

Charles G. Finney:

John v.42--"But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."

These words were addressed by the Lord Jesus Christ, on a certain occasion, to those who professed that they loved God. I design, this morning, and in the afternoon, to establish the doctrine of total depravity.

In doing this, I design, in the first place to show what the doctrine of total depravity, is not.

And secondly, what it is:

And thirdly, to prove the doctrine, according to the definition which I shall give of it.

And to conclude each discourse with such remarks as shall appear appropriate and necessary.

First. I am to show, what the doctrine of total depravity is not.

1st. It does not consist in any want of faculties to obey God. We have all the powers of moral agency, that are needed to render perfect obedience to God. If there were any want of faculties, in our nature, our responsibility would cease; and we could not be justly blamed, for not doing that, for the performance of which, we do not possess the appropriate moral powers.

2dly. Total depravity does not consist, in a mutilated state of our moral powers. Neither our powers of body, or mind, are in a maimed, or mutilated state. If they were so, our obligation to obedience, would be diminished, precisely in proportion to the imperfection of the faculties of moral agency, which we possess.

3dly. Total depravity, does not consist, in any physical pollution transmitted from Adam, or from our ancestors, to us. It is impossible that moral depravity, should consist in physical pollution. Some persons have spoken of depravity, and of the pollutions of our nature, as if there were some moral depravity cleaving to, or incorporated with, the very substance of our being. Now this is to talk utter nonsense. If such a depravity were possible, it would not be moral, but physical depravity. It could not be a depravity for which we were blame-worthy. It could not be a sinful depravity. It would be a disease, and not a crime.

But again, 4thly. Total depravity, does not consist, in any principle of sin, that is incorporated with our being. The word principle is used in two senses. It sometimes means a property, or an attribute, of a substance, which has an inherent tendency to produce results agreeable to its nature. In this sense, depravity is not a principle, it is not a root, or sprout, or essence, or property, or attribute of any substance. It makes no part, either of body or mind. It does not belong to the constitution, but belongs purely, and exclusively to character: Moral depravity is a quality of voluntary action, and not of substance. If by principle, is meant purpose, preference, disposition, voluntary inclination to sin; then, in this sense, depravity is a principle; but in no other sense.

5th. By total depravity, is not meant, that any being is, or can be, sinful, before he has exercised the powers of moral agency.

6th. By total depravity, I do not mean, that there is any sin, in human beings, or in any other beings, separate from actual transgression.

I do not mean that there is some constitutional depravity, which lies back, and is the cause of actual transgression.

7th. I do not mean by total depravity, that there is the same disposition to sin belonging to the substance of body or mind, that there is in a serpent to bite, or in a wolf to devour sheep. In other words, I do not mean that there is a constitutional appetite, or craving for sin, implanted in the substance of the body or mind.

8th. By total depravity, I do not mean that men are as bad as they can be, or as they might be, under other circumstances. If they were placed under circumstances of less restraint, or of greater temptation, they would doubtless be worse than they are.

When we say that men are totally depraved, we are sometimes understood to affirm, that men are as bad as

they can be. They seem to understand the word total, as signifying the highest possible degree of depravity. But certainly this is not the meaning of the word total. The sum total of 3 and 2 and 5 is 10. This is not the highest possible number, but is the total of 3. and 2. and 5. The same word when qualifying depravity, does not mean the highest possible degree of depravity, but simply, that the whole character is depraved; that there is no mixture of good in his character. Not that he does and says as wickedly as he could say and do; but that whatever he does and says, and is, is sinful. "That every thought and imagination of his heart, is only evil continually."

Secondly. By total depravity, I do mean

1st. That impenitent sinners are universally destitute of love to God. My main business this morning is, to establish this position, and conclude with several remarks. In the afternoon, if the Lord permit, I will further state what is meant by total depravity, and adduce the proofs of the several positions, as I go along.

