

Charles G. Finney:

TEXT--James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God."

In continuation of this subject, I will,

III. Notice various delusions practiced by many upon themselves.

1. They confound desire with will. And because they desire to be reconciled to God, to give up their sins, to be pious, and such like things, they suppose themselves to be willing; not considering, that willingness and desire are very different things, and that men often desire, and strongly desire, that which upon the whole they are very unwilling should occur. Sinners desire to be Christians, on a great many accounts; but still they are unwilling to forsake all and follow Christ. Multitudes are deceiving themselves in regard to the very foundation of their moral character, by thus confounding desire with will. And when you ask them, whether they are right, whether they are deeply engaged in the service of God? They reply--'I desire to be; I am willing to do any thing; but I am a poor creature, and cannot do as well as I would.' Then fleeing to the 7th of Romans, they suppose themselves exactly to coincide with Paul, in their experience; whom they understand in that chapter to say, that "when I would (am willing to) do good evil is present with me." Whereas in truth it should have been rendered, "when I desire to do good evil is present with me; so that the good which I desire to do I do not, and the evil which I desire to avoid, that I do." The case supposed by the Apostle, in this very chapter, is one in which the soul is in bondage to sin, where conviction is fastened upon the mind, and strong desires for deliverance excited, but where the will is still under the dominion of sin.

2. Many deceive themselves, by confounding emotion with the heart or will. Emotions, or what are commonly called feelings, are involuntary states of mind, and are necessarily excited in the sensibility whenever the thoughts are intensely occupied with those considerations which are calculated in their nature to produce such feelings. Now these feelings or emotions are very commonly understood to be identical with the heart. Whereas they are no more the heart than the conscience is the heart. And their existence is no more certain evidence of piety than the convictions and remonstrances of conscience are evidences of piety. Any kind or degree of emotion may exist in the mind, while the heart is entirely selfish. Submission belongs, as I have already said, to the will, or heart. And when the emotions are confounded with the heart there is a ruinous delusion. And this accounts for the fact that so many persons mistake mere excitement for religion. While in all their business transactions they are supremely selfish, they nevertheless can maintain a hope of eternal life. Under strongly exciting preaching, circumstances, or measures, they find themselves strongly excited, and exercised with deep emotion. They call these feelings the feelings of their heart, and thus take it for granted, that their hearts are changed; while all their lives demonstrate, that their hearts are supremely selfish.

3. They mistake conviction, remorse, and emotions of sorrow, for that repentance that forsakes sin. Repentance, let it be understood, belongs to the will, and emotions of sorrow for sin, are a consequence of repentance, and do by no means constitute it. Indeed, emotions of sorrow for sin may and often do exist in a high degree, without repentance, or without that change of will that actually rejects or forsakes sin. It should be always understood, that a truly penitent soul cannot live in sin; that is, that it is naturally impossible for a truly penitent soul to live in sin. John says, "he that is born of God cannot sin, because his seed remaineth in him." Now by this seed is not meant some root or kernel, but it represents the voluntary attitude of the will. Will controls the thoughts. It controls the outward actions. Repentance, let it be understood, is a fixed choice, preference, or intention of the mind, and consequently controls the volitions that direct the thoughts and actions. Suppose a man chooses or intends to go to Europe. This choice or intention will beget and be the cause of all those volitions that move the muscles, direct the thoughts, and use all the means necessary for the accomplishment of the intended end. Now if the will or heart is right with God--if a man is in a state of penitence, it is as impossible that he should live in sin, as that he should act against his will. By this I do not mean, that no regenerate soul can fall under the power of temptation, and at no time commit a sin; for a single volition, or even a series of volitions may, under the pressure of temptation, be put forth by the mind which are inconsistent with the healthy or ruling choice or preference of the mind. But in all such cases, as soon as the pressure of temptation is removed, if the heart is truly regenerate, as soon as the thoughts cease to be diverted from the great object or end which is supremely aimed at by the mind, the whole being will at once come back under the influence of the heart, or supreme choice and intention of the mind. Persons are often convicted, experience the deep agonies of remorse, deeply regret their having sinned, on a great many accounts, and yet, after all, know nothing of that repentance which is unto life, or of that state of submission to God, that puts and

keeps the soul strongly on its guard against iniquity.

