabitants. How often has he swept over the world with his besom of destruction! At one time, all the inhabitants of the earth were swept away by a flood of waters, with the exception of only one family; and, on the other hand, we see that men are everywhere doing what they can to repudiate God's authority and claims to love and obedience, and are making war on his throne and government. In all this we can plainly see that there is a controversy between God and man; man opposes God, and God is continually, by many ways, showing his displeasure with them. 3. But I said also that the existence of the office implied that there was some obstacle in the way of their coming together and reconciling their differences, and that this might arise, first, from the relation which the parties sustained to each other. Now, anyone who has ever considered what government is, or has had anything to do with administering the law, can understand the sacredness of government, and the difficulty there is in the way of exercising mercy to the rebellious. Can rebels approach offended majesty in their own name? What have rebels to say in their own name? They cannot come nigh to treat with him in their own name, for he says, "I am of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." It is of no use for them to attempt to approach to him in their own name, for he will not look at them. Secondly, the difficulty may arise out of the state of mind of the parties. To be sure, God is disposed to do men good, notwithstanding their rebellion, and there is no state of mind which that would not allow him to exercise compassion and mercy where sinners will repent, but his government relations are such as to prevent his having any intercourse with those who continue in a state of hostility; the state of mind in which they are renders it indispensable for some third person to interpose, in order to reconcile them to God. Hence it is that Christ is represented as reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. But I said further, that the existence of the office implied that there might be some conditions, the fulfillment of which it might be necessary for the offended party to insist upon, but which it was impossible for the offending party to fulfill, or cause to be fulfilled.

Now, here, I suppose, was the great difficulty which stood in the way of God's showing mercy to sinners, even if his own disposition disposed him to be merciful. The law had been violated and dishonored, and God *must* insist upon its being honored, and public justice being satisfied. Here I must notice a distinction between public and retributive justice. Retributive justice respects the intrinsic deserts of an individual; for example, a moral agent may deserve punishment, who is not governmentally liable to it; or the government may be placed in such circumstances as to think it inexpedient to award that punishment which he deserves, and which the law sanctioned. Now, public justice respects public interests; the laws of a country are public property, and when they are violated, all the subjects of the government are interested in having the law executed, that its authority might not in any way be weakened; for when the laws are violated with impunity, they are of no weight, and the government which cannot enforce them is despised. Let me observe, also, that in establishing a government of law, the lawgiver, either expressly or impliedly, pledges himself to punish the guilty, and protect and reward the innocent; and the public interests of the whole community demand this; the criminal must be made a public example, or the authority and intention of law cannot be maintained. *No lawgiver, in heaven or on earth, has any right to compromise the claims of public justice*. Now, observe, God has expressly, or impliedly, pledged himself to sustain his government, and maintain the authority of his law; man has dishonored and violated it, and public rights will be compromised unless something be done to assert and sustain the authority of the law. Here is the difficulty; what shall be done? Shall the execution of the law be dispensed with, and thus be rendered void? Now, what public justice required was, that this law should be vindicated by its penalties being executed upon the offending parties, or something be done to secure reverence for the law and the lawgiver. Now, observe, God himself says that Christ is sent to be a propitiation for our sins, that he may be just, and yet the justifier of them who believe in Jesus. God cannot set aside the execution of the penalty. Here, I say, is the great difficulty. God's relations and character are such, and such the relations and character of man, that something must be done that men could not do as the condition of their being forgiven--the requirement is, that they make satisfaction to public justice. Why, to be sure, public justice required every offender to be punished. What, then, shall be done to meet the demands of public justice, and yet the offender be spared the infliction of the penalty! God's government is perfect; no compromise must be made which shall set aside the true spirit of the law. This leads me to say again, God could not dispense with the *spirit* of the law. All that the spirit of the law required, was simply this--not that the letter of the law should in every instance be fulfilled, that every individual who violated the law should be punished without any reserve; but that means should be adopted which would effectually secure obedience to the law. The offender must receive the punishment

unless something else should be done that would as truly and effectually honour the insulted law, and make a deep public impression of God's regard for it, and his determination to sustain it, and as thoroughly serve to promote holiness and rebuke sin. This would be the fulfilling of the spirit of the law: here would be no compromise of its claims, neither a literal execution of its penalty; but it would be a full satisfaction made to the spirit of its claims. What would be the object of God in executing the law upon sinners, but to make a public impression of his abhorrence of sin, and his determination to maintain the law inviolate, and to honour it at all hazards. The execution of it would teach the universe certain great lessons in respect to God's character and government. Now, suppose that the lawgiver himself should teach these lessons in some other way that shall be as effectual, as impressive, and as influential as would be the execution of the penalty of the law upon sinners, why, then, the spirit of the law would be as effectually honored and sustained. But suppose, to show his great regard for it, he should yield implicit obedience to it himself, and become the representative of man, as it is said he did,--"He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now, in order to do this, in order to make an offer of pardon to the poor guilty sinner, there must be a public demonstration made to the whole universe--the law must be honored as widely as it had been broken.

How was this demonstration to be made? How was the law to be honored? Who was to do it? See, God's own Son, closely associated with him, one with him in the formation and government of the universe, takes upon himself human nature, and represents the race; he undertakes to be the impersonation and representative of sin. God is about to show how he regards sin, by inflicting the penalty due to man, upon one who has come forth to be a Mediator between the sinner and the insulted majesty of the law. God is about to make a terrible demonstration, and show to the whole universe his deep and eternal abhorrence of iniquity. Now, this will fulfill the law even more thoroughly than if the consequences of sin had been visited upon the heads of the guilty themselves. "He laid upon him the iniquity of us all!" What a wonderful demonstration was this! Again: It is plain that this condition was indispensably necessary. God, as the governor of the universe, must insist upon something being done to meet the claims of public justice; the dishonored law must be restored, public justice must be appeased; the spirit of the law must be maintained in all its integrity. Now, there was only one being in the universe qualified to sustain the office. The Lord Jesus Christ was both God and man; he sustained such a relation to both the parties as to be in a position to "magnify the law," and make it even more honourable than it would have been made by its execution upon mankind. Christ satisfied the claims of public justice, and hence it is said, "he gave himself a ransom for all." Christ, by his atonement, testified to the manner in which God regarded the sins of man. Again: Our Lord Jesus Christ knew well what it would cost him. I said just now, that one of the conditions of a Mediator's success must be this: that if the office should call for any sacrifice on his part, he must be fully willing to make it--he must be willing to make any sacrifice, or undergo any degree of self-denial, which may be requisite in the nature of the case. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ knew well what it would cost him. It was no part of his business to compromise the claims of public justice; no part of his business to justify iniquity, or let down the authority of the law. He new better what he had to do, than to act thus; and he was willing to do what the office required of him. Again: the circumstances of Christ's death were such as could never be accounted for except upon the supposition, that he suffered not as a mere mortal, but as the representative of a race of sinners. The circumstances of his death were of a very peculiar nature. He died not as martyrs generally die; when they have been tied to the stake the words of gladness and triumph have burst from their lips, and they have passed from earth shouting and singing glory to God. Christ did not die so. How was this? Is it true that Christ was more afraid to die than martyrs are? What was it extorted from him that cry--"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" How was that? Is God wont to forsake even the meanest of his saints in their hour of trial? Let me ask those who have been in the habit of visiting the deathbeds of the saints, how many, when the last enemy was approaching, and when the clammy sweat was upon their brow, have you heard speak in the language and with the accents of despair? Did they cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No, indeed! Their language is that of peace, serenity, triumph, and when their voice has been gone, they would give you a quivering grasp of the hand, to indicate that the light of God's countenance was upon them. The fact, then, is plain; he died not as a martyr but as the representative of a sinful race. Although God loved him infinitely, still, as the representatives of a sinful race, in his displeasure he poured down upon him the vials of his indignation. The death of Christ was intended to make an impression upon the universe, and all the circumstances attending it show what a wonderful effect it had. When he was nailed to the cross the sun refused to look on, and the

heavens were clothed with sackcloth; the whole universe seemed to be shaking to its foundations. Heathen philosophers observed it, and said, Either nature is being dissolved, or the god of nature is dying. The dead could not sleep in their graves, the earth trembled, and the tombs opened, and those who had been dead issued forth, and walked into the city. The veil of the temple was rent in twain. God made a mighty impression upon the entire universe, when, in order that sinners might be pardoned, he thus made a fearful demonstration of his hatred against sin.

I shall conclude with a few remarks.

1. You recollect that the success of the Mediator must depend upon the consent of the parties. Now, it is for us, on our part, as one of the parties, to consent to receive him as a Mediator in the relation in which he is proposed to us. The Divine government has given to Christ the adjustment of this difficulty, so that as parties in this controversy we must give ourselves up to the will of the Mediator. The sacrifice which he has made has satisfied the claims of justice; but this will affect us, and prevail in our favour, no further than we ourselves approach him as the Mediator between God and man.

2. Again: Man can be reconciled to God only in one way, and that is by faith in Christ; when men believe in him the matter is at once adjusted between them and the Divine government. They are reconciled to God through Christ. Now, we have only to leave this matter in the hands of Christ, and he will set us free from the penalty due to sin.

3. Again: With respect to those who decline to accept of this Mediator, the matter is not only not adjusted, but greatly aggravated. If they will "not have this man to reign over them," they will never be reconciled to God, and their guilt and consequent punishment is greatly magnified, aggravated; and remember that all those resist this arrangement who do not most cordially embrace it by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. This leads me to say again, that you are not to understand by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ merely an intellectual assent to the truths which he taught--and to the fact that he sustains the office of Mediator. The devil knows this, and believes it, but he has not saving faith. You may have no more doubt of the historical fact that Christ died for the sins of mankind, than you have of any other historical facts, but this is not faith in him as a Saviour. You must embrace the method of salvation with all your heart. This is the way in which God purposes to save you, and when you have done this you can enter the door of mercy which Christ has opened for your reception.

Let it be understood then, what it is to be a Christian. It is not mere intellectual assent to the truth of the Gospel, or that you outwardly appear to be religious; but it is with the heart that you must believe unto righteousness. You must yield up your whole being to Christ, and rely not upon your own goodness as a ground of acceptance, but upon Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man, who has "magnified the law, and made it honourable." God requires us to approach him in Christ's name, or he cannot treat with us or make us any offer of pardon. Suppose that the inhabitants of London, or any other city, should rise up in rebellion against the Government. It might be quite impossible to make a general offer of pardon without endangering the safety of that Government. It would be very impolitic and unwise to do so. It would be the way to encourage other cities to rebel--taking refuge under the precedent which the Government had established. The way to make a Government strong is by asserting a principle and adhering to it, giving the people to understand the inviolability of the law, and that it is not to be broken with impunity, and that rebellion could not be connived at. Now, it may be safe sometimes for a Government to exercise pardon, but not unless the exercise of mercy will tend more than the infliction of the penalty to claim reverence for the law and Government. Rebels against the law and government of God could never have been forgiven without an atonement had been made; because God's law is inviolable, and therefore cannot be transgressed without the penalty being inflicted somewhere; and God, by accepting the sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin, at once showed his love for man and testified to the goodness of his law. Christ magnified the broken law, and rendered to it a governmental equivalent. But before a rebel can treat with God for mercy, he must lay down his weapons of rebellion; he cannot make terms with God with arms in his hands; he must repent before he can hope for mercy. Every human Government demands this, and so does the government of God; no Government can stand on any other principle. Those entirely misunderstand this subject who think and say that it is an easy thing for God to show mercy. It cost him more than the creation of the world. But the work is done--Christ has thrown the doors of mercy wide open: "Behold," he says, "I have set before you an open door." It was love to mankind which caused him to make such sacrifices for their salvation. The atonement was not demanded in a malignant spirit, but as a necessary condition of salvation. It was God himself who proposed the plan. He saw no eye to pity and no arm to save; and his own eye pitied, and his own arm brought salvation. His heart yearned over them. Over them, did I say? Over *you* and

over *me*. "He loved me," says the apostle, "and gave himself for me." Can you, my dear hearers, apply this language to yourselves? Have you committed yourselves to him? Is Christ your Mediator in this great controversy? Now, I come to-night as the servant of Christ, to ask you whether you will receive this Mediator-whether you will repent and renounce your sin, and commit yourself to the hands of Christ as the great Mediator between God and man? Do you reply that you do not want a Mediator? The minds of many men are so dark that they are foolish and absurd enough to think that they can approach God and get salvation from him without a Mediator. The following fact was communicated to me some time ago: the sister of a minister's wife who had imbibed Unitarian principles always used to resist the idea of a necessity of a Mediator. She would say, If God is disposed to be merciful, he can exercise mercy without reference to the death of his Son. I want no Mediator; I am not conscious of wanting one. Is not God my Father--my heavenly Father; cannot I pray to him except through a Mediator? What do I want of a Mediator between me and my Father? I love my Father, and I love to pray to my Father; I love communion with my Father. I know no necessity for a Mediator." In this way she used to talk, with that kind of sentimentalism that is common to Unitarians. A great revival took place in the congregation, and one evening this lady returned home and went direct to her chamber. The family, who were below, presently heard her shriek out in great agony, and at the top of her voice: they rushed to her room and saw her standing there in a great fright, with her arms extended, and her eyes startling from their sockets: with much alarm they cried out, "What is the matter? what is the matter?" "Oh!" said she, "God is looking right at me, and there is no Mediator--there, can't you see, right opposite there?" and she shrieked out again in fearful agony, "God is looking right at me, and there is no Mediator." In this state of mind she continued for some time, but eventually Christ was revealed to her, and she was led to embrace the truth. She never realized before what it was to stand before the Judge of all the earth without a Mediator; but when she felt the eye of God blazing upon her, and searching into her heart, she felt then the necessity of "a Mediator between God and man." O sinner, let me tell you, that without a Mediator you are undone; but there is one provided, and he is now offered for you to embrace; it will not take you long, if you are disposed to do it; you can do it now-even now. If you accept him not into your hearts, his blood for you has been shed in vain. There is no middle course; you must be either the friends of Christ, or his enemies. God offers mercy now, but he has not promised that he will ever offer it again! Remember that! There is no angel in heaven, or minister upon earth, who is authorized to say that salvation will ever be offered to you again. Suppose that Christ himself should now come and take his stand in this pulpit with the book of life in his hand, and should say to you all, "*Whose name shall I write in this book? Whoso will accept of me as a Mediator*? Who will give me his heart?" Should we have voices responding on all sides, "I will! I will! I will! O Lord Jesus, take my unworthy name, take my heart; I renounce my sin, and gladly give all my being to thee." Would you reply thus to the personal invitation of the Saviour? Why not do it now? God invites you! Jesus invites you! the Bible invites you! the Spirit invites you! The Preacher invites you! Will to come to Jesus, and come now? Why not? Are you not prepared? What preparation do you want? Cannot you get your own consent? This is the difficulty--the great and the only difficulty! If you can get your own consent, there is no being in the universe that can stand in the way of your salvation. But may you not obtain your own consent if you so will it? What say you? Will you consent? Will you allow Christ to have your name? Will you give him your heart? This is a momentous question, will you decide to-night? We are going to pray. Now, let those who are willing to accept Christ as their Mediator, bend their hearts at a throne of grace; and, Christians, let us seek to get the arms of our prayer round every impenitent sinner in this house, and bring them to Jesus. Let us pray.

PROVING GOD

A Sermon

In behalf of the Christian Instruction society,

Delivered on Wednesday Evening, June 19, 1850,

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, UNITED STATES,

At the taernacle, moorefields.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."--Malachi iii. 10.

In speaking from these words, I propose, first, to notice the fact that it is our duty to prove God; secondly, how we may do this; thirdly, what is implied in the injunction, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house;" fourthly what is implied in obeying the spirit of this injunction; fifth, the meaning of the language, see "if I will not open the windows of heaven."

I. It is our duty to prove God.

God establishes and manifests his own truth, to make man know and see that he is the God of truth, by coming out and demonstrating it by his conduct. He has limited his operations; they are controlled by certain laws both of nature and of grace. He has wisely limited himself to a certain order and way of doing things. Now, let me say, in the next place, that he likes to rebuke infidelity. His heart is greatly set upon the results which he has promised--those things which must result from his coming forth and demonstrating his truth. He holds us responsible for placing ourselves in such a position as to come within the conditions, the fulfillment of which are indispensable to his coming forth, in the established and revealed order of things, to establish his truth before the world.

II. How are we to prove God?

That is, how are we to put God's truthfulness to the test, so as to show to ourselves, and to demonstrate to everybody else, that his promises are true? 1. If we would prove his truthfulness, we must fulfil certain conditions upon which these promises are to be fulfilled. These conditions are expressly revealed, or implied, in his universal rules in the Bible. It would not manifest his truthfulness to fulfil these promises when the stipulated conditions are not complied with. It would then rather prove him untrue. For example, if he has proposed certain conditions, and informed us that unless these conditions have been complied with, he will not fulfil the promises, why, if he should, under such circumstances, dispensing with the conditions, fulfil the promise without them, instead of proving his truthfulness, he would prove that he was a liar. For example, he has said that he will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. He will be inquired of in faith, and nothing shall be received without faith. There are multitudes of such declarations in the Bible, which affirm that he will do certain things under certain conditions, and that he will not do without these conditions. If, therefore, he would prove himself to be true, he must not fulfil these things until we have fulfilled the conditions, otherwise he would prove his own Word to be false. 2. This leads me to say again, that in the world, to prove himself true, he is obliged to deny us unless we ask in faith. Again: he has told us, that certain conditions, such as the use of certain means, are conditions upon which he will do certain things. For example, suppose he has commanded us to repent, and promises to forgive us if we do repent, suppose he should for once forgive us without repentance? He who prays for forgiveness without repentance is tempting God--asking him to do that which he has expressly declared he will not do. When, therefore, people ask God to break through any revealed condition upon which he has promised to do or not to do certain things--observe, in order to prove his truthfulness, he must refuse to do these things, because the conditions are not fulfilled. Before I was converted, I had this thought in mind, I wondered God did not answer prayer (for I was in the habit of going to prayer meetings as often as I could, even before I was converted--I have no doubt God led me to do so). I heard so much prayer, that I wondered why it remained unanswered--I wondered whether God's promises were untrue, or whether the people were not Christians. It did not occur to me for some time, that by the very truth of these promises, God was pledged not to answer them, unless they were offered upon certain conditions, and that the very fact of their not being answered, proved that they were not offered upon the prescribed conditions; and that God was not therefore untrue, because the Bible taught that it would be so under such circumstances. How remarkable it is that the very things which stumble impenitent men, and often, in fact, professors themselves--when seen from a right point of view, these things carry a demonstration on the very face of them. For instance, under certain circumstances God has promised to withdraw his blessing: under certain other circumstances, he promises to give it. Now, suppose we see him withhold it, when we have not complied with the prescribed conditions. Suppose, again, that we fulfil the conditions and then see that he

fulfil the promise. For I do not mean that it is our duty to prove God by disobeying him, so that we may see him fulfil his promise by withholding, for that reason; but the contrary, by fulfilling the conditions upon which he will surely give us the blessing. But when, as a matter of fact, we fail in our obedience-- in the fulfillment of what he requires--when we fail to do this, he withholds the blessings; comply with the conditions, and then see whether he will not fulfil his promise.

But let me say again, we are to prove him in this sense; *we are to use the appointed and revealed means.* We should do this even in obtaining our daily bread. Who believes that if he depends on God, in the use of the appointed means, for procuring his daily bread, that he will not get it? If we use the appointed means, in an appropriate manner, then we prove God, and see whether he will really fulfil his promises. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Now, suppose a person neither "trusted in the Lord," nor "did good," in the sense here meant, who can wonder that he does not "dwell in the land?" Especially does this apply to spiritual things--the greatest and most important blessings. But let me say again, by the appointed means I mean things to be done which God requires. Men must preach the truth, but they must preach it in a proper manner, in season and out of season, and adapt it to the understanding of the hearers. They must *live* it, as well as preach it--not contradict it with their lives, while with their lips they declare it. This applies not only to preachers, but to all classes of persons. Means are to be used, in faith, and perseveringly, they must do the thing that God told them to do; but mark the way--see that you do things according so the spirit and meaning of his Word. Now, certainly, unless people do this--unless they really comply with the spirit as well as the letter of his injunction--how can they except to obtain the blessing?

But let me says again, *we must depend upon God.* For example; the Bible plainly presents the subject in this way:--everything is to be done with the same heartiness, and perseverance, and with the same spirit that we would do it if we were expecting to accomplish it ourselves, without God having anything to do with it. The same language is used in precept and requirement throughout the Bible, as is used in this text. God comes out just as human lawgivers, commanding men to do certain things, in a certain manner, and with a certain spirit. Now, observe; he everywhere insists upon their doing them; they must, therefore, go about the work as if they were expecting to accomplish it, by the efforts they were making, by their own strength; yet, unless we do it in faith--throwing ourselves upon God--we shall not succeed. These two truths stand out together all through the Bible. Just as the farmer goes and sows the seed, as if God had nothing to do with it, and understands that, without the blessing of God, he cannot raise anything. We must be in this state of mind--willing to throw it upon his own blessing--knowing assuredly that unless he succeeds our efforts, no good will result. In this respect the Bible abundantly places things temporal and things spiritual precisely upon the same footing. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman but in vain." Now, the watchman goes about the city, as if God had nothing to do with it. The watchman would tempt God, if he laid down to sleep, and left it *literally* to God; he, therefore, is to keep the city as thoroughly, honestly, and earnestly, as if God paid no attention to it; and yet to know that unless God watched too, all that he does is in vain. Everything in respect to life, health, and property--everything worldly and spiritual--is placed by God on the same footing, declaring that without his blessing we can do nothing; yet telling us to do the thing precisely as if we could do it ourselves. Now, persons generally do not understand this; they tempt God in these things, for they apply this interposition only to temporal things, and instead of complying with the conditions upon which God offers to bless them, they are laying a stumbling block before their own feet.

But let me say again (I wish I had time here to take up the parallel, to show what the Bible really does teach--to show that the obstacle with regard to God's sovereignty is a stumbling block which men create for themselves; and that they might just as well lay the same stumbling block, and pursue the same course, with reference to things of the world,) in order to prove God, *we must abstain from whatever tends to hinder and prevent success.* Everybody knows this is true in respect to temporal things--they know that if they take poison they may expect sickness; with regard to temporal matters, they understand very well, that if they throw obstacles in their own way they may blame themselves for want of success: yet, in spiritual things, it is strange, multitudes throw obstacles in their own way; and yet how do they account for the want of success? They are bound to account for it just as the slothful man in business--they ought to blame themselves just as the man who makes careless calculations in temporal matters; the fact is, that when persons do not abstain from those things which tend to hinder their success, the blame is their own; and if they do not want to tempt God they must ascribe it to themselves just as much as if they had failed in any earthly scheme by using means to prevent their own efforts. Suppose parents seek for the conversion of their children, and yet place them in such

situations in life as almost invariably to ruin them. I knew a gentleman in the city of New York, who had a son going down to destruction. He had prayed much for him himself, and entreated me to pray for him; for he was getting into such bad company and such dissolute habits that he was afraid he would be ruined. I inquired where the young man was engaged, and was told he was in ____ 's store. In _____ 's store! Now, I knew the character of that store well; the young man was employed in selling liquor in small quantities! I accordingly gave the father distinctly to understand, that unless he removed his son from such temptations, I could not think of praying for him under such circumstances. "Get him out of temptation's way, as much as you can," said I, "and then I will pray for him, but while he is in such a hotbed of temptation I will not tempt God by praying for him." Now, how many of you are doing this? How many of you are thus sleeping over the conversion of your children, and will probably go on to do so until they are plunged into the depths of hell? How many of you are complaining that your children are not converted, while you yourselves are placing stumblingblocks in their way? What does this mean?

I have often questioned persons--wives, for instance, who have wanted their husbands converted. They say their husbands ridicule their religion, and so forth. "Well, sister," I said to one of these, "how do you live before your husband--do you manifest a temper calculated to make him see the true character of religion? What are you doing? Do you, in your life, give evidences of the truth and value of religion as you hold it before his eyes? Or, do you contradict it every day? Are you a living epistle--a living illustration of religion before his eyes? Or, are you a living and perpetual denial and contradiction of it?" Now, in multitudes of cases I have found the obstacle to be in the wife; she has been more in the way of the conversion of her husband, perhaps, than the devil himself; for, were she out of the way, or living as she ought, the devil would not find it so easy to persuade the husband that there was no truth in religion. You cannot seeing that these very persons are often themselves the means of preventing the object they seek after. I have often had occasion to tell fathers and mothers that they themselves were the obstacles--the spirit they manifest, their manner of life, their selfish and worldly motives of action--while they continue as they are, they need never expect the conversion of their children. They are living denials of the Gospel before them. No! they take the strongest means to prevent their salvation! I have often thought what wonders we see in society; look where we will, how many persons seem determined to prove that Christ lied when he told them the solemn truth, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon!" They profess to serve God; yet, on the face of their lives they serve Mammon. Again: Christ has informed us that it is next to impossible that a rich man should enter the kingdom of God; but many seem to read it thus--" How *surely* shall a rich man enter the kingdom of God," as if salvation depended on their being rich." Christ represents the salvation of rich persons as next to impossible; and were it not for the wonderful power of God, it would be impossible. He compares it to a camel passing through the eye of a needle, which is certainly marvelously difficult. Persons who are thus labouring and toiling for riches for their heirs, seem as if they were labouring to send their children to hell, or to prove the Bible untrue--to prove that there was no difficulty in the way of their being rich and saved too. These are but illustrations; had I time I could go into ample details of individual instances, in which things are done which stand right in the way; but what I have said will abundantly suffice to show that the difficulty is not with God--that he is doing just as he promised, under such circumstances, to do; and the result will be just what he says it will--they will lie down in sorrow.

I once knew a father who wished to influence his four sons to give up the use of tobacco. He told me that he had always warned them, spoken to them seriously, again and again on the subject, but it did not seem to do them any good; his expostulations were all in vain. When speaking to them on one occasion, one of them said, "Father, you have always used it yourself! Example is said to be more forcible than precept." Now, what do you suppose the father said? Why, nothing, of course; he stood terribly rebuked. The same thing, in principle, I have seen a multitude of cases, where the persons were actually inculcating by their example what they blamed in others, and thus placing a formidable obstacle in the way of conversion of their friends and families, and who were nevertheless, still expecting that they would be converted.

But I remark again, *We must not stickle at little things*. For example, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." It is not promised that we shall be saved with it on. We cannot say, "God must save us with our right hand." The idea is this, that the most useful thing, --things which are important to you--if, after all, they become to you such a stumblingblock that you cannot stand, put them away. The right hand is certainly most useful; but even if it were "the right eye," we are told "to pluck it out." What, then, is the principle involved here? We are never to expect God to grant us blessings promised on condition of any sacrifice or self-denial, if we neglect the conditions imposed upon us. "If thy hand or thy foot

offend thee, *cut them off and cast them* from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt and maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." Now, what does this teach? Why, "if even your right hand offend you, cut it off, or I shall let you go to hell; for you need not think that if you refuse to make the self-denial I shall save you notwithstanding." While you hesitate, and will not walk up to the mark, and undertake this self denial, which God makes the sole condition of blessing you--while you will not do this, you labour in vain; he will not bless you, he will not prosper you. Now, this may be applied to a thousand things; the fact is, that if a Christian, or any person, would have God's blessing, he must absolutely stickle at no act of self-denial required as a condition--he must strenuously avoid anything prohibited, or aught that would stand in the way of his obtaining the thing promised; and if we do not regard these conditions, the fault is our own if we do not obtain the blessing. But I remark again, Another condition indispensable to proving God, is, that we *really enter into God's motives*, and do what we do for the motives from which God acts. We must be benevolent, not selfish. If, for example, we pray for sinners, we must regard sinners as he does; and desire their conversions for the same reason that he desires it. If we seek blessings for ourselves, we must ask them for the same reason for which he would be able to grant them. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss," that is, your motive is not right--you do not sympathise with God's motives--you do not ask the blessing, for a reason for which it would be honourable for God to grant it.

But this leads me to pass from this part of the subject and to proceed to inquire.

III. What is implied in the injunction of the text. "Bring ye," &c. The prophet asks in the ninth verse, "Will men rob God?" What is the spirit of all this? The Jews had neglected their duty--they had been selfish--they had refused to bring unto God the offerings as he required them to do, --they had gone astray, turning away from sympathizing with him--they had gone in their own ways, and had not brought the offerings to God's house, and paid their tithes--in short they had turned away from his commandments; this is what they had done. Now, what did he require of them? That they should return to him, and he would return to them. Now, a spiritually minded Jew would have understood these requirements to mean not merely the outward bringing of certain tithes and offerings; but, a returning of their hearts to God in the true spirit of obedience, and then they would prove him, and see if he would not be as good as his word, and give them the blessings they sought.

The true spirit of obedience begins here--*make first an offering of yourself to God.* Whatever else you offer, keeping back yourself, is an abomination. Yourself is the first great offering; offer yourself a living sacrifice; by a perpetual offering, offer yourself up to God. What is true devotion? I have often thought that many persons entirely mistake the Gospel idea of devotion, seeking to be, and believing themselves to be, devout, without being or pretending to be, pious. They work themselves up into an excited frame of mind, till they have produced certain feelings, and this they deem devotion. To be devoted to a thing--what is it? What is it for a man to be devoted to his business? To be diligent, to have his heart in the undertaking, and to give all his energies to the work--this is devotion to business. What is a man's devotion to his wife, a wife's to her husband, a mother's to her children? Now, what would you think of a mother who sat down and neglected her children--who sat down and worked herself up into a state of devotion to her offspring, and allowed them meanwhile, to go without their dinner? What would you think of a business man who let his business go to ruin while he was engaged in these devotional feelings? What would you think of the farmer who indulges in these devotional frames of mind, and neither sympathizing his ground, sowed his seed, nor took care of his hedges? Now, I have known persons so infinitely mistaken on this whole question, that they have tried to be devotional without possessing a particle of piety. To be devoted, is to give the mind up by a voluntary act, and to expend all your energies on any particular thing. To be devoted to God, is to give ourselves up to him, to be devoted to his glory, to give up body and mind and all our energies to the great work to which he calls us. Remember, the first offering is to be yourself; for this is an offering which many have withheld. They have given tithes and all other offerings, but have withheld the offering themselves.

How many individuals have I known whose *characters*, for instance, *were not on the altar of God!* They would not do anything which would damage them in the eyes of the world. They are unwilling to place themselves in the gap, let men say what they will. They do not come nobly forth, and say, "Lord, here is my character; it is no use to me if it can be of no service to thee. If thou tellest me to do anything for which men will despise me, thou knowest, O my God, I will do it, and leave my character to take care of itself, or leave it to thee." This is the spirit! If God should tell them to do anything which would bring the reproach of mankind upon them, they would do it; if this be not so, it shows the character is not given up to God. Suppose a minister would not preach anything which he knew was so unpopular that it would

bring reproach upon him. I have seen sins--I have known individuals who would, if they were about to rebuke any sin which they knew was rife in the community, and to which they knew a great many influential men were addicted--they would either bear silent testimony against them, or give notice that they were going to preach about it, and then, such persons as felt condemned, of course would stay away. Now, who does not see, that where individuals, for fear they should lose their character with men refuse to come out and rebuke sin, they can never expect to get rid of it. Suppose a minister for example, is afraid to rebuke the sin of intemperance; suppose in America we should not expose the sin of slavery--should we ever get rid of it? Never. God commands us to come out and rebuke sin. Suppose a minister has seen things which call for remark, but upon which "the public mind is sensitive," and which he is consequently afraid to rebuke, how could a man, who thus withholds his testimony, ever expect to get rid of that iniquity? Such evils are always likely to exist until their opponents lay their character, on the altar, and do what God tells them to do, irrespective of the opinions of men--until they hunt it out, expose, and rebuke it. Do they expect God will get rid of it, without their using the revealed and appointed means? He has commanded them everywhere to expose sin, both public and private. Now, suppose there is any sin of so delicate a nature, that the ministers and the Church bear no public and pointed testimony against it, can they expect ever to get of it? Never. They must march up, and lay their character on the altar, and Say to God, "If thou requirest me, O Lord, to do that for which all men will curse me, I will do it. If thou requirest me, O Lord, to do that for which men will crucify me, I will do it. If thou sayest, 'Speak; reprove iniquity, ' I will do so, if I die for it." Now, unless the Church do this--the individual membership, as well as the pulpit--how can they expect to reform the world? The church is the society which God has appointed to reform the world--to take the lead in every reform, and by precept and example to show unto men what they should be. Now, if the Church is afraid to oppose iniquity, can it be wondered that evils great and manifold, roll their desolation over generation after generation? Is it not true that the want of this testimony, both by precept and example, on the part of the church, accounts for the fact that the world is not converted? The Church tempts God by pretending to find a reason for all this in the sovereignty of God. Why, they might as well neglect every temporal affair, and become paupers, and then trace that to the sovereignty of God. God allows evil to exist, and will do so until generation after generation shall have gone to hell, because the appointed means are neglected. There cannot be too much stress laid upon these truths. It is time the Church should understand that unless they devote themselves to the reformation of the world--first reform--and giving themselves up to every good word and work--things will go on as they have done; but upon whose skirts will the blood be? Jehovah has shaken his skirts, and has said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me--prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

This leads me to say, in the next place, --but I cannot enlarge here, because my time is so nearly exhausted, and I must, therefore, pass rapidly to glance to the last head of the discourse--viz.,

V. To inquire the meaning of the passage. See "If I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." This language was designed to convey a revealed principle to us which is worthy of all acceptation. In many of the promises, God has revealed the great and fundamental principles of his government. What is true of God under one state of circumstances, is always, under similar circumstances, true of him. What he will do under one state of circumstances, may always be expected of him under similar circumstances. The principle here revealed, is often revealed, expressly or impliedly. It is this--that where his requirements, and the conditions of which he is pledged, are fulfilled, he invariably comes out and fulfil his promises. "Prove me," &c. Now, this is equivalent to saying, "If you prove me, I will surely pour out," &c.

A few remarks must close what I have to say. I have already intimated that the common talk in reference to God's sovereignty, as applied to the existing evils in the world, and the want of reformation therein--the manner in which this is talked of, if tempting God as manifestly as if the same course were applied to temporal things. God's purposes do not extend more absolutely to spiritual than temporal things; Divine purposes, foreknowledge, agency, and so forth, extend equally to both. Even the grass will not grow without his blessing. On the subject of religion people are for ever applying this talk about Divine sovereignty, election, and such things, as if God had foreordained certain things in respect to religion in such a manner as to interfere with the freedom of man, and set aside his voluntary action in a manner totally different from his conduct in temporal matters. Now, this is quite a mistake; the Bible denies it. God does not ordain anything, in any such sense; there is not one word in the entire Bible which really favours

the idea that any election of God's at all interferes with the liberty and free agency of the creature. I have as strong and as high views of God's sovereignty as any man. I know this, as far as the Divine mind is concerned, there is nothing new or old to him; the judgment day is as present to God as it ever will be. If a man should ask me, "Do you believe in the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God?" I would reply, "Yes." "Do you believe God knows the very hour I shall die?" "Yes." "Can I alter God's purpose so as to change his foreknowledge?" "Certainly not." "Then I might just as well not take any food, or swallow two ounces of arsenic, as I cannot die before my time." They never will die before their time comes; nor will they go one moment over it. What, then, has this to do with their own agency? Who does not know that, notwithstanding God has appointed bounds to their habitation, yet all the circumstances must concur to keep them alive, or they would die before their time They will not die before their time, because they will not reason in this way; but they will use the means, and do just as common sense would have them to do--just as God foresaw that they would do. They will not leap off a precipice, or cast themselves from London Bridge; or anything else of the kind, and then say, "I shall not die before my time!" Oh! that men would use their sense in religion, as well as in other matters! Men know the human mind is left free, responsible, active; and that, therefore, men are to go on, taking care of their property, their health, and their lives, labouring for the results they wish to bring about. But on religious subjects men talk as if they were insane. "If God knows how it will be, what's the use of my doing anything?" Do! Why, act just as you are acting in everything else, or you will go to hell, that's what you will do: just as a man will die who does not take care of his health; and no sovereignty of God in the universe will prevent a man from going to hell who does not repent.

Now, let me ask, What are you doing to secure the salvation of your souls? Are you using any of the prescribed means? How are you living before your families? Are you doing those things which ought to be done, and must be done, to promote religion around you? Do you live, act, and talk--using the means, and in the manner you ought? If not, how do you expect the conversion of the people? Are you endeavoring to remove the evils you see around you? Do you mean to do this? Or are you satisfying yourselves with a merely negative testimony? I have known some ministers who would not preach upon slavery except with previous notice, so that those who held erroneous views might remain away; and others who only preach on it once ayear, or only once in their life. Now, suppose all the ministers in the United States should simply once come out and preach against slavery, and think that then they had virtually discharged their duty so far, but to say that as to laying themselves on the altar to put it away, why, they are not going to do any such thing. Iniquity must be rebuked through the press, in the pulpit, in the railway carriages, and wherever it may be supported; and unless men will do this, the evils will not be removed.

I ask you, before God, have the Christian people of London taken hold for the removal of the iniquity of this city? Have they borne steady, energetic, yet benevolent testimony against all these evils in every way? Or have they kept silent, and cowered down before the world? Rely upon it, beloved, that if you seek the conversion of this great city, every minister must lay his character upon the altar--every Christian must put his shoulder to the work, and bid this great iniquity depart in the name of the Lord.

What are you really doing, as individuals? Are there *ministers* here? Brethren what are *you* doing? Are you satisfying yourselves with an occasional testimony against such an such an evil without continually pursuing it? If you mean to put them away, you must pursue these evils, or they will pursue you. You must hunt them out, or they will hunt the piety out of you. The natural tendency of things is to get worse, instead of better.

And what are you *private members* doing in this great work? Are you on the altar? Are you personally talking, labouring, and setting a good example--laying your all upon the altar? If you are doing this, we shall soon hear of it; for Jehovah has pledged himself before the universe, that if you do your duty--lay your character, time, talents, property, your all, upon the altar--he will pour out his blessings in such manner that there shall not be room enough, even in this great city, to contain them. Yes! the righteousness of London shall be like the waves of the sea. Do you believe this? He tells you to prove him; will you do it?

TOTAL ABSTINENCE A CHRISTIAN DUTY.

A Lecture

Delivered on Thursday Evening, June 27, 1850

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, UNITED STATES,

At the Surry Chapel (Rev. j. Sherman's)

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."-Romans xiv.21.

This is equivalent to saying it is expedient. To say that a certain course, in this sense, "is good," is the same as saying it is best--it is for the general good--it is expedient, and therefore right, that we should neither "eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby our brethren stumble, are offended, or are made weak."

In the early ages of Christianity, there were several topics much agitated in the Church, some of which had been referred to Paul for decision. One of the questions from the Church of Rome was, whether it was lawful to eat flesh, inasmuch as it was customary, after animals presented for sacrifice to the idols had been before them for a certain time, to expose them for sale in the public shambles. Many, therefore, supposed that in purchasing meat they might thus, indirectly, favor idolatry, by purchasing some of that which had been offered to the idols. Many, for this reason, abstained from the use of meat altogether, lest, as I have said, they should seem to patronize idolatry. In the eighth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, you will find further reference to this subject; the Apostle concludes by saying, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." He told them, in reply to their inquiries, that it was lawful to eat meat under ordinary circumstances; yet, if so doing was an occasion of stumbling to any weak brother, and did more mischief than would counter-balance the good to be derived from it, he would deny himself for that reason. He said, if his eating flesh caused his weak brother to offend, he would "eat no flesh while the world standeth." It was not, in itself, unlawful to eat flesh; yet, he taught, it was necessary to take care lest the eating of it should stumble the brethren.

Having been requested to preach on the subject of Temperance, I will begin:--I. By *defining my position*; I shall then, II. Endeavor to*establish that position*; III. *Answer objections to it*; and IV. Examine *the position of those who make the objections.*

The question may be viewed in a great many aspects; it may be argued in a vast variety of ways. It may be discussed, for example, as a scientific question; and, in America, it has been extensively regarded in this light. I do not intend to take up this point to-night; I shall examine simply the religious bearings of the question. I am well aware that the scientific view is extremely important; it is easy enough, however, to proceed to the discussion of it as a religious question, without entering very fully into the scientific department of it. My position, then, is not that the use of intoxicating drinks in any quantity, and under all circumstances, is necessarily sinful; nor do I take the ground that any use of it is wrong, independently of the circumstances under which it is used, and the reasons which have prompted such use. I do not take the ground that any use of it is wrong, irrespective of the circumstances under which, and the reasons for which it is used; for I can conceive of circumstances under which it may be supposed to be the duty of an individual to drink--even in quantities sufficiently copious to produce intoxication--in order to meet some constitutional emergency. Physicians maintain this ground, and patients may think it necessary; under such circumstances, therefore, it is taken innocently; the thing is right or wrong according to the reasons and circumstances which demand its use. Strictly speaking, nothing is right *in itself*, but that love which the law of God commands; nothing is wrong, *in itself*, but the opposite state of mind. But it is not my purpose to discuss this question, but only to say that when we would inquire into the lawfulness of any *particular act*, such as the use of alcohol, we must understand the circumstances under which, and the reasons for which it is used, in order to understand whether it is right or wrong in an individual case. Again, the question is not whether it may or may not be used as a medicine when recommended by a competent physician. I do not deny that it may be used as a medicine under certain circumstances; nor do I say that it is wrong to use wine at the table of the Lord. The Temperance Question has suffered much from the controversy on this point; for if Christ has ordered the use of wine on that occasion, and as matters are left so that it cannot be positively ascertained whether his wine was alcoholic or not, the question need not be discussed; inasmuch as the quantity used at such times is so very small. Again, Paul enjoined Timothy to "Drink no longer water but take a *little* wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities." It was lawful, therefore, for him to take a *little*. The Apostle did not require him to take much; nor is it necessary or usual to take much at the Communion Table, so that this part of the question does not strictly belong to the Temperance Reformation. Again, the question is not whether or not it is necessary in any case, or whether it is or is not an indispensable

article of diet in any case; I would take the negative view, but, at present, I cannot make this issue, as it would carry me too far from my main design; nor do I mean just now to affirm, even, that it is in no case useful to persons in robust health, as is commonly supposed. Neither, since I cannot now enter into the scientific bearings of the question, do I mean to determine whether its use is or is not necessary or beneficial to persons in feeble health. I must make the question one of self-denial for the sake of others. I should like to discuss the question of their real necessity or utility under any circumstances; but I must content myself on this occasion with the assumption that, under some circumstances the moderate use of these drinks is useful. I will take up the matter, then, in this way, Is it your duty to forego the use of these drinks as an act of self-denial for the sake of others? I love to discuss the question in this light; because, if these drinks are useful, it affords the Church an opportunity of manifesting her love for the Savior by the sacrifice.

I. I shall state my proposition, which is simply this:--the manufacture, sale, and use of intoxicating drinks, as a beverage, or as an article of luxury or of diet--or to provide them, as such, for others--is neither benevolent, nor expedient, and is, therefore, WRONG.

In other words, that "Total abstinence from the manufacture, sale, and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, or as an article of luxury or of diet, and from offering or providing them for others, as such, under the present circumstances of the Church, *is expedient, and therefore a duty."*

Such being my position, I shall now proceed--

II. To defend this proposition.

In doing this, I shall

(1.) begin by admitting, that *the abuse of a good thing is not always a sufficient reason for totally abstaining from its use*. Food, clothing, the doctrine of justification by faith, many of the best things are abused; it is, therefore, not a universal rule, that the abuse of a good thing is a sufficient reason for totally abstaining from its use. But I shall have occasion to advert to this admission again; because while I admit that it is not a universal rule, yet I maintain it is a good rule, and binding on men, *under certain circumstances*--that it is obligatory upon men, under certain circumstances, to abstain from a thing that may be useful, or that is, in fact, useful--on the ground of its great abuse. Although I admit the rule is not universal, I shall endeavor to show, that the abuse of this article is a good reason that it should be abandoned as an article of luxury or diet.

But this leads me to remark--

(2.) *Benevolence is a universal duty.* All men, under all circumstances, should love God supremely, and their neighbor as themselves; this is a rule of universal obligation. There is no possible exception. But what is benevolence? Benevolence is good-will. It implies a willing of every good, according to its known relative value. There must be no particular stress laid on a certain good, because it is your own, irrespective of its relative value. When your neighbor's good is of greater value than your own, it must have the preference. If, by denying yourself a small good, you can procure for him a greater good, it is your duty to do it. Christ acted upon this principle; in the atonement, the great principle upon which everything turns is this--that when, by sacrificing to self a less good, or taking upon self a less evil than would befall others, or sacrificing a less good than we can obtain for others, the law which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves plainly points out the path of duty; it is very easy to see that this principle must be the one upon which Christ acted, and upon which the whole plan of salvation turned. He designed, by taking upon himself certain evils, to secure to the universe a good which was greater than the evils which he suffered. It was, therefore, in strict accordance with true benevolence that he acted, in coming forward to make atonement; for the sacrifice then made was an evil of less magnitude, than would have been the consequences of an opposite course. Because of his nature and relations he could magnify the law, and make it honorable, saving multitudes beyond number from eternal sufferings, although they were inconceivably great to a creature. His benevolence led him to make personal sacrifice for the sake of a great good. The apostles also proceeded upon this principle in carrying out the course their Lord and Master had thus begun.

The following facts are admitted by all:

(1.) that *intemperance prevails* in this land *to an alarming extent*, far more than people are generally aware of. I have been surprised, since I have been here, to learn how ignorant the masses of the people are with reference to the statistics of the extent to which intemperance prevails in this country; every person, however, knows and admits that it prevails to an alarming extent.

(2.) The second fact is, *that intemperance is one of the greatest evils which infests society*, whether it be regarded physically, morally, or socially. Regarding it in its relations to the health of man, it cannot be denied that it is one of the greatest physical evils, producing more sickness and death than any other evil. Considered morally, it does more to demoralize society,

by drawing thousands into all forms of vice, corrupting the Church, and causing it to pour forth some forty or fifty thousand yearly from its bosom. Considered socially, it poisons all the fountains of social intercourse. I could enlarge here as well as upon its political aspects; if I had time I might swell this statement, and adduce such a mass of statistics and facts, which have been gathered and published, both in this country and America, that no man could shrink from admitting that, as an evil in society, viewed in all its bearings, it has no parallel in the history of this nation, or in that of any other nation anywhere. Another fact,

(3.) which cannot be denied, is, that *the good which results* to the Church and the world *from its use* (admitting, for the sake of argument, as I said before, that good *does* result), yet it cannot be denied that any such good *is indefinitely less than the evil* which results. Who doubts this? Admitting that some good does result, who does not know that the evil resulting from its use, is indefinitely greater than the good.

(4.) The Christian Church is admitted to be a society whose *business it is to reform* the world. Its sole business in the world is to enlighten and save it,--all that it does in the world is to be done in subserviency to this. Its grand object--the end for which it lives (or ought to live), and moves, and has its being, is to glorify God, by saving the world from every form of sin. Christ said, "Ye are the light of the world," "ye are the salt of the earth." But again, another fact

(5.) is this,--*the church is bound to reform the world*. Christ has required them to convert the world--not of course in their own strength, but in his--and he has promised to be with them in it; consequently, it is their duty to put away every form of iniquity from the world, and to make disciples of Christ of all the nations of the earth. Christ requires it; he has promised his aid; it is therefore their duty to reform the world. The reform, to which I, this evening, address myself, is indispensable to the success of the Church, in its great mission. It is so great an evil, that the Church can by no means be excused form bringing about its removal. Another fact

(6.) is*, that the Church is able to effect this reform*, if united, and if it uses aright its money, time, talents,--if it does this, it is able to enlighten the world, and settle this question for ever, by putting away this mighty evil. Now, if this reform is indispensable to the success of the Church--to secure the end for which she lives--it would follow, of course, if we may judge from the success which has attended efforts made where the Church has been united, that, wherever they will steadily, and in a right spirit, use the right means, persevere in enlightening the public mind, bringing the whole force of their precept and example to bear upon it, they may thoroughly rout this enemy of mankind, and banish it from the world. A multitude of cases which have occurred in America, will show, that even a few individuals, in a Christian community, may exert such an influence as to put certain evils away. But who doubts that if the British Churches were united in this matter, an influence could be brought to bear, which would rout this enemy, and bring about this reformation. Suppose every minister and member of the Christian Church in these realms should frown upon it, and men of all ranks in society, who are professed Christians, should undertake at once, and with all the force of their influence, both by example and precept, to oppose it, how long, think you, would intemperance fill this land with crime, woe, and mourning? No one can doubt, that, in the course of a few months, these vendors' shops would be locked up, and the Church purified. Who that took an opposite course, would then dare show his face in the streets, when rebuked from every pulpit, from every Christian man in every place? Why, the four winds would blow a rebuke in his face! It is easy to put it away, if the Church, whose duty it is to unite for this purpose, would do so. Now, if it can be done by the Church, and it is necessary to be done, and the evil of its remaining is vastly greater than the evil which would result from putting it away, then it is a simple demonstration, that it is the duty of every Christian to do what he can, by precept and example, and every other lawful means, to put this evil away.

But let me say again, it will not be doubted, I presume, by any who have ever examined the question, that*, the cessation of the manufacture, sale, and use* of intoxicating drink as a beverage or an article of luxury or diet, *is a condition of success* in this enterprise. While a minister uses it himself he cannot have much influence in staying this tide of desolation. This is generally known and acknowledged in this country; in America it has been shown up to a perfect demonstration. We have tried every ground a Christian could take on the question, and the conclusion we have come to is this, that we must have total abstinence or total failure; this was our final issue. Let any minister continue the use of it and try to reform his congregation. He will find it is a failure. Let any set of men try the moderate use, everybody will hold their views. No drunkard will claim the right to use it in any other degree than moderately--no man will assert that it is right to drink to intoxication--all take the ground of moderation. Moderation! What is it? Intoxication! What is it? Where is the line? Examine

this question; and you will find that if the Church is to do anything, it must wholly wash her hands. The Church must take this ground--that as a beverage, an article of luxury or diet, it will not indulge in it. The questions will not now be argued, whether it may or may not be used *as a medicine*; but, in accordance with the terms of my proposition, I shall endeavor to prove that the law which requires universal benevolence, requires us to aim at promoting our neighbor's good; and if our neighbor is stumbled or injured by what we are doing, even though it may be by his own consent, yet if, after all, the injury to him is vastly greater than the good to us, benevolence demands that we should, for his sake, deny ourselves. Especially is this true, where the difference is very great--where the evil to him is enormous--indefinitely greater than the good to us; and total abstinence on our part, is the only condition of saving him from the evil.

But again, *the spirit of the Gospel plainly requires this*. I have already said, it is easy to show that the whole plan of salvation turns upon this great principles of Christian benevolence, of one man denying himself of a good for the sake of obtaining a greater good to others--one individual taking to himself certain sufferings, and enduring certain evils, in order to avoid the infliction of greater, though deserved, evils on others. Now, the apostle acted upon the principle of the gospel when he said, that if eating flesh should cause his brother to stumble, he would eat no more flesh while the world stood. He could do without eating flesh--although useful, he could eat other things--although a good, it was not a necessary of life. It was not necessary in such a sense that he could not do without it; consequently, the great abuse of it was a good reason for his abstaining from using it altogether. The same, he said, was true with regard to wine, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, is offended, or is made weak." Now, by "anything," he did not mean to say he must necessarily forego those things which are indispensable to life or salvation; but those things which could be spared--which were not indispensable--we should abstain from the use of all such things rather than stumble our brethren. By refusing to do this, we walk uncharitably--contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

I remark, again, *the intelligence and conscience of the Christian world* demands that the Church should proceed to take up this question. It seems now to be called up by the providence of God, and most pressingly urged upon the Church. The public conscience is beginning to awake on this subject in this country, and, to a still greater extent, in America, because more has been said there than has been said here; but I have never been anywhere, since this subject has been so thoroughly discussed, where the consciences of all classes of men--infidels as well as Christians--did not demand at once that the *Church* should take action. The law of benevolence requires that, not only Christians, but all men, should take up this reform, and deny themselves, for the sake of the good which may result. The Church of God is manifestly under rebuke on this point. I might mention many instances in which the Spirit has been manifestly grieved by this holding back--cases in which ministers of the Gospel have not been successful where they did not preach with that unction and power which give the Gospel effect--where the Christians have dwindled away in number, while those who remained had decreased in spirituality. I could bring a great many evidences of this, in different denominations of Christians, wherever this subject is neglected, since it has come up in the providence of God. It is remarkable to see the extent to which this has been manifested in America, where the displeasure of the Almighty has been *visible* towards those who have withstood this reformation.

It does strike me, therefore, that as a matter of self-denial, and as a Christian duty, on the ground of expediency and charity, the question is perfectly plain; still, however, there are many objections, some of which I shall now proceed to answer.

Admitting then, for the sake of the argument, that intoxicating drink is a good; it must also be admitted that it is not indispensable, while it were easy to show that the evils resulting from its abuse are vastly greater than the good derivable from its use; and, therefore, the law of benevolence plainly demands abstinence, because, upon the whole, the use is an evil rather than a good.

III. I shall answer objections.

1. Some object, that *"Christ used alcoholic, or fermented wines*; and that, if benevolence required abstinence, he would have abstained." This needs to be proved before it is assumed as a certain truth. I do not know that he did; and I will not affirm that he did not. The sweet wines were called "wine," as well as the fermented. To establish the fact that Christ used alcoholic wines, it is said that he was accused of being a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber (Luke x.9), a friend of publicans and sinners, and that he, neither expressly or implicitly, denied that he did use wine; but from his non-denial that he did use wine, it no more follows that he did, than the fact that he did not deny that he was a glutton implied that he admitted it. But even if he had used wine, the circumstances under which he used it

not only justified, but might have demanded, its use, in his case. I have already said, that the use of wine is not wrong in itself; it is presumable, that, in the case of Timothy, some urgent reason existed for his abstaining from the use of water, and taking a little wine; but observe, in this case, it was enjoined as a medicine, and not as an article of luxury or diet; from which it may fairly be inferred, that Timothy was not in the*habit* of taking wine in *any* quantities; for it was but little which he was enjoined to take; while, if he had taken it in any quantity before, this injunction would have been unnecessary. It has been supposed, that, by the apostles, and their coadjutors, nothing was said upon the subject of temperance, and against the use of alcoholic drinks. It is manifest that Timothy did not use it, and that he actually needed the injunction of the apostle to induce him to do so, even as a medicine. Observe what the apostle says:--"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, or anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Is it likely, then, that after such language as this, the apostle himself used it, or recommended it to be used, as an article of luxury or diet, especially where the circumstances were such that its abuse was a great stumbling-block to the Church? No! It is not likely that he would thus contradict himself!

2. Others object that if temperance, in the sense here meant, is a specific branch of the great reformation to be carried out and perfected by the Christian Church, *Why did not the Apostolic Church do it*? They had very good reasons for not doing it. There were several other important questions as well as the use of wine, such as war and slavery, for instance, which were not raised as distinct subjects; and I know that this fact has been used by some persons, and even by ministers, in such a manner as to lead many persons into infidelity. They say the apostles could not have been inspired men, neither could Christ have been what he professed to be, or he and they would have used all their influence to suppress war and put an end to slavery and intemperance. Let us inquire, for a moment, whether it would have been expedient for them to have done otherwise than they did in this matter. The fact is, that they had a previous question to settle. It was by no means generally admitted that he was the Messiah; consequently, if he had attempted to have exercised authority on this point, had made such reforms a prominent object, he would thereby have diverted public attention from the first great question of his Messiahship. So it was with the apostles. The advent, Divine authority, and resurrection of Christ was the first question to be settled. It is easy to see that it was totally inexpedient to raise any excitement on other points till this was settled. It was necessary, first, to show that their revelation was Divine, that Christ was the Messiah, and that they were his inspired and duly commissioned servants. Suppose, either by precept or example, they had raised the questions before mentioned, they would have left their main position unsustained, and would have left undone the work they had been particularly commissioned to do. Their first great business was to establish the fact that what they set forth was a revelation from God, and not to take any particular branch of reform and raise a question upon that, thereby diverting public attention from their main question. If the question could once be settled that their message was a revelation from God, it would then be in place for the Church to take it up in its details, and apply its great principles to the annihilation of every form and degree of evil. It took Christ and his apostles their lifetime to settle the great question of the true Messiahship of Christ, the Divine authority of the apostles, and to establish beyond controversy the fact that what they delivered to the world was truly the mind and will of God. Now, they no doubt avoided (and wisely) making issue with many points and branches of reform, before the one great question was settled that they were commissioned by God to give to mankind a revelation of his will. They no doubt studiously avoided making such issues either by precept or example; hence it is not strange if they did use wine moderately, as it was the common drink of the country. I suppose they could not well have avoided this without having raised an excitement on the question. I judge this from the fact that the very practice has often provoked vehement discussion as I have sat at table. You cannot abstain without having more or less of this excitement. At some tables where I have refused to take wine, I have been obliged, in self-defence, to enter into a discussion of the question. No doubt this would have been the case with Christ and his apostles; and it might have been--I do not say it was--for this reason, they were unwilling to start a public fermentation on the subject at that time, and under those circumstances. Who does not see, as I have said, that the issue to be first made and settled, was whether or not their revelation was from God. If you look through the Bible, you will find principles which condemn war, slavery, and intemperance, and every other form of iniquity, is condemned by the Gospel of Christ. Let no one, therefore, reject the Bible on the pretense that it sanctions or connives at such evils as these. God has proceeded step by step in his various reforms, as mankind were able to bear them. There is no occasion of fault-finding either with the Bible, or with God's dealings on these questions. I should think that what I have now said on this subject will be quite enough to

satisfy men who were willing to be satisfied with regard to the examples of Christ and the apostles. Admitting they did use it moderately, the reasons for so doing, that I have name, are, I think, too manifest to leave any stumbling-block, on this score, in the way of any honest mind.

But let me say again--3. many take this *ground that they manufacture, vend, use, and offer it as indispensable to health*. Now, more than 1,000 medical men, and among them, many of the principal physicians, of Great Britain, have testified that it is wholly unnecessary, and may be done without, in perfect safety. In America, I may state, the fact is established in hundreds of thousands of cases. The deacon of the Church to which I first belonged, was an elderly man, and accustomed himself to take alcoholic drinks, in small quantities, before his meals, as his "appetite was poor," and as his "physician had recommended him to do so." Now, soon after my conversion the temperance question came up in the United States generally, and particularly in that neighborhood. As the Church began to examine the matter, they found the influence of this deacon greatly in their way. Many of the members were ready to go through with it, for the sake of the public good; but Deacon Clearly, being an elderly man, did not take up reforms so readily. Finally, some of the brethren ventured to expostulate with him. But he said he was "sure he could not do without it." He was "sure he should die, if he wholly abstained;" but he "would use it moderately, as a medicine." At length, however, he said his life was of no great importance; it was of less importance that he should live, than that he should stand in the way of the reform. He thought the devil was trying to take his life, and he would rather, therefore, give it up, than be a stumbling-block. "You may have my name," said he, "and whatever influence I possess." Now, mark; in a couple of years, his strength was renewed, and he became quite a different man; and, on being asked what he thought of giving up alcohol, "Oh!" he said, "I am renewing my youth; it was the devil who made me think I could not do without it!" This has been the experience, in cases all but innumerable in our country; and, there, I have not heard this argument for years. It is not contended for, as a necessary article of diet, or, at least it has not been, to my knowledge, for years.

I formerly used it moderately and occasionally myself, but I have now abstained for *twenty-five years*; and surely I have performed as much labor, I think, as any minister, either in America or in Europe; and I can say that I am better in health now than I was on the day I abandoned its use. I can do more now than I could when I was accustomed sometimes in moderation to use it; and my experience is corroborated in instances beyond number.

Another objection is--4. That the *rights of hospitality demand it*. Now, what is intended by this? The rights of hospitality! Has any man a right to expect me to do that which is inconsistent with benevolence as a mere matter of hospitality? No! You think, perhaps, you will be accused of selfishness instead of benevolence, by refusing to provide it. The fact is, that if your reputation must suffer for doing your duty, let it suffer; for the man who is not prepared to do this, is not prepared to go the length of taking Christ and his apostles as his examples. Men, when they bring up such excuses, and accuse others of selfishness, are not even themselves satisfied with their own reasonings; so that while they accuse others of selfishness, and of disregarding the rights of hospitality is not offering it--I cannot believe that they are satisfied with such reasoning as theirs.

But, again--5. Some object that they *cannot employ laborers without providing it*, or giving them the means; they will have it in some way, and if they don't give it them they will not work for them. Now, farmers, in our country, furnish their laborers with board almost universally; and people have urged that the men will not work unless they give them alcohol in some form, but if they were to advise their "hands" not to drink it, setting the example themselves; and if they were to give them in wages the amount of what it would cost to furnish them with the article--if they were to do this it would be fair enough; and where it has been done, as far as I know, it has given universal satisfaction. Increase their wages by giving them the worth of the alcohol in money, and how soon will the laborers be not only satisfied, but glad that such an experiment was ever tried! There is no difficulty in getting over this; if Christian men will but persevere in taking strong and right grounds, their "hands" will soon be influenced by them not to take it. Finding they do not really need it, they will be glad to receive the money instead.

There are some who object--6. That *teetotalism is made a religion of*; and that, therefore, there is danger in inculcating it. Now, I never knew any instance of this kind in my life. We have observed, on the contrary, that when we can get men to abstain, they almost invariably come to a more just apprehension of God, and of religious truth. When we induce them to abstain from these drinks, they see more clearly by far the necessity of a change of heart, and a religious life. It is strange, indeed, to suppose, that after clearing a man's whole system of this abomination, we should make him all the more apt to deceive himself! This danger, therefore, is

very small. But there is a good deal of danger on the *other* hand. Those how make this objection do not seem to understand that there is a danger of being deceived by the spirit of alcohol--a danger of confounding the influences of alcohol, with those of the Spirit of God. Now, every physiologist is aware that there are certain persons, on whose minds stimuli, in certain forms, produce certain impressions, and, in many cases, these impressions incline them to think and talk about religion. For instance, when I was quite a lad, I was teaching a school one winter in a certain neighborhood, and boarding in a certain house. The head of the family was an intemperate man, and often came home from the public-house in a state of intoxication, so much so, indeed, as to walk in such a manner that they all could see he was intoxicated. Now, when he came home in this state, he invariably prayed with his family; while on other occasions he never said a word on the subject of religion. Such was the tendency of his mind. This is an extreme case, I admit; but I have known multitudes of cases involving the same principle. I have seen men exceedingly fluent in prayer, and flippant in religious conversation, after taking a little alcohol. I knew a minister who never preached fluently unless he was well steeped in alcohol, and when I rebuked him for it, he told me that he would rather give five dollars for a gill of brandy, when he had to preach, than preach without it. He could speak, preach, or pray, after taking alcohol; rob him of that, and he seemed to have no more of the spirit of preaching than a stock or a stone. For years he went on in this way; and when the Temperance Reformation compelled him to abandon alcohol, he resorted to *opium* as a substitute. There is a tendency in many minds to this. But, in justice, I ought to say, that I am not aware that it has been customary in *general* for ministers of the gospel in America to take alcohol, in any form, just before going into the pulpit; and never in my life, to my recollection, did I so much as hear of its being kept in the vestry, in any form, for the use of ministers or church officers. But I cannot express my astonishment and grief at this custom as I find it exists, in some cases, in this country. I have sometimes found a man praying with very much apparent fervency; but when I have come near him, I have found his breath smelt of alcohol! Take the alcohol away, and see how he would pray then! If you mean to give him fervency, you must give him alcohol. If you would see that there is nothing in him but spiritual death, deprive him of it.

In America, before the Temperance Reformation, multitudes of such cases occurred. Many years since I was laboring in a town in the State of New York during a revival of religion, and boarded with a deacon who always had a glass full of old cyder on his table. His eyes glistened after partaking of it, which he did in large quantities. I spoke to his pastor as to his general character. He said he was "always in the Spirit--always ready." I told him I was afraid he either was, or would be, a drunkard. The minister was quite shocked. Said I, his speech and general appearance are those of a man who keeps himself highly excited with alcohol. The minister never thought of this. It was the custom of the temperance men to send lecturers round where there had been revivals; that they might make their appeal, while the public conscience was awake, and men's minds were yielding to truth, and easily won over to the reform. They visited the place referred to, but this reputed good man resisted the Temperance Reformation; and, to the astonishment of every one, it was found that he was a secret drunkard, that he had often been seen drunk by his family, at different times, extending over some years. He was, of course, excommunicated from the church, as a drunkard. Before this time, it may be, he is in a drunkard's grave! I have seen such results to those who opposed the Temperance Reformation so many times over, that I have come greatly to fear, that ministers, or professors, who continue to oppose it, will become drunkards.

But this leads me to remark again. Another objection,--7. is*, "So many persons have become abstainers,"* it is said, *"and have turned back again."* I have very frequently read this, and have been shocked, I cannot tell how much, to hear it sometimes even from professors of religion. Admitting its truth, what does it amount to? Even should they nearly all go back--what then? Is it wonderful they do, while the Church stands aloof, and opposes the reformation? Suppose they should attempt any other branch of reform, and the Church, with its weightiest influence, should oppose them--who would wonder if they became faint-hearted? If the ministers, and nearly all the Church should frown, or, at least, should fail to smile, is it wonderful that the masses should go back, thinking they are wrong? Who does not see that it were almost miraculous that such masses should continue to stand by the reform, under such circumstances? Suppose great revivals of religion should spread throughout the land, and great efforts should be made; but, suppose again, that the ministers and Churches should rise up and denounce it as the work of the devil, and give the whole of their influence against it, discouraging the efforts, and setting their faces firmly against it,--should the converts, under these circumstances, backslide, and then the Church say, "There, you see your revival is good for nothing--half of you backslide!"--would it be thought wonderful that they

had backslidden? It is easy to see, then, who is the occasion of this going back; and yet these are the very persons to make this a stumbling-block, and objection to the reformation.

Again, it is objected--8. *That "we had better seek the conversion of men to God, and aim at making them Christians, and that temperance will take care of itself."* But lets say there are thousands and thousands of persons who never can be made Christians till they abandon alcohol. How can such men be made Christians, when half their time they are under the influence of alcohol? Again, suppose they were converted. Could they be expected not to fall away--ever and anon to backslide, unless they abstained? If such men are to be saved, the proper means must be used, and the stumbling-blocks removed out of their way. I believe the saints will persevere; but I also believe it will be because the stumbling-blocks will be overcome, and removed out of the way. It was supposed, when first our missionaries went abroad, that the question of caste would "take care of itself." It was said the natives were "sensitive on the point, therefore do not attack it. Make them Christians, and caste will take care of itself." But one of our missionaries (whose name I was glad to see in the *British Banner* yesterday attached to an address on the subject), once told me this--"We have done wrong. We have allowed men to believe that they could be Christians, and yet retain their ideas of caste, supposing that Christianity would remove this feeling. But we find we have thus allowed an element to exist in the Church, which, if it remain, will ruin it." He said that when he went back to India, he should have to "excommunicate a multitude whose spirit of caste had overcome their Christianity, instead of the opposite course, as they had hoped."

But I must pass rapidly over this ground. It is objected--9. That *good men have used it*. So they have; but good men have also engaged in the slave-trade. John Newton, for instance, did so for some time after his conversion; and Whitefield was a slave-holder; but they were not fully informed on the point. When such things are done in ignorance, the men may be Christians, notwithstanding. But it does not therefore follow that *in these days of light* men may either hold slaves, or vend, use, or offer alcohol, when the truth has been presented to them, and an entirely different aspect of the question comes up.

Again, some object--10. "*I can do nothing alone*, and my individual example can do but little, therefore although I care nothing about alcoholic drinks, it is of no use for me, as an individual, to make an effort." Now, the misery is, that there are so many that say this, when, if every man would lay aside this plea, and act, there would be a great army in this enterprise, and no one would think or talk of being alone. Come up each one of you for himself! give the influence of your name and your example. When will this work ever be done while each one stands away and says, "If I come, I must come alone!" But if you are obliged to come alone, *come alone*, and rid your skirts at any rate of this abomination.

The last--11. objection I shall notice, is, that almost as often as I have brought this subject up in conversation, and other ways, since I have been in this country, I have heard the objection thrown out *that the cause of teetotalism has been rendered odious by the imprudence, mismanagement, and false position of its advocates*. I have heard the same objection made repeatedly in America, to both the anti-slavery and temperance reforms. It has been common there, for those who withhold their influence from these reformations, to say, "We are in favor of temperance," or, "We are opposed to slavery; but we cannot identify ourselves with the abolitionists," or "We cannot identify ourselves with the teetotalers, because we cannot approve of many of their measures and arguments." I have been in the habit of making this reply. Brethren, show us a more excellent way; come forward and take the lead; we will give you the lead, and shall be glad to follow, if you will come forward and give us the benefit of your wisdom and prudence in precept and in example. Why do you stand back? Why do you leave it for others to go forward, and then complain of their want of wisdom? They would have been glad to have availed themselves of your wisdom and experience, if you would have suffered them to have done so. If you will but be leaders in this enterprise, we should be glad to have you; and if you will not, why do you not? Why do you stand back and refuse to put your hand to the work, because there is not so much wisdom exercised in pushing these reforms as you think you might exercise yourselves? The fact is, it is too bad, for men of the highest influence in society to remain silent till those perhaps of less influence, and less wisdom, are*compelled* to do something, and go forward according to the best of their judgment, and then for these wise men to excuse the withholding their influence altogether, because, they say, the cause is not advocated in the wisest manner!

I shall now,

IV. Examine the ground of those who object.

I might assail their position from many points, and examine it in a great many ways; but I prefer, on the

present occasion, to present it in the form of what logicians call the *argumentum ad hominem*. Sometimes we have an argument pressed upon an individual in this way; he admits certain truths, and, admitting these truths, we can present an argument, upon his own grounds, that will have a bearing directly upon him in view of his own premises. This is what logicians call *argumentum ad hominem*, and this shall be the form in which I will present this part of the argument to-night.

In England, you have settled the unlawfulness of slave-holding. Between yourselves and me, there is no difference of opinion on this subject. You believe, that making, vending, and holding men as slaves, is sinful, and a great abomination in the sight of God, and that it ought to be immediately abandoned. Now, in view of this admission, of yours, I remark, 1. That *the liquor-trade is as injurious to society as the slave-trade*. I can only go rapidly over this part of the subject. For example, who would not rather that his son or daughter, husband or wife, should be torn away, and sent into slavery,--for there he or she might have the use of reason, and, at least be moral and religious,--than become the victim of drunkenness? I need not say, that I do not, in any degree, sympathize with slavery. My tongue has not been silent against it, nor has my pen been useless. I have used both tongue and pen to rebuke this great iniquity.

One of the features of slavery which has perhaps, been most complained of, is its sundering of family ties, tearing children from their parents, and sending its various members to different parts of the country--thus severing them for ever. Now, look at alcohol. Does not that do *worse* than separating them one from another? Yes, indeed! I had rather have my wife torn away and made a slave, and my family broken up, than that we should become a family of drunkards! Who does not know that there are more ways than one to lacerate the heart, tearing the family to pieces, and effecting domestic ruin? Slavery is bad, but the sale of alcoholic drinks, which ruins thousands of families, is worse than selling them into slavery. The one is bad enough, but the other is still worse. Would you not rather that your own family were sold into slavery, than that they should become a family of drunkards? Slaves are made so by force, drunkards, by their own consent. A man, in being made a slave, commits no sin--a man becoming a drunkard, ruins both soul and body. Both of them appear wrong under the light which the Gospel pours upon them, when they are presented and developed in their proper aspect.

But I remark again, inasmuch as the slavery question is settled in this country, and connection therewith accounted a great wickedness, I address the question to you in this shape, because you English people admit that slavery is not to be tolerated, and that, however convenient or necessary some may assert it to be, they may not have slaves to be their servants, even if it were impossible to get servants without slaves, as the slaveholders maintain--you will hear no such arguments. I honor you for the ground you take on this question; but I should like to see you take equally consistent ground on the liquor question.

In both cases, the *demand* sustains the trade. If nobody bought slaves, nobody would raise them: and if nobody used alcohol, it would not be manufactured and sold. More than this; if nobody *abused* alcohol, though it were a useful article of diet, yet there would not enough be demanded to render it a profitable article of manufacture or sale; it is the enormous abuse of it which makes it so profitable. The sale and manufacture is undertaken upon the assumption of its abuse. I doubt whether there is a single manufacturer or vendor, in Great Britain, who will deny that it is this *abuse* which renders it so profitable an article of traffic, or that it is made and sold on this assumption.

But, let me say again. In both cases, also, the enormous quantity advertised for sale increases the demand. When once the thing began, its exhibition everywhere increased the amount of temptation, and the demand increased.

Again, it is remarkable to what an extent both these evils are sustained, and defended by the same arguments. They appeal to the Bible, in the same way. Some say the Bible sanctions and sustains it; others are content that the Bible recognizes its existence, and does not condemn it. The same course is taken on the liquor question. They say, the evil existed when the inspired men lived, and that men were allowed to use it. The Bible is quoted as conniving at it. But I have not time fully to trace the parallel, or you would be struck with the extent to which these questions are sustained by the same arguments. Intoxicating drink, then, is a greater social, political, domestic, individual, and moral evil, than slavery. It introduces more immorality. It does more injury to the cause of religion, it does more to ruin the bodies and souls of men, than slavery. No well-informed person can consistently deny this.

They are both persevered for the same reason. Their usefulness and necessity, are pleaded for in the same manner. The spirit of selfishness acts the same part in both cases. In America, we find the same difficulty, in both cases, in the way of getting rid of these evils. Both are so firmly fixed in the habits of the people--so many

interests are at stake, so much property is invested, both in ardent spirits and in slaves--there are so many difficulties in the way of getting rid of both--it is astonishing to see to what an extent these difficulties are the same. We find the same reluctance to examine the question on the part of those who are connected with either of these trades. Many pulpits were formerly shut to both these questions. Preachers have refused to give notice from the pulpits of meetings on these subjects. There is the same sensibility of rebuke both from the pulpit, and through the press. Some said, they were not proper questions for the pulpit, especially on the Sabbath.

With reference to intoxicating drink in this country, it is the same as slavery is in ours. In the North of our country, ministers preach, in season and out of season, against both those evils, on the Sabbath as well as on other days; but at first they were sneered at. A great amount of sensitiveness existed, in all classes, against bringing up discussions on these subjects. It was said, it would produce divisions in the Churches. So it did. Nevertheless, it must be done. The same sympathy for those, who are committed to both, has been manifested, under the name of *charity*. We have been often called upon to be charitable, with regard to those engaged in the manufacture, sale, and use of these drinks, as well as towards the slave-dealer and the slaveholder. The same arguments, in this respect, too, are used in both cases. There has been the same sacrifice of ministerial character--they have, at length, some of them, been banished from their pulpits, for want of sympathizing with these reforms. In America, this has been the case, to a lamentable extent. Ministers now begin to take high grounds on both questions.

I wish I had the entire ministry of Great Britain here before me this evening! I would ask them, if they continue to stand aloof, in what light the public will come to regard them? For I have understood that one body of them have actually refused to receive a memorial on the subject, which was presented to them for consideration! Now, who does not know that such persons must suffer in the estimation of those who inquire? When it comes to be considered that 60,000 of your fellow-countrymen annually go down to a drunkard's grave, every year some 40,000 or 50,000 are excommunicated from your Churches for this sin--when the people become fully alive to these and multitudes of similar facts, which might be stated, they will consider it a shame for the ministers to withhold their influence on this question. Yes! The ministers are deceived if they think the people are satisfied with their present position on this question.

I am glad to find that so many of them have already given the weight of their example to this reform, and among them the excellent minister of this place (Rev. James Sherman). I congratulate you, brethren, on this point. Since I have been in this country I have been thrown into the company of ministers, and have been shocked! For years, till I came here, I have not seen a minister drink a drop except at the communion table. I have seen enough in America to demonstrate that there no minister can be sustained by public confidence who withholds the influence of his precept and example from the Temperance Reformation. And if you will continue to use it, and refuse to rebuke it both by precept and example, you must expect to lose the public confidence; and, as certain as God rules the world, *you ought to lose it!*

I speak this all in charity. I know very well that the time has been, in my own country, when the question was not thoroughly understood. It was used, because it was considered necessary; many, however, though still supposing it to be useful, denied themselves on account of its abuse, and the great evils which arose therefrom.

But let me say again. There is *the same tendency to infidelity*, resulting from the conduct of the Church, in reference to both these questions. IN the United States, it has been common for persons to say there can be no truth in religion, because the Church, and especially the ministry, do not come out and take decided ground on these questions. The same is going on in this country, in respect to the Temperance Reformation; multitudes are losing their confidence in ministers and Churches, in the Bible, and even in religion itself.

I have thus pursued a rapid parallel between the slave traffic and the traffic alcoholic drinks. I have only suggested points for your consideration. Perhaps I should do well to say that a tract has been written and published in the United States, by one of our best men, pursuing this parallel. I have never myself read this tract, but it made a deep impression, as it well might; for who cannot see that, in every part of society, intemperance is an evil as injurious as slavery? And that, when light is cast upon it, the crime of both is great, if not quite equally so?

It costs the Church more than she can afford, to use alcoholic drinks. The providence of God plainly calls upon the Church now to act. There is a minister in this country whom I have heard openly oppose the total abstinence question, and declare that he has no sympathy with it. Now, I have been informed that this very man's wife is a drunkard; his eldest son, too, is such a beast of a drunkard that he requires someone

constantly to take care of him. The rest of his family will probably go in the same direction. Yet he "has no sympathy with the Temperance Reformation!" I myself have seen him drink glass after glass, and that more than once. What infatuation is this! Yet what else could he expect? Let me state that thousands of cases, involving the same principle, might be adduced where persons have opposed teetotalism, until the result has been the ruin of their families, or, at least, of some members of their families.

I once urged a man in become a teetotaler, because I feared he would be a drunkard. He "consented if his *wife* would go with him." I reasoned for an hour with her; but all in vain. I said, "You will rue this, mark me." She replied, "I'll risk it." "Now, in less than five years her husband became a drunkard! He is now, perhaps, in a drunkard's grave.

But let me say again, I was astonished the other day, while conversing with a brother minister, to hear him say, he was struck with the use I made of. Lev. x.9, which expressly states that priests were not, on pain of death, to take wine or strong drink when going to the services of the sanctuary. "Is there such a passage as this?" "Yes, there is," I said. He could not believe it, so I got up from the table, took the Bible, and pointed out to him. The passage as thus:--"Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, *when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die*; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations."

But again, some say, *"I take a little, but don't care about it."* You take just enough to prevent your rebuking it in those who take much; for they will turn round and ask if you entirely abstain, and your influence in the matter comes to nothing, or rather it confirms them in their evil habit. If you care so little as you say, what a pity it is you range yourself on the opposite side for such a trifle!

I have been informed by one who was a city missionary, and have been repeatedly assured by those who profess to know, that the managers of the City Mission discourage the advocacy of the total abstinence principle by their missionaries. Now, I cannot vouch for the truth of this; but if it is true, such conduct is worthy of unmeasured rebuke, and may well account for their comparatively small success. What! city missionaries, one of whose principal duties it ought to be, to secure total abstinence among the poor, discouraged from *such*efforts! If this is so, it is both shocking and abominable. It may be untrue; I would fain hope it is.

Again, do the Churches in England expect a general revival of religion, whilst they resist this reform, and refuse to come up and lay themselves upon the altar? If they do, I am sure they are mistaken. It is perfectly plain that the ministers of this kingdom have not given themselves in earnest to rebuke this sin, and carry forward the temperance reform. I have occasion to know that some ministers and others, who are themselves abstainers, nevertheless provide it for their guests--who do not hesitate to put upon their tables for the use of others. Some of them seldom preach against it, and when they do, they are in the habit of giving notice that they are going to do so, that those who do not like to be rebuked may about themselves. Thus they try to satisfy their consciences, either with bearing the silent testimony of their example against it, or, at most, by preaching perhaps once a-year a sermon on the subject. Now, is it not plain, that this is rather an apology for a temperature effort, than anything like laying themselves upon the altar, with a determination to push this reformation? What does it mean? Why do they not, on all occasions, rebuke this as one of the reigning sins and evils of the day, of the land? Why do they not speak against it, pray against it, write against it, rebuke it everywhere and on all occasions, like men who have resolutely undertaken to put away one of the greatest abominations of the world?

The fact is, the great mass of ministers, by their use of wine and other intoxicating drinks, directly countenance this evil as it exists in society. Comparatively few are abstainers, and those, either because they fear they shall offend their brethren in the ministry, or their churches or congregations, or all these together, do very little, I fear, to promote this great reform, and put away this wide-spread and overwhelming evil. And is this the way for ministers of God to treat one of the greatest, most wide-spread, and most desolating of evils, that ever cursed any country? Why, really it is lamentable to see to what an extent the leaders of the sacramental hosts of God's elect compromise with this evil! If they hold their peace much longer the stones will cry out against them, and society will universally rebuke them. For if this is not so, than those laws of mind that have so strongly developed themselves in every other country, will fail to do so in this. But there is no mistake. The public conscience is beginning to arouse itself, and there is a murmuring, deep and increasing, that will, by and by, speak forth in accents that must be understood. The time is come for the Church of God and her ministers to speak out, and rebuke this evil everywhere and on all occasions. Will not the brethren come up to the work?

When I was first settled in the city of New York, in 1832, I found that one of the elders of the church was a spirit-dealer. The Temperance Reformation was but, as it

were, beginning to excite public attention. I reasoned with him in private, but without effect; I then exposed his business in my public preaching, and when he objected to my doing so, I told him that as often as I went into that pulpit, he might expect that I should rebuke both him and his business, till he either forsook the congregation or abandoned the abominable traffic. I did so, and did not let him rest till he left his seat, and went to another congregation; and his place was filled by a better man.

But I see I have trespassed too long on your time. The subject is so extensive, as to need a course of lectures. I have condensed as much as possible, and endeavored to present the subject as fully as I could in one lecture; however, I must now leave the subject with a word of appeal to the ladies of England. The female sex are deeply interested in this question. You are wives, mothers, sisters; do you not see the multitudes of husbands, fathers, brothers, going to destruction, through the use of these drinks? and will you not give the benefit of the whole weight of your precept and example against this crying evil? Shall *women* withhold their influence from a cause that appeals so strongly to the sympathies and the hearts of all classes of men? If the female sex were to unite their efforts, and wholly discountenance the use of alcoholic drinks, and refuse to associate with those who do use them, in one year they might effect a change which would be the admiration of the world. *Will they not come up to the work.*

MAKING GOD A LIAR.

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 26, 1850,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, AMERICA,

At the Tabernacle, moorefields.

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"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believed not the record which God gave of his Son." --1 John V. 10.

I SHALL remark at this time upon the second clause of this verse--"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." I will endeavour to show--

I. What unbelief is not.

II. What it is.

III. In what sense unbelief makes God a liar.

IV. Notice some of the manifestations of unbelief.

V. Briefly advert to the results of unbelief.

I. *What unbelief is not.* Multitudes of persons speak against unbelief without exactly understanding what it is. It becomes necessary to spend a few moments in showing what unbelief is not, and then what it is. Unbelief is not the mere absence of faith. It is not a mere negative state of mind at all. Neither is unbelief a mere intellectual attitude, or state, caused by a want of sufficient evidence. Neither is unbelief a state of blank ignorance of God and, of his truth. Neither does unbelief consist in a state of entire ignorance of the existence and attributes of God. Unbelief is not mere disbelief or belief in the opposite of what the Bible says is true. Unbelief is not an intellectual state at all. The Bible represents unbelief as a sin; therefore it is not a necessary state of mind.

II. *What unbelief is.* Of course, if it is sin, it must be a voluntary state of mind; the Bible complains of it as a spirit which we have no right to indulge, represents it as a great crime in us for which we are accountable. Now, if this be the fact, it must be a voluntary state of mind; because if we could not help it, the Bible could not denounce it as one of the greatest of sins, and call upon us to cease from it. Again, it is really the opposite of faith. What is faith? Faith is not a mere intellectual conviction. We know it cannot be, for the devil has that faith, and so have many wicked man; their intellects assent to the truth, and that is what often troubles them so much. Faith consists, then, in giving God our confidence, in voluntarily yielding ourselves up to him,

confiding in him, trusting in him, casting ourselves upon him, voluntarily receiving his truth, and committing ourselves to him. It is thus that the term faith is used in the Bible; the very term that is rendered commit, is also rendered faith. Let them commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." And again, "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men;" in these, and divers other instances, the word here rendered faith, is rendered commit. Now, unbelief is the direct opposite of this; it is the withholding of confidence where there is sufficient evidence, and where there is sufficient light in the intellect; and this withholding of confidence is represented as unbelief of the heart--not merely of the intellect, but of the heart. Unbelief implies that the intellect perceives the truth. That which constitutes saving faith is the heart trusting in God, committing itself to the truth, yielding itself up to receive the truth; while unbelief is the opposite of all this--that the heart does not commit itself to God, and does not yield itself up to receive the truth. Now, we often see this state of mind manifested in relation to this world. You see persons withholding their confidence where there is the strongest evidence of the truth of that which they are called upon to believe. Look at that jury box; the prisoner has been tried, and the judge has summed up the evidence, and put the plain truth before the jury, but some of them will not yield to it, will not give their confidence. Now, this state of mind in religion is unbelief. Now, we multitudes of men on every side whose minds are made up concerning the truth of the Bible; they believe it is true; assent to it intellectually, and they call this faith: they say they believe--their opinions are settled. They can argue in defence of their principles, and they say they have faith in them. You call upon them to believe, and they say they do believe; while the fact is, when men will not commit themselves to the truth, they do not believe to the saving of their souls. Intellectual belief is nothing without confidence. The Bible says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Having explained the nature of unbelief, I pass, in the next place, to consider--

III. *In what sense unbelief makes God a liar.* It is said in the text, "he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar." Withholding of confidence, is a practical denial that God is worthy of confidence. Now, there is nothing more unreasonable in the universe, than unbelief. God has so constituted men, that, by a necessary law of their minds, they affirm that he will not lie. Nobody ever believed that God would lie; everybody knows better, every intelligent being in earth, hell, or heaven, knows that God will not lie; and yet, wherever an individual withholds confidence in God, it in a practical denial of his trustworthiness, a practical denial of what reason and conscience affirm must be true. This is one of the most provoking forms of sin of which Moral agents can be guilty. There is nothing more provoking, even to the greatest liars themselves, than to have their veracity called in question. What an infinitely awful sin it must be to make God a liar!! But it is also injurious to yourselves, and ruinous to society. Why, who does not know that if a wife should withhold confidence from her husband, she would ruin herself and her husband too? And so, if a husband withholds confidence in his wife, he ruins his own happiness and that of his wife too. Suppose that confidence is withheld, without good reason, by a husband from his wife, how it ruins her happiness, what a trial it is for her to endure! Suppose that the husband reproaches the wife with having committed some wrong, and withholds his confidence; and, suppose the children lose confidence in her, how can she manage to govern them? What wrong is done to the family! Probably the family would be ruined. Destroy confidence in a government, and, unless it be very strong, and thus enabled to keep the people in awe, that government will very soon be ruined. So with business transactions. The world has to live by confidence. In each other, There is no community whatever that is not ruined, if unbelief, want of confidence, comes to be the law of action. Withholding confidence when there is no reason, is the greatest crime a man can commit against society, or the family. Everybody must admit this. You often find persons tremblingly, quiveringly, alive to their own reputation for veracity, who withhold confidence from God. Some people, who call themselves Christians, too, fail to realise the truth of God so as to confide fully in him. God has said " all things shall work together for good to them that love God," but a great many persons have no belief in this! They don't rest in God's words, and they are always in trouble, distress, and tribulation, because of their unbelief. Now, if you should see a man standing on a mountain of granite in the greatest trouble and anguish, lest the rock should not be strong enough to hold him. Why you would say the man is deranged, his conduct would be, in a high degree, ridiculous. Now, the people of God are infinitely more ridiculous, when they withhold confidence in God, than the man on a mountain of granite, fearing it might fall. God's promises are infinitely more able to support them than mountains of granite! The strongest rocks in creation are but mere air when compared with the stupendous strength and stability of the promises of Jehovah ! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord shall stand fast for ever. Again: it is the most blasphemous of all forms of sin. Let any man publicly accuse God of lying,

and the law of the land would lay hands on him. He would be indicted for blasphemy. Suppose a man should go through the streets of London, proclaiming aloud that God was a liar, you would very soon find him in Newgate, and he would deserve to be there. If any man should go through the streets, proclaiming that God was a liar, everybody would say it was the most revolting species of blasphemy; they would stop their ears and run, in order to get away from him. Nobody would dare to walk in the same street with him, lest a thunderbolt should descend and destroy him, or the earth open, and swallow him up. Now, many a man, if his conduct were put into words, and he should speak them, would be indicted for blasphemy. Again: let me say unbelief accuses God of perjury. God has sworn the greatest oath that he could think of, in confirmation of his truth. " Because he could sware by no greater, he aware by himself." He confirmed his promise "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie." Now, mark! *Unbelief accuses God of lying under an oath!* --of lying under the greatest oath that God could take! Suppose a man should, in words, accuse God of perjury--that he had not only lied, but sworn to a lie! We have now to advert, in the next place, to--

IV. *Some of its manifestations and results.* First, a want of rest to the soul. Now, when the soul does not rest on the promises of God--does not believe that " all things shall work together for good to them that love God"--the soul has no rest in Christ, does not embrace Christ, does not rest in his faithfulness and in his promises. Now, my hearers, let me put one question to you--Are you guilty of unbelief? If so, you are the very persons that are charged with making God a liar! Again: another manifestation of unbelief is want of peace. There is always peace and joy in believing. Now, the want of peace is an evidence of unbelief. The fact is, that where there is real faith, although there may be much to disturb and distress the mind, there is deep peace and joy in God, in the midst of it all; but where persons have not peace, real joy, and great satisfaction in God, in his truth, and in his promises, you may know that there is unbelief there. From the very nature of the case, there must be. The mind cannot be reposing in the promises of God, if it has not peace and joy. Again: when persons have not power in prayer--when they have no faith in prayer, to prevail with God. In the Bible, we are told that those who have faith, have power with God, and can prevail with God, and receive the spirit of their petitions. Now, let me ask you, my hearers, if you have this confidence, this faith which makes you mighty in prayer; or, do you want this power in prayer? If the latter, then you are guilty of unbelief. Now, one of two things must be true, if these things are wanting in your soul,--if you have no confidence in the promises, no peace of mind, and no power in prayer,--either the Bible is not true, or you do not believe the Bible; because the Bible affirms that these things are true of them that believe.

