

What Saith the Scripture?

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GLOSSARY

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

Thanks for The Gospel Victory

Lecture I

January 30, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Rom. 7:25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Text.--1 Cor. 15:57: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In both these passages Paul gives thanks for deliverance from a sinning and sinful state.

To bring this subject fully before us, I remark,

I. That unconverted men are morally and spiritually dead.

II. Moral death of sinners is a fact of experience.

III. There must be efficacious remedy for sin.

IV. This remedy is never in ourselves.

V. What the Bible thus declares, is true also in philosophy and in fact.

VI. Thanksgiving for victory over sin.

VII. Until the church is sanctified, the world cannot be converted.

I. The Bible everywhere teaches and facts prove that unconverted men are morally and spiritually dead.

- 1. They live as if there were no God. They appreciate neither His rights nor His feelings. To all intents and purposes, they are, towards God, as dead men. Considerations concerning God have no influence on them. This is one of the most obvious facts in human life. So true is it, that in fact we often find men pleading as their excuse that they have no inclinations towards God. Thus they reveal their moral death, not in their lives only, but in their very excuses; showing that they are conscious of their moral apostasy and death, and but too well aware that they have no tendencies in themselves towards God.
- 2. Christians, on the other hand, are represented as being alive but not in good and perfect health, and not mature in their growth. At first they are new-born babes, needing the pure milk of the word; then youth, needing counsel; then fathers and mothers in Israel, of "full age," and "having their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Often the scriptures represent Christians as being very weak, so that they have great liability to stumble and fall. This stumbling and falling becomes a sad stumbling-block in the way of wicked men -- those men who are prone to look for and seek stumbling-blocks for their excuse. They do not realize the

condition of Christians, only in part reclaimed from their death in sin. They do not consider that though born, they are yet babes, or at best, but children. But they are not disposed to make allowance for these circumstances -- a fact which only serves to show how unreasonable sin is.

Returning to the fact that Christians are usually weak, I remark, this weakness is moral, not natural. Natural weakness pertains to one's created faculties; moral, to one's voluntary purposes. Weakness of nature is a misfortune; weakness of moral purpose is a fault. Death in sin is simply a fault -- always and altogether, a fault. This weakness in Christians is also a fault, because it results from a want of faith in Christ, and love to His name.

II. This weakness and moral death of sinners is a fact of experience.

- 1. I have myself had but too much reason to know what it is. I found a total discrepancy between my convictions and my actions. I could say, "So I ought to do, but so I do not." When I questioned myself, asking -- Why is this so? I could only say, It is wholly unaccountable. Wide awake on all other subjects, and to all other interests, yet perfectly dead to this, I found myself in a strange state, and if not a "wonder to many," I was at least to myself. In a wretched state, I knew I had no disposition to get out of it. And every sinner who reflects knows that this is just his state.
- 2. The spiritual weakness of Christians manifests itself in a conscious want of promptness to act upon, and fully up to, their convictions of duty and sense of obligation. They are more deeply conscious of these defects than sinners are, or can be, of theirs. Sinners have little anxiety or trouble about their own moral death; but not so with Christians. They recognize their obligations, and are unusually conscious of being ready, prompt, and anxious to meet them, yet painfully aware that while "the spirit is willing the flesh is weak." Sometimes they are strong in the Lord, and their sense of weakness has passed away; anon, perhaps, they trust to their own strength, and find out their weakness to their cost; they fall sadly short, and come into darkness and trouble.
- 3. This state in both saints and sinners is among the most patent and obvious facts in the world. Who can doubt that there is moral life in real Christians, and moral death in sinners? This the Bible everywhere teaches or implies. It is a fact that no man can doubt who has eyes to see, and a mind candid enough to apprehend and admit a plain fact.

I often think it strange that unconverted men allow themselves to be so stumbled by the weakness of professed Christians. I have met some impenitent men who had thought candidly on this subject, and who seemed to appreciate fully the state and difficulties of Christians, and consequently were not stumbled at all by any mistakes or errors into which they might fall. They did not at all wonder that Christians are no better. If I had not considered this matter, and had not ceased to stumble myself on the imperfections of professed Christians, I never could have become a Christian. If I had not seen that all this is according to the Bible and reason, I could not have come into a state of mind towards God and Christianity in which my conversion from sin would be possible. Usually, in a place where there are many Christians, there will be some who stumble constantly upon

them, as if utterly unable or unwilling to apologize for their failures on the score of infant piety, superinduced upon long-standing habits of sin.

III. If there be not some efficacious remedy for sin, in the soul, sinners must be either annihilated, at death, or damned.

So of Christians, if there be not some efficacious remedy, giving them victory over sin, they too must be lost. In my early life I was much more ready to doubt whether any could be saved, than to believe that all would be. There seemed to me more reason to suppose all would be damned, than all saved. The great inquiry was, How can any be saved? It was never this, How can God damn any? Let any sensible man get a clear and full idea of what salvation is, and he will see it can be no easy thing. He will assume that the law must go into full execution against all, and that so, none can be saved. My mind before my conversion ran on this text -- "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I could see that even Christians must have mighty help from some quarter, being only babes in Christ, and their salvation a work of many difficulties.

It has always been passing strange to me that any man could be a Universalist. Even before my conversion it was a profound mystery. Why, said I then, does not everybody see that men must become holy or be lost? If the Holy Ghost does not go down into hell to convert sinners, surely they cannot be saved there. Unless there be some efficacious remedy for sin, taking effect to the full extent of actually giving the victory over it, salvation in heaven is impossible.

In Romans 7, Paul describes a state in which there is the greatest effort to get rid of this state of sinfulness. There he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Then, the gospel opening on his anxious eye, he thanks God for deliverance through Jesus Christ. He saw the remedy.

IV. This remedy is never in ourselves.

Nowhere in the wide range of the material system all round us, can it be found; nowhere outside of God. It might be demonstrated that in our own nature there is no efficacious remedy. Yet by this I do not mean to say that if any man would use his powers right, he could gain no relief; but I do mean to say that, apart from God, he never will use his own powers right for this end. His own will is committed in an opposite direction. He has fallen into the slough of his corrupt propensities. These propensities are fearful adversaries to his being holy, and must be, until they are subdued. Hence we are constantly pressed with the question -- Where is the power that can subdue them and give us the victory?

- 1. Paul answers, thanking God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him we have it. Yet until men come to know the gospel by an inward apprehension, it is to them dark, and almost without meaning. They feel but little if any interest in it. But when the divine Spirit reveals Jesus to the mind, these dark things become precious realities. Light breaks in, and illumines the chambers, so recently in thick darkness. Under this influence gospel truth becomes intensely interesting, and even exciting. Men who have been swept away by the influence of worldly objects, who would not look at spiritual things, and were almost mad in their pursuit of objects which appeal only to the senses, are now wonderfully changed. Christ

reveals Himself so clearly that He overbalances and overcomes these earthly excitements. Especially is this the case when the Spirit reveals God as being truly love. This at once, takes prodigious hold on us. Said one who had long professed Christ, and had known something of the gospel in her own experience, "All at once, after so long walking in comparative darkness, the Lord showed me that I had hitherto known Him but very imperfectly. I did not know God was love, before. I did not see this in its own true sun-light. I had opinions; I had notions; but it could not be said I had knowledge. I had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye has seen Him, and my heart has been ravished with His love."

From this time onward her whole soul seemed all glowing with love to God, and radiant with the love of God, revealed to her. So it will always be when the Spirit reveals Jesus to the soul, and we see why He died for us, and why He has in so many ways done so much for us. When these things come up from the realms of theory, into the position of fact, and of experience, apathy ceases; the sensibilities are no longer stagnant; all is wakeful; slavish fear is gone; the soul approaches God freely, and in the spirit of a child; he is no longer religious, because he must be, nor reads the Bible because he must, nor does he pray, or give in benevolence, for such reasons. All these forms of dead experience have passed away, and the mind looks back on it as a loathsome abomination. While these views of Christ are before his mind, he will make no more legal efforts -- will no more strive to gain the favor of God by mere works of law. Christ, thus revealed, breaks the power of sin.

- 2. Turning now to my impenitent hearers, I ask you if you do not know and admit that I have given a fair account of your case. You know that you have no proper regard, practically, for God, no more than if your heart and intellect were separated, and all mutual influence of one over the other were broken off. Your convictions of truth are often clear and strong; but the response of your heart to this truth is utterly withheld. The state of your affections and will seems to have no correspondence to your own convictions of what they should be. Yet this strange discrepancy is altogether within your power, and you ought to put an end to it at once. You have no right to live on so; God asserting His claims, but your soul utterly disowning them. This is precisely the state of the sinner; his conscience dis severed from his heart. When his attention is turned to this, he is conscious of this utter disagreement and discordance. In my days of sin, I was just as sensible of this as of my own existence.

Do you ask, What is the reason for this? Am I ever to become self-consistent? Said one of the first lawyers in New York -- "There is no use in trying to vindicate myself. I can make no defense; can offer no explanation. It avails nothing for me to argue my case, for I have nothing to plead." So you know you have no reason to offer for your course of sin. If I were to put it to you all, to say by a public expression if this be not your case, you would at once, if honest, rise to give assent. You are in a lost state. You feel, sometimes, a deep sense of this lostness. Is there a remedy for you?

- 3. Some of you who profess religion are in great doubt whether you have any spiritual life. Let me ask you if you have not been greatly tried with the fact of your own spiritual impotence, and of your having so little rallying power in yourself? Are you not surprised and troubled at your want of energy, your inefficiency in duty? Have these things pressed you, and have you been

led to inquire, anxiously, whether there is a remedy? Do you want to get hold of one, if it be yet possible?

Our text gives us the true and only remedy. God in Christ is the only efficient and all-sufficient power to reach and remedy this direst of all things, sin. Everywhere else in the Bible, the condition of this victory over sin is declared to be faith in Jesus Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Without faith the gospel never takes effect in us.

V. What the Bible thus declares, is true also in philosophy and in fact.

Goodness revealed has attractions over even sinners. It is its very nature to attract all human hearts.

- 1. Some of you felt this attraction even when you were in your sins. Perhaps you feel it somewhat even now. In my own case I recollect the circumstance of weeping profusely at an instance of goodness. I thought then it came near to winning me over to sympathy with goodness. I could not help crying out, This is not in me; I know my heart is not in sympathy with God; -- so strangely did this manifestation of goodness affect me.

You who have read Uncle Tom's Cabin will remember the story of Topsy and little Eva. Topsy seems never to have seen any manifestations of kindness and goodness towards herself. Always beaten about, every influence only driving her the farther from goodness, no wonder she became surly and morose. Little Eva approached her on one occasion as she sat, and looking her mildly and sweetly in the eye, asked her if she could not be good. Now, for the first time, she saw an interest manifested in her happiness, and saw also, in contrast with Eva's spirit, what her own was. This is represented as the first step before the great moral change.

- 2. No doubt this is true in philosophy. There is something in goodness which strongly tends to draw a moral being into sympathy with itself.
- 3. Christians are made strong by the revelations which Christ makes of Himself to their minds. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, (Jesus) they are changed from glory to glory." The view of His own glory, which the Lord gave to Moses when he prayed, "I beseech Thee show me Thy glory," and the Lord answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee," this strengthened Moses greatly. It seemed to cast the mantle of Jehovah upon him, and make him a new and wonderful man.
- 4. When the Lord gains the confidence of a sinner so that He can reveal Himself, the first step is to reveal His goodness. So we should expect, and so it is.

But this goodness must be believed. Confidence must be reposed in Christ, else He cannot reveal His goodness in any saving manner.

- 5. A conscious victory over ourselves and sin is the only evidence of a saving change. An apparent victory is the only evidence to others of our being savingly changed. This victory consists in being saved from sin, and in becoming like God. Nothing less than this is real

salvation.

Love revealed to faith is the power of God unto salvation. Suppose one of you comes into a state in which you have not a particle of confidence in any one who tries to do you good; all that any friend should attempt to do for you, you ascribe to some sinister motive. So long as you withhold confidence his love is not revealed to your faith, for you have no faith to which it can be revealed. In this case, by a natural law of mind, all the goodness he reveals to you only makes you more wicked and only works out a deeper ruin.

The love of God revealed to faith, is the power of God to bring the soul out of its bondage. But love manifested, yet through unbelief rejected, works ruin to the soul by a natural law; and by the same law, the clearer the revelations of that love, the more rapid and fearful the ruin wrought. The case of the Jews, taught by Christ in person, is in point, a most striking and affecting example. The way they rejected their Messiah served fearfully to deprave their hearts and to hasten the ruin of the nation. Christ Himself said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, (that is, comparatively none) but now they have no cloak for their sin." When Christ went through all Judea and Galilee, manifesting everywhere the evidences of His being the Messiah, and bearing Himself with so much kindness, dignity, and humility, it seems wonderful that the people in mass and their priests and scribes especially, did not open their hearts to bid Him welcome. But when instead of this, they withheld their confidence, and rejected Him in stern and wicked unbelief, they became fearfully hardened. Every step in the process of this rejection, worked only mischief and ruin. Suppose you have in your family a son whom you are trying to save; but the more you labor for this result, so much the more does he withhold his confidence, traduce your motives, and pervert to evil all your intended good. Such a course as this on his part throws him fearfully into the power of Satan, and he is led captive, by that arch-deceiver, at his will.

- 6. None can appreciate our texts, and other passages of this class, except those who have had experience. "Thanks be to God," cries Paul, "who giveth us the victory;" -- a song in which none can truly join but those who have gained this victory, and know its power and blessedness. What can an impenitent man know of such emotions? What can he say? Can he thank God for victory of which he knows and experiences nothing? No; he has been only vanquished, and Satan sings the peans of victory over the ruin of his soul.

To the Christian, really victorious, there is the utmost occasion for gratitude and thanksgiving. He esteems this far above all his other mercies, that he finds himself lifted above the power of temptation, his old chains broken, his religious exercises and purposes become spontaneous, and religion the life and joy of his soul. How earnestly does he bless the Lord who hath given him the victory!

VI. Thanksgiving for victory over sin.

- 1. It is sad to see how little there is, in our day, of this thanksgiving for victory over sin. How rarely do you hear such thanks for grace received and victory obtained! We have been in the

habit here of having a thanksgiving meeting, for the purpose of expressing our individual grounds of thanksgiving. When the next thanksgiving day occurs shall we hear any offerings of praise to God for giving the victory over sin? We used to hear thanks for grace received; shall we have such thanks again? It was once, more common with us than thanks for temporal mercies; shall it be so again?

- 2. If the numbers who return to give thanks for this blessing are small, what shall we infer? Is it not fearfully sad and perilous that the gospel should lose its power, in any community?

Many seem not to be aware of their real state. It is hard to convince them that they are not altogether right, yet they have no thanks for this victory. Yet if they had gained this victory they surely would acknowledge it, and express their gratitude to God for it. No other victors are more grateful than Christian victors. If they find themselves victors, they will not conceal the blessed truth, but will naturally wish to shout the praises of victorious grace!

- 3. Many professed Christians spend their time and breath in brooding over their great weakness, talking it over, praying about it, and discouraging themselves and others as if the Lord were a hard master, who imposed heavy tasks and allowed only the least possible amount of grace to help His children perform them. Yet they do not usually quite despair of help in themselves; do not cease from legal efforts; are not dead to this class of efforts, as those who have utterly renounced them, and who trust in Christ alone. They still think they shall gain the victory by some work which they shall do in themselves. By efforts made without faith, they hope to get faith, and so work out their own righteousness. But it is only when self is really despaired of, that deliverance comes. When you see a sinner on the verge of despair in himself, then you may know he is near the kingdom of grace and mercy. When he has done everything he can do in himself, to save himself, and is compelled to despair of doing anything more, then he is ready to trust in Jesus. Who of us has not seen this experience in others, and felt it in ourselves? At first we thought we could get religion with little effort; we started off self-righteously, made some ineffectual struggles to pray, and soon learned that our case was far worse than we had supposed. Before my conversion I had never prayed much. For a short time previous, I used to lock my office door, stop the keyhole, and whisper out a short prayer in the greatest perturbation lest somebody should hear my voice, or in some way learn that I was praying. But this answered no purpose; I must pray better than this. I seemed to be bound up and hemmed in on every side, and could not pray. But it occurred to me that if I could get entirely away from everybody, and could meet God alone, that then I could pray. So I went off into the woods, far beyond any danger of being overheard, or seen. But even then I could not pray. My heart refused to pray; there seemed to be no prayer in it. I felt fearfully faint -- said, All is over with me; I never can pray. Despair came down on my heart for a moment; the last prop was knocked out from under me, and there was nothing more I could do but to fall helpless at Jesus' feet, and find mercy there!
- 4. Often persons talk and complain much of their weakness, but do not despair of yet further efforts in their own strength. They are not so shut up to God that they know they cannot take another step to purpose, in any other direction. They seem little aware of the fact that Jesus Christ is knocking at the door of their heart every moment, as He said, "Behold, I stand at the

door and knock" -- yet they do not bid Him enter with welcome. In fact, they even bolt the door against Him.

A lady of my acquaintance, hopefully a Christian, felt her need of sanctifying grace, and really exhausted her strength in efforts, after her own ideas of the matter, to get the command of her temper. At length she fell into despair; said she was not a Christian and could do no more, and would profess piety no longer. At this crisis Jesus revealed Himself to her, and in a moment she found deliverance. She was completely saved from the power of her giant temptation. Years after this, she said to me -- "I have no more expectation of committing those sins of temper than I have of committing murder."

- 5. Real despair of help in one's self does not make men careless and lead them to drop all efforts; on the contrary, the more they despair, the more their soul reaches out on every side for help and hope.

VII. Until the church is sanctified, the world cannot be converted.

Until Christians can testify with their lips and lives, it cannot be expected that the truth will take effect.

A man of much prominence in New York had a pious wife. When the subject of sanctification came to be agitated here, some eighteen years since, she was enough of a Christian to understand it, and to feel her need. She studied it and embraced it. When her unconverted husband saw the astonishing change it wrought in her, he said, "the church must have this. When they do, the world will understand the gospel. They will have something intelligible to aim at." How true! Until the church gets the victory, and, rejoicing in this victory, can show it to the world, she need not think she is greatly recommending religion, or is likely to secure many converts.

- 1. Converts are likely to be converted only to the current standard of piety in the church where they are. Often you see this illustrated in a very striking manner. Although they have the Bible in their hand, and although they have excellent preaching, yet their practical ideas of religion are usually drawn from the observed life and spirit of their Christian friends. The living patterns have the practical power. Hence, if young converts have before them high example, it puts them upon high aims and efforts. They aspire to the standard of those whom they most esteem. O how precious to them, to have high and holy examples for their imitation!
- 2. Church members are in their own light when they reproach converts, for they only reproach themselves. They often do not consider that these converts are only themselves reproduced; a mirror in which they can see the reflection of their own faces. So, also, for the church to complain of each other is only to complain of themselves. We are every one of us responsible in our measure, for the state of the church, and to blame for its state being no better than it is. It is therefore of no use for us to recriminate.

Some professors of religion say, "All this does not apply to me, for I don't profess sanctification." A great mistake; for you have professed sanctification. Scarcely could you make a more solemn profession than you made when you joined the church. Then you

publicly avouched the Lord Jehovah to be your God, Jesus to be your Savior, and the Holy Ghost to be your sanctifier. You solemnly promised to abstain from all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and if this is not a profession of entire sanctification, what is? Certainly, your promise and profession went the whole length of pledging yourself to full and whole-hearted obedience -- an obedience not so complete as you may perhaps, render in after years, with more and better knowledge; for holy obedience may progress with knowledge, onward through all time and all eternity. But after such a covenant, it avails nothing to say that you have not committed yourself to a life and a state of entire consecration to God.