4. Many mistake assent and conviction for faith. Overlooking the fact, that faith belongs to the will, they suppose themselves to believe, while, as a matter of fact, they do not practically confide. Now faith is a practical confidence in God. It is of course a practical confidence, because it is the confidence of the heart. To call that faith which does not produce a corresponding practice is absurd. It is no more an act of faith, than an act of vision is an act of faith. The mere apprehension of truth by the intellect, the mere conviction of the understanding, is just as distinct from faith as an act of vision is distinct from the effect of an act of vision. I see a house on fire; but this is not faith, it is mere perception. I perceive, know, and am convinced, that the house is on fire; but this is not faith. Faith is that act of the mind which is produced by this perception. It is an act of will. In perceiving this truth, the mind goes into action. It puts forth choice, volition, and the whole being into motion, to extinguish the flames, or to rescue the inmates of the house. Just so, when the great truths of religion are perceived by the mind, the mind apprehends and knows these things to be true. But this is an involuntary state of mind. It is not confidence. It is mere apprehension, or knowledge. It may be the occasion of confidence, or faith, or it may not. Faith is that act of the will, that choice, that confidence and trust, which results from the intellectual apprehension of truth; but does not consist in this apprehension. Now to confound conviction with that act of the will or heart which constitutes faith, is a ruinous mistake. I say again, that faith always consists in a practical confidence; because it is an act of will, which of course and of necessity produces corresponding practice.

5. Many confound a foolish and wicked Antinomian state of mind with true submission. They have such absurd views of the sovereignty and agency of God, as to think it unnecessary to make any efforts to accomplish their own salvation, or the salvation of others. They suppose themselves to be truly submissive in respect to the salvation of their own children, while they make no more efforts to bring about their conversion or sanctification, than they would to produce a storm of thunder.

6. Many mistake a legal and outward reformation for religion.

7. Others take it for granted, that the standard notions of the Church, in respect to what constitutes true religion is religion indeed. Especially do they regard the notions of their particular denomination as correct; and looking away from the Bible, they call that religion which accords with the views of their church. And still, more especially, do they think that religion, described by their minister as being such. Now suppose that a minister had mistaken conviction for conversion, as thousands of professors of religion, and as, no doubt, many ministers really do. In his preaching he would naturally be guided very much by his own experience of what religion is. He would describe that as religion, which he himself had experienced. Whenever any persons in his congregation came into the state of mind in which he is himself, he thinks them converted, and encourages their uniting with the church. Both he and they, thinking themselves converted, remain securely entrenched under their delusions. But upon this model the Church is formed, with these ruinous notions of what true religion is. And out of it young men are sent to prepare for ministry, who also have confounded conviction with conversion. And they form and gather churches, having the same notions of what religion is. Thus this delusion extends itself, until great multitudes of churches and ministers have radically defective views, and consequently a radically defective experience. All such ministers, and such professors of religion, would think it highly censorious and uncharitable, of course, for any one to intimate that they were not truly converted. Now that such is the real fact, at least in some large branches of the Christian Church, cannot be reasonably disputed or doubted; and the longer I live, the more ripe and painful is my conviction, that great numbers of ministers have mistaken conviction, and a mere legal religion, for conversion and the religion of the gospel.

8. Many deceive themselves, by ascribing to benevolence or true religion what is in fact the result of other and radically different principals of action. Some ascribe to true benevolence, that which is the result merely of constitutional temperament. Others ascribe that to benevolence, which is the result of the influence of public sentiment, a regard to their own reputation. They do many things, or omit many things, from a regard to their own reputation, which should have been done or omitted from pure benevolence alone. And without questioning themselves in respect to what the motive is, under whose influence they are acting, they take it for granted that it is real religion; because outwardly it is in conformity with the principle of benevolence. Or, they ascribe to benevolence and true religion in the heart, those duties that are performed under the influence of hope and fear, or merely legal considerations. In short, they deceive themselves; because they are too careless, or too uncandid to thoroughly discriminate between those things that are the undoubted and conscious results of benevolence, and those things that result from other and opposite principles.