The text expressly asserts, that sinners have not the love of God in them. It would be easy to show, that this same doctrine is every where recognized in the Bible. But as I am to deal with those whom I affirm to be totally depraved, I do not expect that a thus saith the Lord will settle the question with you, and put it beyond debate.--You are unbelievers, and however you assent to the truth of the Bible in general, yet I know, that you have no hearty confidence in its doctrines in their detail. To prove to you, the doctrine of total depravity, from the Bible only, may gain your unfeeling assent. But I am well aware, that this kind of evidence will not so bring the subject home to your experience as to make you feel its truth. I might quote the text, and other passages of Scripture in proof of this doctrine, and then throw the responsibility upon you, of receiving or rejecting it. But as there is an exhaustless variety of other proofs within my reach, I will gather up a few of them, and lay them before you for your consideration.

Facts are stubborn things, and however men may evade the bible; however they may turn away from, and misunderstand metaphysical reasonings; they find it difficult to resist plain matters of fact; especially when the facts exist in their own experience. I design to gather my proofs of this doctrine, from the experience of you who are present. To point out certain facts, in your own history, and in the history of those around you, that will place this doctrine upon a foundation not to be controverted.

The laws of mind in their detail, are but imperfectly understood. Yet there are certain laws of mind that are understood, even by children. They are facts of such universal and frequent experience, that we know with absolute certainty, that such are the laws of mind. For instance, by experience we know it to be a law of mind, that we take delight in pleasing the object of our affection. To love an individual, is to desire his happiness. To promote his happiness, is to gratify that desire. To please the object of our affection then, is to please ourselves. To do that which is pleasing to one whom we love; to add to his honour, or to his happiness in any way, is to gratify our desire for his happiness; and naturally and necessarily adds to our own happiness.

It is not essential that we should aim at gratifying ourselves, or at promoting our own happiness, in our efforts to please the object of our affections.

When we act virtuously, to please ourselves is no part of our design. But although not entering into our design, it is the natural result of pleasing an object of our affection. It is the gratifying of our love, or desire to promote his happiness, or honour; and this gratifying of our desire, is of itself happiness. We find this principle, showing itself in all the relations of life. When is the affectionate husband or wife in a state of higher enjoyment, than when they are engaged in those employments, and in the performance of those offices that contribute to each other's happiness. When is the affectionate wife more cheerful, than when busied in those things that she knows will please her husband. How assiduous and unwearied are lovers and other dear friends, in their efforts to please the object of their affection. How eager to anticipate each other's desires; how readily, how joyfully do they engage in those things that they know will give pleasure to one whom they greatly love. It is absurd, and a contradiction for you to say that you love an individual, and have no delight in pleasing him. It is impossible that you should love an individual, and not be gratified in promoting his happiness. To say, that you love a person, is the same as to say, that you desire his happiness, and to say that you can desire his happiness without delighting in promoting it, is the same as to say, that to gratify virtuous desire, is not happiness. In other words, that the gratification of virtuous desire, is not a gratification.

This law of mind holds true, in all its fullness and extent, upon the subject of religion. I appeal to every Christian in this house, whether, to do the will of God, is not more than his necessary food; whether it is not your meat and drink to do the will of your Heavenly Father. When are you so happy, as when engaged in those things that you know will promote the honour and glory of God. I do not mean, or suppose, that it is your design to gratify

yourself, when you obey and serve God; but I ask, do you not find it to be a matter of fact, that you are never so happy, as when you are engaged in doing those things that please him? You search his word, to know what will please him; and when you know his will, and engage heartily in the performance of it, the happiness you will experience in the performance of these duties may not enter into your design or thoughts; and yet you know, that as a matter of fact, the performance of duty promotes your own happiness. To please God, pleases yourself. And now, let me appeal to the experience of every impenitent sinner in this house: do you not know, that from the very constitution of your mind, you love to please your friends. And do you not know, that it makes no part of your happiness to please God. How you delight to gratify your children; to please the objects of your most endeared affection; but I ask your conscience, do you take delight in pleasing God? Do you study to know what will please him? And when you have learned his will, do you find yourselves inclined, readily and joyfully, to perform it?

How much pains you will take; at how much expense you will be; how watchful, assiduous, and persevering, not only in conforming the general outline of your conduct, to the wishes of one whom you greatly love; but in following out the minutia, into the detail; in fulfilling the slightest desires, and gratifying even the passing wishes of one upon whom your heart is set; and thus giving yourself up, to promoting the happiness of the object of your affection, makes up, at once, the history and the substance of your own happiness.

