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by

Charles G. Finney

President of Oberlin College

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GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

The Child-Like Spirit an Essential Condition of Entering Heaven

Lecture I
May 26, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Matt. 18:3: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Text.--Mark 10:15: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

The passage from Matthew stands in the following connection: The disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

"And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Look at the question which drew forth this decisive remark from our Lord:--"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Strange question this, for holy men to ask -- for men to ask, who had now been in the society of the Meek and Lowly One long enough, it would seem, to understand and to have imbibed His spirit. Our Lord wisely took advantage of the question, to propound one vastly important principle in reference to the nature of His kingdom and the consequent fitness for entering it.

In discussing the subject here presented, it will be important,

I. To state some of the characteristics of little children.

II. To show why this state of mind is indispensable to salvation.

I. To state some of the characteristics of little children.

It is important in the outset to consider attentively the fact that the case taken for illustration is a little child; not a young man or a young woman; -- not one who had reached the period where little children, as they advance in age, are wont to lose the simplicity of little ones. Let it also be carefully noted, that the characteristics of the little child, to which the Savior refers, are not, as they appear in the very young child, moral, but only natural. They serve to illustrate the moral qualities of character which are indispensable conditions of salvation, yet they are not themselves moral, for the reason that they are spontaneous, and are not developed under the action of either the intelligence or the

conscience. Until both these faculties are so far matured as to act responsibly, it is a great mistake to suppose that there can be either moral character or moral action.

The language used by our Lord plainly shows that He refers to analogous and not to identical qualities. "Except ye be converted and become as little children." He does not demand that we should become as ignorant as they--as void of enlightened conscience as they. No. Like Paul, He would say: "In malice, be ye children; but in understanding, be ye MEN."

Let us, then, trace the analogies between the characteristics of little children and those of Christian converts.

- 1. In transparency or guilelessness of character. This is a most remarkable characteristic of very young children. It has been said that "children and fools always tell the truth." The infant mind is a stranger to guile. It has not yet learned to practice duplicity; it has not learned what the thing itself is. Mark that little one; no dodging, no evasion of the truth; no desire to cover up; not yet the first idea of having anything to be covered up; -- how guileless and beautiful in his transparent simplicity! No wonder everybody loves such little children. You love them for the same reason, substantially, that you love holiness. It is intrinsically lovely. Their characteristics closely resemble those of the true convert -- those of the holy in heaven itself.

Do not forget that I am now speaking, not of a child who has grown forward into guile and deceit-- who has begun to violate his conscience, and of course has a motive for trying to appear what he is not; not of such does the Savior speak.

- 2. Next in the list of infantile characteristics, I notice humility. By this I mean, not a sense of sin, but a willingness to be known and appreciated according to truth. The little child is in this sense humble. He feels no repugnance to being known as he is. He has not once thought of trying to conceal his real character. He is ignorant of almost everything, and he seems very cheerfully to assume that such is the fact. Hence, he asks questions of everybody and under any and all circumstances, never anxious lest he should expose his ignorance. Indeed he expects to expose it if he has it, and deems it no harm to do so. He seems to suppose that there can be no objection to being known according to the truth in his case.

It is often very striking and instructive to see how this spirit develops itself in quite young children. It often seems as if they should scarcely find time to sleep, so earnest are they to learn the meaning of the thousand new things which they daily hear and see. You see them asking their simple-hearted questions of everybody and everywhere. Even the little children of Queen Victoria will run into the kitchen and ask questions of the humblest servants in her household, and none are so low in station that they are ashamed to expose their ignorance before them. In fact, at this unambitious age of life, they seem to have no idea of aristocratic distinctions. They are free of heart to associate with any kind-hearted children, be their color or condition in life what it may.

How unlike all this is the condition of those who have advanced in years and in sin till they are ashamed to be known, and afraid even to know themselves! Then see how artful--how studious to keep their real character in the dark! How expert in framing

disguises, and how intent on keeping up false appearances! If they are ignorant on any point, perhaps they will sooner remain so than run the risk of exposing their ignorance by asking a question. How strong the contrast between them and little children, in this respect of true humility!

- 3. Little children are also confiding. The spontaneous impulse of their minds is to believe everything they hear said, and to assume that everybody speaks the truth. Until they have learned by revolting experience that there is a vast amount of falsehood and deception in the world, their simple hearts are altogether unsuspecting and trustful. So should the Christian convert be, and so in fact the real convert is, I mean, in his relations towards God. He comes into a trustful spirit, and seems spontaneously to believe every word God says. He assumes that every promise of God is sure-- every declaration reliable. And this is a most striking as well as perfectly indispensable element of true Christian character.
- 4. Little children are also affectionate. They seem naturally inclined to love. Treat them kindly, and you will not fail to win their young hearts. How easily and spontaneously their warm affections gush forth. All simple-hearted in bestowing their love, they need only see the manifestations of love towards themselves, and they give their hearts, returning love for love without stint or fear. You smile on them; they respond with full and unsuspecting hearts. So the soul of the young convert responds to all the affecting manifestations of the Savior's love, and it is his delight to mark the testimonies of God's loving-kindness, and to let his heart flow out in grateful and responsive love to such a Being!
- 5. The little child is willing to live by faith. In fact, he does live by faith altogether, and seems to think of no other way to live. He trusts his parents and friends for everything he needs, and trusts them so heartily that he has no anxieties, no solitudes. He is not restive and uneasy lest somebody should prove false, or lest some of his hopes should fail. That little one trusts his parents implicitly, as if perfectly assured that they will provide for all his wants. He knows he can do nothing, or almost nothing, towards the care of himself and the supply of his own wants; yet he feels no solitudes, but lives along day by day on simple faith.

How beautiful an illustration is this of the spirit of trustful dependence in which the young convert lives of his Savior! The Christian, as we all know, must have this spirit; he has no other way to live a real Christian life--no other way to enjoy peace of mind amid a world of wants and cares--no other way to go on from strength to strength, waxing more and more mighty through the might of Jehovah.

- 6. Yet another characteristic of the little child is a spirit of candor. He has no motive for wishing what is true to be false. Nobody cavils against the truth till he has an opposing heart. When his heart comes to dislike the truth, then he cavils. He raises senseless objections and tries to believe they have sense and weight in them. Scan his state of mind to the bottom, and you find it to be nothing else but hatred of the truth. He has an interest -- at least so he thinks -- in opposing the truth. But you see none of this uncandid spirit in the little child. He is easily controlled by the truth, and seems never to think of resisting it. So of the young convert. He opens his whole heart to the truth and loves to see it revealed, let it out and condemn as it may. What has he to do with cavils against the truth? It seems to him like fighting against God

Himself, and why should he be found fighting against God!

But it is time to break off from this enumeration of these beautiful and illustrative characteristics of the little child, and advance.

II. To show that a state of mind corresponding to these characteristics of the little child is essential to salvation.

"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Let it be well considered, that the qualities of character which I have specified as common to little children, are not real holiness. These little ones may not have reached the development of any moral character at all. But their spirit so closely resembles, in some respects, the spirit of the true Christian that it affords a pertinent illustration, and it is only as such that our Savior uses it. And moreover, it stands in so strong contrast with the spirit of the sinner, who gives up his soul to sinning, who violates his conscience, and who of course becomes dishonest, proud and selfish, that it seems the fittest illustration that can be found of the marked difference between those who belong to the kingdom of hell, and those who enter the kingdom of heaven.

But why, let us ask, must persons be converted and become as little children, before they can enter heaven?

- 1. Because in any other state than this, they are not honest, but on the contrary, entirely dishonest.

Look carefully into these qualities of the little child, and suppose a case in which they are not present. Here is a man whose character is not transparent, but who studiously conceals his real heart. Is not he dishonest-- essentially, radically dishonest? How unfit, then, for a place in the kingdom of heaven!

Or suppose him proud, in the sense opposed to that humility which I have named as one characteristic of the little child. He does not consent, by any means, to be known as he truly is. His whole endeavor is to put on, and keep on, a false appearance. Is not this radically dishonest? And who does not know that God can have no sympathy or fellowship with a dishonest mind?

Or again, suppose a man aspiring and ambitious. How rarely can you discover in him anything that even seems like real honesty!

Or suppose him wanting in that confiding trustful spirit which is so prominent in the little child. If you search his character to the bottom you will find that he lacks the element of substantial honesty of mind, and has learned to be distrustful of others by observing that there is nothing trustworthy in himself.

In this way, you may take up successively each element of the spirit peculiar to the little child, and you will see that the absence of these qualities and the presence of their

oppositives evince a dishonest state of mind, and therefore a state utterly unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

- 2. But again, the beautiful simplicity of character which shines forth in the little child must be essential to prepare us for heaven, because it is so like the spirit that fills all heaven. Did you never consider that all heaven is full of little children? Christ Himself says -- "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven is composed of such as they. Even the tallest archangels have the spirit of little children. You mistake them entirely if you think of them as high and lifted up in a vain notion of their dignity and self-consequence. On the contrary, no dear little child was ever more simple-hearted, more guileless, more transparent than they. On the testimony of our Lord Himself, we learn that whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Hence the more simple, confiding, trustful, and open-hearted, the more there is of the spirit of the heavenly world. And hence none can go there who have not these elements of spirit and character. Men must have the soul of heaven in them, or it is no place for them to dwell in. God will not mar heaven by admitting discordant elements there. Hence if we can learn what the spirit of heaven is, we learn what spirit persons must have here before they go there.
- 3. But a third reason is that this childlike state of mind is indispensable to being taught of God. The holy in heaven, and those who are becoming holy on earth, are all God's pupils. His Divine Spirit is their Great Teacher, promised and given in order to lead them into all truth. But how can God teach those who are not teachable--those who cavil against the truth--hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved?

Now we all know that the little child has a teachable spirit. He loves to be taught, and therefore his mind is all open to truth, and you can teach him anything you please. But if he advances onward to a state of mind all of pride and vanity, and withal, to a state in which his selfish and wicked heart opposes the truth, then how he changed! O, he knows so much now that you cannot teach him anything! He is wiser than any seven men, however skillful they may be in giving the reasons of things. There are some students who can never learn theology. They will forever stumble and flounder along; and the reason is, they are already too wise in their own conceits to become any wiser. Who has not had occasion to observe how surely fatal to the acquisition of knowledge is this spirit of self-conceit? How then can God teach men of such a spirit? I know God sometimes comes down to teach His people "by terrible things in righteousness," and that sometimes He does effect by hard discipline what perhaps could be done by no milder means; yet it is true as a general law of God's spiritual administration, that the "meek," and those only, "will He teach in judgement--the meek will He lead in His way." God makes His creatures bear the responsibility of maintaining a teachable spirit; and according as they do or do not maintain it may they expect to be taught or not taught of God. Hence the necessity of being converted and of becoming as a little child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

- 4. God cannot teach and cannot bless in any way those who will not confide in Him. God adapts the whole course of His discipline with His children to this world as a dark sort of state -- where little comparatively can be seen with the eye, and where most things must be received with faith

in the veracity and love of our Father. Hence God cannot lead us along as His children unless we confide in Him. Jesus could not do many mighty works in certain cities, because of their unbelief. He could not afford to cast His choice pearl's before swine. God cannot teach, as His children, any class of intelligent beings in earth or heaven, unless they will be simple-hearted and confiding.

- 5. In no other spirit but that of a little child are men truly submissive to God's will, as revealed in His word or His providence. This is too obvious to need illustration. Yet all must be thus submissive, else they cannot enter heaven.
- 6. This state of mind is indispensable to peace with God. Unless men are submissive, they are not satisfied with God's ways, and how can He be pleased with theirs?
- 7. It might also be shown most clearly, that such a state of mind is indispensable to mental and spiritual peace. No one can be at rest in his own spirit unless he is simple-hearted, honest, trustful towards God -- in short, unless he has in most decided moral development, those very qualities which in their natural form characterize the little child.
- 8. It scarcely need be added, in conclusion, that the state of mind of which I speak is indispensable to acceptance with God. This is made plain by the entire course of our illustrations.

I must therefore proceed to close with some

REMARKS.

1. This state of mind is always characteristic of young converts. If you see professed converts who have not this spirit, you may be very sure that are not converted. And even great men form no exception to this remark. The greatest men, when converted, are the most childlike. Scores of times have I heard the remark made as if with astonishment -- "Such a great man appears just like a little child." The reason was simply this: he had become truly converted, that is all. That had occurred in his case of which the text speaks: He had been converted and had become as a little child. I once heard a Doctor of Divinity spoken of as a great man--an eminently great man. I happened to know the man, and was therefore able to reply: "if you were to see him, you would find him just like a little child, as simple-hearted and as far removed from anything like vanity or pride. You might feel yourself perfectly at ease in his presence, for he does not put on airs as if he were above his fellow men."

Professed converts sometimes come out as they call it, in a state of great excitement, full of shouting and triumph, but are not humble and childlike. You may be almost sure there is some mistake in such cases. They have not entered by the way described by our Lord: have not been so converted as to become like little children. I once knew of a very proud man, who came into possession of this genuine gospel spirit. A friend of his who had known him in his life of sin saw him afterwards in a prayer meeting: "What! said he, would you believe it possible? I saw that man, once so proud, on his very knees, down in the midst of some of the lowest class of society, just as if he were no better than they! He prayed and they prayed and nobody seemed to think of any difference in rank between them. That man, once so full of aristocratic pride is now among the lowest of men." Mark such cases!

Christianity develops itself very rapidly too in such cases.

2. Selfishness in its moral and proper sense does not appear in very young children. They love their own happiness to be sure: What sentient being does not? But this is not the same thing as selfishness. If you would carefully observe the difference between the self-seeking of very young children, and the self-seeking of those whose moral agency is developed, you would discover it to be very great. The little one loves to be happy, but loves to have others happy also. He is altogether simple-hearted and guileless. But as soon as he gets away from his infantile simplicity, the fruits of sin and of guilty selfishness become apparent. Now he is all guileful. Like Adam and Eve, he hastens to sow up some fig-leaf covering and to hide himself among the trees of the garden from the searching scrutiny of both God and man. He has done something wrong; all wrong things are mean; he knows and feels it keenly; and therefore seeks to hide and cover up. Until this time he had never done anything which he wished to cover up. Now, therefore, his spirit of concealment and guile reveal his sin and selfishness. All full of fraud and treachery, he waxes worse and worse; conscious of wrong doing, and anxious to save appearances, his temptations to deceit and hypocrisy are too great for him to resist.

3. Selfishness is too false to be confiding. The selfish youth knows himself to be unworthy of confidence, and hence, judging others by himself, he does not naturally trust them. With no self-respect, it cannot be natural for him to trust his fellows. Unteachable also, he ought to expect to remain in ignorance. How often it happens that sinners get above becoming religious, simply because they become too self-sufficient and proud of their attainments or talents to understand a thing so simple as the gospel. They get into a state of mind in which they cannot learn the plain and humbling doctrines of the cross, and hence they are prepared for yet deeper self-deception. It would be easy to show that selfishness is the greatest self-deception. The selfish man seems to use his intellect only to deceive himself and to deceive others, his main business being to cover up his own true character and real motives. "A deceived heart hath turned them aside," saith the heart-searching word of the Lord; and nothing can be more true. It does most truly turn men aside from integrity and truth. "Deceiving and being deceived," is another daguerrotype sketch of the selfish man's history. It is but a righteous judgment that he who gives himself up to deceive others should be caught in his own snares, deceiving himself just because there is no simplicity nor honesty in him.

4. If children die in real infancy and before moral agency commences, it is easy to see how naturally they pass into the kingdom of heaven. I am aware that some will be stumbled at such a sentiment, for there are some who maintain that even the very marrow, blood, and bones of the infant are altogether sin. But this is not Jesus Christ's teaching. He most fully recognizes the fact that the earliest developments of the infant mind closely resemble true religion. Hence He says all men must be so changed as to become as little children; else they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Little children live in love and walk by faith; so must all who enter the kingdom of heaven. These are the two great elements of piety. Hence the natural adaptedness of little children, (taken at a period anterior to moral agency, sin and self-righteousness,) to be removed to another state where the discipline needful in order to evolve real piety may be brought into action. If they die before they have violated conscience, how naturally will they go right on in progress towards holiness and perhaps we might say progress in holiness. God takes away their body; no temptation therefore assails them from that quarter. They have the loving-kindness of the Lamb to lead them along and secure them from all spiritual dangers; what then shall hinder their being truly the children of God in their new abode?

Ye who have lost little children think of this. Dwell on what Christ Himself says--"Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Before they have developed the dishonesty and fiendishness of the selfish spirit, they go in all the simplicity and guilelessness of little children into the presence of their Savior. They will not, like Adam and Eve, fly from God; there is no reason why they should. If they were selfish; if they had trampled down their conscience; if they were intent upon covering up their real character, then they would have abundant reason for flying away from Jehovah's presence.

Precious little ones: How will Jesus gather them in His arms! How intently will He pluck the little flowers and transplant them, yet tender and lovely, into His better garden. A sense of guilt they never have had: happy for them that they are never to have it. All suddenly, from the sleep of death they awake into the society and the scenes of heaven. What an atmosphere is this to wake in, from such a state as that of the infant mind on earth!

But let that child become a sinner before its transition from earth to the eternal state-- how changed the scene! Then the qualities of his character become unutterably revolting and shocking. All lustful, proud, impatient, distrustful; not one element of character fit for heaven. O, how dreadful to rush into sin and refuse to obey God! How dreadful to plunge into that gulf of depravity where nothing pure remains, but all is "earthly, sensual, devilish!"

5. Selfish beings are continually progressing into a state more and more offensive to God. As they come to know more of God, they become more intensely and more meanly selfish--more committed to evil, and more fatally opposed to good. Let a young man come here for education, as many have, young in years and not greatly hardened in heart;-- he enters the lower classes, comparatively humble in spirit; for a season he passes along quietly and pleasantly to himself; but by and by he becomes ambitious;--then you may see some of the most detestable features of selfishness developing themselves; and perhaps when the time arrives which is to test his standing and his ambition, you may see him angry, and almost mad, because he is not the first and foremost; almost a devil in spirit, he inwardly frets and rages, and outwardly he will often pour out the venom of his selfish and mortified spirit upon the whole surface of the society in which he moves. I have sometimes had occasion to say that I dreaded the influence of the Senior College Class. Do you ask me why? Because they are so testy, so sensitive and so ambitious. What's the matter? They have been in college till they have grown wiser in science but wickeder in heart!

This reveals one great reason why advanced students are so much less likely to be converted than those who have only just entered. The latter have much more simplicity of character, and are much less affected by that horrible ambition which is the bane and curse of so many students. My dear young men, do you know this? Are you aware that the earliest months of your residence in this school are altogether the most hopeful for your conversion,--and that as you go on farther and farther in your course, the difficulties increase, the temptations to sin multiply, and the probabilities of your conversion are exceedingly diminished! O, how does it become you to understand this, and be wise in time!

6. Just in proportion as persons have the spirit of little children are they hopeful subjects of converting grace. Those periods of life in which this spirit is most prominent are the hopeful seasons. Then is the

time to press home the truth and bring the mind to the full decision. If you can enlighten the minds of children quite early all the better, - no matter how early, for then the obstacles you have to meet are so much less. But if you leave them to go astray from the path of duty; if they begin to violate their consciences and harden their hearts, you will find that each day and each hour augments exceedingly the difficulties in the way of their submission to God.

It is sometimes said by way of objection to the work of grace, that conversions occur most frequently among children and youth, and in this Institution, among the preparatory and not the more advanced students. What is the reason of this fact? Is it because the more advanced in learning and wisdom have found that religion is all a humbug! No, indeed; but because the mind that persists in a course of sin while it is advancing in knowledge, must be dishonest with itself. I appeal to yourselves; what Sabbath passes over you, in which you do not play a dishonest part with yourselves and with divine truth! You hear the truth; you know it is truth; and you know it has claims upon you for your instant obedience to it; and yet you wickedly resist these claims. There is not one of you who, if he had but five minutes to live, would not cry aloud in anguish: "Pray for me, for I am a guilty sinner, on the very verge of hell!" Your cavils would vanish in a breath. I know the hearts of the young men who sometimes cavil against God's truth, for I have talked scores of times with half-fledged infidels. They know that God is holy, and that they are altogether sinful. They know these solemn truths as well as they know that they exist. It is all in vain that they try to deceive themselves or others in these matters. They cannot deceive God; and when the searching hour shall come, they will find that they have not even deceived themselves to any good purpose. They know too much, and the eternal truths of God are too well established to allow them to be at ease in their sin. I have never yet seen the first sinner, who, when about to die, needed any arguments presented to prove to him that religion is a reality--that he had broken God's law, and must repent or be lost. In that solemn hour, they all know these things too well to need any more light or reasoning on the subject.

Remember, therefore, that the reason why young persons; as they grow older and more learned, are more averse to the gospel is, not that they see more clearly the groundlessness of the Christian religion, but the reason is, they are more self-deceptive, are more dishonest, more ambitious and aspiring; that they lose the simplicity of their earlier years, and do not deal honestly with the truth which they positively know. Go to them with a personal appeal to their conscience. Say to any of them--"Are you a sinner?" "Oh, yes, I suppose so." "Do you think it right and reasonable for you to live in rebellion against your Infinite Father?" "By no means." "Will you then repent and submit to God?" "No."

Now, such a mind is altogether dishonest with itself and with acknowledged truth. In the light of their case, let me ask you all, if you do not see good and sufficient reason why Christ should say, as in our text--"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

There is a forceful pertinence and a searching power in this passage, which often develop themselves in a most striking manner in personal experience. I once knew a very proud woman, who occupied a high position in society and who meant to maintain it, but the power of truth began to reach her soul, and she began to tremble before it. She called on me at my room. I began to reason with her, hoping to aid the work which the Spirit had obviously begun. Gradually her pride began to come down. At

length she fell upon her knees for prayer and humiliation before God. In my prayer for her, I was led without any particular forethought, to repeat the words of my present text. She instantly caught these words--they seemed so fitting to her case--and repeated them over after me in a whisper; then, she repeated them again and again and again, each time waxing louder and louder, until her whole soul seemed to be swallowed up in the sentiment--"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." I stopped speaking, looked round upon her,--and oh, what a change had come over her countenance! Her loftiness and pride had all come down; she was indeed a little child. Years afterwards, being in her society, I adverted to this scene. "O," said she, "that sentiment is the glory of religion. How beautiful and fitting! I could see myself the very opposite of this, but I saw how reasonable that I should become like a little child, and I there found how blessed it is to come down and honor God on His lofty throne."

And now, in the name of my Great Master, I say to you, "Come down and take your fitting place as children before your Great Father. Who of you will now come right down to the very spirit of a little child, saying, "I give up forever all my pride and folly, and put my trust forevermore in the name of the Lord my God?"

The Fearful Results of a Spiritual Relapse

Lecture II
June 9, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Matt. 12:43-45: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

The immediate occasion of these words was the manifest and great backsliding of the Jewish people generally after the temporary awakening which was occasioned by the preaching of John the Baptist. It is obvious from the history that the nation had been extensively moved under John's preaching. Great multitudes flocked to hear him--indeed the historian says, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan." Public attention was aroused and a solemn impression made. More still than this, it should be said that their minds had been specially directed to One who should come after him--far greater than himself--indeed the same whom the good men of their nation had long expected as their promised Messiah. Yet when the great Messiah came, the people were unprepared to receive Him. A great change had passed over the spirit of the nation. No

sooner did Christ begin to preach than a strong opposition began to be manifested. There had evidently been a great backsliding. We must suppose that many who had been aroused under John's preaching were now bitterly hostile to Christ's doctrine.

When this fact became apparent, the Savior illustrated its guilt and danger in the language of our text, by a figure taken from the then common occurrence of demoniacal possessions. An unclean spirit has had possession in a man; he goes out; finding no rest elsewhere, he returns, and here finding all things so well prepared for his reception, he is encouraged to get more company;--goes and gets to go with him, seven other spirits more wicked than himself; they all enter in and dwell there, so that the last state of that man is worse than the first. The poor man did not take advantage of the absence of the unclean spirit, and put himself at once in a position in which no such being could ever come near him again, but rather prepared himself the more for their reception. Consequently he soon had enough of them to make his last state worse than his first.

Thus does our Lord illustrate the case of the Jewish nation who had temporarily recovered themselves out of the snare and the power of the devil--had given heed to the words of life spoken by John, but had suddenly and woefully relapsed, rejecting their great Messiah, and now were seven fold more under the power of the devil than ever before.

But theirs was no unusual experience. It happens to all who relapse in like manner, rejecting the truth which they had begun to receive. Hence the text reveals a general principle.

In discussing this principle and bringing out clearly its present application, we must,

- I. Consider what is represented by the departure of the unclean spirit.*
- II. That the state of things consequent on his departure cannot continue long.*
- III. Point out the dangers and results of a spiritual relapse.*

I. The first and great thing represented by the departure of the unclean spirit is, the breaking up of the spell of sin.

Sinners who can live stupidly in sin are spell-bound. Sin has a charm--a power of infatuation over them. They don't see their sins nor at all understand their spiritual condition. They can even say--"I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; but they know not that they are wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked." Poor souls! They do not know the first thing about their true condition as they ought to and need to know it.

But the thing represented by the going out of the unclean spirit is, the breaking up of this spell of self-delusion. The man becomes troubled on account of his sins. He is convicted and begins to bestir himself. Perhaps he sets about some external reformation, taking the greatest pains to make some clean spots on the outside of the cup and platter, yet leaving the inside full of all uncleanness. Pressed by conviction of sin, he comes towards the gate of mercy, yet pauses there and lingers long through indecision. He thinks; he prays some; he waits and deliberates on the very threshold of the kingdom of

heaven. This seems to be precisely the state represented by the case of the man out of whom the unclean spirit has gone. There is a temporary suspension of the reign of evil; and a consequent opening for new relations with the good. The sinner might now have life, and he makes some approximation towards it; perhaps he does all, but the vital thing, viz., to close in finally and fully with the conditions of salvation. He is almost persuaded, does everything else but give his whole heart to God, yet failing of this, nothing is so done as to secure any permanently good results. The Jewish nation had gone so far that they seemed quite prepared to receive their expected Messiah--yet when He came, where were they?

This leads me to consider,

II. The fact that this state of mind, illustrated by the temporary absence of the evil spirit, cannot continue long.

- 1. The Spirit of God is soon grieved away. His convicting work is scarcely ever continued long unless His monitions are heeded and obeyed. With awful emphasis God has declared--"My Spirit shall not always strive with man." When a man resists God's efforts through His Spirit to convict and save his soul, he may expect to be left soon to the bitter folly of his own infatuation.
- 2. Restrained propensities, unless soon subdued by submission to God, will reassert their terrible sway, and if so, will do it with augmented force. They will not brook restraint long, unless grace comes and lends her strong arm for their subjugation. If the man will let Christ come into his breast and barricade his soul all around about to fortify him against all temptation, and withal, to become a fountain of strength within, then restrained propensities are brought under and victory is both sure and permanent. But not otherwise. It is all in vain for a convicted sinner to suppose that without divine help, he can keep his propensities long under such restraint as conscience and reason dictate.
- 3. The conscience soon becomes seared. It is found to be less and less active--less quick and less vigorous in its rebukes. He who has one day found its fangs almost intolerable, finds ere long that its voice is almost entirely silent. This result of resisting truth is a law of mind. It must take place where conscience is unheeded and truth, seen, is disregarded. How often do we see this terrible law of mind exemplified!

But I must hasten to speak,

III. Of the dangers and results of a spiritual relapse.

Of its dangers how can we say less than that it is infinitely fraught with danger, of the worst kind. The worst forms of evil are sure to follow. Seven other spirits more wicked than the first are sure to enter in, and what is more, they go in to dwell there, little expecting to be ever ousted from their secure abode.

The sinner's dangers will be as numerous as his temptations, for probably each temptation will now get the mastery over him.

After the action of the mind in its convicted state, there naturally comes on a reaction, and this is generally fatal. When persons, having been partially reclaimed, have relapsed into any particular vice, there is small reason to hope they will come up again. How often has this been seen in the progress of the Temperance Reform? Thousands have been caught hold of by the strong arm of affection and lifted up to the edge of the awful quagmire; but unless they have themselves caught hold of the arm of Jehovah's strength, they have in many, many cases slipped from their treacherous footing and slumped back in to that awful Slough of Death--A Drunkard's Relapse. You have seen such things. They are developments of a general law of mind. Unless the effort of reform is backed up by grace, reaction will certainly ensue and its power will be terrible. Let the dykes once begin to give way and the current set across the breach--all is over. Relapse bursts these flood gates of death. The power of the mind to resist temptation seems to be broke down. The mind seems to have given itself up to be overcome, and the genius of evil is not slow to seize his opportunity of making his victim sure. Nor is there an encouraging hope of deliverance. The mind has once met the question--Shall I give myself wholly up to God and take hold of promised grace to subdue all future sin? It met this question, but failed to decide it right. It is henceforth averse to meeting the question again. A sense of shame perhaps forbids. A feeling of self-respect rises up and seems to demand that a position once taken shall be maintained. The mind is irked and vexed with the perpetual recurrence of an unwelcome question, once set at rest. Hence there is small reason to hope that the mind will return to the subject and make a right decision, and thus secure the deliverance needed and provided.