But I remark again; those who live in bondage to any form of sin are in a state of unbelief. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now, when men live under any form of worldliness, they are under the condemnation of the law. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Now, if you are living in bondage to sin because of unbelief, you are living in a state of condemnation; your own conscience condemns you because of your unbelief. Again: another evidence of unbelief is, the manifestation of a servile spirit in reference to religion--the spirit of a servant, as distinguished from the spirit of a son. By servant, I mean slave; one who serves his master from fear, not love. Now, a great many persons profess to serve God, but they do not serve him with the spirit of sons, although they profess to be the children of God; they look upon religion as something which must not be neglected; they perform their religious duties, not from any love to religion, but as the least of two evils; and thus they drag out a painful existence. Christianity, to them, is not a peace-giving religion; it is not their life in which they have supreme delight, loving it for its own sake. It is to them something which they must attend to, something which they must not neglect, but which they would be very glad to neglect if they dared. They go to meeting, and read their Bibles, and pray, not because their heart & are filled with love to God, love to the Bible, love to their closets--not because they love to have communion with God. No! Their religious duties are regarded as a task, which they must not omit to perform. Now; remember, that in every instance where persons take this view of religion and religious dudes, there is unbelief in the heart. Such persons go through a form of prayer, not from love to God, but because they think it is their duty to pray. Who does not see that to approach God from such motives is not prayer, but only an indication of a mare servile spirit, an evident manifestation of unbelief. They don't come to God to get anything. They don't expect to receive anything from God. The Bible has promised them great things in answer to prayer, but they don't expect them. They pray, because it is their duty. They never run to God to make a request, as a child runs to its father for something which it wants, holding up its little hands with a smile on its face, expecting to get the favour for which it asks. They do nothing of this sort. They say their

prayers, or perhaps read them; go through a form, and do what they call praying, and what for? Many persons pray, not because God has given them promises, not because they have something in their hearts that they want God to give, and because they expect to get it, but because it is their duty to make a prayer. Now, who does not see that this is a manifestation of unbelief; the evidence of a spirit directly opposite to the spirit of prayer, and everything that belongs to true religion. Now, if any of you, my hearers, have been religious because it was your duty,--have served God from a servile spirit, and not from spontaneous love; let me urge you, for once, to approach his throne to-night, and pray, expecting to receive that for which you seek. I say that now you are an unbeliever; you may call yourself what you please, but as certain as God is true--as certain as God is true, you have no faith!

I remark again: a spirit of worldly-mindedness is an evidence of unbelief. I mean that state in which the mind is given up to worldly pursuits and amusements, that minding earthly things of which the apostle speaks--living the mind up to them, giving the chief attention to them, and being chiefly influenced by worldly considerations. Now, mark! This is the very opposite of a state of faith, which, from its very nature, precludes this state of mind. If you find that your mind is worldly, that you are engrossed with worldly things, you may be sure that you have no faith. Can you pray with the world in your mind? Can you go to the sanctuary with business engrossing your thoughts? Can you receive God's truth into your mind, if it is given up to other influences? It is naturally impossible for you to serve God and the world! If you are worldly-minded, I say, it is an evidence of unbelief! And unbelief, remember, virtually charges God with being a liar; and the man who is an unbeliever has the hardihood to say, in conduct, though not in words, that God is a perjured being, that he lies under an oath! But let me say again: the spirit of cowardice is an evidence of unbelief. Those people who believe God are not afraid of anybody. Spiritual cowardice is always the result of unbelief. Confidence in God makes the righteous strong as lions. Now, if you are spiritual cowards; if you are afraid to talk to sinners about their souls; if you are afraid to hold up the light, it is because you do not believe. Again: neglect of the Bible is also a manifestation of unbelief. Nobody neglects the Bible who believes it. Again: neglect to use the promises of the Bible--not pleading them in order to receive their fulfillment--is a sure indication of unbelief. Again: a spirit of indifference in regard to the state of religion, blindness in regard to the state of sinners, no compassion for them, a want of interest in their conversion, are certain indications of unbelief; and I might point out hundreds of others. But let me ask, who of us are guilty of unbelief? If I am guilty of unbelief, I am the very wretch that stands before you, and makes God a liar! If you are guilty of unbelief, you are the wretches who stand before God, and accuse him of being a liar! Horrible! Horrible! But is it not true? Does not everybody know, that if a man withholds confidence from God, it is because he regards God as unworthy of confidence; and if unworthy of confidence, it must be that he is not a true being, but a liar! I will now make a very few remarks, in the next place, onV.

V. *The results of unbelief.* First, unbelief always produces a heartless religion. Therefore, whenever you find a man whose religion is not soul-satisfying--not a living principle in his soul; whenever you find, in your own experience, that religion is not peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; whenever you find, that your religion is not a spontaneous principle of love to God, you may conclude that the reason is because the heart is filled with unbelief. Again: if you lose your faith, your religion will be legal. When persons lose their faith, they do a great many things without regard to God at all. They cease to have an eye to God's will, pleasure, and glory; you cannot distinguish between them and the professedly unGodly. Oftentimes, what they call their religious duties, they perform not out of love to God, supreme regard to him, but to promote their own selfishness. Again: another consequence of unbelief is that it renders salvation naturally impossible. Now, it should always be remembered that the conditions of salvation are not arbitrary; they are natural and necessary conditions. If anybody would go to heaven, be must be prepared for heaven. If an individual has not love to God in his heart, it is naturally impossible that he should be happy in heaven. What would there be in heaven to interest him? What would he do in heaven? To enjoy heaven, and be happy there, he must be a holy man, and this he can only be as he is made so by faith. Again: of course, disobedience of heart to God is always a result of unbelief; there is no heart-obedience to any government, any further than individuals have confidence in that government; the heart of man must confide in any system of government, in order to a hearty and true obedience to it. In respect to the governmental consequences: all unbelief entirely rejects the Mediator between God and man--it rejects the office, the authority, and atonement of Christ altogether. The penalty of the law is dead against those that are unbelievers--those who believe not are condemned already, because they have not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.

A few remarks must close what I have to say this morning. I remark, first, that the first sin in our world, when we resolve it into its true elements as a particular form of sin, was unbelief. Let us look at it. God had told man that he must not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or by so doing he should die. The tempter told our first parents that they should not die, if they did eat of it; and tried to make them believe that God was selfish in the prohibition--that God gave them that injunction from a fear that by their eating of the fruit they should become like himself. Now, what did they do? Why, they dared to withdraw confidence in God. So completely did the insinuation of the tempter take hold of them, that it is said--"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and be did eat." Now, what was the particular form of sin? Why, it was first withdrawing, and, then withholding, faith from God; they refused to confide in what God had said--they did not believe that he studied their good in the prohibition. They listened to the words of the tempter, and believed what he told them, that God was jealous of them; that he forbade them to eat of the tree lest they should become Gods: and then they withdrew confidence in God, and suffered the consequences. Again: this is the root of sin in man--his withholding confidence in God. All the forms of iniquity in this world took their rise here, and we might, did time permit, trace them, by a philosophical method, to this source. Withholding confidence in God is one of the worst of evils--having no confidence in God's wisdom, benevolence, goodness, leaves the mind a blank. Why persons are drawn aside into vice is, because they have lost confidence in God and goodness. If a man yielded his heart to God, could he be carried away with every breath of temptation? No, indeed, he could not; but when he withdraws confidence, the mind is darkened, and error exercises its fall power in his soul. How remarkable was the effect of unbelief in Adam and Eve! As soon as they withdrew confidence in God, they thought they could hide themselves from him; so grossly, did they fall into darkness by withholding confidence, that they thought they could hide themselves among the trees when the Lord God walked in the garden. Again: perfect faith would secure entire holiness. Suppose any man has perfect confidence in all that God says, could he sin? What! Have perfect confidence in God's love, God's goodness, God's universal presence, and consent to sin? No more than they do in heaven; for what is the reason they do not sin in heaven, but because they have such universal confidence in God? If a man had perfect confidence in God, could he sin? Never, never. Where there is any overt act of sin, there is unbelief. Again: there are a vast number of professors of religion, who are grossly guilty of unbelief. They have no peace and joy in God, no power in prayer, are worldly-minded, are "careful and troubled about many things," giving as full evidence of being in a state of unbelief as the world around them; their lives, words, and actions are just the same as those who make no profession at all. You can hardly distinguish them, unless you see them at the Communion Table. You ask if they are believers, and they say, yes; and persuade themselves that they are Christians. But as certain as God is true they are unbelievers, and will be lost with all their profession! Again, the unbelief manifested by professors of religion, is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of the conversion of the world, and tends to drive their children into infidelity and sin. But I will not enlarge upon this, as I have done so in a previous discourse.

Lastly, let me urge upon you to reflect upon the awful wickedness of unbelief. Suppose you have withdrawn confidence from God, what is the state of your hearts? Why, you are playing the hypocrite and concealing the real state of your hearts, and are thus kept from being indicted for blasphemy. Unbelievers, in the sense in which I have explained, whether in the Church or out of the Church, if you were to speak out the real state of your hearts, you would be disgraced before the community and chased from society, if you should venture to persist in this unbelief.

Now, in a few days you and I shall stand before God. What will be our state then? We shall stand before him whom we have accused of lying, withdrew confidence from, and would not believe! I But I must not continue this strain of remark. May God have mercy on us; and let us ponder these things, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, and thus avert his wrath from us!

MOCKING GOD.

A Sermon

Delivered on Friday Evening, May 31, 1850

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, AMERICA,

At the Tabernacle, Moorefields.

"Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth."--Isaiah xxviii.22.

In speaking from these words, I propose to consider

I. What we are to understand by mocking, or being mockers.

II. Some of the ways in which persons mock God.

III. Call attention to some of the consequences of mocking God.

I. *What we are to understand by mocking.* The term to mock, in its scriptural sense, means to act hypocritically; to make false pretenses or professions. We sometimes speak of having our hopes mocked, that is, they are disappointed. To be a mocker is to be hypocritical, to make false presence's, representations that are not true. To mock God is to pretend to love and serve him when we do not; to act in a false manner, to be insincere and hypocritical in our professions, pretending to obey him, love, serve, and worship him, when we do not. Anything that amounts to insincerity is mockery, anything that is only pretense, and does not represent the state of the heart. The term to mock, in ordinary language, means to dishonor. In this sense it is that God is mocked by not being honored. He is not dishonored really, but only so far as man is concerned. When it is said in the Bible, "God is not mocked," it means God is not dishonored really, although individuals do that which would dishonor him, if he could be dishonored. I am now to call your attention to--

II. *Some of the ways in which persons mock God.* And here let me say, in the outset, that if there be anything of vital importance to us, it is that we really understand what is our true position in respect to God; whether we are or are not accepted of him in the service which we profess to render unto him. I must pass rapidly over these thoughts; and, therefore, I cannot do more than make suggestions, which I beg you will think over and enlarge upon for yourselves. 1. I remark, in the first place, that we mock God when we present ourselves in the house of God as his professed servants, without the true spirit of obedience, love, worship, and faith. Unless we are really in an obedient state of mind, in the true spirit of devotion to his service, we mock him by the very fact of coming to his house as worshippers. For example, what do we profess in coming before him as worshippers? It is very important that we should understand what is really implied in coming to God's house, and taking our places before him, as worshippers of God. Why, in coming to God's house you profess to be devoted to his interests, service, and glory, that in your hearts you are really the servants of God, and that you come to his house to express what is in your hearts. You profess by this act to have an obedient spirit, love unfeigned, full confidence in him, submission to him, and the spirit of true worship. Now, every one who goes to the house of God without these sentiments of humility, love, and obedience, is a mocker, in the Bible sense of the term; and you are sternly asked, "Who hath required this at your hands, that you should tread my courts without the spirit of true worshippers--the spirit of truth, real obedience, love, faith, repentance, devotion, consecration to me? Why have you come before me as mere mockers, drawing near to me with your lips, while your heart is far from me?" Now, everyone that comes to the house of God as a worshipper professes, by the very act, that he possesses the spirit of devotion to God, the spirit of consecration to his service and glory. 2. Again, it must imply in us two things, either that we already profess to be devoted to him, or that we come to inquire how we may consecrate ourselves to him and obey him. The language of the real Christian is, let us go up to the house of God and inquire what the will of the Lord is, that we may understand his will, and that we may do it. By the very act of coming to inquire his will, they pledge themselves to obey it when it is made known to them. If this is not the case, what can it mean? For what purpose do you visit God's house? Let me ask you that are professors of religion, for what end do you come to God's house, if it is not to learn his will that you might obey him, and do more to glorify him? If this is not the disposition of your minds, if this is not what you mean, then you are mockers, and you appear before God in the character of hypocrites, virtually saying, "O God, we don't come to obey thee, we don't come to inquire thy will concerning us, with the intention of doing it: we only come pretending this, for in our hearts we have no desire to obey thy will, and do what thou requirest of us." Suppose that there are some of this class of person in this house now. No one can deny that we are met professedly to worship God, and the very fact of coming to such a meeting is surely a declaration that you wish to be instructed in the will of the Lord, that you may obey him and glorify his name. Now, is not this true? Why, yes it is! This is a meeting for God's worship, for

God to reveal his will to his people in order that they may do it. Now, the very fact that you are come together, must imply that you have pledged yourselves, that when the will of the Lord is made known, you will do it. The very fact that we come to God's house must imply that we come to worship God, that we appear before him as obedient people, with a determination in our hearts to do whatever he may tell us to do. Now, let me ask, is not anything short of complying with the spirit of this pledge, mocking God? Would you not regard yourselves as mocked if you were served in the same way by your fellow-creatures?--if an individual should profess great attachment to you, and after all have no such feeling in his heart? Let it be understood, then, that all assemblies meeting for the worship of God, who are really not in a state of heart to do whatever he commands them, are mockers. Just so far as they are not in a right state of heart they mock God, and all who come to such places and do not honestly intend to apply the truth, and obey it themselves when they return into the world, why they mock God. The very fact of their appearing before him implies that they mean to obey him. If they do not, they are mockers. Hear what the Lord said by the mouth of the prophet, "They speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come I pray you and hear what is the word that cometh from the Lord, and they come unto thee as my people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their conversation. And lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on a instrument: for they hear thy words but they do them not." They wanted to make him believe that they designed to obey him, and came out and sat before the prophet as the people of God, and heard his words with attention, and professed to love and admire them, but would not do them.

Now, let me ask, how is it with us here to-night? Do we realize what is implied in our coming here? Are we mocking God, or do we intend to redeem the pledge which we make to God by our appearance in this house? 3. Again: Confessing sin without repentance is also mocking God. When persons confess sin they profess to be sorry that they ever committed sin. I suppose that every person in the act of confession professes to be sorry for sin. Surely, then, if there is such a thing as mocking God, it is this--confessing sin without repentance. 4. Again: When persons confess sin without forsaking their sins, they mock God. Who can doubt this? 5. Again: We mock God by confessing sin and professing repentance for sin, without making restitution when we have done wrong. If we confess, without repentance, without forsaking, and without making restitution to those we have injured, of course we are mocking God in all this. I know it is true that persons oftimes abound in confession, but go right on in the same way notwithstanding. Some persons are in the daily habit of confessing their sins, and then suppose that this is all that is required of them. If you tell them that they are sinners and must seek repentance, they tell you, "Remember, we confess our sins!" They confess that they are in a bad state of mind, that they do not do their duty, that they have done those things which they ought not to have done, and have undone those things which they ought to have done; they confess those things, day after day, and week after week, but never mean to forsake the sins which they confess themselves to be guilty of. Now, when persons confess sin and do not forsake it, and make restitution as far lies in their power, where they have done wrong, all their confessions only amount to this--mocking God. For what does confession imply? Repentance! What is repentance? Why, repentance is heart rejection of sin; and if the heart turns away from sin the life must also of necessity, for the heart governs the external life. By a necessary law of man's being this must be so. Now, where persons profess repentance for sin, without forsaking sin and turning away from it, by all their confessions they mock God.

Now, from all this you can judge whether you are guilty of mocking God, whether you are hypocritical. As a matter of course, you mock God if you confess sin and do not forsake and resist it, as we have seen. What are your views of sin in general? Do you confess sin in your closets? Confess the sins of the day when you are about to retire for the night? If so, why do you do it? Do you intend to repent of your sins, or do you expect to continue to live just as you have lived? Do you confess your sins because you think it is safe as a matter of form? Now, all such confessions of sin as do not come from the heart, from a penitent heart resolved upon forsaking sin, are not only senseless, they are worse than senseless, much worse--they are downright mocking of God. 6. But again: All mere formality in prayer, asking for things from mere custom. Some persons in their closets, if they are in the habit of closet prayer, will pray for things without thinking what they say. They pray according to custom, they go round about in a circle, always asking for much the same things without really considering what they say, or hardly knowing what they do say. They get into the habit of going a certain round, saying certain things from week to week and year to year. They have family

worship, or an imitation of it. They keep up the custom, because they have a duty to perform, as they think: it won't do to neglect their prayers, as they call them. They never fail to have these so-called family devotions, but they pray without faith, without deep feeling, and without anything that should characterize prayer. It is all a mere matter of form. Instead of coming from the depths of the heart, why it is mere talk and form. Now, of course, such conduct as this amounts only to mockery--persons who act thus, instead of praying to God, shamefully mock him. There is such formality in family worship, that every member of the household can tell almost exactly what is going to be prayed for. Sometimes this same thing is seen in the public assembly also. Now, all such things as these are merely mocking of God. 7. Again, let me say, all matters of form, and stereotyped ways of doing things in public worship, that are done as things of course, because they are accustomed to be done: the want of sincerity, and the general state of mind implied in all this, is mocking God. For example, congregations are in the habit of doing certain things in a certain order. Sing! read! pray! sing! preach! sing! dismiss! Now, this is all very well if these things are done in the spirit of them; but suppose a congregation get into such a state that they do not enter into the spirit of the service, they mock God by the performance! For example, the minister reads the hymn and the people begin to sing; they are affected by the sound of the music, and in consequence think themselves very religious. It is a very common thing for individuals to suppose that they are very devotional, because they have some sort of emotional feelings when some plaintive hymn is being sung. For many years before I was converted, I led the music in a public assembly. I could shed tears in singing oftimes; and so deep were my emotions frequently, that I used to take a self-righteous satisfaction in such feelings; but I was an impenitent sinner and a mocker of God. This is no uncommon thing. Some people who have been living in sin all day, and, having no purpose of amendment, can sit down and sing God's praises. Without being in a state of devotion, and never having given their hearts to God at all, they will sing such lines as these--

"Had I a thousand hearts to give,

Lord they should all be thine."

Indeed! when you have not given him the one that you have got! They will also sing--

"When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince the Glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride."

Who does not know that it is common for persons to sing these hymns whose lives tell you that they are not devoted to God! And who will deny that this is dreadful mockery! What can be more solemn and horrible mockery than for a man with a wicked heart to sing such expressions as these. Now, let me say, there is a vast amount of this in religious assemblies. And there is a vast amount of self-deception. I have observed in many places where I have been since I have been in the ministry, that just in proportion as a congregation loses the spirit of true religion, the true spirit of prayer, the true spirit of zeal and devotedness, they will spend their time in singing. You appoint a prayer-meeting to pray for sinners; but, instead of praying they will spend their time in singing. As many long hymns as you please they will sing, but make very short and lifeless prayers. They will amuse themselves by singing hymns, because they can do that and yet go on in their worldly and sinful indulgences; but they have not the heart to pray. Again and again have I known instances in which meetings have been called to pray for sinners, when those who have met to pray have spent nearly the whole time in singing. Instead of considering the guilt and danger of these sinners, and beseeching the throne of God in their behalf--instead of calling mightily upon God to lay hold of them and save them, they have spent their time in singing long hymns. Indeed, it is universally true, that professors will sing in proportion to their want of spiritual life. Ask them to pray, and they would rather sing, and by so doing frequently deceive themselves. I have seen so much of this mocking God in singing, that when I have taken up my hymn-book, I have been afraid to read a hymn for the congregation to sing, lest they should mock God. When I have known the state which they were in, and have had reason to believe the great mass of them were in a state of spiritual death, I have asked, Can you sing this? Can you--dare you sing it? Shall we quench the Holy Ghost in our hearts, and drive him from the assembly? Now, congregations very frequently, and professors of religion too, in singing oftimes grieve and quench the Holy Spirit of God. If the heart does not mean what the lips express, you mock God.

8. Again: Persons often mock God at the Communion Table. What do they profess when they come to the Communion Table? Do they not profess to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ? Do they not profess by this act to pledge themselves afresh to him? And is this always the temper of mind in which they come? Is it not true, that many come to the table of the Lord as a mere matter of form, because they dare not stay away, and thus become mockers of God. Suppose any come with

enmity and malignity in their hearts towards any of their brethren, or with a consciousness of having oppressed and injured those whom they may have in their employ, without having made restitution, do they not mock God, and grieve the Holy Spirit? To be sure they do! Although this is one of the most exalted means of grace, yet how often is it abused by persons coming to it in an improper state of mind and heart! Thus they mock God, and bring leanness into their own souls. 9. Again: Persons often mock God in professing to give thanks for his mercies. How often is giving of thanks but a mere matter of form? I recollect on one occasion having a note put into my hands by the deacon of a church where I was preaching, requesting me to return thanks for some person who had been ill. I found this was a common custom, for the request was partly in print. What was I to do? I did not know that this person was sincere; I did not know that he was a Christian. Must I tell God that this individual came to thank him for his mercies when it might not be true? What could I do? Was I to do as I was desired because it was a custom? Was I to play the hypocrite in the presence of God and the congregation? And yet how often do ministers conform to this custom when there is reason to believe that the person for whom the thanks are requested has no gratitude in the heart at all. Now, it is true a congregation may themselves thank God, although the individual for whom the thanks are returned does not mean it; nevertheless, I have quivered sometimes when such things have been thrown upon me. I have been afraid to return thanks for individuals. I have asked myself, How shall I dare to appear before God as a mere matter of form or custom? Now, I am not finding fault with persons for returning thanks, for I think it is wise and proper to recognize the hand of God in everything. It is everybody's duty to do so, but let us beware lest we be found lying to the Holy Ghost, who requires truth in the inward parts, and abhors that which does not come from the heart. 10. Again, persons often mock God in the public consecration of their children to him in baptism, and especially in certain forms of consecration. Sponsors--godfathers and godmothers, as they are sometimes called--pledge themselves before high heaven on behalf of the children, that they will ensure their being Christians, and perhaps never see them again. What awful and intolerable pretense is this to make before a heart-searching God! If those who do not adhere to these forms profess to bring their children to God and dedicate them to him in baptism, and yet do not realize what is implied in the act, they are in danger of bringing upon themselves and their children that punishment which God will inflict upon those who mock him. 11. Again: All mere compliance with custom in private or public worship; to say and do things because they are customarily said and done, is mocking God. 12. Again: Saying the Lord's prayer is often a mere mockery, as all of you must be fully aware, from beginning to end! We now come to notice, very briefly--

III. *Some of the consequences of mocking God.* The Bible says, in the words of our text--"Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." What is meant by this? 1. The fact is, mocking God grieves the Holy Spirit, and sears the conscience; and thus the bands of sin become stronger and stronger. The heart becomes gradually hardened by such a process. Why should it not? Why should not the heart become fearfully hardened by such trifling with divine things? When individuals accustom themselves to say things without meaning, the effect must be that they come to disbelieve in them altogether, and their hearts become hard and callous to the invitations of the Gospel. 2. And not only do the bands of sin become strong, but delusion becomes strong. Their minds become so darkened that they lose all sense of what is true, spiritual, and good, in relation to religion, the Bible, and everything else. If I had time I might notice some facts on this subject, that have come under my own observation, but there is little need of this; I doubt not that most of you have witnessed the dreadful results of formality in religion, in hardening the heart, and perverting the mind from a perception of all that is true. Things that would affect the ungodly do not affect them at all. For example, if you can get an infidel to go away by himself and pray, he will find it a very solemn and awful business to speak to God; and will be impressed ten times more than the man who has for years been mocking God by his formality, and pretending to pray all his life. Men become gospel--hardened by mocking God. They mock God until the truth of God ceases to affect them. Their hearts have become so dead and their consciences so stupefied, that when God's voice calls upon men to repent, it passes right by them without affecting them in the least. 3. Again: They will get into such a state, and their darkness becomes so great, that they think and profess they are doing their duty, when they are only mocking God by their heartless formality. And, of course, the more such persons abound in their duty, the more are they hardened in sin. Who does not know this? Formalists are the most hardened class, because they mock God the most. It is always so, that just in proportion as persons about in mere form, they become hardened in sin before God.

A few remarks must close what I have to say. Stereotyped forms tend to divert the mind from a true idea of religion. I have found that all forms of worship

must, from the very nature of the case, tend to make men formalists, and blind their minds to a true idea of the spirituality of religion. For example, what true idea of prayer has the man who reads his prayer from a book? What is prayer? Why, it is the language of the heart, coming to God for the supply of its wants; like a little child coming to its parents for something that it wishes for. The child comes to its parent and asks, because it feels that it wants, and knows where it can get what it wants. Now, suppose a child, when it wanted a piece of bread, should read a prayer to its parent, without the word bread being mentioned in it; or if it was mentioned at the end, he must go right through the whole of the prayer before he got to it, and thus get his petition before his parent. Prayer is the language of the heart addressed to God. The language of those who feel that they are in need of something which God can bestow. Now, suppose prayer should be regarded in any other light; the man begin to use a form of words which he calls prayer, because he thinks it is his duty, why he loses the true idea of prayer altogether. This is how persons often lose all true idea of religion and spiritual worship. Thus it was with the Jewish nation--they lost the true idea of religion in the multitude of their forms and ceremonies. Again, I remark, that without great care we are all liable to fall into the sin of insincerity. Be perfectly upright with God in your closet. I have been long satisfied that much of the backsliding we are called to witness, is caused by insincerity in private devotion. If any man is not honest with God in private, neither will he be honest in public, and thus his mind and soul will become ruined and alienated from God. It is but right and proper that every time we meet together for public worship, the minister should offer public prayer to God, but it never need be insincere prayer, for if the minister lives near to God, as he ought, he will always find enough to say. Yes, more than he could utter if he were to talk from morning till night. And if he does not walk with God, it were much better to say nothing at all, and not insult and grieve the Spirit of God by using language that is not dictated by the heart. Once more, from what has been said, you see how it is that some leaders in religious services become so excessively hardened. I have known some of this class in the midst of a revival so cold and callous that the truth never served to touch them at all. Now, there is nothing that will so soon blast and destroy the spirituality and prosperity of a Church, as men of this sort being leaders and chief men in the Church. The Lord deliver us from such. Again, persons should beware of anything like formality in their family worship. I know that some people think forms are better than nothing in a family, but I don't believe it. I am confident that nothing tends so much to ruin a family. It will make the children despise religion, and become hardened to its influence.

My beloved brethren, how is it with you, you that profess to be Christians? Are you honest with God; does he know that you are? Do you confess that sometimes you are not, and do you ask what you shall do when you do not feel in the spirit of prayer? Why, begin right there, and tell God that you have not the spirit of prayer. There is something true; some place where you can begin. Is it that you don't feel right? Then tell God that. Are you not in the spirit of prayer? Tell him that! If you want the Holy Spirit, tell him that! If you have sinned, confess that! Be honest, and make no pretense whatever. Let sincerity be the habit of your life, and you will always have something to say to God; your love, faith, and devotion will be strengthened, and your soul blessed. If you are honest with God, you will always find him honest with you! Some years ago I was acquainted with a young man who had been studying for the ministry; this young man, soon after he had completed his college course, became the subject of a very strong conviction that much of his religious profession had been nothing but a mockery. One night he retired to rest, and after having put out the light and laid down in the bed, he was very much surprised to see the room re-lighted; he sat up in the bed and looked to see whence the light came; he perceived a person in the room looking very earnestly at him, standing at the foot of the bed; in a few moments the whole light of the room concentrated itself into a single eye, and that eye was fixed intensely upon him. He trembled violently, and was in a state of dreadful agony: the eye continued to glare upon him, looking him through and through, searching his very thoughts. He never forgot this searching; it so completely subdued him, that he came to be one of the most holy men and devoted ministers I ever knew. One of the deacons wrote to me a short time ago, and said, "Mr. Hopkins is gone to heaven; we want some one to supply his place, but we cannot expect another Mr. Hopkins." Now, he became what he was, because the Spirit searched him and revealed his heart to himself. Oh, for the Spirit to search every one of us! Let him begin with me! Brethren, pray that my heart may be searched; that the hearts of all your ministers may be searched; that your own hearts may be searched. Pray that God may search us all, that we may be mercifully kept from mocking God, lest our bands be made strong.

THE CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER

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"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. vii. 7, 8. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James iv. 3.

These two passages of Scripture may seem to contradict each other, yet they do not. Matthew affirms that all prayer is heard and answered -- "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." James says that some ask, and do not receive; and inquires the reason why. Yet, I repeat, these Scriptures do not contradict each other by any means. When it is said, that "every one that asketh receiveth," we are to understand, of course, that there is a right asking, and a wrong asking; for what James says will compel us to do this, were we not otherwise disposed to do it. James says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss;" which informs us that there are certain conditions for a right asking, and that there is such a thing as asking amiss. There are few persons who have not, some time or other, felt stumbled on reading these passages. So much is said in the Scriptures about God's answering, while so much is prayed for that is not answered, that it is a sore trial to many minds. It was to myself a stumbling-block; for some time, I could not understand at first how it could be that such unqualified assertions, as those which are made by Matthew, were consistent with the fact that so much prayer remained unanswered. My mistake was twofold - 1. I expected all prayer to be answered literally; overlooking the fact, that God often answers prayer according to the spirit, when he does not answer it precisely according to the letter. We have an illustration of this in the case of Paul, when he prayed to be delivered from the thorn in the flesh. This "thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure," because of the abundance of the revelations which had been committed unto him. Christ had a particular object in giving him this thorn in the flesh, whatever it might have been. It appeared that Paul was distressed about it; and he besought Christ to remove it. His object was not selfish. It would interfere with his usefulness, he thought. Now, Christ did not grant the letter of this petition, yet he granted the spirit of it. He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" informing him that he had this thorn in the flesh for a good purpose; that it should not prove an injury, or stand in the way of his influence, but that his grace should be "sufficient" for him, Paul now says, he "gloried in his infirmities;" in short, instead often persisting in desiring to have the thorn removed, he rather gloried in it, that the power of Christ might rest upon him, assured that the thing he feared should not come upon him. This was all he wanted. He did not want the thorn removed, if it would not injure his usefulness. Let this illustrate what I mean. I said I stumbled, and many others have done so, because they did not understand that prayer is frequently answered, not according to the letter, but the true spirit-- the substance and essence is granted, though not in the way which was expected.

2. Another mistake I fell in to, and which I suppose is common among intelligent men, was, that I overlooked the fact that there are certain conditions expressed in the Bible, upon which prayer may be expected to be answered, and that there is a distinction between that which is commonly regarded as prayer, and that which God regards as such. As soon as my attention was directed to that question, I was satisfied that the difficulty lay, not in the Bible not being true the difficulty was not that God was a hearer, and not an answerer of prayer but that he himself had pointed out certain conditions upon which he would answer it, expressly in some instances, always impliedly, and that we need not expect an answer, except upon those conditions.

No doubt, God often listens to the cry of distress, without regard to the character of the petitioner, or whether he has any character at all. In other words, I suppose he often hears the moanings of animals in distress, and comes to their assistance; he hears the young-ravens when they cry; he even hears human beings that is, he can do it, and he is disposed to do it, when he can do so consistently with his relations to the universe. This, however, is not prayer; it is merely the cry of anguish. God comes to the relief of such whenever he can properly do it. I would not throw a stumbling-block in the way of those who have this in their minds; no doubt, there is a cry of distress, but I have to speak to that prayer which is heard and answered. In hearing the cry of distress, without regard to the character, motives, or designs of the petitioners, it is a mere breaking forth of God's benevolence, without having given any pledge that he would bear and answer such petitions.

But there is a kind of prayer to which God stands Pledged to give an answer, and it is of that kind of prayer that I propose to treat this evening; and

especially, I desire to enter to-night upon some of the conditions that God has himself revealed to us. Let me read a passage to illustrate what I mean," Beloved, if our heart condemn us not then we have confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John iii. 21, 22). Now, what have we here? By the term "heart," we understand conscience; for it is our conscience that condemns us. If our conscience condemns us not, God is greater than our conscience, and must condemn us all the more. If God much more condemn us, his dominion is greater and much more searching even than that of our conscience. But "if the heart condemn us not," this plainly implies, if we do not keep a conscience void of offense towards God and man, we cannot expect answers to our prayers. If we have violations of conscience, sins of omission, and sins of commission anything conscience condemns, conscience admonishes us God is not pleased with us, and, therefore, we cannot expect an answer to our supplications. This is not directly affirmed, but it is plainly implied, in our text. "If the heart condemns us," God much more condemns us. This means, that if our hearts condemn us not, then we may expect an answer to prayer; but if our hearts do condemn us, we cannot, and we ought not, to expect an answer to our petitions. It is clear, therefore,

1. A clear conscience a conscience void of offense is a revealed condition of prevailing prayer. Where persons allow themselves in anything, their consciences do not approve, or where they live in any neglect or commission in any state of mind for which their conscience condemns them, and God all the more condemns them, how can they expect to prevail with God? Why, they are living in such a manner that their own consciences affirm that they are not devoted to God!

The Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm lxvi. 18). Here we have the fact clearly stated.

2. The rejection not only of sins of the outward life but the rejection of heart sins, is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer. In the first passage I have read, it is merely implied, that if we do not keep a conscience void of offense if we do not reject the sins both of our heart and life we cannot expect him to hear us. In the second passage, this is expressly affirmed" if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." What is this? Why, if you have iniquity in your hearts. What are heart sins? Every form of selfishness belongs to the heart, as does all sin, or, properly speaking, every species of self-seeking. God expressly says, he will not hear you. Will not this account for the fact, that many do that which they call "praying," without prevailing with God?

3. But, again: A spirit of universal obedience is another revealed condition of prevailing prayer. it is said, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 9). The term "law," is here used to include the whole of the revealed will of God, and is inclusive of whatever God reveals as his will to men. "Turning away," here implies unwillingness to obey a spirit of disobedience. Now, here we are informed, that whomever is in that state of mind unwilling to obey God" his prayer shall be abomination." But we also do well in such cases to inquire, what is it to turn away the ear, as the term is here used? All neglect to attend to what God says, is turning away the ear; all refusal or neglect to obey what God requires, is turning away the ear; everything of this kind is implied in turning away the ear. Wherever persons pretend in some things to obey God, while in other things they disobey him, this is turning away the ear. Universal obedience-- a state of mind desirous of doing whatever God's known law requires-- is, therefore, a necessary condition of prevailing prayer.

4. Being and abiding in Christ, is another revealed condition of prevailing prayer. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). It is also said, "That if a man abide not in me" that is, in Christ" he is cast forth as a branch, and is with"; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John xv. 6). Surely a man that abides not in Christ, cannot be expected to be in a state of mind to prevail with God.

It cannot be doubted, therefore, that except you abide in Christ, you cannot prevail in prayer with God. What is it, then, to abide in Christ? it is, to live and walk in the spirit, to have Christ dwelling in us and we so dwelling in him, that his spirit shall influence us- in other words, it is a yielding of ourselves completely up to him in confidence, embracing him in faith, and so completely abiding in and committing yourselves up to him, as to be brought under his influence.

Now, except we be thus united to Christ by faith, so that God regards us as being in Christ, and as receiving things for Christ's sake, and through Christ, we cannot expect to prevail with him.

This is abundantly taught in the Bible. We must be so united to him by faith, as really to walk in the spirit of Christ. He says, if we are in this state, whatsoever we ask, he will give us. How is this? He must mean a good deal by being in him, if, when we are in him, and his

word abides in us, we shall have whatsoever we ask; for this is certainly a very extensive promise. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Now, again: "Ye shall ask what ye will." This plainly implies, that persons who are in Christ, in the sense here meant, are in such a state of mind as never to ask anything of Christ, the true spirit of which it is not proper for him to grant. He would not dare to make such a promise, unless he knew that if a person really abode in him, in this sense, he would only ask what could be consistently granted. It is of great importance that we should understand what is really implied in this. What striking passages are these He says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Does he mean, that the person being and abiding in him, should ask anything whatever, and it should be granted? Or does he mean, that you would always ask according to his will that you would, in that state of mind, never ask anything contrary to the revealed will of God that the true spirit of your petitions would always be in precise accordance with his will.

If he did not mean this, he could not make such a promise. He leaves the promise without any limitation "Ask what ye will;" this must imply, they will not have the will to ask anything contrary to the revealed will of Christ, and that those who are really in Christ, abiding in Christ, are taught by the Spirit of God to pray in a much higher sense than people generally suppose. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, became he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans viii. 26, 27). Here, then we have it revealed that the saints are led to pray.

Those that abide in Christ, walk and live in his spirit, we are informed are led to pray for things according to the will of God in other words, they are led to pray for those things which God would grant.

Now, if we really are in Christ, and abide in him, and his words abide in us, in the sense he must mean here, the spirit of our prayers will always be in accordance with his will. He may, therefore, with the utmost safety, promise to grant all that such persons would ask. Christ did not mean to say, that every such petition would be granted to the letter, but that their hearts would be in such a state living in the spirit of prayer they would be so led, that the spirit of their petitions would always be granted. But this implies plainly, that then are some persons who are not in such a state that they can expect an answer to their petitions.

If a man does not abide in Christ, and Christ's words do not abide in him, his prayer is not in the spirit that Christ himself would pray in, and it, therefore, cannot be expected to prevail. The first Sabbath I preached here, I preached upon two petitions of the Lord's prayer, and then I clearly I set forth the state of mind in which we could sincerely offer the Lord's prayer. Now, this state of mind is undoubtedly a condition of prevailing prayer; but as I explained then at large, I now will only say, to be in a state of mind in which you can sincerely offer the Lord's prayer, is a condition of prevailing prayer.

5. Ardent desire is a condition of prevailing prayer. It is one thing to say prayer, and quite another thing to be exercised with a strong desire. Prayer, when prevalent, is a strong desire of the heart to have a certain blessing. What would be thought of an individual who should petition the government of this country for a certain thing, and immediately become careless about it; and even almost forget what he had been seeking? Yet does not this resemble the prayer of some persons?

Those who pray in the spirit of prayer, pray with a strong desire. The capital spirit itself is said to make intercession for the saints, in groanings that cannot be uttered.

6. A willingness to have our prayers answered, is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer. Persons often pray, when they would be very unwilling to have their prayers answered. They often ask things of God, which they would not have answered except upon certain conditions of their own. They would have God take their way of answering them, and are not willing that he should take his own way. Now, unless they are willing that God should answer them in his own way that he should use the essential means, and fulfill the essential conditions of answering them, why, of course, their prayers cannot be expected to prevail.

Men often ask things, which cannot be done without strong measures, which would greatly agonize, distress, and as far as this world's goods are concerned, ruin the fortunes of those who pray for them. If we seek things of God, we must be willing to submit the manner to him, and that they may be given us in any way that shall seem good to him. If we ask for more faith, or to be perfected in love, we must, of course, be willing that God should take his own method that he should remove whatever stands in the way of it that he should take away whatever idol we have that he should do what is necessary to be done, in order to answer our requests.

Sometimes persons pray, when really in their hearts they interpose conditions. They would have God humble them, if he could do it without disgracing them, or destroying their property. They would have God sanctify them, if it can be done without breaking off their self-indulgences. Things, however, cannot be granted without the removal of obstacles; and to pray acceptably, we must be willing to part with a right hand or to put out a right eye, if these things stand in the way of God's granting our request.

Suppose a person pray to be made holy, for example, he must be willing to be made holy; and if there shall be any stumbling-block in the way any besetting sin any unmortified appetite, any passion, any propensity, he must be willing to give it up. If he is unwilling, and insists that the blessing must be granted in his own way, why then he cannot be said to pray acceptably. Again, the man who would pray God acceptably to be made holy, must love his enemies. The man who would pray to be holy, and yet continue in the practice of certain forms of sin, is tempting him, because he is to unwilling to yield up his idols, to be crucified to the world. Persons must be willing to be, to do, to suffer, whatever is implied in having their prayers answered, or indispensable to having them answered, or they do not pray acceptably. Were they to examine the matter, they would often find the difficulty in themselves; they are praying for things which they know themselves to need, but are really making such conditions and reservations that their prayer cannot be accepted.

I could relate, if I had time, and it were worth while, a great many particular cases which have, come under my own observation, of persons who have begun to question whether God was really willing to hear prayer, and whether prayer had any such prevalence as it is represented to have in the Bible; but by and by they come to understand that the difficulty was not in God, but that they were really unwilling that God should give them what they sought, on those terms on which alone he could do so. Many persons pray that they maybe Christians, but all the time are unwilling to be Christians, and when they come to conceive rightly of what it is to be a Christian, they perceive that they are entirely unwilling to have their prayers answered.

I recollect the case of a young lady, who professed to have an intense willingness to become a Christian. She had prayed a great deal, and had done all that she supposed that she possibly could; and finally, after making these pretenses, after a long time, during which her mind was strongly exercised about her soul, one day she retired to her chamber to pray. She knelt down, but before she opened her mouth it was shown her what was implied in becoming a Christian living a holy life. Certain things came on strongly before her, as to what it was necessary to be, to do, and to suffer, in order to be a Christian, that she said it seemed to be put to her, as if God himself had put it to her before her face, "Are you willing that every obstacle shall be removed? Furthermore, it seemed clear, that if she would ask sincerely, her prayer would be granted. But as soon as she saw what was really implied, she rose up and went away, and would not ask. She saw she had not heart to attempt it. So it often is, where persons continue praying, until they doubt whether God be willing to answer prayer, and are ready to accuse him of being unfaithful. At length they see that, within themselves, they are not really willing to receive the true spirit of the thing which they seek.

7. But I may remark again: disinterestedness is a condition of prevailing prayer. James says, "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." I do not mean by this absence of interest, that nothing should be sought, but directly opposite. We should desire, but it should be for a right reason. Suppose an individual prays for his own sanctification, why desires he it? Is it merely for the pleasure or the honor of being sanctified? What does he want to be sanctified for? Is it not to affect a removal of the trouble and disgrace attending on sin? Is it not that he may enter the perpetual sunshine, and happiness, and joy of God's peace? Is this the reason? Does he seek it for his own particular benefit for some selfish reason? No wonder, then, if he asks in this way, that he is not answered. He asks selfishly. Suppose you are wounded to the heart at a world around you living in sin; if your object is to glorify God, your eye is single to this; you want to hold up the true light of the gospel, that men may understand what it is, that their souls may be enlightened, saved; if such be your object, and such alone, than you are sympathizing with God, and you are asking the blessing for the same reason that God would give it you. Again, do you sympathize with God's motives, plans, and designs! If persons ask for blessings, they must sympathize with God in this respect. They must ask for a reason for which God can consistently give. It must not be such a reason as God would blush to acknowledge to have influenced his conduct; but such as to justify him in the sight of every moral agent in the universe.

A selfish petition, therefore, will have no influence with God. It would disgrace him if it should. Petitions must be free from selfishness. We must rise above mere selfish considerations, and take into view the great reason for which God answers prayer. If persons would pray, for

example, for their own holiness and sanctification, it should be because they sympathize with God's view of sin. They must be willing to be holy, whatever fiery trials the attainment and maintenance of holiness may lead them through. Men take a wrong view of this matter, supposing sanctification has no trials, whereas it often tests and tries men, in order that they and every one else may see what God has done for them.

When God gives great blessing, he does not intend that they should be hid under a bushel. When he gives persons great grace, he always places them in a position to try them. If they do not pass through seasons to try them, how should anybody know that God had given them great grace? Now, are you willing to be sanctified, cost what it may? willing to give up all iniquity in every form, let the consequence be what it may, so that God may be glorified?

8. You must have right motives, too, for praying for others, as well as when praying for yourselves; as, for instance, when interceding for your children, your husbands, your wives. I recollect the case of a woman who had a husband who was impenitent. I questioned her as to the manner in which she prayed, and she told me that she had prayed for a long time, that she had not given up, and did not mean to give up, but that she did not know why it was she was never answered. I then asked her, why she prayed for it at all? She said, "Oh! I should enjoy myself so much better it would be altogether much more comfortable for me." Everything she said clearly showed that it was for her own comfort she wanted her husband converted. I could get nothing else out of her but this. I told her, therefore, that it was no wonder her Prayers were not answered, whilst she was so perfectly selfish, and did not enter into God's reasons at all. Now, parents pray for their children in the same spirit. It is merely a selfish thing they have in view. They pray, not because they at all sympathize with God in respect to them.

A circumstance was related to me at a place where there was a revival of religion The minister was going out in the morning to visit some inquirers, and he called upon one of the principal persons in the place, who said to him, "What should you think of a man praying for the Holy Spirit day after day, and his prayer remaining unanswered?" "Why," said the minister, "I should fear he was praying from wrong motives." "What motives should he have?" "What motives have you? Do you want to enjoy your money more, and be happier? The devil might have such a reason as this." The minister then quoted the words of the Psalmist, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee." He turned away from the minister, and he said afterwards, that the first thought that arose in his mind was a hope that he might never see him again, so angry was he. He saw at once that his prayer had always been selfish. He was struck with this, yet so great was his pride, that when he discovered that he had always been selfish, that he had never had a true idea of religion or prayer in his mind, that he was perfectly selfish, and nothing less than a hollow-hearted professor, that he prayed to God to take his life. He felt that he would rather die, even should he go to hell, than, after sustaining such a position in the Church as he had, the people should know that he had been deceiving and deceived. Soon afterwards he was converted, and then he saw clearly where he had been. The fact that we ask and receive not, is accounted for by the fact that we ask amiss, that we "may consume it upon our lusts." This is a great truth, which many persons would do well to ponder instead of accusing God, as they do, of not giving them what they ask?

Faith, also, is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer. As you all very well know, this is affirmed expressly in the Bible" Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and have been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandmen waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receiveth the early and latter rain." In other words, it is often affirmed and everywhere it is always implied.

9. Again, we are to pray in the name of Christ. This is so often implied in the Bible, that I need not quote any passages. Let us inquire what is meant by praying it, the name of Christ. How are we to use Christ's name? Perhaps I had better not enlarge under this head here. It is too extensive for the few remarks I shall now be able to give it. At a future time I will enlarge more upon this than I can at present. There is a great mistake among professors of religion in this respect. Many do not understand what is meant. They do not, therefore, make such use of Christ's name as to prevail. Christ's name, properly used, is as prevalent in the mouth of his people, as in his own. If used, as he intended it should be used, it is just as prevalent in their hands as in his own. Suppose Baron Rothschild were to lend a man, in this city, his name; and suppose that such an individual were to go to the Bank, and stumble at his own poverty! if he had Baron Rothschild's signature, which is well known at the Bank, how does he go? Does he go as if poor? Too poor to have such a name prevail for him? Not he indeed; he can get any amount of money he

pleases. His own poverty is no stumbling-block at all in his way. But I will not enlarge. This is a condition of prevailing prayer.

10. Perseverance is another condition of prevailing prayer, and to be in the spirit of prayer we must have it. We have some striking instances of this in the Bible. For instance, take the cases of Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and the Syrophoenician woman. I cannot enlarge here. I must defer this also to another time. Your spirit, though distressed, should not be at all disheartened; when individuals really have the spirit of prayer, and set themselves to prevail with God, they are not disheartened because they do not at once prevail, but follow up petition with request, turning them over and over.

Take the case of Jacob, for example. How very affecting were the circumstances under which he is represented as prevailing with God! He wrestled all night. It must have appeared to him, as if it was determined not to answer him. He seemed rather to resist him. The circumstances were these: Jacob, on account of his conduct towards his brother, had fled from his country, and remained absent for a long time, until God promised him that he would go with him and bless him.

On his way, he was informed that Esau was coming with large hosts and he had every reason to believe that he would take vengeance upon him for his past misconduct. This, of course, greatly distressed him. He made every arrangement which a prudent man would naturally make, in order, if possible, to propitiate Esau. He sent on persons before him, and then he retired alone to pray. Doubtless, Jacob had a great weight on his mind. He remembered, most likely, how he had injured Esau how he became possessed of his birth-right, and, therefore, he feared that Esau would take vengeance. He had God's promise, and he went aside to plead with God. For a time, the Almighty seemed to resist him. He struggled, but he could not overcome. He continued to struggle and to pray throughout the night. God seemed to take every way to try him. He had many confessions to make, and a great deal of breaking down to undergo, just as in those struggles which some of you can instance in your own experience, when you have set your heart upon obtaining a blessing, and believe some point is not exactly clear between you and God.

In such times you have felt yourselves in such agony, that the perspiration has poured down you, and even if you have not obtained, yet you have not given up the struggle, until you have finally humbled yourselves. Then you have prevailed. This was the case with Jacob. He needed to be humbled and broken down. Probably, till then, he never saw his conduct towards Esau exactly in the proper light. He struggled; God resisted. Yet he continued to struggle. God touched his thigh, and made him a cripple to the end of his life. Nevertheless, when he could wrestle no longer, still he held on, exclaiming, "I will not let thee go," though God told him to do so. "I will not let thee go," he says, "except thou bless me." Had he a right to say this? Yes, he had. He had God's express promise; therefore he would do it. God seemed as if he was not going to fulfil his promise. Doubtless, this delay, however, was of great importance. Jacob's mind was preparing to receive the blessing in such a manner as would do good. Jacob was determined not to be denied as if he had said, "Thou hast promised, and I will not be denied!" This is not impudence. He did not mean that Jacob should be disheartened, although severely tried, as was necessary.

He had not only much to confess but much to promise. There was a great and a wonderful struggle within. Now mark, suppose he had not held on what then? The fact is, he did hold on till the very last. What a remarkable answer, when he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." God said, "What is thy name?" I suppose Jacob blushed when he answered that his name was Jacob, which means a supplanter. He confessed his name was a supplanter, and he was a supplanter, because he had supplanted his brother Esau. I am a suplanter! That's my name. What a significant circumstance was this. Jacob was so bold and so vehement, that he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." "What is thy name," said the Almighty, "that thou shouldest presume thus?" "My name," said he, "is Jacob." God said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis xxxii. 28). "No more shalt thou be called Jacob" the matter was settled. He was a supplanter all along. You will recollect from the circumstance of his birth, how he came to be named Jacob how he cried out, and illustrated his name by taking the birthright of his brother. Jacob all along had proved himself to be rightly named, but after this mighty exercise of faith, this taking hold and keeping hold of God's promises, under all those discouraging circumstances for these things, God did well to alter his name, that it might remind him no more of his having been a supplanter, and to give him one which should remind him of his having had power with God and prevailed.

Again- take the case of Moses. He stepped foreword, as it were, and took hold of the uplifted hand of the Almighty. God promised Moses that a certain thing should be done for the people; but the people had

sinned, and gone into idolatry. Then he said, "Let me alone, that I may consume them in a moment" (Numbers xvi. 21). What a peculiar position did he place himself in! It might have been a temptation to a man of less grace to have given up. God had promised to make of him a great nation. Some men might have said, "Well, if God will make of me a great nation let them be consumed; they are rebels, and have destroyed themselves." But Moses said, "What will the Egyptians say?" See his regard for God's honour, and his persevering spirit. God seemed to have anticipated his prayer and forbade it. He did not mean this (it might have been, however, so to a man without Moses' confidence and grace). He said, "Let me alone that I may consume them, for they are a rebellious people." But no, Moses must step right forward to reason with God. "What will the Egyptians say ? What wilt thou do with thy great name ? Will not they say that thou hast taken them up into the wilderness on purpose to slay them? "Having asked, "What will the Egyptians say ?" he says, "Forgive them, or blot out my name from the book that thou hast written. "How beautiful was Moses' simple heartedness and confidence his determination to stand in the gap between God and the people! I shall not detain you any longer now, but I shall pursue the subject tomorrow evening. Amen.

HOW TO PREVAIL WITH GOD

A Lecture

Delivered on Wednesday, May 22, 1850,

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, UNITED STATES,

At the taernacle, moorefields.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh It shall be opened."--Matt. vii. 7, 8.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."--James iv. 3.

THE subject to which I spoke last evening I shall continue this evening--The Conditions of Prevailing Prayer. I noticed last evening several of these conditions, and announced that this evening I should pursue the subject. I was speaking of *Perseverance* being made a condition of prevailing with God. Sometimes. however, the circumstances are of such a character that there is *no time* for perseverance, in any such sense as to protract; if the prayers must necessarily be repeated, the object cannot be attained at all. But often there are very good reasons why the supplicant should be left to wrestle and persevere. God is anxious, by this means, to develops a certain state of mind, sometimes for the petitioner's benefit, sometimes for the benefit of others, or both of these together. Some came of this kind are recorded in Scripture, where God declined to answer at once, in order that he might develop a certain state of mind in the petitioner for the benefit of others. I shall instance some came of this kind. I noticed last evening that of Jacob as an example of perseverance in struggling--persisting in supplication, until he prevailed. I noticed, also the case of Moses, and was about to mention that of Elijah.

Elijah had the express promise of God that he would send rain upon the earth. When he had built an altar, slain the prophets of Baal, if you recollect, he gave himself to prayer, and sent his servant to see if there were any clouds arising. Elijah commenced praying. The servant went, but saw nothing. Elijah said, "Go again." I suppose he meant to say, "Keep on going until you see the approach of rain, for I must not leave this place till the blessing come." He had a strong desire for rain for the benefit of the people, but there were other reasons. God expressly promised it should come; he was determined its delay in coming should be no stumbling-block. He continued to press his suit, until at length a little cloud about the size of a man's hand was

discovered. He did not go and ask God, and then get up and go away, as is customary with many, who think that if God has promised anything, to be once reminded of his promise is sufficient. No, it was not so. The prophet had an urgent spirit--a spirit which would not let him leave the throne of grace. The servant went and came seven times, and the last time he said, "There is a little cloud rising, about the size of a man's hand." Observe the *perseverance*. Elijah refused to leave his position until rain came.

Again, take the *case of* Daniel. We have in Daniel (10th chapter) a very affecting instance of perseverance. I will read:-- "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled" (Daniel x. 2, 3). Then came the answer--I will not read the intervening verses, but pass on to the 12th,-- "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." Here it appears that a messenger had been sent to answer Daniel, but that he had been withstood by some agency; indeed, an infernal spirit, here called the Prince of Persia--for I think, if we read the connection, it is manifest that it was an infernal agent withstood the messenger sent to answer Daniel, until Michael, one of the chief princes, who was, some have supposed, the Messiah himself, came to help him. Daniel pressed his suit for the space of *twenty-one* days. There was no staying him till he had the answer.

The case of *the Syrophoenician woman* is another striking and affecting instance. This is recorded in the 15th chapter of Matthew. You will recollect the circumstances. The woman was not a Jewess, but her daughter was tormented by an infernal spirit, and she came to Christ to have it cast out. She fell down and worshipped him, and said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Now, the disciples were with the Saviour, who was crowded; she followed and made supplication, and wept along the road after them. They seeing that he took no notice, concluded that he was not going to answer her, and said, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." He replied, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now, as I have said, she was not a Jewess, but a Syrophoenician; however she was not discouraged, but continued crying. He at length addressed her-- "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." "Truth, Lord," says she; "I ask no such thing. I am willing to be compared to a dog. I do not resent this, nor do I ask the children's bread; but may not dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table?" What a spirit was this! Christ turned and said, "0 woman, great is thy faith; be it unto, thee even as thou wilt!" He had developed her faith. The disciples saw the spirit of perseverance and faith, and what confidence she had. With less confidence she might have been at first confounded or discouraged, when he said he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she was not to be discouraged by that. Notwithstanding this apparent discouragement, she would believe that she could get the blessing, therefore she pressed it still, only increasing in importunity, and would not be discouraged. Then he said, as if to try the temper of the woman--as every one can see what he said was calculated to do, he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs", almost treating her contemptuously; but she never resented it. "If you are going to treat me in this way," she might have said, "I won't speak to you any more. I did not come to seek the children's bread, but might I not have the crumbs which fall from the master's table?" Now, this is a beautiful instance, not only of perseverance, but of the *power and prevalence of this perseverance.*

In the 11th chapter of Luke, we have the case of the *unjust judge*, who neither feared God nor regarded man. There are two parables in Luke which are specially designed by the Saviour to teach the necessity and the power of perseverance, and the prayer is very striking in both these parables. Take the case of the unjust judge. "There was in a certain city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while, but afterwards said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her of her adversary." Now Christ did not intend here to compare God to the unjust judge, but he had to take a strong case, and therefore to give a strong illustration of the truth enforced. He says, perseverance in supplication overcame even the unjust judge. She so persevered that, to avoid her importunity to avoid being continually troubled by the woman, he would avenge her of her adversary. Christ tells us here what the unjust judge says, who neither feared God nor regarded man; and shall not God, who is not unjust--for this is the idea-- "shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?" Here was a judge who took no interest in the case, who cared not for the woman or her adversary,--who "neither feared God nor regarded man", but who, to avoid her importunity, avenged her of

her adversary. Now, if importunity could do this with such an individual, what shall it do with God? whose elect are dear to his heart, who cares for them and their cause, and when they importunately cry day and night unto him, shall he not avenge them? When the unjust judge was overcome by importunity, and with neither interest in the person or the cause, was moved by importunity, shall not God avenge his own elect? Yes, "he shall avenge them, and that speedily."

A curious circumstance occurred since I came to England; a party, whose name I have forgotten, but the circumstance was related to me while I was at Birmingham. A Christian man called to see me to relate a fact about himself. He had heard, from time to time, different things about prevailing prayer. He felt, he said, that it was his duty to state the fact to me, to show me how great was the faithfulness of God. It was of so extraordinary a character, involving such a principle, that I have thought of it almost ever since. "Some time back," said the gentleman, "a neighbour of mine lost his wife. When she was ill and nigh unto death, my wife went to nurse her, and staid with her till she breathed her last. After she returned home, I was satisfied that all was not right. Things kept showing themselves continually. Circumstances occurred to show me that all was not right between that man and my wife. I told her what I feared. She confessed her guilt, and not only so, but avowed her determination to quit me, and to live with him, whatever might come of it. 'What do you say? ' exclaimed I? I could not say anything more to her; but I went to God, and cried day and night unto him--'O God, wilt thou not avenge me of this mine adversary? 'For two weeks, I scarcely slept at all, but prayed and wept, sometimes in one position and sometimes in another. But for two weeks I gave God no rest, but prayed continually, 'O God, wilt thou not avenge me of this mine adversary? 'At the same time, I let my wife understand, that my arms and heart were open to receive her if she would return, and I would forgive her all the past. I kept myself in that position. I wept before God. I prayed, and I cried unto him to avenge me. At the end of the two weeks, she came back heart-broken, confessing her sin, humbling herself, and doing all that I could wish her to do; and she has since been all that I could wish her to be." What a striking case is this! Instead of at once turning her away, he went to God, and said, "O Lord, thou seest that this man hath torn away my very wife from my bosom! O God, avenge me of this mine adversary." If in any one case more than another, a man would feel a disinclination to make a matter the subject of prayer, it would be in such a case as this; yet he did, and prevailed in the extraordinary manner I have described.

Let me now present an instance of *importunity for others*, which is recorded in the 11th chapter of Luke. The Syrophoenician prayed for a blessing for herself. Christ given a parable illustrative of the power of importunity in praying for others. It was a case where an individual went to the house of a friend in the night, and said, "Friend, lend me three loaves;" but he would not do it. He and his children were in bed, and could not rise to give him what he wanted. The man, however, continued knocking and knocking, resolved to keep knocking all night; so he might as well get up first as last, or make up his mind to be awake all night. So much was he set on providing for the necessities of his friend who called upon him, that he would stand knocking like this; and though the individual would not get up because of his friend, yet because of the constant knocking, in that way, with such importunity, he got up and gave him as many as he pleased. Here, then, is an illustration of the great value of importunity when seeking blessings for our friends--those upon whose salvation we set our hearts. Here was an individual who wanted a blessing for his friend, and who would not suffer his other friend, from whom he could not get this blessing, to rest till be obtained it. The fact is, that cases oftentimes occur in which it appears as if God kept silence, and suffered individuals to importune with the greatest perseverance and solicitude, until a state of mind was developed, which is so striking as to be very edifying to all who see it, and particularly so to the petitioner himself.

Oftentimes, also, a condition of prevailing seems to be a *great degree of solicitude*, amounting almost to unutterable agony of mind. Blessings very great, which are sought, do not come, until we are so strongly excited in mind, as to be thrown into great agony--to travail in soul before God. Many professors of religion do not understand what this "travail of soul" is. It is spoken of repeatedly in the Bible as a state of mind to which great blessings are promised. The Apostle speaks of "travailing in birth" for those to whom he preached at Galatia. He says, "My little children have backslidden. To reclaim them gave him such agony of mind. When the Prophet speaks of seeing a man in a vision, he says, "Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child, wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned in to paleness?" Have you examined your Bible with marginal references, or a concordance, to see what that book really says on the subject? What is promised to that state of mind which amounts to

agony and travail of soul? This is a delicate subject, yet it is so often dwelt upon in the Bible that persons should search not only what the Scriptures say, but be willing just to sympathize with God so deeply, that their souls travail in birth until other souls are born to God, I do not say now, or suppose that in all instances, this spirit is indispensable to prevail. But it often is. On the first establishment of Christianity, it was so common, that the Apostle speaks of it as a thing well known to Christians. He says, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself also maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans viii. 26).

My hearers, do you know what this is? In the great revivals that prevailed in America some years since, some striking instances of the prevalence of prayer occurred, as also in the days of President Edwards, as well as in Scotland. In various parts of Great Britain, too, where revivals prevailed, there was a remarkable spirit of prayer. I have witnessed much of this myself. An aged minister, well known by name to many of you, mentioned this fact to me. He had not at that time been in those revivals much, but two of his daughters had grown up in impenitence. He told me the great exercise of mind he had had previous to their conversion, and when I told him that it was a thing perfectly common to revivals, be felt surprised that he should have so long overlooked what the Bible says on this subject. The man was so exercised that he could not sleep. So great was the weight upon him that he struggled until he said he told the Lord that "he must die or his daughters must be converted." He felt that his soul was loaded with such an unutterable agony, that he really must die unless that petition was granted. He was literally in travail of soul for them. Often when I have seen Christians in this state--in expressing the state of their minds to me, they have used the very language of Scripture. They have said again and again, "My soul travaileth day and night, I cannot live unless I see the salvation of God." Such persons, when in such a state of mind, are generally not disposed to see company, or to go anywhere, more than they can help. They want to be with God as much as possible. They have deep seasons of sighing unawares--seeking to be alone with God; and could you but hear and see how they wrestle with God, you might, perhaps, feel astonished at the holy boldness and confidence such a soul would manifest in its intercourse with God. You would hear such expressions, and see such a mighty wrestling as you would probably never forget. I have known such things, that where I am a stranger I have been afraid to tell them, lest, the people should think them untrue. I have often witnessed things in revivals of religion, of a character so extraordinary--I have often seen answers to prayer bordering so closely upon the miraculous, that I feel afraid to tell them where I am unknown. The fact is, that the answers to prayer which have come under my notice, have been most wonderful, both in America and in this country, to the great astonishment of those who have not understood them.

But, let me say again: that all the hindrances of prevailing prayer, may be summed up in one, which is one of the greatest, if not the greatest of the difficulties--I refer to *a want of sympathy with God*. How can people hope to prevail with God, unless they sympathize with him? When men really sympathize with him in such a manner as not to stickle at self-denial--when they are imbued with the spirit that led Christ to make the atonement--that led Christ to deny himself, and to do all that he did--to have such a state of mind is a great difficulty. Christ needs his Church to sympathize with him, and while they do not sympathize with him, and are not in a state of mind to deny themselves of even trifling gratifications, for the sake of doing good to the worldly-minded, how can they expect to prevail with God?

This leads me to say again, a state of mind which will not grieve the Spirit of God, but will watch against everything which does grieve the Spirit of God, is indispensable to the true spirit of prayer. No man can prevail with God who does not bridle his tongue. In these days, people talk a great deal too much to pray well. They grieve the Holy Ghost by their much talking, and their bad talking. People speak harshly of their brethren. Now, such a state of mind is not congenial to prayer, and if you wish to, prevail with God, you must take care and keep yourselves in the love of God, by praying in the Holy Ghost. In order to prevail with God, Christians must have the spirit of love, and walk therein; they must have a spirit tender for the reputation of Christ, and live in such a state towards sinners, as to be willing to make any sacrifices for them. My dear friends, I should last night have done what I now intend to do,--ask, as I go along, do you fulfill these conditions? Are you living in such a sympathy with God and Christ that you are willing to deny yourselves, and to walk before God in such a manner as to give yourselves up to the great work of saving souls? I don't mean by this, that you should forsake your necessary employments, and go about to do nothing else but talk and pray; but are you in such a state of mind, as not to stickle at self-denial? Are you willing to live, and be used up, body, property, and everything, for the promotion of the glory of God, and the salvation of the world? Or would you stickle at some trifling gratification? Can a man offer

prevailing prayer, who is unwilling to make sacrifices for the sake of doing more good? Who that had looked at this subject as it is, has not been agonized often, to see the want of sympathy with God? What was the secret of Paul's usefulness? He says, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ--for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He meant to say, he could forego anything personally--he could make any personal sacrifice, if by so doing he could save his kindred according to the flesh. I know that there has been much speculation upon this passage. I have wondered at this. Paul's language is strong, but I have mentioned the purport of his intentions. He would make any sacrifice so far as his own happiness was concerned, he could give up anything they could name. No doubt he did not intend to say that he was willing to go to hell, but that there was no personal sacrifice he would not make. He was willing to hang on the cross, or to suffer anything, so that the world might be saved. Now, I myself know a man who said this, and finally went so far in his sympathy with Christ, as to say, "O Lord Jesus, not only am I willing to hang upon the cross, but till the end of time, if necessary." Now, this is saying much, but it is only expressing the vehement, the agonizing feeling of a man ready to suffer any conceivable thing, if, by so doing, Christ could be honored, and souls could be saved. Such is the spirit to prevail with God--a spirit willing to enter into his sympathies, a spirit which will not hesitate to make any necessary and personal sacrifice, in order to save the souls of men.

But, let me say again: Prevailing prayer is, after all, rather a state of mind than a particular exercise. By this I mean, that a man *to prevail, must live in a prescribed state of mind*. Prayer is not the mere going aside and praying, but a perpetual yearning of the mind, a habitual preventing of the mind in a spirit of importunity. This is the true idea of prevailing prayer. You see sometimes in this world's matters, that men have a great burden on their minds about their business. Men get into such a state of mind as this,--they are intensely anxious--they fear bankruptcy The changes which they expect to come over them, cause such anxiety, that it becomes the burden of their life. They are quite borne down by the continuance of this struggle in their minds. Sometimes men get into such a state of mind as this about religion. They see the Churches are not prospering--that the hand of the Lord is not revealed--that the Church does not understand its whereabouts--that the professors are worldly minded, and not aware of it--that professors of religion are getting into a spirit rather of justifying themselves, than of confessing their sins. They see the difficulty, and betake themselves to God, literally besieging his throne, as Daniel did; even in their dreams they pray; all their waking hours they pray, until they are really borne down. Such is the state of mind in which Christians begin to mourn over the condition of Sion, to take pleasure in her stones, and to favour the dust thereof. You bear them confessing their sins and those of the people, with much weeping then may you understand that the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out--that this spirit of grace and supplication will prevail, and is always indispensable to prevailing prayer.

Again, *clean hands* is another necessary condition. The Psalmist. says, "I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord!" Now, if this is not the case, you cannot prevail with God; and if a man has wronged his neighbour, whether in character, property, or person, if he has spoken against him in a manner injurious to his character, if he has wronged him in any way, he can expect no good to arise till this be set right. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come offer thy gift" (Matthew v. 23, 24). Don't offer it, and then say, "Lord, remember I have spoken against such a one. Pray give me a heart to repent of it." No--repent first; before you can prevail, your hands must be clean. You must be reconciled to your brother. Have you in any way unnecessarily, in any unjustifiable manner injured the feelings, or injured in any respect any of your brothers or neighbours? Go and be reconciled to the brother. Make peace with him, and then come and offer the gifts. When this in not the case, you can never expect to prevail.

But this leads me to say again: the *spirit of forgiveness* is another condition of prevailing prayer--the spirit of forgiveness, where you have been wronged. Christ says in Matthew vi.,--Except "ye forgive not men their trespass, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." My dear friends, are you sure your hands are so clean, that when you come to God, you can say, "Lord, thou knowest that I have taken no man's money, goods, or property, without an equivalent. Lord, thou knowest that I have wronged no man--that I have injured no man in character, in property, or in anything whatever." Or if you have done so, can you say, "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have made restitution--I have not suffered this iniquity to cleave to my hands, and that, O Lord, thou knowest." How is this? Many of you, perhaps, have offered many prayers, but you are not conscious of

having prevailed. Perhaps you have prayed a multitude of times without ever really calling up the question whether you are answered or not!

I was conversing in one of the great cities of America, some years since, with a brother, in the presence of a lady richly dressed, with many artificial and other ornaments common to ladies of her class. I sat talking with the brother on the subject of prayer. I talked for some considerable time. At length, the lady began to pay attention to my conversation. I said I believed the Christians of that day did not really expect to be answered when they prayed. I observed she was running it over and over. At length she became so uneasy, that she finally broke out, "She did not believe persons were so bad." "I do, then," said I. I tried to reply to her as mildly as I could. I asked her, "Do you obtain the things you ask for?" "Yes, she did; if she did not, she would not pray." I went on-- "Are you a married woman?" "Yes." "Is your husband a Christian?" "No, sir." "Are you the mother of children?" "I am." " Are they converted?" "No, sir." "Is there a revival in the church where you belong?" "No, sir." "Have you had any since your connection with it?" "We have not." "Then what can you have been praying for? You say you have received what you prayed for. Now, as you have a husband unconverted, children unconverted, no revival in your church, and have not had any since your connection with it, what can you have been praying for that you have received? Have you prayed for these golden chains and other ornaments? These are among the things that you really have, and perhaps they are what you have been praying for;" and so on. Before we left the room, she burst into deep grief, confessing that she didn't think in reality she ever had prayed! She said she had often gone over certain forms of prayer, but now she felt confident that she had never been heard. In fact, she had prayed without ever asking if she had been heard. She had prayed rather as a task, or a duty. No man ever does his duty by praying in such a manner. It should be done in faith, with a full expectation of receiving what is prayed for, and not as a mere duty. Are you, and am I,--have we, in this sense, clean hands, that we can compass God's altar, and that he can receive us honourably to himself? Have we actually forgiven our enemies? Why, I have known individuals to keep up the forms of religion in the same church, while in such a state of mind, that they would not speak to each other. Abomination! Abomination! Why, such persons deserve to be excommunicated, I had almost said, for ever praying, under such circumstances! They pray that God would forgive their trespasses, as they forgive those that trespass against them, and in so doing they tempt God. Persons in such a state of mind, that they can really rise above the injuries they have received, and pray to God, heartily, to forgive them, and exercise a forgiving spirit, are in a proper state of mind to pray; if they are not in such a state of mind; how can they expect to prevail? With feelings of ill-will, and a spirit that cannot speak peacefully of certain individuals--if you feel so towards any one, even wicked men, you are not in a proper state of mind to offer prayer. Angels--the great Archangel Michael,--would not bring a railing accusation even against the devil,--and angels have no right to exercise any other than benevolent feelings, even towards the wickedest of beings. It is impossible to restore individuals to our confidence while they remain wicked. We are not expected to do this, but we are expected to be in such a state of mind, as to have no disposition to retaliate. We are expected to be in such a state of mind as not to wish them evil, but to wish them all good, and pray for them honestly and earnestly--to pray God that he would bless them. We are to do this with all our hearts, as opposed to the spirit that would pray God to curse them. Unless we have this spirit, we have no sympathy with Christ, who, when we were his enemies, so great was his compassion that he hesitated not to die for us. Some of you are harboring an improper state of mind towards your brethren. Can you go home to-night, and pray God literally to forgive you your trespasses as you have forgiven those that trespassed against you? You have no right to expect God to hear you or to answer you, unless you can honestly say this--"O Lord, forgive me, as I have forgiven them." No matter how much they have injured you. That is not the question. Persons have not done much who have only treated well those who have treated them well; but no man can prevail with God in such a spirit as that. He must be willing to pour out his heart in honest, earnest supplications for his very enemies. Without this, he does not sympathize with Christ. "Love your enemies," says Christ. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" To prevail with God, you must "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Unless you are in this state of mind, you need not expect to prevail with God. Oh! that we could see this spirit prevail--that Christians would really do this-- bless them that curse them, and pray for them that persecute them, and humble themselves before God! The prayer of the

man who prays for his enemy, has a mighty power with God. Job's friends greatly abused him, misunderstood, and reviled him--accused him of being a hypocrite. Job prayed for them. God turned his captivity and blessed him with a double portion. While Job prayed that they might be forgiven, God was pleased, and smiled upon them and upon him too.

THE USE AND PREVALENCE OF CHRIST'S NAME.

A Lecture*

Delivered on Friday, May 24, 1850,

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY,

OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, UNITED STATES,

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS.

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[*The last of a series of three "Lectures on the Conditions of Prevailing Prayer."]

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."--John xvi. 24.

IN passing over the Conditions of Prevailing Prayer, I noticed one--that prayer should be made in the name of Christ. In speaking further on this subject from these words--

I. I SHALL ENDEAVOUR TO SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN AN ACCEPTABLE OFFERING OF PRAYER IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

II. THE STATE OF MIND THAT CAN ACCEPTABLY USE CHRIST'S NAME IN PRAYER IS INDISPENSABLE TO PREVAILING WITH GOD.

III. THE REASONS FOR WHICH WE ARE REQUIRED TO PRAY IN CHRIST'S NAME.

There is some good reason, doubtless, for our being required to pray in Christ's name. In this case, our Lord was addressing his disciples. While he lived, it was natural that they should not clearly understand their exact position with regard to God, in such a sense as to fully comprehend the reason for using Christ's name in prayer. We must endeavour to ascertain our real relations to the government of God. We are outlaws, criminals, under condemnation. True Christians are not outlaws and criminals in such a sense as to be under condemnation; still, they never come into such a relation with God as to be accepted in their *own* name. In order to their acceptance with God, they must remember always their relation to God, and their position to his government. When persons are under sentence for any capital offence, they are regarded as outlaws; the government, as such, does not even recognise their existence while they occupy such a position in relation to it. Being outlawed, they are, civilly, dead,--that is, the government, as such, regards them as dead; and, so far as it is concerned, to all intents and purposes, they are not legally in existence. The government has no intercourse with them, knows nothing of them; they are, to it, just as if they were not.

This is the true governmental position, and precisely, under God's government, the position in which the sinner stands, when viewed as a sinner and separate from Christ. They are criminals, and he, as head of the universe, knows nothing of them, only as being cast out, condemned to die, outlawed.

But, even when men come to be Christians, they do not come into such a relation to God, as to have no more need of coming to him through Christ. An unconverted man stands condemned; he is under sentence of eternal death. Suppose such an one is convinced of sin--convicted by his own conscience as well as by the law of God--the sentence is gone out against him; how is such an individual to appear in God's presence? Why, he cannot have even access to God! How can an individual, who has been remanded to prison under sentence for a capital crime, have any connexion with the government of his country? He is governmentally dead; and it behoves the government to treat him as such; while in such a position, he can have no relation to government but as a dead man. Yet the head of the government may have no ill-will or wrong feeling towards him; he might even be disposed, if he could be in a position, to treat with him; as in individual, the head of the government might regard him as a living man, and as one for whom he had great affection. This he might do in his individual capacity; but, as the head of a government, he has necessarily a public as well as a private character to sustain, and this he must not overlook. He must not act as a mere private individual, public reasons forbid him to do so; and whatever his private relations and feelings may be, he must remember his public relations and character for the sake of the public good.

Now, let us look at such in individual as he stands before God, and is subject to his laws and government. Such is the sacredness of the governmental character and relations of the sovereign, that when the law has pronounced sentence against him, there are laws which

place the ruler and the ruled in certain relations to each other. The ruler cannot justly overlook these relations. Now, when the law has once pronounced sentence against an individual, it has committed the public character of the lawgiver against him; and for the government by any public act to go against this, is to depart from its principles, and to take up arms against the law.

This is so in human governments; and if so in human governments, are not the reasons infinitely stronger in God's government for maintaining his public character, and being careful that he gives no opportunity for any individual to draw a false inference as to his position? Once convicted, the sinner comes before God. What can he do? He is governmentally dead; and the whole human race stands in that position to God--condemned criminals, outlawed, under the sentence of death. God's public character and relations are such that he cannot so much as have the least intercourse, nor suffer them so much as to take his name on their lips without offence--he can regard them only as criminals. If he acts contrary to this, he forfeits the confidence of the universe. It is his public character and relation that render it necessary, that if sinners are to approach him, *there must be a Mediator*; they must come not in their own names; for if they do he will not know, hear, or look at them; but if they can be so united to Christ that Christ may be virtually the petitioner--that, in a governmental point of view, it is Christ, not the sinner, that approaches God--the way is perfectly open. There is not--there cannot be--any approach to God, but by Christ. Unless you come to him through Christ; and, virtually, *as* Christ, in Christ's very spirit,--unless you can do this, God will not so much as look at you, or suffer you to approach his presence.

The sinner, therefore, when he comes to God, must approach him in this way. He must put on Christ appropriating to himself all that Christ has done--taking to himself, as it were, the very work of Christ, and come in the person and name of Christ, with Christ's spirit; then the request he makes will virtually be Christ's own spirit making intercession. The sinner is in him; and, governmentally, united with him. The greatest sinner in the world, as well as the least, may come in this way; only let them do this, and they are accepted as really as Christ is accepted, *because* Christ is accepted. He lives in Christ, and is governmentally regarded as being found in Christ. If he comes repenting, believing, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is as really, freely, and fully accepted as Christ himself; for now he is come into a state of mind in which he really comes in Christ's name. He now comes to be found in Christ, and, governmentally, he is known only as a part of Christ, one of Christ's family, a member of Christ's own body, a part of Christ himself. In this capacity he is known in the government of God.

May Christ now be laid aside? By no means. Unless you abide in the same state of mind, in the possession of the same proportion of Christ, you are cast out. The Bible everywhere teaches us this; nor will it ever be otherwise, to all eternity, since he will be found in Christ, and accepted only on his account. This governmental relation will always exist; and the relation of his saints to Christ will be the sole and only reason they are received into heaven. What Christ has done will not save any one out of him. There is no dropping Christ's name, his interposition, and our relation to him, when we approach God.

This leads me, in the next place, to remark that the use of Christ's name implies that we recognise our relationship to God as sinners, truly abhorring ourselves and repenting. We must truly and fully concede to God the entire justice and propriety of his treating us as rebels, and refusing so much as to look at us, unless we come to him through Christ.

The use of his name acceptably, also implies a state of mind which can and does receive these truths into the inmost hearts; for unless we really renounce and abhor our own righteousness, and wholly give up all expectations of approaching God and prevailing in our own name, and come to God in Christ's name alone, we can never prevail with him. Some say, "Why come in Christ's name, more than in the name of Paul, or of Moses?" What idea can a Unitarian have of Christ's name, when he denies his divinity and sacrifice? The Unitarian cannot understand this; he professes great love to God, and to worship "his heavenly Father," and so forth. I have heard much of this--what shall I call such slang, but slang? I have heard them say they are "fond of God, and God is fond of them;" but they have nothing beyond a species of sentimentalism, very far from this recognition of their relationship to the Creator. This governmental relation must be ever kept in view--it must be an ever-present consideration, and in such a degree as always to influence us in our approach to God.

There are thoughts which take possession of the mind, and are always there, and have their influence, though we may not at all times be conscious of it. For example, persons who have children: this fact always acts upon them; hours may glide away and their children remain unthought of; yet the fact that they have children is an influence always acting upon them. When persons approach God they must have not only an idea

that they sustain certain relations to Christ; but, in order to approach him acceptably, there should be a vivid recollection of this. When the name of Christ is used, they should know well why they use it. The idea of their governmental relations and character without Christ, must have its due weight with them. Do not, for a moment, once think of coming without Christ.

But again: To use this name acceptably implies *a realizing sense of our character and relations, and of his character and relations;*God's character and governmental position--our character and governmental position. Now, unless the mind has a realizing sense, so as really to mean it ought to mean in using Christ's name, it does not do so acceptably. We are to use it understanding why we use it. It implies, also, the most implicit confidence in Christ's influence at his Father's court; an entire confidence that coming to God in his name we shall really obtain what we ask in his name.

When persons really and truly use the name of Christ, there is a very important sense in which they *pray for Christ*. I do not mean by praying for him, that Christ *needs* to be prayed for as a sinner--as one who needs forgiveness, or any favour of God *for himself;* but that the Church is Christ's, God having given the world to him, in such a sense that every favour bestowed on them is regarded, governmentally, as bestowed on him. The saints are Christ's servants. This is Christ's world in such a sense, that when the government of God grants anything to the inhabitants thereof, it yields it to Christ. Prayer has been made for him, it is said, continually.

II. THE STATE OF MIND THAT CAN ACCEPTABLY USE CHRIST'S NAME IN PRAYER IS INDISPENSABLE TO PREVAILING WITH GOD.

To pray in his name, we must ask the thing not for ourselves, because we are not our own; we do not own ourselves, and of course, therefore, we can own nothing else. The fact is, we are Christ's, and when we seek anything in Christ's name, we seek it for him. We are Christ's servants; and as children we belong to Christ. If we want anything for ourselves, separate from Christ; to glorify ourselves, we cannot have it; but if we want it for his sake, because we belong to him, and ask it as something to be given to us only *because* we belong to him; then we can have it. Suppose, for example, we pray for anything whatever, and ask it merely for ourselves alone, we ask it selfishly, "that we may consume it upon our lusts." We have no right to come and plead Christ's name to obtain things for ourselves, as not belonging to him. We are not authorised to use his name in any such sense as that. We are not authorised to make use of his name to get things merely to please ourselves, as distinct from pleasing him. Many regard the Gospel and Christ's name in such a light, as if they might use Christ's name as a mere speculation for their own selfish purposes. But Christ has never given permission for any such use of it; the fact is, that unless we ask for these things, recognising the fact that we are his, and that whatever we ask for--even our daily bread--is to be used for him; the very air we breath is to be inhaled for him; the clothing we wear is to be worn for him; and unless we recognise this practically--unless we really come to regard ourselves as asking for things for Christ's sake, we cannot expect an answer to prayer.

What is meant by the phrase *"for Christ's sake?"* Do you mean for *your* sake, in Christ's name? Do you not know that, as I have said, you belong to Christ, and have no right to approach God, only as you approach him in Christ's name? If, however, you overlook this fact, or think it only a speculation, no wonder you don't prevail. You have no right, as I have said, to pray at all, unless you pray as for Christ, recognising the fact that all you are and have are his. If you want the Spirit of God that you may use the grace received for him, you may have it; but you must have a single eye to his glory. If you do not so regard it--if you ask it for yourselves, as distinct from him, you cannot have it.

We must remember, too, that for God to give anything to the inhabitants of this world, as such, without Christ, would be inconsistent with his position. God promises things to Christ, who distributes them to his children; all the promises are in Christ to the glory of God, and we must recognise this if we would use Christ's name aright, and expect the fulfilment of the promises made through him. These promises are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. God is infinitely sincere in giving them to Christ, who receives them and gives them to men. They are given in the utmost good faith, so that coming in his name it is, "Yes, yes; as often as you please, if you really come in Christ's name, you may approach me with the utmost confidence and boldness--not *impudence*, but boldness." We are infinitely welcome. There need be no hesitation. You are thoroughly welcome to as much as you want, only be sure you come meaning what you ought to mean in the use of Christ's name.

We should recognise the fact, also, in the use of Christ's name, that *there is so good a reason for this use of it*, that, for God to promise us anything in any other way, or encourage us to approach him in any other way, were to forfeit his governmental position. The true idea of faith in Christ is a heart-recognition of the fact that God is, out of Christ, to us necessarily "a

consuming fire;" but that in Christ we are as safe and as welcome as Christ himself. We may come to his house, to the mercy-seat--yea, to his very feet, with every possible freedom. It is impossible that the angels themselves should be more welcome. We may rise, as it were, above the angels, and approach even nearer, perhaps, than they are allowed to do. If we only clothe ourselves with Christ as with a garment, renouncing and abhorring self, there is no language that can express the fulness and the freedom with which we can approach him, and receive as largely as we can ask or think--nay, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

To use Christ's name acceptably, implies, also, that you do it *in faith*. By faith you must rely implicitly on Christ, trusting in him as your wisdom, sanctification, and redemption, expecting that he will accept you as freely and as fully as he has promised. The truth is, that really to accept Christ, implies a great deal more than is often supposed. I have been struck with the extent to which Christ is lost sight of, in many of his relations, and has come to be viewed simply as a Saviour, for whose sake our sins are forgiven--losing sight of sanctification and justification. "What," says a doctor of divinity to me, a few years since--"what! Christ, the second person in the Trinity, our sanctification! Never heard of such a thing!" Well, now, I cannot tell you how shocked I felt. Never heard the Apostle say, "Who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" It was as much one as the other. No man understands what it is to put on Christ thoroughly, properly, until he has learned something more than that he sustains to him merely one relation.

Lastly, It implies *really and universally depending upon him*. Men are dependent upon him; but there is a difference between being really dependent, and depending. Every sinner in the world is really dependent upon him; but every sinner does not really depend upon him, in the sense of depending upon his name. We must come to depend, not upon our prayers, states of mind, feelings--not upon anything we have done, or ever expect to do at all--but we must depend on him really understanding that such are our relations to God, that we can never expect to be accepted only as we are found in him--that we must put on Christ even to approach God.

III. THE REASONS FOR WHICH WE ARE REQUIRED TO PRAY IN CHRIST'S NAME.

Our relations to God's government, when viewed out of Christ, are really those of sinners under sentence for a capital crime--"condemned already," governmentally regarded as dead. There are two senses in which sinners are represented in the Bible: "dead in trespasses and sins"--that is unconverted persons; secondly, they are civilly dead--viewed governmentally, they are outlaws under sentence of death. These are facts which no one can dispute. If a man is a sinner the law of God has condemned him, and the sentence is already out against him; and a man can no more deny this than he can deny his own existence. There is not a moral agent in the world that does not know that, as far as God's law is concerned, he is regarded as an outlaw and a rebel; he can no more doubt or deny it than he can doubt or deny his own existence. These facts are not only revealed in the Bible, but are most clearly manifest to our own consciousness; our very conscience testifies to their truthfulness.

Now, if we don't believe what God says on this subject, we make him a liar; and if we don't believe our own nature, we make him a liar again; for we must not overlook the fact, that God is as really the author of our own nature, as of the Bible itself. Does your conscience accuse you of sin? It is as truly a revelation from God as anything can be. It is God's own testimony, in this sense,--God has given us a power by which we irresistibly condemn ourselves; he has implanted within us a law which, when we sin, irresistibly compels us to do so. This is God's own voice and revelation; and he who disbelieves, is guilty of making God a liar. If, then, we approach him in our own name, we virtually deny the truth of these things, and pour contempt upon his governmental relations and the sacredness of his character. The truth is, that his character and governmental relations are such that no one can be accepted of God who violates or overlooks these relations.

Again--*It is a downright insult to the majesty of God*, as Governor of the universe, to overlook these solemn facts, so plainly revealed to us, both in his word and in our hearts. And he who would approach God in this manner is a deluded wretch, rushing rudely into the face of his Maker.

Again--*It is pouring contempt upon God's authority*, and virtually denying the wisdom and necessity of his method of accepting us. Bear in mind, that a merciful disposition, on the part of God, is no reason why he should accept persons holding certain relations. Suppose the Queen felt compassion for a certain rebel--so much so, indeed, that in her own private apartments she really wept; and suppose he, hearing of this, should attempt to force himself upon her, regardless of the sacredness of the place: because she has compassion on him, may he force himself into her presence? No,

indeed. The fact is the same with God; these relations must not be lost sight of. The good of society, as well as individual interest, demand they should not be overlooked, but well pondered; and every act of both parties should have reference to these relations. Just so it is under God's government; and if, as I have said, if it is necessary in human governments to recognise these relations, is it not infinitely more so under God's government?