Now, sinner, is this your experience on the subject of religion? Do you love to please God? Is it your business? Is it your happiness? In other things, in regard to the affairs of this world, every thing you say or do, is viewed as having a relation to the object of your supreme affection. If you love money supremely, every thing is judged of, is hated or loved, is desired or rejected, according to the relation it sustains to your own pecuniary interest. If you can make money by it, you have pleasure in it. If it would prevent the acquisition of wealth, you are displeased with it. So, if you have an earthly friend, whom you greatly love, it is natural for you to inquire, in every thing you say and do, how it will be received or looked upon by this object of your affection; what relation it sustains to him or her; and all your conduct is modified, and all your pursuits are regulated, by this controlling and absorbing affection for this idol. Now, sinner, I ask you again, is it true, in your own experience, that every thing pleases or displeases you; that you love or hate it; that you desire or reject it, according to its relation to the will of God; that if you see it will please him, it pleases you; if it is agreeable to his will, is it agreeable to your will? If it will promote his glory, do you desire it? If it will dishonour him, do you reject and abhor it? If not, why do you pretend to love God? You could not believe that your children or your wife loved you, unless you saw that they delighted to please you. And why should you deceive yourself, by supposing that you love God, when you know it is not your happiness to please him?

Again, from the constitution of our minds, we delight in the society and conversation of those whom we greatly love. To commune with them is sweet. To be alone with them; to enjoy their confidence; to pour into each other's bosom the overflowings of our affections, constitutes some of the sweetest and most sacred of our joys. This law of mind shows itself, in all its strength, on the subject of religion.

Saints, in all ages of the world, have delighted to commune with God, having sought his society, and loved the retirement of the closet, where they can be alone with God; and never are they more supremely and sacredly happy, than when alone, in secret and holy communion with the blessed God. Now, sinner, is this your experience? Do you love to be alone with God? Do you delight to pray? Is it your most sacred, most endeared employment, to get alone, and low upon your knees, pour out your heart in communion with your God? I do not ask you whether you pray, for this you may do from a variety of motives, but is it because you love to pray? Because you love to be alone and commune with God? If you are an impenitent sinner, you know that you do not love the society of God.

Again, we naturally prize the approbation of one whom we love. We account it of the greatest importance, and it is indispensable to our own happiness, that we should have the approbation of the object of our supreme affection. We are so constituted, that it gives us great pain to know that our conduct is disapproved of by our dearest friends. This is so in regard to our worldly friends, and it is so in regard to God. Nothing will wring a Christian's heart with more intolerable anguish, than the conviction that his conduct merits the disapprobation of God; and this is not principally, and in many cases not at all, through fear of punishment. The Christian may have, and often does have, the most thrilling and painful emotions, in view of his having merited the disapprobation of God; while, at the same time, he is not distressed with fear of punishment. But he has offended God; he is ashamed, and cannot look up; he feels as an affectionate child or wife would feel, under the consciousness of having done what the parent or the husband highly disapproved.

The question naturally arises, and has a controlling influence over our lives, will this or that please or displease him or her whom I love? To gain the approbation of this object of affection, is our ambition, and our highest joy.

Now, sinner, I appeal to you, is not this true, in your experience, as it respects him or her who is the object of your greatest affection? And is it true, that you, above all things, prize the approbation of God? Is it your study? Is it your delight to gain his approbation? Does the consciousness of having done what he disapproves wring your heart with anguish, irrespective of its consequences to yourself, and separate from all fear that you shall be punished? Do you feel the same emotions of sadness, of shame, of distress and sorrow, when you have merited the disapprobation of God, that you do when you have incurred the disapprobation of your most beloved earthly friend? I appeal to your own conscience, in the sight of God. Do you not know that you do not supremely desire the approbation of God?

Again, we naturally have reference to the feelings of the object of our supreme affections, in all our conduct. The affectionate husband or wife, parent or child, is careful not to wound the feelings of those they love; and if they find that they have wounded their feelings, they have no rest until they have confessed, and healed the wound, and are forgiven. This is true in religion. If you love God, you cannot reflect that you have wounded his feelings, without pain. You would not complain that you could not repent. The truth is, that if you were in the exercise of love to God, you could not help repenting, any more than an affectionate wife could refrain from grief, if she had wounded and grieved her husband.