9. Others still, deceive themselves, by confounding a boisterous, legal, bitter zeal, with true religion. They forget, that nothing is true religion but love and its fruits. They mistake a vociferous and highly excited state of

mind, for that sweet, composed, heavenly, and yet energetic love that constitutes the true religion of the Bible. Such persons are very apt to confound Christian faithfulness with a very harsh and vituperative manner of reproof and rebuking sin. Instead of manifesting a deep disposition to instruct and reclaim self-deceivers and backsliders, they seem to think themselves doing God service in using such language as is only used in inspiration, when addressing those who are the most hardened reprobates and blasphemers.

10. Many deceive themselves by saying, that they are willing to do any thing, when in fact they really do nothing. They say they are willing to give up sin; yet, as a matter of fact, they do not give it up. They are willing to forsake all and follow Christ, and yet really do forsake nothing to follow Him. This is a deep delusion. I have more than once said, and it should be for ever remembered, that as the will is so the conduct is, and that to will is the very thing which God requires. It is a principle in the government of God, that "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." This is always true, under the government of God. To will the rejection of sin is the rejection of it. To will obedience to Christ, is obedience to Christ. In other words, to will what Christ requires, is to do what He requires; as the will and the action consequent upon the will are connected by a natural necessity. Many are deceiving themselves, by saying and thinking that they are willing, but are unable to obey God, when the fact is, that they are able enough, but entirely unwilling to do his will.

11. Others deceive themselves, by supposing themselves to be pious, when in fact they do not possess even common honesty. They have been guilty of lying, fraud, and multitudes of sins, which have injured their neighbors; and yet they refuse to make confession and restitution. Even when they are in what they call their best frames of mind, they are overreaching and selfish in their dealings, and will perhaps defraud the Post-Office, by sending or receiving double letters, and paying single postage, or take any other selfish and unlawful means to promote their own interest, when they have the prospect of concealment and impunity.

#### IV. Without true submission salvation is naturally impossible.

1. Because God must and will govern the universe. This He will do, whether you consent to it or not. If He governs without your consent, and contrary to your will, you are of course rendered miserable by it; for his government will continually conflict with your own desires and intentions; and being in direct opposition to your will, it will be a source of continual vexation and annoyance to you,[]

2. He will dispose of you for his own glory, whether you consent or not. Now if this conduct on his part, is not consented to by you--if his disposal of you is not that which you would make of yourself, you are rendered miserable by it of course. You cannot possibly be happy, only as your will perfectly coincides with his in relation to the disposal that is to be made of you. Unless it be the supreme choice and delight of your soul, to be disposed of for his glory, in whatever world it may fix your destiny, and under what circumstances soever your lot may be cast, you are not and cannot be happy under his government. If, on the contrary, you have a will of your own, and would make a different disposal of yourself, property, time, talents, or any thing which you possess, than that which is agreeable to the will of God, you are of course rendered wretched, by having your own feelings crossed, by one whom you cannot resist. You see, then, that it is naturally impossible for you to be saved, any farther than you are truly submissive to God.

3. It is naturally impossible that you should have peace, except your will is completely subdued to the will of God. When you become so dead to your own interests as to have no will of your own, except that the will of God should be done, then, and not till then, can your "peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." Peace is opposed to war. War is a state of conflict. Every moral being, whose will is not in entire conformity with the will of God, is striving with his Maker. And it is certainly and naturally impossible that you should have peace, while your will is in a state of conflict with the will of God. He cannot yield to you. He ought not to do so. His will is supremely good, and should not be yielded up to gratify any being in the universe. Therefore, you must yield. Your will must be entirely subdued. You must come into such a state as to feel supreme complacency and delight in the will of God, not only in all other things, but in his will as it respects yourself, or your salvation is for ever and naturally impossible. God cannot possibly save you in any other way.

4. God has no right to save you, unless you are, in all things, submissive to his will. I have already said, that his will is supremely good. For this very reason--He is bound to insist, that every moral being shall be entirely conformed to his will. In just so far, then, as you resist his will, He is bound to treat you as the enemy of the universe.