These truths everywhere appear within, without, upon the page of inspiration, and in our minds. It is clear that out of Christ, God can have no intercourse with sinners, who are under sentence, condemned outlaws, rebels whom God is pledged to destroy unless they can find a Mediator. To come without Christ is a virtual denial of the necessity this. To come without Christ is to appear at the feast in our own filthy garments instead of throwing over us his righteousness. Under the Old Testament dispensation, many truths were taught in an impressive manner. There were the holy vestments in which the high priests were obliged to appear before God, and without which they were not allowed to approach God; so must we, as it were, throw Christ over us as a robe. This is the lesson the ceremony was designed to teach.

But let me say, again: Not to use Christ's name thus is *to contemn the advocacy of Christ*. In other words, God has made him our advocate, and to act thus is to thrust him aside and become our own advocates--it is to have low and blasphemous conceptions of God's relation to us as Creator. The real saints under the Old Testament dispensation understood this method of approach to God. Daniel prayed for the Lord's sake. He and all the real saints doubtless understood the way of approach as shadowed forth in the typical dispensation. We can well enough account for the fact, that there is now so little prevailing in prayer, because comparatively so few use Christ's name aright. They have no definite idea of the reasons for using it. In their hearts they are really in a state in which they do not so put on Christ as to make a proper use of his name. I have often feared that multitudes of persons *pray for themselves*, and in such a sense as really to be selfish. In their supplications they do not recognise themselves as belonging to Christ, and as deserving answers to their prayers for Christ's sake.

When men do this, they make use of Christ's, just as a man would make use of his master's name to get money to speculate with himself. A clerk or agent takes a check, goes to the Bank and draws money, but it is for his employer. He is certainly going to use it himself; but, mark, he does it in the name and for the sake of his employer--not to further his own private interests, but the interests of his master. Now, if we would come to Christ in a proper manner, we must regard ourselves as his servants in this sense--wanting what we want, and obtaining what we obtain for the purpose of serving him and glorifying his name. While we separate ourselves from him and seek things for ourselves, no wonder that our religion profits us so little--no wonder that Christ's name, on our lips, is of no avail! To refuse to come in Christ's name, is as effectual a hindrance to our prayers being answered, as if there were no Christ at all. Who does not believe, that if a man neglects or refuses to use Christ's name, in the sense in which he requires us to use it, it is just as effectual a bar to his acceptance as if there had been no Christ? The same reason requiring Christ's interposition for us, requires that we should recognise these reasons, and always, on our approach to God, have respect to them.

I have often feared, that *many use this name without hardly knowing why* they do so; it is done by them as a mere matter of form. Perhaps they have never so much as inquired what state of mind was requisite to the proper use of Christ's name. I fear some persons simply suppose, that uniformly to append the phrase, "for Christ's sake," is enough. But this is a grievous error. If we come in Christ's name, we may claim as our due whatever God has promised to Christ. Now, Christ has rendered great service to the government of God, and of this, we, as his children, are to have the full benefit. We are not to suppose, that what Christ has done has merely rendered it*possible* that God may forgive us. He has rendered the most important service to the government of God that can be conceived. He has placed God's character, government, and relations, and the entire question of revelation in such an aspect, as to give the whole universe a great deal of new light on the subject. He has arrested the progress of rebellion, and established the authority of God over all being. Angels sinned, and God exercised the law upon them. Man sinned, and who knows where it might have ended, had it not been for Christ's intervention. He has done that which amply entitles him to receive gifts for men--to bestow them upon those for whom he died. The government of God can well afford to let him do so, seeing how wonderfully he rebuked sin, and revealed the Divine character. So great a thing has he done in his death, that the government of God can well afford to dispense favours to all who belong to him; and they are bestowed as freely as they can flow forth from a heart of infinite love.

In himself, God is disposed to do all he can in behalf of his creatures; *and our greatest governmental*

obstacle Christ has completely removed. He has, moreover, so wonderfully magnified the law and made it honourable, that, instead of there being an obstacle in the way, there is a direct invitation from God to come to him, that he may come out and show the infinite largeness of his heart by giving Christ's people all the riches of his glorious kingdom. So that, as I have said, the head of the very government which stood in the way, now invites us to come to him, that the deep tides of his love and salvation may burst forth--that his grace may infinitely abound, like a sea with neither shore nor bottom, whose waves flow on with boundless universality. The door is open wide to every sinner.

We are never straitened in God, but in our own hearts, on account of our stinted faith and limited confidence. Christ, as our representative, became poor that we might become rich. The Divine government can now well afford to come forth, because, as I have said, of Christ's unspeakable services, and the glorious head of that government can let his compassions flow to sinners. He may use language toward us which it would ill become him to use, but for what Christ has done. Christ now offers you his righteousness and mediation, that--guilty and condemned as you are--deserving as you are to be thrust out--notwithstanding all this, he has set the door wide open, that now, instead of standing in the Court of the Gentiles, in the Court of the Hebrews, or even in the Court of the Priests, the veil is rent, and access is free to the mercy-seat itself, where the cherubim stand with the Shechinah amid a flood of glory.

Put on Christ, then, and come, confessing your sins, renouncing your own righteousness, recognising God's governmental relations. Oh, come! Come quite up to the mercy-seat! God invites you to come, if you will do so in the way I have described. No one is a Christian until he believes--until, in fact, he does the very thing I am now exhorting you to do. Believe in Christ, that is being a Christian. Do you say, Has Christ died for me? Yes, he died for you as really as if there were no other sinner in the universe. Do you say, May *I* have access to him in my own behalf, clad in the filthy rags with which I have been trying to cover myself? Yes! Do as blind Bartimeus did. The poor blind man sat by the wayside; great multitudes were thronging along, some before, some behind, crowding around the person of the Saviour. Bartimeus naturally inquired the cause of this unusual gathering, and was told it was Jesus passing. He had heard of him, and exclaimed aloud, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" They told him to be still; as if there were something improper in his act. But he would not be silenced. He believed Jesus would restore his sight; and he lifted up his voice above all the noise--"Jesus," he cried out, "thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Christ stopped--"What is that?" Why, a blind man. "Bring him here." "What wilt thou have me to do?" "Lord, that I might receive my sight." He would not be kept away. He threw himself upon Christ in faith, and instantly received the object of his wishes.

Now, sinner! why don't you follow the example here set? I wish I had more time to the subject. Oh, that Christians would but understand what they may have by prayer, if they really use Christ's name aright! You are either infidels, or you believe that you will receive what you pray for in Christ's name. Now, do you *get* what you ask? Ask yourselves the question--Do you get what you ask? Do you prevail with God? Do you use Christ's name effectually? Do your families know that God hears and answers your prayers? Can you honestly say, "I believe God hears me?" If you can, I am glad of it. But if you can't, remember you are not using Christ's name aright. He will not hear you till you do so.

THE GREAT BUSINESS OF LIFE.

Delivered on Tuesday Evening, May 28, 1850 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."-Matthew 6.33.

I. What we are to understand by the kingdom of god and his righteousness.

II. What is meant by the injunction to seek this first.

III. Point out some of the reasons why this should be done.

IV. Notice the meaning of the annexed promise-" all these things shall be added unto you."

I. What we are to understand by the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

I remark first, this kingdom is not an outward and visible kingdom. The true kingdom of God "cometh not with observation," as Christ said, but it is a spiritual kingdom set up in the hearts of his people; it consists in the establishment of his own dominion in their hearts. "The kingdom of God is within you," but this kingdom is expressed on earth by an outward and visible Church; yet the kingdom here intended is not a visible Church, but an internal and spiritual kingdom. By the righteousness of God we are doubtless to understand these two things-first, the method by which he pardons and justifies men, and second, the way in which he makes them personally holy. Faith in Jesus Christ is God's method of justifying men and bringing them into a state of acceptance with himself and faith which works by love; for this faith, from its very nature, purifies the heart. Not to enlarge upon this, we pass to inquire.

II. What is meant by the injunction to seek this first?

Let me say here, we are doubtless to understand the injunction as meaning, first, that we are to make this the first business on hand in point of time, and we are to suffer nothing else to take precedence. Second, as pre-eminently first in importance. Nothing is to be regarded by us as of greater importance, or of importance equal with it. Third, I understand it to imply also that religion is to be the great business of our future lives; that it is always to be considered as of the first importance to be attended to, and to be the first concern of life. But this leads me to consider, and point out

III. Some of the reasons why it is to be so.

First, let me say this, that nothing else can be acceptable to God until we do this. So long as we neglect this great salvation, so long as we have not secured our justification by faith in Christ; so long, indeed, as we are not interested in this kingdom of God by actually embracing it, and receiving its laws into our hearts, nothing can be acceptable to God that we do. We can fulfill no requirement of God till we have done this, and he can accept nothing of us till we have done this-for "whatever is not of faith is sin." Whatever does not imply faith in us is sin, and therefore, so long as we neglect this as of primary importance, nothing that we do can be acceptable to God. Persons may have all the outward forms of morality and goodness, but if

they have neglected this, whatever else they do, God will not accept them. He will not and cannot accept us if we are putting that last which he has put first, and that first which he has put last.

God requires us to put this first, and if we do not put things in the order which he has commanded, if we do not make this the great business, the first business of our lives, why, nothing is acceptable to God that we do. Again, let me say, not only is nothing acceptable to God, but it is the most important business to us, and should, therefore, claim our first attention. I say it is the most important business to us! What can compare with its importance to us as individuals? Why, if we secure an interest in this kingdom of God, if we do but become subjects to this government, whatever else we fail to secure is of little importance. Whatever else we fail to secure we shall hardly regret in future; but if we do not secure this, whatever else we do secure will only increase our responsibility and our guilt.

Again, persons ought to understand this, that nothing is of any real importance to us except as it is connected with this as an end, and shall enable us more effectually to obey this command. Now, if we do regard anything as important to us which has no relation to this end and object, we entirely pervert things. But, let me say again, that it is most important, not only to ourselves, but is also most important to our families, most important to all who stand in any relation to us, and have any claims upon us. Who does not understand and believe this? Now, suppose a man neglects God and religion for the sake of his family, does he thereby really benefit his family? No, indeed! The real and best interests of his family require that he should pay his first attention, and his chief attention to this great requirement of God. Who can doubt this? No man really and truly benefited his family by neglecting to obey God. Such a thing never was, and never can be; and by neglecting to make religion the first duty, who can tell how much the family may have to suffer? Again; it is more important to a man's creditors.

If a man disobeys God, his curse is upon him, and upon all that he does and has; but if he obeys God, he may expect a blessing upon his business; and if a man

endeavors to please God, he is sure to be an honest man. If a man owes me money, and that man endeavors to obey and please God, I have reason to believe that he will be enabled to pay me sooner than if he did not regard the commands of God at all. Therefore, even as a selfish man, I should say to my debtor, "Whatever else you do, don't neglect to obey God-don't neglect your duty to him." It is of the most importance to our neighbors, our friends, and connections, all with whom we are surrounded, and the world at large, and to the Church of God, that we should not neglect to regard religion as the first, great, and principal business of our life. Who can doubt this? No person can doubt it, who believes in the reality of religion! No person can doubt it, who believes that God governs the world! But let me say again: another reason is, that it is most dangerous to neglect this business, and to attend to this concern. It is more dangerous to neglect this than anything else.

Why, suppose we did neglect everything else, what then? Why, it would be an evil in some sense, but, in comparison, it would be no evil at all. Who does not believe, that it is infinitely dangerous for a man to neglect his eternal salvation? And if he does not assign this the first place, he may never attend to it at all, and is in danger every moment of dying, or being given up by the Spirit of God! Why, there is nothing so dangerous in the universe, as for a man to put religion off, or not to put it first. Suppose he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, of what value would the whole world be to him? All other dangers are as nothing in comparison with this!

Again: it is not only most dangerous to ourselves, but so far as we sustain relations to anybody else, it is most dangerous to them; for the fact is, if we neglect this great business, if we neglect to make religion our great principal business, just so far do we jeopardise their souls, as well as our own, and often bring down upon them the curse of God as the result of our neglect.

Who does not know that this is true? Again: another reason is, that if we will neglect this, we must inevitably lose our souls. "How shall we escape," says the apostle, "if we neglect so great salvation?" Men need not take great pains to ruin themselves; their ruin is inevitable, if they neglect to lay hold on the salvation which God has provided for them. Let them be good wives, good husbands, good parents, good children, good citizens, say prayers, go to meeting, and give money to send the Gospel to the heathen; let them do anything else in the world, if they neglect this in such a sense as not to make it the great business of life, they are sure to lose their souls. There is a great mistake on this subject, or else the Bible is not true. There is a great mistake on this subject, or else our own natures belie us. Our own natures affirm, that sin is an evil from which we ought to escape, that we should make it the most earnest and solemn business of our lives; and the Bible tells us to run for our lives, to "so run that you may obtain," "so fight that ye may obtain," "gird up your loins," address yourselves to it as if you were about to make it the great present, and perpetual business of life.

Now, do not believe me censorious if I tell you that the great mass of professors are not making this the great business of their lives! It seems as if they attended to it just enough to entertain a hope that they shall be saved, but they never attend to it in such a sense as to manifest much solemn earnestness about it. The fact is, such people know nothing at all of religion, and the natural result will be that they will lose their souls! They never get rid of their sins, they never become sanctified, and therefore, not fit for heaven. Really a great many persons seem to suppose that they can live in sin till death, and then all at once they will become sanctified and prepared for heaven.

Now, we never read in the Bible that death will sanctify men, or that they will go to heaven if they are not sanctified in this world, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost in virtue of their belief in the Gospel. With many professors, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" is but little understood. They regard the righteousness of God as imputed, not imparted, righteousness. They imagine, that somehow or other, the righteousness of Christ can be imputed to them without their being personally holy. They come not into sympathy with God; they neglect to have this kingdom of God set up within them; God's government has no dominion over them. How, then, do they expect to get to heaven? What can they understand by the kingdom of God and his righteousness, which they are required to make it the business of their lives to seek? Again: it is better to leave everything else undone than to leave this undone. How memorable and decisive are Christ's teachings in this respect. He will not allow us to give ourselves any anxiety on other subjects. Nothing is to take precedence of this. When one said to him, "Let me first go and bury my father," he said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead." Your own father, and the duties you owe to him in that relation, must not stand in the way of your seeking eternal life. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," nothing is to be allowed to have precedence of this!

I remark once more: the present is the only sure time that we have, therefore we ought now to make this our immediate and first concern. The Bible always says

NOW. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." You may die, or if you do not die you may be given up of the Holy Spirit! Again: every moment's delay makes the matter worse! Every moment's delay increases your sins, increases the hardness of your heart, and the probability that you will be lost. If you continue to reject the great salvation that is offered, you may soon come into such a state that the truth will cease to affect your minds and hearts at all; your conscience will become "seared as with a hot iron," and your words will constantly be, whenever the truth is spoken, "When I have a more convenient season I will call for thee;" and it is almost certain that that season will never come, because the longer you delay, the more hardened you must of necessity become. If you are not ready now to make this the business of your life, the probabilities are that you will lose your soul!

Again: let me say, procrastination is another great evil; perhaps more souls have been lost by this form of iniquity than by any other. The devil is constantly suggesting reasons for delay-reasons why you should not obey God, and give up your whole mind to him. The ordinary policy of Satan is not to try to make infidels of you, but he suggests that the present is not the time to attend to your souls; remember that if you listen to his suggestions, procrastinate, put off concern for your soul, you may be lost, and are almost sure to be. Again: impenitent persons, and even religious persons, are constantly in danger, from the fact that there are so few persons in solemn earnest on this subject: they are in great danger of not feeling the unspeakable necessity of present and solemn earnestness on this great subject. With respect to professors of religion, unless you make it the great business of your lives, you are the great cause of stumbling to those around you; you are misleading them in the most effectual manner; you are saying by your works there is no need to make this the great and solemn business of your life, there is no necessity to be particularly anxious about your soul.

Then let me say again, another reason why persons should attend to this first, in the sense I have here explained, is, that they will never effectually attend to it at all, till they come to that distinct position. When you consent to postpone anything till to-morrow, it will never be attended to effectually, and will be continually misleading those around you. I suppose that all of you do intend at some time to make this the most serious business of your lives; let it, then, be your first business from this time, or you may lose your souls. I have known many cases where persons have come to see clearly that this was the fact, that they were likely to lose their souls because they did not come to a point, and obey God by seeking his kingdom first. In revivals of religion, I have seen many instances, where person have come to feel, that if they procrastinated any further, they must lose their souls, and have resolved that nothing should hinder them, that nothing should engross their attention or stand in the way of giving their whole mind up to attend to it.

I could tell multitudes of facts where persons came to be conscious of this, when the providence of God aroused them from their sleepy state, and arrested their attention. In such cases they have made up their minds that nothing should, by any means, stand in their way nothing should by any means be allowed to hinder them making religion the great business of life. I shall mention one fact. A lawyer, a man of large business in his profession-this man had been awakened in a revival; he went to his office with a resolution to attend to his soul at the risk of neglecting everything else. As soon as he had reached his office, some individuals called upon important business, to whom he had promised his assistance. "Gentlemen," said he, "I cannot attend to your business now, I must first attend to my soul; I have neglected this business so long already, that if I allow myself to neglect it any longer, I shall lose my soul to all eternity.

Will you excuse me for the present, or get some one else to attend to your business?" They left the office, and took the papers with them. He stayed alone in the office, resolving that he would not leave till he had given his heart to God; and the fact is, that he did give his heart to God, and found peace. My dear hearers, what an awful game you have been playing with yourselves, if your have been neglecting the business which God sent you into this world to attend to. He made it your great, solemn, and only business, and yet you have neglected it. I say that the care of your soul is your only business, to which all other things are only helps and are you attending to this great business, or are you neglecting it, and thus going on the road to ruin? God is speaking to you by his word, by his Spirit, and by his ministers, saying, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This is the errand upon which God has sent you into the world, and have you suffered yourselves to neglect it! Have you been wandering about and forgetting the errand on which you were sent? Did your Father commit a soul to you, and tell you to take care of it; and are you running about thinking of everything but taking care of it, and by so doing disobeying your Father, and ruining yourselves?

Now, is it not true that you have been acting thus foolishly and wickedly? Oh, think of your guilt in neglecting your soul and disobeying God, and resolve

now to procrastinate no longer! Again: for a man to act thus on any other subject, he would be pronounced insane. And it is moral insanity which makes people neglect the business of their eternal salvation; it is madness in the heart. Suppose a man should neglect the most important part of his worldly business, the neglect of which would ruin all his worldly prospects, why everybody would say he was insane. Who can doubt this? Now, what higher evidence can a man give of insanity, who admits his guilt and danger in words, and yet systematically neglects to save himself from ruin. If a man should deny the whole matter, and say there was no truth in the statement, that he is in danger by his neglect, why, what higher evidence could he give of being insane? Let any one tell if he can! We will now proceed to notice, in a few words,

IV. The meaning of the annexed promise "And all these things shall be added unto you."

You observe in the connection of our text, Christ is speaking of worldly things; and he tells us not give any anxiety about these things at all, but to let our anxieties be respecting the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and, in that case, all these worldly things, of which he is speaking; shall be added unto us. The word "added," here means thrown in, something super-added. Now, what Christ means to say is this, that it is perfectly unnecessary that we should be anxious about worldly things, because, if we seek first "the kingdom of God and his righteousness," he will see that we are fully supplied with what we need in relation to our bodies. Let the great business of our lives be spiritual concerns, and he will take care that we shall not want in relation to temporal matters. The promise is, that if we give our supreme attention to spiritual matters, our temporal wants will be supplied.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say. First, from what has been said, it is plain that we can all very well afford to obey God in this respect, for he will take care of our temporal wants, if we will only pay supreme attention to our souls. We can very well afford, therefore, thoroughly to obey God. You see, he has not placed us in such a position that we must starve to death if we seek the salvation of our souls, that our families must starve, or our fellow-creatures must suffer, or that the ruin of our temporal concerns must necessarily be the result of our determination to attend to religion.

Again: how infinitely kind in God to give us the assurance that he will take this stumbling-block out of our way, if we will but attend first to the salvation of our souls, and make religion and the glory of God the objects of our supreme regard. He very kindly says, "If you will take care of your souls, I will take care of your bodies. You have an immortal soul to be saved, let my kingdom be set up in your hearts, seek your own salvation, work it out with fear and trembling, and don't be anxious about your body, for I will take care of that."

Again: I have become acquainted with many interesting facts illustrating the care of God for the temporal interests of his devoted servants-those who came right up to the obeying of this requirement. I have known, too, a great many instances in which persons have said that they could not attend to religion without ruining their worldly prospects. A barber, who had been in the habit of shaving on the Sabbath-day, became awakened, and began to reflect upon his sins, and felt the importance of attending to religion. He was in a difficultly. A great many of his customers were ungodly men, who always came to be shaved on a Sunday; he did not see, therefore, how he could shut up his shop on that day. Yet, how could he be a Christian, and not shut up on the Sabbath? He spoke to his customers, and the great mass of them said, "If you shut up your shop on the Sabbath, we must employ somebody else." He made up his mind, however, rather to starve to death than disobey God. He resolved to tell his customers that his shop would in future be closed on Sunday. When he had fully resolved upon this, some of them asked if he would shave them on Saturday night? "Oh, yes, till midnight," he replied; and this he did; he shaved till midnight on Saturday, but resolutely closed on the Sabbath. I saw him some years after, and I asked him, "How do you get along?" "Why, sir," he replied, "my business has been better than ever; a great deal better." This is only one of many similar instances that I could mention, where individuals have supposed that they were about to sacrifice everything by becoming religious, but, on the contrary, have received much benefit, receiving a hundred fold more in this present life, and the promise of the life everlasting.

Again: let me say, proper attention to business is really attention to religion.

If you make your business God's business, transact it on right principles, and get your heart into a right state, so that you do everything from religious motives, why, your business is then as much a part of religion, as praying and going to church is. Again: the promise which God has here given, is designed to leave men entirely without excuse for neglecting to attend to their eternal salvation. I remark again: many men reverse God's order in point of time, and instead of putting religion first, put it last; the first place is given to the world, the attention is wholly given up to the pursuit of

wealth. Those persons want to place themselves in a position to be independent of God; they must get a fortune first, and then attend to religion. And then there are a great many persons who not only reverse God's order in point of time, but there are multitudes who reverse God's order in point of the importance of it.

How remarkable that many persons should think themselves religious people, while they really place more practical stress upon the most trifling things around them, than upon the great questions of salvation, and disobeying God. Instead of making religion the greatest and most important practical business, they make it the least important. The persons I am speaking of do not utterly neglect it, but they so attend to it that everybody knows that they care very little about it, and do not rest upon it. Again: those who do not make religion their great business, tempt God. Multitudes of souls are lost by tempting God in this way; they are living worldly, selfish, and ungodly lives, and yet they try to make themselves believe, and the world believe, that they are going to heaven in despite of what God has said to the contrary. They live in disobedience to God, but professedly Christians, and it is proclaimed that they died in the faith, and people charitably hope that they are gone to heaven. It was Dr. Doddridge, I think, who so extensively investigated the results of death-bed impressions. Out of two thousand persons, who, when they supposed themselves dying, expressed their faith in Christ, only two afterwards gave evidence of true conversion. Death-bed repentances are not to be relied on. "Seek first the kingdom of God," if you do not this, you may never be saved at all.

Once more: a great many persons seem to say, "I don't care how much sin I commit, if I can but get to heaven." They go as far as they think they can go in the service of the devil, and dishonouring God; but let me tell you, if you put God's arrangements out of order, the probability is that your souls will be lost. God says, "Put religion first." You say, "Not so, Lord, let it be put last; I must attend to everything else first." God says, "Seek this first;" and do let me ask, Is it not your interest to seek it first? If for that reason then, alone, why do you not seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first?

In conclusion, let me ask you one question, Will all of you who are in this house to-night, make up your minds now to seek this kingdom first, that it may be set up in your hearts? Will you pray for this? will you make it your business to pray? will you begin to-night? Now that the Lord says, "Seek ye my face," does your heart reply, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek?" If you delay, your soul may be ruined!-lost for ever!

HOLINESS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

A sermon preached on Friday, June 7, 1850

by the Rev. C. G. Finney

"And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."-Matthew 1:21.

In speaking from these words, I design to show.

I. That salvation from sin is the great necessity of man.

II. That Jesus has undertaken this work.

III. Inquire why it is that so many persons fail of this salvation.

I. That salvation from sin is the great necessity of man.

This is a fact of universal observation. It is also a fact of universal consciousness. Every man is conscious of the fact that he is a sinner, and while he is a sinner he cannot be satisfied with himself, he cannot truly respect himself, he cannot have peace of mind, he cannot have the favour of God; and he ought not to have all or any of these things. In short, it is a fact of universal experience that men are sinners, and that they must be saved from sin as a condition of their being made happy, either in this world or in the future world.

Men are so constituted that they cannot doubt that ultimate happiness is impossible unless they can be delivered from that which they know to be a great curse in this world, and which they also know will be their ultimate ruin, if persisted in. While men are violating their own consciences, they know that happiness is impossible. These facts are always assumed in the Bible, and their truth is declared by the universal sentiment of mankind. But I must not dwell on this thought; the text announces the fact that Jesus Christ has come into the world, and that his great business is to save men from sin. This leads me to the second thought-

II. That Jesus has undertaken this work.

"He shall save his people from their sins," therefore is his name called Jesus--the name Jesus signifying a Saviour. Now, salvation from sin is of the highest importance to mankind. The term strictly, as here used, means merely deliverance, or safety from some tremendous evil; it is often found in the Bible, and includes in it very generally, in addition to mere deliverance, the result of it-eternal happiness and enjoyment in heaven with the people of God.

Thus, properly and scripturally speaking, the term salvation means deliverance, both from guilt and it's consequences. In this text, the reason assigned for the name that was to be given to the child of Mary was, that

he should save his people from their sins-that he should bear the particular relation of a Saviour-that he should save both from the guilt and the punishment of sin. The Bible represents him as having given himself to be the Saviour of the world, as having consecrated himself to this end, as having died and opened a way by which sinners could be saved; and that previous to this, as being in a waiting attitude to accomplish this work; as endeavoring to gain the consent of God and man to comply with the natural and necessary conditions of sinners being saved; and that now he possesses in himself all the fullness of power of necessary to the accomplishment of the work-he is able to save unto the uttermost all that will come to God by him. The Bible represents Jesus as coming on this great mission, and as occupying himself exclusively with this work, and as having fully secured this end. Now, whenever persons come into sympathy with him, and seek what it is his business to give, knock at the door which it is his business to open, the Bible represents him as ready and willing to do these things for them. We now come to the inquiry.

III. Why it is that so many persons fail of this salvation.

That many do fail of it, is a simple matter of fact. Now, the question is, Why do they fail? We remark, first, that many persons fail of this salvation because they have not abandoned reliance upon themselves. It is the most obvious thing in the whole world, that many persons are living not to God, but to themselves.

Now, wherever this principle is manifested, it is certain that persons are not saved from sin, for what is sin but living to self and not to God; self-seeking is the very essence of sin. Now, multitudes of persons manifest that this spirit is not set aside in them, but that, on the contrary, the whole end and aim of their life is self-seeking, instead of the first and great end being the glory and honour of God. Now, a man cannot be saved unless he is justified, and he cannot be justified unless his sins are pardoned,-- this must be a condition of a sinner's salvation.

Salvation consists in being saved from sin; and the reason why a great many persons are not saved is, that they are unwilling to accept of salvation on such a condition, they are unwilling to give up their sins; but if they will not be persuaded to be saved from the their sins, and become sanctified,-- if they will not relinquish and renounce their sin, they never can be saved. Many persons will even pray to God that he will save them, but they really do not desire that for which they ask-they do not mean what they say; to get men to consent to relinquish their sins, is the great difficulty.

Now observe, if a man is saved at all he must consent to it; his will must acquiesce in the arrangement; and the will is not moved by physical force. A man must voluntarily consent to be saved, or Jesus himself cannot possibly save him. Man is a moral agent, and he is addressed by God as such, and therefore, in order to his salvation, he must voluntarily consent to relinquish sin, and have his mind brought into obedience with the law of God.

Again: Multitudes are not saved because they seek forgiveness while they do not forsake their sins. Some individuals will spend much time in praying for pardon, while they indulge themselves in sin. Again: multitudes are seeking for salvation while they neglect the natural condition of their being pardoned. While they continue in sin, indulge in a self-seeking spirit, it is naturally impossible, that they can be saved.

If a man should act in this way in relation to his body, every one would plainly perceive the folly of his conduct; if he should partake of things which rendered good health impossible, and yet should wonder that he did not possess the robustness of health which he desired, people would not pity, but blame him. Now, the fact is, that many persons are seeking for that which must result alone from holiness, while they are not themselves sanctified. They are seeking comfort while they refuse to be holy; thus they neglect to fulfill the natural conditions on which either comfort or salvation can be obtained. Again, many persons fail of this salvation because they are waiting for God to fulfill conditions which it is naturally impossible for him to fulfill, and which they themselves must fulfill, and which God is endeavoring to persuade and influence them to fulfill.

For example: God cannot repent for them; he cannot believe for them; no, but these are the natural conditions of their salvation, and these very things Christ is persuading them to do. Now, they are waiting for God to do that which he will never do, that in fact, which he cannot do, but which he is requiring us to do for ourselves. Let me be understood. God never requires of us to perform an impossibility, nor does he accomplish that for us which we can do ourselves. Don't be shocked at this, for it is truth. Now, observe, God requires us to repent; this is an act of our own minds, and therefore he cannot do it for us. It is true that these things are spoken of sometimes as being done by God; it is said that he gives repentance, faith, and love, but he only does this in the sense of persuading and inciting our minds to the performance of these duties.

Now, if anybody is seeking for God to do that which they must do themselves, they will fail of eternal life. How many are making mistakes in this matter! they are waiting for God to put repentance and faith into them, and entirely overlooking the fact of its being an exercise of their own minds. Again: Another difficulty, and another reason, why persons are not saved is this-they profess to be waiting for the Holy Spirit, while in fact they are resisting the Holy Spirit. They pretend that they are waiting for the Holy Spirit to save them and convert them: now, mark, every moment they wait they are grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit. Now, what do they mean by waiting, when they ought to be acting? From the beginning and end He is the teacher. "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him." "They shall all be taught of the Lord." "He shall take of the things of mine and show them unto you." Now, the Bible represents the Holy Spirit in this way as a teacher, and those who do not yield when the truth is presented to them, are resisting and grieving the Spirit. You remember the words of our Saviour to the Jews, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye."

Now, multitudes in the present day are resisting the Holy Spirit under the pretence of waiting for it. The divine influence is always waiting to save you, if you will comply with the necessary conditions; but if under any pretence you neglect your duty, you never will be saved. But I pass next to consider another great difficulty in the way of a sinner's conversion. Many are really seeking to be justified in sin. They ask God to pardon them, but they refuse to be sanctified; they seek Christ as their justification only. They cleave to their sins, they are living in their sins, and they seek to be justified rather than sanctified-indeed, they refuse to be sanctified at all. Now, this is a very common case.

Again, let me say that this class of persons really regard the gospel as a mighty system of indulgence, on a large scale. They really suppose that men are subjects of this salvation while they are living in selfish indulgence. In the very early ages of Christianity, the Antinomian spirit had crept into the Church: the doctrine of justification by faith, as opposed to justification by works, was sadly abused by many. While some of the Apostles were still living, many persons came to regard the gospel as a system of indulgence, that men were to be justified in sin rather than be saved from sin; thus they took an entirely false view of the gospel of Christ. You will remember that the Apostle James wrote his epistle to denounce this wrong view, and to guard the Christians against abusing the doctrine of justification by faith. Some persons imagine that the Apostle rejected this doctrine altogether, yet this is not true; but his epistle being written for the purpose we have mentioned, he does not give this doctrine the prominence that Paul did.

Now, no man who lives in sin can be justified, because no man can be pardoned who lives in any form of iniquity. The Apostle tells you plainly that those who commit sin are the children of the devil, and while they are living in sin they cannot enjoy the privileges of the gospel. He does not mean that an individual cannot be a Christian who falls under the power of temptation and into occasional sin. The Apostle John also says, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not"--"whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God"--"he that committeth sin is of the devil." This is strong language, and if I should affirm so strongly the necessity of holiness, you would think I spoke harshly; but it ought to be insisted upon more than it is, that men cannot be Christians unless they are holy.

The moral law is as much binding upon Christians as it was upon those to whom it was first given. Faith without love will never save man; but let me say, that true faith is always true love. Every man who breaks the law systematically and designedly, living in violation of its precepts, is a child of the devil, and not of God. Let this be thundered in the ears of the Church and the world.

Now, it is very common for men to overlook this great truth, and fall into the worldly mindedness and sinful practices of the those around them. Again: multitudes are not saved because they regard the gospel as an abrogation of the moral law-a virtual repeal of it. Now, the gospel does not repeal the moral law. What saith the Apostle? "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law." Now, it is true that the gospel was designed to set aside the penalty of the law, upon all who should be persuaded to come back to its precepts, and yield that love and confidence which the law requires. Now, it is frequently the case, if ministers begin to say anything about obedience to the law, the people call out against it as legal preaching! If they are roused up and urged to do that which the law of God requires of them, they tell you they want the gospel. Now, such people know nothing at all of the gospel! They make Christ the minister of sin! They seem to think that Christ came to justify them in their sin, instead of saving them from it.

Let me say, once more, that another reason why men are not saved from sin is, that they have really come to regard justification in sin, as a means to save them from it! In support of this monstrous idea, they will even appeal to the Scriptures. They found justification on the

atonement; now, this work of Christ can never be imputed to any man in such a sense as to justify him while he remains in sin! Justification in sin is a thing impossible! Now, how can a man be pardoned and justified, before he repents and believes! It is impossible! He must be in a state of obedience to the law of God before he can be justified! The fact is, there is a very great mistake among many people on this subject. They think that they must persuade themselves that they are justified, but they are not, and never can be, till they forsake sin, and do their duty.

In the next place, multitudes make this mistake-they seek hope, rather than holiness; instead of working out their own salvation, they seek to cherish a hope that they shall be saved. Again, they seek to persuade themselves that they are safe, while they are in a state of condemnation. Those who seek salvation oftimes fail because they seek it selfishly; not so much because they abhor sin, and want holiness, as because they desire personal happiness, or personal honour, by being held up as very pure and good men, and because they seek sanctification for some selfish reason they do not get rid of their sins. Again, some individuals content themselves in sin so long as they can indulge a hope, or get others to indulge a hope for them. If they have certain feelings, which lead them to hope that all will be well with them at last, they are perfectly satisfied, and have no desire to be saved from sin.

But I cannot continue this train of observation, and will therefore conclude with some remarks. First, no person has any right to hope for eternal life, unless he is conscious of possessing the spirit of Christ within him-unless he is free from those sinful tempers which are indulged in by wicked men-unless he is free from a self-seeking spirit of doing business which characterizes the men of the world. How can a man in such a condition expect or hope for eternal life? How can any man suppose that he is justified before he is sanctified? I do not mean to say, that a man is not in any sense justified before he is sanctified; but, as a matter of fact, a man is not safe for eternity unless he is saved from sin. He has no right to expect to get to heaven unless the work of sanctification is going on in his soul. Again, it is easy to see from what has been said, that many persons regard the doctrine of justification by faith, as the whole gospel. It is the gospel, in their conception of it!

Now, why is this the gospel to them? Why is it good news? Why is it not good news that Christ will save them from sin? How is it that the good news of the gospel as it strikes them is the good news that will justify rather than sanctify?-that Christ is precious to them, not so much because he came to save from sin, as because he came to forgive, to die for their sins, and to justify them! Is there not something wrong in all this? Does it not show, when persons lay more stress upon justification than upon sanctification, that they are more afraid of punishment than of sin?-more afraid of the consequences of sin than of the sin itself? If they can but get rid of the penalty, the governmental consequence of sin, they are satisfied. Again, it is certain, that where this principle takes possession of the mind, that the individual seeks much more to be pardoned than to be made holy. It is better news to him that Christ will justify him, than that Christ will save him from his sins. Talk to him about his sins; preach to him about his sins; require him to become holy; present Christ as his sanctification, and that is not the gospel! Let me say, that there are multitudes of persons who have contracted their views into that one point-that Christ has died to save men from punishment. All idea about Christ being the believer's sanctification, or that sanctification is a condition of salvation, is wholly lost sight of. There is no stress laid upon the doctrine of sanctification.

Christ is chiefly precious because he saves from wrath, much more than because he saves from sin; more because he justifies, than because he sanctifies. Now, rely upon it, that, whenever this is the case, there is a sad defect of character. What is the true spirit of the children of God? Why, it is this,-- they feel as if they must get rid of sin, at any rate. They don't want to be saved in their sins; they feel that to live in their sins is hell enough. They abhor themselves on account of their sins. They must get away from their sins. They would not wish to be saved at all, if they could not be saved from sin. They are ready to say, If the gospel cannot save me from sin, it is a failure, for this is my necessity.

Now, who does not know that the true Christian is more afraid of sin than of punishment? Yes, a great deal more! They abhor sin; and when they ever fall into sin, they are ready to curse themselves; and all the more because Christ is so willing to forgive them. The man in this condition of mind will never look upon the gospel as mere justification. Again: whenever the doctrine of justification comes to be more prominent in the church than sanctification, there is something wrong, there is a radical error crept into the church; there is a danger of that church losing all true idea of what the gospel is. I don't know how it is in this country, but I greatly fear that the doctrine of sanctification is kept very much in the background. Now, why is this? While there is so much said about justification, there is very little said about personal holiness. So much is said about a Saviour, as

if the gospel was meant simply to save men from punishment.

Now, while I know that the gospel presents salvation from punishment, and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, I know that its chief relation to men, is to save them from their sins-to become their sanctification. Again: the true state of men is always known by the great absorbing idea which is in their minds. A man's character is as is the end for which he lives. Now, a man who lives in any sin, any form of self-pleasing, and self-seeking, cannot be a Christian; for the true idea of the gospel is, that, for a man to be a Christian he must be devoted to God, and thoroughly withdrawn from all forms of sin and iniquity. He must be devoted to God, living for God, living for the same end that God lives; sympathizing with Christ, and with everything that is good. This is the character of every true Christian. This is the true conception of Christianity, and just in proportion as individuals approach to this standard have they a good hope of salvation, and just in proportion as they recede from this standard they fail of salvation. Again: there are a great many persons whose aim is to get peace of mind, and who are constantly crying "peace" to others, when there is no peace.

Now, let me say that there can be no real, true peace, unless all the conditions of the gospel have been complied with. You cannot have that peace of God which passeth all understanding, while you are in an unsanctified state; and, if you think so, you are deceiving yourself. Now, let me ask of you, Are you not conscious that this "peace of God" does not "rule in your hearts?" If I am not greatly mistaken, there are many persons in this house who have been trying for years to make themselves happy, but who, after all, are in such a state of mind as not to know that they are pardoned, have no real confidence in their own piety; now, how is it possible that they should have peace of mind? Peace of mind results from sanctification, and this they have never obtained. Let an individual who has been making justification the great idea, be at the point of death, and does he feel happy and resigned, having a full confidence that he shall go to heaven? How often do we hear such persons exclaim under such circumstances, "I am undone, I am not prepared." Why are you not prepared? A short time ago you were indulging a comfortable hope that you were a Christian, and now you cry out in fear, lest you should lose your soul. How is this?

There is a great delusion in the minds of men on this subject. They suppose that they have a very comfortable hope, but it is in the absence of piety; and when death stares them in the face they discover that they have no confidence in religion, or any ground of hope. Again: persons who do not like to have their hopes tried, and themselves searched, do great wrong to their souls. The more hope is tried, if it be good hope, the more consoling and satisfactory will it become. The man who is seeking to be sanctified, desires to be searched that he may not be resting in any degree upon an uncertain and unsafe foundation, because he is more afraid of sin than of anything else; he is more ready to forsake sin, than anything else in the world; he would rather forego any earthly good than have anything to do with sin. Now, don't say that this is extreme, because it is a universal truth, if religion implies supreme love to God: if we supremely love any being, we shall supremely delight to please him: this is a universal characteristic of the children of God.

Now, if this be so, what shall we say of the great mass of professors, who give the highest possible evidence that self-indulgence is the chief end of their lives? They wait to be saved, not from sin, but in it. But while they live in sin they never can be saved! Before hope can be cherished, the conditions of salvation must be fulfilled: you will never be saved at all unless you are saved from sin--mind that! You must become holy in order to become happy. Fulfill the conditions; become holy, and then your peace shall flow like a river. Give up your sins, give your heart to God, and rely upon it that the peace which passeth all understanding shall rule in your hearts.

Believer in Christ, the Lord hath set you apart for himself, separated you from the rest of the world; but you are only set apart as " holiness to the Lord:" this must be written plainly upon you; and if the Lord has written his name upon you, you are safe, not else. And let me say to every one in this house, Don't you expect to be forgiven, don't you expect to be pardoned, unless you will consent to be separated from your sins, and have the name of the Lord Jesus Christ written upon your hearts; unless your prayer is, "O Lord, write thy law upon my heart and make me holy." Receive his name in your forehead and his law in your heart, give yourself up to him, body and soul, and rely upon it, as the Lord liveth, as Jesus liveth, you shall understand what is the salvation of God. Will you do it tonight?

THE SABBATH SCHOOL - COOPERATION WITH GOD

A sermon delivered on Wednesday, August 28, 1850, by the Rev. Professor Finney,

of Oberlin College, U. S.,

To the members of the Sunday School Union, at the Tabernacle, Moorfields.

"We are laborers together with God." I Cor. III. 9.

MAN is sometimes a mere instrument in bringing about certain events; and in bringing about certain other events, he acts as a responsible agent. When he does anything without rendering an intelligent cooperation, he is more properly an instrument; but when he is a sympathizing, intelligent, designing, co-operating agent he is a co-laborer with God in producing results by such combined agency. There are multitudes of cases in which men may be said to combine with God. For instance, in raising the productions necessary for his subsistence, man is a co-worker with God; for he makes use not only of man instrumentally, but as a designing, active agency--aiming to secure a result as, really as God is--sympathizing with him in the great end at which he aims--without the loss of his own responsibility, liberty, cooperating with him designedly and understandingly. It is enough to say, that when men have the same end in view--when they sympathize with him, and take the same means to secure the end in view, they may be said to be "laborers together with God."

In speaking to the subject before us, I shall notice---

I. THE PARTICULAR WORK HERE REFERRED TO

II. WHO ARE PECULIARLY CO-LABORERS WITH GOD IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS

III. WHY GOD MAKES USE OF THIS COMBINATION

IV. THE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

V. VARIOUS HINDRANCES WHICH RETARD THE WORK

I. The particular work here referred to.

The particular work to which the apostle here alludes, is the conversion and sanctification of sinners. In bringing about their salvation, God has, of course, done much without man's co-operation--Christ has made atonement without him; still, however, there was the applying of this atonement, and this was the particular work in which the apostle was engaged.

II. Who are co-workers with God?

The apostle in this case is speaking of himself and his fellow-laborers in the gospel; his eye was particularly upon them; but from the very nature of the case, and what is said in other places, we understand that all persons engaged in religious teaching--every one designing to accomplish the great end, and engaged in giving instruction for the purpose of accomplishing it--sympathizing with God in the grand end in view--endeavoring to accomplish it by the means he has appointed--all such persons are "laborers together with God." Now, not only all teachers, but all those who are employed in any department of labor necessary to the accomplishment of this result, may be said to be "laborers together with God." Such, for example, are editors and others, laboring, directly or indirectly, to attain the desired object; but I shall notice more particularly this evening, one class--Sabbath-school Teachers, who are co-workers with God in the highest sense. The next inquiry is,

III. Why has God employed this combined agency?

We should never forget that God always acts wisely. Whatever he does, we are bound to assume that no other course than the one he pursues, would be so wise and good, if wise and good at all. Now, God cannot depart from the path of wisdom. First, then, God has chosen to associate man with him in this matter; we are, therefore, bound to infer that he has acted wisely in so doing; and that another course would not have been wise. To doubt this, is to call in question his goodness; and we are to infer, therefore, from the fact that he has chosen this method of doing this work, that he could not wisely attempt to do it alone. I will not speak of the possibility or impossibility of it; but the fact that such is the way God takes, shows that, in his judgment, this is the wisest way. It follows, therefore, that as this is God's way, he will not do it any other way; and that if there is not this cooperation on the part of man, we have no right to look for the promised result.

But let me say again: Another reason why this is so, is, because we need this labor. It is just the very exercise we want in order to prepare us for heaven. We need to cultivate our benevolent feeling and affections; this is just the kind of culture that is necessary for our spiritual well-being, these are just the channels in which our thoughts should be directed.

Again, it is honorable to God and man. If he requests any such feeble instrumentality as man's, why the excellency will be seen to be entirely of God, and not be ascribed, even in part, to the instrument, as might be the case even were angels employed in man's place. Furthermore, man can sympathize with man. God will get glory by bringing about so great a work by such means. Man will be benefited; and surely he is greatly

honored by such an association with God, in so great a work.

But I must not enlarge here; I shall now proceed to point out, The Conditions of Success, and then the Hindrances which stand in the way.

IV. The conditions of success.

The conditions of success are, first, sympathy on the part of those who labor to this end with God. You must enter into his designs and views, having confidence in his wisdom and judgment, deeply sympathizing with the self-sacrificing spirit of Christ. There must be deep sympathy with him in regard to his passion for souls universally. Deep sympathy on the part of those who are co-workers with him, is indispensable to success. Who doubts but that one of the greatest secrets of the success of the early Christian ministry was this deep sympathy with Christ in his work. Their self-denying labors--their self-sacrificing spirit, showed that they entered deeply into sympathy with their Divine Master in this work. Now, until men really enter into sympathy with Christ in this matter, as the apostle and primitive Christians did, do not let them pretend that there is some Divine Sovereignty, or anything else, preventing similar success.

Again: Man must understand what is to be done. If he conceives that to save a soul is entirely an act of Divine creation, what has he to do with it? What cooperation has he? But it is not so, and man must, therefore, understand what is the nature of the work which has to be done. Again: He must understand the laws under which it takes place, and how it ought, therefore, to be done. If he has to take any part in it, he needs to understand clearly what part he has to take, and how it is to be performed, whether men are converted by persuasion accompanied by a presentation of the truth, or by a physical act of creation. If he makes a mistake here, he is not of much service in carrying forward the work; he must not go blindly forward without caring to ascertain the part devolving upon him.

But, again: He must possess the requisite skill. He must himself be divinely taught. He must know God's truth himself. He must understand what it is to be converted himself, or how can he labor for the conversion of others? What infinite folly for such a one to attempt to undertake the conversion of others! As well might a man with a beam in his own eye, attempt to pluck out the mote from his brother's eye; let him first cast out the beam from his own eye, and then he will see clearly to pluck the mote out of his brother's eye. He should have some knowledge by experience of what it is to be converted. If he is going to teach the sinner to obtain a new heart, let him understand what it is himself; for if he undertakes the work without knowing anything about it in his heart, he will prevent the work. So does a minister who pretends to point out the way of salvation, without himself having walked therein.

But let me remark again: He must understand the means necessary to this end. Having the end in view, knowing the means appointed by God to secure it, let him apply the means to the end, in an intelligent manner. Would you expect a man to be converted by talking to him about the Bey of Algiers? Yet this is as nearly connected with the subject in hand, as are the methods some take to effect the conversion of sinners. If you are to be co-workers with God, you must know what God is aiming to do--what particular mistakes you have fallen into--as wisely adapting the means to the end as a physician, who inquires into the habits of his patient, what caused the disease, what prolongs it, and the difficulties in the way of its removal. Now, suppose a physician, pretending to be a co-worker with God, should give up the use of means, sending one and the same prescription to all his patients, getting up a common panacea for all their ailments--what would you think of such quackery? But is not spiritual quackery even worse than this? Has not God ordained that man shall be converted by the truth? What then, is most calculated to impress the sinner with a consciousness of his necessity and with faith in his remedy?--what to teach him to get present hold of it?

Therefore, if men would be co-laborers with God, let them be sure to adapt their means to their end. They have no more right to expect to secure their end without the use of suitable means, than has the physician who does not adapt his means to his end, or any other man, attempting any other thing. God is perfectly wise in the selection of the instrumentality by which he does things. He has told us that he converts men by the truth; he has made us understand this. From the Bible and the universal conscience of all who ever were convinced by the truth, everybody can see that there is a Divine philosophy in every step--proper means to every end--all things conspire so that there is a divine, a philosophic beauty throughout the whole. The man who does not comply with the prescribed conditions is just as absurd as one who should undertake, in his business, to neglect the means from which certain results are always expected, and by which they are naturally accomplished, and yet expect to succeed.

Again: I do not mean to say that this result comes to pass by natural causes without the direct interposition of the Almighty; but that it is effected by laws with which he never interferes. His natural laws are everywhere

present, and he will no more violate them in the spiritual, than in the material world. Do not let me be misunderstood; I do not think the means accomplish the end without Divine interposition, but the means are adapted to the end. Who would expect God would convert a man by the preaching of some truth which has no manner of connection with him? Nobody. Suppose I go to an impenitent sinner, and attempt to convince him of sin by discoursing on some purely abstract truth, without any particular bearing on his conduct and responsibility. How could I expect him to be converted by such means? Would any of you expect it? No indeed! But why not just as well convert him when talking about some irrelevant, as well as some relevant matter? Or, suppose you talk of things partly relevant and partly irrelevant. But you must necessarily come to the conclusion that the more you adapt the means to the end, the more certain you

are of securing it. You would not expect Divine interference unless you acted wisely. Suppose a minister should preach from week to week about Cicero, or Demosthenes, and other such matters? You would never expect him to be instrumental in conversion. You say God will not make use of such means as these in the conversion of men. Now, carry this out in all your teaching, Sabbath-school instruction, and preaching; and never forget that when you do not apply the proper means to the accomplishment of your object, you not only do not act wisely, but you are not likely to secure your end.

Again: Another condition is diligence. God himself is diligent, and he loves to see you so. If I take my own individual case, I may say that, since I have been in the ministry, I have been pressed, I cannot say how many times, to spare myself and take more rest, and take more care of myself. But Jesus Christ laid down his life, and I can afford, if necessary, to lay down mine. It is not the point how long any one lives, but what he does. If a man is endeavoring to spare his own health, and to make that a primary object, setting it before his duty,--he is not doing very much.

It is necessary for persons under some circumstances, to lay themselves fully out, or to do nothing at all. Suppose, for instance, you see a man out upon the Niagara in a little boat, some two or three miles above the Falls, drifting gradually onwards to that mighty cataract. He has oars, but the day is warm, and he does not like to exert himself too much, as it would injure his health. The longer he delays, the greater his speed, and therefore, the greater his danger; at length, it increases visibly at every step, till he comes to the Falls, when the whole river seems to roll back in mighty volume, and to struggle lest it precipitate him into the profound abyss beneath. Now suppose, under such circumstances, that he should only take moderate strokes with his oars, lest he injure himself by over-exertion! Why, he might just as well not move at all.

He is placed in circumstances where he must work arduously and continuously, or it is of little use his working at all. He must lay himself fully out. To preserve one's life is a duty, when it can be done consistently with other and more important duties. But it is often our duty to sacrifice life, or at least, to risk it; and the man who cannot do this will never accomplish very great things. The work must be done, come life or come death.

Another condition is, faith in the Divine presence and co-operation. Christ has told his Church to accomplish this work, and he has promised to be with them--not sometimes, but always, even unto the end. They were to go forth, and to make disciples of all nations; and "lo," he says, very emphatically, "lo I am with you always," and everywhere to the end of the world. Now, it is of great moment that those who attempt this work should understand that God is always with them, and that they may rely on his co-operation with as much certainty as that he will not lie, if they will only lay themselves out upon the alter as they ought to do, I do not believe that a solitary instance could be adduced in which the proper means have been perseveringly used in a true spirit, where success has not crowned the efforts. The promise here given may be depended upon, just as much as a natural or physical law. It is the Divine promise of an omnipresent Jehovah to be always with those who engage in his work--always, to the end of the world. It is just as if he had said--Whatever there may be for me to do, I shall not be wanting; I shall be always with you. We are to assume then, I say, that God will interpose, as confidently as an engineer in the construction of his mechanism expect it to obey natural laws, which will cause it to act when it is constructed in accordance with those natural laws. Mark me! I do not confound this Divine interposition with natural laws. But look at the facts in all history. When there has been a deep sympathy with God--means wisely adjusted to the end--in short, when God's commandments and requirements have been complied with in the proper spirit--when has it been found that God did not fulfill his promise? But let me say again: It is very easy for men to put it upon Divine sovereignty when they have gone to work absurdly, and then say, "I have done my duty, and I must leave the rest in the hands of the Almighty!" But even if you have complied with God's requirements,

who does not see that you must follow it up! It never will do to faint with a single effort!

Another condition of success in this work is--we must leave nothing to miracles--we must not assume that God is going to convert men by miracles--we must not leave men to be convinced by miracles. Miracles never did convert men; they were only used to confirm their faith in the message that was sent from God. This having been once accomplished, they had the same gospel that we have. We do not need direct revelation as they did. I have said we must not leave anything to miracles; this is done wherever God is left to work without instrumentality. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" Now, the apostle reasoned that no such thing was to be expected unless means were used. If, therefore, we expect God to work miracles, and leave things to be done by him miraculously, we as really tempt God as farmers would if they waited for him to raise their crops by miracles.

Again: We are to expect nothing without Divine interposition. We are to remember that sinners so obstinate and stubborn will not turn to God except as he interposes to persuade them. Our persuasion will not suffice without his enlightenment. Again: We are also to understand that we are not to expect God to do this alone; he has chosen to do it by means of cooperation with us; we are to be co-laborers with him in it; and while we are not to expect that we can do it without his aid, we are not to expect him to do it without ours.

But this leads me, in the next place, to remark, that we must not stop short in seeking our end. We must not confine ourselves to sowing the seed, and neglect the watering of it. We must press our suit till we obtain our object, and not leave it for God to go on with it alone.

Another important condition is, we must take care not to hinder the work, by throwing obstacles in the way; but as this subject will come up for notice under the head of "hindrances," I will not further enlarge here.

In the next place, if we would secure this end, we must pray to be instructed, study the laws by which it is accomplished, and the means best adapted to secure it. We must adjust the means to the end as nicely as a chemist would do the various substances on which he is to experiment, and as confidently expect the results. We must study the state of mind in a man or child. What is the child taught at home? What does it know? What does it fail to know? We must thus endeavor to remove every obstacle, as a chemist in his laboratory would prepare all the component parts in a mixture, to secure the result of his experiments. Unless he adjusts these things in their exact proportions, his experiments will not succeed. To be sure it is a natural law, but if he does not comply with it, he will not secure his end. Now, who does not see in the gospel this nice adjustment of the truth to the end which it is designed to accomplish? Now, suppose you are going to endeavor to do your part towards the conversion of a certain child to God. What are you going to do? Are you going to tell him some story with no manner of connection with the subject? How can you wake him up to a sense of sin--set his mind fermenting on the subject? How can you best explain to him the atonement? Who does not see that there must be the nicest adjustment of the means to the end? If this is done in a proper spirit, you may expect the result, and you will not be disappointed either.

V. Hindrances.

The first great hindrance to this work which I shall notice, is the many false assumptions which are made; and consequently, the amount of false instruction which is given,--a course which is extremely mischievous. For example: How often is it presumed that God does his work alone? Now, I do not say he cannot possibly do it alone, but I do say he cannot wisely do it alone; but to say that the Almighty cannot wisely do a thing is, virtually to say he cannot do it at all, for he cannot act unwisely. This hindrance is extremely powerful; for of course, where men think God does it alone, they do not care to co-operate.

Another assumption is, that his sovereignty is of such a character as to render it extremely doubtful whether he will co-operate with us. Where this is the case, men have but little expectation of success--they care but little to adapt the means in the end--and the result is naturally a failure. Show me a man who, though doing the best he can, as he thinks, does not feel certain of success, and you will show me an unsuccessful man; for he, instead of being duly impressed with a sense of the presence and cooperation of God--of the fact that God is most minutely watching his efforts, and ever ready to apply his seal to the result--instead, in short, of addressing himself right to the work with the expectation of seeing it accomplished,--he will do no such thing. This is one of the greatest errors in the Christian Church. Why did not the apostles assume God's sovereignty in this sense? Everybody can see that the primitive Christians went right to the work, as if they expected God's agency might be depended upon, taking it for granted that the Divine cooperation would by no means be wanting. Is there anything in the prophecies, in the gospels, in the epistles--is there

anything in the entire Word of God to warrant our saying that the time for such things is gone past? No indeed; judging from the Bible, we have a right to expect more and more of the Divine cooperation and power. Such a supposition as the mistake I have noted, dampens the energies of the saints; and prevents their securing the end.

Another mistake is: It is assumed that the want of success is to be ascribed to God's sovereignty. Now, this is tempting God. There are men not half awake to the subject, ascribing the want of success to God's sovereignty!--men who have actually not employed the proper means! Indeed, the entire affair is nothing more or less than overlooking the fact, that God's government is a moral government. They confound physical with moral government, and physical with Divine influence, confusing and bewildering their minds; no wonder, then that their efforts are not crowned with success.

Another hindrance may be found in the assumption that if the work is God's work, there is no such thing as HINDERING it! "No such thing as hindering it!" Indeed! In what part of the Bible have you made that discovery? Was there "no such thing as hindering" conversion in the days of the apostles? The fact is, that if the means are not suitable to the object which is sought to be attained, it never will be attained; and to say that the means "will be sure to be adjusted to the end," is just as reasonable as would be the parent who forsook his child, on the plea that "if God designed him to get well, he would be sure to get well; he need not, therefore send for a physician--it was no use his doing anything!" To be sure I know," he says, "that God has settled in his own mind whether he shall or shall not get well, and the means will not be neglected if the end is to be secured." But it is just as easy to devote one's self to the conversion of the soul, as to the healing of the sick. Why then do men apply rules to the salvation of the soul, which would not entitle them to be considered sane if they applied them to anything else?

Again: Children are told to pray for the Spirit, when all the time they are resisting it. Instead of throwing all the blame on the sinner, and making him see that he is always resisting the Holy Ghost, they make it appear to him as if he were in reality more willing to receive the Holy Ghost than God was to bestow it! Whereas, if he would but yield to the convictions of the Holy Ghost, he is a converted child, or man, that moment. Yielding to the truth presented to the spirit, is conversion.

Again: He is set to pray for a new heart, instead of being told at once to give his heart to God--thus completely confusing the whole question, by assuming that he has nothing to do except to wait for God to make him a new heart, which they expect to come, like an electric shock, or something of that kind. Now, what is this assuming? Why, that he is really willing to be a Christian, and waiting for it! Now, does the Bible teach this? If so, where? It is in fact, telling the child that he is willing enough to be converted, and that he must pray to God and get him to be equally willing! Now, this is as gross an error as it is possible to propagate. Conversion is an act of the will in turning from sin unto God. The truth is, the sinner is not willing; the moment he is willing--that is conversion. The very act of being willing is the act which constitutes conversion. Now, to set a sinner to do what pre-supposes willingness on his part, is to throw the responsibility upon God. Now, my dear hearts, what can be a more deadly error than that?

Said a lawyer to me in one of the great cities of Pennsylvania, "Mr. Finney, is there any hope for me? When at college, I and two or three of my fellow students waited on the president, and asked him what we should do to be converted. He told us to keep out of bad company, to read the Scriptures, pray for a good heart, and in God's good time, we should either be converted or go back again into the world." As he said, they did "go back into the world." Bursting into tears, he continued, "My two companions are now in a drunkard's grave, and I have but just escaped! Now, is there any hope for me?" I told him, your president was probably a good man, but he taught you just what the devil wished you to be taught. Instead of at once accepting Christ, believing the truth, breaking down before him, he set you to read the Bible and to pray, thus throwing all the responsibility upon God. You were waiting for God to convert you without your cooperation. That was just what the devil wanted! "Oh! I see it," said he, "I see it!" Now, how many souls have been ruined in this way? Is that the way to trifle with immortal souls?--to assume that they are willing, when Christ says they will not come unto him. I know not, brethren, to what extent you are guilty of this; but this I know, that these are errors which are now doing incalculable mischief among children and others.

Again: ofttimes the instruction given to children places them in a false position with regard to the Spirit of God, the use of means, and their own duty. It places them in a position of being willing to do their duty; although impenitent and unbelieving, it gives them to understand that they are willing, and that it is God who is causing the delay--it gives them to understand that they are using means, and doing all they can to procure their own conversion; but it is false!--unutterably false, and pernicious! It is as false as to teach universal salvation.

Why, I would just as soon teach infidelity right out, or any other error that can be taught, as to delude people with the idea that they are willing to come to Christ--that if the Spirit of God will only help them, all would be right now, when every single breath they breathe, they are resisting the Holy Ghost, and nothing else. What man was ever converted that did not learn that he had been all along wrong in thinking he was using means with God, instead of God's using means with him? Now, if a man has not learned this, I do not believe he is converted at all. When persons are truly converted, they see that the difficulty is not in God, but in their own blind resistance--perseveringly holding on to their sins, trying to make themselves better--trying to do something else than coming at once to Christ.

Another great hindrance is this,--the immediate conversion of children is not so much as expected. Why, how strange it is! So far from its being expected, such expectations have been discouraged. I doubt now whether there are many Sabbath-school teachers in this house that would dare to tell of it if his children were converted. No; if he should have the highest confidence possible without direct revelation from God, he would be himself astonished, and would not expect his fellow teachers to believe it. His fellow teachers would say, "Don't say that. Don't get up any animal excitement here! We don't believe in it." Why, now, who does not see that it is not wonderful they do not succeed; their failure is just what might reasonably be expected under such circumstances.

But let me say again: The idea whether young children can or cannot be converted, is still a matter of doubt to many. How infinitely strange this is! In the first place, children are exceedingly susceptible of conviction of sin, their little consciences are exceedingly tender. Their sins, if pressed upon them, will sometimes throw them into utter agony. I have seen the times when my own dear little ones could not commit sin without its causing them to perspire and tremble! I have seen this also in others. You can recollect, doubtless, many of you, some sin which your parents almost overlooked, but which, it may be, stung your little heart to a high degree. Again: Children are more inclined to believe than persons who have put it off and gone on hardening themselves. They can see they are sinners, that they need a Savior, and that Christ is that Savior. I do not mean to say that children when they become moral agents are not unholy; I believe they are, but they have not become so inveterately hardened as many older persons; consequently, everything would teach us to expect the conversion of little children. They are the most hopeful objects; they are the most likely to be converted; the work of conversion, as far as man's agency is concerned, is most easy in them, because it takes less instruction to work their conversion than those who are settled down. Again: some of them think that when they get older, they will be better--that their conversion will then be easier. Some ministers have actually refused children solely on the ground of their age.

There was a case of this in New York. One of the principal physicians in the place was himself an infidel, but his wife was a Christian. They had a little girl between seven and ten years of age. There was a great revival in the church to which the lady belonged; and this little Hannah, one of the most beautiful little children I ever beheld--became seriously anxious about her soul. The father found this out and was bitterly opposed to the mother for cherishing it, and reprimanded her for it. He said he "could not understand it, and he did not believe the child could." He would not, therefore, have the mother encourage such a delusion. However, one day, some time after this, as he was on his way to a patient's house, he began to think seriously on the subject, and saw at a single glance his relation to the Savior; he altered his mind, went home and confessed to his wife that he saw his error--that his pride of intellect had led him to overlook what the child in her simplicity at once had seen. Now, who does not see that this is the true teaching of the Bible? There are truths in religion, which the more lofty men's minds are, the more will they be impressed by them; but the simple truth of the way of salvation is so simple, that they are less likely, as we have seen, to understand and receive them.

Another hindrance is, that teachers have sometimes been flattered, puffed up, made proud when they needed reproof. What would you think of a minister who should always be flattered? Why, he must be a man of great grace, or he would speedily be a ruined man. Would you not expect such a man to be ruined, to lose his unction and power? Sabbath-school teachers are often spoken to in such a manner as to puff them up, when they were doing more harm than good. I shall produce some terrible facts before I am done, which will show that they are often doing almost unmingled mischief, whereas they flatter themselves they are doing an incalculable amount of good! The children are becoming hardened, while all the time, the teachers think they are doing great good. I always love to comfort those who need, deserve, and can legitimately be comforted; but far be it from me to plaster where probing is needed. If you would be flattered, you must go somewhere else; for I cannot flatter those who are not bringing about the great end to which Christ has told them to direct their efforts!

Another hindrance is, the best talents are not engaged in the work. Let matrons that know how to deal with children--men of mind and talent--parents acquainted with the management of the young--let such come forward, and take hold of the work. They ought to be leaders in it. Again: ofttimes Sabbath-school teachers have not the sympathy, cooperation, and prayers of the Church, but are left to themselves, all but uncared for by the body of Christians with which they are more immediately connected. Again: they have not by precept and by example warned the young of the sin and danger of their course.

I said I must present some facts. Now, I have some documents before me, containing statistics compiled by one who has long been engaged in Sabbath-school operations, which go to show that a vast proportion of the inmates of our prisons, have at one time or other, for various lengths of time, been under instruction in our Sabbath-schools! Nay, some of them have actually been teachers in them! In one prison it was found that thirteen out of sixteen had been in a Sunday-school. The total number of inmates of the goals from which these returns have been collected is 9,960; of these, 6,261 have been under Sabbath-school instruction! This is almost two-thirds! From the matrons of a number of penitentiaries, similar facts have been elicited:--number of inmates, 431; of these, 311 had been under Sabbath-school instruction; and thirteen had been teachers! Thus, more than two-thirds of these degraded males had been in Sabbath-schools; and more than three-fourths of the females! In the Wakefield House of Correction, for instance, 310 of the inmates had been in Sabbath-schools, 93 of whom had attended them over five years! 68 between 3 and 5, 59 between 2 and 3, 47 between 1 and 2, and 43 under 1 year. Now, what have we here? Just the very opposite of what we might naturally expect from Sabbath-school instruction. If it secured what it is expected to secure, the figures would just be reversed.

Making all allowance then for the diversity of agencies and other matters, when the inquiry came to be made, it was found that a large proportion of these fell through strong drink. One of the chaplains says: "Put away strong drink, and these institutions may speedily be shut up." All of them bear similar testimony. I have here a copious arrangement of judicial testimony to the same effect. Pains were taken to inquire of these poor children, Did your teacher teach you temperance? Did he by precept and example endeavor to guard you against a custom so dangerous? "No!" Thus, their greatest danger they were never warned against. This mighty maelstrom swallowing up all--never so much as warned! Is this the way?

Now let me say, brethren, in America, precisely an opposite state of things has been the result of Sabbath-school instruction. At least such has been my experience; and I consulted my friend, Brother Beecher, the son of the Rev. Dr. Beecher, and his testimony coincides with mine; and the uniform testimony of our country is that, seldom is a Sabbath-scholar found to be a criminal. The facts of the cases in our country, are actually quoted to defend and support Sabbath-schools. In every instance that I am aware of, total abstinence is pressed upon Sunday school children, and indeed also upon a very large proportion of the pupils of our common schools. Mr. Beecher agrees with me that, as far as our united experience goes, we are not aware of a single Sabbath-school where this is not so.

In seeking to promote revivals of religion among children, we must take care to make use of the great law of sympathy, and the laws of mind to work our end. It has been absurdly assumed that, what is effected through the law of sympathy, is not from God. But this is untrue; for the law of sympathy has a great deal to do with actuating the mind of man. One man's conversion is frequently instrumental in effecting the conversion of another. This is just what might be expected; and to bring a whole mass of children to act together and on one another is the true philosophy of converting children; and in the conversion of the world, it is God's method to bring men to act upon one another. Scores of thousands of American children have been converted in revivals of religion. If children are instructed without securing this result, they are hardened, and wax worse and worse. See how awfully this is the case in this country!

Now, I do not know how you have tried to secure revivals among the children of this country, or whether you have done so at all; and since I read the facts I have stated, I cannot tell you how my mind has been burdened that such should be the results of the Sabbath-schools in this land. I never heard anything of the kind before. Now, what is the matter? Can these facts be denied?

I have right before me the name of the man who informed me--what shall I say?--why, that the Sunday-school Union does not favor the Temperance movement! That some of its most influential members are engaged in the traffic, and set their faces against inculcating such principles. Now, I speak with kindness; but if this is so, it is too bad. It is awful; and although the voice is here coming from the prison and from the tomb-

-although the earth is loaded with wailing and lamentation and consequence of this traffic--yet they will not give it up. Oh! tell it not in Gath! Can such people expect the blessing of God? No indeed! It would be tempting God to expect it!--it would be tempting God to expect it!--IT WOULD BE TEMPTING GOD TO EXPECT IT!

Now, beloved, will you suffer such facts to go forth, and yet make no efforts to guard the children against this danger? Will the teachers now in this house let this state of things go on and on! Will you not say it shall be put a stop to forever.

In many parts of the United States, it is as much expected that young children should be converted, as their parents and the elder children. Sabbath-school teachers labor for it, expect to secure it, and do secure it. Everything favors the idea of the conversion of little children. We find them reputable members of our churches. They are the most hopeful subjects in the world; and the Church should expressly lay themselves out to secure their conversion to God.

But I have already trespassed too long on your time. I will conclude the subject next Wednesday evening.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

A sermon delivered on Wednesday, September 4, 1850

by the Rev. Professor Finney of Oberlin College, U. S. To the Members of the Sunday-School Union At the Tabernacle, Moorfield.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; to continue in them; for in doing this thou shall save both thyself and them that hear thee. I Timothy IV: 16

Such were the instructions given to Timothy. But what was true of Timothy in these respects is true of all ministers and persons who give themselves to Sabbath-school teaching and religious instruction generally. If the conditions above set forth be complied with, in a proper spirit and from proper motives, success is certainly to be relied on.

In speaking to the words before me, I shall notice what is implied--

I. In a religious teacher's "taking heed to himself"

II. By "taking heed to the doctrine"

III. By "continuing in them"

a) By the subjoined declaration and promise.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE INJUNCTION, "TAKE HEED TO THYSELF"

I am addressing myself more particularly this evening to teachers of religion, who sustain a most important relation to all classes of the community. What, then, is implied in a religious teacher's, "taking heed to himself?"

First, let him see to it that his motive is right in undertaking the great work--that the state of his heart is such that he is really in sympathy with Christ. If he embarks in this business without, "taking heed to himself" in these respects, he involves himself in deep condemnation, and must inevitably fail in saving either himself or those that hear him.

But let me say again: Not only must religious teachers take care that their motive of action, but that their spirit and temper, is of a proper character, lest by either of these being bad, they counteract their own efforts, and the efforts of their fellow-workers. They must take heed lest, by their frivolous and worldly lives, they counteract their own teaching. This is the case, in comparative proportions, both with the teachers of the churches, and the teachers of the Sunday-schools--with the latter, of course, the injury is smaller, his influence being confined to a more limited circle. If the teacher, however, manifests a worldly spirit before the children of his class, he is equally culpable with the pastor whose

example is so deleterious to his flock, and for the same reason.

But again: You must take heed to your qualifications. See that you are really qualified--spiritually and intellectually suited to the work, at least in such a measure as to warrant a rational hope of your giving correct instruction to the children.

Again: Take heed that you yourself believe what you attempt to teach. If you don't believe it yourself, it is of no use to attempt to persuade them. They will find you out. You will betray your unbelief in your very manner, and the discovery of it will be their principal stumbling-block. Show them that you personally realize the importance of what you are teaching--that you believe it with all your soul. If you do not attend to this, you do not "take heed to yourself" in any such sense as will warrant expectation of success in your mission.

Take heed, also, that you personally know Christ, so as not to be obliged to teach by hearsay, like the sons of Sceva, who attempted to cast out devils through Christ whom Paul taught, not through anything with which they themselves were connected. Satan, of course, has little difficulty in overcoming those who are preaching a hearsay gospel. They are but poorly prepared to urge it upon others, and they are themselves without any firm expectation of its being accepted. Without any personal communion with Christ on their part, how can they expect to persuade others? Be careful, then, that you know yourself the true way of salvation--how to come at the gospel--how to avail yourself of it--and how to teach others the manner in which they may avail themselves of it. There is a vast mistake among teachers on this subject; instead of teaching others how to avail themselves of the way of life, they teach them the exact opposite of what they ought to teach them.

Take heed that you are taught of God. You must have the spirit of the gospel to explain it to you. You need to be ministers of the spirit as well as ministers of the letter,--instructed by the Holy Spirit himself. Take heed to this, for you certainly may be thus instructed, seeing that God never sets men to make bricks without straw, and if, therefore, he has really called you to instruct others, he will instruct you, if you will allow him to do so. But he will only instruct you on certain conditions--(1) that you believe, and (2) that you renounce your selfishness and have a single eye to his glory in seeking your instruction, and not any selfish motive. In the prayer, you will recollect I mentioned two passages in Scripture. "If a man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not;" and again, that "except a man forsake all that he hath, and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." To be a disciple is to be a pupil. You cannot have him for a teacher unless you forsake all that you have. This means that you must renounce selfishness, not seeking to be taught from any selfish motive, but for the same reason that he would impart instruction. Do this and you may be sure you will be taught of God. Only seek to be instructed for God's glory; pray in faith, and you will certainly receive instruction according to your need.

Take heed not to be skeptical with regard to your work. Do not allow yourself to get into a skeptical state of mind in teaching religious truth. This very skepticism will defeat the end in view, and actually tend to confirm itself. For example, suppose you go and teach children without expecting their conversion, and they are not converted,--why, they are only confirming you in your skepticism. "Then," you say, "I did not expect it; I had no reason to expect it." Indeed, you had no reason, as we shall presently see.

Take heed that you are not indolent careless--in your preparation for the labors of the class--take care you are not wanting in diligence, because this, too, will defeat the work. God loves to see you diligent, and unless you really are so, you need not expect to succeed.

Take heed, also, that you are not discouraged, and by that means defeat the work. Nothing is more important than that you should confidently expect to secure the object which he has set you to secure.

Take heed that your life and manner do not contradict your teaching, so as to make a bad impression rather than a good one. But I must pass very rapidly over this department of the subject, and come to the second consideration.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN "TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE"?

There are a vast number of points about which persons will dispute and disagrees; setting all these aside, however, there are many so plainly revealed as to be wholly beyond the dispute of any reasonable man. Yet, without being at all aware of it, multitudes of persons teach things entirely inconsistent with them, while, if you should put the proposition plainly and ask them if they believed it, they could not deny it. They would assent to the doctrine in the form of a proposition, while,--unconsciously perhaps,--they are continually making an impression diametrically opposed to it. I will give a few examples of doctrines which are thus treated, and to which it is important, therefore, that teachers should take heed.

First; that the blame of sin belongs to the sinner. Now, you Sunday-school teachers, and other religious

instructors, must not only understand this, and believe it yourselves, but you must be sure to lodge it in the mind of the sinner. Impress on the little minds of the Sabbath-school children that they have no excuse for their antagonistic position towards God and that they must, therefore, take at once the full blame of their sins--that they stand before God as rebels against his government, without the least excuse to plead in mitigation of their offence. If you do not believe this, you deny one of the first and fundamental principles of the gospel; you are wholly unfit to be teachers, but need yourselves to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. Take heed then, that, although not actually denying it with your lips, the impression made is not opposed to it.

Take heed, again, that you don't convey the impression that the awful position of the sinner is not a crime, but a misfortune. It is a situation calling for pity it is true, but it is not pity, for his misfortune, but because he has been so infinitely to blame. There is no way in which he can make excuse for himself and his sinful courses.

These things are unqualifiedly and universally true, of every sinner, under heaven, and you must not fail to lodge them in the minds of those whom you instruct. Be sure that nothing drops from your lips which a child could construe into any sort of apology for his antagonism to the Almighty. I have known scholars to say such things, even to their teachers themselves, as would make you all feel the great importance of this point, had I but time to relate them. Some have declared that the influence of the tuition in those places had well nigh made them infidels. A child when once allowed to think he is not to blame, will draw an inference at once natural and irresistible--a logical little mind will never fail to do this, and entrench itself in the results of such a conclusion.

Again: Be sure to know and feel that the carnal mind is at enmity against God; that, therefore, children as well as adults, as soon as they are moral agents, are enemies of God; and that this is, moreover, a voluntary state of mind. It is a minding of the flesh and fleshly appetites. They should understand this, and not be left under a mistake. Their carnal minds are at enmity against God,--a voluntary state of enmity--the committal of themselves to a search after their own particular gratifications instead of serving God. Take heed also to teach them that the will of every impenitent sinner is entirely opposed to God's will, and that in this lies his moral depravity. None of you will deny this. You should tell the sinner that the voluntary opposition of his will to God's is his sin.

You will not deny, also, that no impenitent sinner is willing to obey God. In short, the very words are a contradiction--the proposition that an impenitent sinner is willing to obey God involves a direct contradiction in terms. What is impenitence but resistance? How, then, can an impenitent mind be willing, in any sense, to obey God? Every man, woman, and child who is impenitent, is unwilling to obey God, and this is their only difficulty. Let there be no mistake about this. Let it be so amplified, enlarged, and dwelt upon, in every direction, that every sinner shall understand that he is stubborn, and will not obey God.

Now, I suppose as I have said, that these are truths you will all admit; but are you sure that

you teach nothing inconsistent with them?

Again: Be sure to teach that sin can never be forgiven without repentance. You will admit that no sinner has a right to be forgiven while he remains impenitent. I suppose--you will admit, that while impenitent, God has no right to forgive them, and that he has informed them that he will not do so. I suppose you also admit that they have no right to expect any such thing under such circumstances. But do not people sometimes teach things inconsistent with this admission?

Again: Take heed to the doctrine in this respect--that repentance consists in the heart's forsaking sin, and turning to God. It is not a mere involuntary state of turning, while the heart cleaves to sin in opposition to God, but consists in the heart and will rejecting sin and turning to God.

Now, in the next place, take heed to this--without faith it is impossible to please God; and that whatever is not of faith is sin. No one, I should think, would pretend to dispute this. It is a plain proposition--without faith it is impossible to please God, and what is not faith is sin. But take heed that you do not teach something inconsistent with this; after all, for if individuals pray in unbelief and impenitence, they not only mock God, but commit sin, and that as really as they have done at any other period of their lives,--they only pray hypocritically--it is but sin. This cannot be denied, unless the Bible and all common sense be denied.

Take heed and teach that all men should pray--that they are bound to pray, and to pray invariably,--to pray in penitence and in faith. Even children are bound to pray; and they must be taught to pray--taught always, that unless they do pray, and pray with a penitent heart, that they mock God; and that they never are sincere when they pray, unless they do so in faith,--without this, they cannot possibly be sincere. Every will that is opposed to God, does not want to be converted, does not want the

things it asks for, if it knew what they really were. Take heed to press their present obligation to repent and believe, and the disastrous consequences of refusing or neglecting to attend to these matters. Be sure to make them clearly comprehend that there is no escape from this responsibility. God requires all men, everywhere to repent, and regards every moment's delay wickedness--it's neglect is wickedness so great as to be considered by him as deserving a complete damnation. These things you teachers must believe yourselves--if you don't, you are wholly unfit to teach, for in so doing, you tell lies in the name of the Lord. Press upon them, then, as I have said, their present obligation. Now is the accepted time it is God's accepted time; now is the day of salvation, God himself being judge--therefore none need wait either for God to be ready or for anything else to be done. God calls upon all men everywhere to repent, and to repent now. He tells them that now is the "accepted time," in the sense that it is the "day of salvation."

Again: Teach sinners that they are impenitent--that they do invariably and universally resist the Holy Ghost whenever he approaches them, or has anything to do with them. As long as they reject the truth, and do not unqualifiedly receive it as the truth of God, they resist the Holy Ghost.

Again: It is remarkable to what an extent teachers fail to make themselves understood. When you explain anything to a person so that he fully comprehends you, how often does he exclaim, "Why, how strange! Shouldn't have thought it. Never heard such a thing before." Never heard such a thing before, do you say? Why, there is little doubt but that you have heard the very same thing announced, in other words hundreds and even thousands of times. Pains have not been taken to amplify the subject for the public, and, consequently, they are in great ignorance. Persons brought up in the gospel, are used to hearing the phrases of Scripture repeated, but not expounded as they ought to be, and turned over and over, analyzed, and displayed in their various aspects, so that even children may understand them. This should be the great object of religious teaching. The religious teacher falls far short of his duty by merely talking to the sinner in orthodox phrase without clearly expounding it's meaning. A man may be perfectly orthodox in his teaching as far as words are concerned, but the people may, nevertheless, be as ignorant of his real meaning as if he had spoken in Greek, or in Hebrew, or any other language; for they fail to understand the one he uses.

Some of the most common words for instance which are used by religious men, have no sort of meaning attached to them by worldly men. Some time ago, the question of sanctification came up for discussion in the United States, and not one out of forty of the ministers could give any clear definition of what it really was. Some of the strangest and most absurd things were said about it by the press. We had consequently, as many definitions of it almost as there were men to write upon it. The same may be said of numerous other words, such as regeneration, repentance, faith, and many of the words most commonly used. Many persons have failed to form a definite idea of the state of mind expressed by these words; few, comparatively speaking, have an accurate idea of what that state of mind really is. A child has a mind and consciousness, and is just as really able to understand these words as any person in the world.

If you were going to tell a child anything requiring great logic and penetration, you might find some difficulty to show him what you mean; but matters involving consciousness--such as the terms, love and faith,--these you can explain to a child just as well as you can to an adult. You can teach a child what it is to believe. If his father, yielding to his worrying, should promise to purchase him a knife--such promise would satisfy the child--he would rest on it, believing that his father really would get him one. Well, what is this but faith? Now, if you ask a child, "do you know what faith is," he would most probably say "no, I cannot say." Well then, just tell him--"suppose you wanted a knife that you were much distressed for one that your little playfellow had one that you tease your father to get you one till he promises he will, you leap for joy. What ails you--you have not got it? No, but your father has promised you, and you believe him." I mention this simply as an illustration of what may be done in this way. Be sure to take pains that you yourself really analyze these questions, and sift them to the bottom, making yourself so familiar with them, that you can illustrate them in such a manner as invariably to secure the attention of the children, and enable them to comprehend your meaning.

Again: Beware of leaving a false impression. For instance, do not let them think that they are not expected to believe just yet. By no means let them think they need not do it now. Do not let them think this--do not leave this impression, either directly or indirectly, by anything in your teaching, either in matter or manner. If you do so, as we shall see presently, you have done them the greatest evil it was in your power to inflict upon them. Beware of this, as you would beware of ruining their souls. Be sure; lodge the impression in their minds, and keep it before them, that they are expected to do it

now. By all means encourage the idea, should they manifest a disposition to obey now.

Again: Be careful not to let them run away with the idea that they are unable to obey the truth; for, if you do, by a law natural and irresistible, they will come to the very natural conclusion that they are under no obligation to do it. If they are impressed with their inability, it is impossible they can feel any sense of moral obligation. There never was, nor can there ever be such a thing as a human mind believing or affirming it's moral obligation to perform an impossibility. If, therefore, you leave an impression on a child's mind that he is unable to do what he is required to do, you have done him the greatest possible injury. Why? Because, by an irresistible law in his heart, he will throw off the responsibility, and you cannot help it. He will not only do that, but he will charge God with being a tyrant. He will do this in his heart, if he dare not with his lips. If you tell him God will send him to hell because he did not perform that which he is naturally unable to perform why,--a child cannot believe this! They have minds, and their minds have laws; they will make such inferences, and you cannot prevent it.

Again: Do not leave the impression on their minds that they are willing to be Christians. In conversing with parents with regard to young persons, I have often found them saying, "Oh, he wants to be a Christian, he is friendly towards religion, he is trying to be a Christian"--not one word of which is true! I have had to tell such persons, in hundreds of instances, "what! Do you teach your children that? Do they want to be Christians? Does God say so? No indeed. You say they are friendly to God--he says they are at enmity against him; you teach their willingness--he their unwillingness." Now, what can parents do worse than this?--what can they do worse than this? Nothing! They teach the direct opposite of the truth, and what every orthodox Christian knows and allows to be truth. It is not uncommon for Sabbath-school teachers to teach this, and to leave such impressions.

Again: Do not teach them that they can do their duty in any case, or under any circumstances, before they have given their hearts unqualifiedly to God; therefore, instead of setting them to do something to get a new heart, teach them at once to give their hearts to God. A new heart--what is it? A mind devoted to God by a voluntary act, repenting, believing--in short, submitting its whole being to God. I would just as soon tell a man to go right straight along a road when I knew that, in fifteen minutes, he would precipitate himself from the top of a cliff into the abyss beneath. What! Does God require the sinner to do something by way of persuading God to make in him a new heart? No indeed; he is all the time entreating the sinner to yield himself up to him. Now, this is just what he is unwilling to do. Why do you not yield, when God is entreating you, "My son, give me thy heart?" "Why will you die?" This is what God says; and do you throw it upon God? Instead of teaching him to do his duty, accepting Christ and giving himself up to God, you send him away with the idea that he already does his duty. Now, he will never be converted till he finds such teaching is false. It must be, not because of the teaching, but in spite of it. Until he loses sight of the idea that he is going, in some way, to persuade God to do something for him in the way he thinks, he will never be converted.

Take the history of such a soul: He has been praying and praying, struggling and struggling, pretending to wait for God, and all this; by and by, he suddenly sees that he ought at once to believe; he does believe--that he ought at once to submit; he does submit--and now the thing is done. Thus, in multitudes of cases, I have known individuals struggling for a long time under false teaching, and finally, in a moment, the Spirit has turned their thoughts away from their false teaching, and they beheld what they ought to do. Now, you can easily see that if you teach anything inconsistent with these certain and universally admitted truths, you are going right against the Spirit of God--you are putting weapons into the little sinner's hand to fight against his God, to stand and cavil with him!

But again: Be sure to make children understand the nature of their dependence on God. Now, if you talk to them much, as you naturally will, and as the Bible does, about the Spirit of God converting them, and about his agency, and do not explain to them the nature and necessity of this agency, you will commit two mistakes which, if not fatal, no thanks to you. The Bible does not overlook this question; it is stated clearly and repeatedly as much so as anything else that is in the Bible. If you teach them that the Spirit of God has something to do with them, and that there is a necessity for his agency, and do not teach them what it is, they think it is some electric shock, or something of that kind, which they have to wait for. But teach them that while they thus wait for this electric shock, they are resisting the Spirit of God--it is very obstinate wickedness--this is the very reason why they do not at once turn to God. Ask them" Don't you know you ought to turn to God?" "Yes." "That it is wicked for you to live in sin?" "Yes."

Now, then, why do you grieve the Spirit of God by refusing? Why, just for the same reason as if you had made up your mind to resist your father. He tells you not to go down to the river; never to play near the water.

You are determined to go off with the boys and do so. It happened that you have made up your mind so strongly, that, unless some person comes in and presses the matter home till he prevails with you, you will certainly go. Now, in what sense do you need such a person's agency? You will certainly go, and he knows it, unless he can influence you. You can easily show this to the child--that his dependence on this agency is his crime. It is only owing to his obstinate wickedness; and in proportion to the certainty of his not being without this influence is the greatness of his wickedness. The thing needed is to make him willing. It is, therefore, quite clear that he cannot justify himself because of his dependence, which, on the contrary, is an evidence of his guilt. The influence of the Spirit must be acknowledged as a matter of course; if any of you should think of denying it--mark the consequences; if you deny the necessity of the Spirit's agency, because of the sinner's obstinacy, and that his dependence upon the Spirit suits his wickedness, you deny that the Spirit's agency is a gracious one. If you think the sinner is, unfortunately, rather unable than unwilling, then the Spirit's agency is not grace but justice.

Furthermore: Another error, is, failing to let the sinner understand the nature of this agency. If you fail to do this, he will resist the Spirit, and all the while think he is doing no such thing. He says, "How can I who am a man, resist Omnipotence?" He does not know that resisting truth, when clearly presented to the mind, is resisting the Spirit. He will not admit that he is resisting it. If you do not teach him the nature of the agency, he will not see that, while he is praying for this agency, all the while he is resisting it. Seeing these points are so momentous, warn the little sinners against delay, and against throwing the blame on God, because they have not the Spirit--do this in a proper spirit and suitable manner, and you will make their little consciences quiver. You will feel sorry for them. So does Christ, and that is the reason he wants you to press them to come up. Take the little fellow up, appeal to his little conscience, draw him kindly to you, cut him off from his refuges of lies, shut him up to Jesus alone--that is the way to do with him to save him.

Be sure to make him feel the justice of his condemnation; for in proportion as you fail in this, you throw a veil over the gospel--it must be understood by the sinner that his "condemnation is just." Just in proportion as this is understood, the necessity and glory of the gospel is understood fail in this, and you may talk to the sinner to the day of his death. How can he understand God's love without understanding his own guilt? How can he understand the necessity for Jesus dying unless he knows that he deserved to die himself--and that Jesus died for him. Pinch the little sinner's conscience on this point, for upon it hangs the whole question. It will not be denied that the child deserves to be condemned, for if it were not so, what need was there for a Savior or an atonement? If he did not deserve to die himself, Jesus would not have died for him. This should be always taught and insisted upon; in fact, it should never be kept out of sight.

Once more: Be sure to expect to secure the early conversion of children. Aim at it and be wise in the selection of means. And again, let me say, take head to yourself and the doctrine, and persevere in presenting it.

IV. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PROMISE?