All these influences combine to put the relapsed soul on an inclined plane, down which it glides smoothly and swiftly to the gulf of ruin. The house does not stand long, waiting to be filled; soon a seven-fold evil comes in, and comes to dwell there.

The case as given by our Lord illustrates a great principle. If the Jewish nation falls back from the moral elevation gained under John's preaching, temptations rush in again with their augmented returning waves, and the fearful crisis of its moral ruin hastens on apace. The individual soul that gives way again to temptation after a partial rescue has less power to resist than before; the mind becomes chafed and restive, or perhaps discouraged; it hates restraint more then ever, and sometimes seems to come all suddenly to the decision--"I will not be restrained any longer."

REMARKS.

1. Everyone acquainted with the history of the Jews knows how aptly this illustration meets their case. Who ever has read Josephus' history of the Jewish Wars, and of the ensuing destruction of their beloved city, will recognize at once the moral features of the likeness drawn by Christ in our text. The nation perished because it was too awfully wicked to live any longer. Who that has read of their awful corruption does not see the seven other wicked devils in undisputed possession, and the last state of the nation worse than the first--ah! with a vengeance! Retribution came, as it always must when the cup of iniquity is full, and none who saw it as it measured out its terrible judgments upon the doomed city and people could forbear to cry out--"Verily, the anger of their God is heavy upon them and there is no remedy!" When they pressed into Pilate's court and cried--"Let Him be crucified."--they recklessly braved if indeed they did not invoke the vengeance of Jehovah--"His blood," they say, "be on us and on our children!" How terribly did it fall on them ere long!

2. The same principle applies substantially to every reformation that has ever occurred. It has come with its hands full of blessings which some have received, and have found good, even to the extent of everlasting life; but others, rejecting these blessings, have become indefinitely worse. Their becoming worse is no fault of the gospel itself, but is altogether their own. It is no more the fault of the gospel now than it was in Christ's own age and under His preaching. Then as now, some rejected the counsel of God against their own souls, and as a consequence what came from God to bless them they turned into a terrible curse and cursed themselves with it for eternity.

Thus seasons of reformation in every age of the world are set for the fall and for the uprising of many in Israel--for the fall of many never to rise again; and for the uprising of many to life and blessedness eternal. The reformations are themselves faultless and may be conducted unexceptionably: but he who repels their influence will soon find his soul beyond the reach of good in this or any other world. There can be no good to those who scorn God's means of conferring it. How rapidly they go down to moral destruction when once by resisting truth they have lost the bottom of their minds, so that henceforth they hear truth only as a tub without a bottom holds water!

3. The passage before us and the principle it illustrates should be compared with that fearful declaration of God which speaks of those that "perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved," and of whom He says--"for this cause God shall send upon them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not all the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Discarding and hating the truth which God reveals in love to their souls, they were suffered to embrace errors more and more destructive. They chose darkness rather than light; what therefore could a God of light and truth do for them more? What else should He do but make them beacons to warn other sinners against the rocks on which they made shipwreck of their moral natures and hence of their eternal well-being? Time was in their case when the evil spirit went out of them also, but they utterly failed to improve their opportunity for God; the spirit came back, found all things to his mind; took seven spirits indefinitely worse; they all take up their abode in that sinner's heart; then follow infatuation and swift damnation.

4. We see the danger incurred by churches and families, if they fail to "know the day of their visitation."

The fearful woes which fell on the Jewish nation came on them, said their offered Savior, "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." They had a visitation of mercy; God came near as He could to bless them; but the mass saw not, or at least heeded not His coming; practically they "knew not the day of their visitation." They ought to have known it. It was more their fault than their misfortune that they failed to know it.

So of churches and families in our day, to whom God comes graciously near but who fail to notice His presence, or are not quite ready to greet His coming, until He is gone! Alas! How many such cases occur both in churches and in families! They see not their hour of mercy till it has past. They are not in the secret counsels of the Most High--do not abide so near the Lord as to know His near approach. A few individuals may have such communion with God as to feel His special presence; but their testimony may be wholly unknown, and if known, may be unheeded by their brethren. Many such

churches have I seen, which seemed in many respects just on the eve of being blessed with great power; but the cloud of mercy broke and passed off with only a great wind; Satan came back and with him legions of evil spirits, and their last state was seven-fold worse than their first.

5. From this point of our subject, we can see the great guilt of those who "come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty," until the strength of the few who are in the battlefield is spent. In all cases where the Lord comes near to bless a people, many laborers are needed to co-operate in His work. If they are not on hand, the work flags, and soon the Spirit of God is withdrawn. This is the more certainly the case if the lack of laborers is the fault of God's professing people. If it should occur without their fault, the fact would not offend God and would not be necessarily a reason for the sudden withdrawal of His Spirit.

But as the cases commonly occur, the lack of laborers is wholly attributable to the spiritual apathy of professed Christians. All appearances indicate that God is about to work mightily through and by His people; a few observe these tokens and enter with all their strength upon the work of the Lord; but the many are not ready for the sacrifice and effort called by the tokens of Jehovah's presence; they do not come up to the help of the Lord against His mighty foes. The angel of the Lord sends down His curse upon them. "Curse them bitterly," says He, because in the hour of need they would not help in the work of the Lord!. God called, but they came not. The crisis came, and the crisis went: they moved not: now therefore the wrath of the Lord waxes hot against them for their fearful disobedience to Heaven's high command.

6. Reaction is disastrous in proportion to the extent of the partial reformation. It was obviously so in the case of John's preaching. Those who learned from him most fully the way of salvation and who when Jesus came rejected Him were most deeply guilty and most awfully cursed by the returning power of other unclean spirits.

We who are parents may see what you have to expect if you allow this spiritual relapse to come upon your children. Perhaps you will not realize their danger and will fail to press them to the final and full decision for Christ until the precious season is past: until the unclean spirit returns and legions more, yet worse, come in and dwell there. Depend upon it, you will find the illustration given in our text but too fearfully true. Just in proportion to the light sinned against and to the nearness with which the kingdom of heaven is brought to their hearts, will be the terribleness of their relapse and the uncertainty of their being ever again brought even so much as near to Christ's kingdom. O how fearful a thing for a Christian parent to suffer a child to slip past the sealing time, and go on his broad and easy way towards remediless woe. How carefully should they watch the hour when the unclean spirit is gone out, and bar the door forever against his return! For, once returned and admitted--once reinforced with the presence of seven other more wicked spirits, the state of one who is even a child of praying parents becomes fearfully perilous. Let parents think much of their responsibility to seize now the favoring moment. Never wait till sin gets entrenched in the heart. Take care against even one relapse from a convicted state into unconcern and stupidity. You can scarcely conceive how terribly one such relapse augments the difficulties in the way of sound conversion ever afterwards.

7. The relapse is usually more or less sudden, always more or less obvious and apparent, according to the tone of general influence which prevails in the place. For under a strong moral influence, the most

hardened sinners are often kept morally decent for a long time. But go into a place where sin takes to itself free scope and ranges at will; there you will see the legitimate workings of a spiritual relapse. There you will see how terrible is the tendency of sin to drag its victim downward, downward, to the very depths of hell. You can there mark the fearful reaction which follows deliberate rejection of offered mercy, especially if done despite of the powerful action of divine influence, seeking to persuade the sinner to repent. If you have never seen these developments in so strong a light as I have represented them, you need only go where external restraint is chiefly or wholly withdrawn, and you will surely see it, and will say the half had never been told you.

8. How terrible, therefore, must be the moral state of those who profess to be religious, but who yet have relapsed entirely in heart and are only kept in moral decency by the force of involuntary habits or that of public sentiment. How appalling is their danger! Every physician knows what a relapse is in his patient; he has seen them till he has reason to dread them as his most dangerous adversaries. He thought the crisis of danger was nearly past--all seemed to be doing well; hope had sprung up in his bosom and become almost settled into assurance, when suddenly the awful fact of relapse--flashes upon his eye! Ah, now there is peril! Now let medical skill do its utmost; there is scant hope at the very best. There is scarce a more fearful event in the whole range of medical practice than this of relapse. The system has perhaps rallied itself to its utmost strength to throw off disease and it seemed about to conquer; but now, its powers exhausted, its enemy charges again as with fresh forces and the conflict if not fatal is at least terrible.

Not less so is the conflict between the seven-fold forces of sin and the retreating and half-crushed moral energies that remain after a spiritual relapse. Alas, how many have found the conflict short and feeble, and the issue forever fatal. My dear hearers, it is a fearful thing to suffer a deep moral relapse. Woe to those upon whose backsliding souls it shall fall!

What then will you do? What will you do today? Are you aware of the state of things among yourselves, of the degree in which the Spirit's power is manifested here even among you? If you were fully so, you must see that this is no time for spiritual trifling. You would see a stronger emphasis than ever you have seen before in the language--"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." From many of you the unclean spirit has gone out, and in the deep calm which ensues, you might with hopeful ease, escape the snares of Satan and place yourselves under the shadow of the Savior's wing; will you do it? If still you are tempted to linger,--I say unto you, beware of those seven other spirits, more wicked than the first, for they need only this very lingering of yours to be their signal for returning with more awful power to take such a possession of your soul as your efforts, thenceforward faint and feeble, will never avail to disturb.

God's Love to Sinners as Seen in the Gospel

Lecture III
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by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The subject of this great love is God. It is no other than God who is here said to have so loved this world. Hence God is not a mere intellect, but is a being capable of loving.

This declaration about God's love is not a mere figure of speech accommodated to our apprehension, and hence perhaps not meaning nearly so much as it seems to mean. No, this is no accommodating figure, but a statement of fact,--of fact substantiated by what God has actually done. God loved so much that He gave up His only Son--for sinners. Hence we know that God really loves, and as much more intensely than any creature as He is greater than any.

Who is the object of this love? God we have seen is the lover: but who can be the object loved? The great God loves somebody!--Who is it? Who is the favored object of Jehovah's love? Whom is He here declared to love?

Sinners are apt to think that God is an infinite abstraction, infinitely above themselves, and quite indifferent as to their welfare: but this text declares that God has most surely and most intensely loved this world. This world it says, meaning not this globe--not this round ball of solid matter, but its people--the living, intelligent, moral, yet sinning race that live and have their being here.

But we must look at the nature of this love. What sort of love is it?

Now we know that sinners hate God: and yet here we are told that God loves them. We must therefore ask--With what kind of love? For on this point it is of the utmost importance to make the proper discriminations, lest we should be led to suppose that God's love to sinners is mere good nature--a soft and spontaneous feeling which has no regard to character. It should be well understood that God's love towards sinners is no such thing as this.

God's love to sinners is not a love of complacency, for this form of love fastens upon the character. It is simply delight in character; and who does not know that in regard to their character, God can have no delight in sinners? Their characters are altogether loathsome to Him. Hence God's love for sinners cannot be a love of their characters; and can be only a love of them as sentient beings capable of happiness and misery--i.e. a sincere regard and an earnest desire for their well-being. Parents sometimes have very bad children, and yet they love them, bad though they be. They love them in the sense of desiring their welfare and delighting to do them good. The prodigal son was greatly beloved, although by no means lovely in character. Many a son of such a character has been the object of yearning affection on the part of his parents. They have cheerfully suffered anything that human nature could bear, in order to promote the real welfare of their wayward son. Of this we have a most striking illustration in the case of David and Absalom. Absalom had artfully and maliciously seized his father's throne, dishonored his father's bed, and sought his father's life, yet when David marshaled

his little band of yet faithful men to take the field against this base usurper, his heart yearned over the base monster and he besought his generals, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." And when the unnatural son was brought back a corpse, his grief was inconsolable. He refused to be comforted. So strong were his expressions of sorrow and grief that Joab was afraid of its influence upon his army, and solemnly rebuked his king for giving indulgence to such feelings in such an emergency. "Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants who have this day saved thy life, in that thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends, for thou hast declared this day that thou regardest neither princes nor servants; for this day I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well."

To this rebuke David could only answer--I have only given scope to the outbursting of a father's heart. And indeed it was only the deep yearnings of a pious father's heart that sought expression in such words and groans, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" An ungodly son dies in his sins, and a pious father bemoans his awful death in such language as this! We rarely find anything in history that so forcibly illustrates God's love to sinners as does this lamination of David over Absalom. Under the influence of his strong affection, David seemed almost to overlook the public danger, for when his army went out to battle and the issue was still in dark suspense, he bade his officers deal gently for his sake with the young man Absalom. Now God does not and cannot overlook the public danger, through His great love for sinners, and yet He ventures to pardon and forgive under circumstances which may look as if He did. O how truly is Jehovah's love for sinners the love of a father towards a wayward son! Many suppose that such language as this in our text has no meaning. Oh, how little they understand the facts of the case! It has a meaning deep and sincere, and is no figure of speech by any means. When in language so like that of David, the most High God cries out--"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." We cannot but see the honest heart-yearnings of one who loves the race and who is moved to the very depths of his great heart by the pressure of a stern necessity to inflict punishment. See the heart of a father standing out in the tears and compassionate tones of the king! He would not suffer one hair to fall from the head of his guilty son if he could wisely, safely, spare him; He longs to save your forfeited life; and when in the very act of rebellion you fall and He is obliged to drive the chariot-wheels of His government over your prostrate body, he mournfully laments your fall!

Again, this love reaches every individual member of the race. The declaration can mean nothing less than that God loves every human being--all without any exception. What a thought is this! And how difficult for sinner to persuade themselves of its truth--especially of its absolute truth in reference to themselves in particular. Did you ever try to realize this? Did you ever ask yourself--is it indeed true that the great God has a deep personal regard for my happiness, like that which an earthly father has towards his son? Can I believe that His love for me is so great that He finds His happiness even in heaven in unwearied concern to secure my personal salvation? Such is the fact.

The great difficulty with sinners is that their unbelief as to God is so great that this conception does not get into their minds at all. Yet is it none the less true, and is a truth that sinners greatly need to understand and take home to their hearts.

Again, this love of God to sinners is a patient love--patient even to the extent of long-suffering--

long-enduring the most grievous provocations. If any of you, now living in your sins, had any just sense of your sin against God, and of your great provocations of His wrath, you would cry out, "How can it be possible for God to have any tender regard for me? How can He but think of me only as an enemy of His, to be crushed before Him as a guilty rebel!"

You speak sometimes of the forbearance of parents towards wayward, vicious children, but how far does this fall short of God's forbearance towards sinners! Suppose you are a wicked child towards your parents, so wicked that you have never obeyed them in a single instance. You have always done as bad as you could--have invariably pursued a course of persecution, opposition, and utter hostility: if such had been your course and character, would you expect forbearance from human parents? Oh no, none but God can be expected to have forbearance equal to such an emergency.

I beg you to look at this case fairly. Suppose a young lady were to enter this school, and it should be truly said of her when she came that she had always been a trial and a torment to her parents--had never been known to obey them or to do anything to please them, what would you say of her? What would you think of her? If you learned that notwithstanding all her parents had still forbore and loved and sought only her best good, would you not admire their spirit as something more than human? But the daughter or the son that has so abused his parents you would feel was not fit to live. Your spontaneous indignation would cry aloud--Let him be spewed out from all human society! There is no fit place for such a wretch beneath the light of the sun!

Now, sinners, I entreat you to apply this honestly to yourselves. You have done nothing else since you had a being, but oppose God! You have not yet done the first thing, however small, from a sincere desire to please Him! You know that's the truth! And yet God holds you up in existence--holds you up from dropping into hell! He represents Himself as holding your feet from sliding, as they stand on the slippery places of the sinner's pathway. Ah, how long He has done this very thing! You have regularly abused all the manifestations of His love, and trampled under foot all His commandments. God says, "all this hast thou done, and I kept silence." But though silent, He has not forgotten. Yet love will wait in its long-suffering patience till it can wait no longer.

Mark also the lowliness of this love. See how low it stoops. Of the great Impersonation of this love it was said, "He took on Him the form of a servant, and made Himself of no reputation." He was meek and lowly of heart. Such was the condescension of the Son of God! Scarcely if at all less was the condescension of the Infinite Father. Think at how great expense He provided the means of your salvation. Think of the self-denial to which He submitted. Do you ask--what did He do? Gave up to death His only Son. Gave Him, freely, not for money but for love. When Abraham called of God, went forth to offer up Isaac, and when he had freely shown his purpose of heart to obey God and trust Him if need be to raise up his slaughtered son from the dead, God said to him, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, therefore have I sworn by myself that I will greatly bless thee, and will greatly multiply thy seed, even as the stars of heaven." It was a strong point in Abraham's case that he did not withhold his only son. So also, God did not spare His only Son, but freely gave Him up for an offering. In the case of Abraham, he only brought his only son to the altar and drew his knife--there God's angel caught his arm and pointed out a ram for the real offering. But when God gave up His only Son, the demands of justice against the sinner took their course upon his substitute, and the innocent victim was brought to the slaughter. Nailed to the cross,

He bled, agonized, languished and died! Was ever love like that?

Again, this was love towards enemies--towards those whose carnal mind was enmity against God. This circumstance "commends the love of God towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

This feature in the state of the divine mind is not easily conceived by minds as selfish as ours. Even the best of men are hardly an exception to this remark. How often do you hear them pray that God would bless all their friends. Now in some respects it is quite proper that we should pray for our friends, but we should pray not less for our enemies. Christ prayed for His friends, but so He did for His enemies also. If we were in the practice of praying with all our heart, for our worst enemies, we could better understand how Christ should die for His enemies.

Many sinners say, "O, if we were truly converted, God would love us." True; He would then love you with the love of complacency. Now He loves you with the love of compassion. Yet even this you scarcely realize at all. You find it very hard to conceive how God should put His Son in the hands of wicked men, and let them murder Him, in order that the murderers might be saved! O surely He would convince you if He could, that in His deepest affection He loves you! He would make this impression so strong on your heart, that even when you come to see your great sin, you will still hold on to the strange truth that God has so loved your soul as to give up the life of His Son for its salvation.

Yet again, this love of God for sinners is a spontaneous love. It was self-moved. None of the race of lost men asked for it. God did not find the world on its bended knees in imploring supplication, but on the contrary, found them all in rebellion--rebellion strong and stern, fiercely struggling to get quite away from God's authority. Yet even so, His love gushed forth towards them in infinite compassion.

This was also a persevering love. It was not a love which after a few abortive efforts falls back and gives over the struggle to save. It was not like the love of some Christians for the impenitent, who after a few prayers and efforts, give up the endeavor, especially if they meet with opposition. But God's love for the lost in sin is a persevering love, not easily exhausted--a love that many waters cannot quench nor floods drown. O how well for the sinner that it is all this!

It is also a holy love. If it had been otherwise, it might have sought to save by means that would have put in jeopardy the interests of His government. It was a critical and difficult undertaking--this effort to rescue the sinner over whom the violated law was posing its thunderbolts. By some means, the demands of Law must be satisfied and yet the sinner be spared; but it must be in such a way as will make an impression of the awful guilt of sin--of its great wickedness, and especially of the purity and holiness of the great Magistrate of the universe. It will by no means answer to do anything that shall misrepresent His character. On this point there will be the greatest danger when He comes to set aside the execution of His law, and throw the doors of mercy wide open, and invite every sinner to come forward and enter in. But all this danger has been guarded against most fully in the sacrifice of His glorious Son. It was a love blended with holiness and purity that took these precautions. The necessity was felt of making some demonstrations, which all beings in heaven, earth and hell should see. God must write it out in such characters as all can read--engrave it as it were on the everlasting rocks, so

that through all coming ages, every mind in the universe may have the demonstration all present to its view, showing how much God hated sin, and how sacred He holds His holy law. He made this impression when He gave up His Son to die in the sinner's stead. There, too, He demonstrated the purity of His love for the sinner. He showed that it was not mere good nature that would save sinners any how, and cared not for the consequences to the stability of His kingdom. There He made the truth stand out in strong and bold relief, that He loved His kingdom not the less because He loved the lost sinner. The welfare of the holy, of the yet unfallen, must not be put in jeopardy in order to save the guilty.

God's love for sinners is also a wakeful, solicitous love. It pities its objects, and sets the heart most intently on blessing those it loves. You may have seen Christians in revivals, after their hearts had been brought into deep sympathy with Christ for souls. You observed how wakeful, how anxious, how burdened their hearts were. Perhaps they could scarcely eat or sleep through their great solicitude for the salvation of souls. What made Jesus Christ spend whole nights in prayer? Ah, He was sent to redeem a lost world, and the burden of souls lay heavy on His heart. It was but plain language without a figure when His disciples applied to Him the passage, "The zeal of my house hath eaten me up." A zeal for God had thrown upon His heart such a burden of care and solicitude as wasted His mortal frame away. The prophet foresaw this when in a vision he said of Him--"his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." How strange his aspect!

Old age sat on His faded brow ere he had scarce reached thirty. An old man in His very youth--for the "zeal of God's house had eaten Him up." O the depth of His compassions for the lost whom He came to save! Hear what He says: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" O that baptism of suffering which for months and years hung heavily on His heart in the solicitude of anticipation; and yet love falters not.

Do you understand this? Do you know from any similar experience of your own what this state of mind is? The fact is, those who have never entered into sympathy with this deep benevolent solicitude for poor lost souls cannot understand the love of God for sinners. To all but those who have had some experience it is a dark and unknown state of mind. But when you come into sympathy with God in this thing, when you pour out your life and soul for sinners, then you begin to have some just conceptions of what the state is and then you can begin to understand the nature of God's great love for sinners.

This love moreover is fully of pity. Under its deep emotions, God is represented as being greatly moved. Hear Him break out in the depth of His feelings--"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." My feeling was stirred up by his provoking sins and I spake against him that I would soon cut him down; but presently parental affection rises up--a father's heart earnestly remembers him still. Such is the pity of God for sinners. If God had not such pity as this, how could we account for His conduct in sparing sinners so long? How could we explain it that He has not long since hurled every sinner down to hell?

But I must pass to notice the end sought in this scheme of love. God gave His Son to the end that "whosoever would believe on Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life."

It seems to me passing strange that Mr. Storrs and those who hold with him, should seize upon such expressions as this and make them teach the annihilation of the wicked. They hold, as perhaps you know, that "perishing" means annihilation, and hence that the end to be secured by Christ's death is no other than to save sinners from annihilation and give them an immortal existence. I find by conversation with them that they are led to this belief by their notions of literal sense. They hold that all the language of the Bible must be construed literally, and that the literal sense of the word--perish--is annihilation. But in both these views they are entirely mistaken. Not to dwell at present upon the former, let us consider for a moment the latter. The literal sense of the word perish, is not annihilation. When matter is said to perish, it only changes its form and mode of existence; it is not annihilated. Indeed matter so far as we can see knows nothing of annihilation. So that Mr. Storrs fails utterly in applying his doctrine of literal sense, even if the doctrine itself were true. Besides, perishing is here put in contrast with everlasting life. But this everlasting life is not a mere existence, prolonged forever--by no means;--it is eternal fruition--everlasting blessedness; and hence its opposite must be everlasting misery.

Moreover, if annihilating the wicked would have answered all the purposes of penalty for the transgression of law, and all things considered, God had seen it wise to punish sinners in this way, He could have done it in a moment, and could have created another world of holy beings with only saying--Let it be! All would have been easy and soon done. But we cannot see any good reason why it should be needful for Christ to die on the cross, solely for the purpose of saving sinners from the doom of annihilation.

Hence we see that the object of Christ's death for sinners is to bring them back into fellowship and harmony with God and holiness--to make them obedient sons again in His great family.

The means of effecting this change in the moral attitude of sinners towards their great and good Father are especially the full revelations which God makes of Himself before the very eyes of men through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Christ came in mortal flesh to live, to labor, to speak and act among men as a man, that He might reveal the true character of God to our race. Hence Christ is called the Word of God, because He reveals God to us, as words reveal thought from mind to mind. This is not the only object of Christ's incarnation, but it is one object and a great one.

Let it then be understood that Christ came in human flesh to reveal before our eyes the great love of God, and to make us understand indeed all the great moral attributes of God. He gave His only Son to come among men and live among them as a neighbor. Some of you are mechanics; Christ wrought among his neighbors as a mechanic, to teach men what a mechanic should be. He wrought as a son during His minority, to teach what a dutiful son should be. Then He appeared in public life, showing what men should be in this relation. In all these respects He sought to unfold His true character, so that as a model and more particularly as an exemplification of the true God, He might make His abode among men of the utmost possible service. It was one of the great objects of the incarnation to reveal God so that men should renew their confidence in Him. Sin brought with itself doubt and unbelief respecting God, and this doubt and unbelief must be counteracted before the sinner can be saved. Men whose hearts indulge enmity always try to vindicate and justify their enmity by believing evil of the party hated. Enmity, no matter how causeless and wrong, leads to suspicion and slander. The mind,

troubled with the consciousness of wrong-doing, seeks relief by self-justification, and to gain this relief, is compelled to think and believe evil of those it has unjustly wronged. In precisely this relation do mankind stand towards God. They are enemies for no reason whatever and are thus thrown upon the necessity of some means for impeaching the King they causelessly hate. Hence the need of making such revelations of God to man as shall melt his hard heart under the manifestations of divine love.

As another great means of accomplishing the end in view, Christ must needs atone for sin, so that it can be freely forgiven. This He did most effectually. In Christ both parties in this great controversy are represented. Human nature was there and also the divine. God in human flesh met all the exigencies of the case and satisfied every demand of the emergency.

On our part faith is the great condition of being saved. The longer I live, the more clearly I see that faith refers especially to the divinity of Christ, embracing practically His power to save and fully admitting that the case is one for which no power short of divine is adequate. "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" Do you believe that I can raise your dead, heal your sick, cast out your devils, remit your sins? Do you believe all this? Then if so, cast yourself on My power to save. The substance of faith then is this--believing in Christ as the true God, and confiding in Him as such. Faith confides in Him as to all He professes to be and to do. It is presupposed that the mind apprehends the nature and design of God's love, and then faith receives this as truth, believing that in very deed Jesus Christ loved me, gave Himself for me, died for me that I might not die but live. Thus each believing soul for itself meets God in Jesus Christ and yields itself up to God in reliance upon His promises. A full, unreserved submission seems none too much. With all the heart, the man commits himself to Christ to be used, and governed--to be sanctified and to be saved.

Many treat Christ as if He were a hypocrite. I do not mean that they say so, but in their heart they think so, and what they think determines their treatment of Him. They really feel as if they could put no confidence in His professions of friendship.

Let me put this point to test with you. Have you ever realized that Christ came to save YOU, as truly as if you were the only sinner in the universe? Have you met Him in this relation, as if you understood that He actually came to save you, yourself alone! But this is the true idea of faith. It believes Christ's word of promise and of proffered mercy as applying to your own individual soul.

Faith implies a full renunciation of selfishness. Such renunciation is fully involved in the idea of self-committal to God.

Another element of faith should command our particular regard. It not only believes the history of the past respecting Christ, but also embraces especially all that it finds revealed of His present and future relations. Sinners often believe the past without believing unto salvation, for they do not believe the present and the future. They say--No doubt Christ once lived and ultimately died, but all this took place a great many years ago and a great way off. After His resurrection, He went to heaven--and there the scope of their faith comes to an end. There is nothing fresh and new in it--nothing that touches the great interest of the soul in its own salvation. It is taken up and thought of as any other fragment of ancient history.

But real faith comes nearer home--much nearer. It takes hold of a present Christ--a Savior living now--yea, ever living at God's right hand and ever making intercession there. Did you ever realize that you have been kept out of hell thus long by Christ's intercession? He Himself has illustrated the case in the parable of the barren fig tree. Spare the sinner, he cries; don't cut him down yet; save him, let Me bring him once more into the house of God and under the sound of the gospel; it may be he will repent; if not--if every hopeful effort fails, then let him be cut down, but not before. Then let none of you sinners suppose that Christ has lost His interest in you; far from it. He still prays for you, and still holds you up from sinking into hell. You lay down on your bed last night and slept sweetly; yet the only reason you did not sink down quick into hell, was, not that you prayed but that Christ prayed. Jesus Christ, when your heart was all prayerless, lifted up His voice in your behalf and cried, oh, spare him yet once more--I will carry him up to the house of God again; if this fails, then cut him down!

Once more only,--true faith not only expects forgiveness for all the past, but grace for all the future. Its trustful voice says--"His grace shall be sufficient for me as He has said."

REMARKS.

1. Faith is a natural condition of your salvation. By this I mean that it is in the very nature of the case an indispensable condition. If you will not credit what Christ says of Himself and of the offers of salvation, all else that you may do is of not the least avail. So says our text. God gave up His Son, not to save all men unconditionally--not to save the rich, not the titled, not the learned, as such; not to save the externally moral, or the socially amiable, as such; but to save just all those and none others but those who should believe on Him. Of course this settles the question and shows conclusively who will and who will not be saved by Jesus Christ.

2. Your selfishness is that which makes it so difficult for you to conceive aright of these things. You never loved your enemies: you never make any sacrifice of your own ease or pleasure for their good--but God does. Hence you find it difficult if not impossible to understand God's benevolence--it is so unlike your own selfishness.