Again, we naturally love to think of the object of our affection. Every one knows how sweet it is to be alone, to meditate, to call up before the mind, and to dwell upon some absent object of our love. Thus lovers are apt to seek solitude, and there is a kind of sacredness thrown around those hours, when, in the stillness of our bed-chamber, or in the retirement of the lonely walk, we dwell in silent, but delightful musings, upon the character and person of him or her whom we fondly love. The deep hour of midnight will often witness the wakeful musings of a heart, which, in the sweetness of its own fond imaginings, is dwelling upon that beloved friend, who, though absent, is at once the circumference and the all-absorbing centre of its affections. These musings enkindle our affections into a flame. See that husband from home; he is a husband and a father: when the bustle of the day is over; when the distractions and cares of business have passed away; see his busy thoughts, going out and dwelling upon his absent wife; upon his little prattling babes, until his heart is all in a glow, and tears of unutterable affection fill his eyes. This is nature; and these laws of mind act with equal uniformity, when God is the object of supreme affection. The lone walk, the quiet bed-chamber, the hour of sacred retirement, are sweet to the Christian. He loves to send out his thoughts after God; to dwell upon his glories; look into the mysteries of his love; to think, and think, and meditate, and turn the subject of his glorious character over and over before his mind, till his heart dissolves in love. Thus, the Psalmist says, "while I was musing, the fire burned." Now, sinner, do you love to think of God? Do you delight to have God in all your thoughts? Do you seek solitude and retirement, that you may, unmolested, dwell upon him in your fondest, holiest musings? And when you think, and meditate, and pray, do you find in it a sweet, and tender, and all-satisfying happiness? Are you sensible of emotions of love to God, as strong, nay, vastly stronger than those you exercise when thinking of your dearest earthly friend? I appeal to your own experience, and to your own conscience, in the sight of God.

Again, we naturally delight in conversing about an object of our affections. It gives us pleasure to speak of one we love. It is gratifying to us to let our lips speak out of the fulness of our hearts. Sometimes an affection is cherished, where there is some particular reason for concealing it; but even in those cases, a great affection is seldom cherished, without being divulged to some one. But where there is no reason for concealing it, we see how natural it is to make the object of affection the subject of conversation. This law of mind manifests itself as uniformly, on the subject of religion, as upon any other subject. It is a maxim in philosophy, as well as in morals, that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. You see a person whose heart is warm with the love of God; if God is in all his thoughts, He, and the interest of his kingdom, will be in all his words. If his heart is set upon God, his lips will speak of God; unless he be under circumstances to require reserve, and then he will naturally remain silent, sooner than converse upon a subject upon which his heart is not set. If he is under circumstances where he cannot consistently speak of God, he is inclined not to speak at all. Now, sinner, look at your own experience; do you love to converse about God? Is it delightful to you to speak of his character, of his person, and of his glory? I leave it with your conscience to decide.

Again, we are pained when separated from those we love. Every body knows this is true, as it respects worldly friends; and it is true in a still higher sense, as it respects God. Every Christian knows, just what saints of old knew, that they cannot live, and have the least enjoyment, if they are far from God. If he hides his face, if the manifestations of his presence are withdrawn, alas, how mournful and lonely and sad is the Christian, in the midst of all the gaiety and enjoyment of the world around him. Sinner, do you know what it is to feel as much pain at the withdrawal of God's presence from you, as you do when separated from your dearest earthly friend? Do you feel lonely in the midst of company; sad in the midst of gaiety; away from home in the midst of all your worldly friends, if God's presence is withdrawn from you?

Again, we naturally love the friends of the object of our affection. We feel attached to them for his sake. We love to converse with them, and we seek their society, because their views and feelings upon the subject that engrosses our attention, correspond with our own. Upon this principle, politicians, who are in favour of the same candidate, are fond of each other's society. And individuals, differing widely in other respects, enjoy each other's company, if they have one common and absorbing object of affection and conversation. Thus, Christians love to associate with each other. They love other Christians, because they love God. They delight in their society and conversation, because their views, and sentiments, and conversation, accord with their own. But do sinners love the friends of God? Do you love Christians, because they are Christians? Do you delight in their conversation, and in their character, because they love God? You may love some of them for other reasons, and in spite of their religion; but it is not for their religion that you love them.