5. He cannot, by any possibility, save you, only as you are entirely conformed to his will. What is salvation? If salvation implies holiness and happiness, then it is self-evident, that He is entirely unable to save you in any

other way, than by your being entirely conformed to his will. Suppose He should change his will, and for the sake of gratifying you, and to avoid a conflict between your will and his own, suppose he should submit to you, instead of your submitting to Him. This would do you no good; but would ruin Him and yourself too. The laws of his being would remain for ever the same; and He has no power to change them. He cannot by any possibility be happy any farther than He conforms to the laws of his own being. Supreme and universal benevolence, is in entire conformity with the laws of his being, and therefore naturally and necessarily constitutes his happiness. You are moral agents. If God should so alter your nature as to destroy your moral agency, He would render it impossible for you to be holy, or morally happy. But without a change in your very nature, happiness to you is as naturally impossible, without holiness, as it is to God. The fact is, there is but one possible rule of conduct, conformity to which can make a moral being happy, and that is the law of perfect and universal benevolence. As, therefore, God is love, or benevolence, it is absurd to say, that He can render a moral being happy, only so far as he is holy. For holiness is nothing else than exact conformity of heart and life to the nature and relations of moral beings.

**V. With true submission salvation is naturally inevitable.**

1. Because, let God do what He will with you, you cannot but be happy, if you are submissive. Let it be remembered, that submission is not a mere negative state of mind. It is by no means a passive state of the will. It is an active, joyful, supreme acquiescence and delight in the will of God. If, therefore, you are in a state of true submission to God, you are supremely pleased and delighted with whatever disposition God shall make of you and are therefore happy of course; whether in heaven or in hell, whether in heathen or in Christian lands, whether poor or rich, whether sick or in health. In whatever circumstances you may be, if you are truly submissive, your "peace is as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." You are supremely blessed, because supremely pleased, gratified, and delighted, with the will and providence of God respecting you. Now what is this but salvation? What other idea can you form of salvation, than what is implied in this state of mind?

2. Because, whatever God does, or may do, would be just as you would have it, in all respects. If He should see it to be his duty to send you to hell, and certainly He will never send you there, unless He sees it to be his bounden duty to do so, this would be just as you would have it, and the very place which you would select for yourself, if left to your own choice in view of all the circumstances of the case. If you believed it to be God's duty to send you there, you would feel it to be your duty to consent to go there. If He should see that the interests of the universe demanded, and could be better promoted, by making you a monument of his justice than in any other way, and that, therefore, this would be the most economical disposition that He could make of you--that by sending you to hell, He could accomplish a greater good than by making any other disposition of you, this is the very election which you yourself would make, if in a state of entire submission to God.

3. If then salvation consists in holiness and happiness, true submission will put you in actual possession of salvation in any world. So that God Himself could not prevent your happiness, were you truly submissive to Him, although you were in the depths of hell. For even there you would shout forth his praise, for putting you there, and would be supremely delighted that you were in circumstances, in which you would be of the greatest possible service to the universe. Now, if to do good is your delight--if truly and perfectly benevolent, so that you find it more blessed to give than to receive--if truly or supremely desirous to do the utmost good in your power, put you in any possible circumstances, in any possible world, with the knowledge that you are now in circumstances to do the greatest possible good that can be done by you, and you are supremely blessed, delighted, yea, supremely gratified, to be just in those circumstances. Talk then of making you miserable! Why, it is for ever naturally impossible, while you remain in that state of mind. Happiness is a state of mind. All happiness and all misery belong to the mind, and are the natural and necessary result of conformity or non-conformity to the laws of our being. When in all things we are submissive to God, the whole machinery of our minds works with a most divine sweetness, like an excellent machine, in which there is no friction, no jarring; but all is exquisitely balanced, and a most divine sweetness is shed over all the soul, in its harmonious results. It is like a sweet instrument, so exquisitely tuned and touched with such divine skill, that it breathes the very harmony of heaven. The mind, in a state of entire submission to God, not only harmonizes in all its own movements, but it also entirely harmonizes with the workings of all the machinery in the universe. God's mind, government, plans, and the minds of all holy beings, work together, with the most divine and exquisite harmony, whenever each mind exactly keeps its place; and the law of order is so fully realized, that there is not a point of friction, a note of discord, among all the holy minds in the universe. Why, we read of music in heaven. Do you suppose we shall need instruments there to create our music and feast us with their harmonies? Why, the true idea of music is this very harmony of mind with mind, of which I am speaking. Mind is so constituted, that when all its powers harmonize in action, and when all holy minds act precisely in accordance with their nature, it produces of necessity a universal harmony, a universal sweetness, and a ravishing delight, that needs