Is it not the fact that some of you, instead of coming up to the gospel standard, keep shy of it, more than willing to waive the question about entire consecration, and really anxious to build up a new highway to heaven, which shall not be the "highway of holiness"? Brethren, such building of other highways for the Christian life, must be a fearful failure. There is perdition at the end of such a pathway, and there ought to be. If God's redeemed people rebel against being constrained by redeeming love, and insist that some little sin must be indulged and admitted into the standard Christian life, ought not God to give them up to their own lusts? Nay more, will He not do this as sure as He is holy, and as surely as He hates sin with utter hatred?

Gospel Ministers Ambassadors for Christ

Lecture II

March 12, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--2 Cor. 5:20: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

An ambassador is an agent or representative of a government. In ancient times, they were employed only in regard to matters of war and peace. In those times, commercial relations were of small account, compared with what they are now. Now it is common to sustain ambassadors at all the foreign courts, to look after those numerous relations that obtain between nations at peace with each other. No such thing was thought of in New Testament times. Our Savior speaks of ambassadors being sent, but it was only to "offer conditions of peace." In this sense, God sends His ambassadors to guilty men.

The Church, and especially her gospel ministers represent Christ on earth, and are engaged to do His

work. The world being in revolt against its own Maker, Ruler and Father, He sends His ministers as ambassadors to plead with men to be reconciled to God. Ministers are divinely appointed and commissioned for this express purpose. Holding their credentials from the Lord Jesus Christ, they are authorized to offer men free pardon on condition of unqualified submission to God's will and acceptance of pardon in the name of Jesus only. I need only say, on this point, that a duly appointed ambassador holds such relations to both parties, that, while acting within his commission, his acts bind the government he represents, as truly as their own acts can do. His business is to keep within his commission and instructions, and report what he has done. Then his action is conclusive upon his employers.

I. Sinners are not reconciled to God.

II. But what is implied in being reconciled?

I. The text assumes that sinners are not reconciled to God.

This is, of course, true of every sinner. It is indeed only an identical proposition -- a mere truism -- only another way of saying the same thing. Sin is transgression of God's law, and, of course, is opposition and not friendship towards God. This is the very idea of being a sinner. To say that a sinner is unreconciled to God is only to say that he is a sinner. The being a sinner, implies an unreconciled state.

It is plain that God looks on sinners as being unreconciled; else how should He call on them to be reconciled? I am aware that sinners often say, "I have nothing against God," but this only shows that they know not what spirit they are of. They really act towards God as if they had the utmost reason for disliking Him; and if they were carefully to search their own hearts, they would find real enmity against God -- a spirit that loves to find fault, even where there is not the least occasion.

It is a simple and notorious fact that sinners are at variance with God. There is not another fact on all the face of this world's history more patent than this.

II. But what is implied in being reconciled?

That we cordially approve His character, and not His character only, but His government, so that we practically consent to obey Him. This implies supreme love to God, for He requires just no less than this. It implies submission to His providence also -- that is, to His actual administration of the affairs of this world. It includes a cordial embracing of His whole will -- in every department of His government and providence. A cordial and constant co-operation with Him in all His ways, must be embraced; for as He holds the position of Supreme Ruler, nothing less than this can be commensurate with our obligations.

- 1. There are many reasons why you, who are in sin, should be reconciled to God.
 - (1.) Because everything He has done is perfectly right. There is no fault to be found in His law -- all there, is holy, just and good. There is no fault to be found with the Gospel;

that is ineffably condescending and compassionate -- gloriously good and wise. What reason, then, have you to be otherwise than reconciled?

- (2.) It is utterly useless for you to persist in this controversy with God. You know He is right, and yourself wrong; and you also know that no amount of debate and controversy will ever make your case any better. Why, then, should you prolong such a controversy, so unjust to God -- so unreasonable; and to yourself as ruinous as it is unreasonable?
 - (3.) You ought to yield because you cannot afford to live so. You can find no happiness, no good of any sort in prosecuting this controversy.
 - (4.) God can never yield to you. You must yield, or there must be an everlasting antagonism. And can you look upon such a result with any other feelings than dread and horror?
 - (5.) That you should yield is intrinsically right -- a reason which ought to be sufficient alone, if there were no other.
 - (6.) Of course, it is safe to yield -- perfectly safe. You lose nothing -- run no risk of losing anything.
- 2. Suppose you were at variance with any other person, and there were only this one reason urged for your becoming reconciled, that it would be on your part simply right -- would you not be a knave if you were to resist? And ought you not to be so esteemed by all the world unless you would yield? In all controversies, the first thing enquired after is -- Who is in the right and who in the wrong? In the case between you and your Maker, this is perfectly plain. Not one unprejudiced judge in all the universe will ever decide in your favor.

Again, it is expedient. It will cost you nothing. It will deprive you of no good. In every point of view, expediency demands that you submit to God. I know sinners are often ashamed to admit that themselves are wrong; but which is most honorable; to maintain a position which everybody decides to be wrong; or to recede from that position -- nobly come out, and confess and avow what you know to be right, though it condemn your own past course? What do men say of those who doggedly maintain a wrong position because they are too proud to confess their known wrong? Do they honor such a spirit? Nay, verily, but , on the contrary, men always say if you have done wrong, it is noble and generous to admit it. What a wonderful thing to have a controversy with God, and maintain it, because you cannot brook the humiliation of confession and repentance! What! To contend with God, knowing that you are utterly wrong, and God altogether right; yet you maintain the controversy and go into it deeper and deeper every hour! What would you think of a child that should have such a controversy with its father, the child totally wrong in every point, the father perfectly right, and yet the child persists in maintaining the controversy?

Again, consider, God seeks a reconciliation -- seeks it although He is the offended and injured party, and although your course has been utterly and unreasonably wrong, and

only wrong continually. Yes, the offended party comes and seeks reconciliation. He would live in peace with you. Not that He wants your help; for, is He dependent on you? No; but He seeks your peace and welfare -- seeks it simply and only because He is kindhearted and really benevolent.

- 3. You can have no peace, either within or without, until you yield to God. If you have a controversy with a neighbor, it is perpetually rasping and chafing your feelings; how fearful, then, to have such a controversy with God? How fearful to have an enemy who is present everywhere; so that, if you ascend into heaven, He is there; if you make your bed in hell, He is there; or if you take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, even there you find your adversary -- a fearful Presence to blight your peace! The chariot-wheels of His government will roll on and on; and if you throw yourself in their path, they tarry not and turn not, but must "grind you to powder!" Where can you find a place to live, unreconciled to God? Why then, will you prolong this controversy?

God seeks to be at peace with you, not because He fears you; not lest you should destroy or even mar His happiness; no; you are to Him so small and so contemptible an enemy, He has only to withdraw His sustaining hand from underneath you, and you sink at once to hell by your own gravity. It is only because He loves you that He should ever care to bring you from your wretched rebellion to be at peace with Him.

- 4. He cannot be at peace with you unless you change. There is no possible way to restore a good understanding between yourself and God, unless you consent to become reconciled to Him. He cannot change and come over to you; you must consent to change your position and return to Him. And you must do this voluntarily. For God to force you, implies a contradiction. Omnipotence cannot force a sinner to be reconciled. Anything that should make this change irresistible, is simply absurd -- overlooking the intrinsic nature of the change itself.
- 5. God is your nearest neighbor, and always will be. You cannot move away from Him; He will be your nearest neighbor wherever you go or wherever you stay. Why would you keep up a controversy with your nearest neighbor -- with one who held the same room with you? Would you like a perpetual quarrel with your roommate? How much less should you, then, with one so all-present, so all-wise and powerful as God!
- 6. You cannot deny the fact of the controversy, nor the fact that you are wrong in it. How bad, then, to persist in your rebellion, and refuse to yield yourself implicitly to His will!

While God might command and might threaten, He yet for the most part, appears in a very different attitude. Laying this aside, He comes down to beseech you to be reconciled. Just as if your neighbor, who had all law and right on his side; who might prosecute you at law, and might prove you in the wrong, and make you suffer the consequences -- should, instead of this, come to you in a modest and quiet way, entreating you and saying -- "Now let us be at peace." So God comes in tones of most tender entreaty, and beseeches you to be reconciled.

- 7. If you do not come, you sin against your own soul. You impose on Him the hard necessity of

destroying you. The feelings with which He views this hard necessity, you may see in His language when He cries out -- "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together." O sinner, hear that! "How shall I give thee up!" He bursts out in the language of grief, as if His very heart would break! Long time, and with every means in His power, He has followed the sinner, beseeching him to turn and live; how sad, then, to a heart of infinite love, to see that, probably -- yes, certainly, all these compassionate labors must fail! O, to follow a sinner so, in the fulness of an aching heart, for years and scores of years -- and then have it come utterly to naught!

And is this God's bearing towards thee, O sinner? Precisely so; these are God's own words. And He feels thus and speaks thus only because He so dislikes to take vengeance. Therefore, it is that He waits so long and so patiently, and still comes forth in mercy to entreat and beseech wayward sinners to be reconciled to God.

- 8. Consider yet, that God has taken the greatest pains to put things in the best position for entreating you. Think of this -- that God should take the attitude of a suppliant -- and before whom? Not an equal -- not a lofty angel even; but before a poor, weak and mean sinner! To even such, He sends His ambassadors praying and beseeching! And is this really so? Suppose you should meet Him on earth, and, instead of reproaching you, He should look you in the face most tenderly, and ask you why you had been abusing Him so long and so grievously. Suppose He presses you to say why you have ever had it in your heart to abuse Him at all. What could you answer? That He should come and really beseech you -- would not this break your heart as a potter's vessel?
- 9. God loves to do this when He can do it safely. It is only when He knows that He can spare no longer, with safety to His kingdom, that He changes His attitude, rises in His majesty to maintain the honor of His throne, and hurls the sinner down to eternal ruin!

REMARKS.

1. Sinners often pretend to think the difficulty is on God's part. They say -- "I have nothing against God; I am reconciled to God."

What does that mean? Do you really mean that you yield obedience to God, and in every way, take your own proper position towards Him? How can you say that while you are in conflict with Him at every point?

What base hypocrisy it is for sinners to set aside the whole question by saying -- I have nothing against God. But you have something against God. Your heart is full of prejudice against Him. You utterly fail to love, honor, or obey Him! Not one thing, appropriate to your relations to God, have you ever done! How basely hypocritical, then, for you to claim that you have nothing against God, and that all is right on your part!

2. Sinners seem to think that they must move God. They will have it they must persuade God to make up with them, and almost, if not quite, confess, that He has been in the wrong. Instead of praying that

they may themselves come back to God and feeling that they ought to, they insist that God ought to come back to them. You may have heard of the little girl who became convicted of her sins, and who prayed for a long time with great agony; but, at length, got hold of the true idea of her relations to God and of God's to her, and running in, she cried out to her mother, "Ma, ma, I have made up with God!"

3. The world has gone off into rebellion against God, and is utterly removed from all sympathy with Him. Upon this state of things, God has ordained an economy of proceedings, all arranged for the one purpose of restoring man to love and obedience. It aims to illustrate God's government and yet to demonstrate His love. In the development of this great plan, Christ came in person to His own chosen people; when they reviled, He reviled not again; when they cursed, He only blessed; when they blasphemed, He prayed for them; and when they plotted and perpetrated His murder by most wicked hands, He prayed, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, and proceeded at once to offer them pardon through the very blood they had shed, "beginning at Jerusalem." In how many ways did He strive to teach men, even sinners, that God is their friend, displeased, indeed, with their sins, yet earnestly seeking their welfare and ready at once to blot out all their transgressions, if they will repent and accept of mercy. See how beautifully all this stands revealed before us in the last scenes of the Savior's earthly life. You know how He finally died under their hands; how He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, meekly and unresisting; how they mocked Him, put on Him a crown, not of pearls, but of thorns -- a reed in one hand for a scepter; how, when the Roman Governor would release Him, they preferred the scandalous Barabbas, as if glad of an opportunity to show their appreciation of the Son of God! You know how this mobocrat and murderer was released instead of Jesus, and how they heaped on Him every form of abuse and of insult they could devise. And did He lose all patience? Does He call for twelve legions of angels to sink that guilty city a thousand fathoms deep in the gulf of destruction? No; far from this as can be! After He has comforted His disciples, the first thing He does is to say -- "Go, preach My gospel among all nations, but begin at Jerusalem." Go, first of all, to My murderers!

4. And now, after this demonstration by "God manifest in the flesh," can you suppose that the difficulty is on God's part, and that He cannot consent on reasonable grounds to be reconciled to you?

5. How can this difficulty be settled? God on His side says -- "What can I do more that I have not done" to you? As one of Christ's ambassadors, I ask -- What more shall God do for you? Can you suppose anything short of your yielding up the whole controversy can save you? Indeed, if God were to change ever so much, and recede from His claims ever so fully, your conscience would wage everlasting war against you and you could get no peace! I said to a young lady -- Are you a Christian? She replied, "I believe God deserves better treatment than He has ever received from me." What sinner does not know this? And who would not be compelled to say it if he were shut up to the truth? You know you have no occasion to treat Him with any, even the least, contempt.

6. If He deserves better treatment at your hands, shall He have it? What do you say to that? Shall He have it from this time and onward forever? God being your helper, and by His grace, will you yield entirely to His claims? This is implied in being reconciled to God; have you any reason why you should not do it?

7. Suppose God should abandon all efforts to make peace with you! This is more than supposable; it will certainly take place ere long. He has plainly told you that He will not always strive with you. And, besides, it is every way reasonable that He should at some time desist from all further effort. You could not think it strange if He were to desist now. It should even be expected. Suppose, then, that His compassion should fail -- His forbearance go no further -- the Spirit be withdrawn, God give you over to hopeless impenitence and endless woe -- to let your enmity rage on forever; what then? Suppose this result which surely must be reached in time, were reached today? There remains no more hope for you. You can look back on a hopeful past -- a period when you sat near the very gate of heaven, and almost without effort, you might have pressed your way within the strait gate; but that time has forever past. O, how you wish you could have one more gospel Sabbath, and have another gospel sermon, and have once more a waiting Savior and a striving Spirit! O might it only be! But with you it is all too late!

Are you not afraid of this result? You know God will not wait long. You know you have abused His patience already, past all human endurance, and how long can you presume that even divine forbearance and compassion will hold out?

Having made you proposals from my Master, and in His name, I come now to demand from you an answer. What shall I say from you to my Master? Suppose I come to you individually -- for this business is all to be done with you as individuals -- I come to you, then, as individuals, and would fain know what you reply to my Master. I am going to report the matter; what shall I report? Do you say that you have no report to make -- that you take no action in the case? But this is impossible. To try to do nothing, is to neglect this offered salvation, and insult your Redeemer, and say back to God -- "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways!" It is scarcely possible that any action can be so fatal as this.

Suppose Christ should appear -- in this very place and hour -- and with a voice that should shake this house, should say, "I come to demand a decision! Tell Me now, once for all, whether you will or will not repent -- whether you will or will not have salvation through My blood! Now, therefore, let every sinner choose the ground he proposes to stand on forever. As you say now, so it shall be at the judgment, and so shall stand through eternity!"

So Jesus does beseech you to choose this day whom you will serve, and so He may accept your virtual decision as final, and set His seal upon it forever!

The Destruction of the Wicked

Lecture III
May 7, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney

President of Oberlin College

Text.--Prov. 29:1: "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

In speaking from these words, I shall,

I. Notice some of the ways in which God reprov's the wicked;

II. Show what is meant by hardening the neck;

III. Point out some of the ways in which men do harden the neck;

IV. What is meant by being suddenly destroyed;

V. What, by being destroyed without remedy;

VI. Why this destruction is remediless.

I. The ways in which God reprov's the wicked are various.

- 1. All His providences are disciplinary. Every one of them has a voice of admonition, speaking to the sinner in tones of love, and appealing to his fears, or to his conscience, or to his heart.
- 2. His revealed word is another means of reproof. There God speaks in burning words to the sinner. What language could be more plain and persuasive! And every word teems with reproof against sinners and admonitions to cease from sinning.
- 3. God's Spirit reprov's the sinner, making use for this end of both God's word and providence. Often these reproofs are felt by the sinner to be deeply solemn and searching.
- 4. Besides all these agents, God makes use of the human conscience. He has constituted the human soul with a faculty which takes cognizance of its moral acts and states. Through this, He rebukes the sinner. He also employs our friends and our enemies, availing Himself of the social law of our nature to reach us through fellow-beings, and do us good.

II. What is meant by "hardening the neck?"

The figure is that of a bullock who presses against the yoke until his neck becomes callous -- a figure both plain and common to denote the stubborn resistance of the sinner's will against God.

III. The ways in which sinners harden their neck are many and various.

- 1. They do it by refusing to attend to God's reproof. Nothing is more common for sinners than

to divert their attention voluntarily from the reproof which God administers. For example, they go to meeting, not because they wish to hear of God and duty, but because they cannot well avoid going. Once there, if truth annoys their conscience, and they cannot divert their attention otherwise, they will leave the house, or open a book and read. Why do they refuse to attend to Gods' messages? What is this but strengthening one's self in rebellion against God.

Some of you have done this very thing today. Many of you know full well that you have set yourself against God's claims, and do not mean to give them even so much as your serious regard.

- 2. Sometimes, when friends seek an opportunity to converse with you, you are careful to give them no opportunity. As those who are invited to the gospel feast are represented by Christ as begging to be excused, so sinners in our times, will even try to escape hearing even the invitation to the feast.

Again, sinners harden their necks by refusing to interpret God's providences rightly. They resist the admission that God has a controversy with them. In every way they try to get rid of the idea that God has any meaning in His providences, and especially, any meaning for them. They ascribe all these events to be fixed laws, or to fate, or to change -- any form of atheism, rather than admit a present and ever-acting God!

- 3. When the finger of God's providence becomes so plain that they cannot deny it, then they refuse to justify God. Instead of yielding the point at once, saying -- "I have sinned, and I have nothing to say in my own behalf, they murmur, and rebel, and think it very hard in God to single them out for such a stroke. They wonder why it is that God deals thus and thus with them -- a common way of intimating that they have done nothing so very wrong as to call for such rebuke from God.
- 4. An almost universal method of hardening one's neck against God is to refuse to make self-application of the truth to one's own life and heart. Sinners can very readily apply truths to others, both bad men and good, but they feel strongly averse to making this sort of application to their own heart and conscience. Why? Because they don't love the truth, and do not mean to yield their hearts to its claims.
- 5. When the rebukes of truth apply unmistakably to their own case, they refuse to justify God, but insist on justifying themselves. Just at this point, they reveal their real state of mind. You remember how Nathan came to David, and how he managed his application of truth so well that he drew out from David a most decisive verdict against a special case of wrong-doing before he let him see how entirely the case was his own. David's indignation was aroused and he declared that the man who had done so should die. Yet when Nathan solemnly replied to him -- "Thou are the man" -- what did David do? There he revealed his real character. He did not rebel -- did not resist the application, but humbled himself at once, and confessed his great sin. Often, however, it happens that, when persons cannot mistake the application of rebuke to themselves, they refuse to justify God, and insist on justifying themselves.
- 6. Sometimes, when persons have done that which publicly disgraces religion and are publicly

reproved for it, instead of humbling themselves, they complain and think themselves hardly treated. Indeed, they often talk as if God's ministers had no right and no authority from their Master to reprove men for their sins. So they defend their position in sin, and, of course, harden their necks.