What is meant by the promise? Simply this,--that if you do what is commanded in the right spirit, the promised results shall follow, from which it may be plainly inferred that the connection between conversion and the use of means, on the part of the church, and of those who instruct the people, is invariable. What else can it mean? Now, whatever people may say about God's sovereignty, one thing is certain--that if religious teachers take heed to themselves and to the doctrine, and continue in them in so doing, they shall both save themselves and those who hear them. This is the law of God's government; it is God's absolute truth, and is as true as God is true.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say. What a tremendous responsibility devolves upon the religious teacher! But there is something better than this--there is a glorious encouragement held out to him. When I preach to parents about their responsibility in relation to the conversion of their children, I endeavor to impress them with the fact, that God has made them responsible for the conversion of their children. On one occasion, after a sermon on this subject, in which I had been showing the responsibility of parents, a man came to me in the vestry, and told me he did not like my view of the matter. But he was soon reminded of the fact, that God had laid this responsibility upon them, and that it was a most glorious encouragement, for God had connected their salvation with the persevering use of means within their reach. If this subject were regarded in its proper aspect, instead of mourning, parents would leap for joy and say, "Well, in the name of the Lord, my children shall not be lost!" "By the grace of God," the teacher might say, "my class shall not be lost!" Here is your privilege--will you shrink from your responsibility? No indeed!

Suppose a mother with a sick child shall be told, "Your child is sick unto death, unless you comply with certain

conditions." Would she say, "Oh, that's such a responsibility!" Oh! no; you know what she would say. You tell her the conditions, how she would catch at them, exclaiming, "if there is anything I can do, how gladly will I do it!" All the mother is awake in her to secure the end.

I remark again: Unbelief in teachers of religion is the greatest of all their stumbling-blocks. Sinners would be very much better off without any teachers at all than an unbelieving one. I would rather trust them with the Bible alone, a thousand times. Suppose, for example, a minister should always leave the impression that he did not expect the conversion of his hearers-that it would be unreasonable to expect it. Suppose he were to preach and pray as if he did not expect it--that he had no rational reason to do so. Why, such a man is the greatest curse a congregation can have! Just as it is with the Sunday-school teacher, who does not believe that his children will be converted. I would never send my children to such a school as that. No! I would as soon send them to no place whatever to be taught.

I remark again: It is common for people to teach children that they ought to be converted now, while it is very evident from their way of proceeding, that they do not expect them to be converted now. They expect it "by and by." Is this right? If the child is old enough to be taught, why is it not old enough to be converted? If he is old enough to sin, why is he not old enough to repent? It is more natural to expect persons to be converted early, when they first get the doctrines of the gospel into their minds, because then they are naturally more impressed with the subject. They afterwards lose their hold of it. If I believed my child could not be converted young, I would not teach him religion while young. If they must be men or women first, I won't teach them a word of religion till then. Why? Why, I should state these truths merely to harden their hearts and increase their guilt!--Why should I do this before I expect them to obey the truth? How absurd!

What a great evil it is that little children should die if they are old enough to sin, and not old enough to repent--if they can be taught now, and yet not be converted till by and by! Bring up a child from its very infancy to the use of alcohol. Be sure that the mother, while nursing it, takes enough to keep the child drunk. Give it a little after awhile--let it sip a little out of it's cup and thus bring it up to the use of it. Do not teach it temperance till it becomes older, when fairly hardened in its course, bewildered, and stupefied by drink. Then try to reform it! Is this the way? Yet, this is just as true of other forms of sin, as of this. When first a sense of sin afflicts their little consciences, teach them to come to Christ at once for forgiveness.--then, if ever, is the time you may expect it. Every moment's delay only makes sin a habit, hardening the heart, and stupefying the conscience. Oh! what a mistake it is to let children grow up in sin, expecting them to be converted when they become more hardened.

I had intended to have enlarged here on the method of promoting revivals of religion among children--how it may be done, how it has been done, and what the results have been. I wish I had time to state my views of the importance of getting masses of them to think and act together--to move in one direction. There is nothing on which the great law of sympathy has so powerful, direct, and glorious a bearing as in bringing masses of men to inquire with regard to religious truth--in bringing them to rise up and act together. Especially is this true with regard to children; it is the most elevating, fascinating, and glorious thing conceivable to see masses of children turning to God.

Another great difficulty in the way, is the unbelief of the Church with regard to the willingness of God and the certainty there is that he will immediately put his hand in the work. One day, in conversing with a brother minister, he said, "I bless God for the idea of the truth of which I have now no doubt, that when I do just what he has told me to do, I can depend upon his immediately seconding my efforts and cooperating with me." While thinking thus, it occurred to me that to doubt this, or to leave the question open to debate were to doubt God's own word, and to throw a stumbling-block before my own feet. Now, the truth is, that Christ has said he will be with us in all places, at all times--and for what? Why, to secure the very end he has sent us to accomplish--the salvation of men.

Now, dearly beloved, we ought to expect this cooperation as really as we believe in the natural laws which govern the universe. It is as certain as the operation of the law of gravitation--as certain, and may be depended upon just as much as any natural law may be depended upon, when all the conditions of it's fulfillment are strictly and fully complied with. Whenever this is tried and tested--whenever we can truly say we have in all respects done our duty--God has never failed. If he has, let cases be brought forward! It cannot be done. How long, then, shall this unbelief stand in the way of the work?

I had much more to say on this and kindred branches of my subject, but time will not permit; but let me remark that if you take heed unto yourself, and to the doctrine, and continue in them, your classes must be saved.! Does not God distinctly tell you so? I ask for no more

than this one thing--in regard to my ministry, I want no higher assurance than this. To be sure I know very well that I am dependent upon Divine grace, but I know that I am dependent upon it in such a sense as that I shall be sure to have it. God has not sent me to preach the gospel as the Israelites in Egypt had to make bricks without straw. God said to Paul--and it is true of every preacher--"My grace is sufficient for thee;" he has said again, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Beloved, then, hold on-- hold on--oh! hold on to this! Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE

A farewell sermon

Preached on Wednesday, September 11, 1850

by the Rev. C. G. Finney (of the Oberlin Collegiate Institution, America) at the Tabernacle Moorfields

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." I Corinthians X: 31

In speaking from these words, I propose briefly to show:--

I. THAT THE CHARACTER OF GOD IS OF INFINITE VALUE

II. WHAT IT IS TO LIVE TO DO ALL FOR HIS GLORY

III. NOTICE SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS RULE

IV. EXAMINE SOME THINGS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS RULE

I. I HAVE TO SHOW, IN THE FIRST PLACE, THAT THE CHARACTER OF GOD IS OF INFINITE VALUE

God, as a moral agent, must have a conscience, and it is of infinite importance to Him that He should meet the demands of His conscience that His character and conduct should be in all respects what His conscience tells Him it ought to be. Of course, it is of infinite importance that He should meet the demands of His conscience, because His own happiness depends upon His approval of His own conduct and character. Just think. Suppose God did not wholly respect and approve of His own conduct and character! Suppose he should violate His own conscience--not that it ever will be so, but suppose that it were--of course the happiness of God would be destroyed, He would not glorify Himself, nor honor Himself in His own estimation; His character, therefore, is of infinite importance. Now, we all know the importance of self-respect. When we forfeit our own self-respect, we render ourselves wretched; when we have our own consciences against us we must of necessity become miserable. Persons are well aware that their own character is to themselves of very great importance in this respect. They find it impossible to be at peace when they sin; when they are living in such a manner as to be unable to approve themselves in their own consciences. Now, it is not too much to say, that for God to honor Himself in His own estimation, to meet the demands of His judgment in respect to what is best and right, and to satisfy the demands of His own infinite reason and conscience, is a matter of infinite moment to Himself. Then again, it is of the utmost importance in relation to the government of the universe. Suppose God's character were to suffer in the estimation of the universe? The stability of his government depends upon the confidence of His subjects as subjects, of a moral government. The well-being and safety of the universe depend, I say, on the confidence reposed by the subjects of God in his sovereignty. Let their confidence in his character be forfeited, and what would be the result? Of course, it would unhinge his government and ruin the universe. Indeed, confidence in God is the great hinge upon which all obedience turns. Destroy confidence in God, and you destroy the happiness of the entire universe. Confidence in God, therefore, is just as important as the happiness of the universe. But I will not enlarge on this.

II. I AM TO SHOW, IN THE SECOND PLACE, WHAT IS INTENDED BY LIVING TO THE GLORY OF GOD

The term "glory," as it is here used, means renown, reputation. To do everything to the glory of God, is to have this end in view in all that we do; whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, 'this to be done for the glory of God: to secure the universal respect and confidence of his subjects; to do those things that shall set his character in the strongest and most attractive light, and that shall lead men thoroughly to understand and appreciate His character; and thus endeavor to win for God the confidence and the hearts of all of his subjects. It is the same thing as to win souls; to endeavor in all our ways to win souls to God, to win souls to Christ, by showing forth the character of Christ in our example, in our tempers, in our spirit, and in all that we do. It is to be our chief aim to set forth His will, His law, and His whole government as perfect, and to make it so lovely and desirable as to draw the hearts of men to Himself, to confide in Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. I repeat, that to do whatever we do to glorify God is to have this great end in view in all our ways, to make ourselves living mirrors reflecting the image of God. Suppose a man should come from America to England, and profess to be a devoted friend of the American Government, but should totally misrepresent it

in all that he did. If instead of representing the true spirit of the government--the true Republican spirit,--he should himself be a despot in his spirit and character, and in every respect quite contrary to the real spirit of the American Government, and did not that, in any of his actions, which would truly represent it, what should we say of him? Now, suppose an individual should profess to be a disciple of Christ, should profess to love and obey his government, and to respect and revere his character, and yet he himself in all his ways misrepresented the character of God; that in his spirit and temper, and in his general deportment, he should hold forth a false light, and create a false impression of what the character and government of God really are, what should we say of such professors? Now, suppose a citizen of this country should go forth among the savage tribes of Africa, or any other part of the world, with the avowed object of recommending to them a species of government which, in his estimation, would secure their well-being, if adopted by them. Now, suppose he should profess great admiration of the British Government, but in all his ways and actions should misrepresent it; what would be the effect? Would not the savages think that any governmental constitution was better than such a hideous monster? But, suppose this individual was really sincere and benevolent, suppose that he really felt and believed that the British Constitution would greatly conduce to their well-being, of course he would by all his conduct endeavor to recommend the government; he would seek to show in his own person what kind of a man such a government was calculated to make; his aim would be in all things that he did to recommend the government to the people; he would always have this in view in everything that he either did or said; in all his ways, and by all his actions, he would seek to recommend the government of his country so as to induce those among whom he sojourned to adopt it. Apply this to the government of God. Suppose that those who profess to be the subjects of God's government manifest anything else than the true spirit of that government? For example, suppose, that--instead of showing that they are universally benevolent, and thus exhibit the law of God in it's true spirit, they should manifest a selfish spirit--who does not see that such persons would greatly and grievously misrepresent the true spirit and nature of the character of God's government? But suppose in all things an individual makes his whole life a mirror that shall reflect the pure character of God--the self-denial of Christ, the love of the Father, the purity and excellency of His law, and the perfection of His Government, and thus secure the glory of God, by living a life of universal peace and holiness. I pass now, in the next place, briefly to notice,--and as I am so exceedingly hoarse, I must be very brief; perhaps I shall not make myself understood; I will try, and you may expect nothing more of me--

III. SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS RULE

Observe, we have here a simple and plain rule of life, by which we are enabled to judge correctly of what is, and what is not our duty. The Bible always lays down great and broad principles. Instead of condescending to specify every form of duty, it lays down great principles to be followed out in practice. These principles are sometimes expressed in one form and sometimes in another; but they always amount to the same result in whatever way they are expressed. For example, the same principle is involved in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," that we have in the text, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." My object, beloved, is to set before those who profess to be converts, in as simple and as clear a manner as I can, a rule that they will do well always to remember, and by a reference to which they will, almost in all cases, be able to judge easily and correctly of all forms of duty, and whether any course of action is inconsistent, or not, with the Christian religion. If you are a Christian, you desire in all your ways to honor God. Of course you wish to awaken souls and bring them to him, to magnify His law, and to secure for Him the universal confidence of all moral agents everywhere. Now, the life and conduct of Christ was a simple illustration of this rule; whatever He did, He had this one great end in view. His aim, He said, was not to seek his own glory, but the honor and glory of God--that is, considered as the governor of the universe. The aim of Christ was to honor the Father considered in the relation of law-giver and governor; so to make men know Him, and rightly to understand and appreciate his government--in all His ways he manifested a deep desire to show forth, in His spirit and temper, and in His whole life, the true character of God. I speak of Christ thus not only as a man, but a man endowed with a divine nature.

Now, mark! his object was most thoroughly, and correctly, in all things to honor God, by making a fair, full, and thorough representation and reflection of God, in His own life and preaching, that He might show forth the character of God before the world, in order that he might prevail upon men to admire and imitate, and give themselves up to love and serve God. And let me say, the same was manifestly true of the Apostles. They caught the same spirit, and they labored for the same great end. Their object everywhere was not to glorify themselves, but to honor God, to glorify Him, and to

publish abroad His glory and His praise, and get for Him renown, and to obtain for Him the confidence of all men.

But let me say again: The same rule we see shines most beautifully in the primitive saints and martyrs. And the same rule is applicable to all ministers, lay men and women, and every person in every rank of life now; the disposition of all Christian persons should be to commend God's government and character to the world--in all things to set forth the religion of Jesus Christ, the religion of the Bible, and so to exhibit it before the world, that men seeing their good works shall be constrained to glorify God. Christ has said, "Ye are the light of the world:" "Ye are the salt of the earth." "So let your light shine before men that they seeing your good works shall glorify your Father which is in heaven." You profess to be the subjects of God's government, the disciples of Jesus; then in all your conduct, manifest his spirit, let your light shine so as to cause God to be glorified; and do not misrepresent religion, do not falsify the character of God and the benevolence of His government. The apostle said, "For me to live is Christ." Do you live so as to be able to say this? Let your object be in living among men to seek to image forth Christ in all your conduct; to represent Christ among men as if there were a new edition of Jesus living in you; as if Christ was again appearing among men; showing himself through your temper, and spirit, and your whole life. But let me say again: Let it be understood, then, that this rule is one of universal application. It is binding on all Christian men in all places and at all times. You are to glorify God in the week as well as on the Sabbath; in your business as well as in your prayers. If you fail to glorify God in your business transactions, you will dishonor Him in your prayers; if you appear at the communion table, at the prayer meeting, at the service of the sanctuary,--everything you do at any or all of these places is dishonorable to Christ, if in your daily life, in your dealings with worldly men, you are doing nothing to honor Christ! I say that on all the days of the week as well as on the Sabbath, you are to honor God--in your business as much as in your prayers; and in your ordinary meals, you ought as truly to honor God as at the Lord's table. To be sure, the Lord's Supper is to commemorate the Lord's death, but whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, you are to do all to the glory of God. You are to show that you are not "a man given to appetite," in such sense that you live to eat instead of eat to live, in order that you may do the work of God. But I cannot enlarge upon this principle which you see so clearly brought out in the text. The meaning of all this is, that all our lives should be devotional, that we should ever, by our lives, and in all our ways, be devoted to God--everything that we do is to be service rendered to God. Now, suppose, that you are living by this rule, that you really intend to live to God, of course you will seek to glorify Him in your eating and drinking, you will not eat food merely to gratify your own appetite, but that you may have strength to glorify God. Of course it will be so as to the things you eat, and the quantity you eat. Of course, you will not make "provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof;" but your appetite will be subservient to God--you will have His glory in view, and not merely your own personal gratification, in eating and drinking. So in everything else, you will show to the world that you have a higher end in view than merely your own personal gratification, and that you are living to honor and glorify God.

V. BUT I AM, FOURTHLY, TO EXAMINE SOME THINGS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS RULE

VI.

And first, under this head, I would say, it is not enough that a thing may be done for the glory of God, but the question is, is it in fact done to glorify God? Now, you may do many things, beloved, that might very reasonably be done for the glory of God that are not. An illustration of this fact occurs to me at this moment. Several years since, I was laboring in one of the towns of America, during a revival of religion, where there lived a very singular woman, who contended that it was very proper for Christians to have balls and to dance; and this position she defended most strongly. She adduced the fact of David's "dancing before the ark with all his might." Now, David did it as a religious service, and I asked her, "Do you actually perform dancing as a religious service? Do you do it to glorify God? Do you mean it as an act of worship? Do you mean it, as David meant it, to honor God and show his holy joy and holy zeal when the ark of God was coming into the city? Now, do you do it for that reason? Do you recommend it as a part of religious service? If you do, why then say so; but, if you don't mean to recommend it as a religious service, what do you mean by it's being lawful?" Now, the fact is, things may be done to glorify God, that in fact are not done for that object. I can conceive of a man being so full of holy joy as to dance to glorify God as David did; but, this would not prove that all dancing is performed for the same end, nor will it prove that dancing is right, except for this reason. I mention dancing rather than anything else, simply because the fact that I have just related occurred to me at the moment. It is not enough, I say again, that a thing may possibly be done to glorify God, but it really must be

done for that reason. Men must glorify God in all that they do, or they do not obey him.

But I remark, secondly, under this head: We cannot aim to glorify God by any means that are manifestly discreditable to God. For example, suppose a pirate ship should be fitted out for the avowed object of getting money for the Bible Society? Suppose this vessel went out into the open seas with the black flag and cross-bones, making war upon all the ships that passed where it was, destroying their crews and stealing their freights, and all this for the purpose of getting money for the Bible Society. Who does not see that this would shock the common sense of mankind, who by a necessary law of their own natures would know that such a thing could not be done for the glory of God. Such a thing would be repugnant to the feelings and hearts of all men, and everybody would see that the very pretense was a gross absurdity. Suppose a slave ship should be fitted out to go down to the coast of Africa for slaves, that they might be taken to the West Indies or to the southern part of the United States, under the pretense of getting money for the Missionary Society. The convictions of all moral agents would be that this was sheer blasphemy! There are things, then, that cannot be done to glorify God--that the universal mind of all moral agents agree to declare cannot be done to glorify Him. It is a remarkable fact that there are certain fundamental affirmations that belong to moral agents, as such, that they will agree in affirming to be true. I have just mentioned two,--the slave ship and the pirate ship, pretending to be engaged in religious pursuits. On such matters, reason is out of place--it is a necessary conviction of the mind of men universally, that murder and robbery cannot be perpetrated to glorify God.

There are a great many other things in the same category. Suppose, for example, that anything which is injurious to society should be got up, with a professedly religious purpose, that right on the face of it shows itself calculated to ruin the bodies and souls of men, but it is got up for the sake of doing good, and bringing glory to God. Now, who does not see that it is hypocrisy to pretend anything of this sort? Could any person bring himself to believe that he was glorifying God, for example, by engaging in any branch of business that is right in the face of society, calculated to injure both the bodies and souls of men? Suppose an individual should keep a house of ill-fame, under pretense that the avail was to be given to the Church! Who would not say that such a pretense was most blasphemous? But let me say, there are multitudes of things that, on the very face of them, misrepresent the benevolence of God, that are done on the pretense of honoring God! Now, this is a downright shame! Now, let me ask, can anybody pretend to represent the benevolence of God by any of the things that I have named? No indeed! But again; take many of the ways of making money in the present day, by speculating, and by over-reaching. Money is made by this means, and sometimes under the pretense that part of it is to be given to the glory of God! Away with such money! Away with such pretensions! Who does not know that it is an abomination in the sight of God? Is it not revolting to every feeling of humanity to reflect that men should beat their slaves to make them earn that which they pretend they are about to devote to pious purposes; that, that which is got by the sweat and blood of men is to be paid into the treasury of the Lord? Away with it; it is an abomination unto the Lord! But let me say again; you ought never to do anything that Christ plainly would not have done. Now, there are certain things, for example, that by a law of our own being we affirm Christ would not do. There is a sure guiding principle that lies deep in the mind of man, that affirms things in which men will agree. For instance, every moral agent will affirm that Christ would not give Himself up to be a pirate. Who believes that He would? He would not give Himself up to pursue any kind of business that would ruin the bodies or souls of men! Who believes that He would? Do you suppose that for the sake of getting money to spread the gospel, He would resort to some of the means that are resorted to in these days? Now, let me say--the Lord does not want people to get money for Him by grinding the faces of the poor. That a man for the sake of selling his goods cheap, and to get money for the cause of God, should screw-down the people in his employ, and give them such a pittance as will hardly keep body and soul together! Do you think Christ would do that? Would He shave and cut down the honest earnings of a poor woman for the sake of getting money to diffuse the gospel? No indeed! God is not so poor that He cannot get money without your serving the devil in that way!

I am so very hoarse tonight, or I intended to take up this question of trade fully, and put the knife of truth into it, but I must forbear. But let me say again: Very often persons get up fairs, or parties, and even balls, for the sake of getting money for God, as they say. Some years ago, while laboring in a certain place in America, the Unitarians got up a ball of this kind, that was to last for two days. Each gentleman paid two pounds for attending the ball, the proceeds of which were to be given to the poor--in fact, to supply them with fuel, for it was very cold weather. Now, many people who professed to dislike such things in a general way, went to the ball, because it was "a charity ball!" Now, why, if

they were benevolent, could they not at once give the two pounds to the poor? Why go to feast and ball, serving the devil for two days, and then give only the residue to the poor? Was not this merely an apology for charity? Yes, and nothing else! Some of the Orthodox people, who did not like balls, and would not go so far as that, got up some parties--"charity parties" as they called them,--and there they got together and had a fine time of it--had everything that was rich and nice--and concluded with prayer! Why conclude with prayers? Because they got the ministers in to sanction and share in their proceedings. And, then, the residue of the proceeds of these parties was given to the poor! Do you think Christ would have acted thus? Young convert, how does it strike you? Was that benevolence? What think you of having a night of merriment, and calling it "a charity party," laughing and talking and going on, and then sanctifying the whole with prayer? Well now, I might mention a great multitude of things that are done under the pretense of benevolence. Some of you perhaps, may have been drawn into some of these things. I have known theaters to give "benefits" for the poor, and have thus drawn in professors of religion who did not object to go because it was "a benefit for the poor." Why not give your money at once? Why run to the theater? Oh, what a miserable subterfuge is all this! I trust you will in future have your eyes open. Ask yourselves, when you are requested, or tempted, to do anything--would Jesus Christ do that?

But again: Speculation cannot be engaged in for the glory of God. By speculation, I mean this--there are multitudes of individuals who will give themselves to get money by making great bargains out of their fellow-men, under the pretense that they are going to get rich in order that they may give money to the cause of God. Now, it is manifestly wrong for a man thus to overreach his fellow-men, that he may make a great bargain, and thus be able to give something to God. Such a man says to God, "O God, I have made this speculation out of that man, and now I will give part of it to thee." Now, is this one of the ways in which a man can honestly attempt to glorify God? No indeed! God does not require that a man should be unjust to his fellow-men, in order to give money for the advancement of his cause on the earth. I am not speaking of those persons who are engaged in what may be termed lawful speculations; but of those who drive hard bargains, professedly for the glory of God. Now, there is altogether a mistake in this; they don't do it, for this reason. The very nature of man cannot assent to this. To wrong a neighbor to give to God cannot possibly please God. God loves all men; there is an important sense in which all men are his children, and God will not see injustice done even to the wickedest of men. You have no right to act unjustly to a wicked man. No indeed! God will not consent to it.

But, again: let me relate a fact I believe I mentioned it in this place once before; it may be well to mention it again; however, as it will illustrate what I mean. About the year 1831, an individual possessing large property professed to be converted, and he said that he had resolved to give up all his property to God, for His glory and the advancement of His religion; he had no family, and therefore did not want it. He spent several years in looking about him to see what object he should give it to, but he could see no object worthy of it--he always saw something in every society which, he said, conscientiously prevented his parting with his money to it. His property in the meantime, went on accumulating. By and by, he began to speculate in provisions, and he went through to the great thoroughfare of the West and bought up everything that he could in the shape of provisions in order that he might sell them out again at an extravagant price. But it so happened that he did not get hold of enough to carry his speculation; he did not become possessed of sufficient to control the market, and therefore, lost all he had. He came to my house soon after, and seeing he looked very said, I asked the cause. "Why," said he, "all my store is gone." "I am glad of it," said I, "for you never intended to give it to God." I felt sure of this, although he had told me what he intended to do with the money if the speculation succeeded. "You wanted," said I, "to make the poor man sweat and toil to pay an extravagant price for his food, and you tell me that the object you had in doing this was, that you might serve God with the money! You gave yourself to speculate for God, did you? I don't believe you thought so. You were selfish in it." You may judge how the conversation affected him. "Now," said I to him, "I can't believe this; it is not in human nature to believe it, it is contrary to the laws of moral agents. Neither will God have money so gotten."

Let this illustrate what I mean, beloved; never think, then, that you can glorify God in engaging in anything that Christ would not have engaged in. Ask yourselves, would Christ do that? Should I be shocked to see him do it? If you would be shocked to see Him do it, if you would be stunned and confounded to see Him do it, then don't do it yourselves. But, let me say once more, I might advert here, if I have time and strength, to a great many things which pass currently among men, which they profess to be doing religiously, but which cannot be done religiously; but I cannot now enlarge upon them.

I must now conclude with a few remarks. First, nothing short of living in conformity with this rule is true religion.

That is, when you do not live with this in your view, you have not a single eye; even if you have been converted, you are not now a child of God unless you are living according to this rule. If you do not glorify God in everything, you are fallen into sin.

Again: This is always a good rule for young converts, especially when any question comes before the mind, and you are unable to decide what you ought to do, just ask yourself this question; would Christ do this? Might I expect to find Christ at that party? Would an apostle suffer himself to be there? Can I do anything for Christ there? Can I speak a word for Christ, or will it be considered entirely out of place to talk about religion; or if I should manifest a Christian spirit there, would it not be considered out of place? Would it shock the company that I should pretend to have any religion? If so, it is manifestly not the place for religious people a place--where Christ is not, and religion is an intrusion.

But again: Many persons will sometimes go to such places, but to save their characters, they will introduce religion in some way or other, perhaps to give offense; just to save their characters, they will introduce Christ, but only to be rejected and despised.

Again: Never go into any company without seeking to glorify Christ, and where you do not go for that object. Jesus, you know, went to dine with the Pharisees, but it was with a view to rebuke, and instruct, or to correct their religious errors. Again: Do not fall into this mistake,--do not go for some other reason, and finally cover your retreat by sanctifying it with prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. Now, persons will sometimes go to places where they don't expect to do any good; they don't go for that object, but after they have had their pleasures and feastings, they will cover their retreat by prayer. Now, beloved, always remember to do whatever you do to honor God.

But let me say again: This is one of the most simple and natural rules of life for men whose hearts are right with God. When the heart is in a right state, it is as natural as to breathe, to have reference to Christ in everything that you do. Again: If men would regard this rule, their business transactions would not be a snare to them. Business was not designed to be a snare to any man; and if men will but transact business for God, they will be as religious in their business as they are on the Sabbath. Observe, you may be as truly spiritual-minded behind your counters as in your closets. Spiritual-mindedness is devoting everything to God, making everything over to Him, and living for His honor and glory. Now men ought to be just as spiritual-minded in their business as in their prayers; and if they are not in their business, they are not in their prayers. Mind that! If you are not devoted to God during the week, you are not on the Sabbath, and you deceive yourself if you think you are. You cannot serve yourself in the week and God on the Sabbath. Not you! The fact is, you will have the same end in view on the Sabbath as in the week. If you are selfish in the week, you will be selfish on the Sabbath. If you are not religious in your business, you will not be religious in anything. This is the fact. For what end are you doing business? What object have you in view? What do you live for? This is the great question. It should always be understood, then, that men are in reality no more religious on the Sabbath than they are in the week. They are not more truly religious, in their prayers than they are in their workshops. If they are religious in the one, they are in the other. Let no man think that he honors God on the Sabbath if he does not serve God on the other days of the week. It is well to be in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and on all proper occasions; this duty should not be left undone, and let your devotion to God's house be seen and acknowledged; but be sure to let the world see in your business that you are a servant of God; let this be known in all your ways, in all your expenditure, in all your dress, in all your equipage; you must be the servant of God in every little thing, or be the servant of God in nothing.

Now, let me say, it will not be considered extravagant if I state that there is a very great mistake among the mass of professors of religion in this particular. There is a great affection of sanctity on the Sabbath, with many who have no piety at home, and in their business transactions. See a man in the house of God on the Sabbath who appears very devout, and you wish to know whether he is really so, go and do business with him on the Monday, and you will soon find out what he really is. Ah, you can say, I have done business with that man; I could not tell what he was when he was in the chapel, but I have seen him in his own house, in his shop, and I see that he is a man of God there; I saw him dealing with the hired men and women in his employ, and I have learned it all. Now mark, he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. That is the Bible doctrine. He that would cheat you of a penny would cheat you of a thousand pounds, if he could do it without injury to his business character. A man that does not regard God's glory in everything, does not regard it in anything! But I must not continue this strain of remark. Beloved, I designed simply in my remarks tonight to lay down a great principle of religion, the great rule of life. I have done so. Now, let me ask, will you consent to live by this rule? Young convert, do you now

see how you can honor or dishonor religion? Do you see how much good or how much evil you can do? Do you know how much the character of revivals of religion depends upon you living in everything to glorify God? Live therefore, close to God; "whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Whatever you think will really honor God, that do. Whatever, in your solemn judgment and by the light of the Scriptures, and the example of Jesus Christ, you think will be honorable to God, that do; do it for that reason, and the blessing and peace of God shall be with you.

I am not now preaching on the Atonement--my text did not lead me. I am not now preaching on Baptism--my text did not lead me. I am not now preaching about Election--my text did not lead me. I have been preaching about living to the glory of God! And have been urging you, beloved, to live to the glory of God. Will you do it? Perhaps I ought to say I shall, in all probability, see the faces of many of you no more until we meet in judgment. I shall make no appeal to your feelings in respect of meeting me there; but I would remind you that both you and I will soon have to meet God! Let us study to approve ourselves to Him, let men say what they will. Amen.

SEEKING HONOR FROM MEN

A SERMON

Delivered on Sunday morning, December 1, 1850

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY (of Oberlin College, United States) at the Tabernacle, Moorfields

"How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" John V: 44

The question of the text is equivalent to a strong assertion, that while individuals receive honor from men rather than from God, they cannot believe. This is a very common way of speaking. When we wish to express a very strong negative, we throw our remarks into the form of a question, as in the text--"How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" which is equivalent to saying, you can by no means believe while you do this.

In speaking from these words, I propose to show--

I.WHAT FAITH IS NOT

II.WHAT IT IS

III.WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT

IV.WHAT IS INTENDED BY RECEIVING HONOR FROM MEN

V.THAT THIS STATE OF MIND, THAT SEEKS HONOR FROM MEN, RENDERS FAITH IMPOSSIBLE

I. WHAT FAITH IS NOT.

There is scarcely any word in the Bible more common than the word Faith, few things are said more about in the Bible as important to be considered; the greatest stress is laid upon it everywhere; it is always put forth as of the greatest importance; and yet, strange to tell, there is scarcely any word in the Bible, perhaps, about which such loose and vague ideas have existed among mankind. A great many individuals have used the word without really understanding what they themselves meant by it; much less have they understood, in many cases, what the Spirit of God means by the word. If there be anything of importance in the Scriptures for us to understand, it is that we should conceive rightly of the full import of this term. To be sure, there are other terms which, perhaps, are just as important, such as Love and Repentance. Now, it is of the greatest importance that we should have the most distinct ideas of what these terms mean, for, observe, they are all designed to express a state of mind. What is this state of mind? Now, the Holy Scriptures treatment of the states of mind indicated by these terms. The Scriptures, from beginning to end, are always using language which is designed to represent certain states of mind; sometimes it refers to the mind of God, sometimes to the minds of saints, and sometimes to the state of mind in which sinners are. Sin is nothing else but a state of mind; and holiness is nothing else but a state of mind; so that, unless you understand what these terms mean and what particular states of mind they are designed to represent, you will never understand anything about religion. Hence, when I speak on the subject of faith, I am in the habit of trying to make myself understood and, if possible, to develop in my hearers what I suppose to be the true idea represented by the term, and also what is not the meaning of the word.

Before I proceed to define the meaning of the term Faith, I would just remark that every man, by his own consciousness, knows that there are three distinct operations of his mind--his intellect which thinks, his sensibility which feels, and his will which acts. Now, these three faculties every man is conscious of possessing, and is conscious of exercising those three classes of action. He is conscious of thinking and reasoning; he is conscious of willing to put forth action--to do certain things in preference to others; he is also

conscious of feeling; he knows that he has sensibility which can feel, and have desires and emotions of various classes and kinds. Every man knows, moreover, that ofttimes his thoughts and intellectual affirmations are unavoidable--that he is not voluntary in them.

For instance, every man knows this; and he affirms, without any hesitation, that a thing cannot be and yet be at the same time. Every man, also, is perfectly conscious that the whole of a thing is equal to all its parts, and that he cannot possibly affirm the opposite of this, or go beyond this. Every man knows that he is irresistibly compelled, under certain circumstances, to make such and such affirmations. The same is true of the feelings. Every man knows that he must feel in a certain manner, and cannot possibly feel otherwise; for example, if he puts his hand into the fire and burns himself, he will feel the smart--it is irresistible. So you may suppose that, under certain other circumstances, he will have various feelings and emotions which he cannot possibly avoid because they are wholly involuntary. But every man knows just as well, and comes by his knowledge in precisely the same way--by his own consciousness--that it is not so with his will, but that, on the contrary, his will is perfectly free. A man wills a thing in one direction or another, and acts as he wills; he may will to go to meeting or to sit at home, to go about his business, or to refrain from going about his business; every man knows with the same certainty, and in the same way, that his will is free as that he exists. Now, suppose that any one in this house were really practically to call in question whether his will is free, whether he is able to will to go in one direction or another. Suppose we should say to him, Do you calculate to go home when the meeting is concluded? "I don't know," he would say, "whether any such motives will be presented before me as will make me willing to go: I am not free, I cannot will to go myself, and whether anything will take place to make me willing, I can't tell." Now, we say that every man assumes his own liberty; and if he was not free to act as he might, will, should there be a post in the street, he would be just as likely to run up against it, and be thrown down, as he would be to pass on either side of it. The truth is, no man practically does call in question the freedom of his will, and if a man ever does this in words, he does not know what he says. Every man knows that he is free as certainly as that he exists, and he bases almost everything that he does upon this assumption; if men were not free, they would do nothing of themselves any more than a machine can. These remarks being made, I proceed to show, 'what faith is not.' It is not thought, nor is it an affirmation, nor an intellectual perception, nor an intellectual conviction; the devil may have a faith of that sort,--indeed, he has it; the Bible declares that; the devil believes, and his belief makes him tremble. It is only an intellectual conviction; we often find sinners deeply convinced, so that they tremble, but that is not faith. Faith, then, does not consist in believing simply with the intellect anything that God says--a man may believe it with his intellect, and yet have no faith. Let me say again, that faith is not mere feeling. Thoughts and feelings, as anyone knows, are in a sense involuntary; moral character does not attach directly to them; being involuntary, they are unconnected with actions of the will. We do not deny that persons are in a sense responsible for their thoughts and their feelings, but mark--it is because their thoughts and their feelings are placed in such a relation to the will, that the will can in a certain sense modify or control them: man is responsible only for the actions of his will. This leads me to say that faith is also in the Bible represented as virtue--it is called a holy faith; it is represented as obedience to God. Again, faith must not only be voluntary, but it also implies, as a condition of its existence, that the intellect perceives something to be believed; faith always implies that there is something to be believed, and that which is to be believed must be recognized by the intellect. It is the intellect which sees, and the mind, when it puts forth an act of the will, chooses or rejects that which the mind sees. Faith, therefore, must imply the perception by the intellect of some truth, but merely this perception of truth however clear it stands out before the mind, with all the vividness and brightness of a living reality,--if it goes no further, it is not faith; and the clearer the conviction of an unbelieving man, the greater will be his agony of mind--that is the reason why an unbelieving conviction disturbs the guilty and makes them tremble. The clearer, I say, the intellect sees when the mind does not believe, and when the heart does not yield to the truth, the more intense is the agony of that mind, when these truths relate to God, and His relations to eternal things.

II. LET US CONSIDER, THEN, WHAT FAITH IS

First, that which constitutes the faith of the gospel is the heart or the will committing itself to the truth which the intellect perceives--yielding the whole will up to it, so as to be influenced by it. Observe, then, there are properly in faith the following things:--First, there is an intellectual perception, a realizing that the thing is true; then there is the mind committing itself to the truth, or embracing it, or yielding itself up to the truth, to be molded and governed by it. It is in fact, the mind's coming into sympathy with, and partly yielding itself up to, and embracing the truth so perceived. Let me illustrate this if I can. Sometimes

you see persons convinced of a thing they do not will to be convinced of for some reason or other. It is often found that when certain truths are pressed upon an individual, he is unwilling to believe. For example, there is a man who has a sick wife; he sees that she is pale and haggard, he perceives her sunken cheek, and hears her hollow cough, and he fears that she may be in a consumption; he is unwilling, however, to believe it, and tries to flatter himself that her lungs are not affected, and perhaps the doctor tells him that it is a nervous complaint and not a consumption. But day after day he sees the hectic flush of the face and the clear and burning eye, and all the other symptoms of consumption. By-and-bye the physician says, "I must give her up, she is in a consumption; I am satisfied that she can live but a little while." Now, mark! Suppose the man does not recognize the hand of God in this event; he now sees the naked reality, it stands out plainly before him; in a few days or weeks he will be without a wife, and his children without a mother--ah, what an agony that is; he has not such confidence in God as to be able to see the hand of God in the affliction; he has no such confidence that he can yield up his little ones without any misgiving to his heavenly Father. The reality has at length come upon him; his intellect must yield; his wife must die; his children must be left without a mother; and he himself must go about alone. But to all this his will does not consent; he is dissatisfied with the order of providence; he is disposed to murmur, and is in agony when he realizes the fact that his wife must die. If you tell him that in all this, God is acting wisely, his intellect will admit that all the actions of God are both wise and good, but his heart does not admit it, his will does not receive it. See the difference between faith and a mere intellectual conviction. Take the Bible and show him the promises of God, bring before him evidences of the goodness of God, of the universal care that God exercises over all his creation; "I know it!" he says, "I know it!" but how he agonizes and smarts under it. But he becomes a converted man. You left him last night in the greatest distress; but you see him this morning, and he meets you with a smile. You ask after his welfare?--Oh, he never was better. You inquire how his wife is?--Oh, the Lord is going to take her home. There is a great change. He says now, "I have no wish nor desire but that God's perfect will should be done." He can now embrace the fact with his heart; he sees in it the hand of his Father and Savior; he can yield up his mind to the dispensation without a murmur. Now, this is faith in the particular providence of God.

Now, let us see what faith in Christ is! Faith in Christ is the mind yielding itself up to Him and implies, first a conviction of sin. That is, the mind apprehends itself to be a sinner. It implies also that the mind is convinced that Jesus Christ died for sinners; it also implies that the mind assents and consents to the understood relation of Christ to man as a Savior, in that He died to save him. But look at that man, what ails him? Why, he has a clear conviction that he is a sinner, but his will does not yield, and he is wretched; and the clearer his conviction is of the truth, the more miserable does he become. The Bible tells him to believe--he says, "I do believe," yet he finds no comfort in it. He is told to pray; he says he does pray, and pray in faith; but does he receive answers to his prayers? No! The fact is, he knows intellectually about these things, but his heart does not yield and come into sympathy with them so as to embrace these truths, and he is often in agony when he thinks about them. All at once, some thought passes in his mind about Christ and salvation, when he instantly yields his will and heart to the truth, and his soul becomes like to the chariot of Aminadab! He finds himself in sympathy with the truth; and he wholly gives up his heart to embrace it. The truth does not distress him now as it did before. He has set his heart on the truths of the Gospel now; he sees a glorious reality in them, and they set upon the soul with such sweetness, that he feels it to be the element in which it was designed to "live, move, and have it's being;"--all is joy and peace.

III. I AM, IN THE NEXT PLACE, TO NOTICE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPLIED IN BELIEVING IN JESUS

First, of course, it implies a supreme regard to His will, a committing of the mind to Him, and a yielding up of the whole life to live in sympathy with these truths that respect Him. Furthermore, it implies a forsaking of everything that is inconsistent with the will of Christ. We cannot love Him and yet, at the same time, sympathize with His enemies. Again, it implies a supreme regard to what He does or wills respecting us. For example, an individual who really believes in Christ, has a supreme regard to his good opinion, and is desirous to please Him; and is infinitely more desirous to have the approbation of Christ than the approbation of the world--infinitely more. Believing in Christ, then, implies a supreme desire to please Him; a state of mind that will say whatever will please Him; that will do, and that will aim to please Him, regarding any token whatever of his approbation as being infinitely more valuable than the approbation of all the creatures in the universe. Of course, it implies that there must be no such regard for the opinions or admiration of men, as at all to interfere with the mind's supreme love to, and confidence in God, and the opinion and approbation of Jesus Christ. Of

course, if this is so, it implies a change of life--a change in respect to the great end for which men live. Instead of living to themselves, they live to Christ; instead of living to please men, they live to please God; instead of regarding men, they regard Christ; and it is but a small thing with them what men may think of them.

IV. THIS LEADS ME TO SHOW, IN THE NEXT PLACE, WHAT IT IS TO RECEIVE HONOR OF MEN

"How can ye believe which receive honor of men, and seek not that honor which cometh from God only?" First, it implies a disposition to be honored by them. To "receive" honor from men, implies that the mind embraces it, and comes into sympathy with it. Now, a man may be honored by his fellow-men, without being said to receive that honor in the sense here meant, or any sense that implies anything wrong. He may not seek it; and he may regard it as of no such importance as to sacrifice any principle of right and truth to it. To "receive" it, then, in the sense of the text, implies that the mind has such a regard to the public sentiment, or the opinion, good will, and favor of men in some particular thing, more than the opinion and favor of God. It implies a state of mind, in fact, that has no sympathy with God--a selfish state of mind that regards the approbation of men as a great thing, and that seeks to secure the favor and applause of men. That state of mind, I say, is selfish; it has the spirit of self-seeking in that particular form. For instance, some men seek money--that is the form in which their selfishness manifests itself; others seek power; others still, seek their own reputation among men--they aim to secure popularity, in order that they may control and rule; and such a regard have they for the praise of men, that they will not sacrifice it for the honor and approbation of Christ.

V. THIS LEADS ME, IN THE NEXT PLACE, TO REMARK, THAT THIS STATE OF MIND RENDERS FAITH IMPOSSIBLE

This is plainly stated in the text. Christ does not mean to say that we have no power to put away that selfish spirit and feeling, but that while we have that form of selfishness, we cannot believe. Do you say, Why is faith impossible? "Why? Just because there is no fellowship between Christ and the world. "He that will be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God," says the apostle. Again: Christ and the world have a spirit in complete opposition to each other. Again: There cannot be any sympathy both with the world and with Christ. Again: If persons seek to please the world and to have it's sympathy, favor, approbation, and good will, they are in a state of mind which is directly over against the state of mind that will please God, and secure the good will, approbation and favor of Christ. These two states of mind are exactly opposite. But mark! they are both voluntary states of mind. We can determine whether to love the world or to love God, whether to have the favor of the world or the favor of God; but we cannot have both at once; we cannot walk in two exactly opposite directions at the same time; we cannot will supremely to love God, and yet supremely will to seek the applause and honor of man, at the same time. It is an absurdity to suppose such a thing possible. I have known individuals to have such a supreme regard to the opinions and approbation of an individual, as to be in perfect bondage to him; the approbation and favor of that individual was more regarded than the favor of all the world beside, or perhaps than Christ himself. Now, a man who is in that state of mind cannot be in Christ: if he is in bondage to man, he cannot have a supreme regard to the will of Christ.

It is easy to see the strength of the application of these words of Christ, as uttered to the Jews. It was extremely unpopular, you know, to believe in Christ when he was upon the earth--the whole current of public feeling and prejudice set strongly against Him; the religious teachers of that day being the foremost to oppose and denounce Him, and in seeking to prevent the people exercising faith in Him. "Now," said Christ, "how can you believe in me while you are inquiring all the time, 'Have any of the rulers believed on him? ' and are so anxious to know how it will affect your reputation with men if you become my disciples? I know very well if you become my disciples what it will cost you, and I tell you plainly that if you have so much regard for those around you so as to seek their approbation and honors, you cannot believe in me; if you come into sympathy with me, you must turn your back on them. You cannot love me and the world too."

A few remarks must close what I have to say this morning. First, there are many persons in the state of mind indicated in the text. When the Gospel is presented to them, they are held back from accepting it and connecting themselves to it, by the opinion of some individual, public sentiment, or something else. There are men who sustain a certain relation to them, and they don't like to displease them. I have repeatedly known men sustain political relations, and commercial and business relations, with men to whom they were in complete bondage; they could not believe and accept the Gospel, but they would sacrifice the good opinion, or the friendship or favor, of this particular individual. Now, they could not believe the Gospel, because belief implies a tearing away from this unholy relation, and a

giving up of everything that would hinder the individual obeying Christ. One man perhaps sustains a political relation to another who has interest and influence, and expects to get him elected into a certain office; you call upon him to believe, and he does not accept the invitation; his mind is closed against it, because his so doing would offend his patron. Another man sustains certain business relations to an individual who has the power of injuring his worldly interests, if his views are thwarted; the question about believing in Christ comes up, but he cannot commit himself to Christ, till that man's opinion, views, and good will shall have been consulted. Perhaps some of you, who now hear me, are in this very predicament. Perhaps there is some garment of self-seeking in which the devil has bound your soul fast; that you are in bondage; that you have given yourself up to be influenced by some man or set of men. Now, let me ask, will you come right out and shake off this unholy garment? will you break this degrading yoke? and now that the Gospel is presented to you, say with all your hearts, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth;" it is a small thing for me to be judged of man's judgment; my God, let me have thine approbation, if all the world condemn me! It is God that justifieth, then who is he that condemneth?"

Let me remark again: My observation has led me to acknowledge of this fact--that political aspirants very seldom become truly pious. It is the most natural thing in the world that it should be so. Political ambition is among the greatest snares in the world, and the greatest hindrance to the reception of the Gospel. In popular governments, such as the United States, this is especially the case; you are there entirely surrounded by political ambition. I have watched it now for thirty years, and have marked the influence of political ambition on the minds of men. A man becomes politically ambitious, he tries to stand well with his party, and in a very little while he becomes a perfect slave to his party--as really as a negro in the Southern States is a slave; and I should ten thousand times sooner expect to be able to emancipate the negro, than the man who is politically ambitious! He has sold himself to his party. This is the case in the United States, and I suppose the same thing is true in England, that men who are politically ambitious have sold themselves to their party. But what will become of them. May we not ask, in reference to them, "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not that honor which cometh from God only?" Let me tell you, my hearers, that if you are conscious of any influence which is keeping you from God, you must remove it, you must break it off; you must pluck out a right eye, if need be, and cut off a right hand! Some individuals who are in business, do not become religious lest they should offend their customers. In short, how many of these snares the devil has set, like gins and traps, at every corner of the street, and you find men falling into them on every hand, and when God's truth comes home to them, "How can they believe?"

Let me ask you, my dear hearers, if you don't know something of these facts in your own experience? How many of you can say, today, that there is no human influence, no fear of man, no regard to the good will or opinion of any living being, that holds you back from a whole-hearted consecration to God? How is it? Again: You can see from this subject why so many professors of religion have little or no faith. How can they believe if they regard the opinions of the world, instead of committing themselves to God, let men say what they will. A great many people fail to be saved because they regard public sentiment; they ask, "How will it affect my reputation?" How will it strike such and such an one?" Instead of asking, Lord, how will it please thee? If this is the character of any of you, my hearers, it is impossible for you to be saved. Let me say, once more; one of the greatest and most important steps that men can take, is to break away from this snare, and at once commit themselves to God, without regard to what any man, or set of men, may say; break right away from the fear of man, and regard only what God will think, what God wishes, and what will please Him, and at once commit their whole being to Him; this is a great and most important step for a man to take. Is this the step that you will take? Are you prepared to do it this morning? Doubtless, many of you know that you ought to do it, and therefore I need not occupy the time in telling you of your duty; but I ask, have you manhood enough to do it? Have you strength of character enough to do it, or are you so perfectly enfeebled, so perfectly weak that you cannot? Have you been so long gone, so far in the other direction, that you cannot make up your minds to do your duty, and commit yourselves to God? It is remarkable how such things enfeeble the mind in a certain sense. Look at that drunkard! watch him as he goes shuffling along the streets! He has been a "temperate drinker," as he called himself; then after a little, he became intemperate and eventually, he became so degraded and debased as to abhor himself, and everybody abhors him, and his is shunned even by his own family and friends; he has become a mere wretch! See how weak he is! Sometimes after he has have been intoxicated, and has come to his senses, he is ready to spit in his own face, if such a thing were possible--he abhors and despises himself; but set a cup

of strong drink before him and you see his weakness; he is a perfect slave, he has sold himself, and he will drink it even if it be his eternal ruin! Many a man has, in a similar way, sold himself to ambition, and become a complete slave to the influence of certain men, or to the opinions of certain individuals. They dare not do anything without consulting them! They dare not take such a great and important step as to break off their sympathy with them, in order to enter into sympathy with God! They are so weak as to have lost all self-reliance. You ask them to believe in Christ, and you give their consciences a twinge, but they slink away, as the drunkard quails before the cup; while he takes it up to drink its contents, he trembles and almost curses himself. And it may be the case with some of you, my hearers, that you are seeking honor from men and despising yourselves all the time. Let me ask, "Are you prepared to look God in the face?" Oh! if I knew your name, perhaps I might tell a tale--and nothing but the truth--that would make you blush, so that you dare not hold up your head, of something which has kept you from entering into sympathy with God, and committing yourself to Him; perhaps your wife could tell this tale, or others who may be intimately acquainted with you. I will tell you who can tell the tale--that conscience of yours can tell it! Or, perhaps it cannot speak just now! Perhaps you have abused it's claims time after time, so that now it takes a dignified and indignant position of silence, and says not a word. But it will speak by and by! It will tell the story presently! You may only hear the rumblings of conscience now, having smothered it so long, but it will speak by and by--a death bed is coming. Ah, but perhaps before that, conscience will assert its claim and reproach you with your folly. But let me ask, Will you turn now, and enter into sympathy with Christ, and believe in Him? When do you expect to be converted? Dear soul, do you ever expect to be converted? Do you ever expect to be, until you break with the world--until you come to cast off the regard of men, and regard God supremely? How is it? You must do it sometime, if you will be saved; when will you do it? Do you think a future time will be better? As reasonable and dying men, reflect! You will break off the world and sin at some future time!!! Do you believe that there will ever be a better time to break off the favor of man and escape destruction than the present? None! none! Then will to come to Jesus now? Are you saying--"Hitherto I have played a foolish game, but I will now turn my back upon the world and sin, and commit myself to Christ, let men say what they will." Will you do this? Then do it now, right here, in this house! Let the question be settled right here! Oh, do not postpone it! For the sake of your own immortal soul, decide now!

Shall we ask the Lord to interpose and break off your chain? Will you stretch forth your fettered hand and let it be struck off? Hold it out! hold it out! Stretch forth the fettered hand, and we will ask the Lord to break off the chain, to bring you out of your present state of thraldom, and assist you to commit yourself to Christ!

HARDENING THE HEART

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday evening, December 1, 1850,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

(of Oberlin College, United States.)

at the Tabernacle, Moorfields, London.

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"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. iv. 7.

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This reference to David relates to the ninety-fifth Psalm, from which these words were quoted. The apostle was addressing the Israelites, and, in this connexion, was speaking to them of the manner in which their forefathers tempted God in the wilderness, the result of which was that they were not suffered to enter into the promised land. In warning the Israelites against unbelief, he says to them, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

I. I shall inquire into the meaning of the word "heart," as here used.

This term, like many others in the Bible, and in common language, is employed in a variety of senses. Here, however, it manifestly means the "will." To harden the heart, in the sense in which the phrase is here understood, is doubtless to gather up the energies of the will, and to resist, to become stubborn, and obstinate. When the Bible commands or exhorts people not to harden their hearts, it is equivalent to saying, "Do not resist and strengthen yourselves against the voice of God. Do not become stubborn and rebellious, and set yourselves against the voice of mercy; but, to-day, after *so long a time;* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." That is, if you are inclined to listen to what he says, you are not to harden your hearts and become stubborn.

Parents sometimes have the mortification of seeing their own children become stubborn against parental authority, and of seeing their requirements resisted, and their counsels set at nought. Parents often see children, when they undertake to press them to do anything, instead of obeying, wax stubborn and rebellious. They stand and resist, and manifest a cool determination to persevere in their disobedience; to persist in resisting the claims of their parents; and, so far as the philosophy of the act is concerned, resistance to God is just the same. The mental process is precisely similar. The mind resisting truth "is hardening the heart," in the sense of the text. I shall next inquire

II. How is it that sinners do harden their hearts?

How do they do this? And here let me say, that when individuals resist the truth -- when they resist its authority when it is presented to them -- they have to make some apology for their conduct. The natural tendency of the truth, when it is presented to the mind, is to convince it -- to beget a choice -- to lead the individual to yield himself up to its influence. The mind and truth sustain such relations to each other, that the former is naturally and necessarily influenced by the latter; and unless the individual resists the truth, its natural tendency is, as I have said, to lead the will into a state of obedience to it.

When persons harden their hearts, there must be some reason for their doing so. Take the case of the Jews, -- the apostle called on them not to harden their hearts. He knew they were in danger in doing so. He knew their prejudices of education, their Jewish notions, and peculiar views of things. He knew the course they had taken with Christ previous to his crucifixion, and now he had been crucified, had risen from the dead, and was proclaimed to the world as a risen Saviour -- he was writing this epistle to the Jews, and therefore reverts to a passage of their former national history. He calls their particular attention to it; and when he had strongly fixed their minds upon the course their fathers pursued, and its results -- knowing well to whom he was addressing himself, being well versed, as I have said, in the prejudices against Christ -- knowing their self-righteous spirit, and that they were prepared to resist Christ -- knowing all these things, he warns them solemnly not to harden their hearts. It is easy to see that they could assign themselves multitudes of reasons for resistance. He knew that they were in error -- and in great error -- on the subject of religion, and therefore he called on them not to harden themselves -- not to betake themselves to their prejudices -- not to fly to their Jewish errors and peculiar notions, and to strengthen themselves in opposition to the truth.

This leads me to say that persons are very much in danger of hardening themselves, by holding fast to some erroneous opinion or improper practice to which they are committed. All their prejudices are in favor of it, and they are very jealous lest anything should disturb it. They hold on to some particular error, and whenever they are pressed to yield to the claims of God, unless it is done in a peculiar way, so as to be consistent with their prejudices, they are apt to rise up and strengthen themselves against it. What danger such persons are in of assigning to themselves, as a reason for resisting the truth, that it clashes with some of their favorite notions! When they see its practical results contradict some pet theory of theirs, they will strengthen themselves against it.

I recollect an instance of this kind. One evening, in the city of New York, I found among the inquirers a very anxious lady, who was exceedingly convicted of her sins, and pressed her strongly to submit to God. "Ah!" she said, "if I were sure I am in the right church, I would." "The right church!" said I, "I care not what church you are in, if you will only submit yourself to Christ." "But," she replied, "I am not in the Catholic Church, I am not in the right church; if I were, I would yield." So that her anxiety about the "right church" prevented her yielding at all, and she continued to harden her heart against Christ. This is often the case whether persons are Catholics, or whatever they are; when pressed strongly to submit, they flee to some prejudice, and immediately hide themselves behind it; and although they cannot deny the truth of what they resist, still there is some error or prejudice to which they betake themselves by way of present resistance to the truth that is pressing their consciences.

Others harden themselves by indulging in a spirit of procrastination. "I will follow thee," is their language, "but not *now.*" They say, "I intend to be religious," but when God presses them to yield, they are not quite ready. They say, "This is not exactly the time," assigning to themselves some reason for present delay in order to harden themselves. They have something, perhaps, in hand, which must be attended to first. Do let me ask you, now, how many times some of you, when thus pressed to yield at once to Christ, have urged some such reason as this for your delay?

Why are you not Christians? Is it because your attention has never been called to the subject? Is it because you never intend to be Christians? No! Well, what is the matter with you? How is it that you have always succeeded in assigning to yourself a reason for a present delay? One time, you have one reason; at another, another; and you have, in fact, as many

reasons as occasions, and they come up whenever you have been pressed immediately to surrender your heart to God. Now, I ask you if this is not true? I ask you if you do not know that it is true, as well as you know that you exist?

I remark again, that many persons strengthen themselves and harden their hearts by refusing, wherever they can refuse, to be convicted of their sins. They have a multitude of ways of avoiding the point, and force away the truth, and hardening themselves against it. Take care, for instance, of the practice of excusing sin. The veriest sinner in the world will make some excuse for what he is doing; and at least it suffices to satisfy himself. It is exceedingly difficult to convince a man against his will; it is remarkable to see how a man will evade conviction. Go to the slaveholder, for instance, and how many excuses he will make! How many things he will conjure up! Sometimes he will even flee to the Bible to defend himself; at other times, he will excuse himself by saying that he knows not what to do with his slaves -- that the laws of his State forbid him to emancipate them. You may press him on every point -- you may reason with him again and again, but all to no purpose. Men often excuse and defend their sins in this way; and sometimes they actually deny that they are sins at all, when they come to be pressed to give them up; but the apologies they make are such as God will never receive, although they suffice, at present, to delude themselves.

But again: Another way in which men harden themselves is, that they are unwilling to come and do what is implied in becoming Christians. They reason thus within themselves: -- "I must give up such and such things, if I become a Christian I must do thus and thus." They consider that they must make a profession of religion, and that, therefore, the eyes of the world will be thenceforth upon them; they see that they must consequently be careful how they conduct themselves. They cannot go to such and such places of amusement; they must discontinue such and such things they have been in the habit of doing, and which are now so dear to them. This is how they reason; they begin to count the cost. But a short time since, I was pressing an individual to yield up certain forms of sin of which I knew him to be guilty. "Ah," said he, "if I begin to yield this and that, where will it all end? I must be consistent," said he, "and where shall I stop?" Where should he "stop?" It was clear that the cost was too great, and that he was therefore disposed to harden himself and resist God's claims, because he considered God required too much. If he were going to become a Christian, he knew that, to do his duty, he must give up sin as sin, and that it would cost him the sacrifice of his many idols. This is a very common practice. If you ask persons, in a general way, they are willing to be Christians; but "what will be expected of them?" Ah! that is quite a different thing! If you tell them what it really is to be a Christian, that is quite another thing. Now you have set them to count the cost, and they find it will involve too great a sacrifice. They are wholly unwilling to renounce themselves and their idols; and accordingly they betake themselves to hardening their hearts, and strengthening themselves in unbelief.

I will cite the case just referred to for a moment. The conversation respected, at that time, a particular form of sin. Now, why did he not yield at once? Why did he not instantly say, "I will give it up. I know it is wrong and inconsistent with love to God, and I will therefore renounce it." But instead of this, he saw that the principle on which he yielded this point would compel him to give up others; and therefore, he said, "if I begin this, where shall I stop?" He gathered up all the reasons he could, and strengthened himself in his position. Thus he was hardening his heart; this was just what the Jews did when Christ preached.

Thus it is men perceive that it will call upon them to humble themselves before God, and make restitution where they have been fraudulent in their dealings; they see that to become Christians, implies that they undo, as far as it lies in their power, the wrong they may have committed, and become honest men. They see that multitudes of things are implied in listening to the voice of God, and becoming followers of Jesus Christ, and this causes them to surround themselves with considerations to sustain them in their unbelief and resistance to the authority of God. I might mention a great many other particulars under this head; I shall not, however, at present, do so, but in a few words show,

III. Why men should not harden their hearts in this way.

Perhaps the first thing that I shall notice will startle some of you. It is this; you should not harden your hearts, "because, if you do not do so, you will be converted."

I have already said, that truth is so related to the mind, and the mind to truth, that when the mind perceives truth, with its practical bearing, this relation acts as a powerful impulse to the mind, tending strongly to induce it to yield and conform; it is a natural stimulus to the mind, prompting it to act in a given direction. To be sure, it can be resisted; and it is this resistance that God exhorts you to avoid, you are to let the truth take effect.

You recollect, perhaps, some of you, that the apostle says -- I believe it is in the Epistle to the Romans -- however, in the particular passage to which I was going

to refer, God denounces those who restrain the truth, and go on in unrighteousness; that is, those who hold it back, and prevent it from influencing their mind. This is the way the heart is hardened, by refusing to yield to the truth, withholding the mind from going out in obedience to it.

Now, observe, beloved, that if the truth is but yielded to, this is conversion itself. *Conversion is the act of the mind in turning from error, selfishness, and sin, and yielding to the claims, and obeying the commands of the Almighty*. This is conversion.

Now, as I said, the natural tendency of the truth is to stimulate the mind to embrace and obey it. God has so constituted the mind, that, as everybody knows, truth is a most powerful stimulant, which invites and draws the mind in a given direction: Truth induces it to act in conformity with its dictates. Now, to do this, to obey the truth, that is conversion. If you do not obey it, it is because you harden yourself against it, and resist its influences; for it is an utter impossibility to be indifferent to the presentation of truth, and especially is it utterly impossible to maintain a blank indifference to the presentation of the great practical truths of Christianity. They are not mere abstractions, in which the mind sees no practical bearing, but they are realities of such a nature that the mind must either resist them or suffer them to guide it.

The apostle knew that if they did not harden themselves, they must surely be converted.

Another reason why you should not harden your hearts, is, that you will not be converted if you do. In other words, if you resist the Spirit, God never *forces* you against your will. If he cannot persuade you to embrace the truth, he cannot save you by a physical act of omnipotence, as, for instance, he could create a world. You are a free moral agent, and he can save you only in his own way. In other words, if he cannot gain your own consent to be saved in his own way, he cannot possibly save you at all. If you wish him to save you by moving your will, as I would move this lamp --[Mr. Finney here moved the branch of one of the pulpit lamps to and fro]-- I say, if he is to save you as I move this lamp, he will not do it. It is not a physical operation that can make you willing; that is not the way in which the will is controlled. He must have your consent; and when he sends his ministers to reason with you, -- when his Spirit strives with you, -- he strives to gain your free consent; hence he says, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." If conversion were a mere act of the physical omnipotence of God, he would not exhort you not to harden your hearts; for *how could you harden your hearts against, and resist a physical almightiness*?

Men who have this conception scoff at the idea of the sinner's hardening himself against God. Persons who talk thus, of course, assume that conversion does consist in an act of omnipotence; they seem unable to comprehend that conversion consists in God's securing your own consent, and that is all. Did you ever consider this, dying sinner? Did you ever reflect on the fact, that all that is necessary, is, to give your consent to be saved? You fancy you are willing; but the fact is, that your obstinacy is the only real difficulty to be overcome -- to get you to yield yourself up to God's claims. It is easy for you to see, that if you harden your heart, and surround yourself with prejudices, gather all your energies up to resist, -- if you do this, it is easy for you to see that you can only expect to remain unconverted -- to live, and die, and perish in your sins! While you harden yourself, it is impossible that you should be converted, for conversion is the very opposite of this resistance -- it is the yielding yourself up; the claims of God.

Another reason why you should not harden your hearts, is, that *you may be given up!* God may give you up to the hardness of your hearts. The Bible shows that this is not uncommon. Whole generations of the Jews were thus given up. You may be, and there is considerable danger; the same God of mercy that now governs the world gave up whole generations in that comparatively dark generation; and if so, what reason have we to suppose that he will not do so with you? God, under the Gospel, is not more merciful than he was under the law -- he is the same God. Some think there is not so much danger of this now; but the fact is, there is more, because there is more light. He gives them up because they resist the light of the truth with regard to his claims. I beg of you to consider this.

IV. We Shall Inquire, Whose "voice" is here referred to?

Is it the voice of a tyrant, who comes out with his omnipotent arm to crush you? "If you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Whose voice is it? In the first place, it is the voice of God; but, more than this, it is the voice of your Father! But is it the voice of your Father, with the rod of correction pursuing you, to subdue you by force? Oh, no! it is the voice of his mercy -- of his deepest compassion. Hear what he says: "Ephraim, my dear son; Ephraim, my pleasant child;" for although he spake against him, yet did he "earnestly remember him still." Like a father who has almost made up his mind to abandon a disobedient and cruel child, whose misconduct he could not endure, and whom he found it

impossible to reform. All the father works up in him at the remembrance of that child; the parental heart yearned over him. "I have spoken against him, yet do I earnestly remember him still."

Just so God addresses you. He "earnestly remembers" you. He offers to forgive you. He says, "after so long a time." *How* long a time? How old are you? How many long years has God waited for you? Just number them up -- some of you, perhaps, eighteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty. How many years have you refused to hear the voice of your Father, your Saviour; the voice of mercy, the voice of invitation, the voice of promise, the voice of expostulation, and even of entreaty? By his providence, the work of the Spirit, the words of the inspired volume, the ministrations of his servants -- in how many ways has this voice reached you? And now he says, "after *so long a time!*"

A few further remarks must close what I have to say; and the first remark is this: persons often mistake the true nature of hardness of heart. Supposing it to be involuntary, they lament it as a misfortune, rather than regret it as a crime. They suppose that the state of apathy which results from the resistance of their will, is hardness of heart. It is true that the mind apologies to itself for resistance to the claims of God, and, as a natural consequence, there is very little feeling in the mind, because it is under the necessity of making such a use of its powers as to cause great destitution of feeling. This is hardening the heart -- that act of the mind in resisting the claims of God. For persons to excuse themselves by complaining that their hearts are hard, is only to add insult to injury. They resist God's claims, and then complain of the hardness this resistance induces; they harden themselves in the ways we have stated, rendering themselves obstinate against God, and then they complain of the results of their own actions. Now, is this the way?

I remark, once more, it is worthy of notice that the claims, commands, promises, and invitations of God are all in the present tense. Turn to the Bible, and from end to end you will find it is, "To-day" if ye will hear his voice. "Now" is the accepted time. God says nothing of to-morrow; he does not even guarantee that we shall live till then. It is "to-day," after so long a time, harden not your hearts."

Again: The plea of inability is one of the most paltry, abusive, and blasphemous of all. What! Are men *not able* to refrain from hardening themselves? I have already said, and you all know, that it is the nature of truth to influence the mind when it receives it; and, when the Spirit does convert a man, it is by so presenting the truth as to gain his consent. Now, if there was not something in the truth itself adapted to influence the mind, he might continue to present the truth forever, without your ever being converted. It is because there is an adaptedness in truth -- something in the very nature of it, which tends to influence the mind of man. Now, when persons complain of their inability to embrace the truth, what an infinite mistake! God approaches with offers of mercy, and with the cup of salvation in his hand, saying, "Sinner! I am coming! Beware not to harden yourself. Do not cavil. Do not hide behind professors of religion. Do not procrastinate! for I am coming to win you."

Now, what does the sinner do? Why, he falls to hardening his heart, procrastinating, making all manner of excuses, and pleading his inability. Inability! What! Is not a man able to refrain from surrounding himself with considerations which make him stubborn? Is he not able to come from this soul-destroying business of hardening himself? Oh! sinner, you *are* able; that is not the difficulty.

Once more: I said this is a most *abusive* way of treating God. Why, just think. Here is God endeavoring to gain the sinner's consent -- to what? Not be sent to hell. Oh, no! he is not trying to persuade you so to harden yourself as to consent to lie down in everlasting sorrow. Oh, no! he is not trying to persuade you to do anything, or to consent to anything, that will injure you. Oh, no! he is not trying to persuade you to give up anything that is really good -- the relinquishment of which will make you wretched or unhappy -- to give up all joy, and everything that is pleasant -- to give up things that tend to peace -- he is not endeavoring to persuade you to do any such thing as this. With regard to all such things, he is not only willing that you should have them, but would bring you into a state in which you could really enjoy them. He cries out, "Sinner! do thyself no harm!" He is trying to prevent you from injuring yourself, and not endeavoring to play off any game upon you which will interfere with your well-being or happiness; he is trying to prevent your ruining yourselves, and trying to consent to be blessed. Will it hurt you to give up your sins? God sent Christ to turn you away from those courses which, by a natural law, must prove your ruin. What is it, then, that God wishes you to do?

What is that sweet voice which falls so sweetly from heaven? It should melt all stubbornness down. It is the voice of his infinite compassion and love. Oh, sinner, destroy not thine own soul! Flee not from the Saviour who has come to save you! Harden not yourself against the offered mercy; and, now that the cross of salvation is passed around from lip to lip, do not push it away!

What are you doing? Is God come to injure you? If he had come in wrath, he would not care whether you hardened your heart or not. O sinner! if you place him in such a relation that his infinite heart is obliged to make the sacrifice, when he enters into judgment he will not tell you not to harden yourself. Then you may harden yourself if you can. He says, "Can thy heart be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" Oh, no! But now it is different. Now he comes and sweetly tries to win you -- he comes as a friend, as a father, as a Saviour! spreading out his broad arms of love to embosom you every one, drawing you so near to his great, gushing heart as to thrill its tides of eternal love through all your being. Oh! will you resist? What! "*after so long a time*!" Oh! sinner, is it not infinitely inexcusable? Shall he fail to get your consent? Then, when you sit before him in solemn judgment, and the universe shall all be gathered together, he will publish the fact of how, after he tried to spread out his broad, beneficent arms of love over you -- how, after he tried to gather you under the wings of his protection -- but ye would not! He could not gain your consent! What! shall it be told of any of you in the solemn judgment that God could not possibly gain your consent to the only terms on which he could possibly save you? Ah! when he shakes his skirts, as it were, and exclaims, "I am clear of thy blood." what will you say?

Again, he will have the eternal consolation of knowing that he has taken all the pains to get you to consent that he wisely could take. You will be obliged to say, "The fault was my own, and I have been an infinite fool! I have resisted the claims of Christ, hardened myself against his dying love, and cast away my soul!" Sinners! how many times have you been invited? Can you remember? How many times have you seen the Lord's Table spread? Are you prepared to partake of the elements now about to be spread -- the solemn avowal of your attachment to Christ? How many times, I ask again, have you been invited? Have you not had enough of sin? How much more do you want? Let me ask you another question -- how much longer would you like to live in your sins? How many years have you already devoted to them? Do you think God *ought* to allow you to enjoy a little more sin? Suppose he, personally, put the questions, "Do you think I *ought* to allow you to live any longer in your sins? Do you think I *ought* to let you live to remain in rebellion any longer?" Suppose he should say, "Unless I fan your heaving lungs in sleep to-night you will be lost. Unless I keep you, you will lie down in hell before the morning. Now, do you think I *ought* to keep you alive to sin against me another day? Do you think that when you lie down in your sins, I*ought* to watch over you, and see that you do not die; and that Satan does not steal away your soul, and drag you down to the depths of hell?" Dare you look the Eternal in the face and say, "Yes, Lord." Dare you say, "I think I *ought* to be indulged a little longer, and not be hurried in this way?" No, indeed! You know you are without excuse. You could only say that you are "infinitely to blame," and you are in infinite danger if you do not to-night cease to sin, and yield yourself up.

[Mr. Finney, after a short prayer, dismissed the congregation, while the church remained to celebrate the Lord's Supper; however, seeing that between three and four hundred persons kept their seats, as "spectators," in the spacious galleries, Mr Finney, after the administration of the ordinance by the pastor (the Rev. Dr. Campbell), again addressed the assembly.]

Christ has invited you to "do this in remembrance" of him. Whose business is this? Is it yours only, or mine only; or is it equally incumbent on both? Did Christ die for you, and not for me? or for me, and not for you? or did he give himself up for us all? Surely it is the duty of all to "do this" for whom Christ died. Did he tell you to "do this," and you have really never done it? How is this? I want to know *why* you have never done it? Is it because you are not a Christian? Why are you not? When Dr. Campbell (the pastor of the church) announced that the communicants would seat themselves below, while the spectators would retire to the gallery -- "Spectators! non-communicants!" said I to myself; "who are these non-communicants? Are there, then, those of Adam's race for whom Christ has not died? Are there those who will thus openly acknowledge that they have "no part or lot in the matter?" Suppose, now, that Christ actually had died only for a part of mankind, and you knew that it had no more reference to you non-communicants in the gallery than to the fallen angels! If you knew this, why, of course, I should expect to see you non-communicants; for why should you celebrate his death if his blood was not shed for you? You might then absent yourselves with some reason.

But, if this were the case, how could you sit round that gallery and look on? Now, do take this view of the matter, and consider it for a moment.

But Christ says, "Ho *everyone* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters of life -- come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," -- "Come unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." Suppose, then, that the cup were handed round to you -- would you say, "Oh! I am not prepared: I am not a Christian?" Why are you not? You shut yourself out by your own consent.

"Not prepared!" You are neglecting Christ, and hardening your hearts against him -- that is the reason you are "not prepared."

"Not prepared!" Just think of it! Who is it that requests you to "do this?" It is a friend -- a dying friend -- a friend dying in your stead. What does he say? He says, "I am just going to offer up my life for you; break this bread, pour out this wine, and partake of them in remembrance of me -- partake *ye all* of it, and when you do so, remember my struggle, my groans, my agony, and death." Will you obey this dying injunction? Why, then, do you thus turn you backs upon it?

Suppose that a mortal should do you a similar favor? Suppose a fellow-creature should bleed and die in your stead, and in the agony of death should take a ring from his finger and say -- "Here, dear friend, take this, wear it, look at it, and as often as you do so, remember me!" How would you regard this love-token presented in the hour of nature's final struggle? Would you throw the ring lightly away? Suppose any one should say -- "Give me that ring;" or, "How much will you take for it?" How much would you take for it? Why you would sooner part with your heart's blood than lose it; and if they inquired why you so prized it, you would tell them your simple story, and assure them that nothing could induce you to part with it.

Now, think of this! Yet when Christ made an effort to save you from endless death, by suffering himself, how indifferent you are! Was it a mere ring? No! He took bread and brake it, saying, "This is my body which was broken for you;" he took wine and poured out, saying, "This is my blood which was shed for you, do this in remembrance of me." Who is to "do this?" Why, all of you; seeing that for all of you his blood was shed.

But practically you say, "I will not do this," and turn your back on the ordinance. What must angels think, when they see a number of persons for whom Christ died, and to whom he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," but who will not do it? If there can be amazement in heaven, surely this would cause it.

Now, *will you ever neglect it again*? I recollect an instance of an individual present at a season like this, when the question came up about his long neglect, when he was so impressed by the consideration of the sin and danger of his position, that he resolved on the spot, that he would never voluntarily neglect it again. At the next communion he was there, and could rejoice in the resolution he had taken, to drawn near that great heart of love. After that he was always one of the first at the table.

What do you say to-night? Now think of this when you lay your head on your pillow to night. Can you say, "Lord, this night have I rejected thee publicly before the whole congregation." Try to go to sleep, but say first, "Lord, do not let me die to night, I have just come away from thy table and refused to acknowledge thee, and do not let me go to hell to-night."

Would you not blush to talk thus? would you not rather say, "O my God! I have to-night rejected Jesus, and how dare I sleep in my sins? This night, Lord, I in my heart give thee a solemn pledge, that, by thy grace, I will never turn my back on that ordinance again. It shall never be said of me (by thy grace), that I am not prepared. I will remember thee; and in the presence of heaven and earth, I will manifest my gratitude to thee from this time." Oh! let it be written in heaven!

THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.*

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A Lecture

delivered on Monday, Dec. 16, 1850.

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY.

at the Tabernacle, Moorfields.

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I have so many things to say to parents, that I hardly know where to begin. It is one of those subjects upon which so much needs to be said. The greatest influence in the whole government of God, exercised over the destinies of the world, is exercised in the family. The mother begins the work. The parents influence is no doubt the supreme influence. God designed it should be so. This was one object in establishing the family relation. It was not only to secure among human beings temporal blessings, the care and nurture of the young, but that they should have a spiritual influence, and exert it over their offspring; the great end God had in view was their spiritual well-being. This was one of his great designs, no doubt; but it is not kept in view by parents; and therefore the great object of the Almighty in establishing the family relation -- so far, at least as children are concerned, is defeated.

It should always be remembered, that this influence, whatever it may be, takes place in very early life, and is generally decisive, one way or the other; the after life is in most cases, little more than the development of what has been thus commenced. The mother as I have said begins the work; she heads the undertaking; and exerts

more influence over the child at first than everything else; and if she understands what she is about -- if she is a pious woman -- if she avails herself of the facilities God has put into her hands she will be, under God, the greatest possible blessing to that child. Parents stand in such peculiar relations that their children naturally have more confidence in their father and mother than in anyone else. Their position gives them an influence over the youthful mind, for good or for evil, with which no other influence in the world can compare. Whatever is done, in this direction is done and will be done in very early life, and the results are only developing themselves ever after.

But to explain what I mean: -- parents have a mighty influence over little children, -- they lead them to their earliest thoughts, and give them most of their first ideas. The spirit of the parent teaches the child a great deal, even before his words can teach him. The example and influence of the parent is not confined to mere verbal teaching; everything he does has an influence over the child; every word the parent says before it can fully tell the meaning of words, has an influence over it; and when it comes to understand language, the little mind weighs all that it hears and thus the child is educated. Now if the parents' influence is of a worldly character -- if there is not that in the parent which early leads the child to think about its soul and God -- if it does not see in the parent a concern for his own soul, its education has begun in the wrong direction. If the parent neglects to let his child see in very early life, that he is concerned for its salvation -- if the idea of religion is not a prominent idea -- if the child does not see that the subject is working in the parents mind, if he does not see that the will of God is the parents' life, and that to glorify God is the parents' end -- if he does not see these things in the parents, but the contrary, the child will understand it, think of it, and it will have its influence over him much earlier than parents are in the habit of believing. I have known children, for instance, whose temperament was such, that when very young, they talked much about religion, and were constantly asking questions about it; so thoroughly indeed, were their little minds engrossed with the subject, that they scarcely seemed to know that there were any other places than those to which their parents were accustomed to resort for religious worship. Even when strangers have come in, they have been accustomed to ask, "is that person a Christian?"

The early conversion of children materially depends on the parents securing a lodgment for religious truth among the earliest thoughts which are developed in the mind. It is curious to see how children observe when parents pray and recognise God in all their ways. It is remarkable to see the effect of this on their infant minds; they get their little chairs, kneel down and try to pray. They see their parents pray. Their mother is in the habit of taking them and praying with them, from their very birth; and as soon as they can understand her, she leads them into her closet, reads the Bible to them, talks about the Saviour, and prays with them daily, -- sometimes several times a day and in consequence of this, you will see them get their little chairs, and have their little meetings, and go down on their knees and pray for themselves. One mother recently writing to me says: -- "Little Willy gets his chair, kneels down, and clasping his little hands, says, 'O Lor' (he could not articulate Lord)." Every little thing would begin to pray if he had such a mother. Now the tendency of all this is to keep the little one's thoughts awake; from the spirit and temper of the parent, he perceives that religion is something of supreme importance. God comes to be in all his little thoughts. He sees that religion is the great concern of the parents' life, and where this is the case, I do not believe that there is one case in a thousand, in which children are not very early converted -- that is of course, unless there be some error in the teaching or conception of the parent that gets in the way, and keeps this influence from producing its natural results. I have known pious parents who have said much to their children on the subject of religion, but who, from holding certain erroneous views, have laid stumbling blocks in their way; the parents taught them some things which were false, and which consequently proved hindrances to them.

It is important that parents should understand, that there is only one of two courses open to them with regard to their children, they must either exert a worldly influence which would give their little minds an entirely wrong direction, -- or a spiritual one, which will set them after religion; the child's mind will be caused to ferment on the subject of religion; its earliest thoughts will be about religion; the earliest influences they can remember, will be convictions of sin; Heaven and Hell, Christ and Eternity, will put their little minds into a state of effervescence. These influences commence ere the child has left the lap of its loving mother.

For the few moments I can spend in addressing you, I shall turn your attention to a few things which parents must avoid, if they would secure the salvation of their children.

First. Be sure you don't stumble yourself by the idea that "you can't expect" the early conversion of your children. A worthy deacon from Birmingham called on me a few hours ago at Dr. Campbell's. His family were all

converted and united to the church; his youngest child was only about ten years of age. He told me that he had been introduced to the deacon of one of the City churches, who had a large family, not one of whom were converted, and who on being apprized of the happy condition of the Birmingham family, said "Well you know *we* cannot *give* grace to our children." "O no" said the Birmingham brother, "but we can use the means in our possession to make them Christians." When the fact came out that the youngest child was only ten years' old, the City deacon shook his head. "Ah!" said he "I don't believe in forcing people into the church." "Nor do I" was the response, "I did all I dare do, and said all I dare say, but what could anyone do or say, but let her profess her faith in Christ as other people do?"

I know that one of the greatest stumbling blocks is cast in the way of families by the idea, that to expect the early conversion of children, is to say the least, rather enthusiastic "the idea of a child of ten years of age being converted! why we cannot believe it!" But suppose I were to preach the funeral sermon of such a child and to say, "it is gone to hell no doubt." "What makes you say so?" you would say. Why, you do not pretend that the child is not a sinner at ten years of age? This is the greatest error that can be entertained. If a child has intelligence enough to sin, has it not intelligence enough to be converted? If not, what becomes of children old enough to sin, but not old enough to be converted? The fact is that it is easier, so to speak, for the Holy Spirit to convert a child, than it is for him to convert a man. Now do let me ask, what is in the way of the child's conversion? When its little conscience first wakes up, sin takes such a twinging hold of it, that it goes into the greatest agony at the thought of it. This is natural; for the little conscience has not yet been trifled and tampered with. Now cannot the Spirit of God teach such children? What? Cannot those who understand the nature of faith in the parent, understand the nature of faith in God? Cannot those who understand parently protection and love, understand the protection and love of their heavenly father? Cannot those who know so well how to depend on a parent, depend on God? They can surely do it more easily then, than if they wait until they have learned, from contact with the world, to mistrust everybody and everything. Cannot they, whose tender hearts are so ready to trust, be taught to exercise faith in Christ? Why, this is the most likely time in their lives. It is much more likely then, that they will be converted than it is that if you allow them to grow up and form bad habits, those habits will be more easily corrected, than if you had used the best and earliest means to prevent their formation. The fact is the Spirit of God is always ready to cooperate with the judicious use of means -- just as ready to cooperate with children as with adults. But parents allow children to grow up and escape from under their influence, with the false impression, that such is not the case. I have observed that, just so far as parents have intelligently used the best means in their power to secure the early conversion of their children, just so far have they been successful in their endeavors. But when the contrary has been the case, I have not been surprised to find that the children have grown up to manhood and womanhood unconverted.

I have sometimes asked parents, if they ever made it a great pressing business to secure the early conversion of their children "O no; we never set ourselves to make it a pressing business to secure them for God." You don't eh? Then is it any wonder that they are not converted? There are multitudes of persons who are obliged to admit, that they never in good earnest, set about promoting the conversion of their children and securing it under God. I wish I had time, I could tell you of numbers of cases, where such sons and daughters have turned out badly. Oh! What stories have I listened to, of the awful results of the neglect of parents with regard to this matter!

Secondly. Many persons entertain ideas of God's sovereignty which are a great stumbling block in the way of the early conversion of their children.

The man who said, "We cannot give grace to our children" had doubtless an idea that God's sovereignty was, in some way, peculiarly connected with the act. Such persons associate God's sovereignty with conversion in a way that they associate it with nothing else. In every other matter they exert themselves, as though there were some connexion between means and ends in the government of God but with respect to conversion. They seem to take it for granted that there is no connexion between means and ends in the act of conversion, -- that God sets aside, in the conversion of men, all the laws by which he invariably operates at other times -- and that he exercises a peculiar kind of sovereignty in that particular instance. I have been not a little surprised to find that multitudes of persons have such ideas of God's sovereignty and agency, that they can recognize his hand in nothing short of an absolute miracle. For example; a person goes and talks to a child in such a manner as to make a deep impression on its infant mind, and the impression is made accordingly; the child awakes to a deep sense of sin and importance of religion. But what does the parent say? "Let it alone now, and we will see whether you have been merely

playing upon the child's feelings, or whether the spirit has been cooperating." The fact is the child is talked to in the very way to produce the effect predicted. If a preacher so discourses as to affect the minds of his audience in a certain way, and accordingly they are so affected. Ah? then God has nothing to do with it? So I suppose, in your idea, it must be something in which there can be no perceivable relation between the means and the ends, in order to have God recognized? But, if there really is any natural and necessary connection between the means and the end, why then is not God recognized, unless in an act in which he is supposed to set aside this connection, and act in a manner entirely inconsistent with it? But when persons talk in this way, why are they not consistent in carrying the matter right out? Now if you sit down and converse with a child about playing marbles, who could expect that such conversation would be followed by any religious result? And if a minister got into a pulpit and preached about politics, would you expect anybody to be converted? It seems therefore to be necessary that the subject of the discourse should have a religious leaning in order to expect a religious effect. It must not be some historical facts in no way connected with what the sinner has to do -- you could not expect that to have the desired results; he must press the matter home, till the sinner fully feels that he is virtually saying, "Thou art the man." Ah! and now what is this? "Oh!" you say, "you have been playing upon his sympathies." But if you reason so where are we to stop? The fact is you do not -- you cannot expect God to convert any one when there is no sort of relevancy, in the means used; and if some relevancy, even according to your own ideas of divine sovereignty, is necessary in the means employed, pray *how much* relevancy is absolutely indispensable? When God works, he can never be expected to commit any infraction of the laws which he himself has ordained for the government of the universe; and if he does operate according to his own laws, why should it be doubted that he is operating at all? For my part, I am always expecting to see God work in accordance with his own established laws, and I recognise him all the more, when I see how nicely he adapts the means to the end.

He created mind and established its relations to truth, and when he presents truth to the mind, and it is received in accordance with principles he has ordained, am I not to recognise the hand of God in them?

Parents do not seem to feel the necessity of their applying themselves to secure the early conversion of their children, with as much earnestness as they seek their recovery when sick. A little error in nursing will often have a most dangerous influence on the health of the patient, and a little error in instruction may induce a serious turn in the thoughts, and perhaps, present a fatal stumbling block. If God allows things to take this course in the physical world, he will permit it in the moral world. Why not? If certain laws are violated in the physical world, God allows the thing to take its natural course, why should he adopt a different policy towards the moral world? This is the very way in which God's sovereignty really manifests itself. If you look round on the natural world, you will see that God permits immense results to turn on the most trifling violation of natural laws. A ship would sink though filled with devoted missionaries, if the natural law is neglected. In fact -- if they have neglected to take compass or chart, or some such necessary precaution on the pretence of trusting to the sovereignty of God, they have in reality been tempting God, by not taking care to adjust themselves to his physical laws; and that ship, although, as I have said, it is filled with missionaries, must go to the bottom! And in such a case, perhaps, the salvation of thousands of souls might be suspended on that ship's reaching its destination in safety. It is the same in the moral world, let mother or father make a mistake, either moral or physical; in one instance it is death to the body -- in the other to the soul. This is the teaching of the Bible, and it is borne out by experience. Men should know that they can as certainly ruin the soul, as they can kill the body.

Thirdly. Care should be taken not to cause the child to stumble through bad government, or no government at all.

Some govern their families too much -- others not at all. Now I should like to write a book on such a question as this, instead of talking to you for half an hour. It is really dreadful to see; ofttimes the spirit of the whole family government is such as to make a false impression; it is not a Christian government -- a government of love; it is not the firm spirit of God's government; it is either despotism on the one hand, or on the other hand, no government at all. In other cases, there is one half the time too much rigour, and the other half too much laxity.

Let me say again. All the impressions thus made affect the children in connection with religion. If the general impression of your deportment should give them to understand that you are "in God's stead" to them, you cannot conceive the importance of thus early seizing their little minds and will, and bringing them under proper control. Oh! that little will! If unsubdued, what will it cost that child to be converted, if it ever is converted! When parents permit the will to pass unsubdued, their little ones get into such a habit of self-will, as to render it

extremely doubtful whether they will ever bow either to God or man -- to say the least, it will render it far more difficult for them to do so, than it would have been had a contrary course been pursued. When I see children affected to an agony at their position, and still unable fully to yield and come into the kingdom, I always suspect they have never been properly taught to yield to parental authority in their childhood. It is of the utmost importance to take hold of this will, as soon as it develops itself, and hold it as the representative of the Almighty, to exert the first moral influence under God's moral government. Take hold of that little will kindly, and hold it as a sacred trust under God. Hold it by parental authority and love -- so kindly and firmly, that it is, as it were, lost in your will, and controlled by it. Even a look, or a motion of the hand, when understood, should be immediately and willingly obeyed; and by and bye, when it can understand about God, give the whole weight of your will to lead the child's will to submit to God. Did you ever think what a powerful influence you poss? Where the little will from the first has been held under control, and the child is old enough to be talked to about God, bring all your powers to bear upon it, to induce it to yield itself up to God, and you will find yourself, as it were, almost handing it over to God. I could tell you some extraordinary things of the amazing power of parents in this position, and how God uses this influence to accomplish his purposes. You are not to suppose that because your influence is used as a means, that God has nothing to do with it; he has placed you where you are in order to use you. He has stationed you there to watch over the development of that little will, and kindly to control it, so that in due season you may be prepared to hand it over to God through the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

This is the great work which you are sent to do, Fathers! Let your parental heart draw the little one close to it, and let your mind draw the little mind into close connection with it, and let the little will be as far as possible subject to, and guided by your will. Do it with prayer before God, and you need not fear a failure. As soon as the little will can be influenced by religious truth, pour it in with all the weight of your parental authority, and carry that will to God.