Again, we naturally avoid the enemies of our friends. See that woman; is she intimate, and do you find her every day running in and spending her time in that family where they are enemies to her husband? Does she select as her friends and intimates, those that speak against her husband or her children? No, she naturally and instinctively avoids them. See that little child; he goes in to play with a neighbour's children; but while there, he hears them speaking against his father; he listens, and looks grieved and offended. He is a little one, and they do not notice him, but continue to vilify and abuse his father. He steals silently and sadly away, and goes weeping home; and hereafter you will perceive that he will avoid those persons as he would avoid a serpent. Just so with Christians; they naturally avoid the society of those that abuse God, unless they mingle with them to warn and save them. Sinners very often imagine that Christians avoid them, because they feel above them; but this is not the fact. It is true, that some professors of religion do not delight in the society and fellowship of the saints, but manifest a preference for the company of the gay and ungodly. But this is demonstration that they are hypocrites, and is no exception to the uniform action, of this law of mind. "Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; he, therefore, who will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God."

Again, we are grieved, when our beloved friend is abused in our presence. It is amazing to see the blindness and stupidity of sinners upon this subject. When Christians manifest grief, at the wicked conduct of sinners, they ascribe it all to superstition. If the pious father or mother manifest grief, when an impenitent son or daughter is engaged in sin and rebellion against God, they imagine that it is all superstition, and say, they have forgotten that they were ever young. See that husband, when he breaks the Sabbath, and swears, and abuses God, his wife weeps, and leaves the room. He says his wife is very superstitious; is a great bigot; is under the influence of priestcraft. He wonders that she should concern herself about him; he shall do well enough; he can take care of himself. He does not seem at all to understand the principle upon which his wickedness affects her. See here, man; suppose you are sitting in your house, with your wife, and an enemy comes in, and begins to abuse you in her presence, and when he had heaped numberless vile epithets upon you, he looks, and your wife is in tears: and now he says, what ails you, woman? You must be very superstitious. What affects you so? What would you think of such questions? Could you see no reasons why his abuse of you distressed your wife? Would you not think it strange if he did not understand the reason of her tears? Now, your wife is a Christian, you disobey and abuse God in her presence, and she expostulates and weeps, and you wonder at it, and call it superstition. Turn over the leaf; suppose, when this man, of whom I have been speaking, abuses you to your face, your wife manifests no emotions of grief, nor of indignation; but on the contrary, upon casting a glance at her, you perceive her conniving at it, and appearing evidently pleased with it. What! a wife pleased to see her husband abused! you would, from that moment, set her down as a hypocrite. You would not, you could not believe that she loved you. Now, the same holds true, where God is the object of affection. When God is abused in the presence of his friends, they feel emotions of grief and of indignation, as a thing of course; and this is the reason why the society of impenitent sinners is so disagreeable to a spiritual Christian. It is not because he feels above you, sinner, but because your conduct is a grief to him. When Christians mingle with sinners, it is upon business, or for the purpose of doing them good; not because they have any delight in their impenitent characters, or conversation, while they are the enemies of God.

I ask you, sinner, whether you are grieved with those that disobey God? Whether you feel mingled emotions of grief and indignation; as if your wife, or dearest friends were abused in your presence? Does it pain you, even to agony, to hear men swear in the streets; to see them break the Sabbath, and trample on God's holy commandments? Should you go through the streets and bear execrations and abuses poured upon your dearest earthly friend, from every quarter, it would fill you with grief and indignation unutterable. And can you walk the streets, and hear God's holy name profaned; see his Sabbath desecrated; hosts of impenitent sinners trampling, with unsanctified feet, upon his high and holy authority, and not be grieved? Then you are a hardened and shameless hypocrite, if you pretend to love your Maker.

Again, we are naturally credulous, and pleased if we hear any good of one whom we love. It is a well known fact, that it is comparatively easy to believe what we desire to believe. And we can believe in accordance with our feelings, upon slight testimony. A man will believe what he wants to believe, almost against testimony. If the thing accord with our desires, we are not inclined to question the validity of the testimony, by which the desired fact is established. We witness the developments of this law of mind, in the transactions of every day. So on the subject of religion; when Christians hear of the conversion of any one, or of a remarkable revival of religion, or of any thing else that glorifies God, they manifest a readiness to believe it, because it so accords with their desires. But do impenitent sinners show that they love God, that their hearts are set upon his glory, and the interests of his kingdom, by manifesting a readiness to believe what they hear in favour of religion? Let your conscience speak.