- 7. Often men plead some excuse to palliate their wrong, and thus harden their necks. They insist that others are to blame, and seem determined to assume that this ought to excuse them. Suppose you were laboring to enforce the truth upon one of your children, but he should dodge every point and try to cover up, and cast the blame on others; would you not feel greatly grieved that you could not reach his conscience to do him good?
- 8. Yet further, sinners harden their necks by objecting to the manner in which the reproof is administered. Instead of looking at the matter of the reproof, and asking themselves if it be not true, and if it does not involve very great guilt, they engross their minds with the manner, and complain of that as being perhaps very strange. But God is not wont to consult the taste of wicked men as to the manner in which He shall rebuke their sin. Probably He is not so fastidious as they are. It often happens that men do object to His manner when He handles them roughly, and get only the result of being thereby more fearfully hardened.
- 9. Sometimes they object against the persons who reprove them, saying -- "Physician, heal thyself." Or you may hear talk loudly of impudence and impertinence. David, rebuked by Nathan, did not do so, although he had all the power a man could ask, The reason of his different course was, that he had a conscience and humbled himself before a holy God.

But let reproof come from whom it may, and in whatever manner it may, those who reject it are surely hardening their own necks. There is nothing, perhaps, which more clearly reveals a man's real character than his course and spirit under reproof. You may, perhaps, recollect the case of a minister who was so much abused in his own house, that his wife lost all patience, and said to him -- "Why not show the man the door?" but who mildly answered his wife's suggestion, saying, "Let us hear all he has to say against me; we may learn some good. If the Lord suffers him to curse, who knows but he has some wise ends to answer." It is most true that God sometimes lets our enemies try us and provoke us sadly. Happy is that man who has humility enough to receive such rebukes and make the best of them. The justice of the reproof, not the manner of it, is the thing we should look at. This is the matter that most concerns us in our relations to God. If the reproof be administered manifestly in a bad spirit, then you need pre-eminently to be on your guard. Then you are in the greater danger of repelling it, and becoming thereby the more hardened. Human nature is exceedingly prone to feel deeply, and to object strongly to the manner, or the person who reproves; but God will not hold us guiltless if we repel reproof for such reasons.

- 10. Persons often harden their own hearts by complaining of the language used in the rebukes they receive. They think us too severe, or perhaps, extravagant, while really no language can adequately describe their own great wickedness.
- 11. All sorts of excuses made for wickedness, harden the heart and stiffen the neck against God.

Sometimes, when reprov'd, men will resort to recrimination, abuse and retort. Instead of receiving rebuke in humility, they hurl it back with resentment. Woe to him who does this. Nothing that he can do will more fearfully harden the heart.

- 12. Some seek relief under the sting of reproof, by indulging hard feelings against those who reprove them. These feelings tend strongly to confirm the will in its rebellious attitude against God, for as long as one indulges these feelings, he is, or course, hardening his neck against reproof.
- 13. Some, to excuse themselves, will plead their inability, or that they have other duties to perform, yet are compelled in honesty to say, "I might have done it if I had been in the spirit of religion, and had realized the value of souls."
- 14. Some persons excuse themselves from attending meetings, but would not, if they knew and felt the value of souls. It is entertained only as an apology for neglect. Or by allowing some prejudice to prevail, men will repel the truth and harden their neck. Or they will utterly deny the justice of the charge made against them. This spirit of self-justification is sometimes so strong that they will not confess. Press them as you may, they are still so full of the spirit of self-justification, they will not lisp a word of confession -- will not come down in true humility.

These are some of the ways in which sinners harden their necks.

IV. I am next to show what is meant by being "suddenly destroyed."

- 1. This class of words -- destroyed, kill, etc., does not mean annihilation. We know nothing about annihilation. Who can know anything about it? We have had no observation and of course no experience of it. We certainly do not know that it is possible, save to the omnipotent power of Jehovah. This, however, we do know -- namely, that the words kill, destroy, etc., never mean annihilation; but only the death of the body, leaving the soul as full of life as ever. Therefore, in using these or similar words, God does not threaten annihilation.
- 2. Nor again, can it denote a merely temporary punishment. No man would use such language in such a sense. Nor can it denote any light degree of punishment. It must mean the loss of the soul -- the utter ruin of all the sinner's well-being.
- 3. It shall be sudden -- that is, it will come unexpectedly. This is the usual sense of the word, sudden. In such an hour as they think not, the fearful blow will fall.

V. What is meant by its being "without remedy?"

- 1. It must mean that the threatened destruction cannot be prevented. You are sick and send for a physician; but he decides that your case is beyond a remedy. The meaning is, that he cannot avert impending death. The threatened calamity will come, despite of every means of resistance. So the sinner, of hardened neck, must be destroyed, and nothing can prevent it. He may resist instruction, but cannot resist destruction. He may withstand the rebuke that seeks to reclaim, but the rebuke that comes to avenge God's insulted majesty, no power can withstand.

When God's own right hand is lifted to destroy, there is no mightier arm than His that can deliver. Alas, the sinner may look imploringly in every direction, but no help can come!

- 2. As it cannot be prevented that it shall not come, so neither can there be any redemption from it when it has once fallen. No relief, interposing, can prevent it from being final and complete.

VI. But why is this destruction so sudden and remediless?

- 1. For the reason that it is just and righteous altogether.
- 2. Also, because it is of no use for God to spare such sinners any longer. Having reached the point where reproof only serves to harden their necks the more, it is plain that for them to live longer, would only serve to enhance their guilt, and there heighten their doom.
- 3. Why, then, should not God destroy them suddenly? And yet further, it is benevolent towards all other beings to make of them a public example. The public good would be in jeopardy if God's forbearance were prolonged indefinitely. And should not God take care of the interests of the holy and pure not less than of the hopelessly vile?

REMARKS.

1. This text is applicable to nations. When they are often reprov'd, and yet still harden their neck, they may expect destruction speedily and without remedy. Of this the Jews were examples in more than one generation.

2. So of the visible church.

3. And so, also, of sinners. After great provocations of His long-suffering patience, they are left of God. In revivals, especially, we often see how God cuts them down. I could stand here and give you the names of many whom God has cut down as in a moment. They had abused His Spirit until they had become fatally hardened, and God saw there was no more hope of their turning to Himself. What could He do, then, better than to cut them down where they were, ere they had swollen yet more the measure of their guilt, and the fearfulness of their retribution?

We can often predict the doom of sinners when we see them hardening themselves against God. How awful to look on and see them hardening themselves against God, and yet know assuredly that ere long they must be suddenly destroyed, unless they at once repent! Some of us have had our faces turn pale as we have seen our children hardening their necks. O, what sorrow can be like this sorrow!

It is, of all things else, most alarming, to see persons becoming so blind to their own guilt and danger, that they can rush on, reckless of God and of His righteous retribution. Hear them crying, Peace and safety! All seems well to them; they enjoy perfect health, perhaps, and think their mountain stands strong; but ere they are aware, sudden destruction cometh on them, and they shall not escape forever!

Sinner, do you wish to know when God will arise in His wrath and cut you down in your sins? It will be just when you are crying "peace and safety," and are hardening your neck against all sense of either

guilt or danger. Then, in a moment, it will burst on you like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky! Just this our Savior affirmed when He said, "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

Think of the case of sinners here. In every breeze they may hear the gentle whispers of Divine love; in each day's prolonged life, another appeal to their souls to render unto God the honor and gratitude which are His due; at every table, a fresh demonstration of His loving-kindness; through every Sabbath and every week, the voice of God re-echoes in their ear -- but alas! they are weary of hearing so much from God! They are tired of these constant appeals to do what they hate and to honor Him for whom they care not. So they harden their necks and make their course of sin as smooth and as undisturbed as possible!

Ah, we shall see how it will be with them! We shall see whether they withstand the Most High when once He shall arise in His wrath to take vengeance on His foes! Who hath ever hardened himself against God and prospered? Just when they thought themselves on the eve of triumph over their great enemy, then sudden destruction fell on them, and there was no escape!

4. The infidelity of many in regard to God in providence, is to them a stumbling block. They will have it that there is no God in these events that occur. They are most averse to any recognition of His agency. "God speaketh once, yea, twice; but man regardeth it not." Nothing is so unwelcome to the sinner as to meet with manifestations of a present God. He does not love the truth taught by Christ, that "even the very hairs on your head are all numbered." O, if they could only be forever beyond the reach of this great and awful God! But they cannot!

5. Their pride and self-will are their ruin. Long time has God been laboring to subdue your self-will; but you resist and will not yield. You are determined this proud will of yours shall not be subdued. Has not God been making appeals to your heart and conscience to induce you to yield to His sway? Has He not in many ways sought to move you by affliction, until, perhaps, He is saying of you -- "Why should you be smitten any more? Ye will revolt more and more." Reproof comes to you from the four winds of heaven; every living thing has a voice for God to use in solemn warning and affectionate entreaty; and shall it all be in vain? Will you yet make your heart hard as an adamant stone? If so, we shall see whether God will be true to His word. We shall see whether sudden destruction will or will not come, and that "without remedy!"

How fearful must such a destruction be, and especially so to those who have been so long and so well instructed as most of you have been! Some of you are from families where you have been continually reprov'd of sin from early infancy. O, how fearfully hardened must your necks have become! Will it not be most awful for you to fall into the hands of a just God!

The Wicked Stumbling in Their Darkness

Lecture IV

July 2, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Prov. 4:19: "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble."

The older I grow, the more I admire and love the book of Proverbs. Its wisdom is most profound. Manifestly these proverbs are the result, not of inspiration only, but of much observation and reflection in the writer. They are useful, being easily remembered, and so various, that you can always find something to apply, be your circumstances what they may. It is plain the author had moved among men with his eyes wide open. Hence, he had noticed that the wicked are forever stumbling, and seem not to know at what they stumble. It is to this great truth that I now call your attention.

I. It is well, in the first place, to notice several facts of human consciousness.

II. To state in detail some of the things over which sinners stumble.

III. A few words should be said here as to the course that true wisdom dictates.

I. It is well, in the first place, to notice several facts of human consciousness.

Whoever shall carefully study these facts, shown by human consciousness, must see that the pretended skepticism of men is mere hypocrisy. Men know better.

What are these facts?

- 1. In any moral agent, the spirit of living to one's self, as distinguished from living for others, is sin. Every moral agent knows this because his irresistible convictions affirm it.
- 2. Consciousness affirms that the way of the wicked is one of self-will. For, to make the promotion of one's own interests the chief end of life is self-will. Self-will and nothing else prompts and pushes men to this. And, in respect to this point, it matters not whether the interests sought to be promoted are temporal or eternal -- those pertaining to time, or those which reach forward into eternity.
- 3. Sinners are alienated from God. God is cast out of their regard. They scarcely think of Him, and never, with the reverence, love, and trust, which are His due. Every sinner knows this, because his own consciousness affirms it.
- 4. Yet, even in this fearfully wicked course, they seek to justify themselves. Consequently, they are tempted to be very uncandid; nay, ore -- not only tempted, but if they will persist in their sin, compelled. They cannot justify themselves, and still be fair-minded. The truth is all against them; so that it must make them ceaseless trouble if they consent to see things as they are.

- 5. Of course, this leads to great blindness. The Bible represents sinners as being blinded by sin; you can now see how this must certainly result. When men take a false position towards God, the truth annoys them terribly; it becomes entirely essential to their quiet in such a position, that they should see things, not as they are, but as they are not; so that they are led on to pervert the truth, and blind their own eyes. Such a result from such causes, is by no means peculiar to religion. It takes place just as certainly and palpably in politics, and there, we may see it any day. When men resign their opinion to the control of self-will, they, of course, become uncandid, and thus blinded. This is a simple matter of fact, coming within the pale of consciousness.
- 6. Such men become filled with prejudice. They try to seek some refuge of lies. They get up excuses -- which yet are no excuses, and they inwardly know it. Yet, suppressing all notice of this inward knowledge, they manage to make themselves almost believe in the validity of these excuses -- this being the only way in which they can live any way comfortably in their sins. It is remarkable that a sinner will bring himself with great ease to accept some delusion; a single suggestion suffices often, and he does not trouble himself about the evidence. "The wish is farther to the thought."
- 7. The Bible says of the wicked, that "their way is as darkness." It is as if one was groping along, in the dead of a night, starless and rayless; he feels his way; he stumbles and knows not at what. He cannot see things as they really are. Such is the way of the wicked.

His self-will prevents him from coming to the light. "Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, because his deeds are evil."

- 8. The control of self-will and self-interest ensures profound misapprehension. Those of you who observe the errors and prejudices of politicians, are often amazed. It shocks you to see what absurd positions they can take, and with what facility they can utterly distort the truth, and yet make it seem to their eyes to be truth yet. Of late, I do not pretend to believe the party papers. Let them say what they please, I know there is no confidence to be reposed in either their facts or their opinions. So, on any subject, let a man become committed to a party, and that moment he becomes the victim of prejudice. If you had fallen in with the members returning from the National Democratic Convention, you would have been surprised to see how differently from yourselves they view the great questions of the day. Are they right? No; they are committed, and, by consequence, prejudiced. So, on any side of any question, men committed under some selfish influence, are sure to be misled.
- 9. When the Bible says of the wicked -- "They know not at what they stumble," it assumes that they do stumble and fall. Of course, this refers, not to the body, but to the soul. Misled as to their relations and attitude towards God, they stumble and fall into eternal perdition.

They stumble -- they know not at what. They are in no state to see. They have enveloped their own minds in deep darkness. How can they discriminate? All the effort they put forth for this purpose, while in this state of self-will, is vain. They will not adjust and weigh the evidence fairly. All their trying is likely to avail nothing, unless they shall

really cut loose from their committal -- sunder the bonds that hold their minds under the sway of prejudice, and let in the light of truth upon their own souls. In fact, until they do this they do not try to see the truth, in any proper sense. They might see the truth easily if their minds were in an upright and honest state.

II. I am now about to state in detail some of the things over which sinners stumble.

Let me beg of you, as I name these points, to note their bearings on your own experience.

- 1. Sinners stumble at their own ignorance. Often they are amazingly ignorant -- of God, of His attributes; of their own relations to God, and indeed, of themselves. It is amazing to hear the things they say, and the conclusions to which they come. Yet they seem not at all aware that they are stumbling at their own ignorance. A young man of skeptical views, who came here some years since, said to me, in answer to some question of mine in regard to his spiritual state -- "I do not take the same views of Christianity that you do." What, said I, what does this imply? It must imply either that you have given more attention to the subject than I have, or more able thinking, or that you are more honest. Yet, when he came to bring out his own view, anybody could see that he was stumbling over his own ignorance. He had, as he thought, got bravely over the prejudices of his godly father; had broken off all the trammels that hold the professors here; in fact, so profound was his ignorance, he seemed not to have comprehended the first thing pertaining to the subject. Just as you sometimes see persons talking very large and wise on other subjects, when every word they say, show their ignorance to be most profound; so it is here.

In like manner, sinners stumble over the ignorance of others. They follow leaders who mislead them, and cause them to stumble over themselves into destruction.

- 2. They stumble over their own foolish and wicked prejudices. It is impossible to be wicked without being prejudiced. Usually, men are not well aware of the depth and power of these prejudices. Hence, under this influence they are the more surely led on to ruin.

This principle is true on political as well as on religious subjects; and, indeed, on any and all subjects.

- 3. Sinners stumble over their own enmity against God. Through neglect to notice their own consciousness, and through neglect of God, they do not admit the fact of their being at enmity with God, and consequently fail to account for many things in their own history as they might. Indeed, they often assume themselves to be friendly to God and to religion, while really there is the deepest enmity in their hearts. Hence, no wonder that, under such a delusion, they become fearfully blinded, and stumble into perdition.

Often sinners misunderstand and pervert sermons and the truths they teach, because of their own bad state of mind. The enmity of their hearts boils up, and its fumes becloud their mental vision.

- 4. They stumble over their own dishonest state of mind. They are uncandid and dishonest towards God, and this constantly perverts their views. They say that when they read the Bible,

they cannot understand it. Reason; lack of an honest mind. They stumble at God's character, providence and dealings with men -- all because they are not in a state of mind to see and judge fairly. When they read the Bible, they are forever looking after its discrepancies and its difficulties, and they find almost nothing else there. Now, the Bible is so written that a dishonest mind can make for itself any amount of difficulty with it. The explanation of this fact is, that the sacred writers were so eminently honest and simple-hearted, they wrote right on as men who take no pains to avoid being misunderstood. Honest themselves, it does not seem to occur to them that any of their readers will be otherwise. The Bible is, in style, utterly unlike the documents of diplomacy. A man who remembers that his words are to be quizzed and sifted, will take care for the one construction which shall answer for one emergency, and, perhaps, also, for other constructions, to meet other emergencies. A crafty writer looks out in all directions. Honest men, like apostles and prophets, never trouble themselves about cavilers.

Hence, cavilers against the Bible abuse that model of beautiful simplicity -- to their own damnation. They can do this if they choose, and they choose to do so because they love darkness and not light. The Bible is particularly open to perversion, so that, if men are dishonest, they will almost certainly misunderstand it. If you talk with Universalists, you will be amazed to see how they can swallow down the greatest absurdities, and the most monstrous lies and delusions, taught them by their ministers. No matter how hard and tough it may be, they seem to have a capacity equal to it -- their hearts going before and creating an appetite for this doctrine.

- 5. They stumble over their own unbelief. Their want of confidence in God leads them to misinterpret His providence; to question its universal goodness, and to misunderstand His works and ways. Now, it is in the nature of the case impossible for God to explain all His conduct to His creatures as He goes along, so that they can understand all He does. Hence, the natural necessity for faith, and hence, if you have not faith in His goodness, you are stumbled. Take, for instance, the existence of American slavery. It certainly exists under God's government. Not that He has ordained, in the sense of commanding or approving it; but He has suffered it to exist. Now, suppose you infer from this that God is tyrannical and cruel. This inference would only show your want of confidence in God's providence. It would not, by any means, show that God is doing wrong. So sinners stumble at what God does or omits to do. Suppose your children have no confidence in you. Unless you explain everything, they are stumbled, and think hard of your course. They must see through all your plans and approve them all, or they cry out against you. Would not you think this horrible?

Sinners are often stumbled through their sheer aversion to God. They cannot bear to admit that He is as holy, just, and good, as He truly is. If they were willing to believe this, it would be easy enough. Just as when you are greatly prejudiced against a neighbor, and hear much good said of him, you will be like to reply, "I can't believe that." Yet the reason why you cannot lies not in the man, or in the evidence, but in your own prejudice. You might perhaps say -- There is so much counter evidence, I cannot believe it; -- but really the force of this counter evidence lies only in your own prejudice. So with the sinner; the root of the difficulty is that he is so alienated from God, that he cannot bear to think well of Him.

- 6. They stumble also over their own uncharitableness. You meet thousands who are stumbling over what they are pleased to call the faults of professors. Now the fact is, that ordinarily by far the greatest part of all that is said against Christians is untrue. If you search out these charges, you find but a lean foundation, often, for the gravest part of them. I have found it so in cases almost without number. Sinners will tell you gravely that they are greatly stumbled against the things they hear of Christians; when the fact is, they would give no credit to such stories on equal evidence, yet bearing against friends. That is, they believe them only because they are prejudiced against Christians. They hate God's people, and are eager to catch up any scandal against them. One instance in point occurred not long since where I was laboring. A brother whom I had long known, I found was generally spoken of with disrespect. It was said he was dishonest in his business. I determined to enquire into the case; did so, and found this report false, and that report false, and indeed could not track down any of the reports to a valid foundation. I then went to those brethren in the church who had been circulating these reports, and said to them, Do you know those evil reports to be true? "No." Have you carried these reports to that injured brother, for his explanation? "No." Then, said I, you ought to be turned out of the church, every man of you, for slandering your brother.