A Christian lady once informed me, that she had found her daughter under conviction of sin. "I have so trained her," she said, "from her infancy, that she regards my will as her law; a look from me is enough. I did not at first understand properly my relations to her with reference to her conversion; but as soon as the thought came before my mind, that I could exert a direct and powerful influence in the matter, and that the Spirit of God would use that influence, I took the child with me to my closet, and prayed with her. I there showed her what it was her duty to do with regard to yielding up herself to Christ; I talked and prayed with her, and urged the matter in this light -- 'Now, my child, you never hesitate to obey your mother in other things, and I want you now at once to renounce yourself, and give yourself fully up to Christ." Before they left the closet, she said she had reason to believe that her child had really given herself up to God. Said she, "Never before had I any idea that the Spirit of God would so use this influence." Now mark; this was not any such authority as would *threaten to whip the child!* but that proper parental influence which can carry the little mind with an amazing power; and when the whole weight of this parental influence is concentrated upon the single question of "my child give your heart this moment to Christ," what human influence can be more powerful? And this, of course, is backed up by the word of God, and seconded by the Spirit of God -- all this in addition to that will to which the child has always been accustomed to yield. I have seen the infinite importance of this not only in my own, but in many other families.

Fourthly. Parents are very apt to stumble their children by their temper.

It destroys the confidence of the child in their piety, and causes him to doubt their sincerity; and thus the parent loses all hold on him. Few things more surely and speedily destroy the influence of a parent than to scold them peevishly, or even to speak to them snappishly, and call them hard names. Anything that savours of ill temper has a dreadfully powerful influence in leading the child away from Christ, and counteracting well-meant endeavors.

Fifthly. Parents must be careful to feel and manifest concern for their spiritual welfare; for if they do not, a child at that age cannot be expected to feel a concern for himself.

Suppose a parent felt truly concerned to keep a child out of bad company, he would keep this before the mind of the child -- if concerned for his health he would keep that before the little one, and teach him how to take care of it. It is just the same with anything else of this kind. Now the parent ought to feel and manifest a supreme interest in the child's salvation. Let all your conversation plainly indicate that it is so. Let your children see that health, worldly prospects and everything else must be subordinate to religion. Do these things, and you are beginning right; and by a natural law you can hardly fail to see their early conversion.

Sixthly. Parents often manifest great error, in not seeing to it that their children are punctual and regular at public worship.

I have been in a great many churches, and have known the history of a great many families. Sometimes I have found households, the children of which were both punctual and regular. At chapel you would see, in the pews where some families sat, all the children able to come out always there. Where their parents were there were they. They felt that they were no more expected to absent themselves from chapel when their parents went, than from the dinner table. It was a thing of course; they were not suffered to wander about and absent themselves, their parents not knowing where they went; for where this is suffered parents have little or no religious influence over them. Parents must also guard against laxity with reference to the due observance of the Lord's Day. It is not right to throw up everything into the hands of the sovereignty of God, assuming that that alone will convert them, whatever influence may be brought to bear upon them, than which there is not a greater falsehood; a more damning error never entered the world. It is true other influences may possibly convert the child, and as other influences may save the child in sickness, but no thanks to the parents in either case.

There is another fault of parents which I must notice. They do not take sufficient pains to *render home happy*; and the children not finding friendship and sympathy at home, run about elsewhere in search of it. Their home is not a happy one, and they consequently rove about, and come under bad influences. Now a happy home is one of the principal things at which a parent should aim. The home should be rendered so pleasant that the child would rather remain there than go about. Dear parents! are you aware how often a child's life is embittered by the neglect of this? They must be made happy, and have something to love at home, or they will naturally seek company and happiness somewhere else. Oh! that parents would see the necessity of using this and every other means they can devise to secure and retain their proper influence over the little minds! They ought to feel towards you so that they would sooner tell you than anybody else their little thoughts. Fathers are more apt to neglect this than mothers; children often seem afraid of their fathers, so that they cannot tell him the workings of their little minds. He treats them with a kind of despotism, manifests no interest in their little concerns; and as he does not sympathize with them, they turn to someone else. Thus those whose hearts ought always to run in sympathy with them have shut them out; and what do they do? They turn away and fall under some other influence, and they are gone! How many parents who have had to lament the evil conduct of their children, who, if they could look back might attribute it largely to this! The father has been sharp, has not kept his influence over their little hearts. Oh! how often religious people, and even ministers, have been so busy with other matters, that they have neglected their children in this respect, and have so shut them out, as it were from their hearts, that they have fallen into other hands, and under evil influences.

Now, dear parents, one of the first things God wishes you to do, is to secure and retain the affections and confidence of your children, and to use your influence over them for him. In order to keep their hearts open to you, let yours be open to them. Let them know that if there is any burden on their minds, you will be the very first to sympathize with them. You will surely secure your end if you do so. But, on the contrary, if they are afraid to approach you because you keep them at such a distance, then, if they are not ruined, no thanks to you; and instead of telling you all the temptations and trials they fall into, all their plans, the books they read, -- instead of feeling that in you they have advisers who can and will sympathize with them -- they will manifest the same reserve to you on these matters that you have displayed to them, and you have, therefore, failed in a vital point. I would that time did not so press, for I have ten times more than this to say, but I must pass rapidly on.

Another point I wish to notice is, the evil practice of allowing children to wander about where they will in the evening. Now, if, as I have said, you would make the home what it should be, they would *never want* to do this; they would rather be with you than anywhere; but if you suffer them to go out and keep late hours, they are sure to go in the way of temptation. I have often seen too, the injurious influence of holidays being so numerous and protracted, and of the difference parents make at such times with regard to their controul over the children. They are allowed to do things then, *because* it is a holiday, which you would not permit at other times, and this leads them astray. But I cannot enlarge upon this point just now, time forbids; but the holidays are near, and what will be your influence over them during that period? Parents! think of this.

Once more. Parents should always be wide awake to secure the conversion of their children during revivals of religion. If I had time, I could tell you many remarkable things, which have come under my own observation, connected with families, who have allowed revivals to take place and pass away without endeavoring to turn them to account in this direction. Sometimes the parents

themselves will not enter into these revivals, although they are professors of religion; on the contrary, many speak against them, or cast a slight on something connected with the movement; and thus, as far as their influence is concerned, they shut the children out from blessings they might otherwise probably have received. Other persons, although they do not actually speak against it, yet refrain from entering into the work. They come and go again and again, and while multitudes are blessed they seem never to have taken up the subject, as if they had any personal concern in it. They have never endeavoured to secure a blessing for themselves and their households. They never seem to say, "Oh, is not Christ to visit our family?" They pass it by, and let it go. It is, in fact, just tantamount to this: Christ comes into the neighbourhood, and passes along, but they never invite him into *their* house, and they, with their households, are passed by and remain unblessed. I have inquired into some of these cases, and it has become a matter of remark, that the children often turn out badly; this is true, I believe in eight cases out of ten. I have now before my mind a case in point. Some years back, I spent a short time in Philadelphia, and knew a family that did this. The husband and wife were both professors, but she was a worldly-minded woman. He felt considerably for his children, and I talked with him on the subject several times. He very delicately hinted to me that his wife did not sympathise with the movement, and that the daughters were under her influence, and like-minded with herself, and regarded her opinion in preference to his. Now, mark: I inquired about this family some years after, and what had become of them? One of the daughters had married, and after a year or two eloped from her husband with another man. Some time after the others went in the same direction -- all turned out in a wretched manner. And this is only a specimen of a multitude of cases, which have actually come under my own observation.

It is therefore of the utmost moment that children should be immediately brought to Christ. The parents should say, "Now, Lord Jesus, thou art passing by; do thou have mercy on my children!" If you have hitherto exerted an improper influence, try at once to repair the evil done as well as you can. Do all that lies in your power; set your heart fully on securing the conversion of your children, and do it*now*! Begin at once with all your children, and especially those that have reached an intelligent age; and oh! I beseech you, do not let the Spirit manifest itself in this church and congregation, and you remain at a distance from the work! what do you think the Almighty will say about your family? What do you think he will say if you have not taken precautions to preserve yourselves in the visit of the destroying angel, by sprinkling the blood on the lintels and posts of your doors? Do every thing according to the rule which God has laid down; if you do not, when the destroying angel passes by, what will become of you and your family?

But I cannot continue these remarks to-night. There are thousands of things I might say, but I must reserve them for a future opportunity.

* The first of two Addresses to Christian Parents on their duties and responsibilities in relation to the early conversion of their children.

CHRIST APPEARING AMONG HIS PEOPLE

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A Sermon

Preached on Sunday morning, Dec. 29, 1850

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY

Of Oberlin College, America,

at the Tabernacle, Moorfields.

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"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his wages*, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi iii, v 1-5.

These words were originally spoken by Malachi respecting Christ and John the Baptist. We learn from the New Testament that John the Baptist was the messenger who was sent before the face of the Messiah to prepare the way before him. We find this explained in the third chapter of the Gospel by St.

Matthew, which I read to you at the commencement of the service. John the Baptist was sent before Christ, and Christ was the Lord who suddenly came to his temple; and the things followed his coming that are here spoken of in this passage of scripture -- as also in a great many other passages of scripture. We have here not only a fact announced, but a principle revealed in reference to religion and God's government of men. Christ had a church on earth when he came, but it needed searching and purifying, and he came for the sake of carrying forward this work. In this passage we have a striking illustration of the manner in which Christ deals with his people when ever he comes amongst them to search and purify them.

My present design is to notice the characteristics of a genuine appearing of Christ among the people to revive his work -- the revival of religion among them. There are many other passages of scripture in various parts of the Bible which reveals the same principle. It is said of Christ, you recollect, that when He came his fan was to be in his hand and that he should thoroughly purge his floor, gathering the wheat into his garner, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. It is often of the greatest importance that men should consider well what are the true characteristics of Christ coming among his people -- what are the indications and evidences of it? There are a great many reasons why people should understand how such an appearing may be known, some of which reasons I shall have occasion to point out this morning. Before Christ personally appeared among the Jews he sent his messenger to prepare the way. John the Baptist was sent, you know, to call the attention of the people to the near approach of the Messiah, and to prepare them to receive him. Now this is a principle of the divine government, that when Christ is about to appear to revive his work among His people he sends a messenger to prepare his way. Nay! it is a curious fact that when he comes to judge and to condemn men he often sends them warning -- he sends a messenger to prepare his way, whether he comes in judgment or in mercy: this is a very common thing and has been in all times; when he comes in judgment he warns men in order to put them on their guard, if by any means he may bring them to repentance; and when he comes in mercy he prepares them for such a visitation also -- therefore, in the first instance, when the Lord comes to revive his work, somebody will be stirred up to call the attention of the people to the real condition of things and the necessity for a reformation among them. You will find this to be uniformly the fact, that when Christ is about to appear somebody will be stirred up to consider the spiritual wants of the people, and will do more or less to prepare the way for the coming of Christ by calling the attention of the people to their necessities. Sometimes it will be the pastor of the church, and this will generally be the case, or the leading members of the church, or other instrumentalities, will call the attention of the people to their spiritual wants, and then after this has been done, the Lord will suddenly come to his temple. There is first the seeking after the Lord, then a calling upon his name in earnest supplications for him to revive his work, and then the Lord whom they seek will suddenly come to his temple. The Lord's temple is his true church on earth, of which the temple at Jerusalem was only a type; and doubtless reference is made in this passage to the people of God and not merely to the temple at Jerusalem. In the second verse it is said, "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap." Now what did Christ do when he first appeared amongst men? And here let me say that what he did then he does substantially now under similar circumstances, and for the same reason -- because of the necessity for it; now it is always to be assumed when Christ comes to revive his work that such a revival is needed. But what is implied in such a necessity as a visitation for a revival? There is a great deal implied in the necessity for such a visitation; for this reason, whenever he comes to revive his work in any place there is a great need for it. It implies that there is much that is wrong, and that there is therefore much need for a reformation, -- this is always implied in a reformation of religion. In the first place some are stirred up to see that such things are needed; they look and seek for a reformation and after a time the Lord suddenly comes. "But who shall abide the day of his coming"? What is his object in coming? what will he say? what will he do? "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." Of course then whenever a revival is needed, this may be expected that when Christ comes there will first be a tremendous searching among the people. When he did come what did he do? "Think not," he says, "I am come to bring peace on earth, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-inlaw against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." What did he do? Why he began at the fundamental difficulty; he began by upturning the foundations of their hopes; all their self-righteous expectations. He brought to bear upon them a searching ministry. Observe, by his searching ministry, he threw them into the utmost distress, and agony of mind; he

revealed to them the spirituality of God's law -- of the whole Bible as it then existed; and brought so much truth to bear upon them as to search them out. Now this is what he always does: this is his first work. He must try the metal to see what dross there is in it: he must see what chaff there is with the wheat, and then fan it away. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and gold: he must put them into the fiery furnace, by bringing truth to bear upon them in such a manner, as to purge the dross from the pure gold. But let me say again: in such processes as this, it will very generally be found that certain classes of persons are peculiarly affected. We find in the present case, that Christ took in hand chiefly the Pharisees, the leaders of the church, and in a most unsparing manner searched and tried them; reproved their errors; contradicted them, and turned their false teaching completely upside down. To be sure this greatly offended them; very greatly tried them. But it is easy to see that this must have been the first work with him, for he came to purify the Jewish Church, and he must do this, by teaching them their errors and misconceptions -- their errors of doctrine and their misconceptions of the law of God. Now what he did then, he always does with all churches and all people, when he comes to revive his work; whatever errors and misconceptions they may be labouring under he must set himself to correct. If he find them with superficial views of the spirituality of God's law, he must correct them: if they have superficial views of the depravity of the human heart, they must be corrected -- if they have Antinomian views on the one hand, or legal self-righteous views on the other, they must be corrected. He must cast light on all the dark places, search the nooks and corners; and dispel all errors by the powerful light of truth: this must always be the case. And here let me say, that it is almost always true, that when the church or religion wants reviving in any community, much of the difficulty lies -- when perhaps people are little aware of it -- in their having settled down into some false conception of things, and mistaken their own spiritual state, and have thus betaken themselves, to various forms of error, more or less serious and fatal; so that after all they are not in that state in which Christ wishes them to be, but yet persuade themselves, that they are in a state which is acceptable to God. Now all this must be corrected; consequently when he takes hold of any community, any church, any people, any nation, you will always find that he begins in high places: he will begin among the leaders of Israel; among the heads of the people, and he will give them a terrible searching; he will try their spirits, their teaching, their lives, and he will most severely try them. It is very common -- I have always witnessed it -- for Christ when he comes to revive his work, to begin by trying the ministers themselves; "he will purify the sons of Levi" -- this he always does in all places. Indeed he needs to try them, that they may be instrumental in trying others: he needs to search them, that they be instrumental in searching others. He is going to work by them and through them, and therefore he will first give them a most tremendous sifting and searching; their motives will be searched, all their springs of action will be laid bare, and he will bring them to see their errors, and feel them too. I have many times known such terrible searchings to take possession of even ministers themselves in revivals of religion, that they would for a time almost despair, indeed I have known them quite do so for a time. Now this, I say, may be expected.

But let me say again: when Christ comes, of course, his object is to search out wrong every where and set it right. He will search out the carnal professors of religion. These are divided into various classes. Sometimes there are ambitious persons in the church, who have an ambition to rise in the church -- their ambition takes a religious type. They wish to be highly influential, to be highly respected, to be put forward in the church, and to be held in great esteem; now where there has been such ambition as this, Christ sees it, and will search it out. How often have I seen such persons as these searched out in such a manner as greatly to expose and mortify them. With men who have thus been ambitious, Christ will take such a course, as to shew that they have been spiritually ambitious: if they wanted to be thought very respectable, and be very high and influential in the church -- he will put them down when he comes to revive his work. There is a great deal of this very often in churches, but Christ will surely search it out and destroy it. "Who shall abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Again there are many professors of religion who have a worldly ambition; they want to rise in the world, they are trying to climb into the highest places of society -- they court alliances with families who are on the high places of the earth. Now Christ at his appearing will search out these worldly minded professors, and oftentimes will make terrible revelations of their state of mind. Some have been spiritually proud, or have had a worldly pride, and they will all be searched out. Again: oftentimes when he comes, he will make revelations of character, and reveal the thoughts of many hearts, in a manner that shall be truly terrible and shocking; things shall appear which were not supposed to have any existence: with respect even to religious teachers, things shall come out of such a nature as to shock men, and they will say who would have expected that? Who would have supposed that

such and such things existed? Who would have expected that such a state of things existed, as actually did exist at the time of our Lord's appearing in Judea? What a state of things did his coming reveal! Who would have expected it? And what a stumbling block it must have been to the mass of the nation that all the teachers and leaders of the people should deny that he was Christ; they could not recognize his likeness to the prophetic announcements, which has been made of him, and so they rose to oppose him. Now we say, what a stumbling block this must have been to the great mass of the people, who were accustomed to look up to their teachers as the very best of men, and the most excellent of the earth: for it had come to be said, if any men are religious, the Pharisees are; if any men may hope to be saved, the Pharisees may -- they were regarded by the people as the most excellent of the earth. Now mark! what a stumbling block it must have been to the mass of the nation, that this class of people, almost to a man, rose up to oppose Christ when he came. They did not know him: they would not acknowledge him; they were angry with his preaching, and denounced the searching manner in which he dealt with them. It is always the case now, that just in proportion as people are out of the way in any church, or in any given locality or country, two things will be seen: first, that they do not know it themselves -- they will be blind to their own position; and second, just in proportion as they are out of the way, will they be taken by surprise at Christ's coming. These same indications will be seen more or less, as the state of things more or less resembles those which existed when our Lord was upon earth. If the church are settled down with some Abraham for their father; if they prefer to be the followers of some man or somebody who has stood very high in the Church of God, there will always be certain indications boiling out and revealing themselves, which are not in harmony with the Gospel. Now this is a very striking fact, that oftentimes without being aware of it, people get into such a position as entirely to misapprehend the truth. Again: "the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed," when Christ comes. Now it often comes to pass, that men do not clearly reveal to their fellow creatures the deepest springs of action within them, unless something is done to search them out; but when certain things are done, they will reveal the deepest springs of action within them. Some men, when Christ comes to revive his work, will reveal great spiritual pride and arrogancy. They pretended to be very humble, and very prayerful, and all their deportment before people would seem to tell them that they were really so; but when Christ comes and begins to search them, and calls in question any thing respecting them, they reveal their great spiritual pride, their arrogance, their ambition, their disposition to lord it over God's heritage; or their true spiritual ignorance. "The thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed," now this is often very striking to see; I have witnessed it in a great many cases in times of revival; and precisely similar revelations will be made, when Christ comes to revive his work in any given church or locality. How strongly the deep feelings and springs of action will come out. It will be said of such and such an individual -- "What does he say?" "What, does he say so?" Things so unexpected will come out! Oft times let me say, individuals will be so searched that they will see their own rotten-heartedness, and other people likewise will see it. O! sometimes these revealings are terrible indeed! If I had time, it might be profitable and instructive to relate some of the multitude of facts that I have witnessed in revivals of religion, in illustration of what I am saying: terrible and even shocking things have been brought to light, and always will be under such circumstances. When Christ comes to revive his work, he will bring iniquity to light by searching, preaching, and the power of the Holy Ghost. He will be a swift witness against them; there is no mistake; he "will be a swift witness when he comes to judgment against the sorcerers and against the adulterers." Yes, against the adulterers, for adultery will be brought to light; "and against false swearers;" false swearing will be brought to light; "and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages." Transgressions shall be brought to light; "the widow and the fatherless and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts." Every one of these things is often revealed and brought to light, when Christ comes to revive and purify the sons of Levi! The chaff is to be separated from the wheat; and the dross to be purged away from the gold and silver, and the corn and the metal are to come forth pure. A terrible searching this will be! A time of severe trial and sifting. But after this season of trial is past and things begin to settle down; "they shall offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

But he will not only do this with the church; he will also try the congregation, who are not professors of religion; and will bring a terrible searching to bear upon them, through his ministers, through his church, and by his spirit -- he will bring home conviction to them, so that they shall understand themselves, and know the state of their own hearts!

A few remarks must close what I have to say this morning. In the first place, every one can see by looking closely at it, that these things must be true, of all revivals of religion. Now mark! I am speaking of revivals of religion; of Christ coming to revive his work, as spoken of in the text. Now if religion is to be revived, sin must be put away; if sin is to be put away; there must be a conviction of sin; and if there is to be a conviction of sin, searching must be applied. This must be a first step to a revival of true religion in any community -- for mark! A revival implies a necessity for a revival. If the people are in a declining and luke-warm state, then of course they want a revival, and before they can be revived, things must have a terrible searching. Again: it must be true, as every one can see, that the searching must begin in high places; that there will be, and must be, searching among those who are to be made instrumental in searching others, thus carrying the work forward. Rely upon it, that when any reformation is to be made, it will commence with the ministers; it must be so, for if any change is made for the better, in any church, those, who are to be the instruments of carrying it on, must be prepared for their work. Again: many persons have no just conception of what constitutes a true revival of religion; and so when Christ commences a revival, they begin to be surprised. They often think that such a terrible state of things as is manifested, where such a work is begun is evidence of anything else than the Spirit of Christ among the people. Thus it was when Christ came among the Jews, and therefore, they could not see in Christ a likeness to the Messiah, whom they expected. Now, let me say, it is always so, where people want reviving -- they are surprised, because they are not aware that they are so much out of the way: therefore when such means are adopted, they will say, these are not the kind of means that were needed. Of course, if they knew what they wanted, and if they were aware of their true condition, they would not be in the circumstances in which they are; but they are not aware of their true position, and their real wants. If it was left to them, they would universally do something else, than that which Christ sees is needed. But when they complain of the means which is adopted, and you ask them what they think they want, they cannot tell! They do not apprehend their true position, and their real wants. Therefore Christ always comes and takes them all aback and surprises them. He sees they need reviving, and therefore he searches them by his ministers, whom they will sometimes rise up against, oppose and denounce.

If persons would but consider deeply what is always implied in the necessity for a revival, they would see, that just those means must be used which, if they are in need of a revival, they do not desire, otherwise they would not be in such a state. The difficulty is in their own hearts. Their hearts are wrong. Now if their hearts are wrong, they do not desire that thing which God says they want; consequently when he comes to revive them, he will take such a course as will greatly shock their prejudices, for mark me, if he did not shock their prejudices, he never would revive them; if your prejudices, I say, are never shocked, you will never be revived -- never! Universally to shock prejudice is the very first thing done towards a revival! He universally takes them aback, in order to make them see that they are not going right. This should always be understood, and always counted upon by those who stand upon the watch towers; those who stand upon the high places of Zion, that if they ask Christ to come, he will give them a terrible searching; this is absolutely necessary, and I say should be remembered. I have often had occasion to say to ministers, with whom I have been labouring as an Evangelist, "I fear there is something coming, that will make the ears of the people to tingle; I am afraid there is something that God will search out; take care lest there should be some terrible revelation." Now when pastors know that any evil thing exists, let them apply themselves to search it all as before the light, and bring every soul to repentance. The searching will open men's minds, but let pastors not be afraid; let them stand fast: let them understand that their work is to purify and purge the church from dross and chaff: and in the prosecution of this work, they must expect that those who are at ease in Zion will be afraid and terror will surprise the hypocrites. But these things must be done.

Let me say again; it will often come to pass, of course, indeed uniformly, that where a revival has been commenced, persons who have kept up a fair outside, and deceived people, will then begin to be exceedingly restless and uneasy and will manifest a degree of opposition that from their profession was not to have been expected. A revival of religion will uniformly find out such people as these and bring them to their proper level, and make them understand themselves, and other people also will not fail to understand them. Sometimes I have known the most striking cases of persons ,who, it was supposed, would favor a religious movement, turn very restive, and find fault with this thing and that thing, and with the manner and the matter of this one, and of the other. Now this is to be expected; because if they are out of the way, this will be of course. If such is their condition, their hearts need be broken and searched, and it is not to be expected that this will be gratifying to them, or what they wished for.

Again: persons, who have seen revivals of religion, know what to expect in them, and they don't therefore want a revival. They dread the searching! And why should they not dread it? They are afraid! They may well be afraid. I have known ministers sometimes afraid, either for themselves or some of their people; they dreaded the disclosures of the rotten state of many among them.

But let me say again: impenitent sinners, who have committed crimes and are averse to making restitution, will dread a revival.

Once more; many persons who have hopes in which they have not much confidence, will have their hopes tried. There are many persons hold on to a hope when they can just barely hold on to it; they find it difficult to hold on at all; they have so many doubts and misgivings -- and so much reason to doubt. I am convinced that those doubt most who have the greatest reason to doubt! Cases are very rare in which persons doubt of their hopes, who have not good reason to doubt. Now persons who have hopes in which they have but very little confidence are not willing to have their hopes tried, to have them brought right into the crucible; they will therefore feel wretched when a searching commences, that will be likely to severely try their hopes.

But this leads me to say again: hopes that are really good at the bottom must be tried also. Those whose hopes are good, have need to be tried that whatever is wrong may be removed. Christ therefore brings the fire to bear upon them, and bring their hopes to the proof, and such will come forth from the furnace "rooted and grounded in love." Some have been guilty of crimes; these will be searched out. Perhaps crimes against the law, or against society. Most disgraceful things have sometimes been discovered, and made public, and sometimes the individual has been brought to repentance. Ofttimes when Christ comes to purify, it will appear as if the Church was about to be torn in pieces. I have often seen this myself. Just in proportion as professors of religion get into any false peace, it will seem, when a revival commences, as if everything was going to pieces. Don't be afraid, Christ is at the helm! Don't be afraid, I say of any such result as the church going to pieces; only continue to pray, and put every soul in the crucible, let every soul be thrown in; every one must be tried and searched; hold steadily on, let the fire try and search them to the bottom. It will do the people good.

Once more: ofttimes it will be found in revivals of religion that this will occur in congregations, some will go away; they can't stand it; they won't give up their idols. Some, I say, will go; but generally where one goes, twenty will come! When the minister goes on searching and sifting, it will sometimes produce great changes in a church and congregation; and mark! it is necessary that the worldly element should be put out, and therefore, such changes are necessary. Sometimes I have observed that when the worldly element has got into a church, it diffuses itself like leaven, till almost the whole church becomes possessed with a worldly spirit. Now Christ comes to work the worldly element out; and it is curious what means he will sometimes take to work it out. No matter what outward form it puts on, he will work it out of the church in one way or another; some he will bring to repentance, and he will greatly change the position and relations of others; instead of being high in the estimation of the church, they will become low, and some who are low will be elevated. Views will be changed of the spiritual character of many of the members; some will be greatly mortified; great changes will be introduced. These things, and such things as these may always be expected when Christ comes to revive his work. "He is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Some will fall and some will rise. Great changes will occur, but they will be all for good.

Again: and I hasten to close what I have to say this morning revivals of religion are designed by Christ not only to sift, purify, strengthen, and settle the church; but they are designed also to tell upon impenitent sinners who live around them for Christ works through the church upon the world, consequently, they are sealing times, harvest times, when multitudes are gathered in.

Now, let me ask, my brethren, have you had any indications of Christ's coming to you? Have you found that the Master, whom you sought, has come to his temple? Have you many evidences of Christ's appearing among you? How many of you have been searched? Have you been thrown into the crucible? Have the things that I have briefly noticed, and which are contained in my text, been seen among you? If so, then you know that Christ is in the midst of you.

Once more: ofttimes persons are looking for a revival of religion in an exactly opposite state of things to that which really constitutes a revival of religion. They want Christ to come in such a way as not to disturb anybody they cannot suffer any excitement! No excitement? Can a backslider be reclaimed without being excited? Never! Can a sinner be converted without excitement? No! Never! And no church ought to expect it.

But once more, and then I have done for this morning. Those that cannot abide the day of his coming here, how shall they abide the day of his coming hereafter? If

you do not expect his coming or do not profit by it, or cannot stand the searching, cannot abide his coming to promote a revival of religion, what will you do when he comes to judgment? If you cannot bear the searching light of truth here, O what will you do when you stand unveiled in the presence of the solemn judgment under the blaze of that glory, from which the seraphim turn their faces, and cover them with their wings?

THE INFINITE WORTH OF THE SOUL

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DEC. 22, 1850

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY

(OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, U. S.)

At the Tabernacle, Moorfields, London

"For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" MARK VIII. 36

I HEARD of this text being proposed once to a great man who was celebrated as an accountant, but who was neglecting his soul. A friend of his stepped into his counting house with this important question for him to solve, as a question of loss or gain. "Is it not a question in which you yourself are vitally concerned? If it were not," said the friend, "I would not thrust it upon you." It was said to be instrumental in the conversion of that important personage's soul. In further remarking upon this subject I propose,

I. To notice the worth of the soul.

II. That nothing can be really good to a man who loses his soul.

III. That whatever he may gain, if he lose his soul, everything else will be but a curse to him.

Instead of gaining anything, if he lose his soul, even were it "the whole world," it would be of no great value, on the contrary, it would be a great curse. But how shall I speak of the worth of the soul? There is no question on which I ever attempt to speak, which makes me feel so much at a loss, and that not because there is nothing to say, but because there is so much to say; not because the subject is void of interest, but because it is in itself so surpassingly great, so infinite, that I always approach it with the fear of belittling it, rather than at all giving or having anything like an adequate conception of it. Indeed the text which I have read tonight is one that I always feel that I dare not preach upon. I never did preach upon it in all my life; because, as I have said, it always seemed to me that all I could say would only belittle the subject, so far does the value of the soul surpass all human conception. There are nevertheless certain things which, if a man will take the trouble to amplify, will enable him to form a much clearer conception of the subject than he otherwise would.

But let me say, to begin with, that it is admitted by all men that happiness is a good in itself--a thing desirable for its own sake. All moral agents everywhere regard it as a thing desirable for its own sake. This is a primary truth which everybody assumes, and consequently everybody at all times and in all places are seeking for it in one way or another. Enjoyment is what they are seeking; the desire after this, and the reckoning upon it as an ultimate good, is the main spring of human activity. Again, misery is regarded, by all men as an ultimate evil--a thing to be avoided for its own sake. These two things stand in direct contrast in men's minds by a natural law. About these things there is--there can be no dispute. Everybody assumes them to be true, and therefore, everybody seeks to secure the one and avoid the other.

In the next place of course, everyone knows, who has a human soul, that it is susceptible of both these--that it is capable of both happiness and misery. By most men, the immortality of the soul is admitted. It seems indeed to be a truth known to men to the necessity of their own nature; they never doubt it, unless they begin to speculate as to the truth of that which they know by their own nature. When they do this, they call into question things, which they are so created as naturally to affirm and believe; the immortality of the human soul seems to be one of these things. So strongly do they assume this, that very few cases are recorded in which men on their death beds have believed themselves to be about to pass into a state of annihilation; there have, however, been some few cases of this; but, mark me, this is not the unsophisticated language of nature itself. Those who have not sophisticated themselves by doing violence to their own intelligence, have, by one of its natural laws, the belief that the soul is immortal. Go to the savage child of the forest! He believes that after death, he will go into a region of boundless hunting grounds comprising, to him, every element necessary to constitute a state of felicity; he has thus an idea of his own immortality and of the immortality of the souls of all men. More than this, the Bible abundantly and clearly

teaches it, but I have not time to go into this department of the subject. As a Christian congregation, I shall assume that you believe it, and shall therefore content myself with taking up a few points to induce you to contemplate, as well as the shortness of the time permits, the infinite and incomprehensible value of the human soul.

The soul's capacity for enjoying happiness or enduring misery, must be an ever increasing one; thus it is able to enjoy or suffer more as it progresses in existence; this also, is a thing which we very well understand and know to be true. Now there is no doubt that men are capable of enjoying or suffering much more than mere animals, or that adult persons are more capable of enjoying or suffering than little children. We know from our own consciousness and observation that it is a law of intelligent mind that their capacity for happiness or misery is a continually increasing capacity. The infant has very limited sources of enjoyment; all seems physical; its evil is bodily pain, and at first, it knows nothing whatever of pain connected with thought of remorse on the one hand, or of pleasure on the other arising out of remembrances. It is like a little animal--the gratification of its appetites produces pleasure, while physical pain of course produces misery; but as its mind develops, sources of pain and pleasure multiply continually. As soon as it comes to have thoughts, from its very nature these thoughts are the cause of pain or pleasure. Just as the intellect develops itself in all its departments, sources of happiness are thrown open; the capacity for enjoyment is enlarged on the one hand and for misery on the other. The little one comes by and bye to know his parents and those around him, and the smile of his mother is the source of happiness, while her frowns are productive of misery. Everything with which it becomes acquainted opens up new sources of pleasurable or of miserable emotions; just in proportion as it progresses in knowledge, these sources are multiplied. If virtuous, his increase of knowledge enlarges his happiness; the very laws of his own mind--the lecture as it were, which God has inscribed within him increase his enjoyments; and just in proportion as he avails himself of these means, his capacity for enjoyment becomes greater and greater. Perhaps he is converted while yet a mere child, and grows up knowing more and more of God and his government as he proceeds, till at length he launches into the eternal world; onward and onward he goes, learning more and more of everything which can increase his enjoyment, and increases in his capacity for enjoyment forever and forever.

But mark; the Bible informs us that men's happiness or misery shall be *unmixed* in a future world; that is, if persons are happy at all in a future world, they will be perfectly so. It will not be a mixed condition as it is here; there, happiness will be unmixed, complete, ever growing, and just so will it be with the misery of those who abuse God here--their misery will be unmixed and eternally increasing. To the one there remains no more misery--to the other no more enjoyment.

But again, this enjoyment or misery must, from the nature of the case, be ever increasing in all respects. First, it increases in *quantity* by reason of its continuance. Supposing the degree to remain stationary--that the individual got no more misery or happiness to all eternity--yet the *amount* would be constantly increasing from the very fact of its continuance by the law of mind, to which I have adverted, and from the nature of the case. Secondly, the degree of either happiness or misery becomes the means of producing happiness on the one hand, and misery on the other. Constantly accumulating knowledge will constantly increase happiness. Happiness or misery must constantly increase as the capacity of enjoyment or suffering is perpetually increasing. This is the inevitable result of a natural law. The mind must have new thoughts continually--it must know more of holiness and the nature of sin, and of all the reasons which forbid the one and promote the other, and thus, of course, the misery will increase with an increasing consciousness of guilt. But I need not dwell on this part of my subject.

Reflect a little, and endeavour to form some kind of conception of *what endless duration is*. Look right at it, for a moment, and try to attain to some comprehension of the infinite value of the immortal soul. It is to live to all eternity; it is to increase in happiness or misery forever and forever, there is to be no termination to this increase; it must be so by a law of nature. It is therefore easy to see that a period must arrive when every one of all the moral agents in God's universe will have either suffered or enjoyed more than all the universe have done together up to this present moment! Suppose tonight it could be computed how much happiness has been enjoyed by all God's creatures from the first moment of their existence to the present; the amount of course, would be great--utterly inconceivable to us; it is beyond our conception and we cannot conceive a bound to it; but yet, as the happiness of each soul is, as we have seen, incessantly increasing, a period therefore, must naturally arrive when the aggregate of its single enjoyment shall be equal to all that has yet

been enjoyed in God's whole universe. But even this is but the beginning.

In fact, this is not all; the period will also arrive when each individual shall have enjoyed a hundred, and a hundred thousand times more than all the universe has enjoyed up to the present moment. Go right on from here; the time must come when every individual who is happy, will have enjoyed myriads and myriads of times more than the highest arithmetic in the universe can calculate; for, observe, it is ever increasing, and if it increases ever so slowly, what then?

Suppose a being is to be employed in removing the entire universe of matter by a single grain of sand at a time. Let him take only a single grain in a thousand years, occupy another thousand in his journey, another thousand there, another in the journey back, and after the expiration of a fifth thousand set off with another grain, till he has thus removed the whole of the globe on which we live. Let him take a million instead of a thousand years, and add to this globe the whole of the material universe, still an immortal being could do it, there is plenty of time to do it. Every one of you, remember, must live long enough to do this again and again, and yet be no nearer the end of your existence--*you will even then not have a moment the less to live!* All this time you will be either perfectly happy or perfectly miserable.

It is easy to see, moreover, that the time must arrive, when each one of God's creatures now existing shall know more, have more experience than all the universe of creatures yet have had. Every moral agent in the universe, at some moment of his existence, will be capable of more enjoyment, or of suffering greater misery, than all the universe of creatures are now capable of enjoying or suffering. Think of that! Just think of a mind whose capacity for enjoyment knows no bounds, and the law of which is everlasting development! Look at such a soul as that! What? Fixed under an unalterable law of everlasting development, running on and on as long as the Almighty Creator exists! Just think of the infinite and utterly incomprehensible value of a soul so constituted--capable of an amount of joy or sorrow so utterly outstripping all finite conception!

Suppose we take any child that is here tonight; when that child has gone forward so far in existence, that he has absolutely enjoyed or suffered more than all the creation of God has done up to this time, why he has not got one particle the less to enjoy or suffer than when he began; he is not the slightest possible particle nearer the close of it than at the earliest moment. Suppose he is happy, the time will come when he will know more of God, and have more experience of his government--when he will have lived longer than the entire created universe now has--and when he can look round and say, "my age is now greater than the aggregate age of all God's creatures previous to my birth; I am older, have more experience, have enjoyed more than all had before I was buried." What then? Why he will live on and on, and on and on till he has enjoyed myriads and myriads of times more and more and more until all finite conception is overwhelmed and swallowed up. But has he any the less to live or enjoy after all this? Oh, no! Why he has only begun, and he is no nearer the end of his existence than at the very first moment, for it has no end; he rolls onward and onward and onward on the tops of the waves of eternal life.

But reverse the picture. Shall we dare to look upon it? The period will arrive when, if unhappy, you will be able to say, "I have known more sorrow, remorse, bitterness, and agony than all the creatures in God's universe had when I came here." What then? Let him go on and multiply this to any possible extent till he can say, "Why no creature, that existed when I began to suffer, could then have conceived of the amount of misery that I have now suffered, and yet, I am no nearer the termination than when I first came here." Indeed the mind is wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of so incomprehensible a subject. Who can understand or conceive anything of eternal existence?--of what it is, to roll on and on, through an endless cycle of years, in happiness or misery, with a mind capable of the keenest enjoyment and of the most intense anguish forever and forever. Individual capacities in this world are extremely diversified; take for example that little child; it weeps, but while the tears stand on its little cheeks, its mother smiles, wipes them away, and it drops quietly to sleep. By and bye, it grows up and becomes a philosopher, it has read, studied, thought, and violated the law of God. Now remorse begins, but he wanders on in error and crime, and ascends the heights of science, as Byron did, looking down from those heights with a kind of disdain upon the ignorant multitudes beneath him. But the more he knows and the more he has abused his knowledge, the greater is his capacity for misery, till by and bye, although he sits on a high elevation of knowledge, he is racked with the keenest agony--an agony which an ignorant mind knows nothing about. There are opened in his bosom springs of the most intense misery, with which, in his earliest years he was perfectly unacquainted. Every step in the scale of intellectual development has only opened up the floodgates of wretchedness upon his soul. See him

grow pale and wretched, till at length he curses the hour which brought him into existence. But if he could only escape from his own recollection--if he could only escape from the gaze of his murdered hours, opportunities neglected--what a blessing it would be to him! But mark, there they all stare at him--all his sins, his talents and acquirements troop around him to be his tormentors forever and forever.

But I pass in the next place to say, that nothing can be a real good to a man who loses his own soul. Happiness is the ultimate good, as everybody knows and admits, and all things are valuable to us in proportion as they contribute to this result. If we are deprived of happiness, nothing can be a real good to us. Anything which cannot be made subservient to our happiness is of no value to us. That, which men at present look upon as a good, they will ultimately see, from their present abuse, has become a curse; for the misery of a state of future punishment must be unmixed; their existence will therefore be an unmingled curse.

This leads me to say again, that everything man may gain, if they lose their souls, must be a curse. Their very existence will be a curse,--their knowledge will be a curse. The less knowledge the better; even should they be deprived of consciousness altogether, it would be an infinitely less evil than the retention of it. Every gift they abuse will be an ultimate evil. When they remember their comforts in the midst of their misery, will it not tend to increase their unhappiness? Every enjoyment they have had will be an ultimate source of increasing anguish. Sinners, for example, who abuse the gifts of Providence, will have to suffer for it in this sense--God will call them into account for every one of them. God ought to do this. If they have had temporal enjoyments here, the very recollection of them will be a source of additional suffering there. It is therefore madness to neglect the soul for anything else. If the soul is saved it matters not what else is lost; for after all, the soul and its enjoyments is the only thing of real value. If the soul is saved, what matters it what is lost in securing it?

Let me speak to the poorest man in this assembly--you look perhaps on the riches and luxury of those above you in society. You, perhaps, envy their enjoyments; but have you reason to do so? Look at this; suppose that your soul is saved, what will it matter to you a thousand years hence, whether the few days you live here, you were rich or poor? You can look back, perhaps saying, "When I lived in London I was very poor, and had to work very hard, and sometimes did not know how to provide for the wants of my family." But would you then regard those sufferings as an evil? No, indeed; you would see they had all been for your benefit; your soul was saved, which secured you all conceivable and all possible good: but if, on the contrary, your soul had been lost, what would it matter if you had literally gained the entire world? If your soul is lost, of what use can anything else be to you? Banished from the presence of the Almighty and the glory of his power, how could you enjoy anything? The moment you die, you have received all your good, if you have lost your soul, and all the rest is unmitigated and unmingled evil.

But let me say once more, the salvation of his soul is the great business of a man's life; his great errand in this world is to secure his own salvation and that of as many as he can. Why, who does not know this--than as eternity is longer than time, in just so much is the soul more valuable than all that relates to this world. In short, nothing is valuable except insofar as it contributes to this end; and everything ought to be made subservient to this, but what is perverted is worse to us a great deal than if we never possessed it. To seek present enjoyment then, even if it were perfect, at the expense of our soul, were infinite madness. But *perfect* enjoyment in this life is an utter impossibility. Oh! sinner, suppose you live two hundred years; and suppose, moreover, that your enjoyment actually is perfect, if you lose your soul, what an infinite loss it would be; for this enjoyment, if abused in sin, must be more than compensated for by a proportionate addition to your future misery. The very breath you breathe, if you breathe it out in opposition to God, and die in your sins, will be charged against you in God's account. If you are abusing the blessings you possess, you had better far have been without them.

Again, suppose you should submit to the greatest possible earthly trials and privations, so as to deny yourself every earthly good for 200 years, what then? Suppose you spent the whole of the time in the most entire and universal self-denial--nay, suppose you had hung upon the cross in all the agonies of crucifixion--suppose you should remain there till the end of time, what then? How much more than compensated would you be by the retrospect in a state of everlasting felicity? For the joy which is set before you, can you not afford to endure the cross and despise the shame? When quite a young convert, I remember being very much struck by a resolution of President Edwards, which was to the effect, that all his conduct should have respect to the whole of his existence taken together, and that he would decide the propriety of any course by regarding it in view of his endless being. It struck me at the time as a resolution worthy of a child of God. How shall I regard my conduct ten thousand years hence, when I have grown so old that the universe has passed away with a

great noise rolling up like a scroll--when the sun has gone out, and the material universe is scarcely remembered--how shall I regard it then? Suppose that the virtuous were completely miserable, and that the sinful were completely happy in this world; and that this life were to continue not only while it will, but to be extended for as many myriads of ages as it is possible to conceive of, still men would be infinitely mad to choose present happiness and future misery. But it is not so--it cannot be so--the man who fears God enjoys indefinitely more, even here, than the sinner; for "the way of transgressors is hard." How much there is to embitter every day and hour of his existence. Ah! how little real enjoyment has a wicked man, even in this life! Poor creature! And is this the best he is ever to have? Oh yes, this is the best, poor as it is, and mingled as it is with bitterness! What infinite madness! There is no profit at all; it is only an appearance of profit for a few moments--a feverish excitement which will react and render the misery the greater.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say, and the first remark is this--how little men think of the infinite value of the human soul and what eternal life and death is! How little is this realized, even by those who profess to believe the Bible! Now is it not one of the greatest of *all* wonders, that men so generally admit that this life is short, and that it may close at any moment, they know not when; and yet, with this admission on their lips, that if they die in their sins they must lose their souls, and that they are liable to die in their sins at any moment--that they must exist to all eternity--and yet, infinitely strange to say! where can there be any such thing found in the universe? what so infinitely wonderful, as the little thought men give to the value of their souls? I have sometimes been obliged to turn my mind away from a thought so horrible, or it might have absolutely thrown my intellect off its balance. I have set my children before me, and reflected on their destiny, till I have said to myself, that if I should see one of them die in their sins, I should die myself immediately. What! The thought of one of my children losing his soul! It seems to swallow up everything else, and nothing seems to be of any importance in comparison with it. If their souls are saved, what else need they care for? I have often thought of how little consequence it was to lay up money for them. I have always let my children understand that, from the nature of my occupation, I have no money to leave them. I have told them that I have no desire to do so. I have given them as good an education as I could, and all I desire for them, is, that they may save their own souls, and the souls of others. To give them worldly goods, except with a view to extend their spiritual usefulness, always seemed to me to be the extreme of madness.

In looking at the anxiety of Christian parents to lay up money for their children, we see how much influence their conduct has in making their little ones worldly-minded--they come to think a great deal of wealth, station in society, the things of time, and almost nothing of eternity. When I have thought of that, I have asked myself thousands of times, "Can these parents believe that their children are immortal?" Is it possible that if they do believe it, that they love them? Is it possible they believe the affirmations of Scripture, and yet pay so much attention to their temporal, so little to their spiritual welfare?

For example: the Bible represents this world's good as a most ensnaring thing and that it is an extremely difficult matter for a rich man to be saved; it everywhere warns men against efforts to enrich themselves and their offspring; but I have remarked that very many persons act as if the exact opposite of this had been declared in the Bible--as if it had said that prosperity in this world was essential to eternal life. The good things of this world are not, however, to be despised; but when they are allowed to stand in the way of securing the salvation of the soul, the madness is absolutely infinite.

Let me now address myself to such of my hearers as sustain the parental relation;--my dear friends, how have you regarded this subject in relation to your own children? How important it is that you should estimate rightly the value of your children's souls--that you should appreciate the dangers of their position, and the duties of yours;--if these things were rightly considered, they would set your hearts on fire with zeal to secure their salvation. Once more. Let me remark how infinitely different God's judgment is from ours. We call those happy who are wise to get money, and who are successful in the acquisition of it, and you envy those who rise in rank and station. Ah! the penetration of such is not very deep. How infinitely different will you think of it a few years hence! when the curtain drops and you depart, less than a single hours experience in eternity will convince you which would have been the best for you.

Suppose the spirits of those who have gone before you could appear to you in the flesh and communicate with you, what a tale would they unfold! But the veil between time and eternity has been drawn down closely. All that we absolutely need to know has been revealed to us; and if he receive not Moses and the prophets, neither should we one risen from the dead; for if you reject God's testimony, you will have infinitely more reason to

reject the testimony of one from the dead. Sinner! *how long* do you mean to neglect your soul? You don't *always* mean to neglect it. Ah! there is the stumbling block. I greatly fear for you. Suppose we should go tonight to one of the wretched inhabitants of hell and enquire, how came you here? "Procrastination was my ruin. I intended to repent; I never meant to die in my sins; but ah! in the midst of this I was cut off." Oh sinner, will you not attend to your soul now? Do you say you "Can't do it tonight?"

But you *can* do it tonight; for God would not command you to do it now if it were not in your power to obey him. But you do not in your heart believe your own objection. Suppose an individual were just now to have a direct revelation that he was about to die, and suppose that he should stand up and appeal to me as to what he should do--suppose also that I should reply, "Oh! it is too late now; you have not time!," would you not all rise up and exclaim, "He can! He can! He can!" And will you tempt God by making an excuse which you don't believe yourself? Suppose anybody should attempt to hire you on oath not to attend to your soul till after a certain period? How much would you ask, sinner? Why you would think it was the devil himself, if a man should come and propose such a thing to you.

I recollect a case of this kind, in which a sinner absolutely did hire another in this way. The sum was three dollars, and the man engaged not to attend to his soul for a given period. He took the money. The donor of it was a stranger, and he bethought himself, after he was gone, that it must have been the Devil in human shape. "Have I not sold my soul?" at length he cried out; and he cast the money away in the bitterest agony. Well might he feel shocked. You would be shocked if anyone were to make you such an offer. But Satan will not shock you; he will let you slide and slide along and along, while the unseen hand of death is preparing to toll your knell! Perhaps he is watching to see whether he cannot persuade you not to attend to it just now, and eagerly looking to see whether you go home tonight neglecting it, and what else you will attend to first. What is there of which you can say, "Oh God, I must do this first?" Sinner! have you gone thus far along the path of life and neglected your soul till now? And shall this warning also pass unheeded?

But let me conclude by addressing a few practical remarks to the unconverted. Now, sinner, are you not afraid to go on in your sins? If you put it off tonight, tomorrow evening you will not be at the prayer meeting, but somewhere else; and next Sunday perhaps, you will not go to a place of worship at all. A father once, in writing to his son about a certain habit which he had contracted, after expostulating with him at some length, broke suddenly off," But enough, enough, I know I shall not ask you in vain; and I will therefore urge the matter no further, lest my doing so should appear a want of confidence in your love." And shall God appeal to you in vain? Where is your sense of right? of honor? or of duty?

Oh, sinner! I am ashamed to be obliged to present so many considerations! Am I surrounded by reasonable beings who know the relations to God? Am I standing here for an hour and a half to persuade you by an array of motives which would sweep away every thing but a rock, to lead you to repentance? Might I not blush that I am a man, if I have thus to plead with you, or in fact, to suggest any other motive for your repentance beyond the fact that your not doing so is an infinite wrong to the Almighty?

Come to Christ, and say, "Oh, Jesus! thou hast bought me, I will be thine. Thou hast died for me, and purchased my life; and shall the life which thou has redeemed be given to Satan? No! no! as I am a man. No! as I have an immortal soul. No! as I belong to the government of God. No! as I hope for salvation. No! I dread to displease God, and desire to please my Saviour. Heaven beareth witness that I renounce my sins; and let God write it in heaven." Are you not ready? Why not? Make up your minds now and forever, right here on the spot, in the house of God where the angels wait to tell the story, where the Holy Spirit breathes upon the people. What say you sinner, are you willing to convert over from Satan to God?

You must decide *now*, one way or the other; and if we could see what infinite consequences, in respect to persons here, are turning on that decision, methinks the congregation would wail out with agony to see what destinies are trembling on this momentous point! See that needle, trembling on its pivot! It must, when it settles, point either one way or the other to heaven or to hell. Sinner! such is your destiny. What do you say?

PURITY OF HEART AND LIFE

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1850

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

"I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord."--PS.xxvi. 6

In remarking upon these words, I propose to inquire--

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE PSALMIST?

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN KEEPING THAT RESOLUTION?

III. I SHALL SHOW, THAT BOTH THE RESOLUTION AND THE KEEPING IT ARE INDISPENSABLE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

I. Inquire, *What is implied in the resolution of the Psalmist?*

We find the Psalmist among many other striking sayings forming and expressing such a resolution as this to God. I will read the connection in which this resolution occurs--" Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity." Here you see, he invites God himself to sit in judgment upon his uprightness. "I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore, I shall not slide. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." What a laying open of himself! What an unbosoming of himself before God! "For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers." He did not sit down with vain persons, neither would he associate himself with those who dissembled before God. "I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked." By *sit*, here, is to be understood to mean *associate* with, to be on familiar terms, so as to imply fellowship with them. Then follows the language of the text--" I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord."

It is very plain, from the connection in which these words stand, that this resolution implies, first, *an apprehension of the holiness of God; the absolute purity of his character*. The Psalmist, undoubtedly, clearly saw this; because to form such a resolution as this in any proper sense, always implies that the mind perceives the holiness and purity of God's character, and understands it. Why should he form a resolution to cleanse his hands in innocency, unless he saw that it was an absolutely indispensable condition of approaching God! I remark again. It implies also a perception of the condition upon which we may approach him--upon which he will allow us to come into his presence. Doubtless, the Psalmist, not only had a conception of God's holiness, but that God required him to be holy, pure, sincere, upright, in approaching him--to have "clean hands," as the Psalmist here expresses it, if he expected to have any fellowship with God. It is worthy of remark, that the Psalmist says, that he had no fellowship with wickedness, that he did not sit with vain persons himself, that he did not go in with dissemblers himself; that he had nothing to do with mockers; and it would be very curious if he should say this of himself, and yet suppose that God would have anything to do with dissemblers, pretenders, mockers! The Psalmist felt that these things would be required of him, and that they became him; that if he would approach unto God, he must be able to say what he did say. Now if he himself refused to sit with the wicked, and to have fellowship with dissemblers; could he expect that God would accept such, and allow them to have fellowship with him? Doubtless, he had a very clear perception of the holiness of God's character, for his resolution shows that he had been so contemplating it; and says also very plainly the real condition on which he could approach God and find access to him, and acceptance with him. Contemplating the holiness and purity of God, he mentions these several things as he seems to come nearer and nearer to God. As one after the other they seemed to loom up before his mind, he saw clearly that such things must be the conditions of an infinitely holy God accepting him. He would not accept the wicked himself. Would God then accept him if he went in with the wicked, and associated with dissemblers! He saw clearly that God could not accept him if he came with vile hands!

I remark again: this resolution implies, not only that he perceived the holiness of God, and the condition upon which he might have communion with him, and be accepted of him, but it implies also that he fervently desired communion with God's purity, with God's holiness; with God himself. It shows that he himself wanted to draw near to God; he viewed God's purity, so that it instead of driving him away from the throne of grace, had the effect of drawing him to it. His most anxious desire was to come very near to God, and crowd right up to his throne of grace, or why should he express himself as wishing to compass the altar of God, and declaring his intention to wash his hands in innocency, that he might be accepted of him.

It implies also that he was perfectly willing to give up everything that was inconsistent with approaching God in this way. He resolved to cleanse his hands, to wash them in innocency, and in this particular manner would he compass God's altar. Now observe, he saw the conditions, and was willing to fulfil them. He saw what God must, from his own nature naturally require of those that would come near to him--that they must come with clean hands, that he could not receive dissemblers, if they would not leave their sins behind them they could not approach the altar of God; but if they would leave their sins they might approach and find forgiveness--if they would bring their sins they must not come in. Every soul may come into his presence, and approach him, but they must not bring their sins with them, if they do, they cannot be received. The Psalmist saw this, and he resolved to do it.

Again, it implies, of course, renunciation of all sin. He designed to approach God with clean hands. But observe, persons cannot approach God with clean hands, in the sense that they never have sinned, but in the sense that they are resolved to renounce all iniquity for the time to come.

Once more, the resolution implies a solemn pledge of universal obedience to God. "I will wash mine hands in innocency;" implies, I say, the idea of universal obedience to God.

II. But I inquire in the next place, *What is implied in keeping such a resolution as this?*

If the resolution is a mere feeling, it is not a proper resolution at all; nor if it is a mere wish, a mere desire; it must be a purpose of the mind, and a determination of the heart. But let me ask what is implied in keeping this resolution! The resolution is, "I will wash mine hands in innocency." As is usual in the scriptures, an inward state of mind is expressed by an outward act--washing or cleansing the hands. "I will wash mine hands in innocency." Now, certainly, he did not mean to say literally that he could simply wash his hands, but his heart. Washing the hands, in this case, doubtless implies in the very first place--I will put iniquity away from my heart--I will renounce the spirit of self-seeking altogether--renounce from my deepest heart, every form of sin and iniquity- renounce sin as sin, and iniquity as iniquity. And here it should be remembered, that it is not enough for an individual to renounce *one* sin or one form of sin, but *all* sin and every form of sin--at least for the time being. Everybody can see that the mind cannot reject *one* sin, because it is sin; cannot put it away because of that particular quality--sin; and yet cherish some other form of sin--no man can put away one sin, as sin, without at the same time putting away *all* sin of every form and degree. The keeping of the resolution then, implies, that no iniquity shall be left, but that all shall be put away. Do you suppose that the Psalmist confined his idea to any outward act, and meant to say that he would simply reform his outward life in certain respects? Would that be to wash his hands in innocency? What say you? If he had put away *great* frauds, and retained *little* ones? If he had put away forgery, but retained little petty thefts in his business transactions? Would that have been to wash his hands in innocency? Judge ye! If a man paid his debts to save his reputation, and yet took a penny out of every person's hand who came into his shop, would that be to wash his hands in innocency? Suppose that a man kept his word in great matters which would entirely come out before the public, but should keep all his affairs in such a position as to mislead the public; or should put an article in the window, marked such a price, and when people came in, should not sell that, but an inferior article at the same price? Would that be to wash the hands in innocency? Now, suppose I had time to go over all these little tricks with which the business world is so full, should we not see a great deal to condemn? and should we not see a very little washing the hands in innocency? We look into business transactions and we see cheating, over-reaching, pulling and grasping on all sides. The resolution then to wash the hands in innocency, implies that there shall be no stain, no sin left, none of your tricks, none of your management, none of your little petty actions in palming off goods for what they are not--no sin whether in heart or life.

Let me say again: the keeping the resolution to wash the hands in innocency, undoubtedly implies also, repentance for past sin, for unless persons repent of past sin, they do not cease from present sin--that is certain. Now suppose that a man breaks off from any actions which he formerly practiced, but does not repent of them, what does he do? Why, he continues to cleave to the iniquity still! He does not show it in his outward actions, but not having repented of it, it festers in his heart; it is like a fire covered up, there it is, although it does not for a while gush out--the iniquity is there, though it does not bubble up. If there is no repentance, there is no washing the hands in innocency. But let me say again: the keeping the resolution to cleanse the heart, implies further. Self-examination in the light of the rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the rule that God has laid down--" Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thou shalt regard his interests as thine own; thou shalt

regard his feelings as thine own; thou shalt regard his reputation as thine own. Now observe, of course, the keeping of the resolution to cleanse the hands, implies that the mind looks at the rule in view of which the hands are to be washed, the life and the heart purified. Here is the standard! No other standard than this is God's standard! Now observe--unless the mind looks at that, it will never renounce sin. A man therefore, who would approach God with his hands cleansed, must ask himself, have I done, or am I doing, in all things, as I would wish to be done by? Such a man requested a favour of me! Did I grant it, as I should have desired him to grant it had I been the petitioner? Did I grant it, as I might reasonably have expected of him? I dealt with such a man, did I deal with him just as I would have him deal with me? Such a man wanted money, I had some, did I let him have it just as I could have expected or wished him to let me have it, had I been placed in his circumstances? Such a man's character was assailed in my hearing, did I seek to vindicate his character, just as I would have had him do in reference to mine? I heard a story about him that I did not believe was true, did I deny it and resent it, as I would had it been told about myself? Did I feel for his character as I should have done about my own? Such a man is in difficulty, do I sympathise with his as I should wish him to sympathise with me if I were in his condition? Ah, I wish I had time to enter into many of these things in the sight of this rule, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." If we were to take this rule and set it before ourselves, and then go into the various business affairs of life, we should see a vast number of things that require amendment. Let me urge each one of you to take this rule, and see wherein you have transgressed it, and say, I must repent of all these things, which are not merely transgressions of human laws, but of the perfect law of God. I must repent of these things, and what is more, I must, as far as possible, set about making restitution. There is no honest repentance without this. Suppose a man were to rob you of a hundred pounds, and then say, "I am very sorry," but nevertheless keep the money, what would you think of his repentance? Would that be to wash his hands in innocency? Suppose a man has slandered you, spoken evil of you, or has connived at others speaking evil of you, and when he has learned the truth, refuses to confess it to those whom he has misled,--is that to wash his hands in innocency as becomes an honest man? You know very well that there is no more honesty in him than there is in the devil! Who does not see that this must be true? But you may say, is he not honest in reference to other things? I answer, no! What does Jesus Christ say himself? "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." The man that is unjust in the least, is universally unjust; he is not thoroughly honest in anything. Let me illustrate this. Suppose a man pays his notes to the bank, but behind his counter will take advantage of his customers in the matter of a few pence, will cheat every man that comes into his shop, as far as he can without danger to his business character. He is continually putting out his feelers, like a snail, to see how far he can go without danger to his reputation among men--is that man an honest man? No! there is not a particle of honesty about him: he is selfish and sinful from beginning to end! He pays his notes into the bank! Why? His business character would be ruined if he did not, and he would become a bankrupt. But go into his shop to make a purchase, and he will cheat you if he can. Is that an honest man because he pays his notes to the bank? No! There is not a particle of honesty in him. Now let me say; these are very practical ideas, and of great importance to be considered in a city like this.

I remark again: I said that the keeping of this resolution implies confession and restitution. Observe what is the rule by which confession and restitution is to be made; the golden rule--"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Now observe, it ought to be universally known that confession must be made to the injured for the wrongs inflicted. Here let me make a difference which it seems necessary to make, between this confession and the confession insisted on by the Roman Catholics. They make a priest the depository of all confessions, but I speak now of making confession to the person who has been injured. Suppose you have slandered another, you ought to confess to him, or to the person whom you have misled, by your statement concerning him. Such a confession is demanded by justice and our duty towards our neighbours. And it is self-evident that such a confession as this is demanded by God, who has said, "he that covereth his sin shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall obtain mercy." And again, "confess your faults one to another that ye may be healed."

But let me say again: a keeping of this resolution implies a taking up of the stumbling blocks, and a making everything right as if preparing for the judgment. Just suppose that we knew, that in one week the judgment was to sit and all the preparation we should be permitted to make must be made in that space of time! Would you not at once be thoroughly upright and honest? Well you must be as honest now as you would be then! To be sure, I do not say that you must take the same course now as you would then, in all respects, for if you knew that the affairs of the world were so soon to

be wound up, you would not think it necessary to continue your worldly business any longer; and many other things that you ought now to do would not be needful then; but the keeping of this resolution implies that you be as thoroughly upright and honest now as you would be then, in making confession, and as far as possible, restitution. We must remove all stumbling blocks out of the way. Suppose we look around us and see sundry things which offend, and hinder the salvation of our fellow men, what must we do? What does Christ say? "When thou bringest thy gift to the alter, and rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift; first go and be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." Do not offer it, for if you do it will not be accepted. Go first and remove the stumbling block and then come and offer thy gift. Here is the very principle for which we are contending laid down by Christ. Some men seem to suppose that the gospel dispensation is a very lenient one, compared with the Old Testament dispensation. The exact opposite of this is the truth. The New Testament dispensation is the same as the Old; but while the one related chiefly to the outward life, the other comes right home to the heart. Take Christ's sermon on the Mount, in which he tells you that unless there be obedience to the law of God in the heart, there is no obedience at all. He taught us also to exercise a forgiving spirit, or else when we prayed God would not hear us; unless we are upright and honest when we pray, and make our peace with those whom we have offended, we cannot approach unto God.

But let me say again: regard to the rights of others in all respects is implied in washing our hands in innocency, including the payment of our debts and exact uprightness in all business transactions; not in the sense of compliance with human laws, but in the view of the great principle of loving your neighbour as yourself. Washing your hands in innocency, implies that all your business be transacted upon this principle. You cannot really be honest except only when you love your neighbour as yourself, and regard his interests as you would your own, and seek his good as well as your own. Suppose a man comes into your shop for a certain article, and you knew well that you have not got what he wants; but you show him another, and say, that this is not exactly the article you wanted, but it is better than the one you inquired for, and it is the article most generally used, while at the same time you know that you are deceiving the man; you know it is an inferior article, but you say, though this is not exactly what you wanted, I guess it is better and will answer your turn quite as well; you will get it on to him if you can, no matter by what means. Now let me ask, is this being honest with God? Is this washing the hands in innocency? Is it indeed! O, the endless tricks of selfishness, and the endless subterfuges with which men excuse themselves; and yet so much piety in the midst of it all--*selfish all the week, but mighty pious on the Sabbath!* Sometimes it is that persons would not on any account stay away from church on the Sabbath, but they would cheat you in their business on the Monday if they had an opportunity of doing so. Suppose a man comes into your shop and asks if you have such an article, and if you are not sure that you have, will you tell him so? will you say--I do not know that I have: I will look, but I do not think I have anything that will exactly answer your purpose. There is an article something like it, you can look at it and see if it will suit you. Now, will you tell him all that you know about that, and be right up and down with him? Or do you say that is not my business. Let me take care of myself. Your customer is ignorant of the quality of the article: will you be honest with him, or will you take advantage of his ignorance, and charge him more than it is worth? Perhaps he will barely get home before he finds out that neither the article nor the price were what they ought to have been. Suppose you say, well, I am seeking to get money that I may give it to the Missionary cause! Let me tell you that a man might as well fit out a pirate ship for the same purpose! You take advantage, lie and cheat, to get money for God! Well, when you have got the money so for God; just go into your closet, lay the money down, and say, "Lord, thou knowest how I got this money today: there was a man came into my shop and wanted a certain article; and I had not what he wanted, but I had one not so good, but I managed to get him to take it, and I charged him a little more than it was worth, because I wanted to give something to the Missionary cause!" Now would that be washing the hands in innocency? Can you serve God in such a way as that? Would an infinitely holy God accept such an offering? Judge ye!

III. We now pass to show in the next place, that *both the resolution, and the keeping of it, are indispensable conditions of acceptance with God.*

Now let me here explain what I mean by the condition of acceptance. I do not mean that these things which I have mentioned are*grounds* upon which God will accept us. He will not accept us for these things, because after all, there is no satisfaction made for past sin--not at all: therefore, he cannot accept us as if we had not sinned. While this resolution, or the keeping of it is not the ground of an acceptance, I say it is a condition, in the sense that we cannot be accepted without it. Because if

God were to accept us without this, he would do the very thing that the Psalmist himself would not do. The Psalmist declared that he would have no fellowship with iniquity, and would not go in with dissemblers, and shall you do so? No! Then I say this is an indispensable condition of acceptance with God.

It should always be understood then, that when we talk of persons being justified by faith, we always mean that faith implies repentance, making restitution, obedience and holiness of heart. The faith that takes hold on Christ implies all this. We are justified by faith; but it is the faith of obedience to God; the faith which leads to sanctification; the faith which works by love and purifies the heart; the faith that overcomes the world. Ah, the faith that overcomes the world, that's the faith to mark an honest man! The Bible describes the faith that justifies as the faith that overcomes the world. Look at that man, he says he has faith. Does his faith enable him to overcome the world? Why, it has not made him an honest man in his worldly business! It does not keep him from cheating! Is that the faith of the gospel? No, indeed! It is the faith that makes void the law; and "do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yes, we establish the law." True faith produces the very spirit of the law in the mind, and consequently obedience to it in the outward life. Do not let me be misunderstood, I am not advocating a system of self-righteousness. I am not saying that men may be saved by their own works, and denying that they are justified by faith; for this I maintain; but I maintain that the faith which justifies, is the faith which overcomes the world. Faith implies honesty with God and man. Faith implies uprightness of heart; and faith implies a cleansing of the hands. Beloved,*no man has faith that justifies him who has not faith that makes him honest*. If you are not honest, you have not faith; in God's sense of the term, you have not the faith of the gospel.

But let me say again: this must be a condition of acceptance, for God would disgrace himself if it were not. We could not ourselves feel a respect for God if he did not make this a condition of our acceptance. He does not require that we should be saved by our own works, for that is impossible. He does not require us to undo the actions of our past lives, for that were impossible; but he requires us *now* to become honest, and all which is implied in that state of mind, sincerity, simplicity of heart, and confidence in him. Furthermore, let me say, if we could approach God, and be accepted by him without becoming honest men, it would not do us any good. If God was such a being that he could have fellowship with our sins, we should be wretched beings still. The fact is, beloved, there is no way in which the soul can be at peace with God, without its becoming like God. There must be written upon the heart of a man holiness to the Lord, before he can be at peace with God. There is a natural attraction between the mind of God and a good man, as there is between the sun and the planetary system; instead of our earth running in a straight line away from the sun, it is drawn round and round and round by the attraction of that planet. Just so it is with a good man and God. There is such a natural attraction between the good and the holy soul, and the God of infinite purity, that it is continually drawn towards him. The sun attracts the earth, and in a certain degree the earth attracts the sun, and thus the earth is carried round its diurnal and annual rotations. In a similar manner does God attract the soul of the good man, and the soul of a good man, in a measure, attracts God. The soul knows nothing about gravity in respect to this earth. The mind is not material, and if it was not tied down by the body, it would not go round with the earth, but would ascend to its author. Why, Christian, have you not found sometimes that there was such an attraction between yourself and God, as if your soul would almost leap from its body, or draw the body up with it to heaven. An eminent Christian lady once said, that at one time the attraction from God was so great, that it seemed to her as if she should go to heaven body and soul together.

I mention these things to show you, that when we speak of being drawn towards God, we are not merely using a figure.

But let me say further. Some people suppose that they are to be saved by imputed righteousness, while they are destitute of personal righteousness. Suppose you had imputed righteousness, what then? Suppose you were to get to heaven? that would be no place for you. Heaven would be hell to you. But let me assure you that you must have an imparted righteousness, and become pure in heart and life, ere God will accept you.

A few remarks must close what I have to say. The first remark I make is this--you are not accepted of God; if you have not conscious communion with him; if you do not find God in his house, in your closet, and do not enter into sensible communion with him. Again: you see from this subject why there is so little real communion with God in the church. For the best of all reasons--there is so little of the washing of the hands in innocency. Let me say again: many persons do not seem to understand at all that this is a condition of acceptance; they seem to suppose that somehow the gospel was designed to make men pure, but they do not understand what is implied in washing the hands in innocency, in casting themselves upon God for present grace and for future grace. Again: you have seen from

this subject how abominable it must be to God for persons to pretend to love and serve him while they indulge in a worldly spirit and live a worldly life. I remark once more; you need not make some great and wonderful preparation--occupying months or years before you give your heart to God. Now suppose that every person in this house were at this moment willing to do as the Psalmist did, and were to come right out and say," I will wash my hands in innocency"--what is there to hinder? We are soon to unite in prayer. Let the whole congregation then make one move toward the throne of grace! everyone make a move with his heart, and say, Lord, I give up all sin, and I do it now, and as soon as possible I will set about making everything right outwardly. In my heart *now* I renounce sin, all sin, I will now consecrate my heart, and wash my hands in innocency. Are you all willing to do this? Come along then! come along! every one. The veil has been rent, and the door has been thrown wide open, and no man can shut it against you but yourself. Will you then shut it against yourself? Will you refuse to enter? Be not so foolish; come now, come with earnestness and sincerity and God will accept you.

THE SINNER'S SELF-CONDEMNATION

A sermon preached on Sunday evening, December 8, 1850 by the Rev. C. G. Finney at the Tabernacle, Moorfields

"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." Luke xix. 22

These words are part of a parable, which is as follows:--" A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself kingly authority, and to return. And he called ten of his servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, "Trade with those till I return." But his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And when he was returned, having received regal authority, he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." And he said unto him, "Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." And he said likewise to him, "Be thou also over five cities." And another came, saying, "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou are an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." And he saith unto him, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with interest!" And he said unto those who stood by, "Take from him the pound, and give it to him who hath ten pounds. ("And they said unto him, "Lord, he hath already ten pounds.") For I say unto you, That unto everyone who hath much, shall be given more; and from him who hath little, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

The purport of this parable is clearly this:--"First, it is presumed that that which God requires of man is the right use of the talents committed to him. This is assumed throughout the parable. God expects this, and they make themselves entirely responsible, and without excuse, for not immediately obeying God. The very admission pre-supposes a knowledge of the duty devolving upon them. The fact is, they know themselves to be sinners, that they ought to repent, that they need a Saviour; and who would allow that he ought to repent if he had not sufficient conviction to see that he ought? Once more. In admitting that they ought to repent, men assume thus their *ability* to do so. They may deny it, but they believe it still, or they never would admit that they ought to repent any more than they would admit that they ought to fly.

Again: this admission shows that they themselves have no confidence in the excuses they make, that they do not suffice to justify themselves; and that they well know that not one of them will be had in respect, when things come to be seen in their true light; if this were not so they would honestly and confidently bring them forward in justification of their conduct. This is natural, and you will find it everywhere, from the smallest children upwards; wherever they really suppose themselves to have a good excuse, they will readily make it--they will deny their obligation whenever they honestly feel that they have a valid excuse. This shows conclusively, that when sinners admit their obligation to become Christians, they assume, in this very admission, that their excuses are good for nothing. If they had but one really good excuse among the whole, they would rest calmly upon it, and at once deny their obligation.

Let me say again. These things also show that these people are in reality hypocrites, making excuses; for if they were not, they would deny their obligation; for if there were in reality any valid excuse for their conduct, they must plead it in justification. But they do not deny it; they cannot do so without belieing their very nature; they can no more deny their obligation than they can deny their own existence. They virtually admit their own hypocrisy, in not doing what God tells them they ought to do, what they know and feel they are bound to do, and excuse themselves in a way that does not even satisfy their own consciences.

But I remark again. These admissions on the part of sinners, also show that they know very well that *God must condemn them*, for if not,*they must condemn him!* They condemn themselves, and they therefore assume that God *must* condemn them; for if he does not do so, they feel that he cannot be just. Sinners themselves acknowledge their wrong-doing. They violate even their own standard of moral obligation. They sin against their own consciences, however stupid those consciences may be. They feel that, as God is a good being, he must condemn them; and if he does not, then their own consciences will condemn him.

Their admission shows again that in the deepest assumptions of their minds, they do justify God. The law of their own minds are God's witnesses, and stand up for ever to testify for him. So truthful are these laws of the human intellect that they will speak, and speak the truth. To be sure, there is no virtue in admitting what you cannot honestly deny. There is no virtue in a man's conscience saying, what by a necessary and natural law, it must say and cannot deny. True, the heart would bribe the conscience if it could, but the testimony of their nature for ever leaves them without excuse before God. These admissions show that they themselves know their pleas of inability, and every other plea is only a refuge of lies with which even they themselves, as I have said, are unsatisfied.

From these things we see why it is that sinners everywhere have such a fear of deat-- why they are afraid to die! Is it because they are afraid God is unjust? No. Is it because they are afraid that they shall fall into the hands of a cruel and relentless tyrant who will trample them down in their weakness, regardless of their merit? No! They are not afraid to meet God because they think him wicked, but because they know by the irresistible assumption of their own minds, that God has an awful account with them, and that they have no apology for their sins. They do not say, "Oh! I have a good excuse, I know I have; but God will not hear it. I know that I was born with such a sinful nature that I have a good excuse for my conduct, if God would only hear it; but he will bear me down with his power."

Is that the reason why sinners are afraid to die? No! that is not the reason; it is because they know they have done wickedly, and that they are without excuse. They are not afraid to meet God because they deem him unreasonable and partial, but because they are wicked, and he is good. That is the difficulty. They feel that goodness ought to be armed against them, because they have no possible excuse for their sins. It is often deeply affecting to sit down by the death-bed of a sinner who has gone on in sin for a long series of years without a serious thought in his mind; if you examine into the workings of his mind, it is striking to see how many things after all, he has assumed. It is remarkable how many points of self-accusation present themselves in how many points his conscience is disarmed.

But again, it is absurd for any individual to acknowledge obligation, and still plead inability. If it be naturally impossible for a man to do a certain thing, consistency would lead him of course to deny his obligation to do it. It is not only an absurdity to acknowledge obligation and still deny ability, but it is an absurdity that no mortal, is, in reality, ever guilty of. Men may theorize about it, and think the contrary; but the principle is true and universal; there is no excuse to which it is not applicable. For if we have an excuse that is really a reasonable one, it is a justification--it sets aside the obligation, and the only proper way is instantly to plead the excuse and deny the obligation. The mind is true to itself, and always does do this; for if a man has a reasonable something that, in his own assumption, ought to justify him for doing, or neglecting to do certain things, it is a direct contradiction to say that he can possibly, at the same time, admit his obligation to do those things. The mind never does or can do this; and therefore, when men admit their obligation, they assume that God is reasonable in requiring it, and that it is not naturally impossible for them to do it.

But let me say again. The excuses with which men deceive themselves, when viewed in the light of their own admissions, is a glaring proof of the madness of their wickedness. How strange! Here is an individual admitting that he ought to obey God, and with the same breath excusing himself for not doing so! Does not everyone see the absurdity of admitting obligation and excusing yourself at the same moment!

Again. I know very well that sinners do not really consider what is actually implied in those admissions. Multitudes of persons here have followed these admissions saying--"Oh! yes, I admit that--I admit that

there is a God, a right, a wrong, that God is good, and that I ought to obey and love him--that I have sinned and ought to repent and become a Christian and that I ought to *do it now*." But have you really considered what is implied in these admissions? you are naked, speechless, and without excuse in the presence of God!

I remark again. Though sinners deny, as they often do in theory, their ability to obey God, they know it, and while they admit they are sinners and have done wrong, their consciences convict them of wrong, and assure them that they might have done right. Now take any case whatever where a sinner has done that for which he condemns himself--he sees it is wrong--that he ought not to have done it. Now in that very case he assumes that it was possible for him not to have done it; he would never admit having done wrong in a certain case if he knew that he had no power to do otherwise than he did too. In any and every case where a moral agent believes he could not have done differently, he will justify the course he took. It is of no use for a man to pretend to believe that by outward circumstances he is irresistibly propelled along a certain track; God has so constructed his mind that he cannot believe it. He may wind himself up in sophistries; still, however, his own nature will speak, out and tell him that it is a downright lie from beginning to end. Let him go and commit a crime and then try to justify himself if he can. He cannot do it. Let him go and commit murder, or any other crime; he cannot, for his life, conceal from himself his wickedness. He may bring up this doctrine of fatality, but it is of no use; he cannot satisfy his conscience with it. There is something within him tells him, "You are to blame. You ought to have done otherwise and might have done otherwise." This pursues him wherever he goes; there is always a sentinel from God, a witness which will speak out, and tell him that he lies just as often as he attempts to justify himself. See him go along in the dark! What is the matter with him? His hair stands up on end, what ails the man? Why does not a horse feel such terrors as this? Because he is not a moral agent, and has not got written in his mind those great facts which are written in the mind of man. See that individual try to persuade himself into the belief that there is no hell, judgment, or final retribution! There is, after all, within him that which causes an awful sound in his ear, and his soul, when he is in darkness and in secret places quakes within him.

Further, if sinners really and truly believed in their excuses, they would not admit the obligation and necessity of repentance. Take a man, for instance, who honestly believed he could not do better than he does, would he not at once tell you that he has nothing to repent about? He cannot honestly tell you anything else. He meets you at once with a full and flat denial of his moral obligation. He would say, "God cannot send me to hell for I do not deserve it. God cannot, with justice, shut me out of heaven." Again, he would not be afraid to die. He would say, "Why do you think I am afraid to meet a God of justice? Not I. God has nothing against me. He has no right to have, and I am therefore not afraid to die." Tell him to repent and be converted. "I have no need," says he, "I am right already." If they sincerely believed in the excuses, they would no more condemn themselves than a windmill. If they really believed they were machines, their consciences would never be disturbed. But the fact is, men assume and know that they are not machines in any such sense as not to be free and accountable. They can never, for their lives, escape the conviction that they are both free and accountable.

Again. If they believed that men were machines, they would not blame the conduct of others. If you are sincere in professing this, if a man knock you, or take away your wife, your child, or any of your property, you cannot blame him; for how can he help it? He is a mere machine. How could he help it? Why, if you really believe you are machines, you could no more blame a man for knocking you down in the streets than you could blame the arm of a windmill for knocking you down. If you are knocked down by the arm of a windmill, why not blame it? Because you cannot assume that it was to blame; it is a mere machine, and you pick yourself up as well as you can and go away. But why blame a man, when according to this idea of yours, he is not the least more culpable? But can this infidel in his heart believe this? No! I say he cannot. He cannot show to mankind, or even to himself, that man is not a moral agent. It is a remarkable fact that this law is always true to itself; you could not for an instant think of blaming the windmill, but notwithstanding your theory, in your heart you blame the man, because after all, you actually believe that he is a moral agent. When infidels can carry out this absurdity practically--really admitting and feeling that a man is no more responsible for his actions than a windmill--then we have a right to believe that they think so, but not till then.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that all men should question themselves as to their own deep convictions. I love to sound, as it were, the deepest recesses of my own mind, to see what will come up--to trace back the logical connection of my own thoughts, admissions, in order to see what must lie as an eternal, necessarily known principle in my own mind, by which I must be eternally judged. Oh! are men going to the

judgment seat, the great white throne, when the Judge is to appear and take his seat, and all the universe shall tremble before him? What are the books to be opened! First, mark me, the Book of the Laws of your own nature, wherein by the pencil of inspiration, was written at creation itself the immutable law which enforced on you the knowledge of your moral agency, and responsibility to God. God will question first your own conscience, your deepest nature, for he knows its laws--and it will rise up and testify against you. You will carry this self-condemner with you into hell if you go, and it will never perish! Thus will Christ say--"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

Now, dying sinner, what is your remedy! What will you do when he says, "As for these men who try to excuse themselves, bring them out here, and slay them before me!" Now, do you say to yourselves, "well, if this is true, my case is hopeless?" Now you know better. The fact you are saying this is a mere shuffle of your wicked heart. Here is Christ that uttered this parable, who has committed to you this talent, and now he says, "Consecrate it to me. From this hour unroll the napkin!" Ah! but perhaps you have *spent* some of it! Have you? Indeed! then you are worse than the individual in the text, for he did keep all that was entrusted to him! Ah! how much of it have you spent? How old are you? Oh! see those grey hairs on you! Have you burned out life's lamp, and left nothing but a smoking wick? You have served the devil, then, all your days! Indeed! Then, when God comes, you cannot even unfold the napkin and say, "here is the pound that thou gavest me." No! You have carried over all this money--all these powers all this time, and all this influence with which God did so kindly endow you, and gone over and squandered it in the service of his greatest enemy the devil! Have you, indeed?

Well, your case is a bad one! But mark me, dying sinner,--can you believe it? notwithstanding this is even so, that bleeding hand is held out, and Christ is saying, "Come! Come! Come! All things are ready, and always have been." But now will you come to Christ and consecrate the little remnant that is left? How much is then left? Some of you are young, and have still much time before you, in which you may do something to promote God's glory. But do you wish to serve the devil a little longer? Now does not this look to you ineffably mean in you to speculate on the chance of sinning a little longer, and yet being saved? Ah! does not God's keen eye see that thought? Why not at once come right to God and say, "Lord, here I am--I cannot undo what I have done--I cannot go back to the beginning of my moral existence--but I will come now, and O Lord Jesus, I will devote my all to thee--body, soul, influence, health--all I have and am, and by thy assistance, shall henceforth be consecrated to thy service, in helping forward that great work of love which I have been hitherto hindering by my sin."

REFUGES OF LIES.

A sermon preached on Sunday morning, December 15, 1850 by the Rev. C. G. Finney at the Tabernacle, Moorfields

"The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."-Isaiah xxviii.17.

A refuge is, of course, a place to which resort is had in time of distress; a place of protection and security against danger. A hiding place, has also attached to it much the same idea--a place in which an individual secures himself against danger. The figure used in the text is a hailstorm, a sweeping hailstorm that carries all before it, even the places of refuge into which people have run for shelter from its desolating power; and so great is the flood that it fills up all the low places, the caves, the hiding places, to which they have betaken themselves.

The connection in which these words are found is very simple: they were addressed by the prophet Isaiah to the Jewish church; who were, of course, professors of religion, professing to be saints. At the ninth verse he says-- "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little; for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, this is the rest wherewith ye cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing that ye would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared, and taken." God was determined to leave them wholly without excuse; if they would deceive themselves, they must bear the guilt and punishment, he had by the mouth of his prophets set them "line upon line, and precept upon precept. Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem"--that is the

religious rulers of those days--"because ye have said we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." They thought they were sure of their salvation; that they were God's people; they regarded themselves as being justified and accepted in so high a sense that they were ready to say, "we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves; therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." A figure representing the character of their righteousness--their religion upon which they placed so much dependence,--it was like a bed "so short that a man could not stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." Thus their religion which they depended upon was utterly inefficient. "For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth." The prophet delivers this very solemn message, and he warns the people from dissembling,--for that is the true idea of "mocking" in this place--do not dissemble, he says, do not play the hypocrite, do not deceive yourselves; "for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts, a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth."

My object this morning is to point out some of those refuges to which men betake themselves in our day, and shew that they are really refuges of lies. It is oftimes of great importance to have the attention called directly to those refuges to which men are in danger of betaking themselves, and to which too many do betake themselves. It is very remarkable to what an extent men will deceive themselves on the subject of religion. In connection with this subject, more than any other, we find the most remarkable cases of self-delusion: they are so very remarkable sometimes, as to appear altogether incredible, that men with reason and in possession of the Bible, should ever betake themselves to such refuges--should by any possibility make themselves believe that in the way they take, they are even likely to get to heaven.

I shall not have time to notice a great many of the present prevailing forms of error and sin, but I will advert to a few that are very common amongst men. The first thing that I notice, as a false refuge in which many indulge, is a selfish religion. And here let me say--I am sorry to be able to say it--that the longer I live, and the more acquaintance I have with men in general, and especially with professing Christians, the more am I afflicted with this conviction, that multitudes are perfectly mistaken with regard to the nature of religion--with great multitudes it is only a form of selfishness. A whole sermon might be occupied on this subject, but I must make only a very few remarks upon it. Let me say, selfishness in any form is in exact opposition to religion. It makes no difference as to the type which selfishness puts on. The question is, does a man make his own interest the object of pursuit? If so, such conduct is the exact opposite of that benevolence which Christ manifested, when he laid himself out for the good of mankind and the glory of God. He lived not to please himself, but to please God. And the Apostle says, "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Indeed, everywhere, both in the law and the gospel, religion--true religion, is presented to us as disinterested benevolence. By disinterested benevolence of course I do not mean a want of interest in the great subject of salvation itself; but I mean that we should be religious not from any selfish motives or reasons, but that we should love God for what God is, and that we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Supreme devotion to God; to God's interest as supreme, and to his nature as a God of holiness. Where there is true religion it will manifest itself, in prayer, praise, and obedience. It will manifest itself with respect to God in efforts to please him, to honour him, and to glorify him, and an earnest desire to secure the love, confidence and obedience of all men. Now this must be naturally so. With respect to man, true religion will manifest itself, in simplicity of character, in seeking the good of all men, in caring for them as we care for ourselves; in caring for their interests as we care for our own interests; in caring for their salvation as we care for our own salvation; rejoicing in their prosperity as we would in our own, sympathizing with their afflictions, as

if they were our own--in a word, there will be a setting ourselves with a single eye to promote the interests of mankind and the glory of God. Now this is the natural result of faith in Christ. All selfishness is sin. But mark! it is not selfishness for a man to have a proper regard for his own salvation; but it is for him to regard his own salvation only and care not for the salvation of his neighbour. Suppose a man cares ever so much about his own salvation, but cares not for the salvation of his neighbour, this is supreme selfishness right on the face of it; and the more intensely anxious a man is about his own soul, if he cares nothing about the salvation of his neighbour, the more intensely selfish he is. This should always be understood. Men that are very regular at the means of grace, and who make their own salvation a matter of deep concern, but who after all care little or nothing for the salvation of others, are deceiving themselves--trusting in a false refuge. Why it is perfectly plain in such cases that their religion is mere selfishness. For let me ask, where does the Bible allow men to make any separate, selfish interest their great object of pursuit? The teaching of Christ is, "thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself," and Christ himself acted upon this principle, and the apostles did so too; instead of making their own enjoyment, happiness, or salvation the great end of pursuit, they laid themselves out for the good of the world. And further, this is the true way for a man to secure his own salvation; by caring for the salvation of others. "Whosoever will save his life," said Christ, "shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Now it should always be remembered therefore, that all religion which terminates upon ourselves, or upon our friends, whom we regard as parts of ourselves, is a religion of supreme selfishness, and not the religion of the Bible--but the exact opposite. Now a great many persons fall into this mistake. They think that persons may be selfish in religion and be real Christians. They know that when men are worldly, engrossed with the world, why of course, that is not religion, but most admit that. But when individuals are found at the meeting, and found at the ordinance, especially, and are found saying their prayers, for themselves, and those who are parts of themselves,--they are thought to be very pious! But this is a grand mistake; for after all they have not escaped the narrow circle of their own selfishness. Selfishness has changed its type, to be sure; it was once worldly, directed to some worldly object, glory, wealth, character, or something else; but some circumstance led them to change their course, and now they have begun to care about religion, but they are just as selfish now as when they were in the world--the form of selfishness is changed, but the principle is not removed. *Before, they speculated out of men; and now they attempt to speculate out of God!* They set themselves, before, to make something out of men; and now they set themselves to make something out of God! Instead of having come into sympathy with the benevolence of God; instead of having laid themselves on the altar, they are as selfish as ever. They are as selfish in seeking to secure their own salvation as they would be to secure a worldly estate. The end they have in view is a selfish end. I will tell you how it may be known, right on the face of it, whether a man, professing to be religious, is a selfish man. When he was engaged in worldly matters, his object was entirely self: how much he could make for himself--all his bargains and tradings were to this end. If he cared about a man's bankruptcy, it was for some selfish reason; in the hope that he would be able to make something out of it. Look at a selfish man in trade, he cares only for his own business; he does not "look also on the things of others," according to the apostle's injunction: while trying to please himself, and to benefit himself. Now he becomes what is called a religious man: well, look at him now, is he any more really benevolent in his religion than he was in his business? Does he give any indications of his selfishness having been given up? Suppose he observed the business relations of society: why it was his interest to do so, he had a good reason for it. Look at the man when he has become a religious man, after he has been introduced to the church of God, if you please; and what proofs does he exhibit that he had undergone a radical change? Does he care for his own salvation? Is he labouring for the salvation of others? Is he anxious for others? Does he pray for others, care for others, rejoice with others? Does he mourn over the desolations of Zion? Has he come into full sympathy with Christ? Does he feel a deep concern for the souls that are around him? Does he care nothing for worldly things, only so far as they may be made the instruments of saving the souls of men? Does he pray for grace that he may be useful; that he may be able to save souls, pulling them out of the fire, and is he engaged in building up the true church of God? Now you can easily see if you have fled to a refuge of lies in this respect. Have you felt awakenings of soul when you have heard or read of the awful things that God has said about the wicked? Has his hand come near you, and stricken down a companion, a friend, a neighbour, and has your heart awakened from your dream of worldly mindedness? Have you been led to see that life is short and death is near, and that a solemn judgment is to follow? Have you understood the value of religion? and further, have you so studied its nature as to see that the starting point is a firm resolution in regard to the great end of your life?

