

What Saith the Scripture?

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Professor Finney's Letter
of February 13, 1839

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TO THE CONVERTS OF THE GREAT REVIVALS
THAT HAVE PREVAILED IN THE UNITED STATES
WITHIN THE FEW LAST YEARS.

Beloved:

I closed my last letter by adverting to the fact that several professedly religious periodicals have so referred to what I had said in regard to your being "a disgrace to religion" as virtually to represent me as denying the reality, genuineness and power of those glorious revivals in which you were converted. I denied having said anything in that connection to that effect. But I did assert in my lecture and reassert in my last letter [[January 30, 1839](http://www.WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/OE1839.Letter.1.30.html) -- <http://www.WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/OE1839.Letter.1.30.html> --] that I believed many of you were by your lives a disgrace to the religion of Christ. Now, beloved, I said not this nor do I now say it to bring a railing accusation against you, but for the purpose of preparing the way to put some questions to you conscience, with the design to turn your eyes fully upon your own life and spirit as exhibited before the world.

And here let me say that when you receive this number I desire each of you to consider this letter as directed to you individually, as a private letter to you, although communicated through this public channel.

I will write upon my knees, and I beg you to read it upon your knees. And when you have read it as written to *yourself* and received, as I conjure you to do as a private communication to *you from me*, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I entreat you to hand it to all your Christian friends in your neighborhood and within your reach, beseeching them to receive it and consider it as a private letter to *them*, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hereafter, should the providence of God permit, I may more particularly address different classes of individuals than I can in this letter. I intend to address fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, ministers, church officers, editors of religious papers, young men and young women, as so many distinct classes of individuals to whom particular truths may be applicable. In this I address you without reference to your age or sex or station or calling, simply as a professor of the religion of Jesus Christ.

I have said that I fear and believe that many of you, at least, are a disgrace to the religion you profess.

By this I mean that instead of fairly and truly representing the religion of Christ in your life and spirit, you and many respects grossly misrepresent it. Do not hear suffer your temper to rise and turn upon me and say "Physician, heal thyself," I might, to be sure, confess my own sins; but my business now as "an ambassador of Jesus Christ" is with your own conscience.

And now, dearly beloved, bear with me while I put the questions home to you, as by name.

Are not your life and spirit and habits a miserable *misrepresentation* of the religion you profess?

You are a professor of the religion of Jesus Christ. Your profession of religion has placed you on high, as "a city that cannot be hid." You are not hid. The eyes of God, of Christians, of the world, of hell are upon you.

And now, precious soul, do you sincerely believe that you *feel* and *act* and *live* and *do* as the Lord Jesus Christ would under similar circumstances?

Are those around you forced by your *life* and *spirit* to recognize the lineaments divine of the character of Christ in you?

Would those that know nothing of Christ be able to catch and *understand* the true *spirit* and *meaning* of the religion of Jesus by an acquaintance with you?

Would they obtain from your *life* and *example* such an idea of the *nature*, *design* and *tendency* of the gospel as would lead them to value it, to understand its necessity and importance?

Are your spirit and temper and conversation so *unearthly*, so *heavenly*, so *divine*, so much like *Christ*, as fairly to represent Him? Or do you miss represent Him?

Is not the *temper* that you manifest, the *life* that you lead, your *conversation*, your *pursuits*-- are not all these in many respects the very opposite and contrast of the spirit of the religion of Christ?

My beloved brother, sister, father, mother, whoever you are, *remember* that while you read these questions God's eye is pouring its *searching blaze* into your *inmost soul*.

What is your temper in your *family*, among your *friends*, in your *private* life, in your *domestic* relations and in your *public* walks?

Is your conversation in heaven or is it "earthly, sensual, devilish"?

What is the testimony of your *closet*? Can it bear witness to your sighs and groans and tears over the wickedness and desolations of the world?

Are men by beholding your good works constrained to "glorify your Father who is in heaven"? Or is the name of God blasphemed on account of your earthly and unchristian life and spirit?

Can those that remain unconverted in the place where you live bear witness that a great and divine change was wrought in you by the Spirit of God?

I beseech you in the name of Christ to inquire, are your impenitent acquaintances *constrained* to confess that that *must* have been a work of God that could have wrought so great a change in you, as they daily witness?

Do you think that the interests of religion are *really advanced* by your life and that you are continually making an impression in favor of holiness on those around you?

Do they witness in you the "*peace of God that passeth understanding*"?

Do they behold in you that *sweet and divine complacency* in the will and ways of God that spreads a heavenly *serenity* and *calm* and *sweetness* over your mind, in the midst of the *trials* and *vicissitudes* to which you are subjected?

Or do they behold you vexed, anxious, careful, easily disturbed and exhibiting the spirit of the world? My dear soul, if this is so you are a horrible disgrace to religion; you are unlike Jesus. Was this the spirit that Jesus manifested?

Let me inquire again: what are you doing for the conversion of sinners around you, and what for the conversion of the world?

Would one hundred million such Christians as you are, and living just as you live, be instrumental in converting the world?

Suppose there are a thousand million of men upon the earth and suppose that one hundred million of these were just Christians as you are, in your present state and at your present rate of usefulness; when would the world be converted?

Is the church and the world *better* and *holier* on account of your profession? And are they really *benefited* by your life?

If not, your profession is a liability upon the Christian religion. You are, like Peter, *denying* your Savior; and like Judas, you have kissed but to *betray* Him.

Now, beloved, I will not take it upon me to decide these questions that I have put to you on my knees and in the spirit of love. Will you be honest and, on your knees, spread out this letter to God your Maker and Christ your Savior? Will you not upon your knees read over these questions, one by one, and ask God to show you the real state of your life as it relates to each of them?

And here, beloved, I leave you for the present; and may the Savior aid you and make you honest in meeting cordially and answering honestly these questions. You must be searched and humbled and broken down in heart before you can be built up and made strong in Christ.

Do be *honest* and in *haste*, and address yourself to the work of self-examination without delay. I beg of you to prepare yourself to receive the consolations of the gospel of Christ, for my soul is panting to spread them out before you.

Providence permitting, you may expect to hear from me again soon.

C. G. FINNEY

A Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