Christ prays for you--has done and still does--and yet you are cruelly slow to believe it. But consider how He beheld Jerusalem and wept over it. He had been among them and knew their malignity towards Himself. He saw the whole city becoming deeply excited--sharpening their weapons to slay Him; yet now as He was coming in for the last time--in the nearest view of the final catastrophe, His heart was deeply moved with pity and compassion. He well knew how much they hated Him and yet He cried out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem; thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen does her brood under her wings--but ye would not." Another Evangelist says--"He beheld the city and wept over it." He seemed to forget their awful wickedness as if it had never been.

But how can you realize such a state of mind as His? Your selfishness is so great and so controlling that you never have any such feelings yourself towards your enemies. And when you are called on to relinquish your enmity and selfishness, you plead that you can't do it. Hence you are sadly crippled in respect to meeting the condition of faith intelligently. Just as it is one of the most difficult things in the

world to make a great liar believe your word however trustworthy, or just, as you cannot persuade a great scoundrel or knave into the course of duty. They don't understand the proper force of the motives you present, and more than all, they do not love to admit sound moral truth home to their heart and conscience. So a thief always suspects others of theft. And on the same principle it becomes sternly difficult for a wicked man to have confidence in God's sincerity and goodness. He may admit it in theory, but still he doesn't believe it and bring it home to his own bosom as a reality.

Now look at the case. See what God has done to provide for your salvation, and also see how much He has said and done to lead you to believe it--but alas, your heart is still heavy as lead with unbelief! What more can God do to make you realize it? O tell me, what more? Sinners will stand and look on the cross itself, and still say--"I cannot realize that this is all compassion for me--I cannot believe that all this came of love for my soul." How then can God persuade you to believe in His loving-kindness?

3. Faith in Christ will give you peace. Of this you need not and methinks you cannot have the least doubt. Are you then willing to receive the intelligence, that God gave His Son for you as individuals? So His own word declares. "God, having raised up His Son, Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Therefore make no delay. Rouse up all the energies of your soul to this work--at once.

4. Sinners are not apt to distinguish between Christ given and Christ received. Christ given is one thing; Christ received is quite another. God has in great love given the donation: have you accepted it? It avails you nothing until you do. Believing on Him is accepting Him as given. Of a long time you have known that the offer of Jesus as your Savior has been made you. Have you cared anything about it? Have you had one feeling of gratitude to express to God for His unspeakable gift? Have you ever uttered one word of gratitude? Have you ever come before God with the first note of thanksgiving? How does your ingratitude look even in your own eyes? And if you are ashamed of it yourself, how must you suppose it appears in the eyes of your Savior?

Suppose Jesus Christ were to come into this house while you are sitting here. You know by the halo of glory about His head that it can be none other than the Lord of glory whom you have so long rejected. He shows you the prints of the nails in His hands and feet--the wound of the spear in His side, and coming near where you sit, He asks you with a look of tenderest compassion,--Is all this nothing to you? Do you know who I am? Yes, Do you know what I want of you? Yes. Am I worthy of your confidence? I suppose so. Then, will you give yourself up to Me, trusting My word and grace to save you and devoting yourself heartily to My cause? O, you answer, I don't feel enough. But He replies, I have come to save you. This matter has been debated long enough, and it is time you should tell Me honestly what your final decision is. We must conclude this matter now, and whatever your decision may be, I shall write it down and put the judgment seal upon it. And now, under these circumstances, what will you do? Will you say--Go Thy way for this time? But if I do for this time, I return no more to bless you. I shall pray for you no more. All your day and scope for mercy will pass away. You know I have dealt in all honesty with you to save your soul if I can. I have sought to show you your enmity of heart against Me, and have implored you to put it all away and give Me your heart--will you do it even now, though it be your eleventh hour of mercy?

Sinner, do you understand this appeal? Doubtless you do. Christ is trying to win you--He would fain

persuade you to save your soul. Will you be persuaded? Will you decide the momentous question this hour? If you knew that your present decision would be final, how would you make it? Let me tell you, it MAY be final;--therefore take care what you do! "There is a point beyond which forbearance is no virtue"--beyond which even God cannot forbear, for virtue forbids it. Remember that this is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and if you sin willfully against Him, He may never forgive you. But do you say--The Holy Ghost is not now with me. Beware what you say! Has not some influence, other than your own mind, convinced you of sin? Must you not admit that by some means, you have seen your sins as you have rarely done before, and have been pressed to come to Christ for pardon? Then now is your time. You ought to consider that this may be your last time. Why then will you not cry out--O Jesus, take my heart; O take it wholly, and seal it Thine forevermore!

All Things for Good to Those That Love God-- and All Things Conspire for Evil to The Sinner- No.'s 1 & 2

Lecture IV & V

July 7, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

You will observe that the apostle speaks with all confidence. He does not say--we expect, or we believe or we conjecture that all will be well for God's friends,--but he says--we know. There is no doubt about it.

Let us then,

I. Inquire, what does his language mean?

II. Show how the result of good to all that love God is secured.

III. Notice some particulars as illustrations of the general truth.

IV. Show how we know it to be true.

I. What is the apostle's meaning?

Here the great question is--Shall his language be interpreted as strictly universal?

In terms, he announces a universal proposition. All things, he declares, work together for good to those that love God. But does he mean to affirm a proposition strictly universal?

Not all universal language should be taken in a strictly universal sense. In the scriptures we not infrequently find it necessary to modify universal language. There may be things in the text or context which forbid the universal sense; or there may be declarations in other parts of the Bible which preclude it, or the nature of the case may render the universal sense either violently improbable, or perhaps absurd, and hence may demand some modification. It should be remembered that the language of the Bible is the language of common life, and everybody knows that in the language of common life we often affirm in the form of universal proposition when we really mean something much short of this. For example, it is common to say of a well known fact--"Everybody says so"--but our "everybody" is by no means intended to embrace all mankind.

But the language of our text I do understand to be used in the strictly universal sense, meaning that absolutely all things, present and future--all things, above and beneath--in heaven, earth, and hell--do and will conspire to the ultimate blessedness of the saints. The Bible obviously teaches this doctrine, and I know of no facts in the universe that militate against its universal application.

II. How does this come about? How is this result secured?

In order to see this matter in its true light we need to consider that the happiness of moral agents is conditioned on their holiness and results from it. The holy will of course be happy, and have real enjoyment in proportion to the degree in which they are holy. Still further, let it be considered that the holiness of moral agents is conditioned upon their knowledge. Every moral agent is more or less holy according as he knows more or less and is more or less conformed in heart and life to what he knows. I speak now particularly of the knowledge of God, whether obtained through His word or through His works.

Now all events are matters of knowledge, and not only all events that occur under God's government, but God Himself is also an object of knowledge. According to the Bible, all events will ultimately be known to the saints, for the judgment day will bring them all to light. Hence we learn that ultimately the entire history of all God's doings will be known to all His creatures. All He has ever done or shall ever do--whether in this world or in other worlds, will be open subjects of knowledge to His creatures, and will be known as fast and as far as their limited capacities will admit.

Now it is very plain that if all things, embracing all events and all the works of God, are matters of knowledge, and if moreover knowledge is a condition of real holiness, then all the knowledge which the saints attain will be at once available to their happiness. It will go to enhance their real blessedness. Especially will this be true of all their knowledge of God and of His countless works and various ways. All things, the saints will then see, are parts of one great plan--both those which God Himself performs by His direct agency, and those which are done through His permissive agency by His creatures. It will then be seen that all things are arranged and planned for the good of His obedient children, and when this great all-controlling principle in God's administration comes to be seen in all its bearings, the knowledge of this truth cannot fail to be a source of ineffable blessedness to all the holy. God's infinite grace as the great and good Father of all His loving children, will be so revealed as

to show that He makes all things work together for their good.

III. Let us now turn our attention to some particulars as illustrations of the general truth.

It is generally supposed that what we call mercies and blessings, and what we recognize by name as God's good gifts to men, are really good things to those that love God. We can see that they are, and men universally recognize them as good.

The same is equally true of what we call judgments, and chastisements--the rebukes of God; for all these too are means of grace, and are blessed of God for the spiritual good of His children. Their only design as they come from our Father's hand is that they may work out God to His saints. He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men from caprice or from any pleasure in their pain, but only and wholly for their profit, that they may the more deeply "partake of His holiness." Under this broad principle, we know that all the losses and crosses which befall the saints--all their burdens of care and responsibility,--and all their infirmities, shall be overruled for their good. All these things will conspire to teach the saints more of God and more of themselves. By the aid of such revelations they will be able the better to appreciate God's character and plans of discipline and their own infinite obligation to His manifold grace.

Nor from the "all things" of our text can we except the sins of God's people. They are indeed altogether blame-worthy for all their sins and none the less so for the good which God educes from them by His overruling agency. The sin of Peter was overruled of God for his good. He was a more humble and a better man as long as he lived. He better knew his own weakness, and better appreciated Christ's tender compassion. He felt the force of the admonition--"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," and there was none among all the original twelve to whom Christ said more emphatically--"Feed My sheep"--"Feed My lambs."

This sin of Peter brought him into great peril. "Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat,"--and if Christ had left him to himself, he would doubtless have fallen fatally into the snare of the devil. But Christ did not leave him in this hour of his need. "I have prayed for thee," said He, "that thy faith fail not." Christ kept His hand and eye on him, and soon plucked him from the destroyer's grasp. In this scene Peter learned more of the length and depth of his Savior's grace than he had ever known before.

This is only a single case, yet it was by no means a peculiar case, and therefore it serves to illustrate the general law of God's administration over His people.

Similar was the case of David. No thanks to him, but all thanks to God, that his sin was overruled, so as in the issue to make him a more meek, humble, penitent, and holy man.

Not only are the sins of the saints overruled to their good, but the sins of others, of sinners, and even of the most wicked. All the mistakes of our associates--their infirmities--the thousand nameless things that try us among the "all things," which God makes subservient to the good of His people. There is a woman whose husband is a bad man. His temper is uncomfortable--his ways are adapted to make his intimate associates unhappy, and hence he causes his wife many sore trials. Yet if she loves God and

makes Him the Refuge of her soul, all these little trials shall certainly work out her good both in this world and the next.

Not less so of the husband who has a bad wife. Not less so of those unhappy families in which the husband and the wife are great trials to each other. So of parents and children. Parents may be a source of trial to their children, and it often happens that children are a source of the greatest trial to their parents. But howsoever the trials occur, the great principle of our text applies to them all. To those that love God, they shall all work together for good.

The principle also reaches and applies to all the temptations of the devil. Let him poison his darts with demoniac skill and hurl them with hellish malice, they will not ultimately harm those that sincerely love God.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe." The Christian has a panoply complete, wherewith he may be able to withstand all the fiery darts of the devil. And what is more to our present purpose, though wounded by these darts he shall not be slain,--though cast down he shall not be destroyed, for there is a healing, overruling hand under whose agency even the wounds that Satan inflicts shall be wrought into better health and more spiritual vitality than the saints enjoyed before. God knows how to foil Satan with his own weapons and make even his apparent temporary success react in terrible defeat and disgrace upon his own head. God knows how not only to rescue His saints but to do much more than simply to rescue them: He imbues them with new vigor and sanctifies to them their most bitter and humiliating experience.

Yet further, all events are designed to illustrate God's true character. The whole creation is only a revelation of God, and all events that occur in it only serve to reveal more and more of God to intelligent beings. "The heavens declare the glory of God--the firmament showeth His handy-work." How many lectures upon God are read to us by the silent stars! How many lessons are repeated to us day by day by His rising suns and nightly dews and timely showers! Where in all the works of God, whether in nature or providence, is there a thing that does not speak His praise and bear some testimony which He can bless to the souls of His saints?

IV. We know that all things work together for good to the saints.

So says Paul. How did he and his brethren know this to be true? Perhaps they knew it by revelations already made in God's word; or it may be that his mind rested this truth upon the general knowledge of God enjoyed. It is a matter of revelation. The Bible amply affirms this truth. And it is also a plain dictate of reason. When we come to understand what God's attributes are as affirmed by the reason, we shall see that such a God can suffer nothing to occur which shall not in some way result in good to His friends. This must be so, if it be true that God loves His friends, studies to promote their highest good--has all events under His control--had His choice in the depths of a past eternity among all possible events and could determine to cause and suffer to exist such only as should subserve the ends that lay near His heart.

It is often a matter of experience and observation in this world that things which seem freighted with destruction turn out to be full of life and salvation. For a time, all looked dark and desolate, but light

and joy came out at last. Look at the case of Job. You can scarcely think of one form of grief and sorrow, which did not blend in the throng that rushed upon him as if to crush him: but he lived to see all these things work together for good to himself both for time and eternity. So in general, I remark that observation and experience will often show that this doctrine applies even to the present life and has its exemplification even here. Yet the apostle did not mean to affirm that God's plans have their full development in the present world. His affirmation contemplated a future world in which results but partially unfolded here can have their full and everlasting development.

REMARKS.

1. Saints will in eternity blame themselves for what they cannot on the whole regret. Seeing the results which God has educed by His overruling agency, they cannot wish they had never done those wicked things; yet surely they will none the less blame themselves for their own sins. As to the blame of sin, no matter how much good may come from our wrong-doing, it never can affect the question of our guilt, nor its measure. Take the case of Judas. No thanks to him that his infamous treason was one of the agencies which provided a Savior for a ruined world. The good which accrued from the death of Christ changes not the intrinsic character of his sin; cannot in any measure make it less mean, less sordid, less revengeful. Hence he must blame himself as much as if no good but only evil had resulted from his betrayal of Christ. It was God alone by His own infinite wisdom and power, who overruled this sin to great good. All praise therefore to Him, and none the less blame to Judas the traitor.

2. Our subject shows how the saints can be perfectly happy in heaven to all eternity. For there is in many minds a point of obscurity in this matter which needs explanation. The saints will see all their past sins in heaven's clear light, and they cannot but blame themselves for every sin they ever committed. How then can they be perfectly happy?

The answer is, they will see how their sins have been overruled for good, and they will rejoice in this good which God brings out of their iniquities. In this exercise of joy, they will be deeply humble, as indeed they will have all reason to be, and their joy will be purely a joy in God, blended with everlasting adoration and praise that He had both the power and the heart to bring much good out of their own wrong doings. Every view taken by a saint in heaven of his past sins will redound in praise to God, but in deeper humiliation to himself. Yet this humiliation will by no means conflict with the saint's happiness--for he enjoys being humble--he enjoys giving all glory and praise to God.

3. God blames a multitude of things, but has no regrets. He has often expressed Himself as we do when we feel regret, but these forms of expression are shaped in accommodation to our modes of speaking, and when used by God should be interpreted in accordance with His known character and known relations. It cannot be that on the whole, under all the circumstances of the case, He really regrets the occurrence of anything that takes place. He blames the guilty author, He condemns the sin; but it has not taken Him by surprise; it is no new thing to Him, and it has not in any wise frustrated His purposes and plans for the government of the universe. Before this sin was committed, or its author existed, God saw how He could over-rule it for good, and for so much good that on the whole He judged it better to let its author come into existence and commit this sin rather than prevent either the one or the other. Yet He blames every sin as much as if no good could be educed from it. The sinner is none the better for this development of good, through God's overruling agency. To God alone

belongs all the praise, for both the good intention and the good results are His alone. But for His good hand interposing, all the results would have been evil, and the sinner's intention is of course all evil and only evil continually.

Yet while God blames both sinners and saints for all their sins, He freely forgives the believing penitent and accepts him as a son. Then He so overrules the sin as not to be agonized by anything that occurs.

We sometimes see results corresponding to this in the earthly discipline which parents exercise over their children. The parent sees that his child has sinned; at first he regrets the thing exceedingly; but having in the fear and help of God done his utmost to reclaim and improve his child, he sees his efforts crowned with the divine blessing, and he says--That sin of my dear child almost killed me, but now I see him so much changed for the better that I can no longer regret the means which have resulted in so much good.

4. From this it does not follow that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. For if under the very circumstances in which they sin, men would obey rather than disobey--do right rather than wrong--then yet greater good might accrue than accrues from God's overruling of the sin. But God prefers His own course to any other which He can take. Under the circumstances He always does the wisest and best thing possible to Him, and hence He has no occasion for regret. He brings out the greatest good possible to Himself. If His creatures who do in fact sin, would be persuaded to do right instead of wrong, their agency for good, concurrent with His, would educe a still augmented good.

For illustration; a father commands his son to perform some certain work. But he has good reason to believe that the son will not do it unless he himself stays at home to control the son by his presence. Yet it is so important for him to go away that he decides to go, though at the hazard of his son's disobedience. In case the son disobeys, he trusts he can subject him to such discipline as shall bring out some good, and the good to be secured by his own presence elsewhere is too great to be sacrificed. The greatest good possible can be secured only by the concurrent agency of father and son. The father can secure the greatest good possible to himself by going away, even though his son should disobey in his absence.

5. But if sin were overruled so as to be at last the means of the greatest good, no thanks to the sinner. Suppose it were the case that the whole world would have been damned if Judas had not betrayed Christ, so that his sin secured the salvation of the world--no thanks to Judas for such a result, for he meant not so, neither did his heart think so. He intended no good to the world, nor to any being in it except himself. His act of betraying his friend would be none the less mean, sordid, and revengeful, for the good which in the case supposed would ensue. The good wrought out would be wholly attributable to God.

6. It is naturally impossible to sin benevolently. There can be no such thing as a benevolent sin. To sin with design to do good is an absurdity in terms. To say therefore that we do evil that good may come is absurd and impossible. To do evil for the sake and with the motive of securing real good is a self-contradiction. For the doing evil implies a wicked intention, and the having a good end in view implies a good intention. But to have both a good intention and a bad intention at the same instant,

each determining the same act, is surely a self-contradiction. If a man intends good by his act, it is not sin. No man ever sinned in order that it might redound to the glory of God. No tyrant ever persecuted the saints of God that it might do them good. Suppose a wicked man were to say--My wife is a good woman; let me plague her now for her good. It will only make her a better woman, so let me torment her all I can. There is no way in which I can do her so much good.

He can't do any such thing! It is naturally impossible that a man should be honest in trying to do good by wickedness. This sinning benevolently is a natural impossibility.

7. Saints should always be in a position to fall back upon God in all their trials in this life. They should stand in such relations to God that they can rationally and naturally trust Him to shape and control all events even here so as to make them work out good in the highest degree. If they walk humbly before God, they may know that all things shall be made to conspire for their good. Only let them truly love God and trust Him; then they need not fear the issues of any events whatever that may occur. None can occur without God's permission, nor independently of His direction. They may therefore be assured that God will shape all their bearings for the good of those that love Him.

But if professed Christians are living in sin, they have no claim on this promise and no right to expect its fulfillment to themselves. But if they are not in sin, they may like Micah cry out triumphantly--"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

8. This truth affords ground for strong consolation to the saints. Why should they ever be sad? Suppose all things do not apparently work well now. Let them still have faith in God and rest in His promises. Has He not said that all things shall work together for good to His loving friends? No wonder saints are often seen smiling through their tears, for joy lies deep in their souls, though sadness may overcloud their face. Joys and sorrows are often strangely blended in their bosom. Calamities, disappointments, bereavements befall them as they do other men, and these things are not for the present joyous but grievous; but their faith in God assures them that all will yet be well. Many things will befall them in life that burn and agonize their sensibility; but deep within are trust and faith in God and a sweet leaning upon His promises--for they know that the ground of their consolation is firm and strong as the pillars of the universe!

9. We may rejoice in whatever befalls any of God's real children; whether ourselves or others. Parents may rejoice in whatever befalls their godly children or friends. Many things may occur which cause tears now--yet as Christians our watchword should be--It will surely be well for them in the latter end. The things which give the severest shock will do most good, and those which seem most afflictive, when God has brought out all their results, may be found to be most blest to His saints. Those fearful events which seemed to come with a crash as if they would break down all the pillars of your foundation--Oh how sweet to see even those strange things so strangely overrule for the good of the saints!

10. Very few Christians can live a single week or even day without needing the consolation which this truth affords. Hence they ought to hold it fast, to keep it treasured in their memory--lying near their hearts--ready to be applied for consolation and for strength in every emergency.

This truth may well reconcile the saints to any and all events of divine providence. They can afford to be submissive, while they know that their Father will make all things work together for their good. They can afford to have travail and suffering, for even their most intense sorrows shall all conspire to work out good to their souls. Therefore let not unbelief deprive us of this consolation. Apart from the light of faith many things will occur that are inexplicably dark, but faith illumines and explains all.

How wonderful are God's marvellous works. Well may it be said of Him--"He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Results may lie hidden long, but they will come out at last in glorious sunlight, showing that God's hand has guided events to their results with unerring wisdom. In the light of eternity if not in the light of time, they shall see it all, and seeing it shall wonder and adore. God, they will shout aloud, hath done all things well! Then, do not allow yourselves now to be deprived of this great consolation.

But do you say--ah, if I only knew that I am a child of God, if I only knew that I really love God, then I could receive this consolation legitimately. Then I could feel that it belongs to me. Then I could say--Let come anything that God is pleased to send, for I am anchored in His love and on His promise.

Now you may be very guilty for these doubts, for surely you may be free from them altogether; but still if with all your doubtings, you are really God's child, they shall all be overruled for your good, so that in heaven you will have it to say--How wonderful are God's ways! That He should bring me out of a region, so dark and desolate, and then make all my doubts and darkness subserve some useful ends to my own soul and to His glory--that out of such materials He should bring out any good at last--how wonderful!

Finally, we can see that the volumes of glory and praise to God must be to all eternity continually accumulating. Fresh revelations each hour of His wonderful wisdom and love must evolve from humble and holy hearts fresh accessions of praise and honor to His blessed name. Is it not delightful to think that such a God shall be thus praised and honored through eternity!

LECTURE V.

July 21, 1852

ALL THINGS CONSPIRE FOR EVIL TO THE SINNER--No. 2

Text.--Isa. 3:11: "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

Text.--Ps. 92:7: "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever."

Text.--Deut. 32:35: "To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

Text.--2 Pet. 2:3: "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

From the bare reading of these passages you will see that they present a direct contrast to the great truth of our morning discourse. [This was published in our last issue.] In that it was shown that all things work together for good to those that love God. In this our text leads to the opposite truth in regard to the sinner. All things conspire together for their ruin. All tends to complete and aggravate their destruction.

This awful truth is taught throughout the Bible in a great variety of forms. I have read to you a few of the passages which affirm it; I might read many others but it cannot be necessary.

Obligation is imposed on moral agents by the light of truth. To know truth respecting duty is the condition of obligation. When moral agents are able to understand it, then the value of the God to be sought measures the obligation to seek it. All are bound to be benevolent--in other words, to seek the good of all beings. To know that any beings need some particular form of good, and that under existing circumstances you are capable of securing to them this God, imposes on you the obligation to secure it, which obligation is the greater by how much the greater is the good in question. Hence as knowledge increases, so does guilt increase. The more you know of your duty and of the interests that depend upon faithfully doing it, the greater your guilt if you refuse to do it. On the supposition that the moral agent remains is sin--refusing to do known duty, then the more his knowledge increases, the greater must be his guilt.

As all events are to be made public under God's moral government, it is for His own interests as well as for the interest of His creatures that He should apprise them fully of His character and of the principles of His government, and to make all clear to finite minds, it is important that He should spread out before them somewhat fully the details of His moral administration, so as to leave nothing involved in darkness or doubt on any important subject, to any honest mind. It seems essential to the well-working of God's moral government that He should at least ultimately, illustrate His own acts so fully as to leave no ground of cavil, that every mouth may be stopped, and every candid mind in the universe be satisfied in regard to all His works and to every point in His vast administration. Who can doubt that the Great Government of the universe will vindicate His own conduct? Who can suppose that He will leave one dark point unexplained?

Hence, as all events are to be made known, both for the vindication of God's character and for the instruction of all moral agents, it follows that the destruction of the wicked will be aggravated by every accession of light to their minds. Every new revelation of God's works or ways which is made to them must conspire, (1.) to enlighten their minds; and (2.) by consequence, deepen their guilt and enhance and aggravate their doom.

This is beyond question the truth in respect to the sinner's relation to God and to His government. It presents the subject however in an abstract form. Let us therefore proceed to notice some of the particulars which illustrate this truth.

1. Men will be held responsible for mercies abused. Hence those things which most please sinners, and which they call their good things, are charged to their account, and they must be held to the

strictest accountability for their use or abuse of all their good things. The sinner is charged in God's book with every breath he breathes,--with every meal he eats,--with every draught of God's water that he drinks,--with every day's health that he enjoys, and with every night's rest. He is indeed welcome to all these good things, if he uses them as he ought to; but if he will use these blessings in the devil's service, he must give account thereof to God. Why should he not? The Bible most abundantly teaches this truth. It assumes that wicked men rob God, and that for this guilt they must be held to a strict account.

If these are facts, then sinners are getting deeply in debt. As a man who in his business never pays but runs himself more and more deeply in debt, so sinners are constantly swelling their black account with their great Benefactor. The rain and the sunshine He sends them; the food and the friends He grants them; every one of these things, used in sin and for sin, spent on their lusts and with an ungrateful heart towards the Giver, must all pass on to his book of account to be settled in the great reckoning day.

Everything therefore that now pleases the sinner so much will swell the mass of things that shall agonize him at the judgment day and throughout his eternal existence. Why do not sinners consider that a day of reckoning will come, and that one of the most fearful things then to be canvassed will be the long catalogue of abused mercies? These things are good in themselves, yet it is better you should never have had them, than that you should pervert them to purposes of sin and self-indulgence and ingratitude. Ah, it were better for you that you should never have been born, than that you should pervert the powers God gives you, to make yourself a guilty rebel against your Maker. Better that you should never have health than that you should use it in sin. Many of you bless yourselves that you live while others die; but if you abuse life, it were better that you had died long ago--yea better that you had never been born. Take heed how you deem yourself fortunate for having so much health; you cannot afford to have any health at all, if you abuse it in sin and lay up a fearful account to render for every hours comfort. How can you afford to live, while every hour's life swells your fearful debt and makes you worse and worse a bankrupt, on the great books of the final day!

Not only all these countless mercies, but all the particulars embraced under them and connected with them are to come into your account. All will prove a great curse to you if selfishly abused.

The same principle applies to the entire course of God's discipline towards you, embracing the various rebukes of His providence. The Lord, for purposes of discipline may smite your property or your person. He may give wings to your riches and a blight on your strength. Losses may checker the scene of your long prosperity, or by pain and weakness the Lord may seek to impress your soul with a sense of dependence on an almighty arm. All these are measures taken for your good, but if you will not improve them they will only work out your deeper ruin. There is a sinner who has been brought down to the verge of the grave by sickness. His Heavenly Father sought by this means to induce serious thought and true repentance, but He sought in vain. The heart was made no better by this affliction. The sick man recovered through divine mercy, and he blessed himself for his restored health, but it cannot be said that he blessed his great Benefactor. He blessed himself, and thought of his good fortune, but Oh! how much better for him to have gone quick to his grave than that he should rise from his sick-bed only to have a harder heart and a blacker account to settle through all eternity with his insulted Benefactor.

Perhaps the deluded man said to himself on his recovery--Now God has punished me all I deserve and I have no more punishment to fear for my sins. Far otherwise! He has not been punished at all. These trials on earth are only chastisements, intended for moral discipline. God sent them as the most hopeful means for doing you good, but you have utterly resisted and defeated His intention; you have only converted into a curse what your Father sent upon you for a blessing.

How marvelous that wicked men should suppose that these light afflictions are the proper punishment of sin? No; these are only God's means of discipline, employed here in this life for the good of men's souls. Instead of being themselves the retribution due for sin, they are only the guarantees sent on before-hand by the Great King, involving His pledge that He will punish sin unless He can secure repentance. They imply God's holy abhorrence of sin; they are the incipient manifestations of the great truth that He can never overlook transgression. What! sinner, do you think God can by any means, and under any circumstances, fail to notice your sin? If He could, then you might find Him neglecting the means of moral discipline. But if on the contrary, you find Him ever wakeful to the work of discipline, you may know that--this failing of its object,--there is another kind of notice to be taken of sin.

Suppose a parent--a father, should chasten his son with a grief that seemed to tear his very heart and deeply wound his spirit, but all is in vain; would not even you affirm that such a son ought to be punished and much the more for the pains his father has taken to save him, and for the wicked stubbornness that would not be subdued to love and duty? See that mother, wearied and worn; she has chastened her daughter, but it avails nothing; the deep agony of her heart is crushing her to the grave, and her soul weeps over the cruel abuse of a wayward daughter; now tell me, shall all this stubbornness and abuse towards a faithful and fond mother be passed over, and not be heeded?

So, sinner, of all the things for which you deserve to be punished, this is the chief. God has taken so much pains to bless you; His very heart has been moved to the center of His being, and once and again He has cried out--"How can I give thee up?" And now, all effort and pains-taking having failed, shall no account of the stubbornness and guilt which has frustrated the toil of infinite love, be made?