That to begin, you must renounce self, and live for God: if not, you are self-sufficient still, and know nothing about religion at all. Suppose that you are selfish in religious matters instead of worldly matters, what are you the better? There is no real difference, which you will see if you think of it. Selfishness has put on a new type, but the man is not new, and therefore you are none the better. Selfishness may often change its type. It puts on one form in the child, another in youth, and another in manhood. It is manifested in ambition, the love of fame, the love of character, the love of power, and so on. I might chase these things down from one stage to another, and selfishness would everywhere unfold itself. In almost every man's history we should find that at some period of his life it puts on a religious type, sometimes in youth, and sometimes in riper age. Observe, that against which I would warn you is this--making such a mistake as to suppose that religion at all consists in mere attention to religious things, but from selfish motives, always terminating at last upon self.

Let me say in the next place. Another refuge of lies to which mankind betake themselves is *religious impulse*. By this I mean they are excited purely by their feelings. This is a prevailing form of selfishness. This delusion consists in appealing to the feelings instead of to God's law as developed in the conscience and reason. Such persons as these think themselves very religious, because they feel deeply upon the subject. You will very often hear persons when spoken to on the subject of religion, say something about their *feelings*--they will tell you that they *feel* so and so; but take away their feelings and they have no religion. Now mark! I call this a religion of impulse, because it is not a religion of principle. These people become religious in proportion as their own feelings are excited; bring them under exciting means, and they are very religious. Nay! strongly excite them, and they will do almost anything; excite and rouse their feelings, and you can carry them along. But let the circumstances subside which excited their feelings, and you see that they have not the root of the matter within them. Now it is remarkable to what an extent we see the religion of impulse prevail--they are wonderfully religious while excitement prevails; but let it be swept away by neglect of the means of grace, and they will be very dull, and know very little about piety. If they do attend to means at all, it will perhaps be only the communion. Perhaps they will be superstitious enough to hold on to the ordinance--for there is a vast deal of this in every country that I have visited. Persons who are not really religious in their daily life, will yet make a point of appearing at the ordinance. Now it is very evident that such persons have no religion, and they make an ordinance of religion a refuge of lies in which they trust. They are like the Roman Catholics, who are very careful about attending to their Masses--they make attention to ordinances one of the prominent features of their religion. Now let me tell you right here--and you may set it down as a universal truth, that wherever the prominent feature of a person's religion is attendance upon ordinances, it is a sure sign that he is not a Christian. What are ordinances? They are the means of perpetuating certain truths in the world. The design of the Lord's Supper was to perpetuate the remembrance of the Lord's death. "As often," said the apostle, "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." It is symbolic and commemorative: the same by baptism. They commemorate two great truths, and are very important as such; but no Christian makes them his religion. He is not sanctified by baptism and the Lord's Supper, but by the reality which they represent. He has got the reality in his own heart--he leans on Christ, he feeds on Christ, he loves to commemorate the ordinances of Christ;--but mark! if he is not self-denying, prayerful, anxious for the salvation of others, and making efforts for this end, but merely cares about ordinances, he is not religious, but merely superstitious. Look at the Roman Catholics for example--and I do not wish it to be supposed that I mean to say no Roman Catholic is pious, for some of them may be, and doubtless are--who make ordinances the chief feature of their religion; and the same may be said of some other denominations to a considerable extent. They make so much of their mass, and of the ordinances, that instead of laying themselves out to do good, instead of leading holy lives, instead of being religious in everything, why their religion is confined to certain ceremonies. Now mark, this is an infinite mistake--religion is not a form, it is not an ordinance, it is a life. True religion must, from its very nature, show itself in a man's business as well as in his prayers. Nay! inasmuch as his business occupies six-sevenths of his time, the principal place in which to see his religion, if he has any--is in the daily walk of life. It will be seen there the most, if he has any. Now if you see persons religious on the Sabbath day; religious in ordinances; religious in particular forms, but not in their everyday life, you may be quite sure that their religion is mere superstition-nothing else. Some men are very particular in attending to what they call their religious duties. They make a distinction between religious duties and their duties to their fellow men. Now this is a fundamental mistake, for mark me! a man who does not live a religious life cannot be religious on the Sabbath; if he is not religious in his business, he cannot be religious at the communion, and he has no more business to be

there than the devil has--not a bit more! If he is not religious in his daily business, he has no more right to be at the table of the Lord than those harlots have who spend their lives in abominations too horrible to be mentioned.

Now this is no new doctrine! This is no American heresy! It is God's naked truth! If you don't believe it, you have fled to a refuge of lies.

But let me say again: others have a mere religion of opinion, which is just the opposite of a religion of impulse. The religion of impulse implies that a man feels strongly, and he acts in accordance with his feelings. But right over against this is the religion of opinion, which is another refuge of lies. These men hold very strongly a set of opinions--right or wrong they hold on to them. These opinions do not mould their lives nevertheless; but they hold the doctrines, the opinions, and make a great deal of them; yet they don't obey the commands involved in them. They live very careless and worldly lives, but no matter how corrupt, they think themselves to be Christians. But their religion is a mere matter of opinion, a mere question of doctrines, a mere holding on to certain dogmas, that do not mould, and fashion, and influence the life: dogmas that lie in their minds, but have never come into sympathy with their hearts; and while this is the case with men, they are only trusting in a refuge of lies: they have no real religion. They make much of their orthodoxy. They cannot bear to hear a word said that does not accord with their particular notions of orthodoxy. They come to meeting, and they hear a sermon, and when it chimes in with their views, they say it is sound doctrine. Now the question is, do these doctrines affect their hearts? If so, it is well; but if it is otherwise, then sound doctrine is only leading them the shortest road to hell. Their orthodoxy is the most direct road to hell, because they are living in the full blaze of light. They will speculate about doctrines, but they make no efforts to pull sinners out of the fire, and to build up the kingdom of Christ. They are selfish, and close fisted; you would think that they were holding their worldly possessions with a death grasp. Now mark, they are very orthodox, and you cannot offend them more than by touching their orthodox, but they are not living for God, and are not laying themselves out for the salvation of men--they live for themselves, and are maintainers of certain opinions; and if the doctrines which are involved in them were taken to the heart and moulded to life, they would stand forth as beautiful specimens of Christianity. But I repeat, much of the religious opinion is only a refuge of lies.

But another refuge of lies is the religion of sectarianism. I have seem much of this, and might tell of much. We see this largely in the Romish church, for she tells everybody not within her communion that they will go to hell; but it is not confined to that church; it is the doctrine of every church, who says that in their church only is salvation to be obtained. One particular sect sets itself up and claims to have apostolic succession, and everybody who is not of it is out of the church--that church is right, and every other church is wrong. When these sectarians, to whatever party they belong, speak of "the church," they do not mean the congregation of believers in every community, but their particular system or form which they call "the church." In this country, I believe that most of those who claim to themselves the right of being called the church, do admit that Dissenters from them may be Christians; and Dissenters will not deny that there may be good people in the church which is established by law in this land. But mark! there is a vast deal of zeal that is mere sectarianism. Really, I have been astonished sometimes in this country to hear ministers "*thank God for Methodism*." I do not know how many times I have heard that! The first meeting that I attended in England was a missionary meeting, especially connected with the Wesleyan body, and I was astonished and appalled at the first that so much was said about the glory of Methodism; thanking God for Methodism, and so on. I had not been in the habit of hearing such things in a missionary meeting, and it struck me as very astonishing that they should have invited people of different communities to be present, and talk thus while they knew that the very man who occupied the chair was not a Methodist! They had got together a multitude of people not belonging to their section of the church, in order to take up a collection for the missionary cause, and yet there was so much glorifying of Methodism! I did not rebuke it at the time, but I felt it, and I have since made up my mind, that if I ever hear it again under such circumstance, or any other, I will rebuke it! I will rebuke either the glorifying of Methodism, or the putting forward of any other species of sectarianism whatever, when Christianity ought to have been the theme. It is not to be tolerated. It is no part of religion. For my life I cannot enter with zeal into any efforts to build up any particular sect. I have my own notions, but I know that others hold opinions different from mine, with as much honesty as I hold mine. I do not mean therefore that I have no particular opinions, but I will not glorify any particular denomination, and spend my life in building up a party. There is a vast deal too much of this party spirit, and what is the effect? Selfishness of heart, and no openness of soul--no going out for the salvation of the world. I do not mean to say that I do not regard any of the distinctions which prevail as of any importance, because I do; but I do not regard

them of such importance as to merge everything in their favour. I can respect the gospel and myself too, and therefore I cannot devote my time to the building up of a sect. *The salvation of men is the great question! The salvation of men's souls is the first concern!* Do not lay too much stress upon sectarian differences. Make your great aim the good of souls and the glory of God!

But let me say once more: another refuge of lies is having regard to what is outward, the performance of certain external actions without love to God in the heart. Religion is often, with many people, only a mere outward act; there is no spiritual life in the heart. This is ungodliness, in the true sense of the word which means unlikeness to God!

There are a vast many men who think themselves very religious because they pay their debts. They make a great deal of that. If you question them about their lives, they have everything on which to pride themselves. But is honesty Christianity? There are many infidels who are amiable in their daily life, and are honest towards their fellow men, and are what are called good neighbours, good husbands, good wives--persons who in their intercourse with men, may be depended on in worldly matters; men whose opinions are sound on worldly questions, men who are trustworthy in business; and they are all this upon a worldly principle, and for a worldly motive. Now let me say that these things are all needful in a certain sense; but I say also that in all this there is no virtue; there is not a particle of piety in it, as there is no recollection and recognition of the claims of God, no living to God, for if there were, it would express itself in prayer and praise, and in all those forms of sympathy with God, which piety always puts on. There must be supreme love to God wherever this is true piety. And mark! There will always be true love to man wherever there is real love to God.

Let not men deceive themselves, and suppose that because they are moral, they have done all that is required of them! Suppose a man is exempted from punishment, is he fitted for heaven? Has he come into sympathy with God? Is he prepared to enjoy God? could he dwell happily with the righteous in heaven? What sort of place could heaven be if you could enjoy it? You have not come into sympathy with Christ; you reject Christ; you reject the Sabbath; you reject the Holy Ghost; and can you think that a supposed morality will answer your turn? Let me warn you to flee away from such a refuge of lies as that!

Let me say before I sit down to those who profess to be religious, who profess to be born of God. Is your religion a thing which can be known? Do your neighbours know it? Do your family know it? or are you hiding somewhere? behind some refuge of lies? Have you got behind that deacon? for you may make a refuge of lies of him! Have you got behind your minister? for you may make a refuge of lies of him! Don't hide yourselves anywhere! Be satisfied with nothing but Christ. Don't get behind that woman! Put no false standard before you. Set no standard by Christ before you! Be satisfied with no opinions that don't mould your life. Be satisfied with no religion that is not the life of your souls. Flee away from every source of error, every refuge of lies, and trust only in that which will mold your character, sanctify your life, and make you blessed forever. I beg of you to think upon these things.

THE SPIRIT CEASING TO STRIVE

A sermon preached on Sunday evening, December 15, 1850 by the Rev. C. G. Finney at the Tabernacle, Moorfields

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man." Genesis vi. 3

The following is the train of thought which I design to pursue:

1. What is implied in the assertion of the text!

2. What is intended by the Spirit's "Striving" with man!

3. How may we know when he is striving with us!

4. What is meant by "shall not always strive!"

1. Why will he "not always strive!"

2. The consequences of his ceasing to strive.

These two things are implied in the assertion of our text; first, that God's Spirit strives with man at least sometimes, and consequently that men do resist him always when there is strife; whenever the Spirit is obliged to strive with a man in order to influence him, why then, of course, resistance is implied. It should always be understood that whenever the Spirit can really be said to "strive" with an individual, that individual must be resisting. But what is intended by his striving? This striving, then, I would observe, is not a physical striving, but a moral influence, persuading, reasoning and convincing. This is the striving; it is a striving of mind with mind, and not of body with body. The process spoken of in the text is the presentation of truth on one side, and the resistance of it on the other. But if this is so, how do we know when the Spirit strives with us?

First, then, let me say, we cannot know this by a direct perception of his agency. The mind does not see the Holy Spirit himself, but it perceives the truth which the spirit presents; for, observe the "striving" referred to is the pressing of considerations upon the mind to influence it, and the "resistance" spoken of is the resistance to the reception of these truths. In inquiring into the evidences of the Spirit striving with man, we must see what are these particular truths which are thus presented to the mind, and which call forth this "resistance? " We are informed in the Bible what it is that the Spirit of God does _ he reproves of sin, for example. Christ promised he should do this, and that he should "take of the things of Christ and show them" to mankind. One of the signs by which men are made conscious that the Spirit is working within them is, the arresting of their attention to the subject of religious truth-- they find these things fermenting in their minds and pressing upon them. Perhaps when they read or attend to business, do what they will the subject is always coming up. If they reasoned on the subject, they could come to no other conclusion than that there was some invisible agency at work within them which kept the matter incessantly before them; it seems to occupy their minds more than ever it did before. They feel an internal conviction of its light, its power, and its reality in a manner of which they had hitherto no conception. This is the striving of the Spirit.

Again, conviction of the sinfulness of one's conduct is another sign of the operations of the Spirit within. When men feel the sinfulness of their course of life, that is the striving of the Spirit. Men often go on in sin without reflecting on the sinfulness of what they are doing; but, by and by, the wickedness of their ways seems to have gained their attention. Looking back on their general conduct, and especially on particular acts, they see their sinfulness; things now come frequently up in their minds and trouble them which had passed unthought of, it may be for years, and when remembered, were not regarded by them as sins. But now they appear to regard them from a different point, and see their error. In some cases there will be a general sense of their sinfulness, of their whole lives-- in others, particular acts will stand out and display themselves in a new and sinful light. This is an evident sign of the striving of the Spirit. When persons are striven with by the Spirit, they are not always greatly alarmed at the realization of their dangerous position, though this is sometimes the case. Sometimes the Spirit does not strive with men because they think so little of their danger, so that they eventually come to fear the results of the Spirit's not striving more with them. The Spirit often gives such persons a distinct and awful glimpse of the exposure of their position.

Again; there are certain forms of sin to which some men are apt to be exceedingly blind; and when these persons are striven with by the Spirit, they come suddenly to a clear perception of this blindness under which they have been labouring. Without this striving these men are very apt to become self-righteous; and when they do feel intensely they are apt to resist and hold out against the Spirit, while all the time they give themselves credit for the possession of these tender feelings. Now it often happens that the Spirit drives off all this by allowing them to become so alarmingly hardened as to find that even these tender feelings on which they were wont to pride themselves have disappeared. Up to the very hour of their surrendering to God this hardness sometimes increases, till they begin to perceive that they never had so little feeling on the subject of religion; their hearts are as hard as adamant. The Spirit often shows these men that they have been mistaking the mere excitement of their feelings for tenderness of heart. Sometimes he convicts them of their unbelief, and shows them that they did not in reality place reliance on God--that they actually placed more reliance on what man said than on what God said. Men are influenced by each other's testimony, and if a man promises to another that he will do thus and thus, his friends believe and trust him and act accordingly. Now ask this man, Do you believe the Bible? Oh! yes, he believes the Bible. But is he influenced by what it promises, as much as he is by what men promise? No, indeed. Let a man come and warn you of your danger, would you not believe and act? If a man should promise you aid, would you not be relieved and comforted by it? If a man gave you a promissory note, as the donor was a man of property, would you not naturally expect to have it paid? But you do not believe God in these respects, yet you are apt to think that you do believe God; but the Spirit at length shows you that you are more comforted by men's promises than by God's--that God's promises in reality afford you very little satisfaction--in fact, that you are actually not at all influenced by what God says, as you are by what men say; when, therefore, you thus come to see the sin of this unbelief, you may rest assured that the Holy Spirit is striving with you.

Again: he convinces men of their *enmity* against God. Few men think themselves *enemies* of God and of religion, even if they do profess themselves to be Christians. It is very common where persons have made a profession of religion, got into the church, and yet are not true Christians; I have observed that if they are not

given up of God and become reprobates, if God intends to save them, God convinces them that, in reality, they are *enemies* of religion. Now you can all see the necessity of this. They profess to love religion, and how can they be saved unless they are convinced that they have made a radical mistake? The Spirit often commences by suffering this enmity to develop itself. They begin by complaining, perhaps, of the preaching; it is too severe, too personal, not "comforting" enough, or something of that kind; either the matter does not suit, or the manner is disagreeable; they want something that will make them happy--something "comforting." They say they are Christians, and believe they speak the truth; they feel sure that if the preaching were what it ought to be, it would be sure to edify and "comfort" them. But God does not mean they should feel so, if he ever intends to save them. They are in a state of delusion, and anything that would make them happy, in this state, would only confirm their delusion; and consequently, God always so directs the preaching and everything as to make it set on them in such a manner as to show them clearly what has, by a great mistake, hitherto been covered up--the enmity of their hearts towards God.

Sometimes I have been struck by the extent to which this has been the case in revivals of religion. Some member of the church, to the astonishment of their ministers, begin to oppose the movement, finding fault with this thing and with that thing; they stay away from their services, go here and go there where they can be "comforted." But the Spirit of God continues to strive with them, and keeps them uneasy, being determined to root out the enmity of their hearts. They come to meeting again and again, and go mumbling away with something more unpalatable than ever; they become each time less "comfortable." Ah! they think "this is not the gospel, for it does not 'comfort' them." How strange everything appears to them! Ah! this is the very way in which the Spirit works; he is determined to drag them out of their hiding places and unmask them. It is curious how long this oftimes goes on till every one but themselves can see it. The very preaching that is moving the masses to inquire and leading numbers to God, all! they "are not edified with it at all."

But do you not see there is a divine philosophy in all this? Oh! yes. These persons are sometimes very numerous in a church; pastors are often astonished to see so many of their members cavil and object. They object all the more, by how much the more powerful it comes home to them. By and by the pastor and deacons look on in amazement to see their members running hither and thither in such confusion. "What's the matter? What's the matter?" why the truth does not sit well on that unbroken heart! They writhe and writhe, finding this fault and that fault, till by and by, they see they do not really love the preaching that God loves--that they are, in fact, at enmity with God. Ah! I have seen them turn pale at such times; but by and by the fact comes out. "Oh! I thought I was a Christian! I have been so many years a member of the church, and yet I find that I stand before God condemned! I see that God and I are at issue--that God loves what I hate, and blesses what I oppose!" Ah! Now this is exactly the way the Spirit of God would take with such persons.

I have often heard, when preaching at various places, "Why, there's such and such a professor saving so and so." But by and by, you will see evidently that the truth is coming home, and hitting him hard. Why, see! he's all in a "*squerm*" again. Pray for him! What's the matter with him? What has been said--any untruth? "Oh, no, but he seems to think you are so personal." Ah! does he. Pray for him! God has got hold of him. He thinks that the minister and all the people are looking right at him; that he is speaking to him personally, and that all the congregation knows it. "Why," said a man to me one day, "it seemed as if not only did you look at me, and mean me, but that everybody knew it and looked at me." Now this is just what God does; and if you see a man begin to "*squerm*," pray for him. Do not be frightened. "Ah!" says a woman, "why, how my husband is offended! He thinks you are personal." Oh, does he; well, pray for him! Do not you see that he is clearly striving against the reception of the truths? "Why?" "Because," says he, "it means me." Does it? Then do not you resist it? Oh! I like to get upon the track of such persons, and hunt them out. I like to follow them and hunt them up, and search them out, till they are broken down. This is the way the Holy Spirit does; he is very personal, and makes the truth personal. He directs the mind of the preacher in such a manner as to make it stick close to an individual he wishes to move; thus it is that people get the impression that the preacher knows them and their history, and think somebody must have been telling him about them. During my thirty years experience, persons have often told me this, whereas it was nothing else than the Almighty directing my thoughts in a certain channel, in order to meet their case. God knew them, although I did not. My bow was drawn at a venture, but God directed the arrow, and it found its way through the joints of their harness; and they were "not comforted." "Not comforted!" Why, the gospel was never made to comfort you in your unsanctified state.

This is also very often the case with merely moral men, who help by their means to support religious institutions; such men are very apt to overlook the fact that they are enemies to God; and therefore, God must in some way show it to them. How is he to do it? They are almost Christians in their own opinion. Their religious wives say--"Oh! I have great hope of him." How often has this been the case. But God sees their real state. They do not come out and acknowledge Christ publicly. God knows there is a rotten heart there. They are amiable, and their exterior is lovely; God must make them know themselves by a course of teaching, preaching, providences, or some other method, and thus take off the veil from their hearts. This being done, they begin to writhe and act in the way the professors just spoken of are accustomed to act. "They are not going there to be preached *at* in that way, when they are doing so much to aid religion. To be treated in such a manner they think is very personal and abusive." It is very hard, they cannot bear it, although they do not, and cannot deny its truth. By and by you will see them writhe. This shows that there is a sediment at the bottom of their hearts; stir it up. Do not be afraid. Pray for them. If you find your unchristian husband begin to *squerm*, and threaten not to go to meeting, *do not ride with him*, and say you think he has reason to be offended. If you do not want to ruin his soul, do not take his part. "Oh! " say to him, "Is it true? then you ought to receive it. Is it true of you? you are bound to receive it; for if it means you, and you do not receive it, what will become of you? What! you confess it is true, and true of you, and yet refuse to receive it!" Be careful what you do under such circumstances; for wherever persons thus quarrel with truth, they are, in reality, quarrelling with God. Mark that. But these people often pretend that it is not the truth they quarrel with, but the offensive manner in which it is said. Now mark. Take care what you do. *A real lover of truth is willing to receive it, though it is not on a golden dish.*

And the way in which God convinces the sinner of the danger of his dying in sin, is, by impressing him with the fact that he has not long to live. He feels that others around are dying in their sins, that he himself has lived a long time in his sin, and he begins to calculate on probabilities, and to apply it to himself. This often is used as a means of inducing decision, or at least, of greatly deepening previous impressions. And the mode in which the Spirit operates is to warn men of the danger of his leaving them. At other times he shows them that they are actually ashamed of Christ--ashamed to have it known that they think of being religious--ashamed to talk even to their wives, or open their mind to their minister--ashamed to be seen reading the Bible, or to have it known that their minds are exercised on the subject. Persons in this state are afraid of being supposed to be serious, and therefore often laugh and try to conceal it, while at heart they are full of soreness and distress. But this shows them more and more that they are ashamed of Christ; and they begin to perceive their pride of heart and the awful wickedness of the position they occupy in relation to God.

Sometimes the Spirit operates by leaving men wholly without excuse. Every plea they have been accustomed to urge is swept from under them. They have none left to hide behind as they were wont to do. The Spirit follows them in their excuses, and strips them off one by one, till he has silenced them all; and they turn them over and over, one after the other, but cannot find one to rest upon. The Spirit thus strove with me for months before I was aware of it; but at length I found as I fled from one excuse to another; but my mind would answer each as it rose. Thus the Spirit undermines all my fortifications, till I had not a single apology to make for my conduct. Now mark. Perhaps this very process is going on with some of you. How is it? If you feel that I am personal, see if the truth sits well upon you. If you find that any particular truth does not sit well upon you, whatever your character may be in a general way, rely upon it that you are at war at least with that one truth; and if at war with truth, you are at war with God.

Persons are sometimes convinced by seeing that they have been altogether selfish. Selfishness is sin; and all sin is selfishness in some form. Persons often see that their very religion has hitherto been selfishness; they can see clearly that they are not in sympathy with God and with Christ--that they have not the spirit of Christ within them--that they are not living to and for God--and that they are utterly selfish in their business, and even in the relations they sustain to what they call their religion. They are fully convinced of this. Ah! are you convinced of it? Do not resist the light on such questions! Oh! if you shut down the gate, turn your eyes away, and refuse to be convinced you will wake up in the blackness and darkness forever!

Before I leave this subject I ought to say that sinners often get the impression on their minds, that this is the last call God will ever give them. Doubtless the Spirit of God means what he says. In such cases it would be very natural for the Spirit in taking the last struggle with a man, to give him such an impression; it is no doubt common for him to do so. Professors of religion have often seen at such times great reason to doubt whether they were even truly converted, and this impression has been confirmed by a glimpse at their lives. By and bye,

perhaps, the Spirit of God impresses them with the idea that if they now resist, they will die in their sins. Now, sinner, when God insinuates such things he is in earnest. The devil does not want you to believe any such things; he would not tell you so if he knew it. It comes from one who cannot lie, and who, in his benevolence, forewarns you that, if you now resist, you are a ruined soul to all eternity.

What is meant by the assertion that the Spirit will "not always strive?" Not, of course, that he will leave the earth; but that he will not always follow a man through the whole of his life, and continue to strive with him to the end of his days.

Why not? First, because it will not do them any good. If, after so many strivings, a man will not repent, why should the Spirit continue to follow him? They are enlightened as much as they need to be enlightened, yet they resist and resist--why then should he continue to strive with them? Again, he forbears to do so in compassion to them. When he has once thrust home these very truths which must convert them, if they ever are converted, he knows that, by a natural law of their minds, the longer they resist the more likely they are to continue resisting. Besides, it would materially enhance their guilt. There is, therefore, no way consistent with his honour in which he can follow them any longer. Again; their guilt is so aggravated under such circumstances--from their striving with God face to face, and resisting--sinning with full light and tempting God's forbearance--these considerations present another reason. They hope God will save them in their sins at some future time, but it would be inconsistent with God's honour to do so. There is a point beyond which it is inconsistent with God's high and adorable sovereignty, that men should continue to resist and quarrel with him face to face. Again, if this were not so, men would take courage and continue in their sins, with the idea that they would be just as likely to have the Spirit strive with them when old as when young; and therefore, to avoid this inference, God's Spirit will not always strive with man. Once more. God needs young persons to be converted, that he may train them up to do good: but if they go on till they have well nigh burnt out the lamp of life, God will, indeed, have compassion on them, if they repent; but how seldom do they repent, under such circumstances! They have wasted their life and can do no good if they are converted; and, having served the devil so long, shall they take the stinking snuff of their expiring lamp--the jaded, putrid remnant of mortality which has resisted the Holy Ghost till the grave is open before them--and cast it, as it were, in the face of the Almighty? But again: it would be bad policy on the part of God's government to convert old people as easily as young ones; it would tend to harden the young in their sins: the general rule, therefore, must be the conversion of the young, while the conversions of the old will be at distances just sufficient in number to keep the aged sinner from utterly despairing.

But we must now proceed to inquire what are the *consequences of the Spirit ceasing?*

The first consequence, naturally, is confirmed apathy--carelessness and prayerlessness in sin. This the general rule. Another consequence is, continued opposition; after the Spirit of God has convinced persons--when they have related strong convictions--when their consciences have smarted under the force of truth--they hate it. Their very consciences become unfeeling. They can commit sins now without compunction, which once would have filled them with agony--they go on in sin with very little remorse. This, too, is a general rule, as I might show; but in some instances there is the reverse--a fearful looking for of judgment. They often, however, wax worse and worse, until if they do not go out into open apostasy, it is only the fear of their reputation that prevents them. Christians will find themselves losing the spirit of prayer for them. The wife will lose the power to pray for her husband under such circumstances; she loses her hold on the throne of grace for him; and it is the same in the husband towards the wife, the parent towards the child, and the child towards the parent. The Spirit will not lead a man to pray for those who have grieved him away. No means that are used will savingly affect them; they will become more and more opposed to the means, till they finally abandon the use of them, and the evil habits they formerly indulged in, come back strongly upon them.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say, and the first remark is this: Have you been thus striven with? Did the spirit of cavilling resistance come upon you? Have you felt, at some time, that the minister meant you? Perhaps you have said, "Now, if that minister had known my history, he could not have told it better." Have you been in this state? Have you felt offended at his being so "personal?" I have often thought that there are multitudes of professors of religion who have thoroughly quenched the Spirit; and the reason I think so is this: they are in the church, and hold themselves up in hope, while everybody who knows them, sees that the Spirit of Christ is not within them; if they are searched they feel displeased; there is a want of honesty in their hearts a want of that downright sincerity in religion--there is a slipperiness, carnal policy, quibbling dishonesty, a putting on of religion--still there is something which serves to bolster them up. They are particular to keep

themselves in countenance by regular attendance at the administration of the ordinance, lest the minister or deacons should get at the fact of their being in a state of apostasy from God. But try to get them to do anything else, and you cannot secure their co-operation, unless it is where their character is concerned. Ah! they say, here is such a one's name on the book, has he had a communion ticket? How is this? Ah! they have attended to that, and thus they have covered up the rottenness of their heart and their carnal worldly life by going to the communion!

Oh! I do not know if there are any such persons here tonight, but as my mind is strongly pressed in this direction, I fear there are; and if God is now showing you that you ought to be honest with yourselves, do not go on with your deceitful game! I do not know you--but God knows you; I only beg of you not to ruin your soul by cheating yourself on a point so vital. Many professors get into that state that they hear unmoved the truths which smite the hearts of infidels and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel. They sit unmoved, or if moved at all, it is only to opposition. They have no sympathy with the work of God--no care about anybody being converted, even perhaps their own children. I have known churches where some of the members were the most hardened reprobate persons I ever knew in all my life--the most disposed to cavil, and the least disposed to co-operate. You deacons know whether such persons are here to-night; when you meet the man you are now thinking about, do you find him disposed to cavil, or is his heart in the work? You know whose hearts are in the work, and who, you have reason to believe, are hardened in their sins. The fact is on such subjects as this, it is the most awful cruelty not to deal faithfully with such men. I would sooner cut off both my hands than play a silly game with a man about his soul, his sins, and eternity! I have often been astonished to find that while professors cavil, ungodly men have said, "Ah! that's just what we need, let it come! Let us know the truth, and the worst of our case. Let it come burning and boiling till it melts the icebergs of our hearts!"

One word more. When the Spirit strives, men are in great danger of putting off submission day after day till at length the Spirit leaves them. They try to think about religion but do not come to the point. Ah! They do not know the infinite danger they are in of being left amidst all this palavering. Ah! "While thy servant was busy here and there, behold the Spirit was gone." They must wait till they have done this thing or that thing, and thus they go on; day after day the Spirit strives with them till at length he takes his flight. You should reflect that every moment you are resisting, you are in infinite danger of his leaving you. "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Again: when the Spirit strives it is the most solemn point of the sinner's existence. The judgment-day will disclose things which are done in time, but the sinner's destiny is settled here. When the Spirit strives with men he settles with them personally. The work is done up one way or the other, and becomes a matter of record. The leaf is folded and laid aside till the day of judgment; but here is the time and place in which the thing is done--this is the world on which hangs suspended the eternal life or death of immortal souls. But not only is the matter finally settled in this world, but there must be some turning point at which the settlement takes place. What an hour is that! Christian! Do you realize that when the Spirit is striving with your children, they are then at a moment more important to them than any other moment of their whole existence. Are you asleep over it? Do you see them honest on religious subjects, or do they creep to the house of God hardly willing to let you know it? Do you see already indications that the Spirit of God has been with them? Are you not looking after this? If you see this interest in their countenances--oh! what are you doing? Are you watching unto prayer? Do you feel how great their danger is? Do you feel that their crisis is infinitely more solemn than a fever would be, provided they were Christians? The eternal destinies may hang on that moment, and what are you doing? God is solemn and in earnest, angels are solemn and in earnest, devils are solemn and in earnest, the Holy Spirit is solemn and in earnest--*and do you trifle?* Who are you that you should trifle? Why the very one that heaven and hell are earnest about! Oh! sinner what are you doing? Professor of religion what are you doing? Who can come with his hand upon his breast and say, "Oh, Lord Jesus thou knowest that I love thee, that in my life I acknowledge thee, and that I do this in remembrance of thee, and will show forth thy death till thou comest?" Are you prepared to come and partake of these elements, and prepared to come in such a sense that those who know you feel that you are such a person that you have a right to come? Or do they say of you, What Mr. ------! why I should never have thought that he was a member! What! does he come to the Communion? Is that woman a professor? Why, I have seen them in such places, and under such circumstances that I should never have thought it!

A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF CHRIST

DELIVERED ON FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 28,1851,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

After the Admission of a number of new Members to the fellowship of the Church

All persons are or ought to be interested in the following points.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION?

II. WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR MAKING SUCH A PROFESSION?

III. WHAT ARE THE REASONS ASSIGNED BY THOSE WHO NEGLECT TO MAKE SUCH A PROFESSION, AS A JUSTIFICATION OF THEIR CONDUCT?

IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN NOT MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION?

All persons are really interested in the discussion of these questions, whether they feel so or not. Every one has really a deep interest in understanding these particular points. I shall not take any text to-night, and shall be compelled from want of time to be as brief as may be; and, therefore, must not enlarge upon these points. The field suggested by them is a vast one, and each of these heads might well occupy a full discourse. We have then, to inquire briefly, I. What is implied in making a public profession of religion? First: it is a public avowal of hearty confidence in the facts revealed in the gospel, and in Jesus Christ, together with all things that are recorded of him in the Bible; this is implied in making a public profession of religion- it is a public avowal of faith in Jesus, and a sincere and hearty belief of the facts and principles of the gospel.

Again: it is a public surrender to Christ, or submission to him. It is a public avowal of submission and consecration to him in the relations he sustains to men. It is, I say, a public act of submission, and a surrendering of everything up to him as the only Saviour of the world. Again: it is a public avowal of sympathy with him in the great work in which he is engaged, that of bringing about the salvation of men. Again, it implies a public renunciation of self and the spirit of self-seeking. A public profession of self-denial, in this sense, that we no longer live for ourselves; it is a profession therefore of universal devotion to God. But again: it also implies dependence on him in all the relations in which he is exhibited. Further: it implies a confession of sin that we cannot be saved by our own righteousness, not even begin to be saved. It is a public profession of the impossibility of being saved on the ground of law, and therefore a public declaration of the fact that Christ is the only possible way in which a man can be saved. All profession then is designed to be a public avowal of confidence in the truths of the gospel, of submission to Christ, and of dependence on his authority. Again: it is a public renunciation of the spirit of the world!

for a man cannot be in love with the world and with Christ too. It is an oath of allegiance to Christ. It is a public vouching that he is your God and Saviour. But once more, it is to profess to be representatives of Christ. By the very act of making a public profession of religion you profess that you have received the Spirit of Christ, and therefore, that you intend to exhibit it to the world. By professing religion you virtually say to the world, we will give you an illustration in our lives, temper, spirit, and actions, of what Christianity is. Nothing less than this is implied in making a public profession of the Christian religion. There are many other things that I might mention, which are implied in a public profession, but I have not time. We shall therefore proceed to notice- II. Some of the reasons why persons should make such profession. First: surely it is no more than simple honesty. The fact is, not to do so is to be guilty of the utmost wrong to God and Christ, to your own soul and to the world at large. The facts of the gospel being admitted - and they cannot with any show of reason be denied- to acknowledge them is but a simple act of honesty. Men are not their own, they are bought with a price, and therefore it is but honest that they should publicly acknowledge this. In short, everyone can see that the facts about Christ, his nature, his relations, his atonement, makes it a simple matter of honesty, that every man to whom the gospel is preached, should at once acknowledge that these things are so, and avow his confidence in them, his sympathy with them, his dependence on them, and his submission to them. It is easy to see that this is a mere act of simple honesty, and that no individual has a right to call himself an honest man who does not openly, publicly acknowledge these facts that are as true as heaven itself is true! But again: a public profession of Christianity is essential to self-respect. No person who understands the Christian religion, and does not publicly profess it, can respect himself -he has not, and cannot have any solid self-respect; he is, and must be ashamed of himself. Indeed, a gentleman of this city told me this fact of himself only to-day; that before he became a professor of religion, the minister, whose preaching he attended, used to deliver an annual sermon, in which he brought out the facts in relation to attendance at the communion table of the members of his congregation;

so many had celebrated the ordinance once, so many twice, or so and so many times, and a great many not at all. When these facts were brought out, said the gentlemen, I said, why, our minister takes notice of those persons who absent themselves from the communion table, and I became so ashamed of myself, as frequently to stay away altogether. I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself, that I could go to a Christian church, hear the word of God, mingle with the congregation, and with God's people, and yet after all never publicly avow my attachment to Christ, never avow my belief in the table, and in the gospel. Now from the nature of the case, a moral agent does not, and cannot sincerely respect himself if he knows himself to be dishonest; that he sustains such infinitely important relations to God, and yet refuses to acknowledge them; such a man, I say, cannot respect himself; he has no solid self-respect whatever. He knows that he is dishonest to God, ungrateful to the Saviour, and foolish to himself. I say, therefore, that all persons to whom the gospel is preached ought to understand this, that a public profession of the gospel is essential to true self-respect. And further: it is also essential to true peace of mind, because if a man does not make this public profession of what he knows to be the truth, he does not comply with the fundamental law of his own conscience, and his own being.

But once more: such a profession is, in every point of view, due to Christ. Every man who knows that Christ tasted death for every man, is bound to acknowledge it. Christ will become the advocate of every man who will submit his cause to him, and he is therefore bound to acknowledge his obligations to him. A great many sinners seem to forget that they receive their daily bread from heaven in consideration of what Christ has done for them. Everything they have in this world, every drop of water with which they cool their tongue, is granted because Christ has appeared on their behalf, and given himself to die for the world. God would no more give such blessings to the wicked as he actually does give them, than he would show such favours to the devils, if Christ had not undertaken the mediatorial work. Every man, then, simply regarding the fact that he is out of hell, whether saint or sinner, is bound to acknowledge his obligations to Christ, and that publicly, before all men.

There is a circumstance just come to my mind that will illustrate this. I think I related it before in this place, but no matter, I need not enter into particulars. A man who had lived many years, indeed all his life long, under the sound of the gospel, and who had made a profession of religion, but was not satisfied that he had ever given his heart to Christ, although he knew the truth, had a dream one night, in which it seemed to him that himself and his brother were journeying to a certain place, when a messenger from heaven met them, and said, as you travel along you will come to a place where the roads branch off, the one to the right, and the other to the left, and at that spot you must separate: you will be told which road you must each take and the one that takes the right will go to heaven, while he that takes the left must go to hell! Well, he thought they passed along, and he was in great agitation of mind, until they came to the roads of which the heavenly messenger had told him, when it was announced that he was to take the left hand. Filled with the greatest consternation, he turned about to pursue the path assigned him, and as he was about to part with his brother, he said to him, well, farewell brother, you are going to heaven, you have been a very good man, but I am going to hell! I shall not see you anymore, but I want you to tell the Lord Jesus Christ that I am greatly obliged to him for all the favours I have received at his hands, for all the good he has done me, and for all the good he would have done had I been willing. I have no fault to find, and no excuses make, but as I shall never reach heaven to see the Lord Jesus, I want you to carry this message to him, that I am greatly obliged for all that he has done for me, and even for what he now appoints, I have nothing to accuse him of although I have failed of heaven, for it is my own fault! With this he burst out into loud weeping, and awoke, and then there stood before him, in a manner most clear and bright, his own real relations to Christ. The dream has seemed to prepare his mind and probably the Holy Spirit was concerned in it, for a full reception of the truth; and it so broke his heart all to pieces, that he immediately surrendered himself to Christ. Now, observe, he recognized the fact, although he was going to hell as he supposed, that he had received a great many favours from God on account of Christ, and that, therefore, he owed a deep debt of gratitude and obligation to him, and so told his brother to thank him for those favours which he had received at his hands. Now I suppose many of you have not even done so much as that! Did you ever send such a message to Christ, or tell him yourself that you thanked him for his favours?

But again: it is right and reasonable, on the face of it, that you should publicly acknowledge Christ, and thus show that you regard yourself as being under very great and lasting obligations to him.

Once more: it is due to yourselves that you should make this acknowledgement. Again: it is due to those who are related to you, and over whom you may exert any influence. You cannot live without exerting some

influence, and therefore it is your duty to them who are likely to be influenced by you, that you should publicly profess Christ, and espouse his cause, and thus give them the full benefit of your example; their interests demand this, and you are under an obligation to give it. Think, if you are parents what an influence you have upon your children; and almost everything will depend upon the example that you set them.

Once more: you owe it to the church of God.The church have been praying for you, and to them doubtless, you are indebted for the blessings of life. If you read your Bible, you will find that the prayers of God's people being interposed, are continually assigned as the reasons and conditions upon which God spares sinners. It is the church that they owe the means of grace, and a great many of the blessings which they enjoy; they owe it to the church, therefore to make a public profession of religion.

Once more: you owe it to the world at large, because the world is infinitely interested in this matter, that you should not take the wrong side; and have, therefore, a right to claim the whole benefit of all that you might do to save the world if you did your duty. Once more: Christ expressly enjoins this upon all men. The gospel expressly commands that men should profess the name of Christ before the universe -this is one of the plainest commands in the whole Bible. Another reason why persons should publicly commit themselves to Christ is that it is useful to them: it is a foreclosing the heart against sin. Who does not see the importance of this? that the mind should as much as possible be closed against sin and temptation. A public profession is a guard upon the man who makes it. It forecloses the mind against those influences which might lead it away. The standing illustration of the Bible, of this principle, is the institution of marriage. There are a great many points of view in which it is of the greatest importance that parties who wish to live together, should commit themselves to each other by a public act. They would otherwise be much more exposed to temptation; and it is of great importance to the parties themselves. What a safeguard it is for the wife that she can stand forth as a married woman, against being addressed by other men, and the same with the husband. So it is with those who publicly commit themselves to Christ. It is a proclaiming to the world that it is no longer to expect their sympathy: they are now committed to Christ, and the door is closed against the world and sin.

But let me say again: the public profession of any individual presents an inducement for Christ to watch over him, and by his grace to secure his perseverance in a holy life. For example, when an individual thinks himself a Christian, and yet makes no public profession of Christ, what honour does he bring to Christ, and what inducement is there for Christ to watch over him? People see that he lives a consistent life, and as he makes no profession of Christ, all the credit of his conduct is ascribed to nature, and not to grace. The world will give all the credit to the man, and not to Christ, to whom it really belongs. Now what has Christ to do with such an individual as this? Here is an individual deeply indebted to Christ for everything good that he possesses, but he makes no public acknowledgment of it. Thus he does not honour Christ, why then should Christ continue to watch over him? Why should such a man's candle continue lighted, as it is always kept under a bushel? I say then, that when a man makes a public profession of Christ, and thus acknowledges his dependance on him, he presents an inducement for Christ to continue to give him grace. The Psalmist frequently mentions the fact that he had not kept his righteousness within his own heart, and concealed it from the great congregation. And there is something reasonable as well as scriptural in this. When a man fully commits himself to Christ he engages and ensures the protection of an Almighty arm; he throws himself upon the grace of Christ. Look at Peter in the ship. When Christ was walking on the water, he said, If it be thou bid me come to thee on the water; and as soon as the Lord said Come, he did not hesitate, but just cast himself upon the protection of Christ. Did he let Peter sink? O no, Christ did not let him sink when he had fully committed himself. So when an individual, from right motives, publishes his attachment to Christ, he may depend upon being preserved: Christ will never forsake him. Let him do this with all humility, and what an argument would it put into his mouth. O Lord Jesus, did I not commit myself to serve thee, and illustrate thy religion before the world depending on thee for grace, and now shall the light that is in me become darkness, shall thy grace be withheld, so that I shall crucify thee afresh, and put thee to an openshame? No, indeed, this shall never be in such a case. Would not that be an argument likely to prevail with Christ? Yes; and ought to have power with him if made in good faith.

Once more: another reason why we should make a public profession of religion is, that we ought to be in the channel in which his covenant blessings flow to his people. If we would have these blessings we must comply with God's order. Again: making a public profession of religion gives those who do it an especial interest in the sympathies and cares of the whole church militant. It is not true that people who belong to different denominations make up so many different churches.

The fact is, they are all branches of the church of God if they are real Christians: they may differ in certain forms, and minor things, but they are in heart essentially one. Every genuine disciple of Christ then, who avows his attachment, sustains an intimate relation to the entire church militant, and the church triumphant too, for they are both one. The head of the church is in heaven, and there also are the advanced members; while those who yet remain below entirely sympathize with those who are made perfect in heaven. Every visible member of Christ, then, brings himself by the public profession,under the watchful cares, the sympathy and prayers of the entire church of God. And is this a small thing? Understand, I am not speaking of mere hangers on to the church, and there has always been plenty of these in every age, but I speak of the true church in whatever denomination it is found.

Once more: another reason for making a public profession is, that when individuals come out and are entirely honest with themselves and with God, they then can respect themselves, for they have peace with God; they then have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and they are not the individuals to shrink away from public responsibility. But I cannot dwell any longer on this part of the subject. We have now to consider in a few words - III. Some of the reasons that are assigned, publicly or secretly, for the neglect of this duty.

One says, I am not a Christian. Well, and is that a good excuse for not doing your duty? It is only to assign one sin as an excuse for another. Why are you not a Christian? Suppose a man should attempt to justify himself for having committed some horrible crime by pleading the fact that he was very wicked and loved sin. That, certainly, would not be regarded as a good excuse! No! no! It will not do to plead that you are not a Christian, expecting that such a plea will excuse you, for it only aggravates your guilt.

Another says, I do not make a profession because I fear I should disgrace Christ and his cause. Indeed! Is that a good reason? Is it a true reason? I fear there must be some mistake in that. Do you so dread to dishonour Christ's name and cause, that you abstain on that account from making a public profession, lest by it you should dishonour him? Do you say that? Yes? Well, but is it no dishonour for you to deny him? Do you love him so much and fear to dishonour him and his cause, that you abstain from making a profession lest you should dishonour him? Indeed! How is it then that you are not afraid to sin by denying Christ, which you do by refusing to acknowledge him?

Ah, says another, I am afraid of such a responsibility. Indeed! And is there no responsibility in the other direction? You fear the responsibility of professing Christ! Well, do you not fear the heavier responsibility of denying him? Is there no responsibility in taking part with his enemies, and refusing to obey his commands? Yes, indeed, there is a solemn, awful responsibility.

Another says, It is such a solemn thing. Yes, indeed, it is: but is it not also a solemn thing not to make a public profession? It is a solemn thing, you say, if what I have said is actually implied in making a profession. Is it not a solemn thing? Yes, it is; but it is still more solemn to refuse to do it when Christ requires it, and reason, conscience, and the entire universe ask it at your hands.

Another reason assigned ofttimes is, I can as well be saved without it. What does this mean? As well be saved without it! Is it then a mere question of loss and gain with you? Is the great end in view simply to be saved, no matter how? Do you care nothing about sympathy with Christ? nothing about obeying his commands! so that you gain salvation at last; is that all you care about? But what can you mean by that, Can be as well saved without it. Can you be saved by disobeying Christ as well as by obeying him? You refused to acknowledge him, and yet expect to be saved by him? What does Christ himself say to you He that is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels. Now I suppose it is true that where individuals have no opportunity to avow and acknowledge Christ before men they may be saved without; but if men neglect to perform their duty where opportunities offer to comply with it, they will not be held excused. To say that persons can be saved without publicly acknowledging Christ when they have every opportunity to do it, is equivalent to saying that they can just as well be saved in sin as by breaking off from it. What is sin but a neglect of duty. Can a man live and die in sin and yet be a Christian? O, but say some, this is only one sin. Well, suppose it is, if you live in it deliberately you live in sin, for if you indulge in any form of iniquity you do not renounce one sin from your heart. Now, can you recognize God's authority in anything if you do not in everything? What does the Bible say? If a man offend in one point he is guilty of all. There is a great mistake I believe on this subject. A great many people suppose that they can neglect this duty, while they acknowledge it to be so, and yet get to heaven as well as if they complied with it. You who think so are entirely mistaken, for you live in known sin if you neglect acknowledged duty; and how can you be saved if you live in sin? It is impossible!

Once more: a public profession of religion is the way to have the evidence of acceptance with God. How can you expect to realize the promises without a public committal of yourself to Christ? It is faith that inherits the promises and not unbelief. The fact is that many persons are waiting for evidences that they are accepted of God, while they are unwilling to obey him. Further: a great many persons who have had a clear hope in Christ have put off making a public profession until they have grieved the spirit and brought darkness over their own mind. The path was once clear, but they neglected it, and now, mark! they will in all probability die in that darkness, or be obliged to make a public profession of religion before God will restore to them the light which they seek. I have known a great many cases of persons waiting for light, but have not obtained it till they have made up their minds to obey God; and when they have done this then light has come.

But once more: another reason assigned is, I do not like publicly to commit myself. Now that excuse, right on the face of it, is an evidence that your heart is not right; for if your heart was right you would not hesitate for an instant to commit yourself before the world. Nay! You would be anxious, as publicly as possible to attach yourself to Christ. Another reason, which is sometimes assigned by individuals is, that it will subject them to be scrutinized. People will watch me to see how I live. Ah! and do you shrink away from that? If I do not make a public profession, so much will not be expected of me. Indeed! And is that a good reason why you should not make a public profession? What ought to be expected of you? But another says, It will subject me to persecution. Indeed! And is that a good reason for not making a public profession? Did Christ shrink back from coming to rescue you because it would subject him to persecution? Was he never persecuted for you, and cannot you afford to bear any persecution for him? Surely it is enough that the servant be as his Lord, and the disciple as his Master! If Christ had held back from your salvation on account of persecution, where would you have been? But he did not withhold his cheek from the smiters,and from those that plucked off the hair; he was maligned, slandered, and murdered for your sake.How then does it become you to talk in that way?

Again: some people, I am ashamed to say, do not make a public profession of religion, because if they did they would be expected to support the institutions of the gospel. And is that a good reason why you should not espouse the cause of Christ, because that by doing so you would be expected to do your part in this great work? O shame, that anybody ever should have such a thought! Whose are you? and to whom belong all your possessions? Cannot you afford to be a professor of religion? Afford it! ! And could Christ afford to die for you? Suppose he had said, when he found what your salvation would cost him, I cannot afford it! Where would you and I have been tonight if Christ had said he could not afford to save us?

Another says, It will subject me to greater restraint than I like. I shall not be able to go to such and such places. I sometimes like to visit the theatre, but that is no place for professors of religion. Now I can occasionally gratify myself in this way; but if I made such a public profession, such a course would injure the cause of Christ. Then you mean to indulge yourself, and you do not like the restraints that Christ would impose upon you. Well, and do you expect to secure heaven and indulge in your sinful gratifications too? You want gratifications that are inconsistent with the Christian character, and yet you hope to be saved. Friends! do not deceive yourselves, I beg of you!

Once more: I fear I shall be sorry if I do. What will make you sorry? Do you think that if you make a public profession, and then live as you ought to live, that you will be sorry? Some people I fear mean by this excuse to say, I shall wish to be out of the church of God because I shall not like to live such a life as will be demanded of me. Now if you feel thus, it is a plain proof that you have not committed your soul to Christ.

But another says, I do not know what church to join, there are so many denominations and churches. Cannot you make up your mind? Consult Christ, then, and see if you cannot get some light. Is there nowhere that you can have Christian sympathy and fellowship? O yes, you can find a place! There are those who have prayed for you, and earnestly besought the Lord to distill upon you the dews of his heavenly grace, and if you seek, you will find them.

Once more: It is a dreadful thing to make a false profession, say some. So it is; but is it not a dreadful thing to make no profession at all? Oh, but I can live a Christian life without it! Well, suppose you did! I have already intimated that this would be really to deny Christ, and refuse him his proper due. Man gets the praise himself for his consistent walk, although it is the effect of the water of grace which Christ has distilled upon his heart. This is giving all to nature, and robbing Christ. When the communion table is spread, he keeps away; and what does this say to the world? Why, virtually this, See how I keep myself; you see I have no need of Christ: you see how good I am, but I owe nothing to the grace of Christ! But it is false! it is false! You cannot be a Christian and make no profession of

Christ! But I am to notice very briefly IV. What is implied in NOT making a public profession of religion.

First, it is a public denial and rejection of Christ; and it is also a denial of him of the most empathic kind it is a denial of the LIFE: it is a denial of dependence on him or obligation to him, and a most emphatic denial, not in words but in DEEDS! Again: it is a profession that you have no part nor lot in religion. Again: it is a denial of the truth in relation to Christ. Again: it is a public acknowledgment of unbelief, or infidelity, which is unbelief. Once more: it is a public proclamation that in your view, the Christian religion is a delusion, and Christ is an imposter! Perhaps you do not say this nor really intend it: perhaps you never thought that this was implied in not making a public profession, but it is true nevertheless. Again: not to make a profession of Christ is a public avowal of sympathy on the other side. Now I know that many persons are not aware of the things that are involved in standing aloof from a profession of Christ, and it is for this reason that I state these things, that they who hear me may no longer be in ignorance.

Once more: it is a public profession of impenitence as well as unbelief. Observe, everybody makes some public profession. You are not to suppose that because you do not make a public profession in favour of religion that therefore you make no profession about it, for you do. Your refusing to profess Christ is a public declaration against him. His friends are on one side, and his enemies on the other, and you must belong to one party or the other: and if you are not committed to him you voluntarily subject yourselves to the doom of the enemies of Christ.

I must close with just one or two remarks. Professors of religion should watch over each other with paternal love; watch over them for good and not for evil. I am sorry to say that I have sometimes witnessed a spirit the very opposite of this. I have seen old professors watching for the halting of younger Christians. Oh! I trust it will not be so in this church! but that you will set yourselves to be brothers and sisters indeed; and that the fathers will sympathize with the youth!

Once more: young professors should always remember that they voluntarily place themselves in such a position as to draw the eyes of the world upon them, and of the church. They are the spectacle of angels and of men. Let them remember this!

But thirdly: let them not be deterred from witnessing for Christ on account of the great responsibility which it involves. Christ has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." therefore do not hesitate to put yourselves in the position that Christ requires. He will give you strength equal to your day.

Once more: identify yourselves with every Christian effort. Let all young Christians, who have now become assembled in the fellowship of the church, and others who will do so, doubtless, on the next admission, identify themselves fully with the people of God. Always manifest your sympathy with every good work, and everything which belongs to God's cause. You have publicly espoused it, let it possess your heart. Let all your actions witness that your profession is not an empty profession!

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

A Farewell Sermon

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1851,

BY THE REV. C.G. FINNEY,

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts xx. 26, 27.

I preach from this text, as some of you are aware, at Dr. Campbell's particular request. Much as I have laboured as an Evangelist, and the many times I have been called to part with those amongst whom I have laboured, I have never allowed myself to preach from this text; and when the Doctor asked me to do so this evening, I told him that I did not feel as if I could; there are so many affecting things in it about the Apostle; and I am further loth to preach upon it, lest some should infer that I am in some sense comparing myself with the Apostle, than which nothing is further from my design or desire. In speaking from these words I shall notice- I. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE ASSERTION THAT THE APOSTLE WAS PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN

This will be best explained by a reference to what is said on the same subject and almost in the same words by the prophet Ezekiel, in the third chapter of his prophecy" Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not

warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered: but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not,and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; (or because he takes warning,) also thou hast delivered thy soul." Here you see involved the same principle as that of which the Apostle speaks, and it explains what the Apostle meant. You know also that in scripture the blood is said to be the life. Of course this language is figurative: the life of the soul is called its blood; and for the reason that I have just mentioned. To be clear from the blood of men, then, is to be clear of the charge of unfaithfulness to their souls. To be clear from the blood of all men in the sense in which the apostle affirms himself to be so, means that he was not to blame if they should lose their souls: he had discharged his duty to them: if their souls were lost they were answerable for it, not himself. In further remarking upon this passage, I design to notice the three following thoughts-

I. THAT THE SOUL IS OF INFINITE VALUE.

II. THAT IT CANNPOT BE LOST WITHOUT INFINITE GUILT SOMEWHERE; BECAUSE INFINITE RESPONSIBILITY MUST BE INCURRED SOMEWHERE. III. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH ALL WHO HAVE THIS RESPONSIBILITY MAY BE CLEAR OF THE BLOOD OF THE SOUL.

This is a theme so vast that when an individual gives up his mind to consider and dwell upon it he is completely confounded. It is like eternity: the mind seems to topple in the attempt to grasp it, and become convulsed and agonized in the effort to conceive it. In the Bible the soul is always represented as of great value; and you all know that everything which is really valuable must ever belong to mind; for nothing can be of value except as a means of promoting the welfare and well-being of mind: nothing can be valuable in itself but that which constitutes the well-being of mind. Take all the mind out of the universe, and what is there left of any real value: Joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, all belong to the mind. Especially is this true of all intelligent mind the mind of moral agents; and it is, of course, the souls of moral agents of which I now speak. Of mere brute beasts we have the means of knowing but little; and therefore we cannot say much about them. When we speak of the souls of men, we refer to some things that are believed to be immortal.

Now let me say, the first thought in reference to the value of the soul is this, its eternity of existence it must live forever! When souls have once began to be, they will never cease to be: they will grow older and older, and live onward and onward and onward as long as God shall live! Now think of that! I must not extend my remarks nor longer dwell upon it. But another consideration is, that from the very nature of mind it must be either happy or miserable; and further, that as the mind is so enduring, its enjoyments or sufferings will be continually and everlastingly upon the increase. This must be so as the result of a natural and necessary law. The means of greater happiness or misery will increase. The mind will go on progressing in knowledge, and consequently the power of the mind and its capacity for enjoyment or misery will be forever enlarging. But I must not extend my remarks upon this thought. I have dwelt considerably upon this on a former occasion, when I preached on "the Infinite Value of the Soul," and therefore there is the less need for enlarging upon it now.

I proceed to say in the next place, by way of elaborating a little the thought just now presented, that the soul when it once begins to exist will go on enjoying or suffering forever and ever, and that its capacity for enjoyment or suffering also increases with its duration; and its capacity at any time in a future state will be full of either the one set of feelings or the other. And further, it is easy to see that the period must arrive when each individual shall be either enjoying or suffering more than would fill the conceptions of all finite creatures. If you could unite in one mind all the intellect of the universe at this moment excepting only that of God himself it would not be capable of either the joy or the suffering that may be predicated of any single mind at some period in the future. Indeed such a mind would fall infinitely short of realizing that of which every soul at some point of eternity will be capable. Every individual in this house now, the youngest child or the weakest mind, will have to live forever, after the elements shall have been melted by the fire, and the universe have rolled together as a scroll and passed away with a great noise; and the time, therefore, must come when each of you, whatever your grasp of mind now will be able to look back upon the lengthened ages which you shall have lived, the vast number of circles which shall have rolled away, and

remember all your sorrows and your joys, and be able to say, Ah! I have enjoyed, or suffered, as the case may be, in my personal experience more than all the creatures of God has ever suffered or enjoyed before I was born, or before I came to this place. And when he has said that, he will be infinitely short of the truth.The period will arrive when the youngest child in this congregation will be able to say, I am older now than was any creature of God when I was born; aye! than were the aggregate age of all the intelligences of God's universe when I first began to be, and infinitely more experienced now than they all were then. Yes, and I have received more favours, mercy, and grace from God now, than they all had received when I first started into existence. And they all have been progressing and receiving additional favours just as I have. They are as far ahead of me now as they were then, for God has not confined his favours to me. The period will arrive when the last admitted inhabitant of heaven will be able to say, I know more of God now than they all knew when I came here; I am older now than they all were then. My single cup of knowledge will not hold more than at that time all theirs combined that indeed which runs over the side of mine would have filled theirs. But what have you said even when you have said this? Behind there lies an eternity still; you may roll on the waves of the ocean in that direction forever, for there is neither shore nor bound; neither height, nor depth, nor bottom; infinity is on every side!

How many hundreds of years has Paul been in heaven, and with him associated his spiritual children, those who were converted under his ministry! At some period in eternity the youngest child now alive, or ever will live, who gets to heaven, will be able to say, I now know a thousand times more about God and heaven than Paul did when he was upon earth, or than all the church of God combined knew at that time. (But after all, this is only a very faint conception of eternity and the progress of the mind in a future state.) Draw out the thought to any possible or conceivable extent: let any computation be made: let your mind stretch itself to its utmost tension, and what then? Why you have only just set your foot on the threshold of eternity: you are no nearer to the end than when you made the first step. The joy of heaven is always and absolutely perfect: the soul will be continually and forever rising and rising nearer to God, but there will never be any approaching to a close in anything there, seeing that everything is absolutely infinite!Now turn it over and look at the other side. Think if an individual who goes on sinning, and sinning, just as if there was no such place as hell! There was a first time when you consented to sin, and there was a first pang of conscience in your little mind, and a tear gathered in your little eye. Could anybody have looked into your little heart, and beheld that twinge of your little mind,and seen that heavy sigh, could it have been supposed that you would ever sin again? Ah! But you have repeated it again and again, and on you have gone until now! Just think then for a moment of that individual going into eternity! Then all restraint is taken away. The pleasures of sin too are all cut off; and all good influences have died away forever. He has received all his good gifts and good things. He abused God's mercy, rejected God's gospel, grieved God's Spirit, done despite to the Spirit of grace, and went on in sin; and now, therefore, he is sinning with increasing vigour rushing on in sin! Ah! think of the many sorrows, the many agonizings, the many hours of remorse that the sinner has to endure even here; but then, in a future world, when conscience will do its duty perfectly, when there is no diverting the attention from his true condition; when he cannot shut his eyes to the truth; what will be his agony and remorse then? When he feels that his soul is lost, and lost forever? He cannot repent of his sins then. No! but he goes on sinning still.Sinner, if you be numbered with the lost, the period in that awful eternity will arrive when you will have sinned more than all the devils in hell have sinned up to the present hour! All the devils in that world have not yet created such a source of misery, as at some period you will have done if you are lost! Nay! All the devils, and all the wicked men who have left our world to be their companions in woe, have not in the aggregate committed as many sins as you will be able to claim as your own. The period must arrive when to attempt to number your sins would be an inexpressible source of the deepest agony. Who can count them? Who can compute them? What but an infinite mind could look at them without being so overcome as to wail out in the agonies of despair? if the mind was not infinitely holy.

There is no real believing in immortality, taking it as a truth into the mind, and contemplating it from any point of view, without an individual feeling as if his nerves were on fire with such convictions as these. But I must not enlarge upon this, or I should keep you here all night. I proceed in the next place to show II. *That no soul of such infinite value can be lost without somebody incurring an infinite amount of responsibility and guilt.*

God is in a three fold sense the owner of every one of these souls. First, he created them all. Secondly, he preserved them all, and thirdly, he redeemed them all, by the precious blood of Christ. They cost him an infinite price, and he will not see them lost without making inquisition for blood. By a word he gave existence to the

material universe. He can speak, and by the energy of his own word, world rises upon world, and system upon system, and by the same means he can people them all; but thus he could not redeem sinners. They, having sinned, were spiritually dead, and incurred the penalty of the Divine law; and to save them from the destruction thus impending was a different work to that of creation, and could not be performed by the going forth of his fiat. To redeem these souls was a work that cost him an infinite price. To ordain these laws by which they came into existence, was comparatively a trifling performance although that required the power of a God but to redeem you, sinner, to purchase you back, to relieve you from the penalty of the Divine law; to make an atonement that God might be just and yet save you cost an infinite price! God's beloved and only Son! for more than thirty years endured intense suffering, labour, persecution, and misrepresentation for you, and finally, your redemption cost him his life. Ah! under the charge of blasphemy the Son of God must die for you and for me! God, for man gave his son, his only son, his well beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. the Son of God must die! What a sacrifice!It was infinite! Think brethren, of the immense self-denial to which heaven was subjected! Think of that work which, shall I say, the family of the Divine Trinity; what shall I say? the glory of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, combined to carry on with the greatest self-denial; and all this to save the soul! What a testimony is this to its value! We learn here God's opinion of the value of the soul. Think what self-denial on the part of the Father, that he could consent to fit off his only and well beloved Son as a missionary to this world. What must the inhabitants of heaven have thought of it? What a scene must there have been in heaven when the Son of the Eternal Father was fitted off as a missionary to save this dying world!

We talk about missionaries to the heathen, and the self-denial which they have to practice, and we get up meetings when they are going to sail for distant climes, that we may manifest our sympathy and mingle our tears with theirs, sing hymns to God, and pray together and give them our blessings and our prayers; and all this is highly proper; but what must have been the state of things when it was announced in heaven that the Son of God was going as a missionary to this world to save us rebels by his blood! There must have been tears of grief and also of inexpressible joy at what was going forward, sympathy for the inhabitants of this world, astonishment at the love of God, and wonder at the undertaking of the Son of God. The whole scheme, when it was first published in heaven, must have filled every part of that world with unutterable joy and sympathy. O, how many millions of hearts were united in sympathy with this wonderful mission which the Son of God had undertaken.

Now mark! God has committed to each of you one of these immortal souls; and made provision for its eternal life, although it was doomed to die, and he has enjoined it upon each one to take care of his soul. He asks you, "what will you give in exchange for your soul?" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" In every way he expresses his own idea of the infinite value of the soul. He has charged every man to look to make it his first business to secure it from eternal death. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and those who do this he promises shall lose nothing by it" And all other things shall be added unto you;" everything else that you need shall be thrown in, if you will only be careful not to lose your soul! "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This is the charge that is given to every man! This is the solemn charge that is given to every woman! I commit to you an immortal soul; take care you do not lose it! I prize it infinitely. I have given my Son to die for it. I love it with an everlasting love!But I cannot save it without your concurrence; I must have your consent; I must have your heart;I must have your sympathy. Take care that you do not lose it; but it is impossible, from the nature of the case, to save it without your consent. Take care that you set about its salvation! Let this be your first, your great, your perpetual concern the saving of your soul. O take care of this soul!

But again: it is not only an infinite gift which an individual has received in charge in respect of his own soul; but all those receiving the gift have a charge given with respect to the souls around them. Ministers, especially, have received this charge. "Son of man," says God, to every one of them, mark what I say, "I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel; hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked man thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Again: he has given a solemn charge to the church at large on this subject, and of course to each individual member of the church, not only to regard his own soul, but to watch, take care, remember, pray for, warn, and exhort, and labour for the souls of those around him. Christian parents, teachers, brothers, sisters, and all

classes of Christians are to take care of their own souls, and also of the souls of those around them. "What I say unto one I say unto all, Watch."

Again: God has also laid a charge upon all men to love their neighbours as themselves, to care for the souls of their neighbours as they would for their own. Every wicked man is bound to love God, to love the soul of his neighbour, and to love his own soul; and not to neglect his own soul nor the souls of those under his influence. But I must pass in the next place to notice in a few words

III. *The conditions upon which all who have this responsibility may be clear of the blood of the soul.*

And let me say, it is perfectly plain that we cannot be clear of the blood of souls unless we have done what we wisely and properly could to prevent their being lost. Of course, if we live in sin ourselves, we are guilty of our own blood; and if we do not do our duty by others we are not clear of their blood. It may be useful to advert, for a moment, to the different classes of duty, which arise out of, and attaches to the various relations in which men stand. Ministers, for instance, are public teachers, and as such they must be "instant in season and out of season;" they must preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; they must lay themselves on the altar and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. They must not keep back anything that is profitable to their hearers; they must select such truths as they think most needful to be known, and faithfully declare them, and seek zealously to apply them to the hearts and consciences of those to whom they minister; and further, they must live in such a manner as to show that in their own hearts they believe what they preach. They must not think that they will be clear from the blood of souls, merely because they publish the truth with their lips; they must preach also in their temper and life; they must be true and serious teachers in everything. Church officers, deacons, and others, also ought to consider their responsibility: let them remember that it is great; and that they can be clear from the blood of souls only by living in such a manner as to be what they ought to be in every relation which they sustain.

Next, take parents; see what great responsibilities they have. Only think. They are exerting a greater influence over their children than all the world beside, and as a natural result, they will do more for or against the souls of their children than all other beings in the world. They begin the work of life or death, so far as influence is concerned; they also carry it on and ripen it; and if their children are lost, because they have neglected to do their duty, their hands are red to the elbows with their children's blood! Think of that! See that mother's hand. What! has she been murdering her children? What is she about? She lives not, prays not, labours not for the salvation of her children! O, mother! What are you about?

There is not time, of course, to descend into all the relations of life, and show how responsibility attaches itself to them all; but let what I have said be suggestive. You may apply it to Sabbath school teachers, missionaries, brothers and sisters, young converts, and older Christians for each one sustains peculiar responsibilities; and no one can be guiltless of the blood of souls who does not do his duty, whatever it may be, who does not labour faithfully, as God shall give him an opportunity, and in the spirit and with the power which God offers to clothe him with, for the salvation of the souls of men.

Once more: of course it is expected of ministers that they shall warn, exhort, and rebuke with all long-suffering and doctrine.

But having dwelt this much upon the three leading thoughts, I must proceed to make some remarks.

First, to have a clear conscience in respect of this great matter is of inestimable value. Now, for example, what an infinite consolation it must be to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to know that nothing which could have been wisely and benevolently done for the salvation of men was omitted that everything which could be done for this great end by an infinite and enlightened benevolence was done, nothing omitted; so that when God sees the sufferings of the wicked of the whole universe, when he looks at them and pours his eye over them, and listens to their terrible wailings, just think of the consolation he will have in being able to say, I am clear of their blood! I am clear! I call the universe to record that I am clear!

Why, I suppose this to be one of the great objects of the general judgment, that God, if I may use such an expression may clear up his character, and vindicate his conduct in the presence of the entire universe; and bring all created intelligence to pronounce sentence of deserved damnation upon the wicked. At the present, we cannot pronounce upon God's conduct any further than the law of our own intelligent consciousness affirms that he must be right, as so far as he has condescended to explain himself to us; but mark! the time is coming when he will reveal everything to us; every transaction of the divine government shall be disclosed; at a period when suns and moons have ceased to rise and set; and days and years, as we number them, have ceased to

cycle away; when men shall have ceased to grow, and their eyes are not dim with age, for they have ceased to die, and are immortal; then the time shall come to consider the whole matter. And God possesses the means, for this infinite mind has recorded all the facts; and thus he will bring into perfect remembrance the transactions of the entire universe from first to last. Then doubtless, he will explain the reasons for his own conduct, and show the design he had in the creation, and in all the providential arrangements of his government; then every mouth shall be stopped, not one will be able to say a single word more of the impropriety of anything that God has done, and the whole world will become guilty before God: everything that he has done will receive the unanimous consent of the entire universe: they will declare that he is infinitely far from the least fault in all this matter, when he has placed everything in such a light, that there can be no doubt of his perfect wisdom and benevolence. Then he will know that they know, as he now knows, and will eternally know, that he has done all that infinite love, and power, and wisdom could do to save those immortal souls that he regarded as of such infinite value.

Again: suppose God's conscience condemns him, that he knows he has done that which his own infinite mind must pronounce wrong and unbecoming in himself to do, who does not know that such a thought would fill his infinite mind with sorrow and remorse all through eternity, rolling onward and onward and onward, through a life of accumulating misery. Suppose, we say, that he could accuse himself of any error, or wrong, or oversight, or anything that he should have attended to, or could have done wisely, but did not do, for the salvation of souls why, it would fill his own mind with a pang that would really make it an infinite hell!

But there will be no such thing. Right over against this the eternal consciousness of being clear will fill his infinite mind with satisfaction. When the universe look upon the ten thousand millions of murdered souls yea, more than can ever by computed that shall stand revealed at the day of judgment, the question will be asked, Who has committed these murders? God says, I AM CLEAR! The Father says, I AM CLEAR! The Holy Ghost says, I AM CLEAR! Now then, inquisition must be made for blood. Who has been guilty of this deed? What deeds of death are here? What dreadful things have been done? Who are the guilty parties?

Once more: Paul said to those to whom he had preached, that they knew very well, from their own observation, that he was clear of their blood; and he called upon them again to make a record of the fact that he might take it with him and use it at the solemn judgment, and confront them with it before the throne of God; and thus prove by their own testimony that he was clear from the blood of them all. What consolation this is for a faithful minister. Again: it must be a dreadful thing on the other hand for an unfaithful minister to meet his people in the day of judgment! Indeed it is a dreadful thing for such a minister to leave a people amongst whom he has been labouring. Suppose he leaves them with conscious misgivings, or direct accusations, you have been an unfaithful minister, you have been seeking your own popularity for his conscience may perhaps accuse him of that you have laboured for filthy lucre, you have been indolent, you have truckled to the most false and pernicious sentiments; in short, you have not rightly represented God and his gospel, and have concealed the truth lest it should give offence to men. Suppose conscience speaks thus. You have sought to create a reputation for yourself; but you have not laboured for the conversion of souls! Ah! you will soon have to die, and they also will depart into eternity to whom you have ministered. How do you expect to meet these souls in the solemn judgment? You will have to meet them face to face. What a meeting that will be. Yes, we shall meet again; we shall meet at the bar of God, and see him face to face. What will be the object of our meeting at that awful tribunal? Why, for God to tell the universe that he has done everything that he wisely could for the salvation of your souls; and you to give an account of the manner in which you have received or rejected his offers of mercy!Now we are all going on, and will shortly appear before the great white throne, on which shall sit the Judge in terrible majesty, with the heavens and the earth all fleeing from his presence; then the books shall be opened; yea, and all the dead shall be judged out of those books; and the sea shall give up its dead. Never was I at sea but these words have come with solemn emphasis to my mind, and I expect that in a few days, when I am on the mighty waters, they will recur to me again. "The sea shall give up the dead that is in it, and death and hell shall give up the dead that is in them." Ah! that will be a solemn time for ministers, for hearers, for parents, for children, for old and young: yes, it will be a solemn time for all, for saints and sinners both. Ah! we must each give an account of himself to God. What a responsibility is this.

I was a pastor for eighteen years, and I have laboured a great deal as an Evangelist; hundreds, nay thousands, therefore, who have sat under my ministry have gone before me into the eternal world; I shall follow them, and a great mass of others will follow me; and by and by we shall all be congregated. And what then? I know that it is one thing to talk, and another thing to walk right up with

open face before God, and take his judgment in the matter. All secrets will then be laid open, the deepest intentions of the mind will be brought out and exhibited; every motive of my heart, and every sermon that I have preached, will be closely scanned and scrutinized. The truth upon every point will be brought up, and the whole universe will hear it. Ah, that will be a solemn time for me, for mark! scores of thousands in America and in Great Britain, will either have to face me down or I them. Think of that! I am not going to say all that Paul said.

But once more: it must be an awful thing for congregations to meet their ministers, those who have had pastors, or heard only occasional preaching. Brethren, think of it. I have often thought that of all the relations existing in this world, that of pastor and people is the most solemn; for God will surely make inquisition for blood: he must require this at someone's hand; and it will be a solemn time for the pastor if he is to blame. No soul will be lost without the inquiry being made, Who has done this deed? Who has shed this blood? Who has filled the world of hell with mourning, lamentation, and woe? The cry will resound, loud and withering, WHO HAS DONE IT? As I have said, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost will say, *we have not done it.* The faithful in all ages will say, *we have not done it.* Who then has been guilty of this dreadful and accursed deed? I will tell you who. First, the sinner has done it himself; secondly, unfaithful ministers have done it; unfaithful deacons, elders, and leading members in the church have done it; unfaithful parents have done it; unfaithful children have done it; unfaithful brothers and sisters have done it; unfaithful Sabbath school teachers have done it; in short, all unfaithful men have done it; they are red with the blood of souls. You may know that they have been guilty of murder for the blood of their victims is upon their garments. Cast your eyes upon them and behold they are red from head to foot with the blood of men! All can see that they have done it; every man is covered with his neighbour's blood. See that man! his hands are imbued in the blood of his own soul, the souls of his children, or of his flock, and all those to whom he has been unfaithful. Oh, brethren, I say again, just think of it! See that murderer standing over his victim, his weapons reeking in blood; he is caught in the very act of murder; he cannot deny it, for blood is upon him.

But see the unfaithful minister in the day of judgment, he comes on to his trial, but he cannot look up. Those who sat under his ministry have caught sight of him, and they say to each other that is our minister; you remember his pretty tastes, his dazzling oratory, his graceful amblings, and his captivating blandishments; you remember about his pretty sermons, and you recollect how afraid he was to say hell, or let us know there was such a place; you recollect how he trimmed and truckled, how opposed to this thing and that thing, because it was not genteel, and was against all reform or progress in religion do you remember all that: well that was our minister; see him looking down: he is speaking, what does he say? What does he say? See the eye of the judge looking through and through that unfaithful minister, that man who pretended to preach the gospel, and dealt deceitfully with souls. How much guilt there is upon him! What an awful thing that must be! How dreadful his position.

But once more: I have sometimes in my own experience had great searchings of heart on this matter, lest I should have preached myself instead of the gospel. Thousands of times when I have pressed myself close up, I have had fear lest the blood of souls was upon me. When I have heard that this man and that man was gone, who had sat under my ministry, I have often asked myself, Have I done my duty by that man? was I faithful? or was I indolent and unfaithful? Did I shun to declare the whole counsel of God? I have often thought of this also and I say it, not boastfully as you know, that I could say so far as I know myself I had never kept back what I thought the people wanted most to know; that I never kept back what I believed the people most needed to be told, because I was either afraid of them on the one hand or any other motive on the other. I never had courage to keep back the truth. When people have said sometimes, how dare you preach this thing and the other, I have told them that I had not courage to disobey God, and rush to the solemn judgment with the blood of souls on my hands. Indeed I have no such courage! Whom should I fear, God or man. How much faith must a man have if he cannot walk right up and tell the sinner the truth of God to his face. And if he cannot do this, how can he walk right up the face of God and then give an account of himself to the great searcher of hearts! He who is more afraid of men, than of God, must be an infidel.

Once more: I have already intimated, that in the judgment, sinners will find themselves without excuse; and as in the case of Ezekiel, their blood will be upon their own head; but that is not all: it is also true that there may be moral guilt in not doing our duty, in not warning, praying, and labouring for our neighbours as we ought. I have also spoken of faithless ministers meeting their people at the day of judgment, and the disposition they will have to curse him. I have sometimes wondered if their strong feelings of hate will find vent; whether there will be an audible expression of them. For example, whether at the judgment the

multitude whom the unfaithful minister has misled will be permitted to give audible vent to the natural feelings of indignation that burn within their breasts; whether they will be allowed to curse him. They will be wicked enough and have reason enough, but will they be allowed to curse him. They have more reason to curse him, perhaps, than all the world beside. More reason to say, O thou most accursed and wicked man, did you not trifle with my soul; did I not look up to you as my religious teacher; did I not yield myself up to your guidance; and did you not deceive me with lies, and by keeping from me the truth, by which I might have been saved and all here been well? Such feeling will exist; but will the judge permit them to find audible expression? If so, is it too much to suppose that they will hiss, and groan, and curse, while they weep and gnash their teeth! The same thing will doubtless also be true of parents.

But let me turn over this picture, and look upon another. What a meeting it will be when all the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the prophets, Elijah, and Elisha, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and all the minor prophets, and all the apostles, and faithful ministers of a later time, shall assemble in heaven! I have often thought of that wonderful convention which took place when the Saviour was upon earth the most wonderful, perhaps that ever occurred in this world. You remember the history of the event.Christ took Peter, James, and John with him up into a mountain and was transfigured before them,and there appeared Moses and Elijah the two great representatives of the old dispensation. There was Moses, by whom came the law; and Elijah, who represented the whole race of prophets, in conference with the head of the church triumphant, about the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, and the three representatives of the church militant. What a scene of wonder was that! We are told that the glory was so intense that the apostles were quite overcome, and Peter said, "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." They were so near heaven, so filled with awe and delight, that they know not what they said.

Now just think for a moment how it will be by and by. Moses, for example, has been dead for thousands of years, and has long since become surrounded by a multitude who have found their way to heaven through his direct instruction, or by means of his writings which have been handed down from generation to generation; and all the saints will doubtless know Moses when they get there, of whom they have heard so much, as well as of the patriarch Abraham, and of the apostles and prophets; and when the newly arrived saint shall have a little time, after gazing at the wonders and glories of the place, he will look around for these ancient worthies, and perhaps shake them by the hand, and weep tears of gratitude and joy upon their necks.

Whitfield, who once stood in the pulpit in which I now stand, and the multitudes who heard his voice sitting in those pews in which you now sit, will meet in heaven. Think of that! How many thousands are gone that once saw and heard him; and they now find themselves again united in that blessed world. they are still rational and intelligent, and able to mingle their hearts and their joys; and the time will come when the whole church of God, pastors and people, will be gathered home to glory. O, how fast they are going. Why, since I have been in London I have heard of the departure of the Rev. Dr. Pye Smith,* together with this man and that man, names with which I have been familiar even in America. And so we are all following on, fathers, mothers, ministers, brothers, sisters, all are going. How many of this congregation have taken their flight since I have been here! Just look around. Of how many have I heard it said, they are gone, they are gone! We shall all be gone presently; and that very soon. But what a glorious thought that when we meet in that world of light and joy, the heavenly Jerusalem, it will be to part no more at all. Those of us who shall have our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, we shall meet to say farewell or adieu no more.

When I read to you at the commencement of this service the chapter from which the text is taken,I omitted the last three verses, which I will read now:" And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. Andthey accompanied him into the ship." What a beautiful parting: how deeply affecting. But I must not detain you. I have only to say this before I sit down; and to be sure I would do it with all humility, may I not ask you who have been my hearers since I have been in London, as a matter of justice to record tonight this fact, that according to my ability, I have dealt faithfully with your souls. I challenge you now to record this fact, for I am sure that you bear this testimony in your own consciences, will you bear it in mind at the solemn judgment, that so far as I have had ability I have kept nothing back that you needed to know. I do not say this boastfully: God will judge between us.

But some I fear I shall leave in their sins after all. Remember, I shall meet even you again. Do let me ask if you have yet begun the great work of preparing for the judgment. Have you not begun it yet? You have heard

most solemn appeals and warnings; let me ask you once more, will you think? will you act? My dear hearers, will you rid me of all responsibility by saying, yes, yes, if I perish, it is not your fault, you have done your work faithfully, you have not daubed with untempered mortar, and I consent that the fact should be recorded in the solemn judgment that you are clear.

But I want not only to be able to feel the conviction of this in my own conscience, but that my record should be on high. I know it is vain for me to seek to justify myself, unless it is recorded in heaven that I have dealt faithfully with you. I trust I have. I shall see most of you probably no more, till we meet in the judgment; and oh, what a meeting that will be!

It is not my custom to preach farewell sermons, but when I have done my work to tear myself away, and leave the great Judge to seal up the record that shall be opened at the last day. Now all I have to say is this the last leaf connected with my ministry, and your hearing, in this place, is now to be folded and put away amongst the files of eternity to be exhibited when you and I shall stand before God in perfect light, with no self-excusing, no false pleas, we shall all be naked, honest, and open there. And now, sinner, may I beg of God to search my own heart and prepare me for that scene and to prepare you for it too. May I be allowed this once to call heaven and earth to record upon your souls, that in my weakness, and so far as I have had ability, I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, the gospel and the law, the rule of life, and opened, so far as I have been able, the gate of mercy, and shown you the heart of Jesus. Will you accept it? I must not add another word.

THE CERTAIN DOOM OF THE IMPENITENT

A Sermon

PREACHED ON FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 7, 1851,

BY THE REV. C.G. FINNEY

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS

"He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Poverbs xxix. 1.

There is nothing in the connection in which these words stand that require explanation; I shall, therefore, at once give you the outline of thought which I design to pursue. I. NOTICE THE TRUE IDEA OF REPROOF II. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD ADMINISTERS REPROOF III. THE DESIGN OF REPROOF IV. WHAT IT IS TO HARDEN THE NECK, UNDER REPROOF V. WHAT IS INTENDED BY BEING SUDDENLY DESTROYED VI. WHAT IS INTENDED BY BEING DESTROYED WITHOUT REMEDY I.I am to notice the *true idea of reproof*. First, it does not necessarily enter into the idea of reproof that the individual reproved regards it,or look upon the events or circumstances which are designed to reprove, as a divine rebuke from God. Whatever is calculated in its own nature or relations to arrest the attention of the mind, and call men to a neglect of duty, or the obligation they owe to God, and the danger of their present condition, involves undoubtedly the true idea of reproof, whatever this may be. II. With respect to*The ways in which God administers reproof*. I observe first, that both the Bible and nature teaches that God exercises a universal providence. If it be true that God created the universe, he had a design in creating it; and if a design in its creation, it follows that he has made provision for the accomplishment of the design, what he had in its original construction that he has made provision for securing the end which he originally had in view. This is the true idea of divine providence. There have been started two or three different theories of divine providence. One is, that in the original creation, both of matter and mind, God furnished them with such laws as in their development should secure the great end for which he created the universe. Another theory of divine providence is, that God constantly superintends, and either by his own direct agency and superintendence, or through other agencies, to overlook and control and bring about what he designs and wills. Both these, however, agree in this, that the providence of God is universal. Both admit that God has control in some sense, if not in the same sense. In fact, God could not exercise control over the great events of the world, if he did not over the smaller ones also seeing that the one is

made up of the others. Great events are made up of innumerable smaller ones; and if the smaller things are not under the divine direction, in such a sense as to be controlled by him, of course the great events made up of these smaller ones could not be either. The first system that I named is that of a general providence, which regards the whole universe as a vast machine, which having a law impressed upon it at its creation to work out its results, does not need the divine superintendence.The second theory regards God as superintending and adjusting all the laws of the universe,whether of matter or mind, and are thus made to work out those great results at which God aims.This latter theory regards God as constantly interfering in the spiritual world, and often in the natural world, making such arrangements and adjustments to avert certain results which would certainly come to pass. Those who hold this latter theory believe also that with respect to moral agency it is free, and that God never interferes with man's will by his superintendence. Another theory supposes that the universe is partly governed by irresistible laws impressed upon it at the beginning, and partly by direct superintendence; yet all admit that the providence of God is in some sense universal that God is immediately concerned in all that occurs, or knows what is about to occur; and he does not prevent it, because he knows it is wiser to let the law take its course. Now, when God created Adam and Eve he knew what would afterwards occur; and although he did not prevent their fall, he took care that their conduct should not defeat the great end for which he created the universe. Thus, God suffers everything to be done that is done, in the sense that he knows it is about to occur; or he is actively employed by positive agency in bringing everything about. God, in fact, has some design in everything that occurs in the whole universe, whether he actually originates it by positive and direct means, or only suffers it to occur, and so overrules it as to bring good out of it. Now, observe, God ofttimes administers reproof in his providential government. For example, the favours which he bestows upon those who are wicked, what are they but reproofs. Suppose a man should injure you, and you should show him some great kindness, would he not understand it to be a reproof? Suppose you met a man in the street that had done you some great injury, and you should show him some great favour, would he not regard it as a reproof? Take the case of Mr. Whitfield. When he was preaching on one occasion, an individual rose up and accused him of a great crime a thing of which he had never been guilty but the individual desired to injure him, and ruin his character in the eyes of the people. Well, what did he do? why, when he came out of the pulpit, he called the individual to him and gave her a guinea and turned away. This was intended to be a reproof; and doubtless it made such an impression as she never got over. What did Christ say? "If thine enemy hunger feed him, and if he thirst give him drink; for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." Now, whether it was wise in Mr.Whitfield to act as he did or not, it was evidently intended as a reproof! And does not God intend the favours which he bestows upon the wicked as reproofs? They may think that they receive them because they are deserved: their self-righteousness may say this; but who does not see that this is not true? "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust."How can men prowl about at night in the dark, and not feel ashamed and rebuked when the sun shines upon them in the morning? I knew a man once who had been quarreling all night, and when the sun shone upon him in the morning, he was so cut to the heart, that he was led to repent of his sins. He felt astonished that God should suffer his sun to shine upon such a wretch as he knew himself to be. It is wonderful that when men have been engaged in some great wickedness, and God comes right out and shows them some great favour, that they do not feel infinitely ashamed of themselves, and blush and hang their heads down for very shame. The fact is, although some men may, on account of their self-righteousness, suppose that these things are given as a reward for their goodness that all God's favours are so many reproofs; as if God should say, you have refused to obey my commands, you have broken my law, you have taken my name in vain, you have profaned my Sabbaths, while I have fed you, and clothed you, and given you a home and friends; what do you think of yourself? you live in sin and yet I keep you alive; I watched over you in the dark, and then you rise up in the morning and rebel against me. I have done all this for you and yet you abuse me still; what do you think of yourself? See how much love I have shown towards you, how many good things I have done for you, how I have persevered in doing you good, and yet you have rebelled against me; are you not ashamed of yourself? Now God does not bestow his favours without some design; and that is to lead the sinner to repentance. "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" He gives sinners such a look sometimes that one would suppose would kill them, and break their hearts, and make them burst out into loud weeping. When they abuse him, he steps up to them with his hands full of blessings, but says nothing. How many times has he done so to sinners in this house? What do you think of it? You have forfeited your life and exposed it to eternal death. Have you not

had reason to suppose that a thunderbolt would fall upon your head? But instead of that, God opens your hand and supplies you with all needful good. Do you suppose that he does this because he approves of what you have done? You did not understand it so, but that he meant to reprove you for what you had done. By these gifts he meant to reprove you for your ingratitude and your sin; just as you by the same conduct would have meant to reprove an individual who had done you some great injury. You tried to shame him out of his bad conduct, to break his heart, and to make him feel how wrong and wicked his conduct was.