not instruments and audible sounds to enable the mind to realize that which is intended by the music of heaven. Universal submission to God, is universal harmony, while on the other hand, opposition to the will of God is the friction and discord of the soul. There is an infernal grating, mutiny, and rebellion, of the mind, which naturally and necessarily produces misery. And while a holy soul is like an exquisite instrument that breathes forth nothing but the harmonies of heaven, a sinful soul is like a wretched discordant and infernal instrument, whose keys are touched with a diabolical agency, and groaning forth the very dissonance of hell.

#### REMARKS.

1. There is no submission any farther than there is true peace and happiness. If this is true, and certainly it is self-evident, how little submission is there in the world! If all the unhappiness, vexation, and misery of earth, is owing to a want of true submission to God, then there is certainly very little true submission.

2. A submissive soul can know what it is to agonize in prayer, and can know the pain of struggling with temptation; but these are not at all inconsistent with perfect peace in God, and with that happiness that is the natural result of holiness; because this agony in prayer, and this painful struggle with temptation, are only emotions of the mind, and not at all inconsistent with the deep repose of the will in God. But, on the contrary, are evidences that the will is in a state of true submission to God. For, if the will were not in a state of submission to God, this earnest resistance would not be made to temptation. Nor would there be an agonizing struggle in the soul for the salvation of sinners.

3. No man has salvation, therefore, who is not really saved; that is--any farther than his will is subdued to the will of God. In this salvation consists; and it is in vain to talk about salvation, while that in which it consists is overlooked. Many persons entertain the hope of salvation, who self-evidently are not saved, and who, so far as human observation can go, are not likely to be saved. They are continually fretted and annoyed by the providences of God, and are never happy any farther than the providence of God favors their selfish schemes. Every thing else but vexes and displeases them. If the weather is not just as they would have it--if their business operations do not go just so as to favor their own interests--if their health and the health of their families are not in accordance with their selfish views and aims, they are rendered miserable, by what they call adverse providences of God. In short, the fact is, they have a will of their own. They have interests of their own. They have aims and ends, upon the accomplishment of which their happiness is dependent. If God's providence favors them in these respects, they are happy, and think they enjoy religion. But if otherwise, they are miserable, and think themselves to be highly virtuous if they do not go into downright open rebellion against God. They understand submission to mean nothing more than the absence of murmuring, complaining, and accusing God of wrong; and do not understand, that submission implies a delightful acquiescence, a sweet yielding, and delightful choosing, that in all respects the will of God should be done. Now it is manifest, that such persons understand salvation to consist more in a change of place, than in a change of mind--that to be taken to heaven, is to be saved--that to be pardoned is to have eternal life. But certainly this is an infinitely dreadful mistake. Heaven is a state of mind, and may be enjoyed in any world. Hence the saints, or truly submissive souls, are represented as already being in the enjoyment of eternal life. Hell, also, is a state of mind; and it does not require a change of place, to give the wicked a foretaste of the pains of hell. Why, then, talk of salvation, when you are not saved? Why talk of happiness, while you are not holy? Why hope for heaven, while you have the spirit of hell?

4. An unsubdued will is conclusive evidence of an impenitent heart; or, to speak properly, I should say, an unsubdued will is nothing else than an impenitent heart. True submission and penitence, in a sinner, are the same thing. Now there are multitudes of professors of religion, who of course profess to be penitent, while at the same time, they continually manifest a very unsubdued will. They are not submissive either to God or man. They sometimes have emotions of sorrow. They weep and pray, and confess their sins; but to yield up their own will is out of the question. They know not what submission of will is. They are kept almost in a constant state of fermentation, rasping excitement, and distress, by the providence of God, and yet suppose themselves to be penitent. What oceans of delusion exist among professors of religion upon this subject!

