

What Saith the Scripture?

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## Professor Finney's Letter of January 1, 1839

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Reformatted by Katie Stewart

TO THE YOUNG CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE BEEN CONVERTED IN THE GREAT REVIVALS OF THE FEW PAST YEARS, SCATTERED UP AND DOWN IN THE LAND, WHEREVER THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD MAY HAVE CAST YOUR LOT:

*Beloved in the Lord:*

My body is so far worn and especially my organs of speech so far exhausted that I cannot visit and preach to you orally the word of life. I therefore address you through the press, as the most direct and effectual medium through which I can communicate my thoughts.

I propose, the Lord willing, to address to you through the columns of "The Oberlin Evangelist" from time to time a series of short sermons.

*I. On those practical subjects that I deem most important to you and to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I shall have said what I desire on those more immediately and highly practical topics, if the Lord permit, I design*

*II. To give you a series of sermons on some doctrinal topics, especially the moral government of God, including the atonement, and the influences of the Holy Ghost in the administration of that government.*

A great many of you I know personally, and many more of you know me with whom I have not the honor of a personal acquaintance. You do me the honor to call me your spiritual father, and I have the unspeakable happiness of believing that God has made me instrumental in doing you good. Such of you as know me personally *know* that it is my manner to deal with great plainness of speech and directness of address to the souls and consciences of men. You remember that this was my manner when I was with you. That this is still the only way to do you good I have the greatest confidence.

Now the thing that I desire to do is, so far as in me lies, to lay open before you the very secrets of your hearts, and also to lead you to an entire renunciation of everything that grieves the Spirit of God, to a relinquishment of selfishness, under every form and in every degree, and to hold out before you those "exceeding great and precious promises" whereby you may be made "partakers of the divine nature." The conductors of this paper are willing that I should make it the medium of spreading before you my thoughts, as the providence and Spirit of God shall enable me. I shall give you a sermon as often as

my health and other duties will permit; and whenever you receive this paper containing one of my lectures, I wish you to consider yourself as personally addressed by me. I wish you to read for *yourself* and feel that I mean *you*, as much as though it were a private communication made to you from my own pen, or as if I had a personal interview and addressed you "face to face." If I probe you to the quick, I beg of you not to be offended and throw the paper aside and refuse to hear me. "I beseech you by the mercies of God," nay, I conjure you by our Lord Jesus Christ to hear me patiently and with candor. Nay, beloved, I expect candor from *you*; and many of you, I doubt not, will not only hear me with *candor* but with *joy*. I will try to write as if I had you all before me in one great congregation, as if I beheld your countenances and were addressing you "face to face." Nay, I will consider you, and I desire you to consider yourselves, as in such a sense members of my congregation as to attend stately on my preaching. I shall take it for granted that you read every lecture, and of course address you from time to time as if you had candidly read and attentively considered what I had already said.

Unless I can engage you to grant me one request, I have little hope of doing you good. And that is, as soon as you receive this communication you will make me, yourselves and the subject of the proposed lectures subjects of earnest and constant prayer; and that whenever you receive a paper containing one of the proposed lectures, you go upon your knees before you read it and lay open your heart in solemn prayer before God and to the influence of truth, and implore the aid of the Holy Spirit to make the word to you quick and powerful. We shall all soon meet at the bar of God. I earnestly desire to do you all the good I can while I am in the flesh; and as I do not intend to write for your amusement but solely for your spiritual edification, will you pledge yourselves on your knees before God to examine the truth candidly-- make a personal, faithful and full application of it to your own hearts and lives-- and to improve it as you will answer to God in the solemn judgment? If these are your resolutions and purposes, I am confident the Lord will bless you. I shall not cease to pray for you and intend to make such of you as I can remember special and particular subjects of prayer; and I entreat you to do the same by me.

C. G. FINNEY

A Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