Again: by judgments God ofttimes administers reproof. By judgments, I mean those things that are not regarded by men as merciful dispensations, but as very untoward circumstances. Now, they are designed, everyone of them to administer reproof and when mercy fails, judgment shall take its place. God interposes in a great many ways to save men. Sometimes persons are, no doubt, warned by dreams, although I do not think that dreams can be relied on, because they are very generally occasioned by the state of the health or the nervous system; yet it is manifest that they are ofttimes providential, and have been so in every age of the world. There have been striking instances in which persons have been warned by dreams; I have heard many such things related myself, as no doubt other persons have also; and sometimes, doubtless, they are to be received as warnings. President Edwards relates a very remarkable and striking instance of warning given to a man by means of a dream. In his congregation there was a notorious drunkard, who had for many years absented himself from the house of God and given himself up to strong drink. One night this man had a dream, and he dreamed that he went to hell. I need not enter into the circumstances as to what he saw there, because that would take too long, and be quite unnecessary. However, he was greatly agonized, and prayed to the Lord to give him one trial more, and let him return to earth: well, the Lord gave him leave to do so for one year, and if he was not reformed in that time, he should surely return to hell. The man, as might be supposed, was greatly distressed about this dream, and he went to President Edwards in the course of a few days and related it to him.President Edwards told him that he ought to regard it as a providential warning from God, and hat it was unwise not to regard it as such. For a time, the man broke off his old vice, and betook imself to the house of God. few months only, however, passed away before he went on in his old career, till be became as bad, if not worse than ever. One day he had been drinking a great deal, and became very intoxicated, and being unable to get home, he was carried into a carpenter's shop, and laid down among the shavings: in the night he awoke, and attempted to go down the stairs, when he fell and broke his neck. As this dream had seemed very remarkable to President Edwards, he noted it down in his common-place book at the time that it was related to him, and when he heard of the man's death, he referred to the entry, and found to his amazement that it was just a year that very night. I mention this fact for the purpose of illustrating what I mean, that ofttimes, God in dreams, as well as various other ways, reproves persons for their sins. He does it by his Word, his writings, by sermons, and indeed by every way this is calculated to remind the sinner that he is not doing his duty.

Again: the Holy Spirit reproves, by convincing the sinner of his sins, and producing in his mind visitations of remorse. But I cannot enter further upon this, and show how the Holy Ghost works upon the conscience by every means likely to wake the sinner up to a knowledge of what he is about. I come then, in the next place to inquire III. *The design of reproof*.- Undoubtedly it is designed to effect a reformation. He means to secure this end by forbearance.By reproof he tries to convert and save him if he can; he uses every means to make men trophies of mercy; he intends to leave all men without excuse. I may appeal to every sinner in this house, if God has not pursued a course with you calculated to leave you without excuse! At one time, perhaps, he pursued you, or is pursuing you with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, as if he would melt you down by acts of forbearance and love. But when he finds that will not do, then he uses the rod. When you resist his mild reproof, he will turn and smite you. By all means he reproves you. But are you reformed? For that is his great object. In the next place- IV. *What is intended by hardening the neck under Divine reproof?* - You observe the language is figurative. Reference is made by it, you observe, to the bullock working with a yoke upon his neck. The practice of using bullocks in this manner is not, I find, so common here as it is in America and some other lands. When they are so employed, the neck becomes callous. The yoke often produces a very hard substance upon the neck, by the constant pushing against it. The men that are spoken of here are represented as constantly pushing against God's providence, and thus making their necks hard. The figure is very striking. The bullock when it first wears the yoke becomes sore-necked; sometimes quite unable to bear it on for days, but by degrees it becomes so accustomed to it that its neck gets completely hardened. And thus the conscience of the sinner

becomes quite callous under reproof if he does not yield to it. Reproof may be administered, but he does not feel it any more than the bullock does the yoke. V. *But what is intended by being suddenly destroyed?* - Opposition and destruction will always go together. The Bible teaches this in every place. "When they shall cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, like travail upon a woman with child and they shall not escape." By resisting reproof men become hardened, so that they do not fear the Divine judgments. The conscience becomes so stupefied, that men lose the sense of danger; and it is just then that the danger in reality becomes greater. But although men have been heedless of danger, yet "damnation slumbereth not," and therefore it is that God says, they shall be suddenly destroyed.

But let me say again: it shall come upon them sooner than they expect. "God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and therefore he uses means so long as there is any hope; yet after destruction will come "suddenly," and much sooner than they expect. This was the case with the old world. God warned them by Noah for one hundred and twenty years, but they took no heed, and the flood came suddenly, when they did not expect it. But I must pass over this, and inquire- VI. *What it is to be destroyed "without remedy!"* - How often I have been reminded of this text when I have stood by the dying bed of not a few individuals. It was no use trying to help them, for God had determined to destroy them. The minister is sent to pray for the dying man. He cannot pray: God will not hear. No matter if the entire universe interposes: he will not alter his purpose. How often have I felt shocked and horrified under such circumstances. When God makes up his mind to destroy a man, every chance of his being saved has passed away. Having been often reproved he is suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. All the means that men can employ will be without avail. There is no help for such a man in the whole universe.

But I must pass to make a few remarks.

First: it should always be understood that there is a relation between every part of the Divine economy; and sometimes indeed things in providence occur under such circumstances that even infidels will say it is the work of God; and not infrequently, these providential dispensations will make the ears of good men to tingle. God will reveal himself in such a manner as to shock them.

Again: it is often very affecting to see how God will interpose to save several by the destruction of one. He takes away one of a circle, that those who remain may take warning. I have often noticed such things myself. One member of the family is a great stumbling block to the others; God steps in and cuts him down in order that he may save the rest. How striking such providences are. Several such cases have occurred in my own experience since I have been in the ministry, and many others have been repeated to me. Individuals have given themselves up to oppose revivals of religion; have agreed to resist and stand out against all efforts to revive the cause of God, and have been cut down in a most signal and awful manner. I could name cases, but is it not important to do so, as such events are by no means uncommon.

But again: every sermon you hear is designed to be a reproof to you if you are in an impenitent state. And let me say, reproof will have some effect it will either make you better or worse. Always understand this. Every word of God and every providence will either be a savor of life or death to the soul. It should be remembered that the whole system of providence is but a vast system of Divine instruction.Some people try to make a distinction between the word of God and the providence of God; but they should understand that the lessons taught are the same, and that the God who created the universe is the same that dictated the Bible. Every event in providence is teaching men lessons just the same as the Bible; "Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear." If men will not receive the truth of God's word, they cannot help being instructed as they pass along under his providence and works. Everything speaks to them and reproves them. "He speaketh once, yea twice," whether men regard it or not. Men are therefore preparing for either heaven or hell. Every step each of you takes is conducting you nearer and nearer to the solemn judgment, and everything cries out, "Prepare to meet thy God!" Sinner! beware, you are passing on to the judgment, and God's voice is everywhere loudly calling upon you to be ready to meet him: let the voice be heard!

Once more: the danger of men is great, just in proportion as they cease to be effected by a sense of it, and reproofs cease to be regarded as Divine admonitions just in that proportion is their destruction hastening. When men feel the most secure, if they are living in sin, then destruction is most certain; and of course when it does come it will be sudden, because they do not expect it at all.

Now mark, this is not arbitrary on the part of God: it is a natural consequence of the sinner's conduct. God

admonishes and warns in a thousand ways; and he tells men if they will not give heed he will surely punish them; and if he did not, they would despise him themselves. He does not lead men to expect one result, and then bring about another: he is honest with them, and what he says, he will do, depend upon it. It is often very affecting to see what a state of mind men will manifest sometimes when they have found themselves being drawn into the vortex. The providence of God in its dealings with men has sometimes seemed to me like the Niagara Falls in America. The water of this immense cataract pours over the rocks in one great broad, mighty fall, as smooth as glass; and comes down upon the water below with such wonderful force as to cut right into it. No foam is visible at the place where it enters, but it rushes along under the surface, and then rises again at about a mile and a half distant, and rolls itself up in mighty masses of spray and foam. The water thus forms an eddy of vast extent. Towards the edges of the circle the power is not very great, but increases every inch as you near the centre, where everything that reaches it is instantly engulfed.The sinner has got into such a circle, you call and tell him that he is in danger, but he does not believe it. As you see the dangers increase, you raise the voice still higher, but he regards it not. By and by he hears the mighty roar: he then sees his danger, but it is too late, he is swallowed bythe mighty vortex; "suddenly destroyed." The whole universe may call, but his soul will be lost though black as hell!

Sinner! O sinner! How long shall God warn you? How long will you despise reproof? Be admonished: be warned: be entreated: be persuaded. Cast away your sins: put away your rebellious heart and your neck of iron. Sinner, make up your mind to give your heart to God. Let your language be, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth." Will you say, O my Father, my God, I will sin against thee no more: I am ashamed; I am confounded; I have received good things from thee, and have abused thee for them. Thou hast offered me salvation, but I have refused it! Can I hope for forgiveness? Can I be forgiven? But forgiven or not, I will not go on in this way any longer: God being my helper, I will not. I will renounce my rebellion against God this night: now, in this house: this shall be the last hour that God shall have to complain of me, for I will no longer harden my neck against the calls of his providence. I now yield myself up to God, I give up all my sins, I consecrate myself to him; the rest of my life shall be the Lord's. My time, talents, property, everything I have shall be yielded up to his honour and glory. Will every sinner now in this house, thus renounce their sins, and give themselves up to God and say, here we are, Lord, at thy feet; O write thy name upon our hearts, and let us henceforth live entirely to thee!

THE AWFUL INGRATITUDE OF THE SINNER

A sermon delivered on Sunday evening, December 29, 1850 by the Rev. Professor Finney (of Andeavoring College, U. S.) At the Tabernacle, Moorfields, London

"And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." Psalm cix. 5

David was the type of Christ, and it was common for him to write Psalms in which there was manifestly much reference to the Messiah. The spirit of prophecy within him speaks many things in these Psalms, particularly applicable to himself as the type of Christ, but applicable also to Christ himself; and in this case he speaks both of himself and of Christ. Some portions of the Psalms are quoted by the New Testament writers as having been spoken of Christ; and this passage is evidently of the same character. In proceeding to discuss this subject I shall,

I. Notice a few particulars in which Christ may be said to love the sinner and be hated in return.

I shall now run rapidly over a few particulars in which sinners reward Christ evil for good and return hatred for his love. Christ gives sinners their very existence. They are indebted to him for all they have and are; all things are given over into his hands, and he administers the government of God for the benefit of sinners. He preserves their lives, and bears with them continually in the midst of their sins: He is long-suffering towards them; He lived in this world, denying himself for them; for their sakes He suffered the deepest poverty and disgrace. Whoever was in such deep distress as Christ was a great part of his life! - whoever was in greater poverty! He says, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He is represented in the Gospel as having become poor, "that we, through his poverty, might become rich." He suffered himself to be covered with the bitterest reproaches for our sakes, until he complains that reproach had broken his heart.

Everyone who has been reproached for doing good will form some idea of what he means by saying this. Again, he laboured with such zeal for the good of souls that he says, "the zeal of my house hath eaten me up." He

toiled by day and by night, from town to town, to do them good, and many times he spent whole nights in prayer. We have reason to believe that at the early age of thirteen his appearance was much beyond his years. It is said of him that "his visage was marred beyond any man's." He is represented as bearing your griefs and carrying your sorrows. You recollect how beautifully this is represented by Isaiah. I will read some passages in which this is particularly brought out: - " Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed."

This is descriptive of what Christ has done for sinners. He suffered death at their hands, and then - strange to tell! - turned right around and proposed to make the blood which they have thus murderously shed the very medium by which they might be saved! Who has ever heard of such love as this? The very blood which their murderous hands have shed is made to atone for their sins. He is still as ready to do them good as ever - always living to befriend them, and sitting now at the right hand of God to make intercession for them; all sinners are spared from day to day, and kept in existence by him. You are spared, like the barren fig tree, through his intercession, when justice would otherwise cut you down. Notwithstanding all your abuse of him, he is still ever ready to step forth to preserve you when you will accept his offered mercy. When justice would cut you down he steps forward in your behalf, and that you are out of hell is solely owing to his prayer - " Oh! spare him yet." Having thus shown his love to the sinner, I shall,

II. Notice some particulars wherein sinners reward him evil for good.

That the Jews did this is generally admitted. I have never heard anyone who believed the Gospel deny that Christ laboured assiduously for their good, and that they returned him hatred for his love. But do others do it? Yes, sinners, you do it, and that continually! He gives you life, and what do you do with that very existence in this world, which is only prevented from being snapped off by his intercession? I mean you, sinner; what are you doing with the life he gives and prolongs? What do you do with it? what have you always done with it? What! do you only use it to oppose his law and authority? Again, there is your time; how do you spend that? He spares you from day to day, and how do you occupy yourself? He gives you time, and commands you to repent - have you done so? Oh! no; but your whole existence is one continued act of opposition to him who has thus wonderfully befriended you! He has given you talents - what do you do with them? Wherein is your power? - education, property, talents, or influence? What do you render to him for all the good which he has bestowed upon you? Do you really render evil for all this good? Do you use your money, talents, and education against him? Ah! your impenitence tells the story! I need not bring a railing accusation against you. He gave you heaving lungs, and enables you to breathe, but every breath is breathed in opposition to him. What other gift of his providence have you that you are not using against him? And is not this rendering him evil for his good? Suppose a child is to do this to a parent - suppose your little ones use every gift you bestow on them against you. But again. It is remarkable moreover, that the more he gives, the more and more proud you wax, and the more stoutly you stand up against him. Just in proportion as he loads sinners down with blessings and obligations, instead of being conducted to him, they are the further from knowing him. He has multiplied their blessings, but every one of them is conscious of sin and rebellion against him. They wax rich and great in affluence and talent, and are surrounded with favours, and by-and-bye they become so proud and full of themselves - so great in their own esteem - that they will not suffer an Ambassador from Heaven to tell them the truth. How strange is this!

But let me say again, the longer he spares sinners the more abusive and presumptuous they become. See sinners, the older they get, the longer they are spared, the more they are loaded down with favours, till their heads are covered with the frosts of many winters, and the more rebellious, and stupid, and sottish in their sins they become! The longer he defers their punishment, the more they tempt his forbearance.

Again. That all sinners render to Christ evil for good, and hatred for his love is manifest from this; sin from its very nature, is a rejection of Christ's authority in all the relations which he sustains towards men. It is, moreover, a practical and public denial of their obligations to Christ. It is also an insult to his person, and an opposition to his efforts to do them and others good. All sin, from its very nature, is sympathy with hell, and antipathy to heaven. Moreover, sinners hate to be reminded of their obligations to Christ, and will not quietly submit to it even from their best friends. Many a husband in his sins will scarcely allow his pious wife, whose spirit has wept almost tears of blood over his soul, to speak to him about his duty. No. The fact that sinners render him hatred for his love is most evident. How much they are disturbed if they hear Christ spoken

of, and his name praised! Go almost any where and you will find this opposition manifested.

It is plain that sinners do not sympathize with Christ's friends, but that they do actually sympathize with his enemies. This is clear and easily demonstrable, in a thousand ways, had I time to dwell upon them. I will notice one or two as they arise in my mind. Sinners show their hatred to him by their gratification in the things which grieve him, they make light of sin, and exult when religion is dishonored by its professors. They manifest their gratification and instead of praying for the saints and trying to support them, under their temptations to disobey God, they actually throw obstacles in their way. They appear to approve of the temptation rather than grieve when it is not resisted. When saints sin, they triumph. See how ready they are to take up an evil report against their neighbours, especially should that neighbour profess Christianity. They would not feel this if they were Christ's friends, in any sense of the term. It is extremely unnatural for us to believe evil of those we love, and with whom we have sympathy. If sinners, therefore, had sympathy with Christ and his people it would be utterly unnatural for them to act thus towards them.

It is also extremely unnatural for us to promote the circulation of such reports concerning those who love Christ. We should be careful of the reputation of Christ's children if we loved them. Are sinners grieved when Christ and his cause are dishonoured by those who profess to fear his name? - and are they careful rather to conceal, than to disseminate that which is disgraceful concerning them? No! they are not only very credulous in believing scandal of this kind, but too frequently, manifest a corresponding diligence in circulating it. This enmity to Christ is a mortal enmity. The Jews displayed this to the fullest extent. They were not satisfied with anything short of his life. Sinners refuse to submit to Christ's authority and embrace the Gospel offer, and so far as their altered circumstances permit, they manifest precisely the spirit of the Jews of old who hung him on the accursed tree.

But again. This hatred of the sinner to Christ is supreme. There are more opposed to him and his work than to anything else in all the universe. On all other subjects how comparatively easily it is to gain adherents and make to yourselves friends. In many cases where the enmity has been of lengthened duration and intense to a degree, a change of circumstances will frequently reconcile the opponents. It is with political and social disagreements; even where the antipathy has become in a sense, hereditary on both sides, a circumstance sometimes arises which makes reconciliation a mutual advantage, and how speedily they become united! There are many remarkable cases on record of such persons having eventually become not only friends, but firm and attached friends, to a degree corresponding with or perhaps even exceeding their former enmity. They have become not only willing to do each other good, but unwilling to say or even to believe that which is evil concerning each other. This is, in fact, quite a common occurrence. Where do you find enmity existing between parties which cannot be overcome even by a moderate exhibition of kindness and love? But how is it with the sinner?

Few men readily understand how deep their enmity to Christ is, and in order to have a proper appreciation of this they must consider what Christ has done, what he is doing, and what he has promised to do for them. Suppose that in this city there are two men who have long been enemies. Suppose that this has gone on so long and arrived at such a pitch that their families have come to regard each other as mortal enemies simply because of their family name and relationship. They scarcely look at each other when they pass in the street. But suppose this ill feeling to be all on one side. Suppose the one man to have a deep-rooted enmity against the other. Suppose there had never been any actual quarrel, but that the one had continually misapprehended and abused the other, and followed him with persecution and slander from time to time. The other had done him good, treated him kindly, when embarrassed in business - lent him money and tried in every way to gain his confidence but all to no purpose.

The one is riding in the park and meets a dearly beloved son of the other in his carriage; the horses take fright and the son is all but thrown out. Mark how at the risk of his life, this gentleman rushes to save him: he seizes the horses by the bits and thus saves the life of his enemy's son. The young man, of course, is moved when he sees who it is to whom he is so greatly indebted. He goes home and relates the fact to his father who is much affected and hangs down his head.

"Did he know you?" he asked the son.

"Oh! yes; and he not only saved my life but kindly spoke to me in terms of encouragement, and blessed me."

This very night the father is aroused and discovers his house in flames. The very carpet is on fire beneath his feet. The house is ready to fall in. There is a terrible rush of the crowd in the streets; but there seems to be no way of escape, either right or left. The flames are pouring up the staircase and out of the just opened window. Just under these circumstances an individual comes rushing up the staircase and gathers up one

after the other and hurries off to a place of safety. The women faint, the children scream; and their father on recovering, finds himself reclining in the arms of his deliverer. Ah! who is this deliverer? "Why this very man who a few hours ago hazarded his life to save my son! and he has now sadly burned himself to save me?" How effectually have those circumstances changed the relation which these two persons held towards each other! If he had strength sufficient remaining the father would fall on his knees to his deliverer and bathed his feet with his tears, and if the fire had spared his hair he would wipe them with it! Does he say, "don't you see that my heart is so hard that I can't love you notwithstanding?" No, indeed. Whenever you mention that man's name you mention the name of a friend; and aught that is spoken against him now will grieve him. He is ready now to confide in him - to think and speak well of him.

But now look at the enmity of the sinner, in spite of all that God daily and hourly does for him. When a little one and helpless he kept your little lungs in motion. How often his hand unseen interposed to save your life, when disease was dragging you pale and quivering down to the gates of death! As you have grown up he has followed you with kindness. When death has lurked in ambush he has always watched kindly over you, and you are tonight not only out of hell but able to come to the house of God. And after all this good how do you stand affected towards him? Has it produced any change in your heart? Ah! you are treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

I shall now proceed to point out a little more definitely this peculiar feature of the sinner's conduct - that really this opposition and hatred is rendered to him for his love. My object under this head is to show what is the *reason* of their opposition to Christ. In the first place that sinners have really no good reason for their hatred and opposition to Christ is admitted by everybody; and it is also admitted that this is done in defiance of his love, or at least regardless of it. They have nothing to hate him for, He has never been as men are -partly good and partly evil, sometimes deserving well of sinners and sometimes deserving ill of them. They can't say that in some things he had done them good, but that he has done other things for which they have reason to hate him. No! They have nothing but *love* for which to hate him!

The real reason for this opposition is that he is their moral opposite. All his great love is in direct opposition to their selfishness. His infinite holiness is in direct contradiction to it; it is also a contradiction to say that one so opposite to Christ should not be opposed to him, opposed because he stands out in contrast right over against him! His infinite benevolence is in direct contrast to their selfishness, and while they entertain this selfishness it must be opposed to his benevolence; while they entertain a spirit of injustice they must stand opposed to his justice; while they continue to entertain a spirit of unmerciful-ness they must stand opposed to his justice; while they continue to entertain a spirit of unmercifulness they must stand opposed to his mercy; their falsehood to his truth, his righteousness to their unrighteousness. There are moral opposites, and it is impossible for sinners while in such a state of mind to be otherwise than opposed to him. It is not because he is evil that they are opposed to him; they do not hate him for that reason, but simply because he is good. They being evil, naturally hate one so diametrically opposed to them.

Again. It is impossible but that the very efforts he makes to save them from sin should excite their hostility. This has always been, and always must be the case. They love the yoke of their sins; and his pressing them to give them up and thus therefore while he insists on their doing what they are unwilling to do, this opposition will continue. The more persevering and long-suffering he is, the more will they oppose and hate him. By "hatred" I do not mean that sinners are always conscious of such a feeling; but there it is - a ceaseless resistance to all his efforts to do them good. Their carnal minds are at enmity against him.

This leads me to make a few general remarks, and the first is this - Nothing wounds a virtuous mind more deeply than ingratitude. Every person who has had experience on this subject knows that the consciousness of having done a particular favour to an ungrateful individual is deeply painful. Parents know what this is - they know how bitter is filial ingratitude. Everyone who has done much good has felt this to some degree; they have never had, perhaps, in some cases hatred rendered for their love. This is a most grievous thing; from the nature of mind it is deeply wounding. Many of you perhaps know the bitterness of the sting you have felt when obliged to say of a child or someone you have greatly befriended - They have rendered me "evil for good," and "hatred" for my love.

At the same time this is nothing more amazing than the consciousness of having deserved well of those who hate you. It is a great satisfaction to be able to say, "Ah! I did not merit such treatment at their hands. It is rendering me "evil" for my "good." Christ will not fail to have this consolation - Sinner! are you glad of it? I need not ask the Christian for I know that he must rejoice at

the thought. Christ will have this reflection when he sees the smoke of their torment rolling up and up forever and ever! I tried to do them good," he will say "and they not only vexed me without cause but they returned hatred for my love!" I ask you sinner, are you glad of it? If you persevere in your sins and die in them are you glad that Christ will be always able to say this! When you listen - if the inhabitants of hell are permitted - to the song of heaven, what will you say when you see that Christ enjoys the luxury of knowing that he died to save you - that he offered to do you all possible good, but that you rendered him hatred for his love?

From the nature of mind as we have it revealed to us in consciousness there is no remorse so unendurable as that which results from the conviction that we have "rewarded evil for good; and hatred for love." Anyone who has ever been thoroughly convicted of this sin, I have no doubt will agree with me. Anyone who has desired to be honest with himself and let his conscience speak has known something of what that bitterness is which results from the reflection of having rendered evil for good. Even in matters relating to this world, it is one of the most poignant sufferings which can be endured; for example when an individual remembers that he has injured one who has after all done him good and nothing but good - that he wronged those who have sought his welfare - how deeply that cuts! how invariably and unindurably it wounds the conscience! when they think - I have rendered evil for good, and hatred for love - from the very nature of the mind, as I have said, it is one of the bitterest agonies that can seize the mind.

Again. Sinners will carry their minds to hell, and if they die in their sins they cannot fail to have this reflection. What a thought! Memory will there be perfect; here, as the body grows old from the very nature of the relations of the mind to it, memory fails, in fact it is one of the first faculties that begins to decay; but, when the body is thrown down, there is reason to believe that memory will be perfect. Circumstances often occur here to show how wonderful memory may be. I know a young man who was once near drowning, and he said it seemed to him that he remembered everything that he had ever done with perfect distinctness in a moment.

I have often seen that peculiar circumstances of strong excitement will so call up in the memory from the deep oblivion multitudes of things which have taken place and been long forgotten by the individual. Many remarkable illustrations of this have been recorded. It is no doubt true, therefore, that men are destined, from the nature of their minds, to remember and distinguish through every period of their existence every fact of their history. From the nature of mind it is sometimes crippled by the infirmities of the body; and there is reason to believe, from many facts, that as soon as the body is thrown off from the mind - as soon as this incumbrance is got rid of - it will remember with the utmost precision every minute occurrence in their existence. No doubt this will prove a fearful addition to the future misery of the lost. God has not so constructed the mind of moral agents as to have facts pass forever from it. It is striking sometimes to see, when persons draw close to the verge of the grave, what an amazing power the memory has; there seems to be such a mighty resuscitation of their memory that their faculties seem to arouse themselves, and burst forth with an astonishing splendour and energy.

Perhaps some of you will recollect a case reported to have occurred in Germany some years back: a young woman who was accustomed to hear her master, a minister, read his Hebrew bible aloud in his study, while she was at work in the room adjoining. She could hear him read aloud to himself for his own gratification. Without understanding the meaning of the sounds she heard, or being able to divide one word from another, she became so familiarized with it, that when she became very sick, and was on the verge of death, she began to talk, as they supposed, in "the unknown tongue," but which turned out to be Hebrew, and the matter was passages of Scripture, which she repeated with the same intonations of voice her former master was accustomed to give them. She recited verse after verse verbatim, just as she had heard them read. This may serve to show how the mind of the moral agent hereafter awakes.

If this be so, when sinners come to reflect on the circumstances of their past history, over and over and over again - their ingratitude to Christ in return for his love, will look them steadfastly in the face, and they will be obliged to remember it. They will find it impossible to avoid doing so. What more will be needed to create eternal and unendurable torment than to be obliged to read over and over again the tablets of your memory - the horrible record of a protracted opposition to him who died to save you?

One moment's view of the fact of Christ's having deserved so well of you, and of the hatred you have rendered for his love, will fully reconcile the saints to the justice of your dreadful doom. They will have good reason to be reconciled even if their own children be punished, and those whom they loved best on earth. Can they rebel against Christ when he finds it impossible any longer to spare the sinner? No! They cannot.

The conduct of sinners will appear to the universe to have been infinitely disgraceful. What would you think of a child who should treat his parent as you treat Christ? Would you not despise him, and reject him as an unsuitable associate? Would you have such a sinner for a companion? What then will be thought of you, sinner, in a future world when you come to be seen in your true colours?

Once more. The most blessed and honoured here will doubtless be despised most there. I mean the sinner who has had the greatest number of blessings here, and abused them, will be the most despised there. Sinners will not themselves admit that they render evil for good; the Jews of old assigned another reason for their opposition to Christ; they would not admit that they rendered hatred for his love; but, nevertheless, we all know that they did. Just so it is with sinners in these days; they will not admit it is Christ's goodness they oppose; but they know it is, and that they oppose him only because of his opposition to their sins, and because of his endeavors to do them good. You know very well you are without excuse, sinner! And now the question is, will you continue to persecute Christ? Shall he ever have, from this hour, to say of you that you continue to render him evil for good, and hatred for his love? *What do you say, sinner?*

"NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

A Discourse,

Delivered on Sunday Evening, September 6, 1850,

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FINNEY,

(*of Oberlin College, U. S.*)

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORSFIELD.

"Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."--Mark xii. 34.

THESE words occur in the following connection--"And one of the Scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, (that is Christ and the cavilling Jew), and perceiving that he answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments, is, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength--this is the first commandment. And the second is like namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There are none other commandments greater than these. And the Scribe answered, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

The "Kingdom of God," as the phrase is here used, does not mean the visible Church of God; for this man was at that time connected with the visible Church. Christ did not speak of the visible Kingdom of God; but of that invisible kingdom which is set up in the heart, and consists in Divine authority being established there. Christ said, on another occasion, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."

This Scribe saw the great fact of the spirituality of the Divine law--that after all, religion consisted in that love to God which the law requires--and by his answer to the Saviour, Jesus saw that he had broken so far through the common prejudices of his nation, as to have overcome that darkness which supposed religion to consist in the mere formality of the ceremonial law. He understood that love was the great thing needed--the

great thing in which all true religion consisted. Jesus saw, therefore, that nothing was wanting but faith, and the real building up of the heart. He was so near to the Kingdom of God--so instructed, as that a single act of the mind would bring him within it. He only had to yield his heart to what his intellect perceived--he only had to submit his heart to this--and by that one act he would be in the kingdom. He, therefore, said--"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." In speaking to these words I propose--

I. TO SHOW WHEN IT MAY BE TRULY SAID, THAT A MAN IS "FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

II. WHEN IT MAY BE TRULY SAID A MAN IS NOT "FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

III. THE NEARER MEN COME TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE MORE SOLEMN IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY--THE MORE AWFULLY CRITICAL IS THEIR CRISIS.

Please to keep in mind then, what is signified by the kingdom of God--it is that law which is the rule of his universal kingdom, set up in the heart of the subject--established in full authority of the mind, yielding obedience to it. Through the heart in which this law is set up, the King controls the life of the subject.

When the mind is entirely engrossed with something else--when things connected with this Kingdom of God are not the subjects of thought and attention at all, a man is far enough from the Kingdom of God. This is the case with great numbers of persons; they have "no time" to look through into the real, spiritual virtue, of this kingdom and its laws; they give themselves up to business and pleasure, and think about everything else but what they ought to think about--it may well be said of such persons, that they are "far from the Kingdom of God." They have everything to learn yet.

Again, when persons are in worldly prosperity, full of worldly mindedness and ambitious projects, they are far enough from the Kingdom of God. Of course, their minds cannot be said to be directed in that way at all. Some of you, perhaps, have so increased in your worldly affairs, that even on the Sabbath, worldliness often engrosses your thoughts--even on the Sabbath-day, the world has such a hold upon you, that you have more of worldly thoughts than of any other. Is this your case? Then you are far enough from the Kingdom of God. Some of you have such prospects of getting rich, and elevating yourselves and families, that you turn your backs on religion and all thoughts of Salvation. You, too, are far enough from the Kingdom of God, and perhaps likely to be.

But, again, when there are no reverses and changes to cross the path--when everything goes as you would have it, floating regardlessly along the tide of events, careless, prayerless--are you doing this? If so, far enough are you from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when persons are in great spiritual darkness and ignorance, and know but little about religion--when they have gross conceptions of it--of course, such persons are far enough from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when entrenched in error, giving themselves up to believe some lie, silencing the voice of conscience, cleaving to refuges of lies, they are far enough from the Kingdom of God. When the reins are given to the appetite, and pleasure is the great pursuit of men, running hither and thither, crying who will show us any good? How can we get pleasure, and enjoy ourselves in worldly things? That class of persons, of course, may be said to be far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when filled with the prejudices of education, false ideas of religion, are men far from the kingdom of God. Who does not know, for example, how many false theories and doctrines of religion there are. Look at the Jews, how full they were of the prejudices of education. The Jews, in general, had not gone so far as this Scribe, by any means, inasmuch as he had come to see what the spirituality of the law really intended. Now, how many are there in this country, who think religion is made up of ordinances? As the Jews, they suppose religion to consist in certain ordinances--in submission to certain priests, prelates, baptisms, and purifications--mere ordinances. Who does not see how full the Catholic Church is of this? How much of this there is after all in those gross ideas of religion and those prejudices of education, which close the mind like a bolted door, against God. Thus it was with the Jews; they had so much to unlearn, as to place the mass of them in an attitude of hopeless resistance. As far as salvation was concerned, they were gone beyond the reach of those efforts which God could wisely make to save them. It frequently happens that persons listen to some curious notions, and are so blinded by, and intrenched in them, that what they have learned will cost them probably more pains than they will ever take to rid themselves of them. Hold out the gospel to them--they have immediately some prejudices of education which strongly militate against its reception. They raise, perhaps, election, Divine Sovereignty, dependence on the Holy Spirit, or something else, which they call "orthodoxy;" they must "wait God's time"--"if they are elected they are sure to be saved," and all such stuff. Now to unlearn all that men have been taught of this kind, is oftimes as hopeless, as for the Jews, or Roman

Catholics, to unlearn all their prejudices and falsehoods. There is a sense, however, in which God is sovereign--in which, without the Holy Spirit, they cannot be converted; so is the doctrine of election true; but they have perverted the true sense. Oh! how difficult it is for them to get into the Kingdom of God! Far enough are they from the Kingdom of God.

Again, let us say that persons are far from the Kingdom of God, when their prejudices lead them not to listen to sermons on the subject. They have clearly closed their ears, and will not allow themselves to be instructed, and warned of their responsibility. They will not hear even their own children, wives, or parents; surely it may be said of such persons as these, and, it may be, perhaps some of you belong to this category, are not far from the Kingdom of God. When they are so strongly entrenched in their position it is easy enough to see that such persons are far from the Kingdom--that it would be a wonder, almost, if they are saved. Many persons are troubled about many things--they give themselves so much care about the things of the world, as really to have no time to attend to their souls. Some are engrossed with politics, some in business speculations--some stumble at the conduct of professors of religion--others wait to see if the young converts "turn out well." They say, "We'll see. Wait." Many have done this till their feet have fallen. What were they doing? "O! Lord," they will say, "I was waiting to see whether those were really converted who profess to be; when, all at once, the foundation gave way--I fell! Yes! I was carried to the grave, and my spirit went weeping and wailing down the sides of the pit!"

Again, when persons are without interest, or where their interest is of such a kind, that it is a struggle against religion, they may be said to be far from the Kingdom of God. But I come not to the second part of the subject.

II. WHEN IT MAY BE SAID A MAN IS NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Many of you, perhaps, have been in this condition; some of you may even be so now. When the subject of religion has come to engage the attention of your mind, so far as to induce you to make up your mind to attend to it, and to do it now--when an individual has gone so far as to make this a present business--it may be said, in a very important sense, that he has taken an important step in his approach towards the Kingdom of God, although not an entrance into it. A step, it may be, infinitely important--as much so, perhaps, as his eternal salvation--is here taken; this will afterwards be seen.

Again, where a person has made up his mind to be honest with God, and with himself. This dishonesty on the part of men is a very great obstacle; they are unwilling to be honest--to ask God, honestly, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do." It is indeed a great point gained, where an individual says, I will now just look the subject in the face like an honest man. I could tell you many cases of individuals--just in this position--they have made up their minds to attend at once to the subject; some also, have said, "I will now be honest with God." I could tell you many cases, indeed, many men in the United States have taken exactly this course, and soon, subsequently, been fully received into the Kingdom of God. When they have once made up their minds to be honest with God, it may truly be said they are not far from the Kingdom of God. After all, the question is, not what I have persuaded myself to believe, but what God says. Let us have truth whatever way it is. When a man comes into such a state as this, how easily men find truth! When they come to God for instruction, casting aside all their prejudices--when their errors give way, and men find themselves no longer stubborn and confident in them--when they find they can no longer maintain the position they hold--it may be said, they are not far from the Kingdom of God. This was the case with the Scribe here referred to; but whether he ever entered the Kingdom or not, has not been recorded. It was clear, however, that he had broken through the prejudices common to his nation, and had come to understand the real spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God.

But let me say again. When persons find the excuses by which they have been accustomed to soothe their consciences, begin to fail, it may be said they are not far from the Kingdom of God. No sinner intends *always* to neglect the gospel; but he has, as he thinks, some valid excuse for present delay. When men find themselves stripped of their excuses--when they see and feel that they have not any excuse, and come so far as not to be disposed to make excuses; it may be said they are not far from the Kingdom of God. I recollect that such a period arrived, in my own experience, and I had fought my way through darkness, error, mysticism; I had made many excuses, and settled one truth after another, intellectually, and did not, for a long time, fail to make excuses for delay. But at length, one after another gave way, till, finally, I very distinctly came into this position. I really could not get up any excuse; and feel very unhappy at my inability to see any further hiding-place--I had no excuse that I was not ashamed to make. Now, if any of you are in this attitude--if you see your excuses are really good for nothing--if you are ashamed to make

them, and resolve to make them no more--it may be truly said you are not far from the Kingdom of God.

Whether you will ever enter, will appear by and bye; but you are certainly now not far from the Kingdom of God. If you really see all your evasions go for nothing, it is because the truth has found you out, and the Spirit of God has enlightened you. He had enlightened this Scribe.

Again, when business causes us so entirely to engross the mind, and religion is set in such a light, as that the business cannot wholly engross the mind, and, in or out of business, you are pressed solely with the great question of Salvation. I recollect the time when I myself sat down to examine a point of law, and in spite of myself, I could not read the page half down before the subject of religion was so pressing upon me, that I could not get on--I could not possibly engross myself so wholly with my professional duties. I dismissed it again and again, but it came up as often as I dismissed it. When religion gets such a hold on the mind as this--that a man cannot engross himself with his business, and feels that his business is but a trifle compared with eternal life--when this appears to the mind, that the business lasts but a few days, and where am I? when the mind comes into such an attitude--when the Spirit of God presses the subject in this manner--you are not far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when pleasure can no longer fully engross the mind--when pleasure seems no longer to be pleasure--when those things which have formerly so enchanted and fascinated the mind, lose their hold upon it--when the eternal realities present themselves to the mind--when the heart stands quivering under the lashes of conscience by day and by night, and the great truths of salvation are weighing upon the spirit--rely upon it that such an individual is not far from the Kingdom of God.

As I go over these points, inquire, each one of you of yourselves, "Is this, or was it ever my case?"

But, again, when conscience becomes so much awakened as that an individual can no longer comfortably go on in sin--cannot go on it without great pain and agony, finding by experience, that a transgressor's heart is continually agonizing within himself, filled with conviction and distress about sin--rest assured such a one is not far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when spiritual darkness gives way, so that persons come to see their relations to God as a reality--when they come to understand the gospel and the way of salvation--when they see it developed distinctly, so that they can easily understand it, and see their need of a Saviour--in short, when the truths of religion come to be revealed to the mind, so that the mind really conceives them in their relations--such persons may be said to be not far from the Kingdom of God. This was the case with the Scribe, and has often been the case with persons in these days. Many of you, doubtless, remember the time in your history, when you saw with a clearness of vision you never had before--perhaps you are in this state now--when you saw your relations to these truths, the motives and necessities of the plan of Salvation, and its suitability to your wants--then the word is nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth; and if thou believest on Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved. Who has dispelled the mists around you? The Holy Ghost has done it. You stand within one step--the single act of committing yourself in confidence to these truths, will bring you within the Kingdom of God.

Sometimes individuals are surrounded with special means--special efforts are made which take hold of the mind of an individual, a family, a congregation, or even a whole community, till large numbers may truly be said to be not far from the Kingdom of God.

But let me say again, especially when Christians have the spirit of prayer and pray for sinners--when Christians, in any family or congregation, receive the spirit of God in answer to prayer--when God is drawing very near to them through revivals--it may be said that all persons within the circle of such influences, are not far from the Kingdom of God. This will explain Christ's meaning, when he said, "Be ye sure of this--the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

Again, when persons are "almost persuaded" to be Christians, they may be said to be not far from the Kingdom of God. We read of one in apostolic times, who said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He was all but ready to yield. Perhaps some of you are in this condition; you have been here many times, and are almost persuaded to yield: you are brought so near, as almost to enter the Kingdom of God. You can remember the time, many of you, if it be not now, or lately, you can well remember it--when the Spirit of God was working within you--when all your mind was in a state of quivering anxiety and intense agitation--when some death or other providence arrested your attention--you thought, and looked, and hesitated, almost making up your mind to submit. You came right upon the gate of this Kingdom; you could truly have said you were not far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when the question comes to be balanced in the mind--Shall I now accept the Saviour? or shall I not? When the question is pressed for your acceptance--when you are told that now is the accepted time, and

now is the day of salvation, and yet hesitate, looking at it--oh! how near you often are, perhaps within a hair's-breadth, so to speak, of deciding the question for life and for heaven! Oh, how near! Almost ready to commit yourself, you have seen and felt the necessity and suitability of the atonement of Christ--the blood ran through your veins--you could hear your own heart beat--your pulse was quickened--your very soul was on the tiptoe, so to speak, balancing the question; still you looked and hesitated; how near you were to the Kingdom of God.

This leads me to say, again, when persons are often placed in such circumstances, that the truths of the gospel spread before the mind--they are beginning to be pointed out clearly--an individual is often brought into such a position, that he must either say yes or no, and yes or no to the very question of life or death, of Christ or no Christ. It often comes right to this, that he not only sees his sins, the spirituality of God's law, the meaning of the gospel, its relations to him--he is crowded right up to this, and is only a hair's-breadth from the Kingdom of God. The Divine hand is beckoning him over the line, the Spirit strives, stretches out his hand and calls him--he fairly hops on the line. Oh, how near is such a one to the Kingdom of God! Why, methinks angels look on with wonder, as they see men sometimes standing upon the very line itself, fairly "slewing" over--all but in the Kingdom of God, and yet they don't give their hearts fully up! When we get to the solemn judgment I am expecting to learn that multitudes I have seen here during these many evenings, have been drawn into that attitude. Oh! where are you now? *where are you now?*

III. THE NEARER A MAN COMES TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE MORE SOLEMN HIS RESPONSIBILITY--THE MORE AWFUL AND CRITICAL HIS CRISIS.

The man to whom the words of our text were spoken had already made some advance upon the condition of the people generally; the law was lying revealed to him in all its spirituality--it was perceived in his intellect--it was as near as possible to his heart, so to speak. Now, the more persons are enlightened, in the sense here meant, the nearer they are. Christ did not mean to say, however, that he was any the *better*, for being thus near, if after all he never entered--he was not "almost a Christian" in the sense of "almost [as good as] a Christian." He saw what God's law in its spirituality required; and for it to take possession of his heart, would be the "Kingdom of God" within him. The more a person is enlightened, the greater his responsibility; this man, therefore, was all the worse, instead of better, for his nearness if he did not ultimately accept it. So it is with every sinner; the nearer they come, if they fail to enter it, the greater the wickedness; the better you understand the truth, if you refuse to yield to it, the worse you are, and the more dreadful will be your final account. Of course the nearer persons come to the Kingdom of God, if they decide against it, the guilt of the wrong decision, under such circumstances, is not only greatly increased, but the consequences of it, at such a time, is vastly more likely to be fatal, than under any other circumstances. When persons are in darkness--engrossed with worldly things, they do not reject the truth in any such sense, or commit such a high crime; in short, they do not take such ground as to shut them up in their own impenitence, as they do when they see the truth clearly, and understand what they are doing, and then deliberately decide for the wrong. How fatal is their decision! See how deliberately they reject it!

Look at the case of Agrippa. He was "almost a Christian." Ah! almost! But was that all?--was that all? "I would to God," says Paul, "that thou wert not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Felix--when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come--Felix trembled, but said, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have more convenient season I will send for thee." There is much of this in the present day. How many of you do this? But, mark, when was the "convenient season?" Oh, sinner! inquire in hell, Is Felix there? Where's Agrippa? Is Agrippa here? And did these men hear the Apostle preach? "Yes." Did they hear him plead for the Kingdom of God, and was one "almost persuaded" and did the other tremble? But where are they now? Almost up to the Kingdom of God in time; but now as far from it as hell is from heaven.

A few further remarks must conclude what I have to say.

It is no doubt a general truth, and from conversations with multitudes of men, in various parts of the world, I have been inclined to think it is a universal truth--that nearly all men, who listen at all to the gospel, are, at some time of their lives, really near to the Kingdom of God. Religion has come home to them at some time or other. I never found an individual who, when closely pressed on these subjects, did not acknowledge that he had, at some period of his history, been crowded quite close up to the Kingdom of God. It is remarkable to see how some providence--some striking circumstances in which they have been placed--some storm at sea; some danger on land; sickness, death--look back into your history, and you will discover that the question has, at some time, pressed you, and you have been balancing

it in your minds, and you were very near to a proper decision.

But I remark again. When men are in this condition, Satan is remarkably watchful. The Bible represents him as being ever ready to take the word away as soon as it is sown in the heart. See Satan's subtlety in putting by the crisis, sliding the individual past, and keeping him in a state of carelessness. Sometimes after an impressive service, when on the very eve of deciding aright, he suggests, "Better wait till you get home," or some thought is suggested to your attention--some little squabble, or something comes into the mind and you turn away and look in another direction.

Now let me ask you, dying sinner, have you not, at sometime or other, been thus made the dupe of Satan, when none knew the workings of your mind but God and yourself? Perhaps it was in the dreary watches of the night when, unable to sleep, God made you wake up to a sense of your position; and, such was your agitation, that perspiration bathed your forehead, from the anxiety of your mind. Sin stared you in the face--God's claims so pressed you that your nervous system quivered. Ah! how near you were! One single act-the act of committing your soul to Christ, would have put you within the Kingdom of God. But where are you now?

This leads me to say when persons are brought close along upon the verge of the Kingdom of God--of the peace and joy of believing in Christ--so close that they can look over--that there is nothing but a single step between them and laying hold on eternal life--how very near they are to the Kingdom of God! If you could take a map of your life, some of you would see that, at some period of it the Spirit had directed your crooked way along till--there! see your place on the map! You are on the very margin of the stream! Its waters are flowing at your very feet. One step is all that is between you and eternal life, which is holding out all its charms; but, alas! where are you now? Oh! where are you now? As you have gone back to be engrossed with business, cares, and pleasures--oh! what a lengthened way there now is between that point and your present position--what a way you are from these fair fields on whose borders, with your "almost persuasion" you then stood. You have not yet taken your reckoning to discover your position. It was once said of you, "that man is not far from the Kingdom of God."

Now, perhaps, long tracks of error and wrong-doing have come between you. You have gone on in disobedience, and scepticism, and sin,--oh! sinner, hark! Do you hear that roar? What is that? "What *is* it?" Do you not know that you are nearing that tremendous precipice?--that you are reeling onwards to that mighty whirlpool? Hark! Rise up and flee; for death and hell are there! But, oh! your ears are deaf, your hearts are dull, and your eyes are dim!

Once more; God is leaving men entirely without excuse. Is it not true that if to-night the summons should be given--the great bell should be tolled--if to-night you were called to judgment you would be without excuse? There, who is that gone? Where is that man, and that woman? "Where *are* they?" They are gone to render account to the great God whom they have rejected. And is there any injustice--anything at all unreasonable in all this? No, indeed.

But, to-night, it is with those who have not wandered so far away that I am principally concerned--those who have been so near, and wandered on very far away I have less hope of--the momentous crisis is past. I will not say there is *no* hope for you; but this I say, it is with those who have not wholly passed that crisis that I have now to deal. The opposite party are very seldom, perhaps, aware of the thing which they have done. Perhaps his decision turned upon some mere trifle, as other great things often do; Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; Adam and Eve fell into sin, dragging after them the whole of the race, through the merest trifle; and it often happens that persons break away from God, and run into sin for a very small matter.

Suppose Satan should tempt a man who is just on the borders of the Kingdom of God, to commit an enormous iniquity? Oh! No. Satan is wise enough not to do any such thing. He plies the man with something he considers a trifle--something he thinks he can do without doing himself or anybody else much harm--he tempts him to defer his decision till he reaches his home, or something of that kind, and it is this awful procrastination through which Satan prevails, and by which the deluded heart is separated and led away.

But, I say again, suppose it may truly be said that some of you who have not entered the Kingdom of God are well aware that some of these Sabbath evenings during which special services have been held, you have been brought into the state described, as not far from the Kingdom of God, if you never have before. A man once came to one of these Sabbath evening services who had previously been sceptical with regard to the necessity of his immediately attending to the salvation of his soul; he went up into the British School-room to the address to the Inquirers which is given after service; he confessed to a friend *present*, that he was then and there perfectly convinced of the necessity of at once giving up his sins; but, he said, he had a certain

business transaction to take in hand the next week which he must do first; or else he could not do it at all. I was told of this before he left the room, and made for him through the crowd; but he slipped out before I got to him; I have never seen him since!

How is it with you, dying sinner, to-night? This is my last Sabbath with you. I may never meet you again till the solemn judgment when many of you may perhaps rise up and say, "Oh! Mr. Finney, under your ministry, at the Tabernacle, I was not far from the Kingdom of God; but I decided wrong!" Oh! did you decide wrong? How an angel might weep to hear you say so! "Ah!" you will say, "I wandered and wandered, and never came so near again; and now I have lost my soul!"

Oh! sinner, how shall it be with you to-night? Shall it be said again of any of you that you were not far from the Kingdom of God and yet you would not come into it?

Sinner, how is it? Oh! how is it? Will you decide to-night one way or the other? How is it? Oh! how will you decide to-night? How?*How?* HOW? If there is rejoicing in the presence of the Almighty over one sinner that repenteth, what quivering must there be over your present indecision! Oh! if those ministering angels who are waiting to carry the results of your decision to the Courts above, were permitted to break their silence, how they would cry out. Oh sinner, sinner, sinner--oh! decide aright, and have eternal life!

But oh! as they float about amongst you, with their invisible wings of love, to see how you will decide--watching you in your adjournment to the British School Room--beholding there the quivering of your mind as it trembles like the magnetic needle--and you wait--yes, you wait till you get home; but if the angels were permitted to give utterance they would cry aloud, "Oh! you are lost, *you are lost!* and the echo would fly to heaven! Oh, sinner, decide to-night--decide aright, and let it be told in the Courts above, that a wave of holy joy may sweep throughout those blissful regions!

It was reported of a man in this country, a person of great wealth, who devoted his time and talents to the cause of benevolence, and who was residing for a time in a place where there was a revival of religion, and nearly the whole of which was his property, that one evening the minister preached on the rejoicing there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, when this gentleman rose at the conclusion of the sermon, and said that he thought the time was come for him to decide. "Who," he asked, "dare now commit himself to God?" He then recapitulated very briefly the points of the discourse, and seemed to be lost in thought. "Who will do it?" said he, "shall I? Shall I? I will!" he exclaimed, "and let Gabriel tell it in heaven! *I will, and let Gabriel tell it in heaven!*" He then sat down; it was like a wave of light gleaming over the people. Since then everybody has known his position with regard to religion.

Dying sinner!--dare you now say, "I will, this night, accept Christ, and let it be written in heaven, and I will abide by it for ever?"

QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

A sermon delivered on Friday evening, July 14, 1850 by the REV. C. G. FINNEY (of the Collegiate Institute, America) at the Tabernacle, Moorfields

"Quench not the Spirit." I Thess. v. 19

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephesians iv. 30

The Holy Spirit is the author of spiritual life itself - of all its heat and warmth in man - of all those states of mind that result from his influences. He is the author of all spiritual joy and peace in the soul; that is, his influences are exerted in creating that life and heat which belong to spiritual religion. He also employs himself in producing that joy and peace of mind which are peculiar to Christians. To "quench" him is to extinguish his light and heat - that peculiar light which he brings to the mind, and the heat which naturally results from it. The language is here figurative, of course; he is said to be like a refiner's fire; to "quench" him, therefore, would be to put out that fire.

To "grieve" him is to destroy that spiritual peace of mind of which he is the author, in the human soul. When this is destroyed by anything we do, the Spirit of God is spoken of as being himself grieved - his agency is resisted and he is represented as being, therefore, grieved. There is a sense, undoubtedly, in which the Spirit of God himself is grieved: he is a moral agent. He can and does feel. There is a sense in which he is himself grieved. I have, however, another object mainly in view now. In speaking to the words of my text, I shall consider -

I. What is implied in the injunctions contained in these verses.

II. How the spirit may be grieved or quenched.

III. The fearful consequences of doing this.

I. Things implied.

The injunction not to quench the Spirit clearly implies that it may be done, and that there is a probability of its being done; if it were an act impossible or improbable, we should not find such an injunction in Holy Writ. It implies not only a danger of its being done, but also that it is wicked to do so.

The Holy Spirit is represented in the Bible as being a moral agent. Feelings peculiar to a moral agent are ascribed to him. He is represented, too, as being infinitely interested in giving himself up to the great work of saving us from sin and death. Again: he is infinitely holy, and therefore opposed to iniquity in every form or degree. His influences are represented as teaching and enlightening, but not by a physical, irresistible agency, in the sense that he over-rules the freedom of the human mind; he enlightens, warns, and sanctifies through the truth; he operates by the presentation of such considerations as will most prevail with a moral agent. This must be the way in which he operates, for holiness to be the result of his operations. Holiness in substance, therefore, cannot be created by any creative power. Holiness is love; his influence, therefore, must be truth, and prevails not by setting aside liberty, but by teaching how to use it aright, and by presenting such considerations as will induce men to do so. This is done, not by a physical, but a persuasive and enlightening agency.

II. How may the spirit be quenched or grieved?

The Spirit of God is grieved and quenched in all cases where the mind is unwilling to see the truth on any subject. Oftentimes individuals are unwilling to be convinced on certain points, and will not come up to the light. They avoid coming under the pressure of the truth on certain given points, and wherever this is done the Spirit of God is resisted, quenched, and grieved.

Again: the Spirit of God is grieved wherever the mind is so satisfied as to admit the truth, and yet unbelief prevails. There are multitudes of persons who confound conviction of the truth with faith, and do not know any better than to suppose that when convinced of the truth they have faith. Now there is not a greater error in existence. Being convinced of the truth of a statement is infinitely far from faith, which is the minds voluntary act in view of what the Spirit of God convinces us of.

Unbelief is the rejection of what the Spirit presents to our minds, refusing to commit ourselves to it, take it home, and obey it. Now faith is that committal of the mind to the truth, when received, which God urges; it is this committal of the mind, in fact, that God does urge, in distinction from that which convicted sinners name. Convicted sinners are convinced of God's claims and character - of the necessity and sufficiency of the atonement of Christ, and many other things; yet he withholds because he is unwilling to yield up his sin, and to become a Christian implies the doing of this. But he will not do it, hence he will not receive Christ, take home the truth to his own mind, repose his all in and upon it. Where the truth is thus presented and yet resisted, there is unbelief, and wherever that prevails there the Spirit of God is grieved, resisted, and quenched.

The Spirit is grieved, resisted, and quenched by all evasions of the truth on questions of reform involving self-denial. There are a great many truths, the reception of which calls for great denial - a breaking off of certain things in which we have been in the habit of indulging ourselves. Suppose now a slaveholder, when the question of the moral character of his class comes up, and suppose that although he is wholly unacquainted with the arguments of his opponents and will not so much as read or even talk or listen to anyone upon the subject suppose also that when he does eventually read or hear a discussion of the question, still, after all, he will not yield to the truth which is presented - he resists the Spirit.

It is remarkable to see to what an extent this has been manifested in the United States. Then there is the trade in ardent spirits. Traders in these things deal with the question just as the slaveholders do - they selfishly maintain their position and will not give up the traffic. Well now, on any question of reform calling for self-denial, wherever the mind resists, is not candid in receiving and obeying the truth, the Spirit of God is quenched. There are a great many customs prevalent in society which the gospel utterly condemns and whenever these questions come up, and the mind will not receive the truth and make the necessary sacrifices, who does not see that this is quenching and grieving the Spirit who is trying to lead them away from all such practices?

Again: indulging in resentful or otherwise hostile feelings towards anyone is sure to quench and grieve the Spirit, especially wherein such feelings are persevered. Many have known what it was to indulge in such feelings 'till at length, they have ceased to commune with their God.

Again: to indulge in a censorious spirit - finding fault, and putting a bad construction on everything, is another mode of transgressing the law laid down in our text. Sometimes you will see an individual who puts a bad construction on things which admit of a good construction, making out that certain individuals have wrong motives, bad dispositions; they do this where the

motives may be good for what they know. Now all such conduct as this no doubt grieves and quenches the Spirit of God.

But I remark again: any unnecessary, unbenevolent unbrotherly publication of the real failings of individuals is another way in which this sin may be committed. Persons may commit this crime by telling the truth unnecessarily, and thus finally injuring the person. You have no right to speak even of the faults of others unnecessarily; nor will you do so if you are as careful of his, as you wish him to be of yours - " Love your neighbours as yourselves." If this were the case, how careful would you be of your neighbours. Wherever this is not the case - wherever the tale-bearer is listened to - wherever you treat your brother or neighbour in a manner different from that in which you desire to be treated yourself - there, undoubtedly, the Spirit of God is grieved. Never do or withhold that which you would not like done to or withheld from yourself.

Again: This sin is committed where persons make self-justifying, God-condemning excuses for their sins. Thus some grope on in darkness, error, and distress of mind from year to year, because, instead of taking the blame of sin to themselves, they make excuses which virtually throw it upon God. This is grieving the Spirit. Every selfish person -everyone who is set upon the promotion of his own interests instead of the promotion of God's glory grieves the Spirit of God. Such an act is a virtual apostasy from God. They have professedly committed themselves to God, and have no right to do anything but for him. A man can never enjoy communion with God while in pursuit of any selfish ends -while he seeks things merely for his own pleasure, and not for God. If you do this you virtually take back your consecration to God, and devote yourself to your own interests. It matters not at all in what manner you may excuse yourselves for so doing; you have no excuse; and especially is this the case where light has been poured upon the subject. Now, who can suppose that in those days, such a man as John Newton could, even for a time, continue in the slave-trade without some compunctions of conscience? But suppose he should have no recourse to the Bible, and ask, "Were there not slaves in the days of the New Testament?" Why did not Christ denounce it? Slavery was known to the Apostles, Why did not they denounce it, if it were so wicked?

This is easily enough answered. But suppose men justify the slave-trade in this way? And in the Southern States of America this very common. They forget that Christ had a previous question to settle before he could make any direct attack on the several sorts of sin. When Christ came into the world, instead of his mission being acknowledged, he had to debate every inch of ground. His divinity and divine mission demanded primary attention; it was necessary that the world should first recognize his *authority* to lay down regulations, and prohibit practices. It would have been utterly out of place for him to have attempted to set right social questions before he had established his authority to interfere with such matters. Again: it is said the Apostles did not denounce slavery. They too had a great question which demanded their first attention. They had to establish the fact of Christ's resurrection, divinity, and messiahship, as well as the divine authority of their own commission. This being done, they would naturally commend to the world the Scriptures of truth, and let them tell what things are right and what is wrong. Now, who does not see that it is a selfish evasion for a slaveholder to talk thus? It would have been absurd for him to have denounced any particular sins without establishing his authority to denounce sin at all.

Suppose a man in this country should attempt thus to justify slavery; you would not go with him. When light is poured upon this question, it becomes a heinous offense, and no man can pursue it without forfeiting his right to be called or treated as a Christian. I can recollect the time when we all thought the use of ardent spirits was necessary - we all thought no one could do without them; but by and by, the question was taken up. Many resisted. It was the rising or falling of many in Israel. Many rose up in resistance, and sin quenched the Holy Ghost - and where are they? A desolation has come over some of their churches through taking wrong grounds on this question.

But let me say again: if any person allows himself to pursue any branch of business which is a great evil to society, he is guilty of the sin here spoken of. Suppose he prides himself on his intention to make a good use of his money; suppose a pirate were to plead that he was going to give his money to the Bible Society, would that mitigate his crime? No indeed. There was a rich man in my country, who professed to be converted, made up his mind as he said at the time, to give up all that he had to the Lord. I saw nothing of him for a time, but after some years he called at our house, and we had some conversation. I found he had left his former place of residence, and was removing to another part of the country. I asked him where he was going to, and he replied that he "was going West, in fact, he was going to St. Louis. He had failed in business." "Failed in business?" I exclaimed, "How is that?" It turned out that he had been speculating in the provision line in order, as he said, to get money to send out evangelists. In order to do this, he bought up all the provisions along a

certain road, put a high price upon them, and thus raised money from the poor along this great thoroughfare. He had, according to his notions, been speculating for God. I asked him what business he had doing such a thing as that; and informed him that I was not the least surprised that he had failed. Did God want him to *punish the poor* in order that he might *spread the gospel?* No, indeed.

Again, there is the *liquor trade*. There are may persons who will resist light on this subject, and talk just as men who are determined not to forsake a business which they know is an abomination to the world and a curse to society. Yes! If all the tears could be collected together which this business has caused to be shed, they would make enough, perhaps, for them to swim in. It has broken hearts, ruined families, dethroned reason, desolated firesides - everything is laid waste. All this, and more than this, has resulted from the sale of these deadly drinks. some say it is *necessary*. For the sake of argument I will admit this, in certain instances; but mark, is it not a fact assumed and believed that it will be abused? - that vastly more will be abused than is really needed? - and is not the traffic, therefore, undesirable at all? Suppose no more were used than the comparatively small quantity which is actually necessary - suppose it were not abused, and that there was no probability that it would be abused, how many liquor dealers, think you, would there be in London? How many of them would think of living by the business if they presumed no more than is necessary would be used? Now it is the assumption that it will be abused that renders it so desirable an object of traffic. Every man engaged in it presumes this, or he would not do so. Who, then, can pursue such a trade as this, and enjoy communion with the Holy Ghost at the same time.?

Time was when good men used it because they thought they needed it; but now the frightful extent of its awful ruin has been shown. Drinking, and slavery, and everything of the kind might go on, without its wickedness being dreamt of; but when light is poured upon the subject, and men still refuse to see, it is utterly inexcusable.

It is a remarkable fact, that those who have resisted this reformation - ministers who have refused to yield after they have been shown the sinfulness of their position - it is astonishing to see how they have withered; this has been particularly manifest in my country amongst those who have continued to truckle to the slave power, after seeing the sinfulness of the traffic. The frown of God has been upon them as manifestly as it could be; they have quenched the Spirit. It would be impossible to calculate the good which has been effected where holy men of God in the ministry have taken the lead in these reforms.

There are multitudes of things in business - modes of doing business - by which the Spirit of God is grieved for instance, when the error is seen, and yet the will is allowed to struggle with the Spirit of God. Many men are uneasy and restless from resistance to the Spirit of God in such matters; there is some want of candour, and consequently there is a fetter upon their spirit - there is a strife, an agonizing in their soul - they know there is something wrong - they have not the joy and peace belonging to a Christian; - the fact is, they are engaged in a struggle with their Maker - quenching and grieving his Spirit in the presentation of the truth on some question which has come before them. Liquor dealers, and all who use those drinks, are in danger of falling into this state.

I would not apply my remarks so generally in this country as in America, because public opinion is not so far advanced here as it is there; I would not, therefore, assert that none of you who use these drinks enjoy communion with God. Even Newton, Whitfield, and the Countess of Huntingdon were slaveholders; but were they now alive would they be slaveholders? No, indeed! God is on the way to reform mankind on these points; that state of the world is coming right square up to them. God is turning the attention both of the church and the world to these great evils. Light is blazing forth on every hand and now will anyone pretend to say that Whitfield, or Lady Huntingdon, would be slaveholders if they were alive now?

Now, who does not see that it is the duty of every Christian in the world to take up whatever self-denial these reforms may involve? I have known multitudes of men who have turned their liquors into the street; and who, when urged to dispose of it for chemical purposes, have replied - "No, we will touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing."

When the evils resulting are so great, and there is no mode of counteracting them but by taking off their hands - let me say that all jealousy, envyings, and party feeling, are so many ways of quenching and grieving the Spirit of God. I have seen the piety of churches decline rapidly and fearfully from this cause in great cities, and yet they could not make it out; whereas if you question them individually, you will find numbers of them in such an attitude towards one another, that the Holy Spirit, who loves them both, must, in some measure, withdraw his influence.

Who, in this age of the world, thinks to preach against gluttony? Yet it is one of the commonest forms of sin.

An individual once confessed to me that he had for years been unable to attend properly to his business in consequence of indulging in too hearty a dinner; but that during the whole of that time he had never once heard gluttony preached against, or condemned from the pulpit as sinful. Now I suppose it may perhaps be different in this country; but I think that a great deal needs everywhere to be done, whatever may already have been said, even to Christian people, in the subject of excessive eating.

The same may be said of drinking and other evil indulgences, such as the use of tobacco in its various forms. How few like to look at this in the proper light. They surely cannot plead that they smoke, snuff, or chew to the glory of God. In some few diseases, somewhere about one in five thousand, tobacco may be used with benefit. If professors of religion allow themselves in such self-indulgent habits, how can they expect to enjoy communion with God? Is it not unreasonable to persons to use such articles, wasting God's money for them, and rendering themselves even odious? I was astonished the other day to fall in with a minister, whose hands, and the entrances to whose pockets, were considerably besmeared with snuff. He talked of religion as if he never thought of this; but most men know that all such habits are contrary to the duty of the Christian. I have known some who when told that such were wrong, would get up and leave the house - they were unwilling to be shown the real nature and tendency of these things, but if they are unwilling at least to ascertain by honest investigation, whether such things are right or wrong, they must assuredly quench the Spirit. There is no way in which we can keep a clear medium open between our hearts and God without weighing all our habits in the balances of the Bible. If we would have the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, and so on, we must ever be wide awake to listen to reproof, and honestly apply every principle of the gospel to all our life, and to everything we do.

I used tobacco once myself, even for sometime after I was converted. A brother conversed with me on the subject. I had supposed it beneficial to me for certain reason. "Brother," he said to me, "do you think now that it is right?" I reflected for a moment. He made a suggestion or two on the subject. At length, I put my hand into my pocket, and got out my box, which I had just filled. "There," said I, "take that." I saw him some years after, but I had not resumed the use of it, and have never felt inclined to do so since. I do not speak boastingly, but I have become quite afraid of doing anything which would tend to quench the Spirit. I have always tried to do this; if aught gets between my soul and God, I have been in the habit of saying, "O Lord, tell me what is the matter! What am I doing? What stands in the way?" We should act in such a way as if Jesus saw and was with us, just as he saw and was with the disciples. Let that be the rule. Let no man do or say anything of what Jesus might say. "I am sorry to see you doing or omitting to do so and so - engaged in such and such a business." Let your proceedings be of such a nature that you can say, "O Lord, art thou sorry to see me do this? Does it grieve thee? Does thine heart approve of my doing it?"

Now, do you for one moment suppose that a slaveholder, for instance, could do this, and go away supposing that God would have him continue his atrocious traffic? And do you believe that men engaged in business of other kinds, which are injurious to society - the liquor trade, for instance - can go and say, "Lord, is this for thy glory? Wilt thou approve, and add thy blessing?" Can they say, "Help me, O Lord, to sell as much liquor today as I can - to throw out as much alcohol in all the forms in which I can get people to buy it?" Can they pray so? No man has any right to engage in any business on which he cannot ask the blessing of God. Who would think, in these days, of going to pray in that way? Who would think of going to pray that multitudes of evils which now exist may be put away, while they themselves are among the very persons who do these things.

Now, brethren and sisters, you who are, so many of you, strangers to me, that I do not know if there be anyone in this house who is actually guilty of this, but if there be, I wish to warn such a one in love. I ask you, are you doing these things with the idea that you are honouring God? Can you say when you go to your liquor shops, "O God, bless me in this business, help me to do a deal of business, and thereby glorify thee?"

But let me say again: Refusing to receive a brother who calls for self-denial is grieving and quenching the Holy Ghost, refusing to sympathize with Christ in his self-denying exertions to do good to the world. He has led the way by showing what he is willing to do to save mankind. Now those who hold back, unwilling to unite with him upon the same principles on which he acted, resist and grieve the Spirit.

Not long since an individual was talking to his pastor about the propriety of setting an example to his flock by abstaining himself if only for the sake of others. But he said, "Their abuse of it was no reason for his abstinence. They abused many other things as well as that." Now, was this the principle on which Paul acted? No indeed, he was ready to give up meat "as long as

the world lasted." On the same principle Christ might have said he did not see why he should suffer because mankind had abused the government of the Almighty in making a bad use of their moral agency. Christ acted upon the principle of saving those who had no excuse for their sins - not the unfortunate, but the wicked. Thus it is that missionaries and other Christians deny themselves so that when the good to them is less than the evil to others, they instantly come out and forego their own good because it is so much less than the evil which might result to others. But when we take such astounding ground as in the case of the said minister, what can we expect but darkness of mind and fruitlessness of life? In order to have the Spirit of God, we must yield to him, and if we do not do this - if we do not go from one degree of self-denial to another - we resist the Spirit who is trying to lead us up to a higher ground than we have hitherto occupied. The church has never been on a ground so high as to give herself entirely up to reform the world; but he is pressing her up and up. Her business, therefore, is to prepare herself to go the whole length of reforming herself, and those around her, and prepare for any degree of self-denial that may be required in order to accomplish this. But if anyone shall insist upon not giving up this and that, although he knows that the good to be obtained, and the evil to be shunned will far outweigh all that can be gained from indulgence - what would become of the church and the world should they imitate him?

Suppose, for instance, we admit that alcoholic drinks are, in some cases, useful? Who believes that the use of them is so great a good as the evil of their abuse? The same cannot be said of meat and drink seeing that they are necessaries of life, and cannot be done without. Things indispensable to life cannot be done without - we are not called upon, therefore, under any circumstances, to give them up. But there are drinks and other things which are working a great injury to society, and which it has been demonstrated again and again, may safely be dispensed with - all will admit that the injury which results to mankind bears no comparison to the doubtful benefit which is said to be derived by us individually - it is clear, therefore, that we ought to give them up. What was the principle on which Christ acted? Why, he said, because of my relation and character, it is better that there should be this suffering on my part, than that the human family should suffer eternal death!

If the suffering he endured had been greater than that which he prevented, the course he adopted would have been neither wise nor benevolent. He gained for the universe an unspeakable benefit, and prevented an inconceivable injury. His rule should be our guide. Self-denial does us good. *Shall we offer the Lord only that which costs us nothing?* Shall we say that while a thing is a good to us we cannot give it up? Why not? If your so doing will avoid a greater evil, and procure a greater good, you are bound to give it up, if you are bound to be benevolent at all. If you will not sacrifice a small good to yourself for the sake of a great good to others, what kind of a Christian must you be? You go in direct opposition to the Spirit of Christ and of the Apostles. Now if a man speculates about his indulgences - if he "does not see why he should give up" this or that, and the other thing - who can expect him to have a face so clear as to look up to God and say, "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I would rather die than scatter evils thus around me by anything I should do!" The fact is, beloved, there is a world to be said on this subject. Now who does not see that shuffling and conniving like this is grieving the Spirit?

Some of you are aware of the great and powerful revivals which swept through America, and that when the slavery question came up, the ministers of the North and South were united in one great ecclesiastical connection; they cried out in many quarters, that we should not disturb this connection. The North poured down the truth upon the South, and even the Northern ministers sometimes would not allow notices of anti-slavery meetings to be announced from their pulpits - not even anti-slavery prayer-meetings - but treated the matter just as many ministers in this country do the temperance question. Neither would they speak out and denounce the sin of slavery. The result was, the blight of the Almighty came upon the churches, revivals disappeared, the churches were grieved, the Spirit was grieved! The very same course was pursued over there with regard to temperance; and here let me say, if I am not mistaken, you have got some solemn lessons to learn on this subject in England. I would that all the ministers of England were here tonight! But some of them will not hear us on the subject; they are unwilling to broach it, or to name it broached by the churches! What will become of them and their churches? We shall see! If their churches must be shut to these subjects - if this question is to be resisted - mark me! if you do not experience a similar suffering to that which afflicted the American churches. There are many doleful tales to tell on that subject. But these things must be put away; the chains of the slaves must be snapped asunder; intemperance must be swept away; God will have it so. The cars are coming! The train approaches! Off the track! Off the track!

Let no man trifle with God on these subjects. These great evils must be rolled off from the face of society. The poor must no longer be countenanced in running to

the tippling houses; they must be reasoned with, and retreated. Consider! You do not need it. You are better without it. Do not go!

I wish I had time to tell you some affecting instances of Christians going to the ditch, taking the drunken men out, treating them kindly, - giving the whole force of the influence and example against these drinks. How many tears have thus been wiped away! How many hearths have thus been surrounded with joyous smiles where desolation once prevailed? There is much to be done; do not resist these movements. Do not stand in the way lest you grieve the Spirit of God. I would not, however, deal in indiscriminate condemnation. Time was when there was as much darkness in America on this subject as there is here. I would say to all, "Be willing to practice what you know, and remain open to further conviction." Go for the whole. Say, "I will wash my hands in innocency, then will I compass thine altars, O Lord." I had much more to say on this head, did time permit; but I must now just notice some of the consequences.

First, Great blindness of mind. You are probably aware that such has been the blindness of some men, that they have undertaken from the Bible to prove that slavery is a Divine institution, so benighted have they become! You do not need, in England, to be told that this is gross darkness; and it began in their shutting their eyes to the truth, which begat a coldness of mind and hardness of heart; their whole being was brought under dominion of their lusts; they were chained and bound fast in the fetters of their sin; they are waxing worse and worse - becoming more and more confirmed in sins which I have not time to particularize.

You can all, from the rapid outline I have presented, that instead of at once getting a universal reformation - all classes denying themselves, setting an example, and the church taking the lead, what are they doing? They are falling back - shrinking from their work. There is great wreck of ministerial character, oftentimes, where there is not a thorough walk right up to the work. There cannot be much prevailing prayer where there is so much quenching the Spirit, so few of the fruits of the Spirit, these self-indulgent habits and God- dishonouring practices.

You can see from the remarks I have made that many of you are tempting God by praying for the Spirit while, at the same time, you are quenching. There is great danger of the Spirit leaving you. Some years back a minister about forty years of age came to me after service and said, "Brother Finney, I am in a terrible state of mind. I must abandon the ministry. When at the Theological Seminary, I took the wrong side in a discussion; but having committed myself, I here defended my position contrary to my convictions. I then soon lost the spirit of prayer, and was almost afraid to enter the ministry. The curse of God has been on me ever since. I have been many years in the ministry, yet I do not know that I have been instrumental in the conversion of a single soul. What shall I do? My fruitless vine is dry and withered!"

He told me many more things of a similar character; but the case was not new to me. I have seen instances of individuals having taken the wrong side, and of God holding them up as a warning to others, lest they fall under the same condemnation.

And now, let me ask you, Are you prepared to go the full length of doing what you think Christ, should you meet him, would ask you to do? If you are not prepared to do this, you are resisting the Spirit - you are quenching the Holy Ghost. Are you holding back? What are you doing? Will you live at this "poor, dying rate," or be filled with the Spirit? If so, do not quench the Spirit; resist and grieve him no longer; but give up all your life, heart, and soul, relying upon him; the fruits of the Spirit will abound in you, and if you do this, those around you will take knowledge of you, if indeed you exhibit the fruits of the Spirit of Christ.

LITTLE SINS

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 5, 1851

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

(Of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, America,)

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." -- James ii.10.

The New Testament is the spirit of the Old revealed. From the state of mankind, and, therefore, from the necessity of the case, God began to deal with men, in his first revelation to them, respecting their outward demeanour, and gradually gave them a more spiritual revelation as they were able to bear it. For example, the New Testament reveals the spiritual meaning of both the moral and ceremonial law, it opens up the full meaning of the types and shadows which were designed, under the old Testament dispensation to teach great truths in relation to religion, but their meaning, and real intention, were lost sight of by a great portion of the Jewish nation, who came to regard them simply in the letter; the New Testament was therefore designed to reveal the deep spirit and meaning of them. When Christ came the veil was put away; we no longer have the letter but the spirit. Jesus and his apostles made it their business to expound the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures. Christ often expounded the law to show what was the true spirit and meaning of it, resolving it all into two great branches -- "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Duties to God and duties to man. Christ thus taught us that the motive, the state of the heart, the intention with which every thing is done constitutes it either sin or holiness. You will find that the New Testament writers, and Christ himself especially, when speaking of the outward conduct of man traces it right back to the heart; and they taught that if any action proceeded from love to God and our neighbour, it was right and good; but if not it was wicked, whatever the outward form of it might be. Now, I say, Christ first and his apostles, and all the inspired teachers of Christianity afterwards made it a prime object of their teaching to show what was the real spirit of the law at all times: they taught that love was the fulfilling of the law; that all law -- meaning the law of the Old Testament, was fulfilled in one word --love; and, therefore, whatever action was not from love was sin. It is of very great importance that we should keep our eyes on this fact, for we cannot properly understand either the Old or the New Testament, unless we understand the method of God's dealings with men, that he adapted his instructions to their necessities, training them from infancy to manhood, gradually developing his instructions as they were able to receive them. In the Old Testament he gave men all the instruction in a particular form which was necessary for them at the time; and then in the New the veil was taken away from the Old. Those who were pious under the Old Testament dispensation, were justified by faith, and saved even as those under the New, but the best of them knew but comparatively little of spiritual religion. Jesus Christ himself said of John the Baptist, that he was greater than all those who had come before him, but he also said, that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than he. That is to say, the least under the New Testament dispensation was greater than the greatest under the Old.

In speaking from the words that I have read, I propose to pursue the following order:--

I. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE ASSERTION OF THE TEXT.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED.

III. SHALL SHOW THAT THIS IS PLAINLY THE DOCTRINE OF REASON AS WELL AS REVELATION.

I. *What is not intended by the assertion in the text.* Observed, the affirmation is this -- "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Now I remark, first, that he did not intend to say that any man might obey the spirit of one precept and at the same time disobey the spirit of another precept: to interpret it thus would be to make the text speak directly the opposite of what it does say. The text does not say that you can truly keep all the precepts but one, for this is the very thing which the Apostle takes pains to deny; if we understand him to mean that, then we understand him to assert a palpable contradiction. He says, if a man offends in one point he is guilty of breaking the whole law--then of course he meant to deny that a man can keep the law in some particulars and break it in others at the same time..

II. *What then is intended!* Why he plainly means this--and it is perfect accordance with the spirit of the whole of the New Testament -- that if the letter of every precept but one, is obeyed, while the spirit of that one is knowingly violated, the whole law is broken -- if in any one particular he knowingly, sins he violates the whole law. I will explain the reason for this by and by -- I am now explaining the meaning. I say, then, that the

violation of one law is the violation of all law. That is when the spirit of a precept is violated, there can be no real true obedience of any other precept.

III. We have next to inquire whether this doctrine is sanctioned by human intelligence as well as revelation. Observe, this doctrine was but very little understood under the Old Testament dispensation, for reasons that I have already mentioned. They were taken up with the*letter* of the law, and, therefore, were not disposed to trace back their actions to the heart -- and to understand that all outward actions were the result of the state of the heart. Now the New Testament was designed to correct this great and almost universal error.

In showing you that this is the doctrine, and the only doctrine of human reason, such as human beings can acknowledge, I observe first; the letter of the law refers to outward acts; it says thou shalt do so and so, and thou shalt *not* do so and so; it requires certain things to be done, and certain things to be omitted -- this is the letter of the law. In the ten commandments you have an illustration of what I mean. Now observe, the Jews, as a nation, did not consider that these outward actions had no moral character only as they proceeded from certain states of mind -- consequently when they had fulfilled the letter of the law they thought that they had kept the law. If they did not commit adultery in the outward act, they thought they had kept the law; if they did not kill, or bear false witness, they thought themselves free from all the condemnation and penalties which were attached to the violation of these commands. But Christ said, if a man should so much as look upon a woman to lust after her, he had already committed adultery with her in his heart; and in the same way he took up every one of the precepts of the moral law, and every precept of religion to be found in the Old Testament, and resolved it all back into the state of the heart in which everything was done. This, to be sure, was a most terrible blow to the hopes of the self-righteous, to those who had a great regard for their own doings, but he saw that this was needed.

Let me say again: the spirit of the law always respects the motive from which an action springs. It is so in all criminal courts in every country. The letter of the law says thou shalt not do this or that, and yet in trying a case of crime the judge and jury always try to get at the motive which prompted the action. Suppose, for example, they found that an individual did anything outwardly, but that he was insane when he did it, they would say that his deed was not a crime. To be sure, courts of law are obliged, in general, to take the outward act as indicative of malicious intention; but if it can be proved that there was no such malicious intention -- that the motive was not to do harm, but to do good -- the action would not be treated as a crime. Courts of Law and Equity always seek to ascertain the motive from which a thing is done, and if it can be arrived at the doctrine of reason is always supplied to the case -- the spirit of the law, therefore, in all cases respects the motive from which any action proceeds.

In the next place; the moral law, or the law of God, requires supreme love to God, and equal love to man. The whole of the law is summed up in these two requirements -- love to God and love to man. And this love must not be a mere emotion: the whole being must be devoted to the end to which God is devote: it must be a voluntary devotion to God because of the end which he seeks. In other words -- it is good-will within; it is the mind in a voluntary state yielding itself up, not to self-interest, but the glory of God, and the good of all beings.

Let me say again: it is easy to see that the state of mind which will supremely devote itself to one great end, cannot at the same time give itself up for the promotion of a different end: his mind cannot be devoted to one end and all his outward conduct tend in a directly opposite course; the very fact that he is devoted to an end will regulate his being, and be the mainspring of all his outward actions. If a man's mind is devoted to God, his outward actions will be an illustration of his thoughts: his heart is full of love to God, and he is set upon realizing the end at which God aims; and, therefore, all his outward actions will be a succession of endeavours to realize that end. Selfishness, in all sinners, is the end at which they aim; and their outward life is nothing more than a perpetual succession of efforts to gratify themselves; hence it is easy to see that all their actions will have one great end in view -- the promotion of their own interests. This, I say, everybody knows, that knows anything about mind and its actions.

But let me say once more: when there is supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellow-men -- that is where we love them as we love ourselves -- we cannot consent in any way to wrong God or our neighbours. Suppose now, that a man loves God supremely, is supremely devoted to his interests, it is impossible that he could sin knowingly, and do that which is inconsistent with God's interests. His whole life is an endeavour to secure that upon which his heart is set. Suppose then that his heart is set upon pleasing and glorifying God, can he consent to sin in such a state of mind, and thus dishonour, displease, and set at naught the authority of God? It is a contradiction and an absurdity to say that he can. This is the doctrine of the law as well as the gospel, for the gospel does not in any case set aside

the law. So far is it from being true that the gospel has set aside the law, that it is only a condensation of the requirements of the law, and it contains the whole substance and the very essence of the law doubly sanctioned and enforced. Hence it is said, "If he that despised Moses's law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing!: Again: if a man loved his neighbour as himself, it is impossible that he should consent to wrong his neighbour, but on the other hand, he will seek his neighbour's interests equally with his own.

Then let me say in the next place; obedience to God implies a supreme regard to God's authority. Now every one can see that every known sin is a rejection of his authority. For example. Suppose an individual does anything whatever from a supreme regard to God's authority, he cannot act in any other thing in a way quite inconsistent with that authority. Suppose he does any one thing from a supreme regard for the authority and interests of God, he cannot, while in that state of mind do something, in the accomplishment of which he must reject the authority of God and trample it down. The thing is preposterous, as every man perceives. A man cannot act without regard to the authority of God in one thing, and yet at the same time act from supreme authority to him in another thing.

But let me say again: it is easy to see that a man cannot pick and choose among the commandments of God, and obey some and disobey others. Supreme love to God is an exercise of the mind, and a man cannot have this and yet act the opposite -- it is a palpable contradiction: a man with supreme love to God in his mind cannot consent to violate any commandment of God.

This leads me to remark again; that the true spirit and meaning of what the apostle says, is as obviously and strongly asserted by reason as it is by revelation. What the apostle asserts is this -- if a man should do any or all of the things required in the decalogue, or ten commandments, in the letter, and yet should violate the true Spirit of one law, he would prove that he did not keep any of them from a right motive -- that he did not really obey the law at all in its true spirit and meaning. If I should keep those which did not cost me much self-denial, or keep them in the letter, but violate them in the spirit, this would prove that none of them were kept from a right motive. Hence, if any one indulges in the commission of any one sin, and yet appears in everything else to be virtuous, you may know that he has not true religion in his hear, that he is only religious in appearance. From what the apostle says in this passage it is plain, that if men pretend to have faith, and pretend to have love, and yet do not obey God, that they are deceiving themselves, and are violating the spirit of the whole of God's law. You can thus see, my dear hearers, that if the heart is right the conduct must be, and if the heart is wrong the conduct is wrong, whatever it may appear outwardly. The conduct is sinful, because it does not proceed from right intention. If the law of God is not obeyed in the spirit of it, it is disobeyed, whatever the outward life may be. If there is no reverence for the authority of God, no supreme devotedness to God, and not equal love for our neighbours, the law is violated. This leads me to say again -- if the spirit of the law is violated, -- for the spirit of the law is the spirit of the gospel, and the spirit of the gospel is the spirit of the law -- and both are the spirit of heaven; both are the spirit of God, and both are found in heaven; therefore, whatsoever falls short of obeying the spirit of the law, also falls short of obedience to the gospel.

Some remarks must close what I have to say this morning. First: viewed in relation to God's government of men there are no little sins. A great many persons have wondered, in reading the Old Testament, why certain sins were punished with death, which in the present day are hardly regarded as sins at all. The penalties for breaking the law under Moses were very different to what they are now in governments generally. The fact is, that under that dispensation it was peculiarly necessary for the infliction of a severe penalty against sin; and there were peculiar reasons why the law of the Sabbath should have been so rigidly enforced upon the Jews. But if you reflect for a moment you will see that there are no little sins, because every sin is a rejection of God's authority: every sin is a renunciation, for the time being, of allegiance to the Divine government. Of course there can be no little sins, for every sin involves a breach of the whole law, in the spirit of it; every one of them involves a refusal to love God with all the heart, and our neighbours as ourselves; every one of them involves a setting up of our own interests above that of Jehovah. There are no little sins then under the government of God; for everyone one of them involves rebellion against his authority. When we come to look at human society, and judge of the actions of men only as they effect it, we get comparative ideas of sin; but when we come to look at sin as a violation of the law of God, then we can see that every one who commits sin, in any degree as judged by human society, is an open enemy of God.

But let me say once more: when we truly understand this subject we shall see that when God's government is regarded, those sins which people are apt to call little sins, are really the greatest. That is, they involve the most guilt when viewed in their relations to God. When people practice little forms of self-indulgence, little lies, little acts of unjust dealing, of course the temptation is small, and the smaller the temptation if complied with, the greater the sin. Suppose, for example, an individual, the force of temptation, should commit some horrible crime against society, which is bad enough to be sure; but suppose another man, under very slight temptation consents to cast off God's authority in something else! Not it is true that in the former case the man consented to cast off God's authority too, and the crime consists in sinning against God's authority; the crime does not consist in sinning against human law, and human society. observe, then, in both instances, the sin is against God. The one is called a crime, but the other is not generally regarded as such, and yet both as crimes against God are equally wicked, or it may be, as I have said, that that which is not regarded as a crime by man, may be the greatest sin against God, because it was committed under very slight temptation. You are passing along the street, and you see a woman with a basket of oranges, her head is turned, you pop your hand into her basket, and slip an orange into your pocket. A very trifling thing, you say, I only took an orange. See that man with a plate of buttons, two for a penny, or it may be more, his back is turned, and a man puts his hand into the plate and slips a penny worth of buttons into his pocket. Now, what has he done! Why, under a very little temptation he has consented, with the eye of God looking right on him, to cast off God's authority and trample upon it for the value of a penny! Now he does not love that man whom he robbed, as he loves himself! His conduct says as plain as possible, God has commanded me to love my neighbour as myself, but I will love myself, and not my neighbour -- I do not care what God says; I will do as I please. Now sinner, you would be afraid to *say* that, but you *do* it. You are too hypocritical and cowardly to say it; but you do it right in the face of Almighty God!!

Once more: the least sins against society are often the greatest against God. Suppose a case. Look at that man, he is under the greatest excitement, some one has seduced his wife in his absence from home; he returned and found it out; in his desperation and agony he meets the man who has so grievously injured him, and he takes his life. He has committed a great crime against society and against God. Now take another case -- two men with two dogs pass along the street -- the dogs begin to fight -- one of the dogs receive some slight injury, and a slight scuffle ensues between their owners; and one injures the other. Now in this latter case there was very little temptation to commit the sin of injuring a neighbour compared with the former, and, therefore, this latter sin was as great as the former, and, perhaps, greater in the sight of God.

Once more: it is easy to see, from what has been said, how it is that multitudes misapprehend their true spiritual condition -- I mean men are outwardly conformed to the letter of God's law, but who are not truly Christian men. It is very important to understand this, and come to a thorough understanding that it is not by obedience to the letter of the law that a man can be accepted of God. Take an illustration. We will suppose, if you please, that one of Her Majesty's ships of war turn pirates; they exhibit the black flag, the death's head and cross bones, and go forth to make war upon the ships of all nations. Now they understand very well the importance of discipline, and it is strictly enforced because they are fully aware that they cannot secure their own ends without it. They take a ship, and the booty is distributed fairly to every man in proportion to his rank. Perhaps there is not a better disciplined ship in Her Majesty's navy; nor one in which there is more concern for the feelings and comfort of the whole crew. Now suppose that this ship should want provision and ammunition, and should seek a supply from the government on the score of their discipline and kindly feeling which exist among themselves! The government would ask whether their object in all they did was to vindicate the honour of their country and promote her interests! Now the reverse of this being true of them, is it not easy to see that they would be rightful refused their request by British Government! Where is the virtue of all their discipline and kindly feeling if they are employed in opposing the government and the interests of the citizens! Thus the moralist may boast of his morality, but all he does is from a selfish motive and for a selfish end, and this what constitutes him a sinner. Now suppose that human society in any part of the world should become perfect so far as intercourse between themselves in concerned. Their object is to secure some selfish end. It is indispensable that they should be faithful and kind to each other, as a condition of securing their selfish object. Suppose they should have the utmost discipline among themselves, and even manifest great benevolence. But if all this has relation to their own selfish objects, and not to the glory of God and the good of his kingdom, they are sinners, and only sinners continually. A merely moral man -- a man who is not converted, a man who does, not act from love to

God -- has not a particle of anything good within him. In all his conduct he tramples on the authority of God's law -- he acts from a selfish motive, and not from love to God, he has no reference to God in what he does.