That sickness which your Heavenly Father sent upon you did not reclaim you from your sins. Ah, it will cost you too much to abuse not only God's mercies but His chastisements also. To your surprise and sorrow too, you will find that God has not done all this for your good, that, when abused and resisted by you, it should go for nothing. You have not seen the end of these things yet. You came up from your sick-bed did you? Yes. And then forgot all your sick-bed vows and solemn promises of amendment? Yes! And, on you went, in your sin till you became ten fold more hardened than ever! Ah, you cannot afford to be thus chastised and to have it all result in waxing worse and worse, and in becoming only the more ripe for perdition.

All your infirmities and all your sins; also the sins of those who live near you so that you can see the course of God's dealings with them--indeed the whole history of sin in the universe so far as known to you--all conspire to heighten your responsibility and aggravate the guilt of your sin. For, all these things serve to show you the real evil and wrong of sin; they serve to reveal God's hatred of sin and to assure you that He must and will punish it. Both the good and the evil deeds of all moral beings in the

universe so far as you can know them, have an important bearing upon your responsibilities as a moral agent, because they affect the amount of your knowledge of sin and of God, and hence of your own personal duty.

I am aware that sinners are prone to overlook this fact. They often say--We are held responsible only for our own sins and not for the sins of others; but mark--the sins of others increase your knowledge both of God and of duty, and hence increase your moral responsibility and heighten your guilt, if in the face of so much knowledge you still persist in sinning. The good and the evil of all beings within your knowledge serve to augment your responsibility. These things are continually pouring light on your mind. So also does the entire course of your own history and experience as a sinner under God's government. You cannot eat or drink; rise up or lie down--you can be nowhere and can do nothing without having a continual stream of influence poured upon you which heightens your responsibility because it increases the knowledge of God, of sin and of duty, under which and against which you sin. All your religious privileges belong to the same class, and bear pre-eminently upon the point of your moral responsibility and consequent guilt. Did you ever own a Bible? Has some kind Christian friend given you a copy of that blessed book? Your own Bible! You might read it at your pleasure. It is God's own message from heaven to your soul. But Oh, how you have slighted it! Other friends have sent you messages and letters, but you have treated none of them so! You have always at least read their letters and have commonly treated their expressed wishes with due respect. But you have insulted God by treating His letters with almost total neglect! O, what will that neglected Bible testify against you! Perhaps your mother gave it to you. Her careful hand laid it safely in your trunk when you prepared to leave the home of your childhood. God was in that mother's hand, and through it He placed a copy of His word under your eye, and threw on you a double responsibility to heed it well. You said then--"I am glad that I have got a Bible." So am I--if you use it well. If you study candidly its precepts and heed them in the fear of God, tis all well; but if not, all will go ill with you, and that neglected Bible will follow you up to the judgment, fore-casting your doom and crying out, Anathema! ANATHEMA!! Let the despiser of God's word be ANATHEMA, forever!

And you know this would be only simple justice! You can see that it ought to be so!

REMARKS.

1. I said in the morning that all things work together for good to the Christian, and that ultimately, when he comes to see how all things have had this result, he will regret nothing he has ever done, although he may greatly blame himself for all his sins. It is often the case that Christians here learn lessons of deep experience under their sins. They are deeply affected when they see how God overrules even their sins for good to themselves and to others.

But nothing of this sort happens to sinners. They are not of those that love God, and they have no reason to expect that God will make all things work together for their good. Hence they must both blame themselves and also regret everything they have ever done. They must feel both self-blame and regret that they ever had a Bible; that they ever had a friend; that they ever had health--that they ever had existence! Alas, they will say, alas! that I was ever born! Alas! that I lived so long! Alas! that I ever had one mercy from God to abuse so guiltily! Woe is me that I had a pious mother! Ten thousand woes on my guilty soul that God ever sent me His gospel! Ah me! how have I treasured up wrath

against the day of wrath!

2. Sinners have never any good reasons for joy. You recollect the 73rd Psalm. The Psalmist had been struck with the fact that the wicked were so prosperous and so happy. It puzzled him sorely. Long time he could not understand it, and was thereby thrown into great perplexity. But when he went into God's sanctuary, then he says, "I understood their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places; Thou castedst them down into destruction." Let the sinner only see his own case in the light shed from God's word in His sanctuary and he too will understand that he has no occasion for joy. He will see how insane are all his rejoicings. What! and shall he rejoice in that which will only work out his deeper damnation? Can any but an insane mind do this?

Some one of our children may be prosperous, but yet in sin. If so, he is only abusing the blessings God sends him, and surely this can be no matter of joy either to him or to his parents. He cannot afford to have any of these blessings--to use in sin! Ah no! for he must pay for them at last in the bitterness of eternal yet unavailing regret. If you therefore have unconverted children or if I have, we have no occasion for joy in them, however prosperous they may be.

3. Sinners procure this result to themselves. It all comes, sinners, from your own wickedness--from your own voluntary and persistent impenitence and unbelief. If you would turn about and love God, all would be well for you. But if you will abuse His grace and reject His authority, all is wrong and all will work ill to your soul.

In a spirit not the most honest, you may say--Why did God give me existence at all? He knew how I should abuse it and only bring a curse on myself and curse my own existence.

You ask such questions as these perhaps, and yet you know how impious they are in their implications against your Maker? You ask, Why did God give me existence? That you might use it to His glory and to your own perfect blessedness. But you reply--What? when He knew how I should only curse myself by sin instead of blessing myself by holy obedience? Yes, certainly, none the less so, because of His foreknowledge of your course. Has God's knowledge of the course you would take at all lessened or changed your moral responsibility--the perfect freeness of your choices -the radical, essential guilt of your sin!

God gave you voluntary powers, that, on your own responsibility you might use them for your own welfare. He gave you His Son and in Him an offered salvation, that you might lay hold of everlasting life. He gave you a Bible--that you might read it and become wise unto salvation. He gave you these and a thousand other blessings, that they might be improved, and certainly you do not need to be told that if you will not improve them, you have no right to complain to God.

4. Sinners need not be stumbled by any calamities whatever which befall God's real children. A Christian is sick; well, what of that? Is not the Savior's arm all round about him? But he is going to die! Well, what of that? Is not heaven just before him, and his God with him all through the dark valley of the river of death? He is going to lose all his property, is he? What then? He has got no real property except God--for long ago, his heart made a choice of God for its portion forever.

Sinners often talk as if they were stumbled to see so many calamities befalling the people of God. Let them not trouble themselves about this matter. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and they shall never lack His constant care.

5. All events that transpire in this world or the next, will only make the great gulf fixed between saints and sinners the deeper and the broader--will only make the saints more holy and more happy--the sinners more sinful and more wretched. The widening space between them in character and in relations to God's throne will of necessity constitute a gulf which none can ever pass over.

6. What an infinite folly is it to judge of things only by their relations to this life! To feel and to think of them only in view of this narrow and limited relation! Looking at things in this light only, we could not rejoice in the Christian's case; we could not pronounce him happy because he has the Almighty God for his friend. Viewing things from such a stand-point of observation, we should find everything dark and perplexing. But in the light of God's sanctuary all comes out clear. See those political, money making men, scrambling after power or wealth; suppose they get it--what then? The more they get, so much the more have they to answer for; so much the deeper will their responsibilities, if not honestly met, sink them in perdition. Christians therefore have never any reason to envy sinners for their earthly prosperity. If they are ever tempted to do so, let them go into the sanctuary; there shall they learn the sinner's awful end. Coming forth from the house of God, they will say:

"Now I'm convinced the Lord is kind

To men of heart sincere,

Yet once my foolish heart repined,

And bordered on despair.

I grieved to see the wicked thrive,

And spoke with angry breath,--

"How pleasant and profane they live,

How peaceful in their death!"

But having searched God's word, he sings:

"There, as in some prophetic glass,

I saw the sinner sit,
High mounted on a slippery place,
Beside a fiery pit.

I heard the wretch profanely boast,
Till at Thy frown he fell;
His honors in a dream were lost,
And he awoke in hell."

One of our texts affirms--"Their feet shall slide in due time and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Another declares--"Their judgment now of a long time lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not." "Sudden destruction cometh upon them as pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

7. God's conduct in all this is just and righteous altogether. Who can object because God holds the sinner responsible for the Bible He gives him, or for the existence with which He has endowed him? Dare you say or even think that God does wrong to hold you responsible for the Bible, for the Sabbath, for the Gospel and for all the knowledge of duty which He has placed within your reach? Is He not bound by the eternal laws of right, to hold all His creatures responsible according to the measure of the blessings He has conferred upon them? Could His moral kingdom be safe on any other principle of administration? Would the holy beings around His throne endure any deviation from these eternally and intrinsically righteous principles? Do you not see--for yourself--that if you persist in abusing His mercies, God will bring you to account and must do it, or cease to be a righteous God? It were a mal-arrangement, and a mal-administration if God were to deviate at all from the principle of holding every moral agent to the strictest accountability for all his moral conduct, according to the light he has enjoyed.

How long, sinner have you lived? During all these years, what have you done? How have you used your life up to this hour? Is it not time that you should pause and take an observation?

In the past pages of my own personal history I can see where God summoned me to answer these solemn questions. I had spent all my early life in new settlements, had enjoyed only the most scanty means of religious instruction--had never heard a prayer in my father's house,--yet one night I most vividly remember I lay a long time awake, and I asked myself--How old am I? How have I lived up to this hour? What have I done towards determining the future condition of my existence? These were questions I had never heard before; but God put them home to my soul in a way that made my flesh quiver and my bones quake. I had spent half my life--for I looked then upon the age of forty as the limit of my earthly days; I had lived out half my life, yet what had I done for God or for my own eternal well-being?

Have you, sinner, ever taken such a reckoning? Sailing along unknown seas in the voyage of life, have you ever paused to take in sails, get out your instruments, and take your bearings? Have you ever stopped, as every wise mariner does, to get out your instruments on some fair, sunny day, to find where you are and which way you must steer to gain the haven of peace and rest? Oh, some of you have never made one careful, thorough, observation to find your course and your actual position. The fair sunny days God gives you, you are too reckless to improve for so needful a purpose. Oh, sinner, there are fearful rocks of damnation close under your lee! The darkness of the tempest is gathering fast upon you; soon you will feel the mountain waves tossing your frail bark and the storm-blast will howl through your shrouds to shriek the requiem of a lost spirit! How will the vivid lightnings gleam down your masts and the thunders break in peals like the judgment trump!

Ah sinner, why did you not take your observation before your bark made these rocks of damnation, and before the storm-king was out in his fearfulest terrors, to dash your soul upon the breakers of final ruin? How can you afford to live in such mad recklessness of your soul's well-being? How can you afford to live content in sin amid such perils of damnation? O to think of your case! When I pass you in the streets, sometimes I rejoice in your joy, for you seem to be happy; but more often I weep, for I see you in your sins, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Yes, here you are in your sins, getting an education, doing the very thing which above all other things must augment your responsibility and aggravate your guilt if you will not repent. Ah, you cannot afford to live so. Dear youth, how can you afford to go to the judgment with all the heightened responsibility of an educated sinner? Why will you make your very existence and all the mercies with which God has blessed this existence, a living and an eternal curse?

It need not be so. You may change the whole current of your future destiny. It may be done by simply changing the current of your present life--by simply giving your heart to God and your whole being to His service. Will you do this? How many times you have been called to decide this question--and alas! called only in vain! O, come now and make one thorough observation. See where you are and what is before you. And will you refuse to do a thing so reasonable? Ah, what a dark night is coming on! How will the dreadful tempest roar and howl around your miserable soul--the tempest of divine wrath that must break on the head of the despiser of saving mercy! And must you be thrust into prison and not be released till you have paid the uttermost farthing? Must the doom of the damned be your eternal portion? It will be so if you choose. "They that hate Me," saith the voice of offered mercy, "love death."

8. What a contrast is here! All things work good to the saint. Although he weeps along his pathway of life with mingled tears of penitence and joy, yet soon he passes beyond all his pains and trials. Up, up, he soars, high above all sorrow, high aloft from this vale of tears. But the sinner dances along, gaily laughing and sporting his way--God calling, rebuking and entreating; saints weeping in grief over his madness and his impending doom; all creation in agony for him, but he dashes on. See, mark the contrast! Note how it widens continually. Saints ascend upward- mounting up, up;--but sinners descend, going down, down, along the sides of the pit, amid the wailings of eternal despair.

Do you say--enough, enough, I have heard enough; you have said enough; I am persuaded, and I am ready to come; I will no more abuse my Savior--no longer slight His offered love. Come, then, you

prodigal, come back to your father's house; for there is bread enough and to spare and you need not perish with hunger. Come back with your free hearted confessions of folly and guilt; come and beg for a pittance of the crumbs that fall from his table. Now is the day and the hour of mercy--now is the accepted time!

Need I press again on your attention the wide and awful contrast between saints and sinners? They live together here; the same roof shelters them; the same table spreads for them their daily bread; the same sun rises and pours its blaze of light and joy over all; the same clouds come freighted with waters of summer and distill their precious drops for all; but Oh! how unlike is the scene that lies beneath! Underneath the surface God marks in one a heart of gratitude and penitence; in another a soul tainted with selfishness and mad upon its lusts and its idols. Of course the one must go up, up, rising in the perfection of its holy character; and the other down, down, sinking under the depraving influence of its own headstrong appetites and its will, opposed to God and goodness.

And where will be the end of these courses? You know, full well! You have no need to know better than you do.

The fatal thing with you, O sinner, is that you don't make up your mind to do known duty. I thought I should, you say, but I did not. I half resolve, but fail to do it. Scores of precious opportunities you have let slip, and each one left you only the more hardened. One opportunity came and waited on you--you were not ready to embrace it, and it passed away; another came and tarried--then rose up and went its way; and yet another and another; and what shall be the end of these things? Satan loves to beguile you; and he it is who is playing this game with you, seducing you to delay till each and every opportunity shall have gone past, hopelessly and forever. Will you let him ruin your soul? You see his hand, winding his fatal chain about your neck; O how long can you be quiet under this operation! How long will you consent to be led captive by Satan at his will, when you know his object is to plunge your soul quick into the depths of hell!

Guilt Modified by Ignorance

Lecture VI

August 18, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

This passage is part of Paul's sermon at Athens. In discussing it I shall,

I. Show what it means.

II. Apply its principles to some of the great moral movements of the present age.

III. Show what is implied in repentance.

IV. Show why men should repent and reform now.

I. Show what it means.

Paul is speaking of those places and times where the gospel had not been. It was concerning moral actions performed then and there that Paul said, "God winked at" them. This affirmed a plain and well-established truth, viz. that men are held responsible morally according to their light. Speaking of times when men were but imperfectly enlightened, he did not say men were then absolutely guiltless, but only comparatively so. Their sins were a matter of comparative unimportance. When we use this language -- wink at a thing -- we mean, let it pass with slight notice, let it go. Such must have been Paul's meaning. The principle assumed is as I have said, a well-established one -- that men are guilty, or not guilty, or as the case may be, are more or less guilty, according to the knowledge they have or do not have, of their duty.

II. Apply its principles to some of the great moral movements of the present age.

Applying this well-established principle, which all men hold and must hold, I remark, that since my recollection, a vast amount of light has been thrown on many great moral questions, and consequently the conduct of men in reference to the points they involve has assumed very different shades of moral character.

For example, the question of Temperance. I can well remember when ministers used to drink before they went into the pulpit and drink after they came out of it. The same practices still continue in other countries. Then they thought it no wrong, unless they drank to excess, and beyond their own convictions of right. They measured their ideas of its harm by their own standard. But now so much light is abroad that the moral character of rum-drinking is essentially modified. In those very places where men drank without much guilt, they can no longer drink at all without great guilt. Then men were often advised to drink by their physicians. They thought they ought to drink for the sake of health. But this apology is available no longer. Why not? Because men have learned that health does not demand rum-drinking. They now know that it is wrong to use ardent spirits as a beverage, and that very rarely indeed does it need to be used as a medicine. Of course they cannot use the article as of old without great guilt -- without losing every particle of their piety.

So on the subject of Slavery. For a long time this subject was scarcely discussed at all. Slavery was abolished so quietly and gradually in the Northern States, that but little general discussion was excited. Yet the manner of its abolition in the North left the impression that Northern men had nothing to do with its abolition in the South. The work having been achieved by state legislative action, and without much of any foreign influence of any sort, it was not unnaturally assumed that other states would abolish slavery in the same way. Indeed so little attention was given to this subject by Northern

men, that they did not notice the gradual encroachments of the slave power upon the general government.

But this state of things has greatly changed. Now men generally understand the relations of slavery to the national government. The startling fact is but too apparent that our Union is virtually a slaveholding state, and that Congress have seriously undertaken to make the entire domain of our country a slaveholding land. They enact their Fugitive Slave Bill into so-called law, and then send their commissioned agents into the free states, upon free soil, to compel free men, whose souls abhor slavery, to become slave-catchers, and to deliver up unto their masters or claimants, the servant that has escaped -- in the very face of God's own command to the contrary, not to say also in the very face of every dictate of humanity. When the Northern states set their own slaves free, they had no thought of ever being dragged thus into the support of slavery. They expected, and were authorized to expect that the example of emancipation would be followed by the Southern states. But instead of this, what do we see? Laws enacted by Congress which people all the free states with commissioners authorized to seize men as slaves -- which leave them only the miserable mockery of the forms of trial, and which then, under heavy pains and penalties, compel us to sustain all this iniquity, and aid in dragging the arrested victim into hopeless bondage.

I do not want to rail -- you who hear me preach so often know full well that I am not; nor do I mean to rail on the worst of men or the most oppressive of their measures now; but the question what we, as Christian men shall do under this monstrous oppression is really momentous. The question now has taken this form; shall we individually and personally aid in making men slaves?

This makes a solemn issue. I feel it to be such. So must all Northern men and Northern Christians. It is a new issue. We did not expect when we entered into this Union, that we were to be dragooned into the business of slave-hunting. We did not calculate then to become the tools of the slave power, to help make men found on free soil slaves. We must make up our minds how we will act under this new issue.

This whole subject presents some curious questions pertaining to political action, the pulpit, and the duty of Christian men. Before and during the American revolution, there was much more political discussion in the pulpit than there is now, or perhaps than there has ever been elsewhere. Indeed the great questions of the revolution were all discussed in the pulpit and with signal ability. As some writer has said, "The pulpit thundered and lightened on the subject of liberty." The consequence was the true ideas of liberty were understood, and came to have a living development in the public mind. The tallest statesmen of the land heard the gospel of liberty proclaimed from the sacred desk. Who needs be told that ministers then met their responsibilities to the state and to the public weal, fearlessly and boldly? Who does not know that all these questions were then blended with prayer, and civil liberty was hailed as a boon from heaven?

But ministers in our day have become afraid to stand forth and speak as honest, fearless men on this subject, and political men have become fearful and sensitive lest the pulpit should utter its voice for freedom. But why this sensitiveness of politicians? And why this timidity in the heralds of the gospel? Have not all Christian men political duties to perform? Ought they not to search out these duties, and settle in the fear of God all the great questions they involve, and then meet their political

responsibilities in the fear of God and for the welfare of the nation?

It is not generally considered that neither of the two great political parties can manage this question of slavery at their option. It is a great blessing to have two great parties. They correct each other's errors, watch each other's movements, and if either party should swerve essentially from the right path, the good men of this swerving party would go over to the other, and quickly turn the scale.

At the South, both parties are united on the subject of slavery, and will not for a moment diverge from the line of strictest fidelity to its interests. Each of the two great parties have, or rather had their other issues; now all other issues have fallen into comparative insignificance, and the matter of controversy between them turns no longer upon principles, but upon men, and the spoils of office. But the thing I would say is, that neither of them can control the subject of slavery. Hence when the united South take their stand firmly, and irrespective of party, say -- "So far will we go and no farther," then each party must meet them on their own ground, or lose their support, and with it all chances of success as a party.

Both parties therefore concede to the South all they ask. For example, they both accede to the Compromise acts, Fugitive law included, and affirm this law to be "a finality." This done, they cry, Drop the question of slavery -- let all be quiet as the grave on this point, and let us each carry our other questions if we can. This is just the issue now made. Drop the question of slavery, and no longer make it in any degree a political issue. This is the demand first of the whole South; next, of the two great political parties. Shall the Christian church accede to this? Shall we let this entire subject alone, and go in for contention of the other issues as if they had any importance worth naming in the comparison?

Until matters assumed their present form, a multitude of Christians acted conscientiously with one or the other of these great parties. Both of these parties have promised Anti-Slavery men pretty largely. For example, the Whig party promised to keep out Texas, and to prevent a war with Mexico; and many did believe, honestly too, that one party or the other would do something to withdraw the support of the general government from slavery. So long as they could reasonably indulge this hope, and honestly did so, I cannot condemn these Christians for their adherence to their parties. Many conscientious men thought that they could do most good in that course, and hence we ought not to complain of them for it.

But now it is not so much as pretended that any good results will ensue from acting with either of the great parties. Not even a bait is now held out to allure conscientious and good men into their support. Nobody contends that under the control of either of these great parties, there is, at present, the faintest hope of repealing or even modifying the Fugitive Slave Bill, or getting one good thing for truth or righteousness. Therefore, I ask, can any good man hold on to either of those parties -- for no good object whatever -- not even the promise of any good to the cause of the slave being held out as an inducement?

So of the church. Of old it was often said, What have we to do with slavery? Men did not see that Congress had any particular responsibility on this subject, and hence they could not see that as Christian men, or as a church, they could have any special responsibility in regard to slavery. But now

the world is saying, What are ye Christians doing? Are you with us in the support of our great party? O yes. Now this may please the men of the world, but it certainly can never secure their respect. It never can do honor to the firmness of Christian principle. Do you ask, What ought Christian men to do? Doubtless they ought to use all their legitimate influence against the Fugitive Slave Bill, and against all the political aggressions of slavery upon our free land and government. Doubtless they ought to vote for freedom as against slavery, and speak out in no mistakable words and tones, till the nation shall hear and shall purge itself from all national patronage of this horrible system.

The same should be said of the responsibilities and duties of the great benevolent societies. Time was when great ignorance prevailed in these societies, touching their relations to slavery. When I entered the ministry, not a word was said about the relations of the American Board to slavery, or of the Bible Society, or the Tract Society. But ere long the question came up in regard to the relations sustained by each of those societies to slavery. The Christian public ask, What is the true position which those societies sustain towards slavery? What is their duty? What are they in fact doing? Does their influence go to sustain the foul system? They all claim to be disseminating a pure Christianity, and of course they profess to bear a pure testimony against every sin, and especially against all great public iniquities. Are they in fact doing so? They should consider that increased light begets augmented responsibilities, and that they cannot pass along now, treating slavery as if it were no sin -- however conveniently they might have done so in those times of ignorance which God winked at. There is too much light now on the sin of slavery, and on its multiform relations to the church and to the nation, to admit of neutrality in regard to it, or to allow the assumption that it is not to be regarded as a great sin.

III. What is implied in repentance?

Repentance is turning the heart to God, and abandoning selfishness. The work of repentance belongs to the heart or will. Of course it must be the function of the voluntary or moral department of the mind's powers.

But especially let me remark, that whole repentance is genuine, there will be and must be external reformation. Men may have emotions of sorrow, with no change of purpose; but this is not real repentance.

IV. Why should men now repent and reform?

Because as soon as we get light on any former practice which shows us that it is opposed to God's will, we cannot persist in it without greatly augmented guilt. For example, the case of intemperance. As soon as increasing light on this subject showed the extent of its mischiefs, and the absence of any and all redeeming good, the practice of using intoxicating drink as a beverage came to be seen at once as the murder of a man's own body and soul, and as a fatal temptation to his neighbor. Then, how could any man persist longer in its use without damning sin?

So of slavery. As soon as light prevails on this subject, men can no longer go on in the same course of sustaining the system, without the greatest guilt. It will not answer to substitute evasions, and dodging and side issues in place of real repentance and true reform. To evade the claims of truth thus serves not to acquit the soul before God or man, but only to strengthen depravity and harden the heart.

For an illustration of this principle take the case of the Jews. Before Christ came among them, great moral darkness reigned. When Christ came among them, preaching the kingdom of God and illustrating its true import in His life and spirit, in His miracles of goodness and finally in His death on the cross, they could not but "see a great light." Therefore, when they resisted this light, and resorted to their lies to evade the evidence furnished by His resurrection, their consciences became exceedingly hardened. After all this light, could they go on rejecting their known Messiah without greatly augmented guilt? Nay, verily. The same principle applies to the nation as a whole, and to all its individual members before whom this gospel light shone.

Refusal to repent when light reveals sin and duty, must hasten the destruction of any nation or people under heaven. How long did the Jews continue to prosper after Christ had come and had been rejected? Terrible was their hardening under so much light, and equally fearful was their doom! History records no case of more fearful destruction, or of more black and inexcusable guilt. When the hour of their retribution at last came, God poured out the cup of His indignation upon them without mixture, and bitterly did they drink it to its dregs! So must it be with every nation that shall refuse to repent when light breaks in and duty stands revealed, and yet they refuse to do it.

The governments of the earth, if they resist the light that breaks in upon them, are sure to be destroyed. Who has not looked with admiration upon the English government, and marked its course when pressed by public sentiment to adopt demanded reforms? Their history for centuries is a series of triumphs achieved by the growing intelligence, firmness and wisdom of the people, calling for reforms in government or in the social condition of the masses. We can, all of us, remember the agitation long and deep which preceded the glorious act of West India emancipation. If the government had withstood that appeal and refused to emancipate, I believe the refusal must have crushed the very throne itself. The people demanded the reform. The pulpit thundered and lightened -- the whole public mind rocked as with the upheavings of an earthquake. The only safety lay in yielding to their demands.

No Christian nation since the world began has been able to stand against the united prayers and testimony of God's church. No one has had strength to resist any reform which God's people have unitedly demanded. If they were seriously to determine on resistance, they would find God Himself arrayed against them. O how would He drive His judgment-chariot, axle-deep in their blood and bones! Let His people stand on His side and do His work; they may expect His interposing arm for their support, crowning their toils with glorious victory. This must be so, by a law as undeviating and unfailing as the veracity of Jehovah!

This principle applies to all organizations, benevolent or ecclesiastical. If they resist reform when growing light demands it, God will be against them, and His chariot will grind them to powder! What does He want of a church or a benevolent society that resists reform when light and truth demand it, and sets itself in array against the progress of His cause? He knows how to use them for beacons of warning if they refuse to be used as instruments of progress in doing good. Therefore if any people or associate body will not receive and obey the light, their ruin is sure. The best of all possible reasons for repentance is, that it is God's good pleasure. What! if the expression of God's will -- if the manifestation of His wishes to this effect cannot move men to repent, what can? What would you

think of a child who should say, "No matter what my parents think -- who cares for their feelings or their wishes? It is no reason at all for my conduct that my father or mother desire me to do as they say." What, I ask, would you think of such a child? Can anything be more monstrous than such a trampling underfoot of the most tender and sacred obligations?

Is it then no reason for you who are before me here today that God now commands you all to repent? Nay, more, that with tenderness He invites and entreats, and cries out, "How can I give thee up?"

REMARKS.

1. When light breaks in upon men, it is awful, and even terrifying if they only resist and rebel against it, gathering up their utmost strength like the ancient Jews, to oppose the claims of truth and of God. This is true of governments when they resist the light, oppose reform, and raise for odium's sake the senseless cry, fanaticism! FANATICISM!

2. But the occasion calls on me to apply these principles to the course pursued by some of the great benevolent societies of the day. We wait to know what they have done and are doing in regard to the great reforms of modern times. The American Tract Society is a great organization acting under a charter which allows them to publish only such matter as is approved by a publishing committee composed of six men, one from each of six leading evangelical denominations. All these are Northern men now, and I believe have always been so. If we inquire for the special circumstances under which they now act, we find that since the agitation of the slavery question at the North, the people of the South have become exceedingly sensitive lest some Anti-Slavery truth should come in among them in Northern books, and thus reach their slaves. They became jealous of the entire mass of Northern literature. The Tract Society, dreading to incur their jealousy, and anxious to make their publications acceptable to Southern people, have been in the practice of expunging Anti-Slavery sentiments wherever found in the volumes they thought best to publish. A great many choice books came before them, too valuable to be discarded, and yet some few pages or paragraphs of an Anti-Slavery truth raised a question which they met by expunging the passages. At first they did this without giving the public any notice of the fact. But when the fact came to be known, it was felt by very many to be great injustice to the authors and a fraud upon the public. They became alarmed and protested against the course. They exposed the obvious error of the Tract Society in mutilating books without giving notice of the fact. The result has been that the Tract Society were compelled to modify their course, so far as to advertise the public of the omissions they had made, whether the subject were baptism, slavery, or any other moral or religious question. But in one important respect they have continued on as before. They have taken particular pains to strike out every Anti-Slavery sentiment, whether in psalms and hymns, or in any other books.

Now some have stigmatized the Tract Society's committee as Pro-Slavery, but I do not believe they are Pro-Slavery in the sense of aiming to sustain slavery. They aim I suppose to be neutral on this question, and especially they mean to print nothing which would offend the people of the South or their Northern friends. This I take to be their policy. I believe it to be a wicked policy, but I do not know that they sin in pursuing it. They may think they are doing God service.