5. This subject shows the immense importance of teaching children, at a very early period, lessons of true and unconditional submission to parental authority. Parents should remember, that they stand to very young children in the place of God. They should lay the hand of parental authority and influence upon the will at a very early period. If their will is not early subdued, it is not likely to be subdued at all. If unconditional and sweet submission to parental authority be not early learned, it will never be learned. And if submission to parental influence be not learned, it is almost certain, that no true submission to God or man will ever be attained. I have witnessed a great many cases of protracted seriousness and distress of mind on religious subjects, when, after all, there was not, and I fear is never like to be any thing of the peace and sweetness of unconditional submission to the will of God. On inquiry, I believe that I have found it to be universally true, that lessons of

submission have never been learned by such persons, in early childhood.

6. You can see from this subject, how to account for the dealings of God with many persons. They are almost continually in a course of sore discipline. They are smitten, stripe upon stripe. Now in such cases we may rest assured, that there is some good reason for this, as "God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Under such chastisements, we often hear persons saying, that they cannot understand why they should be thus dealt with. They seem to think there is something very mysterious in God's dealings with them, and are ready to say, 'What have I done, that I should be treated thus.' Now this state of mind at once reveals the reason, and shows the necessity of such dealings on the part of God. He sees that the will is not subdued; and if you want any other reason for his dealings, than that this course of providence is agreeable to his will, this is itself a sufficient reason why he should cross and disappoint you. It is indispensable to your salvation, that you should be supremely pleased with whatever is agreeable to his will. Now whatever his providence towards you may be, if you are not supremely pleased with it, if you ask for any other reason, why He has dealt so with you, than that so it has seemed good in his sight, this shows, that you are not submissive; that you have not entire confidence in his benevolence and wisdom; and that, therefore, He must give you the reasons of his conduct, before you will fully acquiesce in what He does. This demonstrates the necessity of crossing and re-crossing your path, until you will submit. God can never make you understand all the reasons for his conduct; and unless you have sufficient confidence in Him, and are sufficiently submissive to his will, to be happy in what He does; until you can know and apprehend the reasons for his conduct--you need to be, and must be chastised, until you unconditionally submit, or else be given up and sent to hell.

7. From this subject you may see, how great a blessing it is to be chastised of God, until we do submit, and that we ought most devoutly to beseech God not to spare us until our submission is perfect.

8. You see from this subject, what to think of sinners and backsliders, who live and prosper, without providential chastisements. "Whom I love I rebuke and chasten," says Christ. "If ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." If then you are without chastisement, especially if you do not live and walk with God, do not infer, from your temporal prosperity, that God approves of your course of life, or that you are the favorite of heaven. But on the contrary, you have reason to fear, that you are given up of God; that God has abandoned you to your own ways, and left you to fill up the measure of your iniquity.

9. You see from this subject, the indispensable necessity of thorough discrimination in respect to what does and what does not constitute true Christian submission. Some persons have seemed to suppose, that true Christian submission consisted in a kind of dreamy, heartless indifference to what they call the mysterious sovereignty of God. They suppose that submission respects fore-ordination and decrees; and seem to have no idea, that true submission consists in voluntary conformity to the revealed will of God. This class of persons are never for making any efforts, to save and sanctify the souls of men. They think this is to be left with the sovereignty of God, and that submission respects rather the unrevealed, than the revealed will of God. Now it is impossible that we should submit to the unrevealed will of God, for the obvious reason, that we do not know what it is, and therefore cannot possibly submit to it. It is, therefore, a delusion, for the man who neglects scrupulously to conform himself to all the revealed will of God, to suppose himself submissive to the sovereignty of God.

10. True submission, and entire consecration, are the same thing. In other words, no man is truly submissive to God, any farther than he is consecrated to God. And it is very obvious, that there can be no true submission, unless for the time being there is universal submission. A man certainly does not submit to God, as God in one thing, who at the same time refuses submission in something else. It is possible that the same mind may be submissive at one time and not at another. But it is certainly impossible that the same mind should both submit to and rebel against God, at the same time. Present submission then is present consecration; continued submission is continued consecration, and permanent submission is permanent consecration, or sanctification to God. Do you know what this is by your own experience?