In the same way the uncharitableness of others becomes an occasion of stumbling to sinners. They hear others speak uncharitably, and they believe it because it falls in so entirely with their own tendencies of mind.

This uncharitableness is one of the most fruitful sources of stumbling to the souls of men. Just think how much sinners influence each other to uncharitableness, and turn each other away from God.

- 7. Some stumble over a false hope. Suppose it to be a minister of the gospel. If he holds fast to his false hope, it will almost inevitably shape his views of Christian experience. Taking himself to be a Christian, and judging what piety is by his own experience, all his notions are modified accordingly. Hence, he will not only stumble himself, but others also. He tells his Christian friends that they cannot expect to make this or that attainment in this life. Inevitably he will lower down the standard of the Christian life. I have now in mind the case of a pastor who invited a brother to preach in his pulpit. The latter preached to Christians that they ought not to stop short of being fully conscious of loving God; that religion was a matter of consciousness, and hence, if they were not conscious of its presence and power in their souls, they ought to conclude they know nothing of it.

After he had gone, this pastor set himself earnestly to fitter all these ideas away. He told his people men might be Christians and not know it; that many were so, doubtless, who did not regard themselves as Christians; that it was a bad sign to be too sure and confident, etc., etc. It fills my heart with grief to see a minister take so much pains to let the people down to the level of his own experience. This defective experience may be a legal, as distinct from a gospel, experience or it may have other elements of a false religion. No matter, if it be false, it becomes a grievous occasion of stumbling.

- 8. Men stumble over a false profession. Even though they may see clear as light that they have professed without possession, yet their pride may keep them from admitting it. Then, to keep up

appearance, they are subjected to a life of hypocrisy -- a fearful curse to the soul!

It often happens that these false professors are a stumbling block to others. Sinners will place before themselves some false professor, choosing the worst and not the best, as their model of religion, and say, "Well, any how, I am as good as some professed Christians." So they think to hide behind such an example, and stumble over it to the depths of hell.

The real faults of professed Christians often become the occasion of stumbling to sinners. They however do not usually go to the bottom of the difficulty. They ascribe their stumbling to the faults, say, of a certain minister; but the real cause lies in their own state of mind. If they were right themselves, not even the real faults of Christians would stumble them. These faults might grieve them; but could not harm them. "Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend (stumble) them;" -- not even the manifest faults of gospel ministers.

It is much more common for men to stumble over apparent or supposed, than over real faults. The common feeling towards Christians being what it is, there are vastly more apparent or supposed faults than real ones, floating about on the surface of the common talk of the world. All these answer the purpose of those who really seek some relief from the pressure of a troubled conscience, and who want some excuse for a life of sin.

- 9. Men are wont to stumble over their own dishonest moral judgments. For example, they judge themselves by a false standard. One, it may be, of mere external morality instead of heart piety; while at the same time they know better, as is manifest from the fact that they judge others by a very different rule. They will insist that others must truly love God, and not merely be of decent morality. Why do they not judge themselves by this same standard? They are not honest. Besides, in practice, they will allow themselves to do the very same things which they condemn and stumble over in others.
- 10. Their habit of procrastination is the ruin of thousands. They hear enough, but not for the sake of learning their duty that they may do it. They learn not to regard what they hear. Persons who have lived here a long time seem not to be aware of their fearful danger in this respect.
- 11. It is fearful to see how many stumble over God's forbearance. Because vengeance is not executed speedily, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. The longer God waits on them, the more presumptuous they become. Indeed nothing is more commonly a stumbling-block to men than God's goodness. They will have it that God is too good to send men to hell. Instead of combining His goodness with justice and holiness, as they should, they fritter it down to a mere good-nature. They think Him good with such a sort of goodness that He cannot restrain His creatures from ruining themselves, and the whole universe besides -- so very good-natured that He must forsooth let all the wicked be as wicked and selfish as they please, and must be sure not to hurt them, however much they desolate His great family and spread ruin over His kingdom. How often and naturally Universalists do this! In fact, it seems to lie at the foundation of their system. David said, "Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually;" -- the very goodness of God being a reason why men

should be afraid to do mischief.

- 12. Multitudes are stumbled by their selfish views of the whole matter of personal religion. Their whole conception of the plan of salvation makes it only an expedient to accommodate their sin, so that they can enjoy sin almost to the end of life, and then get religion enough to save their souls from hell. Have not some of you made this very mistake? Has not this been the great practical question with you; How long will it be prudent to neglect this great salvation? How long can I afford to run the personal risk of living in sin? So asking, your whole concern turns on self. You care not a farthing for God's feelings, or His rights. You have not the remotest idea of laying your soul and body on His altar, and making yourself truly a living sacrifice to the interests of His kingdom. All the love He has shown you seems to have no influence to draw you towards this earnest consecration to His service. A sinful heart makes men credulous as to falsehood, but incredulous as to truth. "How is it," said one, "that incredulity takes on such a type? Men are strangely incredulous as to what is good. They doubt the sincerity of this good man; but their doubts all look in only one direction, for they are most ridiculously credulous in admitting lies."

III. A few words should be said here as to the course that true wisdom dictates.

- 1. The facts of human consciousness in regard to man's selfishness and alienation from God should be thoroughly admitted and deeply studied.
- 2. You should most fully assume the fact of God's infinite love, purity, wisdom and power. I say assume these, because you certainly know them to be true. You know that God is universally and perfectly good. This you know and should never allow yourself to call in question.
- 3. Let it also be taken for granted that no objection can be valid against God's law or His gospel.
- 4. If men would assume these two things, it would save them from countless mistakes and delusions; namely,
 - (1.) That God is infinite and perfect; consequently nothing can be said against Him;
 - (2.) That there never can be any valid excuse for sin. The goodness of God makes it certain that His law is right, and His administration too;-- that He never requires anything unreasonable. Wisdom dictates therefore, that these points should be forever settled.
- 5. Again, you should always assume man's natural alienation from God. Say, I am , if unconverted, an enemy of God. Let me remember that. Let it be settled also and admitted, that being an enemy, you are almost sure to be prejudiced. This must be true of you and of all who are enemies in heart to God. Now if you know you are prejudiced, or are likely to be, you ought to be closely on your guard in that direction. For example, those of you who have a hope that does not purify your heart, take warning. Remember your proneness to self-deception. And those of you who never had a hope should say -- the causes of self-deception are in my very

heart; I am in the utmost peril of deceiving myself; let me be on my guard against self-justification and against a thousand other sources of danger. My dear friend, you must cast yourself on God for help. Say to Him -- "O Lord my God, Thou knowest all my wicked heart, and Thou knowest how many dangers beset me on every side. Now unless Thou save me, I shall surely ruin myself."

- 6. Another thing; beware what you hear and how you hear it, lest you listen earnestly to the wrong and love it; or lest, hearing truth, your heart should be turned aside by prejudice, and you permit it to your destruction. Say to yourself -- I shall certainly do something to ruin my soul if I am not on my guard. Consider always that while in sin, your state of mind is such as exceedingly to endanger your ultimate salvation. You ought to know the great facts of your own consciousness; and these should solemnly admonish you of your ever present danger.

REMARKS.

1. Because sinners are dishonest, their delusions are entirely inexcusable. If they were really honest, and their delusions excusable, their case would be far other than it is.

2. All the prejudice and errors of sinful men will come out by and by. They cannot last forever. Their utter fallacy and guilt will stand revealed by and by. But it may then be too late to repair their mischief.

There, said a man, now I am sorry; I had a wicked prejudice against a good minister; I held it a long time and it poisoned my mind terribly. At length, I said to him -- Don't you hold this sentiment? No, said he, by no means, Then I found all my prejudices were causeless, and I had brought leanness and guilt on my soul, for no good reason whatever. So sinner, you may be sorry. Your mistake will come out by and by; but very likely too late to be corrected in this world. Then the Lord shall come with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment upon all, He will surely convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds and speeches. But for your real repentance, this will come all too late. Alas, you allowed yourself to disbelieve; you went on stumbling in the darkness which your own wicked heart caused, and now it only remains that you be driven away into everlasting darkness, where is weeping and wailing. The darkness of the sinner's final doom may well remind him of the mental darkness which his own soul loved and caused while on earth.

3. It is often sorely painful to see men stumble in matters which respect only the body. Sometimes they take to the use of quack nostrums, and poison their bodies; sometimes they imbibe the most ridiculous superstitions, and violate the laws of life till they fall an easy prey to pestilence. In cholera times, men would soak their bodies with alcoholic liquors, and surely die by the hand of their own remedy.

But what are all these delusions, compared with that which takes away the soul! Suppose you could see the moral course of sinners painted to the life -- their poor self-deluded souls stumbling into pit-falls which their own hands had dug -- sliding down precipices at the foot of which open the jaws of the bottomless pit; there, there he goes! Alas, you have seen him but your eyes shall see him no more! Gone, gone, where darkness reigns forever! But you see others all around about you, pursuing the same path, and nearing the same death-verge, just ready, some of them, to slide over; and what

will you do? Can you save them?

4. Christians are said by Christ to be the lights of the world. So let them take care to be. Let them stand as lamp-posts in the city in dead of night, pouring light on the dangers that would else engulf the unwary. Some of you have heard of the fogs of London -- where the coal-smoke of many thousand fires is wont in a misty atmosphere to settle down like Egyptian darkness upon all the city. When the thick fogs join their influence, London in mid-day is darker than midnight. Men cannot move save by the light of flambeaux held close to the ground as they pass along. How vivid the picture there given, of the deep and thick darkness that rests down on the city of Destruction, where sinners live! Darkness so profound as this seems not to comprehend the light when it comes. There in London, shall be lamps on their posts, burning with what power they have; but in the dense darkness they are visible only a few feet. The light shineth as in the Savior's day, but "the darkness comprehendeth it not." So often to the minds of sinners now. The light of Christian example and instruction shines around them, but their dense impenetrable darkness does not "comprehend" it. Alas for them.

On The Atonement

Lecture V

July 30, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--1 Cor. 15:3: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

Text.--2 Cor. 5:21: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Text.--Rom. 5:8: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Text.--Isa. 42:21: "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable."

Text.--Rom. 3:25, 26: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

In this last passage, the apostle states, with unusual fulness, the theological, and I might even say, the

philosophical design of Christ's mission to our world -- that is, to set forth before created beings, God's righteousness in forgiving sins. It is here said that Christ is set forth as a propitiation that God may be just in forgiving sin, assuming that God could not have been just to the universe, unless Christ had been first set forth as a sacrifice.

When we seriously consider the irresistible convictions of our own minds in regard to our relations of God and His government, we cannot but see that we are sinners, and are lost beyond hope on the score of law and justice. The fact that we are grievous sinners against God, is an ultimate fact of human consciousness, testified to by our irresistible convictions, and no more to be denied than the fact that there is such a thing as wrong.

Now, if God be holy and good, it must be that He disapproves wrong-doing, and will punish it. The penalty of His law is pronounced against it. Under this penalty, we stand condemned, and have no relief save through some adequate atonement, satisfactory to God, because safe to the interests of His kingdom.

Thus far we may advance safely and on solid ground, by the simple light of nature. If there were no Bible, we might know so much with absolute certainty. So far, even infidels are compelled to go.

Here, then, we are, under absolute and most righteous condemnation. Is there any way of escape? If so, it must be revealed to us in the Bible; for from any other source it cannot come. The Bible does profess to reveal a method of escape. This is the great burden of its message. It opens with,

I. A very brief allusion to the circumstances under which sin came into the world.

II. The philosophical explanation of the reasons and governmental bearings of the atonement, must not be confounded with the fact of an atonement.

III. A distinction must here be made between public and retributive justice.

IV. In this atonement God has expressed His high regard for His law and for obedience to it.

V. What can be done to teach these lessons, and to impress them with great and everlasting emphasis on the universe?

I. A very brief allusion to the circumstances under which sin came into the world.

Without being very minute as the manner in which sin entered, it is exceedingly full, clear and definite in its showing as to the fact of sin in the race. That God regards the race as in sin and rebellion is made as plain as language can make it. It is worthy of notice that this fact and the connected fact of possible pardon, are affirmed on the same authority -- with the same sort of explicitness and clearness. These facts stand or fall together. Manifestly God intended to impress on all minds these two great truths -- first, that man is ruined by his own sin; secondly, that he may be saved through Jesus Christ. To deny the former is to gainsay both our own irresistible convictions and God's most explicit

revealed testimony; to deny the latter, is to shut the door of our own free act and accord, against all hope of our own salvation.

II. The philosophical explanation of the reasons and governmental bearings of the atonement, must not be confounded with the fact of an atonement.

- 1. Men may be saved by the fact if they simply believe it, while they may know nothing about the philosophical explanation. The apostles did not make much account of the explanation, but they asserted the fact most earnestly, gave miracles as testimony to prove their authority from God, and so besought men to believe the fact and be saved. The fact, then, may be savingly believed, and yet the explanation be unknown. This has been the case, no doubt, with scores of thousands.
- 2. Yet it is very useful to understand the reasons and governmental grounds of the atonement. It often serves to remove skepticism. It is very common for lawyers to reject the fact, until they come to see the reasons and governmental bearings of the atonement; this seen, they usually admit the fact. There is a large class of minds who need to see the governmental bearings, or they will reject the fact. The reason why the fact is so often doubted is, that the explanations given have been unsatisfactory. They have misrepresented God. No wonder men should reject them, and with them, the fact of any atonement at all.
- 3. The atonement is a governmental expedient to sustain law without the execution of its penalty on the sinner. Of course, it must always be a difficult thing in any government to sustain the authority of law, and the respect due to it, without the execution of penalty. Yet God has accomplished it most perfectly.

III. A distinction must here be made between public and retributive justice.

The latter visits on the head of the individual sinner a punishment corresponding to the nature of his offence. The former, public justice, looks only toward the general good, and must do that which will secure the authority and influence of law, as well as the infliction of the penalty would to it. It may accept a substitute, provided it be equally effective to the support of law and the ensuring of obedience.

Public justice, then, may be satisfied in one of two ways, to wit -- either by the full execution of the penalty, or by some substitute, which shall answer the ends of government at least equally well. When, therefore, we ask -- What is necessary for the ends of public justice? -- the answer is,

- 1. Not the literal execution of the penalty; for if so, it must necessarily fall on the sinner; and on no one else. Besides, it could be no gain to the universe for Christ to suffer the full and exact penalty due to every lost sinner who should be saved by Him. The amount of suffering being the same in the one case as in the other, where is the gain? And yet, further, if the administration of justice is to be retributive, then it cannot fall on Christ, and must fall on the sinner himself. If not retributive, it certainly may be, as compared with that due the sinner, far different in kind and less in degree.

It has sometimes been said that Christ suffered all in degree and the same in kind as all the saved must else have suffered; but human reason revolts at this assumption, and certainly the scriptures do not affirm it.

- 2. Some represent that God needs to be appeased, and to have His feelings conciliated. This is an egregious mistake. It utterly misrepresents God and misconceived the atonement.
- 3. It is no part of public justice that an innocent being should suffer penalty or punishment, in the proper sense of these terms. Punishment implies crime -- of which Christ had none. Christ, then was not punished.
- 4. Let it be distinctly understood that the Divine law originates in God's benevolence, and has no other than benevolent ends in view. It was revealed only and solely to promote the greatest possible good, by means of obedience. Now, such a law can allow of pardon, provided an expression can be given which will equally secure obedience -- making an equal revelation of the lawgiver's firmness, integrity and love. The law being perfect, and being most essential to the good of His creatures, God must not set aside its penalty without some equivalent influence to induce obedience.
- 5. The penalty was designed as a testimony to God's regard for the precept of His law, and to His purpose to sustain it. An atonement, therefore, which should answer as a substitute for the infliction of this penalty, must be of such sort as to show God's regard for both the precept and penalty of His law. It must be adapted to enforce obedience. Its moral power must be in this respect equal to that of the infliction of the penalty on the sinner.

IV. Consequently, we find that, in this atonement God has expressed His high regard for His law and for obedience to it.

- 1. The design of executing the penalty of the law was to make a strong impression of the majesty, excellence and utility of the law. Anything may answer as a substitute, which will as thoroughly demonstrate the mischief and odiousness of sin, God's hatred of it, and His determination to carry out His law in all its demands. Especially may the proposed substitute avail if it shall also make a signal manifestation of God's love to sinners. This the atonement, by the death of Christ, has most emphatically done.
- 2. Every act of rebellion denounces the law. Hence, before God can pardon rebellion, He must make such a demonstration of His attitude towards sin as shall thrill the heart of the created universe, and make every ear tingle. Especially, for the ends of the highest obedience, it was needful to make such a demonstration as shall effectually secure the confidence and love of subjects towards their Lawgiver -- such as shall show that He is no tyrant, and that He seeks only the highest obedience and consequent happiness of His creatures. This done, God will be satisfied.

V. Now, what can be done to teach these lessons, and to impress them with great and everlasting emphasis on the universe?

- 1. God's testimony must be so given as to be well understood. Obviously, the testimony to be given must come from God, for it is His view of law, penalty and substitute, that needs to be revealed. Every one must see that if He were to execute law on the sinner, this would show at once His view of the value of the law. But, plainly, His view of the same thing must be shown with equal force by any proposed substitute, before He could accept it as such.
- 2. Again, in this transaction, the precept of the law must be accepted and honored both by God and by Jesus as Mediator. The latter, as the representative of the race must honor the law by obeying it, and by publicly endorsing it -- otherwise, the requisite homage cannot be shown to the Divine law in the proposed atonement. This has been done.
- 3. Again, to make adequate provision for the exercise of mercy to the race, it is plainly essential that, in the person of their Mediator, both the Divine and the human should be united. God and man are both to be represented in the atonement; the Divine Word represented the Godhead; the man Jesus represented the race to be redeemed. What the Bible thus asserts, is verified in the history of Jesus, for He said and did things which could not have been said and done unless He had been man, and equally could not have been unless He were also God. On the one hand, too weak to carry His cross, through exhaustion of the human; and on the other, mighty to hush the tempest and to raise the dead, through the plenitude of Divine power. Thus God and man are both represented in Jesus Christ.
- 4. The thing to be done, then, required that Jesus Christ should honor the law and fully obey it; this He did. Standing for the sinner, He must, in an important sense, bear the curse of the law -- not the literal penalty, but a vast amount of suffering, sufficient, in view of His relations to God and the universe, to make the needed demonstration of God's displeasure against sin, and yet of His love for both the sinner and all His moral subjects. On the one hand, Jesus represented the race; on the other, He represented God. This is a most Divine philosophy.
- 5. The sacrifice made on Calvary is to be understood as God's offering to public justice -- God Himself giving up His Son to death, and this Son pouring forth His life's blood in expiation for sin -- thus throwing open the folding gates of mercy to a sinning, lost race. This must be regarded as manifesting His love to sinners. This is God's ransom provided for them. Look at the state of the case. The supreme Law-Giver, and indeed the government of the universe, had been scouted by rebellion; of course there can be no pardon till this dishonor done to God and His law is thoroughly washed away. This is done by God's free-will offering of His own Son for these great sins.