But I need not pursue this subject farther. The policy is one which we do not approve, which no good

man ought to approve, but it is one which prevails in a great many of the pulpits in our country -- I cannot say to their honor, or to the augmentation of their moral power.

3. What shall we do with men who being enlightened upon their duty, do not repent? By one who spoke in behalf of the Tract Society, you have been warned to be on your guard against the force of the sentiment of justice, and perhaps not without some occasion. Many are ready to cry out for fire to come down from heaven upon the men who seem not to keep pace with the demands of truth. But this is never the best way to reform abuses and bring sinners to repentance. God acts on the principle of the greatest possible forbearance. He forbears as long as He wisely can. He beseeches and entreats, and thus labors to secure the desired repentance and reform.

What then shall we do with offending nations, and with our own government when they impose upon us fugitive laws? Of course we are to set about their reformation. Do you ask, how? The way is open. The Christian church has it in her power to reform this nation. She has long held the balance of political power, and she holds it still. Let all Christian men say, "We will not sustain slavery; the men who are in league with it cannot have our votes." -- and the thing would be done. Let all Christian voters be united in this, and they could just as certainly elect the man of their choice as there should be another election. Let them try it. They have the consciences of men on their side, and they would find strength and help rising up where they did not expect it. If they did not succeed in the next election, they surely would succeed soon. Ere another election came round, politicians would say, "We must honor and please the church," just as they now say, "We must honor the South."

But the way to do this is not to turn slaveholders ourselves, and force our opinions down men's throats, and cast them from the church if they do not vote our ticket. The right way is to enlightenment on the subject -- to treat them kindly and yet with great fidelity, and to try to bring them over to the truth and the right by reasoning and persuasion. Substantially we should pursue the same methods of labor and influence that we adopt when we would change men's position on any moral question, the same as when we would convert sinners from sin to God.

In regard now to the Tract Society, shall I excommunicate them all at once? Would this avail anything? Shall we not rather attempt to persuade them as to what we think their duty? Shall we not try to convince them of the great mistake in their policy? What right have we to excommunicate them until we have expostulated?

But some of you say this has been done already. I ask if it has been done both kindly and earnestly, and with all the perseverance that the case demands?

But again the question returns, what shall be done by the church to abolish slavery? I answer, Let all her organizations speak out with decision and firmness. Let the Congregational Conference recently organized in Ohio take their stand and bear their solemn and earnest testimony. Let them send a commission bearing their fraternal exhortations to other bodies of Congregationalists -- to Iowa -- to Wisconsin -- to New England, -- wherever they can gain a hearing. But let us not cast off and condemn the Tract Society without a hearing. Who does not believe that it is in the power of the great Christian organizations of our country to reform that society?

4. There is another society formed for the dissemination of moral truth in its due proportions, not avoiding its bearings on the great sins of the times. No one can deny that it is always right to supply any defects in the labors and influence of the great American societies by constituting another society to do the whole work, as it should be done. This is one of the proper means to correct the evils of which we complain. We can support the new society, and this will be of itself a testimony against the objectionable course of the old. Hence if I were to give anything to the old, I would give much more to the new, both because I would have my donations bear a testimony for righteous principles, and because the new society will have for some time yet to come, few friends and patrons, while the old will have many.

5. Another question is often asked, which has an important bearing upon the subject of church communion. Shall we commune with an offending brother while we are laboring with him to reclaim him from his sin?

In my view the answer depends upon his relations as an arraigned man. I must make no man a sinner by construction. I must not assume that he is wrong, but wait for the proof of the fact. The common doctrine of law and justice is that I must assume my brother to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty. On this principle, the question of treatment should obviously be determined, embracing, of course, the question of church communion.

6. It is always wise to avail ourselves of the admissions of our opponents. If on the question of Slavery they concede that all good Northern men abhor it, let us admit and use this concession. It will be a powerful weapon in our hands.

7. It is always impolitic to represent our opponents to be farther from us than they really are. For example, it would be the height of folly for me to say -- The whole North American Church is for Slavery, defending and sustaining the system. If this were true, how greatly would the fact relieve the conscience of the South! Slaveholders would surely feel that the Christian sentiment of all those who were in a situation to judge in the case is in their favor. And if the fact were not true, it were much better I should not affirm it to be so. My affirming it will have much the same influence on Southern mind that the actual truth would have. Let me take care how I represent the church to be more in favor of Slavery than she is. Rather let us say, if the facts will sustain us in it, that we, Christian men of the North, are all agreed that Slavery is a great sin.

8. But there is yet another reason for the largest charity towards our Northern brethren. The want of charity serves to provoke rather than to convince or to convert. Suppose I meet a Northern brother, and accuse him of being pro-slavery, and try to make him a slaveholder by construction. If his judgment is not carried by the obvious justice of the charge, I am doing him to good. If he thinks himself innocent, he will of course feel himself wronged, and all my efforts with him are worse than useless.

Uncharitable measures never succeed. If even the Apostles, with all their miracles and tongues, had gone out with a bad spirit, they must have labored in vain. God suffers His own cause to experience a temporary defeat, rather than give success to men of a bad spirit. I have no doubt that in many cases the anti-slavery cause has been thrown aback by the bad spirit of its advocates. If we have erred in this

matter, we must repent. We can never hope for the blessing of God until we do.

Before I went to the Mediterranean, I had taken the stand in my congregation in New York city that no slaveholder could come to our communion. In that vast congregation some slaveholders of professed piety were almost always present, and the rebuke was being solemnly felt. The example was exerting a decidedly good influence. But when I came back, I soon found that a strange state of things had come about. Everything was hot and fiery. I felt bound to tell them plainly that they were casting out devils through Beelzebub, and by getting his spirit were really doing his work. This would never do. The cause of love and of human well-being could not be built up by uncharitableness and hate.

If, now, our General Government needs reform, (of which I have no doubt,) then let us forthwith employ all constitutional means and measures for its reform. Of the wisdom of doing all this no one can for a moment doubt.

So of the Tract Society, they have done good; let them have all due honor for what good they have done. Some of you may have been converted through the agency of their publications and labors. I cannot say that any man of you is a hypocrite because I find you giving your money and your prayers to the Tract Society. If you choose to give to that Society, do so. The opportunity will be afforded by every man to give to whichever Society he pleases.

As for voting for either of the two great party candidates, on a strongly pro-slavery platform, that question is in my mind easily settled. I can do no such thing. Sooner shall I cut off my own right hand than suffer it to drop a vote for such men, standing on such platforms.

It would be interesting and useful too, if there were time, to show how all great reforms naturally throw men into three great classes, viz. the Conservatives, the Radicals, and the Moderates. It were easy to show the philosophy of this classification, and how it results from the laws of mind and the action of men in society. It were still more important to inquire what are the mutual duties of these three classes towards each other. Scarce any topic more needs to be discussed and well understood at the present time. My hour is more than spent now, and I must not enlarge.

In some respects I am sorry, and in some respects I am not sorry to be called on to say so much on this subject of slavery -- its issues, and the duties of Christians in regard to it. There is the greatest need that these things should be investigated and well considered. The public mind will and must act on these questions, and the action taken is continually affecting the honor of Christianity and the welfare of the church and of souls, most fundamentally. It cannot, therefore, be amiss to bring this subject into the pulpit. Let it engage your serious attention, and more your hearts to seek divine wisdom in prayer.

My only regret to occupy your time on this subject lies in the fact that so many among us are all wrong, and need to be urged today to repent of all sin and yield up their hearts at once and forever to the service and fear of the Lord their God. For them, I fear it may be an evil to have their attention diverted, even for one Sabbath, from those great things that pertain to their present and everlasting peace.

Salvation Difficult to The Christian- Impossible to The Sinner-- and The Salvation of Sinners Impossible- No.'s 1 & 2

Lectures VII & VIII

September 15, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--1 Pet. 4:18: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

LECTURE VII.

From the connection of this passage, some have inferred that the apostle had his eye immediately upon the destruction of Jerusalem. They suppose this great and fearful event to be alluded to in the language, "For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" This may refer to the destruction of the city and temple of God's ancient people, yet the evidence for the opinion does not seem to be decisive. A reference to the event is possible and even probable. We know that when Jerusalem was destroyed, not one Christian perished. They had timely notice in the signs Christ had already given them, and perceiving those signs in season, they all fled to Pella, on the east of the Jordan, and hence were not involved in the general destruction.

But whether Peter refers to this particular event or not, one thing is plain: he recognizes a principle in the government of God, namely, that the righteous will be saved, though with difficulty, but the wicked will not be saved at all. It is plain throughout this whole chapter that Peter had his mind upon the broad distinction between the righteous and the wicked--a distinction which was strikingly illustrated in the destruction of Jerusalem, and which can never lack illustrations under the moral and providential government of a holy God.

The salvation of the righteous, though certain, is difficult. Though saved, they will be scarcely saved. On this basis rests the argument of the Apostle;-- that if their salvation be so difficult, the sinner cannot be saved at all. His salvation is utterly impossible. This is plainly the doctrine of the text. It had a striking exemplification in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the passage, as I have said, may or may not have reference to that event. All students of the Bible know that this great destruction is often held up as a type or model of the final judgment of the world. It was a great event on the page of Jewish history, and certainly had great significance as an illustration of God's dealings towards our sinning race.

In pursuing this subject, I purpose to show,

I. Why the salvation of the righteous is difficult;

II. Why the salvation of the sinner is impossible;

III. Answer the question of the text--Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

I. Why the salvation of the righteous is difficult.

The difficulty in the salvation of either the righteous or the wicked turns not on any want of mercy in the heart of God. It is not because God is implacable and hard to be appeased: this is not the reason why the salvation of even the sinner is impossible.

Again, it is not in any lack of provision in the atonement to cover all the wants of sinners, and even to make propitiation for the sins of the world. The Bible nowhere raises the question as to the entire sufficiency of the atonement to do all that an atonement can do or need do for the salvation of our race.

But, positively, one difficulty is found in the nature of God's government, and in the nature of free agency in this world. God has so constituted man as to limit Himself to one mode of government over him. This must be moral, and not physical. It must be done by action upon mind as mind, and not by such force as applies legitimately to move matter. If the nature of the case admitted the use of physical force, it would be infinitely easy for God to move and sway such puny creatures as we are. That physical omnipotence which sweeps the heavens and upholds the universe could find no difficulty in moving lumps of clay so small and insignificant as we. But mind cannot be moved as God moves the planets. Physical force can have no direct application to mind for the purpose of determining its moral action. If it should act upon mind as it does upon matter, we certainly know there could be neither moral action nor moral character in such beings as we are. We could not have even a conception of moral conduct. How then could the thing itself possibly exist?

Men are placed under God's government with such a created constitution and such established relations to it that they must act freely. God has made them capable of controlling their own moral conduct by the free action of their own wills, and now, He expects and requires them to choose between his service and rebellion. Such being the case, the great difficulty is to persuade sinners to choose right. God is infinitely ready to forgive them if they will repent; but the great problem is to persuade them to do so. They are to be prepared for heaven. For this, an entire change of moral character is requisite. This could be done with the utmost ease, if nothing more were needful than to take them into some Jordan stream and wash them, physically, as if from some external pollution, and God should be pleased to employ physical power for this purpose. But the change needed being in its nature moral, the means employed must be moral. All the influence must be of a moral character.

Now every body knows that a moral agent must be able, in the proper sense of this term, to resist every degree of moral influence. Else he cannot be a moral agent. His action must be responsible action, and therefore must be performed of his own free will and accord, no power interposing of such a sort or in such measure as to overbear or interfere with his own responsible agency. Hence the necessity of moral means to convert sinners, to gain their voluntary consent in this great change from

sin to holiness, from disobeying to obeying God. And hence the need that this change be wrought, ultimately, by moral means alone. God may and does employ physical agencies to act morally, but never to act physically. He may send sickness, to reach the heart, but not to purge away any sort of physical sin.

There are a great many difficulties in the way of converting sinners, and saving them when once converted--many which people are prone to overlook. Hence we must go into some detail, in order to make this matter plain.

One class of these difficulties is the result of an abused constitution. When Adam and Eve were created, their appetites were doubtless mild and moderate. They did not live to please themselves and gratify their own appetites. Their deep and all engrossing desire and purpose to please God was the law of their entire activities. For a time, therefore, they walked in holy obedience, until temptation came in a particular form, and they sinned. Sin introduced another law--the law of self-indulgence. Every one knows how terribly this law tends to perpetuate and strengthen itself. Every one knows the fearful sway it gains so rapidly over the whole being when once enthroned in power. Now, therefore, the beautiful order and subordination which in holiness obtained throughout all their active powers, was broken up and subverted under the reign of sin. Their appetites lost their proper balance. No longer subordinate to reason and to God, they became inordinate, clamorous, despotic.

Precisely in this does sin consist--in the irrational gratification of the appetites and passions. This is the form in which it appeared in our first parents. Such are its developments in all the race.

Now in order to save men, they must be brought back from this, and restored to a state in which God and reason control the free action of the mind, and appetite is held in due subjection.

Now here let me be understood. The want of balance--the moral disorder of which I speak--is not this, that the will has become enslaved, and has lost its inherent power of free moral action. This is not the difficulty, but the thing is, that the sensibility has been enormously developed, and the mind accustoms itself to yield to the demands it makes for indulgence.

Here is the difficulty. Some have formed habits and have confirmed them until they have become immensely strong, and it becomes exceedingly difficult to induce them to break away. The rescue must be effected by moral, not by physical means, and the problem is to make the moral means powerful enough for the purpose.

Again, we must notice among the difficulties in question, the entanglements of a multitude of circumstances. I have often thought it well for Christians that they do not see all their difficulties at first. If they did, its discouraging effect might be disastrous. Coming upon the mind while it is poising the elements of the great question--a life of sin or a life of holiness; or after conversion, falling in their power upon the mind while yet its purpose to serve God is but little confirmed, the result might be not only greatly trying but perhaps fatal. But the ways of God in this as in all things are admirable. He does not let them see all their future difficulties at first, but lets them come up from time to time in succession as they have strength to meet them and overcome.

The great difficulty is, living to please self rather than God. It is wonderful to see how much this difficulty is enhanced by the agency Satan and sin have had in the framework of society. It would seem that a bait is held before every man, whatever his position and circumstances may be. One cannot but be astonished at the number of baits provided and laid in the habits and usages--we might perhaps say, in the very construction and constitution of society. See how men are interlocked in the relations of life, partners in business, associates in pleasure, attached in the more endearing and permanent relations of life, husbands and wives--lovers and loved, parents and children: how many influences of a moral sort, and often tempting to sin, grow out of each, and O how many, out of all these complicated and various relations! Youth of both sexes are educated--perhaps together--perhaps apart--yet in either case there arises a host of social attractions, and in the history of the race, who does not know that often the resulting influences are evil? The troubles and cares of business--how often do they "like a wild deluge come," and overwhelm the soul that else would "consider its ways and turn its feet unto God's testimonies." How complicated are the sources of irritation that provoke men's spirits to ill temper and ensnare them thus into sin! Many times we marvel and say--what amazing grace is needful here! What power, less than Almighty, could pluck God's children from such a network of snares and toils, and plant them at last on the high ground of established holiness!

There is a man chained to a wife who is a constant source of temptation and trial to him. There is a wife who sees scarce a peaceful moment in all her life with her husband;--all is vexation and sorrow of spirit.

Many parents have children who are a constant trial to them. They are indolent, or they are reckless; or they are self-willed and obstinate; their own tempers perhaps are chafed and they become a sore temptation to a similar state of chafed and fretted temper in their parents. On the other hand children may have equal trials in their parents. Where can you find a family in which the several members are not in some way a source of trial to each other! Sometimes the temptation comes in an appeal to their ambition and pride. Their children have some qualities for the parents to be proud of, and this becomes a snare to parents and children both. O, how complicated are the temptations which cross and re-cross every pathway of human life! Who but God can save against the power of such temptations?

Many children have been brought up in error. Their parents have held erroneous opinions and they have had their moral constitution saturated with this influence from their cradle and upwards. How terrible such an influence must inevitably be!

Or, the business of their parents may have been such as to miseducate them--as the business of rum-selling, for example, and who does not know how terribly this kind of influence cleaves to a man even as his skin and seems to become a part of him by pervading the very tissues of his soul!

When the mind gives itself up to self-indulgence and a host of appetites became clamorous and impetuous, what a labour it must be to bring the soul into harmony with God. How many impulses must be withstood and overcome; how great the change that must be wrought in both the physical and moral state of the man. No wonder that the devil flatters himself that he has got the race of depraved men into his snares and can lead them captive at his will. Think how many thousand years he has been planning and scheming--studying human nature and the laws of depravity, that he may make himself

fully master of the hellish art of seducing moral agents away from God and holiness. The truth is, we scarcely begin to realize how artful a devil we have to encounter. We scarcely begin to see how potent an adversary is he who, "like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour," and who must be resisted and overcome, or we are not saved.

Many are not aware of the labour necessary to get rid of the influence of a bad education. I speak now of education in the broad, comprehensive sense--embracing all that molds the habits, the temper, the affections, as well as develops the intellect. Oft times the affections become unhappily attached, yet the attachment is exceedingly strong, and it shall seem like the sundering of the very heart-strings, to break it off. This attachment may fasten upon friends, wives, husbands, or children; it may make gold its god and bow down to such an image. Sometimes we are quite inadequate to judge of the strength of this attachment, except as we may see what strange and terrible means God is compelled to use to sever it. O how does He look with careful, tearful pity upon his entangled and endangered children, marking the bands that are coiled around their hearts to bind them to earth, and contriving how He can best sunder those bands and draw back their wandering hearts to himself. We know He never does afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men--never his people but for their profit that they may partake of his holiness; yet who does not know how often He is compelled to bring tears from their eyes; to wring their hearts with many sorrows; to tear from them many a fond and loved object of their affections--else He could not save them from their propensities towards sin and self-indulgence. O what a work is this which Christ undertakes that He may save his people from their sins! How strange and how complicated are the difficulties! Who could overcome them but God!

Again, the darkness of nature is so great and so gross, that it must be an exceedingly great work to save them from its influence, and pour the true light of God through their intelligence. It is by no means sufficient to know the mere theory of religion, or to know all of religion that the human mind, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, can know. Indeed Christians never know themselves except as they see themselves in God's own light. They need to see God's character in its real nature, and then in view of what God is, they can see and estimate themselves rightly. This is one important part of the truth on this subject; and another point is, that God himself by His Spirit becomes the teacher of the humble and trustful, and so enlightens the understanding that divine truth can be seen in its real colors and just proportions. And now do you say--O God, show me what I am and make me know my own heart thoroughly? Did you ever find yourself in doubt and perplexity about your own state, and then, crying for help and light unto God, has He not answered your prayer by first revealing Himself and his own character, so that in the light reflected from his character, you saw your own, and in the light of his principles of action you saw your own, and in the light shown you as to his heart you also saw your own? You do not see your own state of mind by simply inverting your mental eye and looking within, but by being drawn so near to God that you come into real and deep sympathy with Him. Then seeing and knowing God, you see and know yourself. You cannot help seeing whether your heart responds in sympathy and aim with his, and this very fact reveals your own heart to yourself. It is wonderful how much the Christian learns of himself by truly learning God. And it is not less a matter of wonder and admiration that Christians should experience such moral transformations by simply knowing God and by being drawn into sympathy with Him the more as the more they know Him. The great difficulty is that Christians are shy of God--shy--especially as soon as they relapse into the spirit of the world. Then they find an almost resistless inclination to keep off, to hold themselves aloof from anything like close communion with God. Hence God is compelled to draw them back, to discipline

them with afflictions, to spoil their idols and dash in pieces their graven images. Always awake and on the alert--so the Bible represents it: "He that keepeth Israel shall never slumber or sleep." By day and by night He watcheth, and "keepeth them as the apple of his eye!" How wonderful is such condescension and loving kindness!

Finally, the greatness of the change requisite in passing from sin to real holiness--from Satan's kingdom into full fitness for Christ's, creates no small difficulty in the way of saving even the converted. It is difficult, nay impossible, to make men see this all at once. And indeed if the Christian were to see it all at once, it would not unlikely overwhelm him in despair. Hence God wisely lets him see enough to impress strongly his need of divine aid, and enough to make him cry out--"Who then can be saved?"

REMARKS.

But I must make some remarks in application of the subject so far discussed, and reserve the consideration of our remaining points to another time.

1. We see why the scriptures are so full of exhortations to Christians to run, **RUN**, and especially to run by rule. He that striveth for the mastery must by all means strive "lawfully," i. e., according to the rules in such cases made and provided. So let the Christian be careful not only that he runs, but that he runs the right way and in the right manner.

2. We see also why the Christian is exhorted in like manner to fight, grasping the sword, buckling on the shield, putting on the helmet of salvation, preparing himself in all points for a warlike march through an enemy's country, where fighting must be looked for day and night.

3. Coupled with this is the fitting exhortation to stand fast--to plant his feet firmly and brace himself with all his strength as if the enemies' hosts were about to charge with the deadly bayonet. Stand fast, their Captain shouteth; play the man for your king and for yourselves, for the enemy are down upon you in strength and in wrath!

Agonize too, struggle, for fierce will the conflict be. It is no contemptible foe whom you must face. The scriptures represent that only the violent take this kingdom of God, and they do it "by force." What could be more expressive of the energy to be put forth by Christ's people if they would win the victory and wear the crown?

We see why Christians are represented as wrestling, like men in personal struggle for the mastery. They have a personal enemy to fight and to subdue.

They must however give all diligence. A lazy man cannot get to heaven. To get there costs toil and labor. For his will must be sanctified. The entire voluntary department of his being must be renovated. It is remarkable how the Christian warfare develops the will. Not an obstinate will--not a self-will, do I mean, but a strong and firm will. The man, disciplined in the Christian conflict, cries out, I must and I will believe; I will trust.

The Christian is also commanded to watch--not to close his eyes for a little more sleep and a little more slumber. His condition is one of hourly peril, and therefore, what Christ says to one, he says to all--WATCH. We can see the reason for this in the light revealed from our subject.

We see also why the Christian is to pray always, as well as to agonize and watch. It is not all to be done by his own unaided exertions. In fact, one of his chief exertions should turn upon this very point--that he pray always, "watching thereunto," lest any thing draw his heart down from the throne of his Great Helper.

We may also see why Christians are exhorted to separate themselves from the world. They are told they must hang the old man upon the cross. To this there are no exceptions. Whoever would be saved must be crucified--that is, as to "the old man and his deeds." The crucifixion of Christ is an emblem of this, and serves, therefore, in a measure, to show what this must and should be.

Does any one suppose that the whole intent of Christ's crucifixion is to meet the demands of the violated law? Not so; but it was also to be an emblem of the work to be wrought upon and within the Christian's soul. Its old selfish habitudes must be broken up and its powerful tendencies to evil be slain.

Mark also why Christians are exhorted to spend the time of their sojourning here in fear, and to walk softly and carefully as before God, through all the meanderings of their pilgrimage. In all holy conversation--so reads his book of counsel--being steadfast, immovable, always abounding in work--the work, too, of the Lord, as knowing that so his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Every weight must he lay aside--must not encumber himself with many cares--must not overload himself with gold, nor even with care and effort to get it--must be watchful most diligently on this side and on that, remembering, for both his quickening and his comfort, that Christ, too, with his holy angels, watches evermore over him, saying, "I am determined to save you if I can, but I cannot unless I can first gain and then retain your attention, and then rouse up your hearts to the utmost diligence, coupled with the most simple-hearted faith." O what a conflict there must be to rescue each saved sinner from the jaws of Satan and from the thralldom of his own lusts, and finally bring him home, washed and holy, to his home in the heavens! No wonder the Bible should speak of the Christian as being saved only through much difficulty.

Again; sinners, if they will only exercise a little common sense and philosophy, can readily account for the faults of Christians. See that husband with a pious wife. He treats her badly, and day after day annoys her by his ill-temper and little abuses. The children, too, trouble her, and all the more for the example her husband sets before them. Now he may very likely, in some of his moods of mind and temper, drop some reflections upon her piety, and upon the gospel she professes; but in his more rational moments he will be compelled to say--"No wonder my wife has these faults; I have never helped her at all; I have only hindered her in all her Christian course, and I know I have been a continual source of vexation and irritation to her. No wonder she has had faults. I am ashamed that I have done so much to create and multiply them, and so very little ever in any way to improve her character."

When candid men come to consider all these things--the human constitution, the tendency to unbelief,

the impulses towards self-indulgence, and the strength of temptation, they cannot but see that there is abundant occasion for all those faults in Christian character and conduct which they are wont to criticize so stringently. Yet often, perhaps commonly, wicked men make no allowance for the faults of Christians, but assume that every Christian ought to be spotless, while every sinner may make so much apology for his sin as quite to shield his conscience from conviction of guilt. Nothing, therefore, is more common than for impenitent men to triumph, devil-like, over any instance of stumbling in a professed Christian. Why don't they rather sympathize with their difficulties and their great work--as real philanthropists? That brother who has a Christian sister, does not help her at all, but, on the contrary tries to ensnare her into sin. He should rather say--"I will not be a stumbling block to my sister. If I cannot directly help her on in her Christian course, at least I will not hinder her." Let the impenitent husband say--"My dear Christian wife, I know something about her difficulties; God forbid that I should play into the devil's hands, and try to help the devil on in his devilish work." Sinner, why don't you abstain from ensnaring your Christian friend? There is One above who cares for him, who patiently toils for his salvation, and watches day and night over his progress, and who is pledged to save him at last. And can you hope to gain the favor of that Holy and Just Being, by trying to ensnare and offend any of his little ones?

LECTURE VIII.

September 29, 1852

THE SALVATION OF SINNERS IMPOSSIBLE--No. 2

Text.--1 Pet. 4:18: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

I said in a former sermon--that the doctrine of the text is that the salvation of the righteous is difficult and that of the sinner impossible. In that sermon I discussed at length the first part of this subject, showing how and why the salvation of the righteous is difficult. I am now to take up the remaining part and show how and why the salvation of the wicked is impossible.

Here let me premise in general that by the righteous is not meant those who have never sinned. It could not be difficult to save such as had not sinned against God. They are in fact already saved. But these righteous ones are those who having been sinners, now come to exercise faith in Christ, and of course become "heirs of that righteousness which is by faith." Vitally important to be considered here is the fact that the governmental difficulty in the way of being saved, growing out of your having sinned, even greatly, is all removed by Christ's atonement. No matter now how great your guilt, if you will only have faith in Jesus and accept of his atonement as the ground of pardon for your sins.

Hence the difficulty in the way of saving sinners is not simply that they have sinned, but that they will not now cease from sinning and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The salvation of sinners is therefore impossible,

- 1. Because it is impossible for God by any means He can wisely employ, to persuade them to desist from sinning. They are so wicked and so perverse that they abuse to greater sin the very

best means God employs to bring them to repentance. Hence God cannot wisely save them.

When I say it is impossible for God to convert them, I do not imply that God lacks physical power to do anything which is the proper subject of such power. On this point there can be no question. But how can physical omnipotence be brought to bear directly upon mind and upon the heart?

Again, let us consider, that it may not be wise for God to bring all the moral power of his universe to bear upon the sinner in this world. If this were wise and practicable, it might avail--for ought we can know;--but since He does not do it, we infer that He refrains for some wise reason.

Certain limitations are fixed in the divine wisdom to the amount of moral influence which God shall employ in the case of a sinner. It is in view of this fact that I say--God finds it impossible to gain the sinner's consent to the gospel by any means that He can wisely employ. He goes as far as is really wise and as far as is on the whole good. This is undoubtedly the fact in the case. Yet all this does not avail. Hence it becomes impossible that the sinner should be saved.

- 2. Again, the sinner cannot be saved, because salvation from sin is an indispensable condition of salvation from hell. The being saved from sin must come first in order. Every sinner knows, and on reflection and self-inspection, he must see that his state of mind is such that he cannot respect himself. The elements of blessedness are not therefore in him and cannot be until he meets the demands of his own moral nature.

He knows also that he does not want to have anything to do with God--is afraid of God--both dreads and hates his presence--is afraid to die and go so near to God as death bears all men. He knows that all his relations to God are unpleasant in the extreme: how certainly then may he know that he is utterly unprepared for heaven.

Now the sinner must be saved from this guilty and abominable state of mind. No change is needed in God, neither in his character, government, or position towards sin; but the utmost possible change and all the needed change is requisite on the part of the sinner. If salvation implies fitness for heaven, and if this implies ceasing from sin, then of course it is naturally and forever impossible that any sinner can be saved without holiness.

- 3. The peace of heaven forbids that you should go there in your sins. I know you think of going to heaven; you rather expect you shall go there at last; your parents are there--as you hope and believe--and for this reason you the more want to go, that you may behold them in their glory. O, say you, should I not like to be where my father and mother are? And do you think you can follow them, in your sins? What could you do in heaven if you were there? What could you say? What kind of songs could you sing there? What sort of happiness, congenial to your heart, could you hope to find there?

