

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Smithers:

Like the prophet Jeremiah, Charles G. Finney was anointed of God to "root out" and to "plant" in the Lord's vineyard, (Jer. 1:10). He was a man of intense prayer, purity and passion. "Emptied of self, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. His sermons were chain lightning, flashing conviction into the hearts of the stoutest skeptics. Simple as a child in his utterances, he sometimes startled his hearers by his unique prayers."

He could thunder the judgments of God upon sin with great liberty and power and then offer the mercy of the gospel with tenderness and tears. Without question he was a prophetic voice to 19th century America. His ministry consistently produced revivals, even in areas considered hardened and unreceptive to the gospel. Finney's autobiography is filled with accounts of powerful manifestations of the Spirit. On one occasion when Finney was preaching in a school house, "suddenly an awful solemnity fell upon the assembly and the congregation fell from their seats, crying for mercy." Finney said, "If I had had a sword in each hand I could not have cut them off as fast as they fell. I think the whole congregation was on their knees or prostrated in two minutes." The crying and weeping of the people was so loud that Finney's exhortation of Christ's mercy could not even be heard.

"Finney seemed so anointed with the Holy Spirit that people were often brought under conviction of sin just by looking at him. When holding meetings at Utica, New York, he visited a large factory. At the sight of him one of the workers, and then another, and then another broke down and wept under a sense of their sins, and finally so many were sobbing and weeping that the machinery had to be stopped while Finney pointed them to Christ."

Finney seems to have had the power of impressing the conscience of men with the necessity of holy living in such a manner as produced lasting results. "Over eighty-five in every hundred persons professing conversion to Christ in Finney's meetings remained true to God. Whereas seventy percent of those professing Christ in meetings of even so great an evangelist as Moody afterward became backsliders."

Such results were the fruit of hours and hours of prayer. It was not Finney's prayers alone that secured such heaven sent revivals. Finney's was supported by the prayers of two of God's hidden treasures. It was the hidden, yet powerful intercessions of "Father Nash" and Abel Clary that laid the ground work for these mighty moves of God. "Abel Clary was converted about the same time as Finney, and was licensed to preach also, but he had such a burden of prayer that he could not preach much. His whole time and strength was given to prayer. He would writhe and groan in agony, unable to stand under the weight." "After Clary's death Finney discovered Clary's prayer journal. Finney found in the exact order of the burden laid upon Clary's heart was the order of blessing poured upon his ministry."

Father Nash lived a life of almost continual intercession. "He joined himself with Finney, kept a prayer list and was no doubt the secret of much of Finney's marvelous success. He did not preach and often did not go to the meetings, but remained in his room, or in the woods, wrestling with God in mighty prayer. Often before daybreak people could hear Father Nash for half a mile or more in the woods, or in a church praying, and the sense of God's presence was overwhelming."

The Church must do more than esteem the history of men like Charles Finney, Father Nash and Able Clary. If we are going to experience revival we must repent and practice the truths they declared; truths of a holy and pure life; truths of hidden intercession and an uncompromising love for Jesus!