Again, we love to see means used to promote the interest and happiness of those we love. If we greatly love an individual, we delight in those who honour him, and try to promote his interest. We are not apt to be very particular and sticklish about the means that are used to promote this object, if they are but successful. We most naturally embrace, and most cordially use those means that promise the highest success. Witness the conduct of politicians, see how wise, industrious, and energetic they are, in devising and executing means to elect their favourite candidate. You do not hear them stop and cavil, and criticise, and find fault with any measure, merely because it is new. If it is not wicked, and if it promises success, its being new or old, will not be a sufficient objection to its being used if it bids fair to accomplish their favorite object. So with Christians, whose hearts are set upon promoting the glory and honour of God. They are on the alert; are looking out, and devising new means of effecting their favourite object. They are industrious and energetic, in finding out new ways, and adopting new expedients to bring about the salvation of the world. But do sinners apply their minds to this subject, and show that they are interested in the glory of God? Are they planning and devising liberal things for Zion? Are they finding out new and more successful methods of promoting the glory of God, and the salvation of men? Do you, sinner, feel rejoiced when some new measure is introduced, which has a tendency to promote this great work? Do you hail it, as one of the means by which the great object is to be accomplished, upon which your heart is supremely set.

Again, it is difficult for us to believe an evil report of one whom we love. Go and tell that affectionate wife of some disgraceful conduct of her husband. Go tell that mother of the dissolute and abandoned conduct of her only son; do you find them ready and willing to believe these reports? Do they believe them without question? No, but they will sift the testimony, criticise, and scrutinize, and perhaps no weight of evidence that you can bring to bear upon them, will thoroughly convince them of the facts. What lawyer is there, who has not seen the difficulty of convincing a juror against his will? If the juror strongly desires that the testimony of a witness should not be true, what a slight appearance of inconsistency, will cause him to give his testimony all to the winds. This law of mind develops itself, with equal uniformity, upon the subject of religion. Go and report among warm-hearted Christians, a story, whether true or false, which, if true, is dishonourable to God, and injurious to the interests of his kingdom. See how instantly they will ask for your authority, scrutinize and sift the testimony; and you need not expect them to believe, unless it come upon them with the force of demonstration. But do sinners manifest this unwillingness to believe evil reports of religion? Should you hear an evil report concerning the family of some near friend of yours; should you hear that one of the sons had greatly disgraced his father, who was your intimate and most beloved friend, would vague report satisfy you? Would the mere say, so of some irresponsible individual, be considered by you as sufficient proof to command your belief of the report? No, you would ask for high and unquestionable authority, and even then, you would say, I can hardly believe it. Now, sinner, when you hear any scandalous report of any deacon or minister, or any other professed child of God, do you find yourself instantly resisting the report? Do you find yourself inclined to call for further proof; to sift and criticise the testimony, to weigh and scrutinize, and give the report to the winds, as false and slanderous, if you find discrepancy or absurdity [in][it--2 its in original--Ed.] it? Do you feel the inward risings of indignation, and your thoughts and feelings taking the attitude of strong repellency, when such a God-dishonouring report is in circulation? Do you feel when such stories are reported about Christians, as you would about slander that was uttered against your wife, or dearest earthly friend.

Again, when we are compelled to believe an evil report of the object of our affection, we are careful not to give it unnecessary publicity. Does the mother go and publish all abroad, the disgrace of her children? Does the affectionate wife trumpet abroad upon the winds of heaven, the disgrace of her beloved husband? No, no. She locks it up in her faithful and affectionate bosom; the mother and the wife seal up their lips in silence, and breathe not aloud the errors of those they love. So with Christians; when they are convinced beyond all contradiction, that something has occurred which has dishonoured God and religion, do they go and blaze it all abroad? No, unless compelled by conscience, to give it utterance, it remains a secret in their own breast. And here let me ask, sinner, are you thus careful not to circulate what you know to be true to the discredit of religion, and to the friends of God? Suppose you had seen a minister, or some other professed child of God, off

his guard, and had witnessed in him the commission of some disgraceful sin, would you, from love to the cause, lock it up faithfully in your breast, and never breathe it forth upon the slightest breath of air, lest it should take wings, and God should be dishonoured. If you hear an individual repeating something that is dishonourable to religion, does it distress you? Do you reprove him for it? Do you endeavour to hush the matter up, and beg him not to repeat it? I leave this question with your consciences.