Your pious mother in heaven--O how changed! You heard her last words on earth--for they were words of prayer for your poor guilty soul; but now she shines and sings above,

all holy and pure. What sympathy could there be between you and her in heaven? Remember what Christ said when some one told him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to see him. "Who," said he, "is my mother and who are my brethren? He that doeth the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The law of sympathy therefore in heaven turns not on earthly relationship, but on oneness of heart--on the common and mutual spirit of love and obedience towards their great common Father.

Do you then expect that your mother would be glad to see you--that she would spread her mantle over you and take you up to heaven? Oh, if she were told that you were at the gate, she would hasten down to say--O my sinning child, you cannot enter heaven. Into this holy place nothing can by any means enter that "worketh abomination or maketh a lie." You cannot--no, you cannot come!

If it were left to your own mother to decide the question of your admission, you could not come in. She would not open heaven's gate for your admission. She knows you would disturb the bliss of heaven. She knows you would mar its purity and be an element of discord in its sympathies and in its songs.

You know it need not have been so. You might have given your heart to God in season, and then He would have shed his love abroad in your soul, and given you the Holy Ghost, and made you ripe for heaven. But you would not. All was done for you that God could wisely do; all that Christ could do; all that the spirit of God could consistently do: but all was vain: all came to naught and availed nothing because you would not forego your sins--would not renounce them, even for everlasting life. And now will heaven let you in? No. Nothing that worketh abomination can by any means go in there.

- 4. Besides, it would not be for your own comfort to be there. You were never quite comfortable in spiritual society on earth; in the prayer meeting you were unhappy. As one individual said here: "O, what a place this is! I cannot go across the street without being spoken to about my soul. How can I live here?"

Let me tell you--it will be just as bad--nay much worse for you in heaven. That can be no place for you, sinner, since you hate worst of all things on earth, those places and scenes which are most like heaven.

- 5. The justice of God will not allow you to participate in the joys of the saints. His relations to the universe make it indispensable that He should protect his saints from such society as you. They have had their discipline of trial in such society long enough: the scenes of their eternal reward will bring everlasting relief from this torture of their holy sympathies. O how will God, their Infinite Father, throw around them the shield of his protection upon the mountains of paradise, that lift their heads eternally under the sunlight of his glory!

His sense of propriety forbids that he should give you a place among his pure and trustful children. It would be so unfitting--so unsuitable! It would throw such discord into the sweet songs and sympathies of the holy!

Besides, as already hinted, it could be no kindness to you. It could not soothe, but only chafe and fret your spirit. O if you were obliged to be there, how would it torment and irritate your soul!

If then, the sinner cannot be saved and go to heaven, where shall he appear?

The question is a strong negation. They shall not appear among the righteous and the saved. This is a common form of speaking. Nehemiah said--"Shall such a man as I flee?" No, indeed. This form of question is one of the strongest forms of negation that can be expressed in our language.

Where then shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? In no desirable place or position--certainly. Not with the righteous in the judgment, for so God's word has often and most solemnly affirmed. Christ himself affirms that, when all nations shall be gathered before him for judgment He will separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. This separation, as the description shows, brings the righteous on the right hand and the wicked on the left. And it should be considered that this statement is made by Christ Himself and that if any being in the universe knows, it must be He to whom is "given authority to execute judgment." He says He will separate them one from another according not to their national relations, or their family connections, but according to their character as friends or enemies to God.

O, what a separation must this be in families and among dear earthly friends! On this side will be a husband--on that a wife; here a brother and there a sister; here one of two friends and there the other--parted forever--forever! If this great division were to be struck between you today according to present character, how fearful the line of separation it would draw! Ask yourselves where it would pass through your own families and among the friends you love. How would it divide College classes--and O, how would it smite many hearts with terror and consternation!

III. Answer the question of the text--Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

It is asked, where shall the ungodly appear? I answer, certainly not in heaven, nor on the heavenly side. But they must be in the judgment, for God has said, He would bring all the race into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. All are to be there, but some are on the right hand and some on the left.

1. The ungodly and the sinner will appear in that day among the damned--among lost angels, doomed to the place prepared of old for their eternal abode. So Jesus has Himself told us. The very words of their sentence are on record: "Then will He say to them on his left hand--Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is indeed the only place for which they are prepared; and this the only society to which their hearts are congenial. They have of choice belonged to Satan's government on earth: at least in the sense of doing precisely what he would have them do. Now therefore, after such a training in selfishness and sin, they are manifestly fit for no other and better society than that of Satan and his angels.

Let it not surprise any of you to be told that the amiable sinners of earth are preparing themselves--(remaining enemies to God and radically selfish)--for the society of the arch spirit of evil. Just observe what restraints are thrown around sinners here. Mark how obviously they feel restrained, and show that they are restive and ill at ease. It may be read out of their very hearts that they would be glad to be vastly more wicked and selfish, that is, in their external life--if they might. It is wonderful to see in how many ways God's providence has walled around the sinner's pathway and hedged him in from outbreking sin.

But let these walls be torn away; let all regard to his reputation among the good perish forever from his soul; let despair of ever gaining God's favor take full possession of his heart, and rivet its iron grasp upon him: then what will he become? Take away all the restraints of civil society--of laws and customs--of Christian example, and of Christian society; let there be no more prayer made for him by pitying Christian friends--no more counsel given, or entreaty used to persuade him towards the good,--then tell me, where is the sinner? How terribly will sin work out its dreadful power to corrupt and madden the soul! Bring together myriads of desperate wretches, in the madness of their despair and rage and wrath against God and all the good, and O what a fearful world would they make! What can be conceived more awful! Yet this is the very world for which sinners are now preparing, and the only one for which they will be found in the judgment to be prepared.

2. As this is the only world for which the sinner is prepared, so is it the only one which is appropriate and fitting, the case being viewed in respect to his influence for mischief. Here only, here in this prison-house of woe and despair, can sinners be effectually prevented from doing any further mischief in God's kingdom. Here they are cut off from all possibility of doing any more harm in God's universe.

In this earthly state one sinner destroys much good, Each and every sinner does much evil. God looks on, not unconcerned, but with amazing patience, He suffers a great deal of evil to be done, for the sake of securing an opportunity to try the power of forbearance and love upon the sinner's heart. You are abusing his love and defeating all its kind designs, but still God waits, till the point is reached where forbearance ceases to be virtue. Beyond this point, how can God wait longer?

Here you find ample room for doing mischief. Many are around you whom you influence to evil and urge on towards hell. Some of them would be converted but for your influence to hold them back and ensnare their souls. If this were the place, I could name and call out some of you who are exerting a deadly influence upon your associates. Ah to think of the souls you may ruin forever! God sees them and sees how you are playing into the devil's hands to drag them down with you to an eternal hell. But ere long He will take you away from this sphere of doing evil. He will for ever cut off your connection with those who can be influenced to evil, and leave around you only those associates who are ruined, despairing, and maddened in sin like yourself. There He will lock you up, throw away the key, and let you rave on, and swear on, and curse on, and madden your guilty soul more and more forever! O what inmates are those in this prison-house of the guilty and the lost! Why should not God fit up such a place for such beings, so lost to all good, and so given up to all the madness and guilt of rebellion?

There alone can sinners be made useful. They refused to make themselves useful by their voluntary agency on earth; now God will make use of them in hell for some good. Do you ask me if I talk about sin being made useful? Yes, to be sure I do. God never permits anything to occur in his universe, but He extracts some good from it, overruling its influence, or making the correction and punishment of it a means of good. This is a great consolation to the holy, that no sinner can exist from whom God will not bring out some good. This principle is partially developed in society here, under civil government. The gallows is not the greatest evil in the world, nor the most unmixed evil. Murder is much worse. States prisons are not the greatest earthly evils. Government can make great use of those men who will not obey law. It can make them examples and lift them up as beacons of warning to show the evil of disobeying wholesome laws. A great many men have had strong and useful impressions made on their minds as riding through Auburn on the Rail Road, they have marked those lofty frowning walls and battlements which enclose and guard the culprits immured within. Many a hard heart has quailed before those walls, and the terrors of those cells behind. If the outside view does not avail to awe the spirit of transgression, give them the inside view and some of its heart-desolating experience. These things do good. They tame the passion for evil-doing and impress a salutary fear on the hardened and reckless. If so under all the imperfections of human government, how much more under the perfect administration of the divine!

God cannot afford to lose your influence in his universe. He will rejoice to use you for the glory of his mercy, if you will; O yes, He will put away your sins far as the East is from the West, and will put a robe of beauty and glory upon you, and a sweet harp in your hands, and a song of praise on your lips, and the melody of heaven's love in your heart, all these, if you will;--but if you will not, then He has other attributes besides mercy that need to be illustrated. Justice will come in for its claim, and to illustrate this He will make you an example of the bitter misery of sinning. He will put you deep in hell; and the holy, beholding you there, will see that God's kingdom is safe and pure, and in their everlasting song they will shout, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest."

This is the only way in which God can make you useful in his kingdom, if you will not repent. He has tried every means of bringing you to repentance, but all in vain; He cannot get your consent. Of course there is no alternative but to make you an example to deter all other moral agents from sinning.

There is no other way for God to meet the demands of the public weal, but to make you an example to show his abhorrence of sin. God is most thoroughly economical of his resources. He husbands every thing to the very best account. Every thing must, under his hand, be made conducive in some way to the general good. Even of your misery He will be as economical as He can, and will carefully turn it all to the very best account. Every groan and every throb and pang of your agonized soul will be turned to use. Yes, rely upon it, all this agony, which does you no good, but is to you only unmingled and unalleviated woe, will be a warning beacon, under God's hand, crying out in tones of thunder--Stand away! stand away! lest you come into this place of torment; stand afar from sin--fear this awful sin--watch against it, for it is an awful thing to sin against Jehovah. I have tried it, and here I am in woe unutterable! O what a testimony, when all hell shall roll up one mighty accumulated groan--a groan, whose awful voice shall be--Stand in awe and sin not, for God is terrible in his judgments upon the guilty.

O sinner, think of it. God wants you now to cry out to every fellow-sinner, and warn him away from the brink of hell. Will you do it? What are you in fact doing? Are you preparing yourself to go out as a missionary of light and love and mercy to the benighted? Are you pluming your wings as an angel of mercy to bear the messages of salvation? O no! you refuse to do this, or anything of the sort. You disdain to preach such a gospel and to preach it so! But God will make you preach it in another way; for as I said, He is thoroughly economical of the resources of his kingdom, and all must do something in some way for his glory. He will have everything preach--saints preach and sinners preach; yea, sinners in hell must preach for God and for his truth. He will make your very groans and tears--those "tears that ever fall, but not in Mercy's sight"--they will preach, and will tell over and over the dreadful story of mercy abused and sin persisted in, and waxing worse and worse, till the bolts of vengeance broke at last upon your guilty head! Over and over will those groans, and tears repeat the fearful story, so that when the angels shall come from the remotest regions of the universe, they shall cry out--What is here? What mean those groans? What mean those flames, wreathing around their miserable victims? Ah! the story told then will make them cry aloud--Why will God's creatures sin against his throne? Can there be such madness in beings gifted with reason's light?

These angels know that the only thing that can secure public confidence in a ruler is fidelity in the execution of his law. Hence it is to them no wonder that, there being sin to punish, God should punish it with most exemplary severity. They expect this, and seeing its awful demonstrations before their eyes only serves to impress the more deeply on their souls the holiness and justice of the great and blessed God.

REMARKS.

1. From this standpoint we can easily see what we are to understand by the doctrine of election--a doctrine often mis-stated, and often perverted to a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The simple and plain view of it is, that God, foreseeing all the future of your existence as perfectly as if all were in fact present, determined to deal with you according to your voluntary course; determined to offer you the gospel, and on your refusal of it, to give you over to the doom of those who deny the Lord that bought them. Election is no new or different plan of divine administration, aside from and unlike what the Bible reveals as the plan of saving men through the gospel. It is this very plan of which the Bible is full, only that it contemplates this plan as framed by the divine Mind "before the world began."

2. If you will now consent to give your heart to God, you can be saved. No election will hinder you. The doctrine of election is simply the fact that God sends forth his Spirit to save as many as by the best system of influences He wisely can save; and surely this never can hinder any sinner from repenting and gaining salvation, for the very good reason that this plan contemplates saving and not damning men, as its object, and is in fact the sinner's only hope.

Come then, repent and believe the gospel if you would be saved. No election will hinder you, and neither will it save you without your own repentance unto life.

How then shall the case turn with you? Almost all who are ever converted are brought in, early in life.

Not one in a hundred is converted after the age of forty. The old among the converts are always few--only one among a host--one in a long space of time; like scattering beacon lights upon the mountain tops, that the aged may not quite despair of salvation. But God is intensely interested in saving the young, for He needs and loves to use them in his service. O how his heart goes forth after the young! How often has my soul been affected as I have thought of his parental interest for the salvation of this great multitude of youth! They come here from pious homes, freighted with the prayers of pious fathers and mothers,--and what shall be the result? What has been the result, as thus far developed, with you? Has any thing been really secured as yet? Is any thing fixed and done for eternity? How many times have you been called to decide, but have decided wrong--all wrong? You have been pressed earnestly with God's claims, and many a time have prayers and groans gone forth from the Christian heart of this whole community; but ah! where are you still? Not yet safe; ah, in greater peril than ever. Often reprov'd, hardening your neck; and what next? Suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. Suppose even now the curtain should drop--you are dead! And whither, then, goes the undying, guilty soul?

3. How great the mistake made by Universalists, that all men will be saved, when the Bible holds that even the salvation of the righteous is difficult, and that of the sinner, impossible. How strangely they misread the whole Bible! Go not in their ways, O ye youth of Oberlin!

But what are you doing? Do you flatter yourselves that the work of salvation is all so easy that it may be safely and surely done during a few of life's last moments? Will you presume, as the man did who said he should need but five minutes to prepare to die? Hear his story. What was the result of his system? Disease came on. It smote him with its strong hand. Delirium set in. Reason tottered and fell from her throne, and so he died! Go on, thou young man; drive on, headlong and reckless; make a bold business of sinning, and bear it on with bold front and high hand; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment! Consider what tidings we hear of our former pupils who once sat as you now sit, and once heard the gospel as you may hear it now. There, one is dead; and now another--and now another. In rapid succession they drop from the stage of mortal life--and what next? What more? Soon we shall meet them in the fearful judgment!

Brethren, what will the universe say of us, if we neglect to labour for the salvation of these precious youth? What will the parents of these dear youth say to us when we shall meet them at the Saviour's bar?

I have spoken to you of the difficulties and the struggles of the Christian--more and greater far than the ungodly are usually aware of;--those agonies of prayer, those conflicts against temptation; out of all which it is only great grace that can bring him forth, conqueror and more than conqueror. If he is saved with so much difficulty, how does it become you to strive to enter in at the strait gate? Are you aware that the smooth sea of temptation bears you on to the breakers of death? Were you ever at Niagara? How smooth and deceitful those waters, as they move along quite up above the draft of the suction from below. But lower down, see how those same waters roar, and dash, and foam, and send up their thick mists to the heavens above you. Yet in the upper stream you glide gently and noiselessly along, dreaming of no danger, and making no effort to escape. In a moment you are in the awful current, dashing headlong down; and where are you now?

And what should you do? Like Bunyan's Christian pilgrim, put your fingers in both ears, and run, shouting, Life! life! eternal LIFE! How many of you are sliding along on the smooth, deceitful stream, above, yet only just above the awful rapids and the dreadful cataract of death! What if, this night, delirium should seize upon you? Or what if the Spirit should leave you forever, and it should be said of you, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone?"

What do you say? Do I hear you saying, "If salvation is possible for me--if by putting forth the whole energy of my will I can ensure it, O let me do so! Help me, O ye ministers of Christ's gospel! Help me, ye Christians, who pray between the porch and the altar! Help me, O ye heavens of heavens, for this is a thing of life and death, and the redemption of the soul is most precious!"

Surely, O ye sinners, it is time that you should set down your foot in most fixed determination, and say, "I must and I will have heaven! How can I ever bear the doom of the damned!"

Paul and Felix, Or Preaching and Procrastination

Lecture IX

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by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Acts 24:24-25: "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season; I will call for thee."

Paul, on a visit to Jerusalem, had been seized by the bigoted and hostile Jews. A conspiracy was formed against him to take his life. Several men had madly taken a solemn vow not to eat or drink till they had slain him. This came to Paul's ears--was by him communicated to the Roman officers; and in consequence of this a strong guard removed him from Jerusalem to Cesarea, the residence of the Roman governor. Here Paul lay confined, awaiting trial. The history describes the commission of Ananias the high priest, with the elders, and an orator named Tertullus, to appear against Paul before Felix the Roman governor--their charge and plea, and Paul's defense. All these you can read at your leisure in Acts 24. They present a beautiful specimen of Roman justice, developing the principles of law, then in current practice, and especially that celebrated usage of their courts, whereby the accused were allowed to answer each for himself. It was in pursuance of this usage that Paul as in our text was brought before Felix and there permitted to plead his own cause.

On this memorable occasion Paul appears before us, not absorbed in the interests of his own

individual case, though this involved personal liberty if not even life;--but we see him true, as he had long been, to his work as a preacher of Christ's gospel and intent chiefly to save souls. He preached "concerning the faith in Christ." "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." On these points he spake with such power that Felix trembled, and answered--"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

In pursuing my remarks upon this wonderful defense, I remark,

I. That it gives us a clue to the apostolic manner of preaching salvation through Christ.

II. Let us next notice the effect of this method.

III. I next observe that we have in our text a specimen of the manner in which sinners reject the gospel and evade its claims.

I. That it gives us a clue to the apostolic manner of preaching salvation through Christ.

You will observe that, it is said that he preached concerning the "faith in Christ." This was made in those times, the great question. The Jews had long held that salvation is to be obtained through works. Paul speaks on the subject as if salvation must be only by faith in Christ. Here then was the issue as between the self-righteous Jews and the apostles.

Now observe Paul's manner closely. What did he preach? Our text is explicit. "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." And he so reasoned on those points that Felix trembled. The narrative begins with saying that Felix "heard him concerning the faith in Christ;" but you will observe that as it progresses to the details, it specifies that he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come." Did he, then as some seem to suppose, preach Christ, Christ, nothing but Christ? Did he begin with an unenlightened uninstructed sinner--a sinner who had no just sense of his sins, and preach only Christ, with no allusion to that sinner's guilt and need of such a Savior as Christ Jesus? We can easily see how it was. Paul carried his appeal at once to the conscience of his royal hearer. It mattered little whether this king was or was not familiar with Jewish law; Paul did not care. Paul knew he had a conscience, and that upon this conscience his appeal would take hold with convincing and condemning power. He therefore made this his first effort. He first appealed to the conscience of Felix on the great law of right--brought up to his own notice the life and conduct of the man--the sinner, and set all his past deeds in array before his eyes, and as they stand forth in the light of a judgment to come. Whatever good works Felix may have supposed himself to have done, were not brought into the account at all. Indeed we must presume that this sermon left him no room to think of his good works at all. Probably it threw them all utterly out of view and showed him that he labored under the greatest mistake if he supposed they were of the least conceivable value. The method adopted by Paul compelled Felix to seek salvation elsewhere than the heathen seek it, for it showed him that they can find no salvation adequate to meet the case of a lost sinner. It held him to his obligations to a life of righteousness and temperance as in view of a coming judgment, and thus made him feel his need of such a Savior as Christ. Paul knew well that this reasoning must condemn the entire life of Felix, and that the only hope of ever doing him any good lay in an attempt to force conviction upon his conscience. Hence his policy.

Another thing. It does not appear by any means from the history that Felix had ever heard the evidence to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. Be this as it may, it does not appear that Paul tarried a moment on this point on the present occasion. Instead of setting himself to array and substantiate these evidences, he goes at once before the conscience of his auditor, by one powerful appeal shutting him up at once to the necessity of having such a Savior as Christ. He talks to him of a judgment to come; shows him from the laws of his own moral being that there ought to be such a judgment and that from the righteousness of God's throne, there must be. Such was the strain of his appeal.

II. Let us next notice the effect of this method.

It is told in few words. Felix trembled. Conviction of guilt flashed upon him. Although the preacher was before him, a prisoner in chains, yet an arrow had pierced his conscience and it made him quail on his throne of state. He saw that there was a King on a higher throne, before which himself stood arraigned and guilty. He saw there must be a judgment to come and that the great God must surely judge him there. He saw that Paul spoke only the words of truth and soberness, for his own conscience affirmed and endorsed every charge which the preacher made. Hence when Paul appealed to his conscience about law, sin, and a coming judgment, he was shut up and condemned, and hence prepared to enquire whether there can be any way in which God can be just and yet justify the sinner who believes in Jesus.

III. I next observe that we have in our text a specimen of the manner in which sinners reject the gospel and evade its claims.

We see how apostles preached Christ; how, beginning with the law and making its appeal to the sinner's conscience, they shut men up to the gospel and compelled them to flee to it for refuge if they would have any refuge at all; but how did sinners then evade this duty? How escape, or at least try to escape the pressure of this appeal?

We can readily see. Felix did not and could not deny the truth of what Paul had preached. He saw and in some degree felt the fearful truth as to his own sin and guilt, and righteous doom as a sinner. He must moreover have seen his remedy. The gospel was before him in its greatest plainness and simplicity, no doubt, and therefore he knew that he might have Christ now as his own Savior, if he would. Yet though so convicted before the chained apostle as to tremble on his very throne of judgment, he did not bid this gospel welcome. He was still so selfish that he sought to make this matter of personal salvation a thing of convenience. "When I have a convenient season, said he, I will call for thee." The subject agonized him and he wanted therefore to dismiss it for the present at least. Besides he managed, as most sinners do, to work in another quite incidental question and give it an entirely undue influence. Shall I sympathize, said he, with a man who is a prisoner before me, and take sides with a despised Christian against the whole Jewish nation? What effect would such a course have on my popularity?

He could not say--I will never accept the gospel, I will never have anything to do with it. No; he knew too much of its truth, and too deeply felt his own need of it, to allow him to turn off the matter thus. In

fact, he was in precisely the position of thousands in our own land; entirely convinced of the truth of the gospel, yet by no means ready to embrace it. Political motives restrained and embarrassed him, and under their influence he could not readily believe that he could yet have this salvation at some quite convenient time when he should be prepared to attend to it and embrace it. He held it to be an offer that he could accept at his own convenience, and therefore, though he deeply felt its great importance, and though his nerves trembled and he could not rest, yet he could at least delay; and this he resolved to do. In this decision he did not stand for what was right as between his soul and his offered Savior: nor did he heed the influence of his example, nor consider his responsibilities as affecting the salvation of hundreds besides himself.

Moreover, he did not purpose to reject this gospel offer finally and forever; by no means; he still hoped to be saved at last. But, here was a door open to get some money; and this hope ravished his selfish soul. He hoped Paul or his friends for him, would offer a bribe for his release, and therefore--to get some money--not to get salvation--"he sent for him the oftener and communed with him." But with the hope of a bribe in his eye, how could he come down in the spirit of a little child, self-emptied and self-condemned, and embrace the pure and self-humbling gospel? He did no such thing. It does not appear that he made any advances in this direction, even after the first fatal hour, when he said--"Go thy way for this time." Beyond this the descent was precipitous and no power could retard his rushing speed to ruin. He never found the convenient time to close up this concern by giving his whole heart to Jesus, and bidding welcome to his needy soul the offers of free salvation.

REMARKS.

1. It is worthy of notice that the inspired teachers always assume the true philosophy of mind, and hence the true way of teaching it and controlling its decisions. True, the Bible does not intend to teach mental philosophy in a scientific way, nor indeed in any direct way yet by inference the Bible does teach mental science most clearly and most fully. If any man will give his mind to this subject and ask--"What does this command imply as true in regard to the mental constitution of those to whom it is addressed?" he cannot fail to arrive at the correct answer. He must see that a command imposed by a good Being, implies the possession of power to obey it. So let him take up also the promises and put the same question, asking, what is assumed to be the moral state of those to whom such promises, are addressed? There can be but one answer, and that will reveal just principles of mental science. See how Paul approached and appealed to this heathen man. Did he assume that this heathen had a conscience before which he could make and lodge his appeal? Most clearly he did, and acted promptly upon this assumption. He knew that however dark his mind might be as to revealed religion, or how ever sophisticated by false reasoning, it would still cry out, Amen, AMEN, whenever God's truth came clearly before his intelligence.

It is curious to observe also that the true philosophy of conversation is always implied by the apostles in their modes of effort to secure this result. Understand this subject practically, they always made their appeal, not to the sensibility, but to the intellect and through this to the conscience--bringing men first to see the truth--then to feel its moral pungency and power: and then to obey it. Thus and only thus did they attempt to subdue the will. Now in the effort to change the entire moral position of the will towards God and holiness, it makes all the difference in the world whether the appeal be made to the sensibility, or to the conscience. If it be made to the sensibility alone, then as soon as the

excitement subsides, the mind falls back again to its old position.

It deserves special notice that Paul appealed to the common life of Felix. He reasoned before him of those very sins of which he knew him to be guilty. Of these intemperance in the general sense of incontinent indulgence of appetites and passions, was one. Yet not this alone, but we must suppose that the preacher overhauled his entire life of sin, and if he did not say out openly--You have done this, he at least made his meaning unmistakably plain. Paul wielded a sharp sword, which cleft its way to the heart and the conscience and made its thrusts most sensibly felt. Else the proud king had not trembled on his throne and before his courtiers. Paul laid open to view the guilty life of the king and then assured him that a fearful judgment was coming. This doubtless was the manner of Paul, not only with Felix, but with all other sinners: and not only the manner of Paul, but of Peter and of other apostles. They made sinners see first of all, that they were lost; and then showed them the way of rescue and of life. The course opposite to this is utterly unphilosophical and unreasonable. It is like offering a remedy to a man who feels himself well and believes he has no disease upon him. Not unlikely, he takes it as an insult. Those who feel themselves whole, never apply to the physician. Sinners unconverted are certain never to embrace an offered Savior.

Convicted sinners generally suppose they need to have great feeling before they can repent. They assume that they must act under the influence of feeling--than which a greater mistake can hardly be made. One is amazed to see how strangely they talk and think of this subject. Do they not know that God expects them to act intelligently, and according to the decisions of an enlightened conscience? And yet they will tell you they cannot come to Christ because they have not feeling enough. They must wait for more feeling.

A short time since, I conversed with a young lady who had been brought up under religious influences, but yet remained unconverted. I soon caught a glimpse of the true difficulty in her way. She fancied that she should become a Christian at once if she felt right. Have you tried to become a Christian? said I. Yes. What have you done? I have tried to get right feelings.

It is wonderful to see how common this mistake is--to think that religion consists in right feelings, or at least that if they could only get up feeling enough, it would certainly move the will and secure conversion.

This is the exact way in which thousands fail to being truly converted. Instead of looking at the truth, and becoming deeply convinced under its power that they are all wrong and God wholly right, so that under this conviction they can intelligently turn right about, justify God and condemn themselves, and then turn their whole souls to God; instead of this, they try to get feeling; but as this course does not succeed, what feeling they have soon subsides, and they fall back fatally and forever.

In this way many of you have been waiting, and waiting and waiting--but wholly to no purpose. The right way and the only right way, is to study the truth, to learn what it is, and what its claims upon yourself are, and then meet those claims and perform those duties. Then truth being known, act in all things according to its demands as seen in your intelligence, and inferred by your conscience.

There is no end to the errors into which men fall through failure to understand this simple idea, of

obeying the truth. A man came to me with great solicitude, saying--"I think I am not a Christian, for I certainly have not all the feelings that I expected to have. Indeed I do not know about my experience at the time I thought I was converted. I was acting rationally all the time; I seemed to understand my own relations to God and my duty towards Him clearer than ever; I knew the reasons of my conduct at every step, and never was more calm, and never seemed to myself to see duty more clearly. Now how can such an experience as this be real conversion?"

But, said I, is your heart changed? That is the great question. "I don't know, said he, I thought the Holy Ghost was to change my heart if it were ever truly changed; but at the time referred to, I seemed to change it myself. How can this be genuine conversion?"

Men seem to think they shall see the Holy Ghost as it were with their very eyes, if He comes. They have exceedingly vague and often mystical notions about His work. You will observe that Jesus said of the Holy Ghost, that when He should come, "He should not speak of Himself," but should only "bear witness of the truth." He should come to "reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." Sinners don't seem to see that the Holy Ghost is in the preaching of truth from the minister's lips, and that, thus coming, He conceals Himself and shows only the truth, it being His only object to present and enforce the truth so that sinners shall be made deeply sensible of sin and shall be persuaded to renounce it. The sinner, thus convicted, sees the truth and is not conscious or at all aware of seeing anything else. The Holy Ghost is indeed there, else this sinner would have no such conviction of truth; the Holy Ghost is there and at work, doing His appropriate business, yet wholly unseen. Therefore you should no more wait for the Holy Ghost to change your heart than you would for me to do it if I were trying to persuade you to turn yourself at once to God.