This being all done for you, sinners, what do you think of it? What do you think of that appeal which Paul writes and God makes through Him -- "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Think of those mercies. Think how Christ poured out His life for you. Suppose He were to appear in the midst of you today, and holding up His hands dripping with blood, should say -- "I beseech you by the mercies shown you by God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God!" Would you not feel the force of His appeal that this is a "reasonable service?" Would not this love of Christ constrain you? What do you think of it? Did He die for all that they which live

should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him that loved them and gave Himself for them? What do you say? Just as the uplifted ax would otherwise have fallen on your neck, He caught the blow on His own. You could have had no life if He had not died to save it; then what will you do? Will you have this offered mercy, or reject it? Yield to Him the life He has in such mercy spared, or refuse to yield it?

REMARKS.

1. The governmental bearings of this scheme are perfectly apparent. The whole transaction tends powerfully to sustain God's law, and to reveal His love and even mercy to sinners. It shows that He is personally ready to forgive, and needs only to have such an arrangement made that He can do it safely as to His government. What could show His readiness to forgive so strikingly as this? See how carefully He guards against the abuse of pardon! Always ready to pardon, yet ever watchful over the great interests of obedience and happiness, lest they be imperiled by its freeness and fullness!

2. Why should it ever be thought incredible that God should devise such a scheme of atonement? Is there anything in it that is unlike God, or inconsistent with His revealed character? I doubt whether any moral agent can understand this system, and yet think it incredible. Those who reject it as incredible, must have failed to understand it.

3. The question might be asked -- Why did Christ die at all, if not for us? He had never sinned; did not die on His own account as a sinner; nor did He die as the infants of our race do, with a moral nature yet undeveloped, and who yet belong to a sinning race. The only account to be given of His death is, that He died not for Himself, but for us.

It might also be asked -- Why did He die so? See Him expiring between two thieves, and crushed down beneath a mountain weight of sorrow. Why was this? Other martyrs have died shouting; He died in anguish and grief, cast down and agonized beneath the biddings of His Father's face.

All nature seemed to sympathize with His griefs. Mark -- the sun clothed in darkness; the rocks are rent; the earth quakes beneath your feet; all nature is convulsed. Even a heathen philosopher exclaimed -- Surely the universe is coming to an end, or the Maker of the Universe is dying! Hark, that piercing cry -- "My God, My God; why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

On the supposition of His dying as a Savior for sinners, all is plain. He dies for the government of God, and must needs suffer these things to make a just expression of God's abhorrence of sin. While He stands in the place of guilty sinners, God must frown on Him and hide His face. This reveals both the spirit of God's government and His own infinite wisdom.

4. Some have impeached the atonement as likely to encourage sin. But such persons neglect the very important distinction between the proper use of a thing and its abuse. No doubt the best things in the universe may be abused, and by abuse be perverted to evil, and all the more by how much the better they are in their legitimate use.

Of the natural tendency of the atonement to good, it would seem that no man can rationally doubt. The tendency of manifesting such love, meekness and self-sacrifice for us, is to make the sinner trust

and love, and to make him bow before the cross with a broken and contrite heart. But many do abuse it, and the best things, abused, become the worst. The abuse of the atonement is the very reason why God sends sinners to hell. He says, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

Hence, if any sinner will abuse atoning blood, and trample down the holy law, and the very idea of returning to God in penitence and love, God will say of him, "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy" than he who despised Moses' law and fell beneath its vengeance?

5. It is a matter of fact, that this manifestation of God in Christ does break the heart of sinners. It has subdued many hearts, and will, thousands more. If they believe it and hold it as a reality, must it not subdue their heart to love and grief? Do not you think so? Certainly if you saw it as it is, and felt the force of it in your heart, you would sob out on your very seat, break down and cry out -- Did Jesus love me so? And shall I love sin any more? Ah, your heart would melt as thousands have been broken and melted in every age, when they have seen the love of Jesus as revealed on the cross. That beautiful hymn puts the case truthfully --

"I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agony and blood;
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near the cross I stood."

But it was not the first look that fully broke his heart. It was only when,

"A second look He gave which said
I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I died that thou mayest live."

that his whole heart broke, tears fell like rain, and he withheld no power of his being in the full consecration of his soul to this Savior.

This is the genuine effect of the sinner's understanding the gospel and giving Jesus Christ credit for His lovingkindness in dying for the lost. Faith thus breaks the stony heart. If this demonstration of God's love in Christ does not break your heart, nothing else will. If this death and love of Christ do not constrain you, nothing else can.

But if you do not look at it, and will not set your mind upon it, it will only work your ruin. To know

this gospel only enough to reject and disown it, can serve no other purpose save to make your guilt the greater, and your doom the more fearful.

6. Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. How beautiful this was illustrated under the Mosaic system! The victim was brought out to be slain; the blood was carried in and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. This mercy-seat was no other than the sacred cover or lid of the ark which contained the tables of the law, and other sacred memorials of God's ancient mercies. There they were, in that deep recess -- within which none might enter on pain of death, save the High Priest, and he only once a year, on the great day of atonement. On this eventful day, the sacred rites culminated to their highest solemnity. Two goats were brought forward, upon which the High Priest laid his hands, and confessed publicly his own sins and the sins of all the people. Then one was driven far away into the wilderness, to signify how God removes our sins far as the east is from the west; the other was slain and its blood borne by the high priest into the most holy place, and sprinkled there upon the mercy-seat beneath the cherubim. Meanwhile, the vast congregation stood without, confessing their sins, and expecting remission only through the shedding of blood. It was as if the whole world had been standing around the base of Calvary, confessing their sins, while Jesus bore His cross to the summit, to hang thereon, and bleed and die for the sins of men. How fitting that, while Christ is dying, we should be confessing!

Some of you may think it a great thing to go on a foreign mission. But Jesus has led the way. He left Heaven on a foreign mission; came down to this more than heathen world, and no one ever faced such self-denial. Yet He fearlessly marched up without the least hesitation, to meet the consequences. Never did He shrink from disgrace, from humiliation, or torture. And can you shrink from following the footsteps of such a leader? Is anything too much for you to suffer, while you follow in the lead of such a Captain of your salvation?

The Sinner's Natural Power and Moral Weakness

Lecture VI

August 13, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--2 Pet. 2:19: "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

I propose in my present discourse to discuss the moral state of the sinner.

I. All men are naturally free, and none the less so for being sinners.

II. Men have this attribute of moral liberty, it is equally true that they are morally

enslaved.

I. The first important fact to be noted is that all men are naturally free, and none the less so for being sinners.

- 1. They naturally have freedom of will. By natural freedom I do not mean that they have a right to do as they please; for this can by no means be true. Nor do I mean that they are free agents merely in the sense of being able to do as they will to do. In fact men sometimes can and sometimes cannot execute their purposes of will; but be this as it may, moral liberty does not consist in the power to accomplish one's purposes. You are aware that some old philosophers defined liberty of will to be the power to do what you will to do. This for many reasons cannot be the true idea of freedom of the will. For look at the department of doing which is embraced in muscular action. The simple fact is that some of our muscles are not under the control of the will at all, while others are under its control by a law of the sternest necessity. In regard to this latter class, all the freedom there is pertains to the will -- none of it to the action of the muscles controlled by the will. It is then a sheer mistake to deny the location of freedom where it is, and to locate it where it is not. If there be any such thing as necessity in the universe, it is found in the absolute control held by the will over those physical muscles which are placed under its control. The obedience of the muscles is absolute -- not free or voluntary in any sense whatever. Hence the absurdity of locating human freedom there.
- 2. This freedom is in the will itself, and consists in its power of free choice. To do, or not to do -- this is its option. It has by its own nature and function of determining its own volitions. The soul wills to do or not to do, and thus is a moral sovereign over its own activities. In this fact lies the foundation for moral agency. A being so constituted that he can will to do or not to do, and has moreover knowledge and appreciation of his moral obligations, is a moral agent. None other can be.

It deserves special notice here that every man knows that he has a conscience which tells him how he ought to act, as well as a moral power in the exercise of which he can either heed or repel its monitions.

- 3. That a man is free in the sense of determining his own activities is proved by each man's own consciousness. This proof requires no chain of reasoning. A man is just as much aware and as well aware of originating his own acts as he is of acting at all. Does he really act himself? Yes. And does he know that he acts himself? Yes. How does he know these things? By consciousness. But he has the same evidence of being free -- for this is equally proved by his own consciousness.
- 4. Still further -- man can distinguish between those acts in which he is free, and those in which he is acted upon by influences independent of his own choice. He knows that in some things he is a recipient of influences and of actions exerted upon himself, while in other things he is not a recipient in the same sense, but a voluntary actor. The fact of this discrimination proves the possession of free agency.

The difference to which I now refer is one of every day consciousness. Sometimes a man can not tell whence his thoughts come. Impressions are made upon his mind the origin of which he cannot trace. They may be from above -- they may be from beneath: he knows but little of their source, and little about them, save that they are not his own free volitions. Of his own acts of will there can be no such uncertainty. He knows their origin. He knows that they are the product of an original power in himself, for the exercise of which he is compelled to hold himself primarily responsible.

Not only has he this direct consciousness, but he has, as already suggested, the testimony of his own conscience. This faculty, by its very nature, takes cognizance of his moral acts, requiring certain acts of will and forbidding others. This faculty is an essential condition of free moral agency. Possessing it, and also man's other mental powers, he must be free and under moral obligation.

- 5. It is inconceivable that man should be under moral law and government, without the power of free moral action. The logical condition of the existence of a conscience in man is that he should be free.
- 6. That man is free is evident from the fact that he is conscious of praise or blameworthiness. He could not reasonably blame himself unless it were a first truth that he is free. By a first truth, I mean one that is known to all by a necessity of their own nature. There are such truths -- those which none can help knowing, however much they may desire to ignore them. Now unless it were a first truth, necessarily known to all, that man is free, he could not praise or blame himself.

As conscience implies moral agency, so, where there is a conscience, it is impossible for men really to deny moral responsibility. Men cannot but blame themselves for wrong doing. Conscious of the forewarning of conscience against the wrong act, how can they evade the conviction that the act was wrong?

Again, the Bible always treats men as free agents, commanding them to do or not to do as if of course they had all the power requisite to obey such commands. A young minister once said to me, "I preach that men ought to repent, but never that they can." "Why not preach also that they can?" said I. He replies, "The Bible does not affirm that they can." To this I replied that it would be most consummate trifling for a human legislature, having required certain acts, to proceed to affirm that its subjects have the power to obey. The very requirement is the strongest possible affirmation, that in the belief of the enacting power, the subjects are able to do the things required. If the lawmakers did not believe this, how in reason could they require it? The very first assumption to be made concerning good rulers is, that they have common sense and common honesty. To deny, virtually, that God has these qualities, is blasphemous.

- 7. Freedom of will lies among the earliest and most resistless convictions. Probably no one living can remember his first idea of oughtness -- his first convictions of right and wrong. It is also among our most irresistible convictions. We assume the freedom of our own will from the very first. The little child affirms it in its first infantile efforts to accomplish its purposes. See

him reach forth to get his food or his playthings. The little machinery of a freely acting agent begins to play long ere he can understand it. He begins to act on his own responsibility, long before he can estimate what or how great this responsibility is. The fact of personal responsibility is fastened on us so that we might as well escape from ourselves as from this conviction.

II. While it is true, past a rational denial, that men have this attribute of moral liberty, it is equally true that they are morally enslaved -- in moral bondage.

- 1. The liberty they have by created constitution; the bondage comes by voluntary perversion and abuse of their powers.
- 2. The Bible represents men as a being in bondage -- as having the power to resist temptation to sin, but yet as voluntarily yielding to those temptations. Just as our dough-faced politicians might, but do not and will not, resist the demands of the slave power. Just such is the bondage of sinners under temptation. The Bible represents Satan as ruling the hearts of men at his will, just as the men who wield the slave power of the South rule the dough faces of the North at their will, dictating the choice of our Presidents and the entire legislation of the Federal Government. So Satan ruled Eve in the garden; so he now "works in the children of disobedience."
- 3. What the Bible thus represents, experience proves to be true. Wicked men know that they are in bondage to Satan. What do you think puts it into the heart of young men to plot iniquity and drink it in like water? Is it not the devil? How many young men do we meet with, who, when tempted, seem to have no moral stamina to resist, but are swept away by the first gust of temptation.
- 4. Men are in bondage to their appetites. Appetite excited leads them away as it led Eve and Adam. What can be the reason that some young men find it so hard to give up the use of tobacco? They know the habit is filthy and disgusting; they know it must injure their health; but appetite craves, and the devil helps on its demands; the poor victim makes a feeble effort to deliver himself, but the devil turns the screw again and holds him the tighter, and then drags him back to a harder bondage.

So when a man is in bondage to alcohol, and so with every form of sensual indulgence. Satan helps on the influence of sensuality, and does not care much what the particular form of it may be, provided its power be strong enough to ruin the soul. It all plays into his hand and promotes his main purpose.

So men are in bondage to the love of money; to the fashions of the world; to the opinions of mankind. By these they are enslaved and led on in the face of the demands of duty. Every man is really enslaved who is in fact led counter to his convictions of duty. He is free only when he acts in accordance with those convictions. This is the true idea of liberty. Only when reason and conscience control the will is a man free -- for God made man, intelligent and moral beings to act normally, under the influence of their own enlightened conscience and reason. This is such freedom as God exercises and enjoys;

none can be higher or nobler. But when a moral agent is in bondage to his low appetites and passions, and is led by them to disregard the dictates of his conscience and of his reason, he is simply a galley slave, and to a very hard and cruel master.

God made men to be free, giving them just such mental powers as they need in order to control their own activities as a rational being should wish to. Their bondage, then, is altogether voluntary. They choose to resist the control of reason, and submit to the control of appetite and passion.

- 5. Every impenitent man is conscious of being really in bondage to temptation. What man, not saved from sin through grace, does not know that he is an enigma to himself? I should have little respect for any man who should say he was never ashamed of himself, and never found himself doing things he could not well account for. Especially I should be ashamed and afraid too, if I were to hear a student say he had never been impressed with a sense of his moral weakness. Such ignorance would only show his utter lack of reflection, and his consequent failure to notice the most obvious moral phenomena of his inner life. What! does he not know that his weakest desires carry his will, the strongest convictions of his reason and conscience to the contrary notwithstanding?

This is a most guilty state, because so altogether voluntary -- so needless, and so opposed to the convictions of his reason and of his understanding and withal so opposed to his convictions of God's righteous demands. To go counter to such convictions, he must be supremely guilty.

Of course such conduct must be most suicidal. The sinner acts in most decided opposition to his own best interests, so that if he has the power to ruin himself this course must certainly do it. The course he pursues is of all others best adapted to destroy both body and soul; how then can it be anything but suicidal? He practically denies all moral obligation. And yet he knows the fact of his moral obligation, and denies it in the face of his clearest convictions. How can this be otherwise than suicidal? I have many times asked sinners how they could account for their own conduct. The honest ones answer, "I cannot at all -- I am an enigma to myself." The real explanation is, that while by created constitution they are free moral agents; yet, by the infatuation of sin, they have sold themselves into moral bondage, and are really slaves to Satan and their own lusts.

This is a state of deep moral degradation. Intrinsicly it is most disgraceful. Everybody feels this in regard to certain forms of sin and classes of sinners. We all feel that drunkenness is beastly. A drunkard we regard as a long way towards beast hood. See him reeling about, mentally besotted, and reeking in his own filth! Is not he almost a beast? Nay, rather must we not ask pardon of all beasts for this comparison, for not one is so mean and so vile -- not one excites in our bosom such a sense of voluntary degradation. Compared with the self-besotted drunkard, any one of them is a noble creature.

So we all say, looking only from our human standpoint. But there is another and a better standpoint. How do angels look upon this self-made drunkard? They see in him one made only a little lower than themselves, and one who might have aspired to companionship

with them; yet he chose rather to sink himself down to a level with swine! O how their souls must recoil from the sight of such self-made degradation! To see the noble quality of intellect discarded; and yet nobler moral qualities disowned, and trodden under foot as if they were only an encumbrance -- this is too much for angels to bear. How they must feel!

Nor is the drunkard alone in the contempt which his sensual degradation entails. See the tobacco-smoker. The correct taste of community demands that by conventional laws he be excluded from parlors, steamboat-cabins, first class rail-cars, churches, and indeed all really decent places. Yet, for the sake of this low indulgence, the smoker is willing to descend into places not decent. See him steal out of his place among respectable people in the rail-car, and herd with rowdies in the smoking car, for the sake of his filthy indulgence. If he were only obliged to ride all day in the society to which he sinks himself by this indulgence, it might admonish him of the cost of his sensuality! It might help to open his eyes!

- 6. I have taken these forms of sensual indulgence as illustrations of the real degradation of sin. In these cases the good sense of mankind has been evinced by the grade of debasement to which they consign these votaries of low self-indulgence. If we only saw things in their right light we should take the same view of the moralist. I recollect that in talking with a great moralist he said, "How can I act from regard to God or to the right? How can I go to meeting from the high motive of pleasing God? I can go from a desire to promote my own selfish ends, but how can I go for the sake of pleasing God?"

Yes, that is precisely his difficulty and his guilt. He does not care how little he pleases God! That is the least of his concern. The very lowest class of motives sways his will and his life. He stands entirely afar from the reach of the highest and noblest. In this consists his self-made degradation and his exceeding great guilt.

So of the miser when he gets beyond all motives but the love of hoarding; when his practical question is; not, how shall I honor my race, or bless my generation, or glorify my Maker; but how can I make a few coppers? Even when urged to pray, he would ask, "What profit shall I have if I do pray unto Him?" When you find a man thus incapable of being moved by noble motives, what a wretch he is! How ineffably mean!

So I might bring before you the ambitious scholar, who is too low in his aims to be influenced by the exalted motive of doing good, and who feels only that which touches his reputation. Is not this exceedingly low and mean? What would you think of the preacher who should lose all regard for the welfare of souls, and think only of fishing for his reputation? What would you say of him? You would declare that he was too mean and too wicked to live, and fit only for hell! What would you think of one who might shine like Lucifer among the morning stars of intellect and genius, but who should debase himself to the low and miserable vocation of snuffing round after applause, and fishing for compliments to his talents? Would you not say that such self-seeking is unutterably contemptible? With all heaven from above beckoning them on to lofty purpose and efforts, there they are, working their "muck-rake," and nosing after some little advantage

to their small selves!

See that ambitious man who so longs to please everybody that he conforms his own to everybody's opinions, and never has one that is really his own? Must not he be low enough to satisfy any of those whose ambition seems strangely reversed, so that they only aspire to dive and sink -- never to soar; whose impulses all tend downwards and never up? One would suppose they would have degradation enough to satisfy any ordinary ambition.

All this comes of bondage to base selfishness. Alas, that there should be so much of this in our world that public sentiment rarely estimates it anywise according to its real nature!

REMARKS.

1. Our subject reveals the case of those who are convicted of the right, but cannot be persuaded to do it.

For example, on the subject of temperance, he is convicted as to duty -- knows he ought to reform absolutely, but yet he will not change. Every temperance lecture carries conviction, but the next temptation sweeps it by the board, and he returns like the dog to his vomit. But mark this, -- every successive process of temperance-conviction and temptation's triumph, leaves him weaker than before, and very soon will find him utterly prostrate. Miserable man! How certainly he will die in his sins!