Again, we naturally try to put the most favourable construction upon any event that might be injurious to the interest or reputation of a friend whom we love. If an event has occurred that admits of divers constructions, we naturally put that construction, if possible, upon it, that is most consistent with the honour and reputation of our friend. If a circumstance should occur in the family of a beloved friend of ours, which admitted of two opposite constructions; one of which would disgrace our friend, and the other not at all, we should, from the very constitution of our being, naturally incline to the construction that was in his favor. It is a law of mind, that charity or love, hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things, and is ever ready to put the most favourable construction upon any event that the nature of the case will admit. We see the operation of this principle, and the developments of this law of mind in the occurrences of every day. You will see Christians, inclining to put that construction upon any event, that is most consistent with the honour of religion, and of God. But do you witness this same disposition in sinners? Do you, sinners, who are here, find in yourselves a desire to construe every ambiguous occurrence in that way, which is most favourable to religion. If something is said by a professor of religion, that turns out not to be true, do you naturally ascribe it to mistake, or to a misunderstanding, and find yourself very unwilling to believe that he meant to lie.

Again, when any of the friends of one whom we greatly love, fall into any conduct that is greatly dishonourable to the object of our affection, it distresses us, and we are disposed, as far as possible, to prevent a repetition of the event. If the son of our dearest friend, should fall into a disgraceful crime, and should, in our presence be guilty of things that were calculated greatly to dishonour his father, or had he run away from his father, and was wandering a vagabond up and down the earth; we should naturally desire to reclaim him. We should love and pity him for his father's sake; should feel grieved and distressed at the dishonour that this son was bringing upon his father; should feel inclined to warn and exhort; to pray for him, and instead of going and trumpeting his failings all abroad, we should naturally be tender of his reputation, for his father's sake; and do all that we honestly and consistently could to cover up his faults. Now, sinner, how do you behave, when you see Christians err and get out of the way? Do you feel distressed, that they bring such dishonor upon God? Do you pity and love them for their heavenly Father's sake? Do you pray for, and warn them, and try your utmost to reclaim them? Let conscience speak; I will not bring a railing accusation against you. But let conscience rebuke you in the name of the Lord.

I shall conclude this discourse with several remarks.

REMARKS.

First. With all these facts staring sinners in the face, standing out in bold relief, upon the very head and front of their own experience; how is it that they can suppose themselves to love God? Nothing is more common, than for impenitent sinners to affirm that they do love God; and yet nothing is more certain, than that they do not love him. Whence is this mistake? I answer,

1. They do not distinguish between an admiration of his natural attributes, which they sometimes feel, and a love to his moral character. The omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, eternity, and wisdom of God, are attributes, which, when considered, are calculated to inspire awe and admiration in the breast of intelligent beings, whether they are sinful or holy. These attributes have no moral character. The devil himself, may be filled with awe and admiration, when contemplating the displays of his natural attributes, which are manifested throughout all creation.

Again, sinners mistake a selfish gratitude for love to God. A supremely selfish being; may be grateful, for favours bestowed upon himself, without any true regard to the character of him who bestowed the blessing. Sometimes when sinners escape from death, and some marked providence is interposed in their behalf; they feel a kind of gratitude, and they might feel the same kind of gratitude to Satan, as they do to God, had he bestowed the same favour upon them.

Again, sinners make their own god, and fall in love with a god of their own creation. They conceive God to be such a being as they desire him to be. They strip him of his essential attributes, and ascribe to him a character that suits them, and then fall in love with their imaginary god, and walk by the light of their own fire, and compass themselves with sparks of their own kindling. The Universalist creates a god for himself; conceives of him as a being just suited to his taste; and if you keep out of his view, the essential attributes of justice and

truth, he will talk and feel very piously; but, bring before his mind the true character of God, and his heart becomes at once like the troubled ocean when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

2. You see why it is, that impenitent sinners think religion is something very gloomy. It is because they have no love to God. What would you think of a woman who should think it a very gloomy business to be with her husband, if she should complain of it as an irksome and disagreeable task, to engage in those offices that she knew would please him--if she accounted it a grief, a burden, and a vexation, to engage in the duties of a wife? You would say it was demonstration absolute, that she did not love her husband. So it is with sinners. When they conceive of religion as something gloomy, and calculated to rob them[sic.--them--Ed.] of all their joys, it is demonstration that they do not love God; that they have no delight in pleasing him.