Let me say again: I fear that there are great many professors of religion, who suppose that they are truly religious although they knew that there are some forms of sin which they have not given up -- things which the law and the gospel both condemn. But they expect Christ to justify them. They think they have some religion, and do not expect to be very pious because they cannot be perfect, and so they indulge in some forms of sin, and are under the influence of certain forms of selfishness, and are thinking all the while, that because they keep such and such other commandments in the letter, that they will be saved at last. Thus they do not keep any of the commandments in the spirit of them, as God requires them to be kept, and if a man obeys not the law in the spirit, he does not obey it at all.

Once more: it is of the greatest importance that men should understand this, for there cannot be a more dangerous idea than that men can serve God and mammon at the same time; that men can pick and choose among God's commandments -- break those, and keep these in the letter, and yet be religious! This can never be. Human reason, as well as the Scriptures affirm that this must be true, and that its opposite cannot.

Now I must break off my remarks, but before I sit down let me ask you a question. My dear hearers, are you conscious of indulging in any forms of sin? And if you are, do you still hold on to the hope that you will be saved? Are you indulging in these things that you know to be sins; so that if you were to meet Jesus Christ in the street you would have no occasion to say -- is such a thing sin? You would be ashamed to ask such a question; for in the deep recesses of your heart you know it is sin. For let me say, although some persons try to persuade themselves that such and such things are not sins, yet if they knew they should not live ten minutes, they would conclude and acknowledge at once that they were. Now I do not mean that a Christian may not fall, under the influence of a powerful temptation, into sin, even as bad as David did. David was a good man, but under the influence of a powerful temptation he fell. But I doubt if a man could do what David did, in the present day of gospel light, and yet be a Christian. But if a Christian fall into sin he will not remain in its indulgence: he will be very anxious to have all his sins searched out, and forgiven. A true Christian will act from supreme love to God, and equal love to man. Now suppose a man should say -- in somethings I keep the true spirit of the law and of the gospel, but there are some forms of sin I have never given up; there are such and such things in which I have always indulged myself; notwithstanding I love God supremely, and supremely regard his authority, in some things I yield my will entirely up to God, but in others, I disobey him. Now what sort of talk would that be? It would be just the religion of a mass of people! They act in this way; but if they were to put it into words it would amount almost to blasphemy!

Another thing I would mention is this -- if sinners would only say right out what they practice, what an awful state of society should we call it. If men were to profess the utmost contempt for God's authority we should be shocked. But men by their conduct; some by swearing and taking the name of God in vain, and others by cheating and taking advantage of their neighbours in every little thing, are really saying -- I do not mind what God says; I have a great contempt for his law; I do not care whether I grieve him or his Spirit; I will do just what I like. If those who are so would only say it, the people would rise up and cast such blasphemy out of society. Suppose a child should be told to do a certain thing, and he should say, I will not, but go right away and disobey you before your eyes. You command them, but they treat you with contempt. They do not say I will not obey, but smile in your face a go and disobey you -- what would you think of them? I will tell you what you would think, that the wickedness of their conduct could not be described in words.

O sinner! sinner! You do just this every day towards God, every one of you! But mind I do not bring this against you as a railing accusation: I have no personal quarrel with you; but I know you would despise me as a dishonest man if I should hesitate to tell you to your face, as God's minister, how you treat him! I have been a sinner myself, and have treated God as you are now treating him; and I know how you feel. When I was an impenitent sinner I never respected a man who did not tell me of my sins -- I despised him. Now sinner, how long will you go on in this way rebelling against God and despising his authority? Will you make up your mind that this shall be no longer? When you can reconcile yourself to such treatment from your children, then you may treat God so, but not before. Will you then turn unto God and live? or will you continue to rebel and perish for ever? Which will you do?

THE SINNERS SELF-DESTRUCTION

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 5, 1851,

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY

(Of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, America,)

AT THE TABERNACLE, MORESFIELDS.

"Do thyself no harm." -- Acts xvi.28.

Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel at Philippi, and Satan, it appears took new ground with them at this place, which, for a time, served greatly to embarrass them. There was a woman there who was the subject of demoniacal possession, and when the apostles were preaching she followed them from place to lace, and called out after them -- "These are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation;" and, of course, inasmuch as she was such a character, and so well-known Paul was very much grieved that she thus went after them, and bore testimony of this kind. He, therefore, cast the unclean spirit out of her in the name of Jesus Christ. This naturally gave great offence to those who made profit by her proceedings, and as they were influential persons they caused not small stir in the city. The brought them before the magistrates, and charged them with "turning the world upside down." After this they were sent to jail, and thrust into the inner prison, and, lest they should possibly escape, their feet were made fast in the stocks. At midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God, and all the prisoners heard them. There was a great earthquake, and the very foundations of the prison were shaken, the bars and bolts were removed, and the doors thrown open. This awoke the jailer, who was sleeping in a part of the same building. Coming from his room, and beholding the state of things around him, he concluded the prisoners had escaped; and knowing that he should be hardly dealt with, he was greatly excited, and drawing his sword, was about to destroy himself. This was observed by Paul, who cried out with a loud voice -- "Do thyself no harm: we are all here." Then the jailer called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

God is always concerned lest the sinner should do himself harm, and what Paul said to the jailer in this case needs to be said to great multitudes of people in the present day; indeed, one way or the other, God is continually cautioning them not to injure themselves. It is not because this text teaches any particular doctrine that I have chosen it to-night, but for the purpose of calling attention to certain things of great importance.

I. NO ONE CAN REALLY DO YOU SPIRITUAL HARM BUT YOURSELF.

II. SIN IS THE GREATEST HARM.

III. THE SOURCES OF DANGER.

IV. THINGS WHICH YOU SHOULD GUARD AGAINST, AS THEY ARE FATAL.

I have said that no one can do a moral agent real spiritual injury but himself. Persons can tempt others, but unless the individual tempted consents, there is no sin on his part. The tempter may sin, but to suffer temptation is no sin. Truly and properly even Satan himself cannot inflict spiritual harm upon men without their consent; for, unless they consent; for, unless they consent, they are not really harmed by temptation. In fact, although Satan never means them to do so, they are often benefitted, rather than injured by temptation, when they manfully resist it. Where individuals designedly tempt others, it is no thanks to them if it works good instead of evil. No one can inflict sin upon another; sin is a voluntary act on the part of the sinner; nobody can sin for you, or make you sin without your own consent, in any such sense as that God will hold you responsible for it.

This leads me to the next point. Sin is the greatest harm you can inflict upon yourself. Whatever else you may do it is of trifling importance compared with this. Sin is an eternal wrong to the immortal soul. But I need only to mention such points; it is unnecessary to enlarge on them. Whenever you wrong others by sin, you always do yourselves a greater wrong than you do them. Suppose, for example, that you have cheated another man, injured his character, or in some way inflicted an injury upon him; you have not inflicted any spiritual injury upon him, although you have wronged him temporally. But mark, in wronging him you have far more deeply wronged yourself; for your act was sin, but the wrong you have done him is not of so great importance -- it is not so great a wrong to him as if he himself had committed a sin.

Now let me turn to the sources of danger. You are all apprized of the existence of temptation, which the Bible divides into three descriptions -- the world, the flesh, and the devil. By the world is meant all that is without -- by the flesh, our own nature -- by the devil, the infernal influences by which we are sometimes tempted.

But my main design is to call attention to certain things by which men are in danger of doing themselves harm, and to can on them to be on their guard against them. First, I remark that men are in danger of doing themselves harm by the indulgence of prejudice. I have no doubt but that prejudice is one of the most common occasions of sin. Men are in very great danger of being prejudiced. For example, nearly the whole Jewish nation appears to have been ruined by prejudice. They were so committed to certain views, and so prejudiced in favour of certain doctrines which they had been taught, that when Christ came he was so completely over-against their prejudices -- so different from what they expected -- they had so given themselves up to their prejudices, that it had become their ruin. Who can contemplate the influence of religious prejudice without feeling inclined to warn everybody to be on their guard against it?

Prejudice is a pre-judgment, a making up of the mind beforehand without the requisite light and evidence. Now, in every age of the world this has been one of the great evils of mankind, and probably the judgment day will reveal the fact, that prejudice has ruined as many souls as almost any other thing in the world. Religion consists in believing and obeying the truth. Now, just so far as an individual is prejudiced, just so far he will, of course, not be under the influence of the truth. If he is committed to a one-sided view he will not know, do, or be sanctified by the truth, and of course, therefore, will not be saved. It is striking to see to what an extent mere prejudice ofttimes governs people on questions so definitely important as that of religion.

I have already adverted to the history of the Jewish nation, and the same is true, to an amazing extent, with respect to nominal Christians in the church. There is, perhaps, no denomination of Christians in which you will not find individuals who give the strongest evidence that their religion, such as it is, is a mere prejudice; and, in fact, some communities the mass of the membership appears to be in this condition; so that to attempt to preach to them contrary to their views, is useless, seeing that just so far as it is opposed to their views, in so far they deem your teaching erroneous. This is an all-powerful argument with them. So amongst the Roman Catholics, for instance; every individual who knows anything of them knows how extremely difficult it is to get them to listen to anything unless it comes to them in a certain shape. Their religion itself is a mere mass of prejudices, and not, in reality a religion at all, and this the mass of them abundantly show in their lives.

Some years since I was called to labour in a locality in the United States where a multitude of Germans had taken up their abode. They were strongly imbued with the peculiar views entertained by their denomination. They were taught their catechism up to a certain age, when they came before the minister, answer certain questions, and if they can do so they are admitted to communion, and then confirmed; this, they are taught to believe is religion. I have frequently been told, when labouring amongst them -- "Oh! I'm a Christian already." "Are you indeed? Who made you a Christian?" "Dr. Millenberg," was the reply in one case. "Well, but do you call that religion?" I have asked, "Oh, yes, that is *our* religion." Now, every drunkard I met in the streets had been to the communion, said his catechism, learned his lesson, and been received into the bosom of the church. So fatal and deep was their prejudice that it was astounding to see the masses in such a position. Their minister, for instance, would make such appeals to them as this, if there was any great revivals of religion in the neighbourhood -- "Why do you go to hear such preaching as this? If you embrace that religion you will turn against your fathers, and you may as well say your fathers are gone to hell! Did they pray and do such and such things? Did they tell their religious 'experience,' and how they were 'converted?' Will you turn against your fathers, give them all up, and proclaim by your conduct that they are all gone to hell?" In this way they were harangued from Sabbath to Sabbath; and is it wonderful that while persons thus have their prejudices appealed to, that they die in their sins by thousand after thousand? No minister, who appeals to the people's prejudices, can hope to promote religion thereby; they cannot be in a more unfavourable attitude to become truly religious; for, until they become honest-hearted, as little children, they will not be converted. Prejudices against individuals is ofttimes a very great obstacle to conversion. people do not seem to see that even when convicted these prejudices prevent their being converted. In fact, this was as total a barrier to their being converted as if they were in the habit of stealing, getting drunk, or anything else of that kind. This is not sufficiently understood. People who indulge unreasonable prejudices in this way, are often surprised to find they make small progress in religion; they cannot think how it is. Some persons are apt to fall into this error from their natural temperament; and such persons are in danger of doing themselves fatal harm. This is one of the rifest resources of destruction among men. How few there are after all, comparatively, whom you do not find so unreasonably committed either in favour of, or against somebody, that they are in a perfectly dishonest state of mind. Press them with religion, if you please, such is their dishonesty you can do them no good. I say the more on this subject because, when conversing with those persons, I have often found that

they had never thought of these prejudices as a hindrance of their spiritual prayers.

Another thing against which persons need to be warned, is resistance to, and trifling with their own consciences. The reason that there is so little sensibility on the subject of religion is, that persons have trifled so long with their own consciences. People complain that they have none of the influences of the Holy Spirit; this is very common. How is it? If we could see through their past history we should perceive times when they felt keenly on religious subjects, especially when they sinned; but they indulged first in one sin and disregarded the reproof of conscience, and then in another and another, till at length the voice of the inward monitor was allowed to pass unheeded, and eventually, except in very extreme cases, it scarcely spoke at all, and finally sinks down into an indignant silence!

There are two things belonging to what we generally term conscience -- the mind's judgment, the moral character of the man, and that kind of feeling created by them -- i.e., a feeling answerable to the mind's judgment of our moral conduct. That which is more generally understood by the term conscience is the twinge of the sensibility; for so is reason related to the feeling part of the mind that when it points out sin in an individual, (that is before he becomes benumbed by resistance) it will produce a feeling impelling the mind to avoid such things. When the mind says such a thing is right, and it is your duty to do it -- that is, when the judgment of the mind says so -- there is a feeling pressing the individual up to do it, or if he has done it without this it causes a deep sting of remorse, when this feeling has not be trifled with, it makes the mind bleed to the very centre; but, when resisted the impulsive part ceases, the remorse ceases, and at length even when any thing is clearly seen to be a duty, not the least impulse is felt to do it. It affirms such and such to be duty, but there is no echoing feeling or tendency in the mind to go in that direction -- only a cold naked judgment, that he *ought* to do it. He has done something wrong, oh! yes; and there is the cold judgment, and that is all, there is no remorse. When persons have thus completely silenced the impulsive voice, and there is nothing left but the cold naked judgment -- what then? They complain of the "want of conviction." They have "no heart to become religious," no feeling on the subject. They know themselves to be sinners, but they feel it not, and care not for it. They know they are in danger of going to hell, but it does not alarm them. They know they have lived in sin, but they do not feel it; they are like a marble pillar. I have no doubt that some of you recognize in this picture your own past or present condition. Cannot you remember when you believed a thing to be wrong, felt strongly drawn back from it; or, if you did it, you felt a sting of remorse which made you writhe, and perhaps even led you to pray and confess it to God? But how is it now? Where is all that impulse now? Perhaps the cold naked affirmation is present -- that you can never resist -- but, make, perhaps all the results which tend to life within yourself is gone. Where are your now? Ah! where are your now? I would earnestly caution you to be careful how you trifle with conscience, for when you have once stifled its voice -- where are you then?

Another mode by which men are in danger of doing themselves fatal harm is by resisting the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it is always true that when the conscience is resisted, the Holy Spirit is resisted, and that this impulse is often, if not always, connected with the Divine influence. When the Spirit of God is quenched and grieved away, there is the utmost danger that the conscience will become entirely silent, and that no truth can savingly reach the soul: for, observe, it is through the conscience that the Spirit of God works, and that the truth takes hold on men; but for a man's conscience, he would no more be converted than a marble pillar. If you take this away, virtually, by resisting it, there is no more hope of your conversion than if you had no conscience.

There is another thing which persons need to be warned, and that is getting into some snare form which they can hardly escape. it is dreadful to see how men fall into such snares. it is the policy of Satan to crowd men early in life into some position from which he knows they will not retreat. Men sometimes do certain things which are almost sure to be fatal to them; Satan therefore crowds them always into these false steps -- into the commission of some sin, or the assumption of some false position -- they commit themselves to something which the dare not confess, and they cannot repent without confessing -- how shall they get out of it? For example, who does not know the influence of telling a lie? Sometimes a sinner's telling a lie will almost certainly ruin him. He will get himself into such a position by telling this lie in order to "make everything straight," and then telling another to cover the first up, and so on, and on that the results of this one sin will often prove fatal; not that such an offense, in itself, was unpardonable, but it necessarily committed the mind to a course of lying, and it rushes on in a course involving the sacrifice of one principle after another, and onward and onward you go.

Let me ask all persons here - have you well considered this going? Did you young men ever seriously reflect on the danger of telling your employer a lie? Have you done so? What a step you have taken? You will

probably be led to tell some one else a lie in order to cover it up, and then you will be led to another and another and so on. Where will you stop? The same is true of business transactions; the devil never shocks men at first by some atrocious proposition; he strives to lead them into unguarded positions -- to push them into danger by committing themselves, by some apparently trifling act, to a certain course of conduct -- and then he seeks to cut off their retreat. For instance, there is a young man who has taken some small advantage of his employer, and dare not confess it for fear of being thrown out of employment -- what shall he do? He conceals it, and then goes on in a course of deceit to keep it concealed. Whenever it is likely to come out he resorts to some new fraud to cover it up; and thus his escape is rendered more and more difficult. Oh! sinner do thyself no harm. Do not take the first penny or first farthing! Sinners, of all persons, have most need to be on their guard against placing themselves in such a position as to cut off their own retreat.

Another thing to be guarded against is the formation of some bad habit. How many thousands of young men have come to the City of London, for example and allow themselves to get into some bad habit! They have been taught better at home; their parents have warned them; and watched their start in London with fear and trembling. They come here, and give up their old habits of order, and keep late hours at night, give way to intemperance, and so the occasional indulgence grows up into a habit, becomes conformed, and often almost ineradicable. Persons should be on their guard against the formation of these artificial appetites; for they are always more despotic and dangerous than those which are natural. For example, the appetite for alcohol is an artificial appetite; that is, no unperverted constitution ever sought poison, loved it, and took to the habitual use of it; and if this habit once gets the mastery over an individual, how awfully dangerous is their position! The use of tobacco belongs to the same category; it, too, is a totally artificial appetite; there is nothing more odious to the taste, at first. When I walk along the streets, and see your poor ill-clad artisans with their pipes in their mouths, how I pity them! It has got such a hold on many persons, that the sacrifice, to them, would be great indeed. Let me say to all smokers, snuffers, and chewers, who are present to-night -- Is this a proper use for you to make of God's money? Is this the way to treat your constitution? Is this a practice which will commend itself when you come to render an account to God? Perhaps some of you will say, these, after all, are very insignificant things to preach about; but to you young men, they are not small things at all; for such habits invariably lead to something worse.

Men need also to be warned against engaging in any improper business. I mean some business which will ruin you souls, if persisted in. Be careful what you do in this direction. Undertake no business which is injurious to your fellow-men -- nothing which is inconsistent with the well-being of society -- no business, in short, that you cannot pursue honestly, with an enlightened, upright heart, for the glory of God. now this is a very common sense thing. Every one can see that when an individual engages in a business he cannot consecrate to God, by that very engagement he has formally withdrawn his allegiance from Christ, and set up for himself. Be careful, then, for you had better have no business at all, ten thousand times than engage in one in which you cannot keep your conscience void of offence. But you must also be careful not to err by pursuing a proper business, for improper motives; if you take the most proper business in the world, and pursue it in an improper manner, it will be fatal. It may be selling Bibles, even; if you go about it selfishly, and yet say, "I am vending Bibles,' -- what if you are? Take care! Mark me, you may just as easily be selfish in that calling as in anything else. In fact, the more sanctimonious the exterior of a business, the greater your danger of pursuing it from wrong motives, without being aware of it. Take for instance, the preaching of the gospel. You can all see at once, that a man who preaches the gospel because of the nature of the profession, might easily give himself credit for it, while it was in fact only selfishness; because he preached the gospel that he might take it for granted that he was in the service of God, whereas he was serving himself in the gospel and not of the gospel. Be careful, then, that you do not prosecute your business selfishly; for if you do, it will be fatal to your souls.

Avoid dangerous companions; if they are agreeable, they are so much the more dangerous on that account. It is always a great snare to young people when they fall in with a very agreeable but unprincipled companion. That young man is a very agreeable companion; he often calls on you, treats you very politely; sometimes asks you, perhaps to an oyster supper, or something else; but he is an unprincipled young man, though he does not at once show it -- all the worse for you; the greater your danger. if he were not agreeable you would not be in so much danger of receiving fatal harm. But he is very agreeable, and the devil knows it, and loves to have him make himself agreeable; he may draw you into some snare, and you are committed for life and for

death. It is just the same with books; they are often all the more dangerous because of their being agreeable.

Again --amusements. Ah! how very amusing they are! But where do they tend? You "must have some amusement," you say. How many millions have been destroyed by not being on their guard against these things! Beware also, of worldly ambition. You see a great many examples of this. Beware of the love of gain. What would it profit you to gain the whole world if you lose your own soul? Look at such a man getting rich -- do you envy him? The Lord may let him have it -- but what then? The richest man in America, a few years since, was called upon by a person who was employed to write his biography. (A person who knew him well, told me that he was the most wretched man he ever knew; so numerous were the calls upon him for charitable objects, that at length he became uneasy whenever he heard a knock, lest it might be some one to beg his money; and such was the state of mind when his biographer called upon him.) "On the whole what do you think of your life, now that you have nearly done with it?" said the biographer. "I think it is a failure," was the reply. "A failure?" exclaims the biographer. "Yes, a failure," was again the response. He had more money than any man in America, yet he considered his life to have been a failure. Ah! he had been greedy of gain; he had loved money, and had got it, but he had lost his soul. he had committed himself to gain, till it had become a passion, and he was eaten up with it. Are you, any of you, doing yourselves harm in this way? Are you so intent on obtaining property that it haunts you even on the Sabbath? Indeed? Why then are you benumbing your souls--riveting your own chains. You ought to take warning, and fly from it as from the very gates of Hell!

Another great danger is that when men become wealthy, they are liable to become "purse proud," and thus ruin themselves. Even intemperance itself is ofttimes not more fatal to the soul; it is manifestly inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel; but there is a great temptation to it. It is remarkable to what an extent men who succeed in acquiring property become haughty in their demeanour. Others indeed need to be warned against family pride. This is a fatal snare by which men do themselves infinite harm.

Again. persons often run to men for advice instead of to God. Some years since, at Detroit, in America, there lived a gentleman who belonged to one of the highest families in the place, and who was surrounded by a large circle of the very uppermost class of society. He was deeply convicted of his sins, very anxious about his soul, at length he became so intensely anxious that he could no longer refrain from speaking to me on the subject. I pressed him to submit. "I cannot do it," said he "without consulting my friends, without which I never take any important step, as they would think it unkind and ungenerous of me." "But are you going to consult unconverted men about your soul?" "Oh! Yes." "But I am certain if you do this, you will tempt the Spirit of God." But he "thought he should not." I pressed him for half an hour to make at once his peace with God. But no, he persisted to the last that his relations must be consulted; and so important a step must not be taken without their consent. Persons often thus consult their friends, and virtually commit themselves to their advice, rather than follow the dictates of their own conscience, their sense of right, and the law of God. They want no advice where the path of duty is so plain; but the fact is, they are afraid to displease their friends, and they therefore go on displeasing God! What a foolish and fatal course is this! -- flesh and blood before God!

The next rock on which may split is the harbouring of resentment, and while this is done conversion is utterly impossible. They have not the spirit which God requires; for except you forgive others their trespasses, God will not forgive yours. Some people harbour resentment more easily than others, and seem almost unconscious of it, and appear unable to see that they are injuring *themselves* by so doing. Have you been injured? "Yes," and *therefore* you entertain a spirit of resentment, and thought of retaliation if you have an opportunity. Do you, indeed? Now do you know that Satan pleases himself with these thoughts; for even if that man has ruined you, you are doing yourself more wrong than he had done; for, mark me, the wrong that he has done you could not injure your soul, if you did not harbour resentment. You pass that man by, and do not speak to him on any account; and pray, is that the spirit to be saved in? Avoid, therefore, doing yourself injury by harbouring a spirit of revenge. Be equally careful to shun feelings of envy and jealousy. I have often thought that were we to look over human society we should find, perhaps, a very great number of persons who are kept from being converted, and go down to their graves in their sins because they have been all the time harbouring ill-feeling towards some one who has injured them. Something has occurred in early youth, or even in childhood, which has placed an individual -- or, perhaps, an entire family -- in the position of enemies, and you go down to the grave hating them. Now the Bible teaches us plainly that this state of mind is fatal to the soul. Satan chuckles over it -- *avoid it!* Guard against all feelings of enmity or retaliation towards anybody, from any cause whatever; I

have always taken the greatest pains on this point in my own family. Parents! What kind of an example are you setting your children on this point? Consider well and examine your position in this respect.

Guard against bearing any sin on your, conscience: There is some sin of omission or of commission which, perhaps, you are putting off, it may be leaving it for a death-bed. You have wronged somebody, and you think confession to them and restitution, as far as circumstances permit, will at present, disgrace you but that you will attend to it before you die. You are too proud, in fact to do it now; you will attend to it when you come to die; but will God accept the act then, think you? When death knocks you will find yourself in no such a position as you are calculating upon; if you thus deliberately refuse or neglect to confess and forsake your sins -- you are all but certain to die as you have lived, for you have been tempting God. Do not, therefore, delay to attend to this matter. Many neglect to do what they know to be their duty, and yet pray to God as if they had really done all that they ought, till they eventually harden their hearts to a degree which is absolutely fatal -- till they have, in fact totally lost their religious sensibility. Beware, then, of the delusion that you can possibly be saved while you are in any respect guilty of dishonesty -- beware of tempting God and ruining yourselves by the indulgence of so fatal an error. If God forgave you, while you were dishonest of insincere in any respect, he would become the minister of unrighteousness -- he cannot do it.

But I must hasten to a close; I will, therefore, content myself with very briefly indicating some other things which need to be guarded against. Be careful lest, by some incautious act, you be drawn into a position which requires the practice of habitual deception -- which necessitates either confession, which might perhaps disgrace you, or involves the necessity of making your life a perfect lie. Sometimes lovers deceive each other with regard to pecuniary prospects or something else, and what awful consequences have been known to result! But the wrong you are doing to yourself is, in all such cases, even greater than the wrong done to others. Sin is the greatest absurdity in the universe, yet -- only think! -- here are you, selfish beings, doing yourselves the greatest injury that can possibly be done to you! All the wicked men on earth, or all the devils in hell could never have done what you will do, if you go on in your present course -- they could never have ruined your soul! This will, be the most agonizing consideration in hell -- that you have done it all yourself. You, and you *alone*, have done this infinite harm to your immortal soul!

Suppose some of you have placed yourselves in such a position -- taken some false oath, committed some theft, or done some injury in some way, and you are sorry for it, but refuse to confess to the party concerned, and do all in your power to make restitution! -- and suppose that it should be told in the solemn judgment that, instead of making restitution you threw yourself on Christ? Suppose it should be found that God had forgiven you while in this dishonest state of mind? But you cannot suppose such an absurdity, for it would disgrace him before the whole universe. But you are too proud to make restitution. Indeed! Then you are too proud to be saved! Beware, then -- I speak to young men particularly -- beware, young men, of taking the first step in a course, the results of which are so terrible! Beware of the first lie -- the first dishonest act! If you have already commenced such a course, forsake it at once; no results which may ensue, can be so great an evil as your going to hell. There is no evil so great as that. But many are too proud, and prefer to go on in deceit, because they have gone on in it so long that they tremble at the sacrifice -- but one hour of hell will be infinitely worse than the worst of such cases can possibly be!

Do not leave it till you come to die -- after you have gone on in injustice -- quenching the Spirit and stifling conscience -- how do you think to make it up so easily with God at your latest moments, when the breath is just departing from your body? Oh! Sinner, how awful will then be your reflections! How your weakened memory will start again into activity, and recall the time when you told the lie that committed you to a course of lying to cover it up -- when you indulged in the first act of extravagance, which finally led you to plunder your employers! You will then see the vast and awful importance of the counsel I now give -- to avoid the first *act*, or, if that be too late, to come out of it while the sacrifice is yet comparatively small, and do not -- let me entreat you -- do not defer till the matter becomes so serious as to render your confession and restitution next to an impossibility! Perhaps a week, or a day, longer in your present course, may lead you to some act which will render the retracing of your steps tenfold more serious than it is at the present moment; and, in fact, may thereby seal your destiny for eternity!

Sinner! Mercy yet calls. Jesus is here with the offer or pardon and salvation. No matter how great your sin. If you will now, indeed, back right out, and pour it all out before the Lord, wash you hands in innocency, bathe yourself in the blood of Jesus, and you shall be forgiven!

THE RATIONALITY OF FAITH

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 12, 1851

BY THE REV. C. G. FINNEY,

(Of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, America,)

AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS.

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." -- Romans iv.20.

These words were spoken of Abraham, as you will see by reading the connexion in which they are found. Faith is the heart's confidence in God. This is faith in its generic form; its specific form relates to particular things -- belief in the promises, in Christ, in the doctrines of the Bible, and in all the various assertions that God makes in his word. This specific form of faith differs from faith in its generic or simple form, which implies a general confidence in the existence, attributes, and character of God. The mind's resting in these things is faith; that is faith in its simple form. Mark, faith in God is not a mere assent to these things, nor a mere intellectual conviction that they are true; but faith is the heart, and the mind, and the will, resting in this truth -- that God is, that he possesses certain attributes, and a certain character. Faith in its specific form is the belief of the heart in certain declarations of God, a belief in his wisdom and goodness; in his assertions respecting Christ, and in all those things which he has said and promised. There a great many specific forms in which faith develops itself -- but the root of it is heart confidence in God himself.

In speaking from the words which I have chosen for my text this morning I purpose to notice --

I. SOME THINGS IN THE WORD OF GOD WHICH ARE EXCEEDINGLY CALCULATED TO TRY THE FAITH OF FINITE MINDS.

II. SHOW HOW FAITH DISPOSES OF THESE THINGS; AND THAT TRUE FAITH IS NOT SUBDUED AND OVERCOME BY A CONSIDERATION OF THESE THINGS.

III. I SHALL SHOW THE GREAT OBJECT OF THESE TRIALS OF FAITH

IV. PROFESSORS THAT STUMBLE OF STAGGER AT THESE THINGS LOSE THE BLESSING CONSEQUENT UPON THEM, AS A NATURAL NECESSITY.

I. *I shall notice some of the things which are calculated to try the faith of God's creatures*.

One that is very common and most striking is the existence of so much evil and misery in this world. God declares that he is acquainted with all. He affirms that he is omnipotent, omniscient -- he is every where present, and knows all things, and is all powerful. He declares himself infinitely good, and disposed to do god. Now, that under the government of such a being as this there should be so much evil, and so much that is sinful, and so much misery -- as a matter of fact we know there is -- is greatly calculated to try the faith of men. That these things should exist, and be every where observable in this world to an immense extent, is to many minds so great a mystery, so difficult to reconcile with the existence and declared attributes of God, that they stumble, and even call in question the fact, that there is a God at all. By the bye, another thing that God asserts, and that reason also affirms, is the existence of a providence which guides and controls all events; that God has a design in everything that he does; that at the very beginning God had a design, and that in what he does he is pursuing this design to its accomplishment; and that this design proceeds from a being who is infinitely good and infinitely wise.

Now the existence of this evil that there is in the world does not seem to harmonize with the things that God says of himself -- with his wisdom and goodness -- many minds therefore find great difficulty in getting over these facts, and it is more than unbelief ever can accomplish. Understand, it is not a present my design to explain this, but simply to notice the facts at which unbelief stumbles, and which are calculated to try the faith of God's creatures. The introduction of sin into this world, and its existence in the world is greatly calculated to try the faith of the most holy being in the universe. There is no doubt that they were unable to comprehend for a time why God allowed such a state of things to be; the reason for all this may have gradually developed itself, but at first the difficulty that was presented to their minds could have only been overcome by faith -- how this is done I shall observe in another part of my discourse.

But let me say again: the manner in which the Bible reveals God is also a great stumbling-block to many; the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, there are a great many that stumble at it because they cannot understand it, any better than they can understand a great many other things; because they cannot understand it they reject it, and say that it cannot be, and so they will not receive it simply because they cannot explain it. Just so with respect to the incarnation of the Son of God; many

men because they cannot understand how humanity and Deity could be united, reject the doctrine, and will not believe it. Now it is admitted at once, there is no occasion for denying it, and to do so would be as absurd as it is unnecessary, that these doctrines are very mysterious; but they are announced as facts, that God was in Christ, that Christ was both God and man; of course it is readily admitted that this declaration is a great trial to the faith of finite creatures; but then the announcement is made by God himself and ought to be believed. The doctrine of the atonement is another stumbling-block to men; that God should give his own Son to die for the sins of mankind, and that he should actually suffer, is a difficulty that can only be overcome by faith -- unbelief will suggest a multitude of difficulties and reject it.

But let me say again: the resurrection, the doctrine of justification by faith, the doctrine of sanctification by faith, and all the other doctrines of the bible, are stumbling-blocks to the minds of men. Indeed individuals who find no difficulties in them have not faith, and show that they have not well considered them; but however difficult they may be, there is ten thousand times greater absurdity in disbelieving than in exercising faith in them, given as they are on the testimony of God himself. But, nevertheless, unbelief finds great difficulty in admitting them. The mind that has not confidence in God refuses to believe, because it cannot explain how these things all are -- of course, such a mind will stumble and stagger at every step.

But once more, the manner in which sin was introduced into the world is also a great stumbling-block to those who have no confidence in God, and therefore cannot rest upon the revealed fact, unless they can explain it. Of course if they cannot receive what God says, unless he gives them his reasons for everything that he does, they will find great difficulty in getting along. Suppose a child should have no confidence in his Father, and should therefore want the reasons for his father's conduct in eveything that he did, and should require to have explained to him in a satisfactory manner how eveything was done before he could believe it -- who cannot see that a family of such unbelievers, stumbling and staggering at every step, would have no confidence in their father at all; for if he was a man conducting a very extensive business on a vast scale, they could not understand as children what even perhaps many men could not comprehend if it were explained to them. How absurd then for the children not to put confidence in their father because they could not understand the reasons for all his conduct.

But let me say again: the very greatness of God's promises is often a sever trial to faith. He promises things so great to persons so undeserving--indeed so ill-deserving--that unbelief finds it difficult to believe him, because he says so much, and promises so much. But again: the providence of God is often a great trial to faith. How remarkable was the conduct of god towards Abraham, and how greatly calculated to try his faith. He called him out of his father's house, and Abraham obeyed not knowing whither he went. God had reasons in his own mind for his conduct in this matter -- he intended to make of Abraham a great nation, and through him communicate his will to men, and that from his family the Saviour of men should proceed -- but he gave Abraham no such intimation of what he was going to do; he called him from his country, and told him to go to a certain place that he should show him. After Abraham had obeyed the command, God promised to give him a certain land for a possession and to his seed after him; and although he had no family, God called him and said, Look toward the heavens and see if you can count the stars for multitude, and promised that his seed should be as numerous as the stars of heaven -- and that he would give him the land of Canaan for a possession, and make him the father of many nations. This promise was long and remarkably delayed; he lived in the land that was promised to him for a possession only on sufferance, and when his wife died, he was obliged to purchase a burial place in that very land that God had promised should be his own -- yet we see no signs of any stumbling in his faith. After a long period had elapsed, God promised Abraham that he should have a son by his wife Sarah. Now both Abraham and Sarah were very old, she was long past the age when it was common for women to have children, nevertheless Abraham believed that god would do what he had promised. Those who will read and ponder well all the circumstances connected with the triall of Abraham's faith, will se that he must have been very severely tried indeed. Now, mar, by and by, after a long time, this promised son was born. The lad grew -- when all at once God takes Abraham by surprise -- as he seems always to have done -- and says "Take thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and go to a mountain that I will tell thee of, and offer him there for a burnt-offering." He not only says to Abraham, "take thy son," but he reminds him that it is his only son, whom he loves; and it is this son, this son of promise, this beloved son, whom he is to offer upon the altar. Now, how infinitely strange is all this; yet Abraham staggered not; he believed that God was able to raise him from the dead. He had such strength of faith that he appears not to have been much trouble of mind about it; he does not seem even to have

discovered to Sarah that he had received any such communication from God; he was so calm that Sarah did not perceive anything was the matter with him. The next morning he started with his servants to offer Isaac at the place which God was to point out to him. When they came in sight of the place, he caused his servants to wait, lest they should interfere with him when carrying out the command of God. Abraham and his son ascended the mountain where the sacrifice was to be offered: Isaac did not understand what was going to be done -- he knew indeed that Abraham was going to offer a burnt offering, for they had the fire and the wood, but he did not know that he was to be the victim, it did not occur to him at all, for he asked where the lamb was that Abraham intended to offer. So calm was Abraham, that Isaac did not notice anything different in his manner; and to the question of his son, Abraham replied, the Lord will provide himself with a lamb for a burnt-offering. When he had prepared the altar, he bound Isaac and laid him on the wood, just as he would have done a lamb, and then took the knife and he was about to slay him, but God called, and said, "Abraham, Abraham" -- repeating his name rapidly, so as to arrest his attention in a moment, "lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son form me. And when Abraham lifted up his eyes, he saw a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and he offered it instead of his son." God did this to test the implicitness of Abraham's faith; and this was as plainly manifested as if he had sacrificed his son -- for he did do it so far as his mind was concerned; he believed that God would raise him from the dead if sacrificed, for he had no doubt at all that God would fulfill his promise. Now this was a beautiful exhibition and illustration of faith. But let me say, this was exceedingly calculated to try Abraham, as you will perceive. And the manner in which God very often fulfills his promises to men is to them a great stumbling-block -- they are expecting him to fulfill them in one way, and he takes a direct opposite course, which is calculated to subvert all their ideas of things. Now all such things as these are exceedingly calculated to try our faith in God. But strong faith will not suffer itself to stumble at such things. Why sold it? Faith embraces at once all the attributes of God; and, therefore, has confidence in him, and does not seek to understand everything before yielding the heart to him. There are, and must be, multitudes of things that we cannot understand, nor would it be useful for us to understand at present.

II. *We see then, how it is that faith disposes of these difficulties.* If God's attributes are what he declares them to be, there are things that cannot be explained to finite beings. Now for example; take the doctrine of the Trinity. To be sure human reason cannot explain that, nor is any explanation called for; God simply announces the fact in the bible, that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are God. Now that God should manifest himself in ten hundred thousand beings at one and the same time is not contrary to reason. For example, we find that at one time, before the destruction of Sodom, three individuals appeared to Abraham, and one of them who is called Jehovah, informed Abraham what they were going to do, and Abraham put up a prayer to have Sodom saved -- you recollect the afflicting circumstance. We learn that there were three men, or apparently so; two of them probably were angels in human form, and the other was no less a being than Jehovah himself. Now mark! Who can doubt but that God could have assumed the same form in millions of cases at the same time in different parts of the world, for there would be nothing contrary to reason in that. There is nothing then unreasonable in the supposition that God should exist in three persons or three hundred thousand million persons! We say there is nothing unreasonable in it. Who does not know that there is not? What then do men mean when they say that they cannot believe in the Trinity? Why not believe? What do such men suppose they know about infinity? Can they affirm of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost that these three cannot exercise and manifest the attributes of God? But as the fact is announced, there need be no evidence of it to the man who has faith. Faith makes no effort to understand it. If you object to this, let me ask, how do you know that you exist yourselves? O yes, you say, we know that we exist; we believe it. What makes you believe it? Can you explain it? Did you choose your body? Can you tell the connection between matter and spirit? How can you prove what yourselves are?

Some years since, I was walking with a gentleman in the city of New York, and we were talking about religion and mind, and he stopped right short in the street and said, "you say such and such things about mind; now what is mind?" "If you tell me," said I, "what matter is, I will tell you what mind is." "Why," said he, "matter has the the property of extension, solidity, and so forth;" but he did not name any of the primary attributes of matter. "Well," I replied, "mind wills, thinks, feels, and the like." He looked at me quite astonished. I continued, "you have told me some of the attributes of matter, can you tell what those attributes are?" "I do not know," said he. "Neither can I explain what the substance of mind is." If the wisest philosopher in the universe were standing in this pulpit, a little child might ask him such questions as

he could not answer or explain any more than we can explain the doctrine of the Trinity not a bit. There is not a single thing in the universe in all the kingdom of nature when you come to dive to the bottom of it, which is not as difficult to explain as any doctrine of the Bible. Why then believe in any and all of these things? Why believe in your own existence? The fact is, that men do not disbelieve things because they are mysterious 'till they come to the subject of religion, because the world around them is so deeply mysterious that there is not a single thing that they can understand to the bottom, yet they are enabled to believe in them. It is very frequently the case that people do not realize that there is a mystery in anything but religion.

Now I know that philosophy can in part explain many things, and that those things which a few years ago were considered mysterious and even marvelous, are now understood. Science has already placed mankind in a position to explain the theory of many things that were deep mysteries and spread them out before the minds of the people. But speaking generally, both with regard to the spiritual and the natural world, men have to live by faith. They believe in the various things around them in the natural world although they may not be able to understand them. The same is true of spiritual things; we must receive much on testimony that cannot be explained to us; and probably, in many cases, God would not explain them to us even if we could understand them because it would not be well for us, but he leads us step by step to a correct understanding of things that may be useful and necessary for us to know.

Now in relation to the question of sin and its necessary attendant, misery, as it exists in our world; there is a mystery about it. Of course, every mind affirms that where sin is, there misery ought to be; but the question of wonder is, how sin came into the world, why it was permitted! But that this is a wise order of things, nobody can doubt. Man was made superior to all the rest of the inhabitants of this globe; and we see by his power and sagacity and knowledge, he was designed to be the head of the creation. But mark! men are in rebellion against God. This is a simple matter of fact; there is nothing more certain in the universe than that men as a race have set God at nought and bid him defiance.

Now reason affirms that the curse of God should be written upon everything in the universe in order to testify to God's real character, and that it should not be mistaken. But while we see that God does testify against sin, there are also indications that he has a strong disposition to be merciful as far as he wisely can; but the difficulties are many and great in the way of his forgiving sin. But let me say, faith in God does not find it very difficult to remove all these obstructions. Disbelief says sin exists, and looking at God's government as a system of moral law, it does not appear that sin can ever have been forgiven; in such a government, pardon is impossible. But faith says at once, God is kind, wise, and good, as well as infinitely powerful; misery and sin exist, but they are allowed to continue in the world only for a wise purpose to assist in bringing about the end at which he aims; for although sin is so great an abomination, God will bring good out of it. Look at the sin of Judas; the devil put it into his heart to betray the Son of God to his enemies and to his dismay, he saw the greatness of his crime; but God overruled their evil intentions. His purpose was that the blood of his dear Son should be shed as an atonement for sin.

Now, although we cannot understand the reason why God should permit the existence of sin in the world at all, faith can easily dispose of the difficulties which may suggest themselves. Faith believes that everything that God does must be infinitely good and wise. The fact is, unbelief in such matters is the most unreasonable thing in the world. If you profess not to believe anything 'till you understand it, why do you believe in your own existence? What do you know of volition? You move your muscles, but how you cannot tell. Faith, I say, disposes of all these difficulties, and is not unreasonable in so doing. Take Abraham's case. God promises that Abraham shall have a son. "I shall have it," he says; "I am very old, and Sarah is very old; no matter how old, God is able to give us a son." The child is born and is growing up when God calls to Abraham and tells him to go and offer Isaac in sacrifice, and Abraham says, "I will go, God has a good reason for the requirement; I know he must; he cannot have any other; he is infinitely good and infinitely wise; he cannot have made any mistake. The path then of duty is plain and I will walk in it." Oh, says unbelief, how will the promise be fulfilled, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called!" "I do not know," said Abraham, "but God is able to raise him from the dead." Thus, you see his faith very quickly disposed of the difficulty although it was very great. Now is there anything inconsistent with reason in all this? Why no. Just look at it right in the face.

My own reason tells me that God is infinitely perfect in all his attributes, everywhere and in everything, and that either permissively or actively, he is concerned in everything that takes place. I find myself in a universe surrounded by a multitude of things that I cannot explain and that even God himself could not explain to me because of my limited capacity, but these things are true nevertheless; and as the law of progression operates, I

come to understand many things which were before, dark and inexplicable to my mind. And does not reason tell us that there must be a vast many things in the government of an infinite God that a finite mind cannot comprehend? But when a man is in a spiritual state of mind, faith takes the place of knowledge. The little child, for instance, lives by faith. Human society exists by faith; destroy all confidence, all faith, and society could not exist; and no business be transacted. And in the spiritual state of man, faith is just as necessary. I have not time to enlarge upon this now. We now come to explain briefly

III. The design of these trials.

Everyone can see that one great object is to strengthen faith. I have often heard it remarked, by intelligent people too, that in heaven faith will not exist, because there, we shall walk by sight. Now there is some truth in that, but much greater error. It is true that many things which we merely believe here we shall know there; but there will be much to call forth our faith; for there must be in the government of God much that it would require millions of ages to understand, and we shall go on acquiring knowledge throughout the immensity of eternity, and thus, there will be need of faith in God in eternity as in time; it will be as true in heaven as on earth. Suppose that the angels had not faith, why the fall of man must have given a shock to the inhabitants of heaven. But they believed that God had some wise design in that he permitted man to fall. Now this is the way faith disposes of everything; and let what will come, there is no alarm or doubt but all will be right.

I had intended to show in the next place that those who stumble and stagger must lose the blessing consequent upon believing as a natural necessity, which everyone can see must be the case, but I see that I must close with one remark. Those who will not believe God, there is no hope for. Suppose you had a family of children and they should lose confidence in you as a business man, they would stagger and stumble at every step you took just because you could not explain to them all your plans. You say to them, dear children, I cannot explain these things to you, I am labouring for your good, therefore be quiet, be passive, and have confidence in me that all will be well; but if they will not, what can you do with them? They must remain in their unbelieving, unconverted state. Now it is the same in God's government. There are many things that cannot be explained to men and yet they will not exercise faith, and if they persist in their unbelief, they will go stumbling and fretting to the gates of hell! Some people will take nothing on trust; they must catechize their Maker; and if he does not explain everything to them, they have no confidence in him hence, it is said that they shall have their part with liars in the lake of fire. My dear hearers, the most unreasonable and blasphemous abomination in the world is unbelief.

THE REWARD OF FERVENT PRAYER

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"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" - Ps. lxxxi. 10.

These words were addressed by God to the Church. There is nothing in the context in which they are found that particularly demands explanation. I would, therefore, proceed at once to say that this promise and injunction being addressed to the Church was also, of course, addressed to individual Christians. Whenever a promise or an injunction is applicable to the Church, it is also applicable to each individual composing the Church. This reveals to us the principle on which God deals with His people. The spirit of what is written here is even more true. In briefly considering this subject, I propose to show:

I. What this language means.

II. What it implies.

III. What its relationship is to our responsibilities.

I. What this language means. Of course it is figurative: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Does it mean literally to open the mouth wide and He will fill it with something without our understanding what?

"I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

This was addressed to the Church of old, and the spirit of it is addressed to the Church in all ages. It is said in the eighth verse, "Hear, 0 my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The language, then, is figurative, and is to be understood in the following ways.

God enjoins us to ask of Him great things. The injunction is not only, "Open thy mouth," but open it wide; open it fully to its utmost capacity; by which it is to

be understood that we are to ask of God great things, as great as we can conceive, We are merely creatures, and therefore our conceptions are low, and the spirit of the injunction tells us that we should ask great things of our heavenly Father. With our finite powers, we can conceive of Him "who is able to do for us abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Let the request be ever so great, He can grant it. In your petitions to Him, therefore, "open thy mouth wide," ask for things as great as you can conceive.

Another thing we are to understand by this language is, we are to expect those great things for which we ask. We are required to ask believingly in expectation that He will give the things which we ask.

The spirit of this injunction also means that we are to attempt to accomplish great things for God. We are to ask earnestly, to ask largely, to ask perseveringly in order that we may honor and glorify Him. Here, I might add, we are to understand that all our petitions must be addressed in the name of Christ from right motives.

II. What it implies.

The injunction "open thy mouth wide" is followed by the promise "and I will fill it."

This language implies that God is interested in us. What would motivate Him to say this to us if He were not interested in us? Why should He exhort us to open our mouths wide and ask of Him great things if He had no interest in us? This language must surely imply that for some reason or other He has great interest in His Church, and, of course, in each individual composing that Church.

It implies that He is interested in those things He requires us to do. He is interested in giving us the great things which He has promised, and in our possessing them to enable us to do what He requires of us.

God's Full Provision

God has made provision for us in every situation. He does not require great things of His people without promising the grace to help them perform that which He requires of them. But He does require many and great things of His people. He requires them to go forth to the conquest of the world, and many other things He requires of them in the various relations that they sustain to the world and to society.

Now, you must not complain that you cannot accomplish what is required of you, that you cannot do this or that because of your littleness or insufficiency. For God says, open your mouth wide for ability to do His will and He will fill it. He will enable you to do what is required of you. I say, then, that this language implies His interest in us personally, and that He is greatly interested in giving us the things for which we ask. He is quite able out of His fullness to supply all our need, to give us everything we want to enable us to accomplish everything He requires of us.

This language is addressed to different classes of individuals who maintain particular relations in life regarding special and particular circumstances. For example, it is addressed to local authorities, ministers, parents, and private Christians. Whatever the circumstances, this language relates to your particular needs: "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

It is of great importance for everyone to understand that God is interested in each individual. He takes all things into account. He placed us in our various relations; therefore, He must be interested in us. He is able to make His grace sufficient to enable us to do all that is required of us so we may honor and glorify His name. People can never be too well assured of this: "I am Jehovah, thy God." What is implied in that? "Thy God." "Open thy mouth wide," therefore, "and I will fill it." These words apply to every individual in all the relations of life.

Now, think of what your relations are. Think of your circumstances, of your peculiar trials, difficulties and respon sibilities, and the duties you are called upon to perform-no matter what they are. Only understand God as addressing you by name-old and young, rich and poor, influential or otherwise-no matter, only understand God as saying to you, "I am Jehovah, thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." He is interested in your maintaining these responsibilities in a manner worthy of Him, as being His children.

I have often thought of the magnitude of unbelief. The unbelief of many is so great that they entirely overlook the secret depths of meaning that the promises of God contain, and they stumble at some of the plainest things in the Bible.

Suppose the King of England should send his son to travel on the Continent or in America, and should say to him, "Now, son, you are going among strangers, so remember your great responsibilities: you are my son, and you are my representative. When the people see you they will form an opinion of me, and they will estimate my character very much by yours, as a natural consequence. Now, remember, wherever you are, that the eyes of the people are upon you and my honor is concerned in your behavior. I have great interest in you; first, because you are my son; and second, because you are to be my representative among those who do not know me personally. I am, therefore, greatly

concerned that you should not misrepresent me. For particular and weighty reasons, therefore, I want you to conduct yourself like a prince, and that you may do so, you shall always have the means. Remember never to exercise any kind of economy that will disgrace your father and the nation you represent. Draw upon me liberally. Of course, you will not squander needlessly upon your lusts, for such conduct would disgrace yourself and dishonor me: but what you want for the purpose of representing fully the Sovereign of England you can have. Draw largely; always remember this."

Now observe, God has placed His people here in a world of strangers to Him. He has placed them in various relations. He has admonished them to remember that they are His children and they are also His representatives in this world. God says to them, "I have placed you in these relations that you may honor me. I love you as my own children. I have given my Son to redeem you, and thus I have proved my personal regard for you. I always desire that you should walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith you are called. Remember, you are my representatives in the midst of' a rebellious world; therefore, 'let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.'"

God's own interest in us leads Him to tell us to ask largely of Him. His intrinsic regard for us as our Father, as His redeemed children, is very great. Indeed, in every point of view,

He has the deepest interest in us. That we may not dishonor Him, He tells us He will give us grace to meet all our respon sibilities and discharge our duties. "Open your mouths wide," He says, "and I will fill them." "I will 'supply all your needs.'I am glad to do it. I shall delight to do it. I am interested in doing it."

Now, don't you ever forget this. Ask largely enough, ask confidently enough, and ask perseveringly enough to meet all your needs. I suppose that no one is disposed to call in question the truth of any of these principles.

These words, "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," imply that provision is made to supply our needs, and that God's ca pability is so great that He does not fear that we shall need anything, or be able to conceive of anything, beyond His power to grant. Hence, He tells us that His grace is sufficient for us. Observe, He does not caution us about asking too much, but He tells us here, as in many other parts of the Bible, to make our requests unlimited: "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Of course it means "what you will" for a right reason, not for a selfish and improper reason.

We are not restricted at all in Him. It is not intended that we should hesitate to accomplish anything which He requires of us. We are not restricted in Him, for He says, "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." In any of the circumstances or relations in which we may ever be placed, or whatever we may be called upon to accomplish, we are never to regard ourselves as restricted in Him.

If He requires His people to go forth to the conquest of the world, they are abundantly able to take possession of the land. We are to have confidence in Him, and to take possession of it in His name and in His strength. If He tells us to compass the city and blow with the ram's horns, the walls of Jericho shall surely tumble down-there is no mistake about it.

In this injunction and promise is implied that if we fail in anything to perfectly represent or obey Him in every respect, and in all things to be and do what He requires of us, the fault is not His but ours. It is not to be resolved into "the mysterious sovereignty of God," for the fault is ours. If we fail, it is not because God by any arbitrary sovereignty withheld the power, but because as a matter of fact, in the possession of our liberty we failed to believe and appropriate the promises.

God Is Honored By Big Requests

This injunction and promise implies that God considers himself honored by the largeness of our requests. If we ask but a trifling thing, it shows that we find ourselves either unable or unwilling to expect or believe any great thing of Him. What does it imply when people ask small favors of God? I know very well what people say-they are so unworthy that they cannot expect to get any great things in answer to their poor requests. But is this real humility, or is it a voluntary humility? Is it a commendable state of mind? "Our prayers are so poor, are so unworthy, that we cannot expect to receive much in answer to them; therefore, we have not confidence enough to ask great things, and so we only ask for small things that we may without presumption expect to receive." Is this a right disposition of mind? This is that voluntary humility which God denounces: it is self-righteousness. What state of mind must that individual be in, who, instead of measuring his requests by the greatness of God's mercies, the greatness of His promises and the largeness of His heart, shall measure them by his own worthiness or unworthiness? Why, the fact is, if an individual will measure his requests by such a standard, he will ask nothing better than hell, and he may expect nothing better. This is applicable to all men in all ages, if they make themselves the standard of their requests. But if we are to rely upon God's promises,

God's faithfulness, God's abounding grace in Christ Jesus and God's eternal love, then there are infinite blessings in store for His people, which the goodness of His heart is trying to force upon them. Then, pray, what has our great unworthiness to do, only to commend us to God's grace and mercy? Whenever, therefore, we ask great things of God, and expect great things from Him, we honor Him, inasmuch as we say, "Lord, although we are infinitely unholy and unworthy of thy bless ings, yet we judge not of what thou art willing to give us, mea sured by our unworthiness, but by thine own wonderful love to the world as shown in the gift of thine own and well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we will not ask small things of so great a God. We will ask great things because it is in thine heart to give them, and thou findest it more blessed to give than we do to receive." Now, it is by this sort of confidence that we honor God.

Some ask scantily, sparingly, for fear of overtaxing or over burdening God. What a mean, low, and contemptible view this is of God! Suppose the prince, whom we referred to, had been very sparing in drawing upon his father's accounts. Suppose that he drew only five or ten dollars at a time. The strangers among whom he was living would have noticed it. They would have said, "What can it mean? Why does he not draw more? How is he so poor? Is his father so miserly or so poor?" Thus dishonor would be brought upon his father and his country because the prince drew so sparingly when he might have had plenty.

Now, God has sent His children to this land, and He has told them that they are the "light of the world," the "salt of the earth," a "city that is set upon a hill." And He says, "Let your light shine"; show yourselves worthy of your heavenly Father. Now, suppose that from a lack of confidence, or for some other reason, they draw very sparingly. Everybody will see that they get but little from God in answer to prayer. A miserable, lean, famishing supply is all they get from their heavenly Father. There is but a slight spiritual distinction between them and the world in which they live; they have so little grace, so little faith, so little of anything that one might suppose God would surely provide for His children. Is this honorable to God? What, profess to be children of God and never realize your high distinction! Living in a world of rebels, having no more grace than you have, you never thought of the dishonor you bring upon God. What do you think of your Father? Do you think that God your Father is satisfied? To see you, people would think you had no Father, that you were poor orphans. And yet God says, "'open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it'; ask of Me such things as you need. Why, then, do you go about in such a miserable condition? Why live at such a dying rate, always in doubt, darkness and trouble? Do you not know that I am the Lord your God, and that if you open your mouth wide, I will fill it?"

Now, brethren, is not this true? Is this some newfangled doctrine not taught in the Bible? Or is it true that professing Christians generally have infinitely misconceived this matter, not understanding what God requires of them, or that they have dishonored Him in the highest degree by such conduct. They the light of the world! Why, their lamps are gone out! They cannot get any oil; and if they could, they have no money to buy it. Why is your lamp gone out? Has God your Father failed to send you a remittance? At all events, the lamp's gone out and left you in obscure darkness-a worldly spirit has come over you. What is the matter? You have been going by little and little till you have lost almost all confidence in God, and scarcely expect to receive anything from Him in answer to your prayers.

I don't know how it is with you, but I know that the great mass of professing Christians are in this miserably low state. They seem neither to know that they dishonor God by their conduct, nor that God is ready and willing to give them abundance of grace if they will believingly seek for it.

Of course, if God considers himself honored by the largeness of our requests, it must be upon the condition that we really have confidence in Him, expecting to receive those things for which we ask. If we should ask great things in words but not mean what we ask, or if we do not expect to receive answers to our petitions, we dishonor God by mocking Him. Always observe and remember this: a man who really expects great things from God and asks of God in faith with right motives will receive them. Those who honor God, God will honor.

God regards himself as honored by everything we accomplish in His name: by our asking great things of Him, and by our attempting great things in His name.

God Is Dishonored By Feeble Requests

Suppose a man goes forth in the name of the Lord Jesus to carry the Gospel to those who are in darkness, believing what Jesus has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Suppose that in this confidence he attempts great things, and aims at the conquest of cities and nations. The greater his aims in God's name and strength, so much the greater is the honor that God receives. He goes forth relying on God, as God's servant, as God's child, to accomplish great things in His name and strength. God considers himself honored by this. God considers himself honored by the high attainments of His children and dishonored by their

low attainments. He is honored in the fact that their graces so shine forth that it shall be seen by all around that they have partaken largely of His Spirit.

Exalted piety is honorable to God. Manifestations of great grace and spirituality of mind honor God. He is greatly honored by the fruits of righteousness His people bring forth. Christ himself says, "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bring forth much fruit." Ministers should be greatly fruitful. They should bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in their tempers, in their lives, in the strength of their faith and labors of love. Can you doubt that God has great interest in these things? Indeed His great desire, that you should bring forth fruit to His glory, is shown in the fact that He says, "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

And it must imply, also, that He is greatly dishonored by the opposite of this. Professing Christians who have but little faith make but feeble efforts, and have but very little to distinguish them from the world around them. Nothing can be more offensive to God than for His professed servants to have so little confidence in Him that they ask sparingly to receive sparingly. It must be admitted, I suppose, that the conceptions of the general population of Christians are very low-they expect but small things from God. But this is dishonorable to God, as I have said, and He is endeavoring by every possible means to encourage our faith. At one time He will go into the nursery, where the mother is with her children, and say, "Mother, if thy son should ask for bread, would you give him a stone? or if he should ask a fish, would you give him a serpent? or if he should ask an egg, would you give him a scorpion to sting him to death?" The mother is surprised, and can scarcely contain herself. "Well," He says, "I did not suppose you would do so; but if these things would be far from you-if you would by no means do them, and feel indignant at the bare suggestion of the possibility of such a thing, 'how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?"' "How much?" Why, as much as He is better than you are.

A parent has no higher happiness than to give his little ones what they ask for if it is for their good. A father or a mother purchases some dainty thing; they can hardly bear to taste it themselves-the children must have it. "If ye, then, being evil"- compared with God, infinitely evil- "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give?" Oranges, sweets, candy? No; "the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." That is the great blessing which you need. Oh, if we could only have more of the Spirit!

Christians live as if God had but little of the Holy Spirit to give. But is this the representation of the Scriptures? No, indeed; but infinitely the reverse of this. Some professing Christians live like spiritual skeletons, and, if they are reproved for it, they say, "Oh, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit." Indeed, and is that the reason you are so much like the world? Why you do not prevail with God to convert your children, and the clerks and people around you? Grieve not the Holy Spirit with such excuses; seek, and ye shall find. God is infinitely more ready to give you His Holy Spirit than you are to give good gifts to your own children.

When God exhorts His people to open their mouths wide, and promises to fill them, we are to understand that He seeks in them a clear medium through which to communicate His blessings to those around them. This is a natural law of the divine economy. If you are parents and have unconverted children, or have those around you unconverted, God seeks to make you an agent by which He can communicate the blessings of salvation to them.

When God thus urges people to open their mouths wide in order that He may fill them, we are to understand that His heart is very much set upon their having the things which He is seeking to give them. He takes the highest interest in their having these things-a greater interest than they do themselves. He restrains not His gift at all; the infinite fountain of His love and blessing flows everlastingly, so that every empty vessel may be filled; and, when they are all full, this living stream still flows on forever.

We must not be afraid of asking too much. When we seek a favor from a finite being, we might ask so much as to be thought unreasonable; but, when we come to an infinite being, we cannot ask too largely. Oh, brethren, always remember that.

III. What its relationship is to our responsibilities.

We are entirely without excuse to God for not being and doing what would in the highest degree satisfy His divine mind. We are not restricted in Him, but in ourselves.

We are not only without excuse to God, but we are cruel to ourselves. How cruel a man would be to himself if he starved himself to death in the midst of plenty, of which he might freely partake. Now, what excuse can a Christian have for all his doubts, fears, darknesses and perplexities, and how cruel he is to himself when such marvelous provision is made to set the Christian free from all such unhappy experiences. Do we live under such circumstances, and yet have a life of complaining? Indeed! And is it a law of God's house that His children

almost starve? Is it a rule of God's house that His children should not have grace enough to lift them above perplexities and unbelief? Does God starve His children to death? "They do all they can; can't they get grace enough," says the devil, "to prevent their living so much like my own servants? So much alike are they, indeed, that nobody can distinguish them from my children!" Dear children, is there not an infinite mistake here? Are we not dishonoring God if we do not avail ourselves of the great things which God has provided us?

It is cruelty to the world also. God has said, "Go forth and conquer the world: disciple all nations." Has He said this to His people, and do they slumber, do they hesitate? What is the matter, brethren? Are not the words, "Come over and help us," borne on the four winds of heaven? "Come over into Macedonia and help us"; send us missionaries, send us Bibles, send us tracts, send us the Gospel? And is the Church unable to do it? What is the matter? Do let me ask, is there not something entirely wrong here? Does God require His people to make brick without straw? Has the world any right to expect the gospel of salvation to be sent to them by the Church? Brethren, consider!

What cruelty it is to those around us and those who sustain relations to us. We have such a promise in the Bible, yet our children remain unconverted! Think of it!

If Christians would but avail themselves of all the blessings which God has provided and really become filled with the Spirit, what do you suppose would be the result? Let me ask this question, "Suppose every Christian in your city should really comply with the appeal and be filled with the Holy Spirit, what do you suppose would be the natural effect upon the populace? Suppose every Christian were to open His mouth wide, and should receive the Holy Spirit, do you not believe that in one year a very great change would occur in the city, so that you would scarcely know it?" I have not the least doubt that more good would be done than has been done before in your city. If one church could be thoroughly awakened, another and another would follow, till the whole city would be aroused and every chapel would be filled with devout inquirers after salvation. This has been the case frequently in American cities; and the like may occur in any city if Christians are but thoroughly alive to their duties and responsibilities. If every Christian in your city would make up his mind to take hold of the promise of God, and thus come into deep sympathy and fellowship with Him, the effect would be astonishing. Like the lamps of the city, Christians are scattered over it so they may give light to the multitudes around them; but if they are not lighted up, the purpose for which they were intended is not accomplished. Let every Christian in your city be filled with the Holy Spirit, and what would be the result? Your city would move! Your state would move! America would move! Europe would move! Asia would move! The world would move!

Now, brethren, does this appear extravagant? If so, it is because you do not consider the power of the promises of God and what the churches are able to effect in His name. The guilt and the weakness of the Church is her unbelief. This is so great that she does not expect to do much. We must now conclude with a few remarks.

REMARKS

Many people so confound faith with sight that they are ready to say, "If God should make windows in heaven, then might this thing be." A great many people have no faith except in connection with sight: give them the naked promise and they cannot believe it; they must have something they can see. Few individuals can walk by faith. When they see a thing accomplished, they think they have strong faith; but only let this appearance be put out of sight and their faith is gone again. Now, what a Christian ought to be able to do is this: take God's promises and anchor right down upon them without waiting to see anything; because, somebody must believe simply on the strength of God's testimony, somebody must begin by naked faith, or there will be no visible testimony.

God always honors real faith. He is concerned to do so. God often greatly honors the faith of His people. He frequently gives them more than they expect. People will pray for one individual, and God will often honor their faith by not only converting that individual but many others also.

I once knew a man who was sick, and a neighbor of his, an unconverted man, frequently sent from his store things for his comfort. This poor man said to himself, "I cannot recompense Mr. Chandler for his kindness, but I will give myself up to pray for him." To the surprise of all the neighborhood, Mr. Chandler became converted; this he testified before the whole congregation, which had such an effect that a great revival ensued and many souls were brought to God. This poor man gave himself up to pray for one individual, and God honored his faith by converting many, thus fulfilling the declaration of His Word, that He will "do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

Instead of finding that God gives grudgingly and sparingly, He gives abundantly. God always acts worthy of himself. You ask a blessing of God in faith and He says, "Be content, and take a great deal more so that

your cup shall run over." The fact is, where but little is attempted, little expected, little will be received; but where little is really obtained, the fault is not with God, but entirely with us.

ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

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"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" - Matthew vi. 10.

These words are part of what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer," and it is one of the petitions which our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to present to God. I must assume that certain things are admitted by my readers, among them, that you admit that the will of God is perfectly done in heaven, that God is perfectly obeyed there, and that everything is done there perfectly in accordance with His will. This I shall not attempt to prove, but shall take for granted that it is admitted by all my readers. In speaking from the words of our text, I design to call to your attention:

I. Some of the principal relations in which the will of God may be contemplated.

II. What is implied in an acceptable offering of this petition to God.

III. That to be in this state of mind is a present and universal duty.

IV. The guilt of not being in this state of mind.

V. This state of mind is a condition of salvation.

I. Some of the principal relations in which the will of God may be contemplated.

Now, observe that God must be a moral agent if He is a virtuous being. This I take to be a universally known truth and conceded-that God's virtue must be voluntary, that it must consist, substantially, in the same thing in which all virtue consists. If, then, God is a moral agent and a virtuous being, and has an intelligent will, He must live for some good and desirable end. He must exercise His will for some good purpose, and not act at random and without discretion or aim; but that wherever He exercises His agency, it is for some good purpose or end.

We say then, first, that God's will may be contemplated in relation to the end upon which it is fastened and which it is endeavoring to realize. In this must the virtue of God, and all other moral agents, substantially consist. If God has chosen a worthy and good end, He is a worthy and good being; but if He has chosen an unworthy end, He cannot be called a good being; for goodness cannot consist in divine substance, irrespective of divine action and will. God's virtue, then, consists in the attitude of His will.

Now, if I see that God has proposed to himself some great and good end, upon which His heart is set-upon which it was set from all eternity-and that this design and aim is really what it ought to be-what the divine intelligence would point out as an end worthy of being chosen and realized, then I can understand the relation of God's will and character thus far: that He is pursuing an end well worthy of himself. We are told in His Word that this end is to secure His own glory and the good of the entire universe.

In the second place, the will of God may be contemplated in respect to the means which He uses in order to secure this end. I refer to the government of God: as all that is implied in the movements of the universe that secure the end at which He aims. We may contemplate the will of God as it relates to both physical and moral government: as it relates to the arrangements and order of nature-the physical universe which He has created; and as it relates also to the moral government-rewarding the good, and punishing the guilty.

The will of God also may be contemplated as the will of a sovereign, who exercises sovereignty over His people; not ar bitrarily, for which there is no reason, but in that He acts according to His own will without consulting any other being. God's will, then, may be contemplated in relation to His character, His government, the exercise of His providential government in the physical creation; and in respect to all moral agents, prescribing the law and showing how it was to be obeyed, and then punishing those who refuse to obey and rewarding those who do obey. God's will may be regarded as the law of the sovereign, acting according to His own discretion, and aiming at those things which to himself shall seem wise.

II. What is implied in an acceptable offering of this petition to God.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Now, doubt less, when our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray this prayer, He meant something more

than that they should just repeat these words. They were intelligent beings and moral agents, and doubtless He intended that they should express the state of their own minds. He would not, therefore, have them understand that they would be regarded as offering acceptable prayer because they offered this mere form. He intended that they should use this language in sincerity of heart, understanding and meaning what they said. I suppose this will not be doubted. Then the question which we have to answer is, "What is the state of mind required in an individual, and which must be implied in his offering such a petition as this to God?"

The acceptable offering of this petition must imply that the petitioner understands what God's will is. I mean this, he must have some knowledge of the true character and will of God. If he has not a true conception of this, he may fall into grievous errors. Suppose an individual should conceive of God as a selfish being. Suppose that he should conceive of God's will as being neither wise nor good; and if with this state of mind, he should pray for God's will to be done in the earth, would he offer an acceptable petition to God? By no means. Then, to be acceptable, he must conceive rightly of what God's will is. He must regard God as a wise and good being. For if God's will was neither wise nor good, people ought not to do His will. Suppose that God's will was neither wise nor good, and yet He should require us to offer this petition, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"-and that there was nothing, neither wise nor good, done in heaven, it could not be our duty, as moral agents, to offer such a petition. The offering of this petition, then, implies that we understand God's will as perfect, both as to its wisdom and goodness.

An acceptable offering of this petition must imply that we have implicit confidence in His will, as being perfectly wise and perfectly good; for if we have not this confidence, we cannot honestly and intelligently pray this prayer.

The acceptable offering of such a petition as this implies sincerity of heart. If an individual asks anything of God, he is required to ask it in sincerity. But what is implied in an indi vidual being sincere in asking this of God? It must imply that he really desires God's will should be done, that this petition is in accordance with His will and expressive of the true state of His heart. If it is not so, then the offering of such a petition would be hypocrisy. Of course it follows, secondly, that the state of mind which can sincerely offer this petition to God must be in entire harmony with the will of God, so far as God's will is known. If there is anything in which his will is not conformed to the will of God, he cannot offer this petition without base hypocrisy.

The acceptable offering of this petition implies, of course, that we understand and embrace the same end that God embraces; that is, that we really consecrate ourselves to the end for which God lives, and that we sympathize with Him in the end for which He consecrates and exercises all His attributes. If we have not the same end in view that God has, how can we say, "Thy will be done"?

Unless we sympathize with Him in the means that He uses, how can we say, "Thy will be done"?

An acceptable offering of this petition to God also implies a willingness to say and do just what He tells us. If we are not satisfied with the divine conduct in all respects, how can we say, "Thy will be done"? If we are not willing for Him to require of us just what He does; if we have in our hearts any objections to what He does; if we regard His will as exacting and unjust to us, we can never offer this petition acceptably. But suppose that intellectually we admit that His will is not grievous. That is not enough if the heart does not fully consent, for observe this prayer is to be the prayer of the heart.

The acceptable offering of this petition not only implies that we are willing that He should require just what He does, but that He should require it on the condition of all the pains and penalties upon which He does require it.

It implies an entire willingness on our part to obey Him.

How can a person sincerely pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," who himself is not willing to do the will of God? If he is not truly and really obedient, to God's will as they are in heaven, so far as he knows His will, how can he offer such a petition as this? If he is resisting God's will on any point and in any form, he cannot without gross hypocrisy offer this petition. The offering of this petition implies that we sympathize with the spirit of heaven, that our hearts are really yielded up in most solemn and earnest devotedness to God. For how can people whose wills are not yielded up to the will of God, without being hypocrites, say to God, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? In heaven, the will of God is perfectly done, universally done; and shall a person acceptably offer such a petition as this if he is not in a state of mind to go the full length of God's will and subscribe heartily to it? It cannot be.

Observe, then, that the acceptable offering of this petition must imply present obedience in the heart to God. The will of the petitioner must have been given up to the control of the will of God. His will must be the expression of God's will so far as he knows it, or he cannot honestly offer such a petition as this to God. I

say that the acceptable petitioner must do the whole of the will of God, so far as it is expressed, in whatever way it is made known: whether through Christ, through the Spirit, through providential arrangements and occurrences, through the Word of God, through the workings of his own heart and mind, or in whatever other way this will is made known.

The heart that is sincere in offering this petition must really embrace and express the whole of God's will as really and truly as it is embraced and expressed in heaven itself. By this I do not mean to affirm that the will of God is known to the same extent in earth as it is in heaven; but so far as it is known, the petitioner must as really and truly embrace it and obey it as they do in heaven. It is not to be supposed that God's will is fully known upon earth; undoubtedly many things concerning the will of God have not been fully revealed to us, so that we cannot understand all the details of His will; but, in so far as we understand it, there will be a willingness to obey it entirely.

The acceptable offering of this petition implies the absence of all selfishness in the mind that offers it. God is not selfish; selfishness is the will set upon itself, regardless of all else. The person who offers this petition cannot be selfish. The very pe tition implies the present absence of selfishness.

An acceptable offering of this petition implies that we really hold ourselves at the divine disposal as honestly and truly as we suppose they do in heaven. Who does not suppose that every being in heaven holds himself at the divine disposal? It must be that every being there considers himself as belonging to God-that to God all his powers are consecrated; and that any indication of the divine will as to how these powers are to be disposed is to be readily adopted and carried out by the agent himself. Who can conceive that there is any hesitation to do the known will of God in any particular?

To sincerely offer such a petition as this to God, there must be an entire consecration of the will and the whole being to Him. A person who offers this petition acceptably must be in such a state of mind as to consider that he has no right to the disposal of himself. He must lay his whole being upon God's altar and hold himself entirely at the divine disposal. The same is true of all he possesses. Who doubts that everything in heaven is held as belonging to God? We know not what things the inhabitants of heaven have in possession, or what their employments are-what they may be employed about, and what instruments they may use to promote the great end that God is intending to realize. But this we know, that whatever they have influence over is all held at the divine disposal. No one in heaven thinks of disposing of anything to promote any selfish interests of his own. Who can believe that anyone there has a separate private interest?

Now, how should we regard our possessions if we are to offer this petition acceptably to God? Why, God's will respects the release of our possessions, our time, our talents, our influence, our character and everything to Him. These must be held at the divine disposal, given to the divine discretion, laid on His altar and left there. No one can offer this petition acceptably to God without doing this. If he would be selfish, and selfishly use anything in the whole world, he is in no state of mind to offer this petition to God. If he is endeavoring to promote his own will, do you suppose he is fit for heaven? Do the inhabitants of the heavenly world act without consulting God, without reference to His will? No, indeed! When people say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," does not this imply that everything on earth is to be done at the divine disposal, and to be as truly disposed of for God as they are disposed of in heaven? Let it be understood, then, that he who offers this petition to God must as really design to obey Him, use all his powers and everything that he possesses for His glory, just as they do in heaven. If he has not this deliberate and solemn purpose in his mind, what does he mean by such a petition as this?

The offering of this petition implies that the petitioner is really and truly willing to make sacrifices of any personal ease and comfort for the promotion of God's glory, so far as he un derstands that he ought. Who doubts that in heaven they are willing to be sent to any part of the universe, or to give tip personal case or anything else for the promotion of the great end for which God is aiming? We are informed in the Bible that "angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation." Any moment they may be called to self-denial and arduous labor. Doubtless they are often called, but do they hesitate, do they consider it a hardship? No; because they sympathize with God and with Christ in this great work. They do not hesitate to make any personal sacrifices that are demanded of them. They are perfectly cheerful and happy in it. Now, a person who would say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," must be willing to make any sacrifice that he knows is to be in accordance with the will of God. If it is plainly a matter of duty for him to do this or that, to go here or there, he must be perfectly willing to comply, or how can he offer this petition?

The state of mind in which this petition can be acceptably offered implies that there is an opposition to sin as real as there is in heaven. I suppose not to the

same degree, because we have not the same appreciation of its character that they have; but, insofar as it is understood here, the individual that offers this petition is as really opposed to sin as they are in heaven.

An individual who offers this petition acceptably to God must have as real a sympathy with all that God has as they have in heaven. In heaven they doubtless sympathize with all that is good, so the individual who offers sincerely this prayer must have intense hatred to all that is wicked, and must deeply sympathize with all that is good. There must be as true a renunciation of self and all selfishness, and as genuine a disposition to please God in every heart that offers this petition, as there is in heaven. I speak not of degree, because I suppose we do not apprehend these things so clearly as they do; but, insofar as we understand what God loves, our sympathy must be as real as it is in heaven.

III. That to be in this state of mind is a present and universal duty.

Every person is bound, now, to be in this state of mind. I say every man; not merely Christian ministers and professing Christians, but every moral agent is bound to be in this state.

It is demanded by the nature of things. How can people be released from this obligation? Every person knows that he ought to obey God; he affirms it by an affirmation that is irresistible. Everyone knows that God's will is wise and good. Who ever heard this called in question by anyone who had a true idea of God developed in his mind? Every moral agent admits he is bound to consent that God's will should be done, and that he ought himself to do it.

Every moral agent knows, too, that it is not his duty merely to do this sometime or other, but it is his present duty. He has no right for a moment to resist the divine will. I need not, of course, enlarge upon this part of the subject, because I suppose that these truths need only to be stated to be universally rec ognized and affirmed to be true, as seen in the light of their own evidence. Are not men so constituted as to have it confirmed by a law of their own nature that they ought to conform to the will of God? They would not be moral agents if they were under no obligation to obey the will of God.

IV. The guilt of not being in this state of mind.

If an individual is not in this state of mind, he refuses to sympathize with God. If he knows that all God's aims are directed toward an end worthy of the pursuit of God, worthy of the Creator of the universe, and yet he refuses to agree with God in this end, he sets it at naught, he turns his back upon it, though he knows it is good.

If an individual is not in this state of mind, he is unwilling that God should govern the universe, not only in relation to the end that He seeks, but also in the means that He uses. He refuses his consent that God should govern the universe in any shape. The man who will not obey God's law, really rebels against the will of the lawgiver; he actually refuses to consent that God should govern.

Let me say that the individual who is not in this state of mind really refuses in his heart to consent that God should be good. He would not have God do what He is doing. He is unwilling to obey Him. He would rather that God did not require what He does; that He would not do what He does do; and yet these things are implied in the goodness of God and are essential to His goodness. God would not be a good being if he did not require and do just as He does. The individual who is not in this state of mind, then, refuses to consent that God should be a good being-that God should do that which He knows is proper to do. Now just think of this, he rebels against that which constitutes the very goodness of God.

The individual who is not in this state of mind really refuses that God should comply with the necessary conditions of His own happiness; for the necessary conditions of God's happiness must be His virtue. An individual who is unwilling to obey God is unwilling that God should comply with the necessary conditions of His own happiness. The individual who is in this state of mind cannot say, "Thy will be done," for he is really at war with the holiness and happiness of God-he is arrayed against both. He is unwilling that God should will as He does. And since holiness belongs to His will and consists in willing as He does will, all God's actions are included in the actions of His will. The individual who is not in harmony with God not only refuses to sympathize with Him, but he also refuses to consecrate himself to the end for which God is consecrated. He arrays himself against God. Yes, he virtually says, "Let God cease to be. Let Him not require what He does. Let Him not pursue the end that He does. Let Him not govern the universe; let not His will be universal law!" He may just as well go one step further and say, "Let God not be happy; let Him be infinitely and eternally miserable." For if God were not holy, who does not know that He would be infinitely unholy? And I tremble to say it, but who does not know that if God were a wicked being, instead of a good being, the workings of His own infinite nature would fill His mind with infinite agony?

Now, observe, what does a man mean when he takes this attitude-that he will not consent to have God's will done, that he will not obey Him, that he is virtually

opposed to His being good? Why, if God is not good, what must be the consequences? If He may not will as He does, and require as He does, and do as He does, He must do the opposite! And does not sin imply this-that the sinner really takes this attitude? Yes, it does! People who refuse sincerely to offer this petition are opposed to the holiness and the happiness of God, and would consent to the eternal overthrow and total ruin of God and His whole empire! This is certainly implied in resistance to the will of God.

Let it be understood that no moral agent can be indifferent to the will of God: he must either subscribe to it, or resist it: he must yield himself to it, or array himself against it! And if against it, no thanks to him if there is any particle of good in God's universe; no thanks to any moral agent who cannot honestly and sincerely subscribe to this petition. It matters not to him if any being in the universe is either holy or happy! He is opposed to it all! The state of his mind is perfectly opposed to it all, and, were he to have his will, he would annihilate the whole of it, and introduce sin and misery into every part of the universe. How great, then, must be the guilt of an individual who has his will opposed to the will of God. I could expand upon this at large, but must now proceed to my next point.

V. This state of mind is a condition of salvation.

By a condition of salvation, I don't mean that it is the ground upon which sinners will be saved, that they will be saved because of universal and perfect obedience. But I affirm this, that it is a condition in this sense, that without being in this state, salvation is both naturally and governmentally impossible.

It is naturally impossible. Heaven is no place for the person whose will is not in harmony with the will of God. Suppose that he entered there, he would introduce a jarring note. He would introduce discord; heaven would be no place for him.

It is governmentally impossible for him to possess heaven, whose will is not in harmony with the will of God. God is the Governor of the universe. God's will is infinite, and where God is, His will must be the law. In every community there must be some one mind that sways every other, or there will be discord. Some will must give law to the universe. There must be someone whose will is universally confided in as perfect, and that will must be universally performed or there will be jarring, there will be clashing. God, therefore, as Governor of the universe, must be obeyed. The indication of His will must carry all minds with it. Now, to the person who hates God's will, this would be intolerable; therefore, governmentally it is impossible for any person to enter heaven who cannot sincerely say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

REMARKS

I must now conclude by making a few observations. How shocking it must be for people to use the Lord's Prayer as a mere form. Just think of it! While he is living in known sin, an individual offers such a petition to God! What can he mean? What profanity! What blasphemy is involved in it! It makes one's hair stand on end to hear an individual pray in that manner to Jehovah, the heart-searching God.

How shocking it is for some congregations (many of whom, perhaps, are unconverted, ungodly men and women) to make use of such petitions as this, pretending to worship God. Yet how common it is to repeat this prayer as a mere form; and it is often introduced into the nursery, and the children repeat it without being told what is implied in it. Why, no wonder their hearts become hardened. But perhaps someone will say, "If this be so, I will not offer this petition at all." But what petition, I ask, will you offer? For remember that you can offer no petition acceptably unless you offer it sincerely!

For example, let us read over these very petitions. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." What does this imply? Why, the recognition of God's relation as our Father. "Hallowed be thy name." What is implied in that? Why, a similar state of mind as that which I have just pointed out. "Thy kingdom come." What is implied in the offering of that petition? Why, that you have set your heart upon the same end that God has, that your will is to obey His will, that you are consecrated to the interests of His kingdom.

Then follows the petition contained in the text, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." "Give us this day our daily bread." What is implied in that? Why, the recognition of the universal providence of God. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; not, as some say, "forgive us our trespasses, and enable us to forgive them which trespass against us"; but "as we forgive them which trespass against us." If you do not forgive the trespasses of others, you pray to God not to forgive you yours. It implies, then, a most forgiving state of mind on your part. I have often been acquainted with the state of mind of certain individuals in respect to others, and I have wondered, when they attempted to pray the Lord's Prayer, that this petition did not choke them. How many people, when they pray this prayer, really pray to God that He would not forgive them at all'? For they don't forgive their enemies.

But let us proceed a step. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." What state of mind does this imply? Why, a dread of sin, and an opposition of the heart to it; and a most sincere yearning of soul to be conformed to everything that is good. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Now, suppose that any should say, "Why, if this is a true exposition of the Lord's Prayer, I shall never dare to offer it again." And what prayer will you offer? Take any other petition, and does not an acceptable offering of it by you imply that you agree with God, and that you will submit to all His will? Can you expect Him to hear and answer you unless you are in an obedient state of mind? Why, if you expect Him to hear and answer you while you refuse to obey Him, you do not regard the plain declaration of His Word, which says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

"Well," some of you say, "if this be true, it is no use for a sinner to pray." What do you mean by that? Of no use for a sinner to pray! Well, of what use can it be for a sinner to lie to God and mock Him? Do you ask me if I mean to prohibit sinners praying? I say, no! But I want to prevent their being hypocrites. Let them pray, but let them cease to be sinners, and submit themselves to the will of God. They should consecrate themselves to God at once. It is their present duty. They need not say, "I will not pray because I am a sinner!" What business have you to be a sinner? "My will is not in a right state," you say. But why is it not in a right state? The sinner is bound to pray on pain of eternal death, but he has no right to tell lies to God. He is bound to be sincere and honest with God. And is it difficult for people to be honest and sincere? Is it an impossible thing? For my right hand, I would not discourage any individual from praying; and neither, for my right hand, would I encourage him to pray with a heart wicked and rebellious against God. The truth is, men ought to know that they are shut up by the divine requirements and the affirmations of their own minds to unqualified submission to the will of God upon pain of eternal death.

It is easy to see, from what has been said, that a great many individuals offer the Lord's Prayer and other prayers, and leave it for others to do the will of God. They pray, "Thy will be done" but they leave it to others to perform this will.

It is easy to see what it is to be truly religious; it is to have the will entirely given up to God. It implies, of course, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and much more of which it is not now my design to discuss, as I must confine my attention to the point before us.

Many people will say that this ought to be the state of their minds, that they ought to offer this prayer in sincerity without solemnly inquiring, "Am I really willing that God's will should be done? Do I really do it?" But this is implied in an acceptable offering of this petition, that, for the time being, we are in a state in which we really do all we know of our duty. By a necessary law, if the will is right, the outward life will correspond.

There is an amazing degree of carelessness among many people as to what they really say in prayer. They begin, and talk right on, without considering that God requires truth in the inward parts. They often say many things that are not true. They verify what the Lord says, "They did flatter him with their mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues."

While individuals are not in this state of mind, there is no true peace. While their wills are not under the control of God's will, and while they are not devoted to him, what multitudes of things are continually occurring to agonize them and destroy their peace of mind! But when individuals yield up their wills to the will of God, they breathe an atmosphere of love, and live in profound peace and tranquillity.

When people are in this state of mind, and regard everything as an expression in some sense of God's will, how easily God's will sits upon them!

Much that is called prayer is really an expression of self-will. I would here refer to a case that occurred some years ago in the western part of the State of New York. A gentleman of high standing, intelligent and influential, became very annoyed by the minister of the congregation where he usually attended, pressing upon his hearers the fact that they were not willing to be Christians. The man to whom I refer insisted that he was willing- had long been willing-to become a Christian. His wife remarked that she had never seen him so irritated before upon any subject.

The minister kept turning that over, and pressing it upon the people that they were not Christians because they were not willing to become Christians. But this man was obstinate in affirming that he knew, for his own part, that he was willing to become a Christian, and would anybody deny that he knew the state of his own conscience? He went home in this state of mind one evening, and in the morning his mind was so weighed down that he sought relief by going in a place alone to pray. He kneeled down to pray, but found that he could not pray; he could not think of anything that he really wished to say. It occurred to him to say the Lord's

Prayer. The moment he opened his mouth to say, "Our Father," he stopped to consider, Do I recognize God as my Father? He hesitated and trembled to say it. "Hallowed be thy name." No, that is not the expression of my heart. "Thy kingdom come" was the next petition, and he said he was conscious he never wanted the kingdom of God to come, that he had never lived to promote it, and was not living now to promote it. Then he came to the next petition, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." He paused for a moment, and the inquiry rushed upon him, How is God's will done in heaven? Am I willing that it should be done in earth? Am I willing to do it myself? As these inquiries came over him, he perceived for the first time what was included in being a Christian. He now saw that to be a Christian implied that the heart should be consecrated to God, that he should fully obey God's will. He felt that he did not do that; that he never had done that; that never, by his own will, had the will of God governed him.

He continued upon his knees, and the perspiration poured down him, because he was in such agony of mind. He now felt what the minister had said was true, and the question came up, Why am I not willing to be a Christian? He felt there was no reason why he should not, and no excuse that he could make for refusing any longer. If he was not willing to do as he ought, he felt he ought to go to hell, and be willing to go and take the consequences-that he ought to be sent there and have no disposition to open his mouth by way of objecting. He himself said, "I gathered up all my soul and energies, and rose up in my strength, and cried at the top of my voice, 'Thy will be done.' I know that my will went with my words; and then so great a calmness came over me that I can never express it, so deep a peace instantly took possession of me. It seemed as if all was changed; my whole soul justified God and took part against itself."

I need not enter into this further; but let me say, dearly beloved, when you go away, can you kneel before your Maker and say, "O my God, let Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, require just what Thou doest, require of me just what Thou doest; 0 God, my whole being cries out, Let Thy will be universally done in earth as it is in heaven"? Or can you not say that? You ought to be able to say it, and to be honest in saying it; but if you never have yet, let me ask you to do so at this very moment. If you have never found peace before, you shall know what it is to go to bed in peace for once. You shall know what that peace of God is that passes understanding, and drink of the river of His pleasures. Do not rest until the attitude of your mind is to do all the will of God.