True conviction is apt to produce a kind of trembling and a tearless agony of soul. I can well recollect the time when I first went to an enquiry meeting. I trembled so that my very seat shook under me. At that time I had never received such instruction as I needed; for if I had, I should have been converted at once. But in my darkness of mind as to what I had to do, I was in great agony, for I knew full well that God's wrath was upon me and that I was living on the very verge of hell. No wonder therefore that my soul was in great agony--tearless agony, for I could not get the relief of a single tear, and yet my whole being seemed to tremble and quake to its center. I was not at this time under particular and special conviction, but only a general conviction of being all wrong. Such I have reason to suppose are not unfrequently the convictions of awakened sinners.

The convictions of Felix were wholly ineffectual. Convinced that Paul was innocent and with ample power to set him at liberty, nay more, under the most sacred obligation to set an innocent man at liberty, he yet closed his administration leaving Paul bound, and this for no other reason than to do the wicked, malicious Jews a favor. Alas, how far was he from the kingdom of God!

There are few sinners in this house who have not sometimes had a strong and deep conviction that you ought to be Christians, but you, like Felix, have dismissed the subject until it should be quite convenient. Like him, you have been convinced, and perhaps you have even trembled under those convictions, but less and less affected, after seeing your Paul repeatedly, you at length dismiss the matter forever. Perhaps like Felix you could even turn away and leave the Christian cause in the hands and at the mercy of its foes. You find in your experience even now that truth affects you less and less,

as it did Felix, and with a growing reluctance to its presence and claims, you are glad of any apology for turning it away. In the case of Felix, we hear nothing about his trembling, after the first interview; that point once passed, he became careless, and managed for a season to live without trembling.

But now always could he live without trembling, for the judgment to come awaited him and he is long ere this gone before God to meet his doom.

This first interview with Paul was the crisis in his history. While he sat there and the chained apostle stood and preached Christ before him, the crisis hours were passing. Then and there he might have had salvation; beyond that point, it was virtually impossible.

So you have your crisis-period. As it was said of some, "they came and went from the place of the holy," so it may be said of you. Often have you come and gone from the place where the saints worship; but alas, no better in heart after the end of all than before the beginning. Says the inspired one--"I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy;"--wicked still, and none the less so for having frequented the place of God's saints. So with some of you. We shall soon bear some of you away to yonder hill--wicked till you die and then "driven away in your wickedness," to the place of the wicked forever. Now you sometimes tremble and sometimes are stupid; and with some of you the crisis is already past. With every lost sinner there must be some place where the crisis is turned. Most sinners pass the crisis just as Felix did. Like him they settle the question--by simple procrastination. Few say, I never will attend to this subject again. Commonly they dismiss it with--"Go thy way for this time." If the devil should suggest to them to take a solemn vow--"I never will have Christ--I never will even think of the subject seriously again"--it would startle them quite too much. Satan is too cunning for such imprudence. Therefore he only says--Let it pass for this time. This answers all his purpose abundantly. Hence this is the very way in which most persons pass the final crisis. There is no need of anything more than this to make damnation certain. It would startle you to go the whole figure at one leap and solemnly swear--"I have done with the gospel of Jesus and with heaven, henceforth and forever." Therefore Satan is not wont to put you up to so daring a step as this. It is quite sufficient for all his purposes if he can persuade you to say--"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will close up this matter as it should be."

But Oh, this fearful crisis-point! Have some of you passed it already? Have some of you quenched the Spirit quiet and grieved Him wholly away? Have you settled down in moral hardness--with no interest in these things? It is not difficult for you perhaps to recall the time when God's Spirit pressed the truth upon your conscience, but you resisted and delayed doing your known duty! Your conscience smarted under the sting of truth, forced home by the Spirit of God; but you resisted--you repelled the Dove of heaven and where are you now?

Some of you may be about to take this fatal step today. Oh will you madly rush on your own certain damnation? Will you say--I mean to be a Christian at some future time, but not now! Ah, when God says NOW--do you reply to Him, not now? Then there is no hope that you and God can agree! You need not expect His Spirit to co-operate in the renewal of your soul to holiness--for how can two work together except they are agreed?

Christ Tempted, Suffering, and Able to Succor The Tempted

Lecture X

October 27, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Heb. 2:18: "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

The connection, commencing back with the tenth verse of this chapter, presents Jesus as one of the brethren among His people and assigns reasons for His assuming human nature into union with His divine. Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, to the end that by His own death He might destroy Satan who had power to make death terrible, and might so deliver His people from the fear of death though otherwise under its bondage their lives long. For indeed, of the race of angels Christ did not take hold, to save them; but He did take hold of the race of man. The former, falling by sin, sank to hell, unredeemed; the latter, tempted and fallen, the Son of God rushed to rescue and save. Hence the necessity of putting on their nature, since He had undertaken to rescue and save them. Therefore He must be made in all things like them, "that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

The subject presented in our text, if discussed fundamentally will embrace the discussion of several points.

- 1. The first respects the nature of sin.

Many seem to assume that temptation implies the presence of sin. They think no being can be tempted unless there be sin in his heart or constitution already, to which temptation makes its appeal. Now if this view be just, it follows that Jesus Christ had sin in His heart or constitution; a conclusion which I need not say is utterly unscriptural and revolting to reason and to fact. Hence we must look into this point.

What then is sin?

- (1.) It is not something which belongs to the very nature of man -- something mysteriously incorporated into his very being, so that nature is itself sinful. To assume this is the greatest nonsense. What is sin? Is it a created substance? What sort of a substance can sin be? And who must bear the blame of sin if it be a created substance? On this supposition, is it possible to avoid the conclusion that the blame of sin must

attach to that creative agency which gave it existence?

- o (2.) Sin does not consist in any involuntary state of mind. It does not belong to the substance of the mind, nor to any activities of the mind, apart from the will. It does not pertain to any involuntary state of the mind, nor to any state or action of either its thinking or its feeling faculties. Mind thinks and mind feels; yet in neither of these, strictly speaking, does sin inhere and to neither does sin primarily belong. When the Scriptures say -- "The thought of wickedness is sin," the language is used only in the same sense in which it is said that muscular action is sin -- that, for example, the muscular action of the arm wielding a club to kill a neighbor is sinful; it is simply the development of a sinful state or act of the will. The mind's intention or will, is the sin in the case. This sin belongs to the muscles of the arm in no other sense than that those are made the instruments of sin. So the plotting and devising of the intellect to accomplish murder are only the instrumentalities which serve a depraved will or intention to murder. The sin lies not in the intellect, but in the intention.
- o (3.) Sin is very clearly explained in the Bible; and if it were not, we should know what it is, for our reason and conscience would teach us. Ten thousand Bibles could not make it plainer than our own reason and conscience make it to every reflecting mind.

Sin is violation of law, and law of course has respect to voluntary action, and to this only. The Bible does not tell us what color our hair should be, or our skin. It never assumes to legislate on such points; nor does it decree what powers of mind we shall have, or ought to have, but only how we should use them. This is the legitimate province of law, and to this the Bible confines itself -- with no deviation.

Duty must be known in order to become duty. It is the greatest nonsense to affirm that anything can become duty before it is understood by the mind. Prof. Stuart said, "Sin is violation of known law." But we need to go somewhat farther back and show what this "violation of law" is. Law prescribes the rule of voluntary action, and prescribes this rule of course to the will, or voluntary faculty. The will is the law-obeying or law-disobeying faculty. In the action of the will therefore must all sin, properly speaking, lie. Sin therefore always lies back of the external acts and back also of proximate violations.

The law of God requires that the will of His subjects be given up supremely to the doing of His will. This is precisely what the law requires and what it expresses in the language -- "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind."

Sin is consecration to self -- a state of mind that cares supremely for self. This is sin and this only. Muscular action is not itself sin. Strictly speaking, nothing is sin but this state of mind. Muscular action is only the development of sin in the external life.

- 2. We come next to the question of temptation. What is it?

Sin consists in self-interest and in the soul's voluntary committal of itself to secure self-interest at any cost. A mind in this attitude is powerfully attracted by any object which excites its sensibilities to selfish good. This attractive power we call temptation.

Temptation is not sin, though often confounded with it. Christ was really tempted. If then the question be asked, "What is temptation?" we must answer, all those states of excited sensibility which tend to draw the soul from God.

Take the case of Eve. Her first temptation found her in a holy state of mind. It consisted in an excited appetite and in the presence of beautiful food. Yet neither of these was sin; they were only temptation. Satan moreover suggested that this food was highly useful -- "a tree to be desired to make one wise;" and he more than insinuated that God had prohibited this fruit through mere jealousy, lest Adam and Eve should become wise as Gods, knowing good and evil. As if he had said, "Are you aware that God has forbidden you this fruit lest by eating it you become as wise as He is Himself?" Then he brought it near that she might see its beauty and perhaps that she might smell its fragrance; and then he extolled its mysterious virtue to make one wise, and she had been longing for wisdom. Thus she is tempted and thus she falls! She is under the charm of the devil; is really in a charmed state -- all excited, so that she scarcely knows what she is doing. Her sensibilities are effervescing most intensely -- and what does she do? All this excitement of her sensibilities is not itself sin; but the steps that followed were sin. When tempted thus, she resolved to violate God's command and take and eat the forbidden fruit, then she sinned.

The Apostle said, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived was in the transgression." From this testimony and from the history it appears that the deception was practiced on Eve only, and then that she became Adam's tempter. Satan took advantage of her acute sensibilities and played upon them till his point was gained. He acted the part of a cunning devil. He knew that God had made woman a bundle of susceptibilities, and therefore he approached her on her weak side, and in the absence of her husband. Now I want you all to notice this case and study it closely, for here you may learn the nature of temptation. There stood Eve -- in the presence of the forbidden fruit, her appetite for it powerfully excited; her curiosity to know if it would make her wise stimulated to great activity, the fascinations of the devil acting upon her to charm her soul into yet more burning excitement -- Adam absent and she too much excited to wait for her return; there in the fatal moment she ate and fell. Strange to say she is so much excited that she has no sooner tasted than she runs after Adam to find him and give it to him that he may eat. The thought of guilt for her act seems not yet to have entered her mind.

Now mark this. The law addresses itself to the will; but the will is reached through the sensibility, and this is excited to intense action by temptations. Yet temptation is not sin. No matter how great the temptation if the will resists and refuses to gratify the demands of the excited sensibility.

Let it then be understood, that nothing is temptation until it awakens a sensibility which allures the mind along into, or at least towards sin. If the mind is aware of this tendency towards sin, then there is sin in the very act of indulging the heightened sensibility, for it must be wrong to give indulgence to an excitement which we know tends to draw us into sin. But we cannot suppose that Eve had this knowledge of a tendency to sin in any form of indulgence, because to suppose this implies that she had already had some experience in sinning.

- 3. Again let it be considered, that temptations to sin are countless. On the one hand flattery; on the other abuse; for flattery tends to make us think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and abuse irritates the sensibility and provokes to anger. Poverty tempts men to repine against God's providence, while wealth tempts to pride. Honor bestowed excited to ambition, but dishonor stirs the feeling of resentment. All the little trials which occur in the family or in the class-room, myriads in number and endlessly various in character, are temptations, but they are not sins. If the feeling is controlled and the will refuses to yield; if the soul stands firm, steadfastly bearing up against the inducement to sin, then all is well. So long as the soul stands steadfast, immovable, holding on firmly to the arm of the Lord, there is no sin.
- 4. The Bible abundantly represents Christ to have been greatly tempted. We might infer that He must have been so, from the very fact of His having human nature. Especially strong in this inference when we consider that He assumed human nature for the very purpose of being tempted, that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.

A careful study of His actual history confirms this view of His case. How often do we see Him abused in a manner which must have tempted Him to anger. No one can read His history without seeing how great His temptations often became.

Among His sorest temptations was that in the garden of Gethsemane. This awful scene of struggle came not upon Him without forewarning. He clearly anticipated its approach. He conversed about it with His disciples; before it came on it would seem that He did so for several days; and we are distinctly informed that as the dreadful agony came upon Him, He warned them of the danger and besought them to pray and watch with Him at least one hour. Some time before this, He had said, Lo, "the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." He knows that I shall do my Heavenly Father's will.

The dread hour came on. He hastened to the garden whither He had been wont to resort for private prayer in the hours of His trial. Turning to His accompanying disciples, He said, "Tarry ye here and pray, while I go and pray yonder." He went Himself to the loved retreat and there poured out His soul in most earnest prayer. Here His agony became intensely great. It is recorded that an angel came from heaven to strengthen Him. Wonderful to tell; He who could command twelve legions of angels is now in agony and weakness, and one from those angelic legions comes in sympathy to sustain Him under the crushing weight of His burdens. O the man of sorrows! How does His heart sink under the awful agony of His temptation! Here it was that His "sweat became as it were great drips of blood, falling down to the ground."

It is perhaps impossible for us to tell precisely what this form of temptation was, but we know it must have been most fearful and terrible. It was a tremendous struggle.

Think of the illustration it gives us of the fearful power of Satan. An angel needs to come to resist the devil and give the tempted sufferer strength to overcome.

The Apostle evidently refers to this scene when he said, "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Heb. 5:7.

- 5. The Bible informs us that one great object in Christ's being tempted was to teach Him by experience how to sympathize with human flesh and frailty. He would have myriads of tempted children to care for and shield against the power of temptation. How desirable then that He should Himself know what sore temptation means by experiencing Himself the same. This was the divine plan, to make Him a sympathizing and compassionate High Priest, fitted in every respect to be the refuge and the strength of His suffering saints. In fact He needed to know all those trials and temptations which men experience who are greatly tempted, yet without sin.

If the Bible had said no such thing as our text affirms, in respect to Christ's being tempted and His learning thereby how to sympathize and to succor His tempted children, even then we could not but know that God must sympathize with His suffering sons and daughters in their temptations, and so would Christ also. Every parent knows what this feeling of sympathy for a suffering child is. When they see their children suffering, how do their hearts cry out, O that I could suffer those pains myself and take them off by this means from the child I love! Now, from the very nature of benevolence, Christ must feel all this towards His children. He must feel it not only because He is benevolent but also because of the peculiar relation into which He enters with them as His redeemed children. Think how He has mingled Himself as it were with them and His interests with theirs. Is it not said, "And we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? No fellowship has He with their sins; but with them, as His redeemed sons and daughters He has a most intense and wonderful fellowship. To redeem them from all sin and to guard them most perfectly against it -- these objects lie inexpressibly near His heart. O, if He could die for us, and suffer so much under Satan's fiercest temptations -- all for our sake, -- no wonder He should sympathize with us most intensely when He sees us in anguish. His feelings must be keen and intense just in proportion as He sees us under the agonies of trial and temptations, and His sympathetic sorrow for us must be according to the strength of His benevolence and the depth of His great sympathy for His beloved people.

He knows now how to succor those that are tempted. From experience He has learned how succor comes to the tempted. Having been Himself strengthened in the hour of His agony, He knows how to strengthen others.

- 6. We can confide in those who have had experience, when we know the fact. In such cases, nothing is more natural than to expect sympathy and to repose confidence.

In the domestic relations, one who has never had a wife cannot sympathize with one who

has had but has lost the sharer of his deepest sympathies. The anguish of the bereaved husband no man can understand by a merely theoretic investigation. No man can tell his neighbor so that he shall be able to understand from the description merely, what this sorrow of heart is. Hence when one professes to sympathize with us, if we know he has had no experience of the sort, we know he does not understand our case. How can you, young woman, understand the sorrows of that mother who holds on her lap her dying child? You must first be yourself a mother and hold on your lap a dying child; then you can know what these heart-sorrows are, and can sympathize with those who endure this sorrow.

The same law is developed everywhere. The young convert knows that unconverted sinners cannot understand his state of mind and the trials he experiences. If he falls under the power of temptation, he knows that one who has not experienced such temptation can by no means sympathize with him. He would not go to him for sympathy, nor for counsel and aid. None except those who have known the Christian's hopes and sensibilities and temptations can enter into them with true sympathy.

In view of this great principle, we can see how fitting and beautiful is the divine economy in making Jesus our great High Priest, familiar with the Christian's trials by experience. He placed Himself in circumstances like ours that He might know what sorrow is and what sore temptations mean. He has Himself endured temptations, excitements, sorrows and persecutions. He knows in His own experience what the assaults of Satan are. The Bible says that one great object of this plan was that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in behalf of a suffering and tempted people.

- 7. Who does not know how natural it is for us to seek sympathy from those who are known to understand our case by experience. Young Christians naturally do this. They fly to those who can appreciate all their trials and enter deeply into their sympathies. This is true not only of all Christians but of all men, under all circumstances of life.

This principle in our nature gives a rich and heightened beauty to all Christ's earthly experience. When we see Him passing through all the various trials of mortal life and understand why He subjected Himself to all this, we cannot fail to see a manifestation of benevolence and a proof of His most abundant fitness for His work -- such as would charm our souls into love and trust, and away from all unbelief. Think how He endured the trial of being unpopular, and also of being popular; how He was both caressed and commended on the one hand; slandered and condemned on the other; how with patient step He trod the varied paths of human life, toiling and suffering even more than falls to the lot of most men -- breasting the storms of affliction; closing in with every form of conflict; joining battle with the world and putting it down beneath His feet; resisting Satan's assaults and foiling him at every step. Thus onward He moved through the scenes of earthly trial, tasting each cup of human trial and sorrow, till He should know them all in their extremest form -- that He might be able to succor those that are tempted.

- 8. Let us notice next some of the ways in which Christ gives succor to His people in temptation. He does this,

- (1.) By assuring them of His presence. O what a wonderful charm and power there is in this! What a safeguard against discouragement, for whose heart can ever sink within him while he is conscious of his Savior's presence? In their seasons of sorest trials, Christians are wont to feel a thick and almost sensible darkness round about their souls; but the light of the Savior's presence scatters this away: for how can it be night to our souls when Jesus reveals His presence? When He manifests Himself as one who sympathizes with us in our trials, what a blessed charm is wrought upon us! How strong we feel to bear our burdens; how powerfully sustained under all our trials! O how congenial to every feeling of the heart! It becomes a pleasure to endure for Jesus' sake.

"I can do all things or can bear,

All sufferings if my Lord be there."

- (2.) Christ sustains us by reminding us of what He has done and suffered for us. He brings before us the scenes of His agony, and thereby not only assures us of His true and actual sympathy with us, but also of His suffering on our behalf. I recollect being present when the limb of Mrs. C. was amputated.

It is well known here that she was extremely weak and great fears were entertained that she would not survive the operation. Efforts were made to render her insensible to pain by means of mesmeric influence, but all in vain. The hour came and the work must proceed. I sat down by her bedside, and began to talk to her about the sufferings of Christ her Savior. He suffered, said I to her, far more for you than you are suffering now. The effect of this consideration upon her mind was truly wonderful. As long as it could be kept before her, it acted like a charm. She scarcely felt her physical pains. The surgeon said that this was better than mesmerism.

So the whole system may be in the extremest agony, but if the eye of faith can look through its tears and see Jesus, and realize how He suffered, it charms the soul away from its sorrows, and bathes it in an atmosphere of peace and joy.

- (3.) Christ breaks the power of temptation by revealing the hatefulness of sin. If He can only get the mind's attention, and bring Himself and His deeds of love before its view, then sin is made to appear exceeding sinful and the temptation vanishes away.

Some of you know how this principle was illustrated in the case of Bro. H. and his pipe of tobacco. He had been long addicted to this indulgence, and had often resolved to break away, but to no purpose. At length as he was musing on the matter, pipe in mouth, the thought flashed on his mind: "Did Jesus die to purchase for me such a filthy indulgence as this?" In an instant the power of temptation was broken, and away went pipe and temptation together. Neither ever returned again. The charm had gone, the snare was

broken, and the bird escaped on wings -- to be imprisoned no more. In that one thought, Christ came with power to the soul and burst its fetters asunder.

How often is the mind in agony under the power of its temptations! It groans out in a tearless agony, as if there could be no deliverance and no power to endure much longer -- till suddenly Christ comes, the soul bursts its fetters and is at peace. Then she sings of victory! victory! through Jesus Christ her Lord.

REMARKS.

1. Temptation, or at least, a strong tendency towards it, may be constitutional and probably often is so. Probably ever since the fall of the first human pair, there has been in the human constitution an increased excitability towards temptation. By this means the race are exposed to strong temptation, some more strong in one direction and some in another; one to licentious indulgence, another to ambition, another to the abuse of power. Yet let it be strictly observed, all this tendency to temptation, however strong, is not itself sin. For however great these temptations and tendencies are, yet if they are resisted and steadfastly opposed, all the more does the soul soar aloft in the triumphs of victorious grace.

If these temptations are firmly resisted, they are not to be regarded even as calamities. Take the case of a man born with a strong tendency in his constitution towards the excitement of intoxicating drink. If he resists this temptation, he grows in moral strength and in true moral elevation of character, with every successive resistance. The original tendency is more a blessing than a curse to him.

2. One great design of God in sending these temptations upon us, is to augment our moral strength. Who does not know that under the discipline thus obtained, men become ten thousand times stronger than they would otherwise be? The Bible teaches us that saints in their future inheritance of glory are to be raised above most other orders of beings. Hence they are tried and proved here for the very purpose of becoming fitted for their exaltation there. Apostles begun this career of discipline, to fit them for what awaited them in the world of their exaltation. Forth abroad they went, through perils by land and sea, perils of robbers, perils of persecution, perils of scorn and hate and malice of wicked men -- all this to test their fidelity to their Great Master, and prepare them to be chief officers in the future church of God, to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Often did our Lord inculcate this principle of His government: "He that is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much." "Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things."

Following in their footsteps, see that great company of struggling, toiling saints and martyrs. They wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. In every age the work goes on, and myriads are being trained and disciplined under the providential agencies of earth for the corresponding rewards and glories of heaven. Kings and priests shall they become under the exalted reign of their Lord.

Let none of them, therefore, complain of trials and discipline though they pass through ever so much temptation and sorrow here. You will go up at last, praising God that He gave you a sympathizing High Priest, under whose sustaining hand, every trial was borne triumphantly and every sorrow

endured with patience. As you move along the eternal hills, your brow bathed in the sunlight of heaven, and your hand bearing one of those golden harps, you will not regret that your pathway on earth lay through the fires of tribulation.

Will these young men and women be there? Shall we see you mounting those glorious hills, and sounding forth the melodies of heaven, on harps of gold? And must some of you go in the very opposite direction, hiding your heads for shame, and crying to the rocks and to the mountains, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb"? Alas, that any of you should choose such a doom when you might have the joys of the blessed just as well, if you would!

3. The sympathy of Jesus can never be over-estimated. Aye, never, NEVER. How deep must I let down the lead and line to fathom the depth of your sympathy for your children? A long line it must be, doubtless. But suppose you cast your line into the great deep of Jehovah's love; where will you find its bottom? Who can mount up to its heights, or go down to its mighty depths? Had you an angel's powers, this effort would be all in vain. And are you then in danger of over-estimating the love of Jesus Christ and His sympathy for His people? O, you have only thought as a child and formed conceptions as a mere pigmy does -- yea, though your heart be all dissolved with sympathy and responsive affection.

4. To lack confidence in the sympathy of Christ is utter ruin to the soul. Let this confidence be wanting and suddenly you are driven away and dashed on the rocks of ruin! You have let go your anchor, and away you drift, dashing and plunging -- like a ship on a lee shore and breakers close ahead under her bow.

But if your pilot is on hand, true to his work, and all is made safe through his skill and care and your confidence in him, then you may laugh at all these terrors. They can be no terrors to you. So if ye who are Christians, professedly, fail to believe in Christ, Satan will surely drive you upon the rocks, and triumph over your eternal ruin.

5. Faith often needs encouragement. Christ understands this perfectly. He knows that although His people believe in Him somewhat, and of course must have some faith in Him, or they cannot be His people at all, yet they often greatly need encouragement to greater faith. He knows that they need to have their hearts powerfully penetrated with the love of God and brought under the full impression of this great truth. When this impression is fully made on the heart and you come to see how much is meant in God's infinite love to lost souls and to His redeemed people, then, O then, what a wonderful relief comes to the troubled soul! Then faith finds an everlasting rock on which it may repose. The effect on the mind is as when old ocean, long tossed with the tempest and thrown into the utmost commotion, is hushed all suddenly, the clouds dispersed and the winds falling to a dead calm. Then how the old ocean sinks to rest. So does the soul when God's love is seen and faith finds its firm footing on God's everlasting promises, and those promises are seen to emanate from His unbounded love.

6. If Christ did not sympathize with sinners, when would they ever be converted? Sinners often get the impression that though Christ has much sympathy with His converted people, yet He has none for

themselves. He may have sympathy, they say, with those who already love Him, but I am a sinner, and how can He care for me? But see. Look at the case of those very saints with whom you admit Christ now has sympathy. I put to you this simple question: Did Christ's care and compassion for them begin after their conversion, or before? If you say it began after their conversion, then I ask you, how they ever came to be converted at all? How came they to be saints? Surely you must admit that Christ sought them while they were in their sins; else they had never been found and brought into His fold. Will you not then believe that Christ cares for you, though He knows you are yet in your sins? He knows that you are lost, condemned, unable to save yourself; totally, utterly unable to make any atonement for your sins, and hence unable to rescue yourself from the terrible ruin into which your sin has plunged you. He knows too all your natural aversion of heart to come to Him for pardon; and He understands perfectly the kind of dependence on Him which you have on this account. And now, does He not care for your soul? Yes, ten thousand times more than you do for your own. Infinitely more ready is He to pour out His soul for you than you are to shed one tear for yourself, and O how much more ready to die for you than you are to lift a finger for Him! Before your very eyes He takes His stand, with His bleeding heart all gushing out before you in love and sympathy for you, and yet you scarcely ever see it! And even now, what are you doing and of what are you thinking? Do you fall back in your seat and say to yourself -- "This is a long and tedious sermon; how little interest I find in these things!" Alas, alas! that the things of salvation should be so unmeaning to you, that they should awaken so little thought or care! O, if it were possible, after you have reached your final abode and after the gates have been closed on you forever; if after that dread hour it were still possible that you might hear a voice, saying, Go back to Oberlin for one more Sabbath; once more for a single day you may take your place there among God's people and hear the choir sing, and bow your soul in prayer for mercy and listen to the gospel offers, once more occupying the position of a sinner under reprieve with offers of mercy held out before him; if I say, all this were only possible, and it might be your privilege, would you not shout for joy and welcome it? Do you not today believe most assuredly that you would consecrate such a day of mercy most solemnly to the work of repentance, making sure of salvation with all your might? No doubt you would, and no doubt you now believe you would. Then why not do so now? Now you have that privilege. Now the door of mercy is just as really open to you as it could be if you were to come back from hell for one more day's grace. But you know that the supposition I have made is utterly impracticable. You know that no sinner since the world began has ever come back to take his place again even for one hour in the house of God to seek and secure his own salvation. You know therefore that now, not then; that here, not there, is your accepted time and your day of salvation.

What, therefore, do you say now? Will you come to meet Jesus now? He reaches down His hand; will you put your hand in His, saying, I give Thee my heart? Am I entirely mistaken in assuming that some of you do say this today -- that some sinners are ready to cry out, Yes, Yes, YES: thou sayest, "Seek ye My face; my heart replies, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Now I want you should tell me whether you will deal honestly and truly with Jesus, my master, or whether you will not? Let me know what you will do, and what you will not do. Will you come to Jesus Christ today?

Election and Reprobation

Lecture XI
November 24, 1852

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Jer. 6:30: "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

Text.--Matt. 22:14: "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Text.--1 Pet. 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."

From these texts you will perceive that I have chosen for my subject ELECTION AND REPROBATION. In discussing it, I propose

I. To define the terms.

II. Show what the scripture doctrine really is.

III. State the reasons for Election and also for Reprobation

IV. Show how, as a general fact, we may determine to which class any individual belongs.

First of all, let me admonish you not to be frightened at the terms, Election and Reprobation. They are Bible terms, and therefore need not alarm any but those who contend against the truth. They are Bible terms, yet have been greatly abused, so that my first business must be to define them, and then in my subsequent remarks, to illustrate them, in order to remove the stumbling-blocks occasioned by their abuse.

I. "Elected" means chosen.

It means precisely this--neither more nor less. A "reprobate" thing is a thing rejected or cast away. To reprobate is to reject, to disapprove, and hence to set aside. It is the counter-part of elect. Such is the meaning of the terms.

II. What now is the Scripture doctrine?

Briefly this: God has chosen to salvation a part of mankind, and has also made up His mind to cast off a part. The whole doctrine is embraced in this: God's mind is made up as to what He will do in the matter of saving or not saving the individuals of our race. His mind, I say, is made up; of course it is if

it ever will be, for He has no new mind, and cannot ever have any new views, new knowledge, or new plans. All things are present to God from the beginning. To deny that God has made up His mind as to what he will do in this matter is to deny the essential attributes of God, for both the beginning and the end are both alike known to Him. With perfect and infinite knowledge ever present to His mind from all past eternity, it is impossible that His mind should not be made up, as to what He will do in the matter of human salvation.

III. But God has good reasons for all He does.

He never makes up His mind without having good reasons, and never otherwise than in accordance with those reasons.