2. No matter what the form of the temptation may be, he who, when convinced of his duty, yet takes no corresponding action, is on the high road to perdition. Inevitably this bondage grows stronger and stronger with every fresh trial of its strength. Every time you are convinced of duty and yet resist that conviction, and refuse to act in accordance with it, you become more and more helpless; you commit yourself more and more to the control of your iron-hearted master. Every fresh care renders you only the more fully a helpless slave.

3. There may be some young men here who have already made themselves a moral wreck. There may be lads not yet sixteen who have already put their conscience effectually beneath their feet. Already you have learned perhaps, to go against all your convictions of duty. How horrible! Every day your bands are growing stronger. With each day's resistance, your soul is more deeply and hopelessly lost. Poor, miserable, dying sinner! "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!" Suddenly, you dash upon the breakers and are gone! Your friends move solemnly along the shore, and look out upon those rocks of damnation on which your soul is wrecked, and weeping as they go, they mournfully say, "There is the wreck of one who knew his duty but did it not. Thousands of times the appeals of conviction came home to his heart -- but he learned to resist them -- he made it his business to resist, and alas, he was only too successful!"

4. How insane the delusion, that the sinner's case, while yet in his sins, is growing better. As well might the drunkard fancy he is growing better because every temperance lecture convicts him of his sin and shame, while yet every next day's temptation leaves him drunk as ever! Growing better! There can be no delusion so false and so fatal as this!

You see the force of this delusion in clearer light when you notice how slight are the considerations that sway the soul against all the vast motives of God's character and kingdom. Must not that be a strong and fearful delusion which can make considerations so slight outweigh motives so vast and momentous?

5. The guilt of this state is to be estimated by the insignificance of the motives which control the mind. What would you think of the youth who could murder his father for a sixpence? What! you would exclaim, for so mean a pittance be bribed to murder his father! You would account his guilt the greater by how much less the temptation.

6. Our subject shows the need of the Holy Spirit to impress the truth on the hearts of sinners.

7. You may also see how certainly sinners will be lost if they grieve the Spirit of God away. Your earthly friends might be discouraged, and yet you might be saved; but if the Spirit of God becomes discouraged and leaves you, your doom is sealed forever. "Woe unto them when I depart from them!" This departure of God from the sinner gives the signal for tolling the knell of his lost soul. Then the mighty angel begins to toll, toll, TOLL! the great bell of eternity; -- one more soul going to its eternal doom!

Moral Insanity

Lecture VII

September 10, 1856

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Eccl. 9:3: "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live."

The Bible often ascribes to unconverted men one common heart or disposition. It always makes two classes, and only two, of our race--saints and sinners; the one class converted from their sin and become God's real friends;--the other remaining his unconverted enemies. According to the Bible, therefore, the heart, in all unrenewed men, is the same in its general character. In the days of Noah, God testified "that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually." Observe, he speaks of the thought of their heart, as if they had one common heart--all alike in moral character. So by Paul, God testifies that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," testifying thus, not of one man, or of a few men, but of all men of carnal mind. So in our text, the phraseology is expressive:--"the heart of the sons of men is full of evil"--as if

the sons of men had but one heart--all in common--and this one heart were "full of evil." You will notice this affirmation is not made of one or two men, nor of some men, merely; but "of the sons of men," as if of them all.

I. But what is intended by affirming that "madness is in their heart while they live?"

II. It is important to point out some of the manifestations of this state of mind.

III. This moral insanity is a state of unmingled wickedness.

I. What is intended by affirming that "madness is in their heart while they live?"

- 1. This is not the madness of anger, but of insanity. True, sometimes people are mad with anger; but this is not the sense of our text. The Bible, as well as customary speech, employs this term--"madness," to express insanity. This, we understand to be its sense here.
- 2. Insanity is of two kinds--one, of the head; the other, of the heart. In the former, the intellect is disordered; in the latter, the will and voluntary powers. Intellectual insanity destroys moral agency. The man, intellectually insane, is not, for the time, a moral agent; moral responsibility is suspended because he cannot know his duty, and cannot choose responsibly as to doing, or not doing it. True, when a man makes himself temporarily insane, as by drunkenness, the courts are obliged to hold him responsible for his acts committed in that state; but the guilt really attaches to the voluntary act which creates the insanity. A man who gets intoxicated by intelligently drinking what he knows is intoxicating, must be held responsible for his acts during the ensuing intoxication. The reason of this is, that he can foresee the danger, and can easily avoid it.
- 3. The general law is that, while the intellect retains its usual power, so long moral obligation remains unimpaired.

Moral insanity, on the other hand, is will-madness. The man retains his intellectual powers unimpaired, but he sets his heart fully to evil. He refuses to yield to the demands of his conscience. He practically discards the obligations of moral responsibility. He has the powers of free moral agency, but persistently abuses them. He has a reason which affirms obligation, but he refuses obedience to its affirmations.

In this form of insanity, the reason remains unimpaired; but the heart deliberately disobeys.

- 4. The insanity spoken of in the text is moral, that of the heart. By the heart here, is meant the will--the voluntary power. While the man is intellectually sane, he yet acts as if he were intellectually insane.

II. It is important to point out some of the manifestations of this state of mind.

Since the Bible affirms it to be a fact that sinners are mad in heart, we may naturally expect to see some manifestations of it. It is often striking to see how perfectly the Bible daguerreotypes human character; has it done so in reference to this point? Let us see.

Who are the morally insane?

- 1. Those who, not being intellectually insane, yet ACT as if they were.

For example, those who are intellectually insane, treat fiction as if it were reality, and reality as if it were fiction. They act as if truth were not truth, and as if falsehood were truth. Every man knows that insane people actually follow the wild dreams of their own fancy, as if they were the most stern reality, and can scarcely be made to feel the force of anything truly real.

So men, in their sins, treat the realities of the spiritual world as if they were not real, but follow the most empty phantoms of this world, as if they were stern realities.

- 2. They also act as if self were of supreme importance, and everything else of relatively no importance. Suppose you were to see a man acting this out in common life. He goes round, day after day, assuming that he is the Supreme God, and practically insisting that everybody ought to have a supreme regard to his rights, and comparatively little or no regard for other people's rights. Now if you were to see a man saying this and acting it out, would you not account him either a blasphemer or insane?

Observe, now the wonderful fact, that while wicked men talk so sensibly as to show that they know better, yet they act as if all this were true--as if they supposed their own self-interest to be more important than every thing else in the universe, and that God's interests and rights even, are nothing in comparison. Practically, every sinner does this. It is an essential element in all sin. Selfish men never regard the rights of any body else, unless they are in some way linked with their own.

- 3. If wicked men really believed their own rights and interests to be supreme in the universe, it would prove them intellectually insane, and we should hasten to shut them up in the nearest mad-house; but when they show that they know better, yet act on this groundless assumption, in the face of their better knowledge, we say, with the Bible, that "madness is in their hearts while they live."

Again, see this madness manifested in his relative estimate of time and of eternity. His whole life declares that, in his view, it is by far more important to secure the good of time than the good of eternity. Yet, if a man should reason thus--should argue to prove it, and should soberly assert it--you would know him to be insane, and would help him to the mad-house. But, suppose he does not say this--dares not say it--knows it is not true;--yet constantly acts it out, and lives on the assumption of its truth, what then? Simply this--he is morally mad. Madness is in his heart.

- 4. Now precisely this is the practice of every one of you who is living in sin. You give the preference to time over eternity, You practically say--O give me the joys of time: why should I

trouble myself yet about the trivial matters of eternity?

- 5. In the same spirit you assume that the body is more than the soul. But if a man were to affirm this and go round trying to prove it, you would know him to be insane. O, if he were a friend of yours, how your heart would break for his sad misfortune--reason lost! But if he knows better, yet practically lives as if it were even so, you only say, he is morally insane--that is all!

Suppose you see a man destroying his own property, not by accident or mistake, but deliberately; injuring his own health, also, as if he had no care for his own interests;--you might bring his case before a judge and sue out a commission of lunacy against him; under which the man's goods should be taken out of his own control, and he be no longer suffered to squander them. Yet, in spiritual things, wicked men will deliberately act against their own dearest interests; having a price put into their hands to get wisdom, they will not use it; having the treasures of heaven placed within their reach, they do not try to secure them; with an infinite wealth of blessedness proffered for the mere acceptance, they will not take it as a gift. Indeed! How plain it is that, if men were to act in temporal things as they do in spiritual, they would be pronounced by everybody insane. Any man would take his oath of it. They would say--Only see; the man acts against his own interests in everything! Who can deny that he is insane? Certainly, sane men never do this!

But, in moral questions, wicked men seem to take the utmost pains to subvert their own interests, and make themselves insolvent forever! O, how they beggar their souls, when they might have the riches of heaven.

- 6. Again, they endeavor to realize manifest impossibilities. For example, they try to make themselves happy in their sins and their selfishness. Yet they know they cannot do it. Ask them, and they will admit the thing is utterly impossible; and yet, despite of this conviction, they keep up the effort perpetually to try--as if they expected by and by to realize a manifest impossibility. Now, in moral things, it may not strike you as specially strange, for it is exceedingly common; but suppose, in matters of the world, you were to see a man doing the same sort of thing, what would you think of him? For example, you see him working hard to build a very long ladder, and you ask him what for? He says--"I am going to scale the moon." You see him expending his labor and his money, with the toil of a life to get up a mammoth ladder with which to scale the moon! Would you not say--he is certainly insane? For, unless he were really insane, he would know it to be an utter impossibility. But, in spiritual things, men are all the time trying to realize a result at least equally impossible--that of being happy in sin--happy with a mutiny among their own constitutional powers, the heart at war against reason and conscience. The pursuit of happiness in sin, is as if a man were seeking to bless himself by mangling his own flesh, digging out his own eyes, knocking in his teeth. Yet men as really know that they cannot obtain happiness in sin and selfishness, as they know they can not ensure health and comfort by mutilating their own flesh, and tearing their own nerves in sunder. Doing thus madly what they know will always defeat and never ensure real happiness, they show themselves to be morally insane.
- 7. Another manifestation of intellectual insanity, is loss of confidence in one's best friends.

Often this is one of the first and most painful evidences of insanity--the poor man will have it that his dearest friends are set to ruin him. By no amount of evidence can he be persuaded to think they are his real friends.

Just so sinners in their madness treat God. While they inwardly know he is their real friend, yet they practically treat him as their worst enemy. By no motives can they be persuaded to confide in him as their friend. In fact, they treat him as if he were the greatest liar in the universe. Wonderful to tell, they practically reverse the regard due respectively to God and to Satan--treating Satan as if he were God, and God as if he were Satan. Satan they believe and obey; God they disown, dishonor, and disobey. How strangely would they reverse the order of things! They would fain enthrone Satan over the universe, giving him the highest seat in heaven; the Almighty and holy God they would send to hell. They do not hesitate to surrender to Satan the place of power over their own hearts which is due to God only.

I have already noticed the fact that insane people treat their best friends as if they were their worst enemies, and that this is often the first proof of insanity. If a husband, he will have it that his dear wife is trying to poison him. I have a case in my recollection--the first case of real insanity I ever saw, and, for that reason, perhaps, it made a strong impression on my mind. I was riding on horseback, and coming near a house, I noticed a chamber window up, and heard a most unearthly cry. As soon as I came near enough to catch the words, I heard a most wild, imploring voice, "Stranger, stranger, come here;--here is the great whore of Babylon; they are trying to kill me, they will kill me." I dismounted; came up to the house, and there I found a man shut up in a cage, and complaining most bitterly of his wife. As I turned towards her I saw she looked sad, as if a load of grief lay heavy on her heart. A tear trembled in her eye. Alas, her dear husband was a maniac! Then I first learned how the insane are wont to regard their best friends.

Now, sinners know better of God and of their other real friends;--and yet they very commonly treat them in precisely this way. Just as if they were to go into the places of public resort and lift up their voices to all bystanders--Hallo, there, all ye--be it known to you--"the Great God is an almighty tyrant!" "He is not fit to be trusted or loved!"

Now, every body knows they treat God thus practically. They regard the service of God--religion--as if it were inconsistent with their real and highest happiness. I have often met with sinners who seemed to think that every attempt to make them Christians is a scheme to take them in and sell them into slavery. They by no means estimate religion as if it came forth from a God of love. Practically, they treat religion as if--embraced--it would be their ruin. Yet, in all this, they act utterly against their own convictions. They know better. If they did not, their guilt would be exceedingly small compared with what it is.

- 8. Another remarkable manifestation of insanity is, to be greatly excited about trifles, and apathetic about the most important matters in the universe. Suppose you see a man excited about straws and pebbles--taking unwearied pains to gather them into heaps, and store them away as treasures; yet, when a fire breaks out around his dwelling and the village is in flames,

he takes no notice of it, and feels no interest; or people may die on every side with the plague, but he heeds it not;--would you not say, he must be insane? But this is precisely true of sinners. They are almost infinitely excited about worldly good--straws and pebbles, compared with God's proffered treasures; but O how apathetic about the most momentous events in the universe! The vast concerns of their souls, scarcely stir up one earnest thought! If they did not know better, you would say--Certainly, their reason is dethroned; but since they do know better, you can not say less than that they are morally insane--"madness is in their heart while they live."

- 9. The conduct of impenitent men is the perfection of irrationality. When you see it as it is, you will get a more just and vivid idea of irrationality than you can get from any other source. You see this in the ends to which they devote themselves, and in the means which they employ to secure them. All is utterly unreasonable. An end madly chosen--sought by means madly devised;--this is the life-history of the masses who reject God. If this were the result of wrong intellectual judgments, we should say at once that the race have gone mad.

Bedlam itself affords no higher evidence of intellectual insanity than every sinner does of moral. You may go to Columbus, and visit every room occupied by the inmates of the Lunatic Asylum; you cannot find one insane person who gives higher evidence of intellectual insanity than every sinner does of moral. If Bedlam itself furnishes evidence that its Bedlamites are crazy, intellectually; so does every sinner that he is mad, morally.

Sinners act as if they were afraid they should be saved. Often they seem to be trying to make their salvation as difficult as possible. For example, They all know what Christ has said about the danger of riches and the difficulty of saving rich men. They have read from His lips--"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This they know, and yet how many of them are in mad haste to be rich! For this end, some are ready to sacrifice their conscience--some their health--all seem ready, deliberately, to sacrifice their souls! How could they more certainly ensure their own damnation!

Thus they regard damnation as if it were salvation, and salvation as if it were damnation. They rush upon damnation as if it were heaven, and flee salvation as if it were hell.

Is this exaggeration? No; this is only the simple truth. Sinners press down the way to hell as if it were the chief good of their existence, and shun the way to heaven as if it were the consummation of evil. Sinner, this is your own moral state. The picture gives only the naked facts of the case, without exaggeration.

III. This moral insanity is a state of unmingled wickedness.

- 1. The special feature of it which makes it a guilty state, is that it is altogether voluntary. It results not from the loss of reason, but from the abuse of reason. The will persists in acting against reason and conscience. Despite of the affirmations of reason, and reckless of the admonitions of conscience, the sinner presses on in his career of rebellion against God and

goodness. In such voluntary wickedness, must there not be intrinsic guilt?

- 2. Besides, this action is oftentimes deliberate. The man sins in his cool, deliberate moments, as well as in his excited moments. If he sins most overtly and boldly in his excited moments he does not repent and change his position towards God in his deliberate moments, but virtually endorses then the hasty purposes of his more excited hours. This heightens his guilt.

Again, his purposes of sin are obstinate and unyielding. In ten thousand ways, God is bringing influences to bear on his mind to change his purposes--but usually in vain. This career of sin is in violation of all his obligations. Who does not know this? The sinner never acts from right motives--never yields to the sway of a sense of obligation--never practically recognizes his obligation to love his neighbor as himself, or to honor the Lord his God.

- 3. It is a total rejection of both God's law and gospel. The law he will not obey; the gospel of pardon he will not accept. He seems determined to brave the Omnipotence of Jehovah, and dare his vengeance. Is he not mad upon his idols? Is it saying too much when the Bible affirms--"Madness is in their heart while they live?"

REMARKS.

1. Sinners strangely accuse saints of being mad and crazy. Just as soon as Christian people begin to act as if the truth they believe is a reality, then wicked men cry out--"See, they are getting crazy." Yet those very sinners admit the Bible to be true, and admit those things which Christians believe as true to be really so; and, further still, they admit that those Christians are doing only what they ought to do, and only as themselves ought to act;--still, they charge them with insanity. It is curious that even those sinners themselves know these Christians to be the only rational men on the earth. I can well recollect that I saw this plainly before my conversion. I knew then that Christians were the only people in all the world who had any valid claim to be deemed sane.

2. If intellectual insanity be a shocking fact, how much more so is moral. I have referred to my first impressions at the sight of one who was intellectually insane, but a case of moral insanity ought to be deemed far more afflictive and astounding. Suppose the case of a Webster. His brain becomes softened; he is an idiot! There is not a man in all the land but would feel solemn. What! Daniel Webster--that great man, an idiot! How have the mighty fallen! What a horrible sight!

But how much more horrible to see him become a moral idiot--to see a selfish heart run riot with the clear decisions of his gigantic intellect;--to see his moral principles fading away before the demands of selfish ambition--to see such a man become a drunkard, a debauchee, a loafer;--if this were to occur in a Daniel Webster, how inexpressively shocking! Intellectual idiocy is not to be named in the comparison!

3. Although some sinners may be externally fair, and may seem to be amiable in temper and character, yet every real sinner is actually insane. In view of all these solemnities of eternity, he insists on being controlled only by the things of time. With the powers of an angel, he aims not above the low pursuits of a selfish heart. How must angels look on such a case! Eternity so vast, and its issues so dreadful,

yet this sinner drives furiously to hell as if he were on the high-road to heaven! And all this only because he is infatuated with the pleasures of sin for a season. At first view, he seems to have really made the mistake of hell for heaven, but, on a closer examination, you see it is no real mistake of the intellect; he knows very well the difference between hell and heaven;--but he is practically deluding himself under the impulses of his mad heart! The mournful fact is, he loves sin, and, after that he will go! Alas, alas! so insane, he rushes greedily on his own damnation, just as if he were in pursuit of heaven!

We shudder at the thought that any of our friends are becoming idiotic or lunatic; but this is not half so bad as to have one of them become wicked. Better have a whole family become idiotic than one of them become a hardened sinner. Indeed, the former, compared with the latter, is as nothing. For the idiot shall not always be so. When this mortal is laid away in the grave, the soul may look out again in the free air of liberty, as if it had never been immured in a dark prison; and the body, raised again, may bloom in eternal vigor and beauty; but, alas, moral insanity only waxes worse and worse forever! The root of this being not in a diseased brain, but in a diseased heart and soul, death cannot cure it; the resurrection will only raise him to shame and everlasting contempt; and the eternal world will only give scope to his madness to rage on with augmented vigor and wider sweep forever.

4. Some persons are more afraid of being called insane than of being called wicked. Surely they show the fatal delusion that is on their hearts.

5. Intellectual insanity is only pitiable, not disgraceful; but moral insanity is unspeakably disgraceful. None need wonder that God should say--"Some shall arise to shame and everlasting contempt."

6. Conversion to God is becoming morally sane. It consists in restoring the will and the affections to the just control of the intelligence, the reason and the conscience, so as to put the man once more in harmony with himself--all his faculties adjusted to their true positions and proper functions.

Sometimes persons who have become converted, but not well established, backslide into moral insanity. Just as persons sometimes relapse into intellectual insanity, after being apparently quite restored. This is a sad case, and brings sorrow upon the hearts of friends. Yet, in no case can it be so sad as a case of backsliding into moral insanity.

7. An intellectual bedlam is a mournful place. How can the heart of any human sensibility contemplate such a scene without intense grief? Mark, as you pass through those halls, the traces of intellectual ruin,--there is a noble-looking woman, perfectly insane; there is a man of splendid mien and bearing--all in ruins! How awful! Then, if this be so, what a place is hell! These intellectual bedlams are awful;--how much more the moral bedlam!

Suppose we go to Columbus, and visit its Lunatic Asylum; go round to all its wards and study the case of each inmate; then we will go to Indiana; then to New York, and so through all the Asylums of each several State. Then we will visit London and its Asylum, where we may find as many insane as in all our Union. Would not this be a mournful scene? Would not you cry out long before we had finished--Enough! Enough! How can I bear these sights of mad men! How can I endure to behold such desolation!

Suppose, then, we go next to the great moral bedlam of the universe--the hell of lost souls; for if men will make themselves mad, God must shut them up in one vast bedlam cell. Why should not he? The weal of his empire demands that all the moral insanity of his kingdom should be withdrawn from the society of the holy, and shut up alone and apart. There are those whose intellects are right, but whose hearts are all wrong. Ah, what a place must that be in which to spend one's eternity! The great mad-house of the universe!

8. Sometimes sinners here, aware of their own insanity, get glimpses of this fearful state. I recollect that, at one time, I got this idea that Christians are the only persons who can claim to be rational, and then I asked myself--Why should I act so? Would it hurt me to obey God? Would it ruin my peace, or damage my prospects for either this life or the next? Why do I go on so?

I said to myself--I can give no account of it, only that I am mad. All that I can say is that my heart is set on iniquity, and will not turn.

Alas, poor maniac! Not unfortunate, but wicked! How many of you know that this is your real case? O, young man, did your father think you were sane when he sent you here? Ah, you were so intellectually, perhaps, but not morally. As to your moral nature and functions, all was utterly deranged. My dear young friend, does your own moral course commend itself to your conscience and your reason? If not, what are you but a moral maniac? Young man, young woman, must you in truth write yourselves down moral maniacs?

9. Finally, the subject shows the importance of not quenching the Spirit. This is God's agency for the cure of moral maniacs. O, if you put out his light from your souls, there remains to you only the blackness of darkness forever! Said a young man in Lane Seminary--just dying in his sins--Why did you not tell me there is such a thing as eternal damnation? Weld, why did not you tell me? "I did." Oh, I am going there--how can I die so? It's growing dark; bring in a light! And so he passed away from this world of light and hope!

O sinner, take care that you put not out the light which God has cast into your dark heart, lest, when you pass away it shall grow dark to your soul at midday--the opening into the blackness of darkness forever.

On Believing with The Heart

Lecture VIII

December 3, 1856

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Text.--Rom. 10:10: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

The subject brought to view in this passage requires of us, that we should, distinguish carefully between intellectual and heart faith.

There are several different states of mind which are currently called faith, this term being obviously used in various senses. So, also, is the term heart used in various senses, and indeed, there are but few terms which are not used with some variety of signification. Hence, it becomes very important to discriminate.

Thus, in regard to faith, the Scriptures affirm that the "devils also believe and tremble," but it surely cannot be meant that they have heart faith. They do not "believe unto righteousness."

Faith in the intellect is a judgment -- an opinion. The mind so judges, and is convinced that the facts are so. Whatever the nature of the things believed, this is an involuntary state of mind. Those things believed may be truth; they may relate to God and may embrace the great fundamental facts and doctrines of religion; yet this faith may not result in righteousness. It is often true that persons have their judgments convinced, yet this conviction reaches not beyond their intelligence. Or perhaps it may go so much further as to move their feelings and play on their sensibility, and yet may do nothing more. It may produce no change in the will. It may result in no new moral purpose; may utterly fail to reach the voluntary attitude of the mind, and hence, will make no change in the life.

But, heart faith, on the other hand, is true confidence, and involves an earnest committal of one's self and interests, to the demands of the truth believed. It is precisely such a trust as we have in those to whom we cling in confidence -- such as children feel in their friends and true fathers and mothers. We know they are naturally ready to believe what is said to them, and to commit themselves to the care of those they love.

The heart is in this. It is a voluntary state of mind -- always substantially and essentially an act of the will. This kind of faith will, of course, always affect the feelings, and will influence the life. Naturally, it tends towards righteousness, and may truly be said to be "unto righteousness." It implies love, and seems in its very nature to unify itself with the affections. The inspired writers plainly did not hold faith to be so purely an act of will, as to exclude the affections. Obviously, they made it include the affections. I must now proceed,

I. To notice some of the conditions of intellectual faith.

II. What are not, and what are, conditions of heart faith.

I. Some of the conditions of intellectual faith.

- 1. Sometimes, but not always, faith of the heart is essential to faith of the intellect. Thus, it may be necessary that we have heart faith in a man before we are duly prepared to investigate the

facts that relate to his character. So, in relation to God, if we lack heart faith in Him, we are in no state to deal fairly with the evidence of His works and ways. Here it is well to notice the vast difference between the irresistible assumptions of the mind respecting God, and those things which we arrive at by study and reasoning. Heart faith seems essential to any candid investigation.

- 2. It is also essential to our conviction as to the truth. I am not prepared to judge candidly concerning a friend, unless I have some of this heart faith in him. Suppose I hear a rumor about my best friend, affirming something which is deeply scandalous. My regard for him forbids my believing this scandalous report unless it comes most fully sustained by testimony. On the other hand, if I had no heart confidence in him, my intelligence might be thrown entirely off, and I might do both him and myself the greatest injustice.

Many of you have had this experience in regard to faith. Often, in the common walks of life, you have found that, if it had not been for your heart confidence, you would have been greatly deceived. Your heart held on; at length, the evidence shone out; you were in a condition to judge charitably, and thus you arrived at the truth.

- 3. Heart faith is specially essential where there is mystery. Of course there are points in religious doctrine which are profoundly mysterious. This fact is not peculiar to religious truth, but is common to every part of God's works -- which is equivalent to saying -- it is common to all real science. Any child can ask me questions which I cannot answer. Without heart confidence, it would be impossible for society to exist. Happily for us, we can often wisely confide, when we cannot, by any means, understand.
- 4. In the nature of the case, there must be mysteries about God, for the simple reason that He is infinite and we are finite. Yet, He reveals enough of Himself to authorize us to cherish the most unbounded confidence in Him. Therefore, let no one stumble at this as though it were some strange thing, for, in fact, the same thing obtains to some extent in all our social relations. In these, we are often compelled to confide in our friends where the case seems altogether suspicious. Yet, we confide, and by and by, the truth comes to light, and we are thankful that our heart faith held us from doing them injustice.

Again, heart faith is specially in place where there is contradictory evidence.

- 5. Often it may seem to you that God must be partial. Then, the mind needs the support of confidence in God. You go on safely if there is underlying all, the deep conviction that God is and must be right. See that woman, stripped of everything -- husband, children, all; how can she give any account of this? You may remember the case of a woman who traveled West with her husband and family; there buried her husband and all but two little ones, and then made her weary way back with these on foot. Pinching want and weariness drove her into a stranger's dwelling at nightfall; there a churlish man would have turned her into the street, but his wife had a human heart, and insisted on letting them stay, even if she herself sat up all night. Think of the trying case of that lone widow. She does not sleep; her mingled grief and faith find utterance in the words -- "My heart is breaking, but God is good!"

How could she make it out that God is good? Just as you would in the case of your husband, if one should tell you he had gone forever, and proved faithless to his vows. You can set this insinuation aside, and let your heart rise above it. You do this on the strength of your heart faith.

So the Christian does in regard to many mysterious points in God's character and ways. You cannot see how God can exist without ever beginning to exist; or how He can exist in three Persons, since no other beings known to you exist in more than one. You cannot see how He can be eternally good, and yet suffer sin and misery to befall His creatures. But, with heart faith we do not need to have everything explained. The heart says to its Heavenly Father, "I do not need to catechize Thee, not ask impertinent questions, for I know it is all right. I know God can never do anything wrong." And so the soul finds a precious joy in trusting, without knowing how the mystery is solved. Just as a wife, long parted from her husband, and, under circumstances that need explanation, yet when he returns, she rushes to meet him with her loving welcome, without waiting for one word of explanation. Suppose she had waited for the explanation before she could speak a kind word. This might savor of the intellect, but certainly it would not do honor to her heart. For her heart confidence, her husband loves her better than ever, and well he may!

You can understand this; and can you not also apply it to your relation to God? God may appear to your view to be capricious; but you know He is not; may appear unjust, but you know He cannot be. Ah, Christian, when you comprehend the fact of God's wider reach of vision, and of His greater love, then you will cry out with Job -- "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." When you have trusted so, think you not that your heart will be as dear to Christ as ever?

II. Let us next consider, what are not, and what are, conditions of heart faith.

- 1. It is not conditioned upon comprehending the facts to be believed. We may know a thing to be a fact, while yet we are entirely unable to explain it. The reasons and the explanations are quite a different thing from the evidence which sustains the fact, and commends it to our belief.
- 2. Let it also be borne in mind that it is not half as necessary to know all the reasons in the case of God's ways as in man's. The ground of the difference is, that we know, in general, that God is always right -- a knowledge which we cannot have in regard to man. Of God, our deepest and most resistless convictions assure us that all is right. Our corresponding convictions in the case of man are far from being irresistible. Yet, even in regard to men, we often find that a conviction of their rectitude, which is far less than irresistible, lends us to trust. How much more should our stronger convictions as to God, lead us evermore to trust in Him!

Again, this heart faith in God does not rest on our ability to prove even that God exists. Many an earnest Christian has never thought of this, any more than of proving his own existence. An irresistible conviction gives him both, without other proof.

But, positively, God must be revealed to your inner being so that you are conscious of His existence and presence. There is not, perhaps, in the universe, a thing of which we can be

more certain than of God's existence. The mind may be more deeply acquainted with God than with any other being or thing. Hence, this heart confidence may be based on God's revelations to the inner soul of man. Such revelations may reach the very highest measure of certainty. I do not mean to imply here that we are not certain of the facts of observation. But this is a stronger assurance and certainty. The mind becomes personally acquainted with God, and is conscious of this direct and positive knowledge.

- 3. A further condition is, that the soul be inwardly drawn to God. In our relations to each other, we are sometimes conscious of a peculiar sympathy, which draws us towards a friend. This fact is a thing of consciousness, of which we may be quite unable to give any explanation. A similar attraction draws us to God, and seems to be a natural condition of the strongest forms of heart faith.
- 4. It is quite essential to heart faith that we have genuine love to God. In the absence of good-will towards God, there never can be this faith of the heart. The wife has no heart faith in her husband, save as she loves him. Her heart must be drawn to him in real love -- else this heart faith will draw back and demand more evidence.

In view of this principle, God takes measure to win our love and draw our hearts to Himself. As human beings do towards each other, so He manifests His deep interests in us -- pours out His blessings on us in lavish profusion, and, in every way, strives to assure us that He is truly our friend. These are His methods to win the confidence of our hearts. When it becomes real to us that we owe everything to God -- our health, gifts, all our comforts -- then we can bear many dark and trying things. Then, we know that God loves us even though He scourge us, just as children know that parents love them, and mean their good, even though they chastise them. Under these broad and general manifestations of love, they confide, even though there be no present manifestations of love. You may remember how Cecil taught his little daughter the meaning of gospel faith. She came to him, one day, with her hands full of little beads, greatly delighted to show them. He said to her calmly -- "You had better throw them all into the fire." She was almost confounded; but, when she saw he was in earnest, she trustfully obeyed and cast them in. After a few days, he brought home for her a casket of jewels. "There, said he, my daughter, you had faith in me the other day, and threw your beads into the fire; that was faith; now I can give you things much more precious. Are these not far better?" So you should always believe in God. He has jewels for those who will believe, and cast away their sins.

Again, I observe, heart faith is unto righteousness -- real obedience. This trustful and affectionate state of heart naturally leads us to obey God. I have often admired the faith manifested by the old Theologian Philosophers who held fast to their confidence in God, despite of the greatest of absurdities. Their faith could laugh at the most absurd principles involved in their philosophy of religious truth. It is a remarkable fact that the greater part of the church have been in their philosophy necessitarians, holding not the freedom, but the bondage of the will; their doctrine being that the will is determined necessarily by the strongest motive. Pres. Edwards held these philosophical views, but despite of them, he believed that God is supremely good. The absurdities of this philosophy did not shake his faith in God. So all the really Old School Theologians hold the absurdities of hyper-

Calvinism, as for example, that God absolutely and supremely controls all the moral actions of all His creatures.

Dr. Beecher, in controversy with Dr. Wilson, some years since, held that obligation implied ability to obey. This Dr. Wilson flatly denied. Whereupon Dr. B. remarked that few men could march up and face such a proposition with winking. It is often the case that men have such heart confidence in God that they will trust Him despite the most flagrant absurdities. There is less superstition in this than I used to suppose, and more faith. Men forget their dogmas and philosophy, and despite of both, love and confide.

Some men have held monstrous doctrines -- even that God is the author of sin and puts forth His divine efficiency to make men sin, as truly as, by His Spirit, to make them holy. This view was held by Dr. Emmons; yet he was eminently a pious man, of childlike, trustful spirit. It is indeed strange how such men could hold these absurdities at all, and scarcely less so, how they could hold them and yet confide sweetly in God. Their heart must have been fixed in this faith by some other influence than that of these monstrous notions in philosophy and theology. For, these views of God, we absolutely know, were contrary to their reason, though not to their reasonings -- a very wide and essential distinction -- which is sometimes overlooked. The intuitive affirmations of their reason were one thing; the points which they reached by their philosophical reasonings, were quite another thing. The former could not lie about God, the latter could. The former laid that sure foundation for heart faith; the latter went to make up their intellectual notions, the absurdities of which, (we notice with admiration,) never seemed to shake their Christian faith. While these reasonings pushed them on into the greatest absurdities, their reason held their faith and piety straight.

- 5. The faith of the heart is proof against all forms of infidelity. Without this nothing is proof. For if men without piety drop the affirmations of their intuitive reason, and then attempt, philosophically, to reason out all the difficulties they meet with, they almost inevitably stumble.
- 6. Heart faith carries one over the manifold mysteries and difficulties of God's providence. In this field there must be difficulties, for no human vision can penetrate to the bottom of God's providential plans and purposes.
- 7. So, also, does this faith of the heart carry one over the mysteries of the atonement. It is indeed curious to notice how the heart gets over all these. It is generally the case that the atonement is accepted by the heart unto salvation, before its philosophy is understood. It was manifestly so with the apostles; so with their hearers; and so, even with those who heard the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Bible says but very little indeed on the point of the philosophy of the atonement.
- 8. It is in no sense unreasonable that God should require us to have such faith in Him. Properly considered, He does not require us to believe what we do not know to be true. He does not ask us to renounce our common sense and exercise a groundless credulity. When we trust His general character and accept certain dark dispensations of providence as doubtless right, what is it that we believe? Not the special reason for this mysterious dispensation, but we believe that,

despite of its dark aspect to us, God's hand in it is both wise and good, and we believe this because we have abundant ground to confide in His general character. It is as if you were to tell me that a known and tried friend of mine had told a lie. I should say, I cannot believe it. I know him too well. But you say -- "Here is the evidence. It looks very dark against him." "Very likely," I reply, "but yet I cannot believe it. There will be some explanation of this. I cannot believe it."

Now I consider myself fully authorized to reject at once all surmises and rumors against my known friend. I am bound to do so, until the evidence against him becomes absolutely conclusive. This is altogether reasonable. How much more so in the case of dark things in God's doings!

For it should be considered that man may deceive us; God never can. We do not know man's heart always, to the very core; and if we did, it may change; what once was true, becomes false. But not so with God; our intuitive convictions affirm that God is always good, and always wise; and, moreover, that there can never be any declension in His love, or any revolution in His character.

- 9. Consequently Christians are often called on to believe God, not only without, but against, present evidence.

Abraham, called out of his home and country, to go into a strange land, obeyed, not knowing whither he went. He might have asked many questions about the reasons; he does not appear to have asked any.

Commanded to offer up Isaac, he might, with apparent propriety, have expostulated earnestly. He might have said, "Lord, that would be murder! It would outrage the natural affection which Thou hast planted in my bosom. It would encourage the heathen around us in their horrid abominations of making their children pass through the fire of Moloch." All this, and more he might have said; but, so far as appears, he said nothing -- save this; "The Lord commands, and I obey. If He pleases He can raise up my Isaac from the dead." So he went on and virtually offered up his son Isaac, and "in a figure, received him again from the dead." And God fixed the seal of his approbation on this act of faith, and held it out before all ages as a model of faith and obedience, despite of darkness and objections.

So Christians are often called to believe without present evidence, other than what comes from their knowledge of God's general character. For a season, God lets everything go against them, yet they believe. Said a woman, passing through great trials, with great confidence in God -- "O Lord, I know Thou art good, for Thou hast shown me this; but, Lord, others do not understand this; they are stumbled at it. Canst Thou not show them so that they shall understand this?"

REMARKS.

1. The demand for reasons often embarrasses our faith. This is one of the tricks of the devil. He would embarrass our faith by telling us we must understand all God's ways before we believe. Yet we ought

to see that this is impossible and unreasonable. Abraham could not see the reasons for God's command to offer Isaac a bloody sacrifice; he might have expostulated; but he did not. The simplicity and beauty of his faith appears all along in this very thing -- that he raised no questions. He had a deeper insight into God's character. He knew too much of God to question His wisdom, or His love. For, a man might understand all the reasons of God's ways, yet this knowledge might do him no good; his heart might rebel even then.

In this light you may see why so much is said about Abraham's faith. It was gloriously trustful and unquestioning! What a model! No wonder God commends it to the admiring imitation of the world!

2. It is indeed true that faith must often go forward in the midst of darkness. Who can read the histories of believing saints, as recorded in Scripture, without seeing that faith often leads the way through trials. It would be but a sorry development of faith, if at every step God's people must know everything before they could trust Him, and must understand all His reasons. Most ample grounds for faith lie in His general character, so that we do not need to understand the special reasons for His particular acts.

3. We are mere infants -- miserably poor students of God's ways. His dealings on every side of us appear to us mysterious. Hence it should be expected that we shall fail to comprehend His reasons, and consequently we must confide in Him without this knowledge. Indeed, just here lies the virtue of faith, that it trusts God on the ground of His general character, while the mind can by no means comprehend His reasons for particular acts. Knowing enough of God to assure us that He must be good, our faith trusts Him, although the special evidence of goodness in particular cases may be wanting.

This is a kind of faith which many do not seem to possess or to understand. Plainly they do not confide in God's dealings.

4. It is manifestly needful that God should train Christians to exercise faith here and now; since in heaven we shall be equally unable to comprehend all His dealings. The holy in heaven will no doubt believe in God; but they must do it by simple faith -- not on the ground of a perfect knowledge of God's plans. What a trial of faith it must have been to the holy in heaven to see sin enter our world! They could see few, perhaps none of the reasons, before the final judgment, and must have fallen back upon the intuitive affirmations of their own minds. The utmost they could say was -- We know God is good and wise; therefore we must wait to see the results, and humbly trust.

5. It is not best for parents to explain everything to their children, and especially, they should not take the ground of requiring nothing of which they cannot explain all the reasons. Some profess to take this ground. It is for many reasons unwise. God does not train His children so.