The elect, therefore, are those whom God has, for the best of reasons, determined to save; the reprobate, in like manner, are those whom, for infinitely good reasons, He has made up His mind to cast off for perdition.

What are these good reasons?

- 1. Not any arbitrary sovereignty on God's part, a sovereignty which has no good reasons for its foundation. God is indeed a Sovereign, but only in the good sense. He judges and decides alone, unaided by the wisdom of any created being; and this, not because He is above taking counsel, if there were any being whom He could wisely consult. God's acts of sovereignty, therefore, are all infinitely wise and benevolent. They are determined on and fixed, only because they are infinitely right and reasonable, and because he sees the reasons for them with perfect clearness, and feels their force so strongly that He cannot do otherwise than act accordingly.
- 2. The elect are not chosen on account of their own desert or righteousness. Mark what I say; not because they are by nature any better than others. They are not by nature any better than the reprobate, for they had nothing in the constitution of their being better than others had.
- 3. Nor was it because their sins were any less in number or aggravation than the sins of those whom God will cast away; but it was because he saw that he could save them under the wisest possible administration of government. He saw it possible to secure their salvation without departing from His chosen system of moral administration. He could secure their confidence in Him and their assent to His scheme of salvation. Yet let it be observed, not for their concurrence in this gospel scheme, considered as a thing of merit, a thing which in justice claims salvation. God could so arrange His government as to secure their voluntary consent.
- 4. The reprobate are cast off for their foreseen rejection, not on condition of their future wickedness, but for it. The elect are chosen on the condition of its being possible to secure their confidence in Him and their assent to the scheme of salvation.
- 5. When I say God foresaw, I use the term, not as when it is used of men. We do not foresee as He does. God sustains no such relations to time as we do. He dwells in time absolute. With us, events transpire, but not with God. Before Him all things are present.

The things which are always present to God, become known to creatures only as they transpire--only as they develop themselves in time. The things always known to God, become known to us only as they develop themselves in their occurrence. They were a secret from all eternity in His bosom. In the lapse of time, they come forth, boiling up before the eyes of creatures.

God's knowing future things does not make them occur. His omniscience no more controls our conduct than our knowing how men will act controls their action. The acts of free agents may be certain, in the sense that God knows with certainty what they will be, yet are they none the less free and voluntary.

- 6. In the case of those who are chosen to salvation, all the facts in view of which God made up His mind, will come out before the view of the finite minds of His creatures. On the other hand, all the reasons in the case of the lost will come up to view. All will pass in full review before the universe in the solemn judgment, so that all intelligent beings of the universe will say, God could have done no otherwise than He has. They will see that the elect were chosen and finally saved on the condition that God could win them, and that the wicked were reprobated and lost because of the fact that God could not win them to give up their sins and accept of salvation.
- 7. Now, mark what I say: A great deal is said about God's sovereignty--a great deal of nonsense too. But mark this--it is not so much the sovereignty of God as the sovereignty of man, on which this question turns. No man can deny his own freedom, and to act freely is to exercise, in this respect, the attribute of sovereignty. Man is free, for how can he either promise or purpose anything without freedom? If he is not free, he can no more promise or purpose than a wind-mill can. Go up to a wind-mill, accost it by name, assuming its sovereignty and free independence, and ask it if it will please turn so and so, and with such and such velocity. You stand rebuked in your folly, for that is a wind-mill, not a man--a wind-mill acting without free agency, and not a man, conscious of freedom.

Man always assumes his own liberty and freedom. He can no more deny it rationally than he can deny his own existence. the fact is, every man knows himself to be free, and in this sense a sovereign.

God puts man upon his own character and responsibility; holds him to his responsibility, and cannot righteously do otherwise. He places before him law; this the sinner rejects. Then God presents the gospel, and having exerted such influence as he wisely can, leaves him ultimately to his own responsibility. God can do no more than to place before him motives to induce right voluntary action. If God should attempt to convert him in any other way than by acting upon his free mind, by means of truth, it would avail nothing. Some suppose that God takes hold of a man and changes his nature, the very constitution of his being. But this would not convert him unless it changed the voluntary state of his mind. A change in the voluntary attitude of the mind is primarily all that is needed. This, and nothing else or other than this, is conversion. God never acts on man otherwise than upon a moral being. Hence, man's own sovereignty must determine his destiny.

IV. The destiny for men for eternity is in general very plainly indicated in their lives.

For if men are ever saved by the gospel, they must be savingly influenced by it while yet they live on earth. If they are ever lost, it will be because they reject the gospel. Now, therefore, if we see that the gospel is taking effect on any mind, we see reason to conclude that that individual will be saved, for he is being saved already. The gospel is already renewing his soul and saving it from sin. We have therefore the appropriate evidence that he is elected unto salvation.

But if we see that an individual is being cursed by the gospel--if it only serves to harden his heart and make him more obstinate, more wicked, more the child of hell than before, we see conclusive marks of his reprobation.

Hence if we would know whether men are elected or reprobated, we must watch. We must notice how the gospel affects them, and what attitude they take towards it. This we may with considerable certainty foresee their destiny--and in like manner our own.

How then may it generally be known whether or not any individual is elected to salvation?

It is not always possible for us to judge accurately in this world. Sometimes things are working deep in the mind which we do not see. Sometimes men seem to be going in the wrong direction with alarming certainty, but at length they turn, unexpectedly to us, and we find the gospel asserting its due power over their minds. So on the other hand, some seem to be running well for a time, but by a sudden turn they take the way of death, and crush all our fond anticipations.

Yet these are only the exceptions; the Bible teaches us that as a general rule we may judge who are reprobates. It requires us to prove our own selves and gives us the tests whereby we may know whether we are reprobates or not.

I therefore proceed to notice some of the indications by which men may know whether they are or are not reprobates.

I do this for two reasons,

(1.) It is due to all the saints that they should have the consolation of knowing that they are among the chosen.

(2.) It is of great importance that saints should know the marks as they appear upon others to show whether or not they are elected. It is also well that sinners should be able to see as in a glass their own coming destiny, that being warned of their peril they may escape while yet salvation is possible. Yet let me say again, I do not imply that these marks are infallible. They are approximate indications--probable signs, sometimes amounting almost to certainty; but nothing more.

Those who are elected to be saved attend to the means of salvation. This is plain, because if they are ever to be saved, it must be through their attention to those means by which God saves men. Men are saved if at all by the agency of these means. God cannot save by merely physical influence; the nature of the case forbids it. Moral and physical government are entirely distinct and contrasted. The planets

are not moved by motives, nor free minds by gravitation. Matter requires one form of moving power--mind another. It is simply absurd to confound the distinction between the two.

The elect, then, will attend to the truth--will hear, and having heard will think. They will, if they can, attend the places of religious worship and instruction I do not assert that every man who goes to meeting will be saved, or that all who sometimes stay away will be lost, but I speak of the general law that obtains in this matter and of the general influences that stand connected with men's salvation or damnation. As a general thing, the elect will go to meeting--will search for truth. They are indicated by their attention to these means of grace, and the non-elect for the same reason by their neglect of these means.

A personal and permanent interest in gospel truth must be awakened in the minds of the elect, for they are to be saved through the influence of this truth.

I have preached in many hundreds of congregations. I have seen hundreds of persons of whom observers could say as they saw their aspect in the house of God--"That man's ears are opened; he is attentive and solemn;--pray for him--he will be converted." Soon he is converted.

But some of you come here, all inattentive, with no serious thought or concern about God's truth or the relation which your souls bear to that truth. Such persons are reprobated--with almost an entire certainty,--reprobate for the very reason that they would not attend to the truth and would not think on their ways. Have I not touched the case of some among you? You come into the house of God, but you treat the truth of God presented here as a reprobate would--as one whom God cannot save because He cannot get your attention. You say, "O I hope God won't send me to hell-- why should He"! What else can He do with you? He cannot get your attention when He speaks to you. Of course he cannot reach your heart, for He cannot even arrest your thoughts and put you upon noticing what He has to say.

But you say--"What is it that I have done so very bad?" What have I done, do you say? If your professor should speak to you in the recitation--and speak again, no answer--and speak again--ten times repeated, yet you deign not one answer, but go on with your amusements, reading your book or otherwise diverting your mind, treating him with the utmost contempt, could he teach you and thus do you any good? And would it be quite proper for you to ask as if in amazement--What have I done?

So are you doing, sinner, in your abuse of God by utter inattention to what He has to say to you.

A candid state of mind is a hopeful indication. It is both a fit state of mind in itself, and also an essential condition of arriving at the knowledge of the truth and of being benefited by it. Hence you may safely set this trait of mind down as one of the marks of the elect.

But the reprobate are cavilling and captious, full of subtle reasoning and sophistry. At least this is the fact with many of them.

And how is this with some of you? Are you candid and honest, or are you cavilling and captious? You know in the depths of your soul how this is, and you ought to know what these traits of mind indicate.

Again, the elect are too much taken up with the plain things of a sermon and the great duties inculcated, to be stumbled at what they do not understand. They are so much engrossed in what is good, that they naturally overlook what is objectionable.

But the reprobate will do the very opposite. They overlook the good and seize on the objectionable; they overlook the plain things because they teach unwelcome duties, and set themselves to cavil at the mysterious things. How often are they found stumbling at the doctrine of the Trinity, wresting and misrepresenting the scriptures!

And are not such men reprobates? Of course they are--unless they speedily repent. Of course this must be a mark of reprobation, because men are reprobated for these very things. In time they manifest their evil captious hearts, just as God foresaw they would.

Now how is it with you? When you hear a sermon, are you so much taken up with its great and good thoughts and its useful things that you have no heart to think of its defects; or does your mind fasten on the defective things, to the neglect of all that is useful and good? There are two classes of hearers;--one class hear as critics; the other as Christians. One class are wholly engaged in criticism and cavil; being part scholars in grammar, their attention is all arrested by some slip of the tongue or some inadvertent violation of syntax, so that they can think of nothing else through the balance of the sermon. Some read the Bible just so. They will ask--not how much of Cain's sin ought to lie on their own conscience for having hated their own brethren, but, Where did Cain get his wife? This and a thousand other caviling questions they ask just as reprobates naturally do, because it is for these very things that they are reprobated. They come sometimes to the house of God, but they take their seat far back--a great way off--perhaps in the window with their eyes abroad, or with book in hand so that they can readily divert their mind. There they read or play or whisper in the most perfect indifference and carelessness. Truth preached is to them as seen sown by the way side--trodden under foot and forbidden to vegetate.

Are not some of you not applying these things to yourselves, as already true in your own experience? Thus far in the moral pathway of your life, you have gone in the road of the reprobate, nor have deviated from it by one single step.

Another mark of the elect is this; they search for truth, while reprobates search for error. They love it and therefore must search for it, it being a demand of their hearts. This must be a distinguishing mark, for the elect must of necessity believe the truth, else they cannot be saved; in order to believe, they must know and in order to know they must search--search in candor and as for hid treasures. Some are so earnest for the truth that they really dig and mine the bible in search for its treasures. But the reprobate are uncandid when truth is presented before them, and as for searching it out, they are much more likely to be on the scent after some foul, long rotten error. The beauty of truth has no charms for them; but you cannot say the same of the ugliness of error.

Again, the elect will believe the truth. Having studied and understood the truth, they are sure to believe and embrace it. They do so because they mean to be candid. But the reprobate may be known by the readiness with which they believe lies and the very great difficulty they find in believing any

valuable moral truth. I recollect that I received a pamphlet some years since, full of mesmerism and its monstrous absurdities. I could not read it without being greatly affected with the testimony it bore to the moral state of the writer. Is it possible, said I, that such a man, of such education, of such intelligence and good sense, can get into such a relation to great moral truth as to believe this nonsense! Is it possible that he can believe such fooleries as these and yet reject the gospel as not fit to be believed!

Some men will believe anything they please. In the line of lies they can believe with great ease that Jonah could swallow a whale; but in the line of truth they cannot even believe that the whale could swallow Jonah! They cannot believe the most simple things in the gospel, however well sustained by evidence, but they can believe mesmerism and all similar nonsense, or any other absurdity which men of perverse minds and reprobate as to the truth are palming off upon our age.

Of the two classes of people morally divided on the point of being saved or not saved, the one have no time to attend to the faults of other people;--the other class scarcely find time for anything else; the one are too much engrossed in studying and obeying the demands of an enlightened conscience to be easily diverted, while the other class are tenfold more inquisitive about other people's conscience than about their own, and commonly are quite ready to take upon themselves to keep the conscience of all the church and of the world besides--so much taken up with picking a hole in the hedge to peep at the weeds in a neighbor's garden that the weeds in their own grow unmolested till they utterly swamp their owner. O how many men of this stripe help to compose our Christian communities!

One class are so much engaged in self-improvement that they get no time to look after other people's faults, while another class are so familiar with other's faults, that they commonly hear sermons chiefly for the benefit and rebuke of their neighbors. O how long their necks become while they sit and reach over and around to see how their neighbors receive the merited castigation!

One class receive what condemns as well as what justifies; with equal readiness what exposes their own wrong as what commends the right. Not so with the other--the class of reprobates, for they receive of a sermon what seems to them to commend, but set aside promptly what does not.

The elect are often found condemning themselves even more severely than anyone else condemns them; often they are more searching, severe and straight-forward in applying the truth to themselves than others in giving it such application. The reason of this often is that they are honest and know their own faults and defects better than anybody else does. You will find them peculiarly unwilling to take credit to themselves. They say--"O my soul, come forward to this light--come up to this strong and clear light and let all thy sins be set in order before thine eyes." O how his soul sweats with agony! He is determined to be thorough and searching in his application of the truth. He sees so much more to condemn in himself than in others that he wonders at the favorable estimate which others are wont to make of him.

Exactly the opposite is true of reprobates. They have an excuse for every offence. When they cannot actually make out anything in real defence, they yet toil hard for apologies. Instead of coming down to their knees and pleading there for mercy, they resort to special pleading in self-vindication and thus ruin their own souls.

The elect give themselves thoroughly and with great jealousy to understand the spirit of God's requirements, fearful lest they shall not admit the claims of God fully to their hearts. It by no means satisfies them that the external is blameless;--they must go deep to the heart and know that all is right there, asking continually at the door of the heart--What is thy motive?

Right over against these are the reprobates--reprobated because they take the opposite course. Their self-application of truth never goes beyond its letter. They say--"If I do about what is honest, God will accept me and I can rest on His justice"--albeit they take this term honest in a very loose and superficial sense. Hence though the outside of cup and platter are made to look decent, yet within are dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

The elect renounce and abhor their own righteousness as any ground of acceptance with God whatever. "What!" their hearts exclaim, "am I to be saved upon my own righteousness? I have no righteousness to be saved upon! Impossible that such a mode of salvation should ever reach my case!"

In truth nothing can be more abhorrent to their deep convictions. They would not trust their salvation on the goodness of the best hour of their lives.

But the reprobate are always blind--perversely and madly blind to the true spirit of God's requirements. They don't want to see their own hearts, nor would they like by any means to understand too well the spirituality of God's law.

You will see the elect most earnest and sincere to renounce themselves and their spirit of self-seeking--all their own will and their own way. They will not depend at all on their own repentance, their own righteousness, or their own faith; most utterly do they renounce self and all that pertains to it.

The reprobate cleave to their own self-interest as if it were the only possible good and this the only wise way to win it.

The elect will seize the present moment and not put off duty forever, or indeed, at all; but procrastination is the everlasting law of the reprobate.

I ought to have paused on each one of these many points, to ask you solemnly how the count stands in your own souls. Will you answer it now in the silence of your own reflection, and let conscience render an honest verdict!

The elect become honest with themselves, with God and with all men. Else they could not be saved. Without this, they must be reprobated.

The elect cry out--"Search me, O God, search me all out most thoroughly"; but do you ever find the non-elect doing this? Notice that elect child. The scaling tears flow down his cheeks; his heart is tender and full of many fears lest in the hour of temptation he should sin against his God. But here is another man; long and in vain has the Lord sought and labored to draw his soul into an honest state

and bring him to self-searching.

You will find that if the elect at any time fall into mistakes and errors they are ready to renounce them. At once when they suspect they may be in the wrong they pause and say--"I will surely aim to look at the truth and search it all out. I have no fear of truth--nor dread of seeing my duty."

But the reprobate are distinguished by their pride and self-committal. You may know them by their fear of being laughed at for doing right after having done wrong. You will see them persist in their errors and evil ways and never give them up till they go down to the depths of hell.

The elect are duly actuated by fear of God--not a servile but a filial fear, well aware that it is rational to stand in awe before the great and holy God. They do not think it becomes them to be above acknowledging that they are afraid of God's judgments and terrors.

But the reprobate lift up their heads on high and disdain to be influenced by fear of punishment or fear of God in any form.

The elect are duly affected by the mercy of God. It has a deep and melting influence on their hearts. On the other hand the reprobate are for the most part unmoved by this influence. You will recollect I said some Sabbaths since that some are so hardened that the mercy of God has no power on them. Instead of bowing under God's mercy, affected to penitence and tenderness thereby, they become only the more bold and presumptuous.

But the elect have the utmost fear to sin. It is not merely or chiefly the fear of being punished; they are afraid to grieve their Heavenly Father--just as a dutiful child fears to add one pang to the griefs of a mother's heart.

The reprobate, however, if they are compelled to admit the truth of the gospel, only abuse it and make the utmost use of it as an occasion for more and bolder sin.

The elect you will be likely to find in the way and use of special means of grace and favored seasons of divine influence. How many times have I seen persons who in seasons of revival, when the clouds grow big with promised rain, must be off. Away they go on some hastily projected journey, or some newly got up plan for business. In the hours of ingathering, they will not be there. Publicans and harlots will crown into the kingdom, but not they. They are out of its way. Or if they stay at home you will mark that when a mighty shower of divine effusions descends on the congregation, the sermon that was blest to scores and hundreds will be unblest to them. They do not hear as for their lives. They hear after a sort, but they go their way, and it is as if they had heard nothing at all.

It is in view of all these facts, foreseen in the divine eye, that His mind is made up. He sees that He can do nothing with them but give them over to a reprobate mind and to its inevitable results.

The elect can never be made to rest in an unsanctifying hope. They know and feel that they must have a self-purifying hope, like that of John as he describes it in his epistle--"He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure." If they find they have a hope that does not induce them to

purify themselves, they say at once--"This is not the hope for me"!

But the reprobate will be satisfied with the least possible evidence. The least that will suffice to allay their fears of hell will answer all their purpose. they live with little self-examination;--know that their hope is not one that purifies the heart--knows it does not lead them to break off from sin--yet since so many are seen or supposed to be in the same condition, they make up their minds to it with little difficulty.

The elect are greatly afraid of delusion; they dread it exceedingly as a real and a great evil. The Bible says of some delusions, they are so subtle that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect, assuming that this is not possible. If so it must be because through grace they can be kept watching and prayerful against every delusion. but the reprobate court it. mark how they rush into every new form of self-delusion. Averse to the truth through hatred of heart against it, they almost pray for delusion. O how greedily they hail whatever new light in the shape of mesmerism and rappings afford a place of retreat from the unwelcome blaze of Bible truth.

The elect will be on their guard against bad company. This is one of the dangers against which they must be willing to watch, or they cannot be saved and could not have been elected. I think now of the case of a young man who began to form acquaintance with another--an acquaintance at first hopeful, but ere long something occurred which aroused his fears and soon something else of the same indication, yet more startling. Suddenly my young friend paused and said--I must cut your acquaintance at once, for how can I trust myself in your society! Such a step required moral courage. It also indicated that that young man was in the way of saving his own soul, and therefore might be presumed to be one of the elect.

Right over against this I remember the case of a young man traveling with his father and other friends. I could not but notice how the father watched that son. "I must do so, said he, for I know that he is continually rushing into bad company. The moment he sees any of that class of society, their attraction becomes to him almost resistless.. He seems to love the society of young men who will debauch his principles and deprave his morals. It seems to me often that he will ruin his own soul in spite of the utmost care I can take of him."

The elect will be afraid of bad habits, and ever on their guard against them. If at any time they have fallen under the power of temptation in this direction, they will try to recover themselves at once from the snare.

Right over against this stands the case of the reprobate, easily known by the fact that they are not afraid of bad habits, but are easily led into them, as God knew they would be, and therefore was compelled to give them over to a reprobate mind.

The elect are afraid of bad books, but the reprobate are not, but rather relish them and indulge in their perusal.

You see one class, betaking themselves to a prayer meeting, while another class wonder why anybody should go there. The latter will say, "If I have not religion enough to seek my own gratification, what's

my religion good for?" About as reasonable as if the drunkard should say, "If I can't get drunk, and get safely out of it again, what's my religion good for?"

The reprobate walk evermore in a worldly way, and not in God's ways and God's counsels. The ways of the world are the ways of their choice. The elect are not satisfied with merely amiable qualities, they must have the deep fountains of the heart broken up, and it's Augean stables cleansed. The reprobate satisfy themselves with the smoothest and most plausible forms--anything that will prepare them to slide down on a glass rail road to the depths of hell.

The elect seek to mortify their pride, and often do things for this very purpose, just to crush down the hatred thing, saying--I will not bear it nor spare it; I put my heel on the very head of the serpent and it shall live no longer.

But the reprobate abhor such a course, and even cultivate their pride.

In times of revival, an elect man will say--Now is my time, I must not delay a moment longer. I must seize my opportunity while yet it is called today. But the reprobate contrive ten thousand excuses, often self-contradictory and always senseless and vain. In point is the case of a young man in Rochester many years since, who, when the revival commenced, and he was pressed with the claims of the gospel, replied--"Shall I make myself a laughing stock among the youth of this city? Do you expect me to be so singular as to set off for the Celestial City all alone?" Ere long the masses were melted and moved. Then, pressed again with the claims of the gospel, he replied--"What! shall I go with the rabble? Do you expect me to connect myself with the masses of merely common people?" Soon the dreadful cholera came--it smote him, and in three short but dreadful hours, took him from the earth, and hurried him before that God, whose claims he had so frivolously and lightly set aside!

So with the reprobate, when the great gospel trumpet is blown, waxing louder and louder, they will not hear. Their hearts are sealed against the truth, and their doom, for this very reason, sealed for the awful judgment. They are reprobates, because they would play the fool, and, because no wisdom could be welcome to their souls.

The elect, moreover, are striving for sanctification. The reprobate, let their profession of piety be as it may, have no heart to become holy as God is holy.

The elect will persevere. Not so with the reprobate, for they are distinguished by a short-lived piety, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. Like a boat in the Niagara, above the mighty cataract, the elect will strike firmly, and ply their oars with their might, and bear away in safety; but the reprobate, give a few feeble strokes, and then give way to the furious current, and are borne along with dashing speed, over the dreadful precipice, down, down, to ruin. Perhaps they set out in their religion, only to make a little experiment, and see how they liked it. Need I tell you, these experimenters are shortly stumbled, and when the sun is up and waxes hot, they wither away.

The elect will have more and more conscience. Mark them when and where you will, they are becoming daily and yearly in their moral course, more and more conscientious, pure-minded, strict, upright, kind and generous. In their early stages, the natural qualities of character may predominate

and chiefly obscure the spiritual, but as time rolls on, and the appliances of providence and grace have time to do their work, you see them more and more ripe for God's service, till at last they melt away into heaven.

But in the reprobate, you will see less and less that is hopeful. The blossoms that in early times seemed to promise fruit, will sicken, fade and drop, and soon the tree itself grows pale and sickly, and ripens for the burning.

The elect, will show sooner or later, that they are saved. You will see that the power of sin in their hearts is broken, and that every grace is thriving and flourishing exceedingly.

"Great is the work, my neighbors cried,
and owned the power divine."

They will not be stumbling about the doctrines of the Bible, but on the contrary will see more and more of beauty and fitness in all those great things which God has revealed of Himself and His plan of salvation. To the reprobate it falls to stumble forever at the plain truths of God's word, and the plainer and the more precious the truth, the more grievous and fatal is their stumbling. What could be a more decisive mark of a reprobate than this?

REMARKS.

1. Men truly decide in time their own election or reprobation. Now do not misapprehend me. Mistakes on this subject are far too common. Some suppose that God has decided man's destiny, as absolutely, and fatally, as if He had nailed it down with iron nails, and man had no power to determine or change it. Whereas, the fact is, that man as really decides his own destiny, as if God had known nothing about it.

2. It is simply absurd to say--"A man elected, will be saved, do what he may," for he never can be saved but by doing his duty.

3. It is a mere absurdity to make election a stumbling block, as many do. Suppose that God and yourself were to commence existence today, together. There is no past with either, and no actions done in the past, therefore, which can in the least affect the future. Now, God determines your destiny, according to your actual conduct, and your entire voluntary activities. Would it not be absurd for you to complain of His election as interfering with your final destiny, or rather, with your power to determine it by your own free choices?

If so on this supposition, then is it so as the case actually stands, for God really determines your destiny solely upon your voluntary conduct,--solely and actually as if He had never thought of it before you began to live and to act.

4. Ministers whose hearts are set on doing their work, cannot help watching the course of things, to see the indications that show who are the elect, and who the reprobate. If their hearts are really on saving souls, of course they will watch with most intense solicitude. Like a faithful physician who

sees his patient in peril, his nerves are on the rack, his lips quiver and turn white, for his soul is full of unutterable sympathy and anxiety; or as the lawyer with a case on hand in which life trembles in the balance, and his sympathies are wrought up to agony: so the honest man of God, who labors for souls as one who must give account, has the sympathies of his heart taxed to their utmost depth, and cannot but watch every indication, that at last his account for each or any soul will be with joy and not with grief. As he sees the evidences of election developing themselves here, or of reprobation there, his soul swells with the varied emotions of hope and of fear; and as those evidences ripen to their maturity, and he stands by the bedside of the dying Christian conqueror, why should he not shout, "Glory to God in the highest!"? The destiny of one more soul for heaven, always known to God, is now made manifest before his eyes, and why should he not give utterance to his devout thanksgivings to all conquering grace?

5. The evidences on both sides are oftentimes so manifestly clear that the wickedest man must confess to their sufficiency as evidence. "That man," they will say, "is certainly fitting for heaven." "That other man is surely on his way down to the depths of hell."

6. The more thorough the application of means, the more decisive will these developments become. When Christ traveled with His own gospel among the people of His time, working miracles and pouring the light of truth in mighty floods up on all the land, how rapidly did some develop their character as reprobates! And on the other hand, how readily did some come to the truth, to the saving of their souls. So in these days, when the means employed are full of power, and the influences are strong and earnestly applied, and men are compelled to decide one way or the other, the work of sealing destiny and of developing its evidences, goes on with utmost terrific rapidity. There is a young woman. She scarcely sets her foot down in Oberlin before she says, "This is a holy place, and God has sent me here to secure the salvation of my soul. It must be done!" But another shall come in at the same time, and come under the same influences but sets herself against the truth from the very first, and only becomes the more rapidly and terribly hardened in her sins.

7. We see what an inquisitive world this ought to be, to know, not who is first in office or foremost in wealth, but to see who develops the character of the elect and who the reprobate. With what amazing interest would angels study these indications, if human character and conduct were as open to their inspection as to ours! These things may be more patent to their eyes than they can be to our own.

We see why Peter said, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." How reasonable that all men should! For consider, you have the same to do, and as much to do, in determining the eternal destiny of your own soul, as if God knew nothing about it.

Again, you see the meaning of that portion of my text--"For many are called but few are chosen." The many, God calls, but few will answer. Long and loudly does He call, and they will not hear. Of course, God could not choose them to salvation.

How does the case stand with you, my hearers? You have some new evidence developed to your view this day, showing, one way or the other, what shall be your final destiny. Do you take warning, and apply the truth to yourselves? Do you find that the gospel is saving you in the sense of saving your hearts from the power of sin?

Generally the early years of life give the cast to moral character and determine final eternal destiny. The masses who are converted at all are converted early, so that you do not need to wait long for developments which are in the main decisive. Early they strike into the path which, followed through after years, lands them at their journey's end in paradise or in perdition. Mark that young man, that mere boy. Has he a conscience? Is it becoming more and more an element of power in his character? Does he fear God and hate evil? Is he attentive to the great questions of religious duty and truth? Then you may predict, almost with certainty, his future manhood and his final destiny.

But on the other hand, if you see him indisposed towards religious truth and its claims, and only waxing more and more hardened and fixed in his aversion, you cannot help saying, "Reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord hath rejected them." The Lord rejected them because he saw that they would turn away coldly and scornfully from every appeal He could make to either their conscience or their sensibilities. Yes, even when Jesus Christ came down to throw His arms of lovingkindness all round about you, you evaded Him and would not be embraced in His loving arms. Then you sealed your final doom as a lost sinner.

Another said, "I must bid Jesus welcome to my heart--I must and will rush to the wide arms of His offered embrace, crying "Life, Life, ETERNAL LIFE!" and so doing, he "made his calling and election sure." And did he, think you, pay too dearly for his soul's salvation? Will he regret it when, in the light of the judgment, he shall come to see what such a salvation is actually worth?

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own

gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.

3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.

End of the 1852 Collection.