Faith is really natural to children. Yet some will not believe their children converted until they can be real Theologians. This assumes that they must have all the great facts of the gospel system explained so that they can comprehend their philosophy before they can believe them. Nothing can be further from the truth.

It sometimes happens that those who are converted in childhood become students of theology in more advanced years, and then, getting proud of their philosophy and wisdom, lose their simple faith and relapse into infidelity. No, I do not object to their studying the philosophy of every doctrine up to the limits of human knowledge; but I do object to their casting away their faith in God. For there is no lack of substantial testimony to the great doctrines of the gospel. Their philosophy may stagger the wisest man; but the evidence of their truth ought to satisfy all, and alike the child and the philosopher. Last winter I was struck with this fact -- which I mention because it seems to present one department of the evidences of Christianity in a clear light. One judge of the court said to another -- I come to you with my assertion that I inwardly know Jesus Christ, and as truly and as well as I know you. Can you reject such testimony? What would the people of this State say to you if you rejected such testimony on any other subject? Do you not every day, let men testify to their own experience?" The judge replied, "I cannot answer you."

"Why, then," replied the other, "do you not believe this testimony? I can bring before you thousands who will testify to the same thing."

Again I remark, it is of great use to study the truths of the gospel system theologically and philosophically, for thus you may reach a satisfactory explanation of many things which your heart knew and clave to and would have held fast till the hour of your death. It is a satisfaction to you, however, to see the beautiful harmony of these truths with each other, and with the known laws of mind, and of all just government.

6. Yet Theological students sometimes decline in their piety, and for a reason which it were well for them to understand. One enters upon this study simple hearted and confiding; but, by and by study expands his views; he begins to be charmed with the explanations he is able to give of many things not understood before; becomes opinionated and proud; becomes ashamed of his former simple heart faith, and thus stumbles fearfully if not fatally. If you will hold on with all your simple heart confidence to the immutable love and wisdom of God, all will be well. But it never can be well to put your intellectual philosophy in the place of the simplicity of gospel faith.

Herein is seen one reason why some students do not become pious. They determine that they will understand everything before they become Christians. Of course they are never converted. Quite in point, here, is a case I saw a few years since. Dr. B., an intelligent but not pious man, had a pious wife who was leading her little daughter to Christ. The Dr. seeing this, said to her -- Why do you try to lead that child to Christ? I cannot understand these things myself, although I have been trying to understand them these many years; how then can she? But some days after, as he was riding out alone, he began to reflect on the matter; the truth flashed upon his mind, and he saw that neither of them could understand God unto perfection -- not he anymore than his child; while yet either of them could know enough to believe unto salvation.

Again, gospel faith is voluntary -- a will trust. I recollect a case in my own circle of friends. I could not satisfy my mind about one of them. At length, after long struggling, I said, I will repel these things from my mind, and rule out these difficulties. My friend is honest and right; I will believe it, and will trust him none the less for these slanders. In this I was right.

Towards God this course is always right. It is always right to cast away from your mind all those dark suspicions about Him who can never make mistakes, and who is too good to purpose wrong. I once said to a sister in affliction -- Can you not believe all this is for your good, though you cannot see how it is? She brightened up, saying -- I must believe in God, and I will.

Who of you have this heart faith? Which of you will not commit yourself to Christ? If the thing required were intellectual faith, I could explain to you how it is reached. It must be through searching the evidence in the case. But heart faith must be reached by simple effort -- by a voluntary purpose to trust. Ye who say -- I cannot do this -- Bow your knees before God and commit yourself to His will; say, "O, my Savior! I take Thee at Thy word." This is a simple act of will.

On Offering Praise to God

Lecture IX

December 17, 1856

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Text.--Psa. 50:23: "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me."

Praise is commendation. To praise one, is to commend him.

The text affirms that he who offers praise glorifies God. Let us enquire --

I. What is implied in offering acceptable praise to God?

II. What is it, we next enquire, to glorify God?

I. What is implied in offering acceptable praise to God?

- 1. Of course it implies confidence in Him. We cannot honestly praise Him, unless we have this confidence. And this implies not merely a conviction that He is a good being, but also a state of heart in harmony with this conviction. Suppose Satan were convinced that God is good, and should say so; this saying so could not be acceptable praise, for he does not feel it. He has no corresponding state of heart. No doubt Satan now knows that God is good, and he might confess it with his lips; yet nothing is plainer than that this cannot be acceptable praise. Praise, therefore, implies the confidence of the heart.
- 2. Acceptable praise implies the spirit of worship and adoration. This involves an appreciation

of His goodness and merits. By this, I do not mean that we must appreciate Him perfectly, and with an appreciation equal to His worth, for this would be infinite, and of course utterly beyond our capacity. But I do mean that we should appreciate Him according to our means of knowledge and our capacity. With such an appreciation, we shall feel deeply, and shall honestly mean what we say. It is of no use to tell God coldly what we think of Him. It does no good to talk over His attributes in a prosy way, with no heart in what we say. In acceptable praise, the mind must be deeply in earnest.

- 3. It implies, also, supreme affection for Him. Suppose a man really hated God, and yet would acknowledge His goodness. Would this be offering praise? Certainly not. No amount of mere saying that God is good, can be acceptable praise, unless it breathe sincere regard and affection. It is obvious, moreover, that true praise implies complacency in God's character -- that is -- it implies that you are truly pleased with Him, and cordially approve His character.
- 4. Acceptable praise also implies a sense of dependence on Him as the Benefactor, both of ourselves and of the Universe. For, if we have no sense of our dependence on Him, our hearts will not burst forth with sincere commendation and praise.
- 5. It implies some degree of light in the intellect, coupled also with corresponding love of the heart. We must both know and love. There is such a thing as light without love. But those who have light enough to produce the conviction that God is good, and yet withhold their heart's love, are of all men farthest from real praise. These convictions may be ever so deep, even amounting to agony, yet there can be no praise without love.
- 6. Real praise implies a union of our will with God's will. So long as there is collision and chafing between our will and God's, there can be no praise. If you are fretting against His providence, or against any truth taught in His word, you cannot praise Him. Any want of cordiality precludes acceptable praise. Everything depends on this state of sincere cordiality. You know what it is as between yourself and your friends. You understand it there, and can readily discern its manifestations. The same must exist between your own soul and God before you can offer acceptable praise to Him. You must heartily approve the ways of His providence and the plan of His gospel. Without this cordial approbation of God, there can be no praise; with it, your heart spontaneously praises God.
- 7. Offering acceptable praise implies an abundance of this feeling. It must fill the heart; then, out of the abundance, the mouth will speak, and its full utterances are real praise.

II. What is it, we next enquire, to glorify God?

- 1. You cannot fail to understand that it means to honor and exalt Him.
- 2. Theologians are accustomed to distinguish between God's essential and His declarative glory -- the former denoting His essential character and attributes; the latter, His character as manifested before His creatures. Now, it is very plain that, in the former sense, we cannot exalt God higher than He is already; but, in the latter sense, we can exalt Him. We cannot change His intrinsic character; we can make it more widely and perfectly known. In the latter sense only,

can we be said to glorify God.

- 3. Offering praise to God is a universal duty, binding always, every where and on all. This is true because God always and every where deserves it of all His intelligent creatures.

For proof of this, we readily appeal to the irresistible convictions of every such being. When you have received a favor, do you not feel that you do wrong if you refuse to acknowledge it? Could you think yourself commendable if you refused to honor your parents, supposing them to be good? When you have abused your loving and kind father or mother, can you escape self-reproach? Do you not both know and feel that you have neglected a plain duty, and done them a great wrong? The fact is, that praise in such a case is intrinsically demanded. As regards God, you know that He deserves to be praised. If you neglect it, you do Him great injustice. You know He is worthy of it, and you cannot refuse without the conviction that you withhold it from Him most wickedly.

- 4. It is most injurious to His feelings to withhold the praise that is due to Him. We can judge of this by our own feelings under circumstances somewhat similar. When we have done a friend a real favor, and he refuses to acknowledge it, we feel wounded and grieved. So, also, if others have done us a great favor, and we refuse to acknowledge it, we are conscious of doing them great wrong. Suppose you were persistently to withhold all commendation from your wife. Would you expect her life to be a happy one? Or could you think well of yourself? Or suppose you were never to thank those who watch over you and nurse you when you are sick, would this commend itself to your better judgment and feelings? Indeed, if one simply manifests his good will towards you, do you not feel that you do him wrong if you refuse to acknowledge your reciprocal regard? And must not God be greatly tried when His feelings are so abused -- when those who are infinitely obliged to Him, persistently withhold from Him the praise that is His due? We feel thus when such things are done to us. If we lay ourselves out to do good to others, and they seem not to recognize it at all, we feel it most keenly. Scarce anything wounds the human heart more deeply. These expressions of gratitude are appropriate and every way in accordance with the nature of things.
- 5. Yet, further, the withholding of due praise from God tends to injure His government. For, it should be considered, His government is a moral one, and must be sustained by moral influence. To withhold our praise, is to withhold testimony to His goodness, and this is often equivalent to leaving His character under suspicion. For His established order is to employ His people in revealing Himself to the wicked. He says to them, "Ye are My witnesses." First revealing Himself to them, He depends on them to communicate what they learn of Him to their ungodly neighbors. Suppose they refuse to do so. It amounts, practically, to bearing witness against God. This very neglect virtually proclaims -- I have known God, but I have nothing good to say of Him. You must make your own inference; this is all I have to say. You do not hear me commend God. You must judge for yourself whether I should do so, if I thought He deserved it!

Now, who does not see that, if this took place between a son and his father, this very silence would be a terrible stab? Who could bear it? When Christians take this course towards God, must it not tend naturally to injure His interests among men? If you, young

men, were never to speak well of your father, would you not greatly detract from his influence? If you wished to sustain and establish his influence, could you hope to do it withholding all due commendation? Suppose you should never speak well of him; could you hope, in this way, to honor him?

- 6. In fact, to commend God, is the way to extend His influence greatly. This is its natural influence. Consequently, to withhold praise, must be an awful sin against God and against His kingdom. Persisting in this sin, do you not deserve to be denied all further gifts? If you will not praise God, why should He continue to load you with His benefits?

The offering of praise to God is important for its bearing,

(1.) *Upon God;*

(2.) *Upon ourselves;*

(3.) *Upon others.*

- **(1.) As towards God.**

We have seen that it is and ought to be most grateful to His feelings. We judge so, in part from our own feelings under similar circumstances. Scarcely anything is more grateful to our feelings than to be commended where we deserve it. If a student has done well, it does him good to commend him for it. I have seen the tears gather in the eye of those who come before the congregation to receive their diploma when allusion is made to their good behavior, and to their faithful discharge of their duties as students. On the other hand, the utter withholding of all commendation would be sad. You would feel the lack of justice in it.

In the application of this point to God, men are prone to overlook the fact that God's susceptibilities are infinite, and that, consequently, He must feel far more acutely than any other being can. All is right in His character. If He were insensible to praise, it would be a great defect in Him. We could not approve His character if He were regardless of the esteem in which His creatures hold Him. For, this would be equivalent to being regardless of their happiness.

Hence, the praises of heaven are not only useful to those who offer them, but are grateful to Him to whom they are offered. They aid Him in carrying out His purposes of love, because they lead His creatures to a better appreciation of His character and works. If it be useful to an earthly monarch to have his subjects speak well of him, how much more so to God!

Make the case our own. How would you increase my usefulness? Suppose you were to do as a friend of mine did many years ago, when I was young in the ministry. I had begun to preach in a place; the Spirit of the Lord came

among us with power; but the adversary, true to his usual instincts, began to circulate all sorts of false and foul stories about me and my former labors. This friend came in just at that moment, and denounced those false stories, told them what he knew of me, and showed them that these rumors were malicious slanders, gotten up to injure especially the work of God. These efforts of my friend were greatly blessed.

God's influence in the universe depends greatly on the praise offered to Him by His people, and by all who know Him. This praise is the more effective for good because where sin goes, there goes unbelief, and a want of confidence in God. The praises of His people bear a direct testimony against this wicked withdrawal of confidence from God. Then, let us never overlook the fact that God's influence is augmented by our testimony to His goodness.

o **(2.) On the importance of praise to ourselves let us consider,**

- 1. It is impossible to be in a spiritual state without praising God. Praise cultivates spirituality. It is indispensable as a means of changing us into the same image as our Savior bears. While we praise, we are insensibly transformed into the same image. This effect is in harmony with a known law of mind. The things we admire, we unconsciously imitate. Hence, the study of God's excellencies of character and conduct, serve to assimilate us to those excellencies. Consequently, nothing tends more powerfully to promote and establish our sanctification than praise.
- 2. Praise increases our usefulness, and is altogether essential to it. Not having the spirit of praise, a man can do little good, whatever else he may have. Some Christians you know walk mournfully all their days. They live on the shady, not the sunny, side of life; but they need never expect to convert sinners so. David said -- "Restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." So long as he was "writing bitter things against himself" -- "his bones waxing old through his roaring all the day," he could not convert sinners. Let it be understood, then, that this spirit and these acts of praise are essential to our success in winning souls to God.
- 3. Praise is essential to our own happiness, and almost constitutes its chief element. Praise is the great employment of the holy in heaven, and no doubt constitutes the chief means of their blessedness. They have such a sense of His goodness and lovingkindness and also of His purity -- indeed, this is all but one generic idea, holiness; they have such views of His holiness, they cannot but praise and adore. Wherever in scripture you catch a glimpse of heaven, you hear them crying -- "holy, holy, HOLY, Lord God Almighty!" Why should not they shout His praises! What else should you expect?

The spirit of praise in us is essential to our fitness for heaven. Without it, there could be no sympathy between our spirit and theirs. I have sometimes thought that old professors would

object to heaven -- there is so much enthusiasm there!

- 4. Praise greatly opens the way for God to manifest Himself to His people. You may see this idea beautifully brought out in Psalm 67. "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

Another striking illustration of the same truth we read in the closing verses of 2 Chron. 5 -- a passage which details the services performed at the solemn dedication of the temple. Of this the historian says -- "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth forever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."

No doubt your own observation, and I hope also, your experience has given you instances in which praise has seemed to bring down great blessings upon the people. When the spirit of praise bursts forth, then the Lord Himself breaks forth in His glorious mercy.

○ **(3.) Our praises of God is also important to others.**

I could not but remark in the revival at Rochester, last winter, that the spirit of praise seemed to be exceedingly sincere and earnest. It was so prominent that it arrested the attention of the wicked, and they said -- "How strange this is! How little have we ever thought of God's goodness before!" It convicted them of the sin of ingratitude, and of their own sins in this respect. When they heard Christians bursting forth in heart-felt utterances of praise, adoring God for all His mercy to themselves, it contrasted so widely with their own state of mind, they could not help seeing their own dreadful guilt against God. They saw themselves unfit for heaven. They knew then that the spirit of heaven was not in them, and that they must be converted to God ere they could hope to see heaven. The very countenance of Christians beaming with the joy of praise, struck home to many this conviction. Such a glow of heavenly praise, said they, on their very faces, gave us a new idea of heaven. That, said they, must be the spirit of heaven; we have it not; but we must have it! I recollect the case of one lady in R. converted in a striking manner, after her friends had been long time praying for her. Her countenance was so resplendent that none could see her without an impression that this is the halo of heaven, beaming on her face. It was truly wonderful! This brought a new conviction on the minds of sinners. Never before had they such an impression of the value of praise and of Christian joy, as

related to the conviction and conversion of sinners. When they saw the contrast between one under conviction, and the same person when converted, it made them feel that they, too, must find Christ.

But when they see only a legal religion, full of mourning and sadness, they are repelled. When they see the spirit of praise bursting all its banks like Jordan in harvest, and overflowing all the soul, they instinctively say -- "That is good! That is worth having!" This gives them the sunny side of religion. Not that religion itself has any other than sunny sides; but the way thither through conviction, and the return to it after backslidings, may be very unlike a sunny side. These sometimes become a great stumbling block to wicked men.

Hence, praise is one of the highest means of influence over the wicked. Sometimes we fail to do good by prayer, and accomplish nothing till we turn our souls to praise.

REMARKS.

1. Sinners, remaining such, cannot praise God. Neither can legalists, nor back-sliders, nor those who are in spiritual bondage.
2. Many ministers present only the shady side of religion. Indeed, they have not been on the sunny side themselves, and therefore know too little about it to preach of it to any purpose. The same is true of many professors of religion. Their whole experience is that of conviction and complaint. They never seem to break forth in the spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Consequently they never draw sinners to Christ.
3. Some entire churches are in this very state. O, how grievously do they misrepresent God and religion! Of course they do but very little good. They have not the true spirit of God's children. Without the spirit of praise, how can they hope to glorify God?
4. No one glorifies God in his life who does not praise God. Indeed, our lives dishonor God unless we praise Him.
5. We see why there is so much more prayer in the church than praise. We dwell more on what we lack than on what we have. This is a great evil among us, that we should forget what we have received, and thus dishonor and displease God. Another reason for so little praise in our times, is that people fear it will look like boasting to stand up and testify for God and His goodness. The case of a man, whom I saw recently in a revival, is in point here. He had been away from the place on business, and failed to appreciate the spirit that pervaded the people there. When he came back he would often whisper to me -- "There seems to be a spirit of boasting here." But, curiously, after he had been there awhile, he too, caught the spirit of praise, and would pour forth his praises with loud voice and gushing tears. But after being absent awhile and returning, his first impressions were as before; and only when the spirit of praise filled his own soul did he appreciate the feelings of the brethren in their praise of Almighty God.

6. Another reason is, we overlook the importance and use of praise. Prayer we understand better. Less is thought and felt of the duty of praise.

Praise is one of the great instruments by which God answers our prayers. When we have prayed for souls, and then the spirit of praise comes upon us, and our souls break forth in thanksgiving, lo, then our God comes! I think now of the case of a father who had long prayed for his children. At last, the spirit of praise came upon him with great power, and then God answered his prayers in the conversion of his children.

Why should not we have more meetings for praise? I have often thought that our meetings on Thanksgiving day should suggest the wisdom of having more meetings of the same sort, in which each one should have opportunity to express his own personal grounds for thanksgiving and praise, and call on his brethren to join him in thanksgiving. On such occasions, how often have we said -- Did not our hearts burn within us while we heard one and another recount the mercies of the Lord toward himself, and saw him pour out the testimony of a full heart in grateful tears? Why do we not continue these meetings, and have stated seasons for praise as well as prayer -- praise-meetings, no less than prayer meetings. If we were to have a meeting for praise and recount the acts of Divine goodness towards us and ours, surely it would bless us more than anything else. Let those who can praise bear witness to the goodness of their God!

O, let it be understood by all and never forgotten, that we are most ungrateful to God when we restrain praise. Shall we go on begging and begging, and never thank God for what we have? Can it be a less sin to restrain praise than to restrain prayer?

7. The absence of praise denotes a lack of faith. The filial, trustful spirit bears a deep sympathy with praise. And where the filial spirit is not, praise is uncongenial. I have often been struck with this, that those who have only a spirit of agony and no praise, are not wont to prevail greatly in prayer.

Those who cannot sympathize with praise are not saved; they have not the spirit of heaven. You who are in sin -- what could you do in heaven? You who have no heart for praise, what would you do in heaven? You could have no sympathy with its employments, or its joy, and you would have no heart to stay in such society and amid such sympathies! None can be there but such as love to glorify God, and God is to be glorified pre-eminently by praise.

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)*.

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