3. You see from this subject, why it is that sinners grow weary and complain of having too many, and too long meetings. What would you think, should you hear an individual who professed to love you, complain of weariness on account of the length of your interview. Suppose he should say, Oh the time does seem so long, I do wish our interview was ended. You would understand it. You would not, and could not believe that his heart was greatly set upon you. So when you hear sinners complaining that there are so many meetings, and expressing a wish, that they should not be more than an hour in length, this is an index to their feelings; they do not love God; they have no delight in his services; it is a burthen[sic.] and a vexation to them, to be called to spend a short time in his presence.

4. Again, you see how it is, that some professors of religion prefer parties of pleasure, to prayer meetings. Prayer meetings are the most delightful parties to those that love God. But to those that do not love him, they are not a source of happiness; and when they are attended by such persons, it is from other motives than from love to God. Whenever you see professors of religion, manifesting more interest in worldly parties than in religious meetings, you may know that they are hypocrites.

5. You see from this subject, that they are deceived who say they always love God. There may be some instances, where persons may have been converted so young, that they cannot remember the time when they did not love God. If there are such persons, I am persuaded that such instances have, hitherto, been very rare; with these exceptions, it is certain that they are deceived, who suppose they have always loved God. Why, by their own showing they have never had a change of heart. They feel towards God as they always did. If they ever had truly loved God, when they first exercised this love, they would know that it was something new to them, and could not possibly suppose that they had always loved him.

Again, 6. You see from this subject, that impenitent sinners, are often great hypocrites. They profess to be very much opposed to hypocrisy, and say that they like true religion; they desire to see persons sincere in what they profess; think true religion is a good thing, and are very much in favour of it. They pretend to be very friendly to God, and say that they love him. Now, in these professions, they are arrant hypocrites. Christ might say to them, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you." "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell."

7. You see from this subject, the manifest and barefaced hypocrisy of those professors of religion, who, unnecessarily, publish the faults of Christians. We sometimes see professed Christians, as forward in speaking in all companies, and on all occasions, of the faults real or supposed, of the professed children of God, as infidels are. They will load down the winds with their complainings of the imprudences and errors of those whose characters are nearly associated with all the endeared interests of religion. And this they often do when no such thing is called for, and where there can be no just pretence that God, or the interests of religion requires this service at their hands. They will even sometimes to give these things the greater publicity, publish them in the newspapers, and all this under the sheer pretence of doing God service and benefitting the cause of Christ. But this is the precise method, and the pretended motive of the Universalists in their slanderous publications against God, and his servants; and there is no more reason to believe that such professors of religion, have the true interests of Christ's kingdom at heart, than there is to believe that Universalists are actuated by a regard to the glory of God. Cases have occurred, in which professors of religion have entertained passengers in steam-boats and in other public places, by retailing slanderous reports of revival men and measures. Vast prejudice has been created, and immense evils have resulted from this infidel conduct of those who profess to love the blessed God. O shame, where is thy blush!

It is impossible, from the very laws of their mind, that they should engage in this work of death, this mischief of hell, if they truly loved the cause of Christ, and to thus wantonly hang up the cause to reproach, by blazing abroad the failings, real or supposed, of those whose name, and character, and influence, are identified with the

dearest interests of Zion is, as absolute demonstration, that they are hypocrites, as if they themselves should take their oath of it.

Finally. While sinners imagine that they love God already it is not likely, that they ever will love him. Sinner, if you think that you love God already, you will never realize that you need a change of heart. If you really do love him, you certainly do not need a new heart, unless you would have a heart that does not love him. In pretending that you love God, you deny the very foundation of the doctrine of the new birth. But let me tell you, sinner, your delusion will soon be torn away. You cannot always deceive yourself with the imagination that you love God. You are going rapidly to eternity. There is, even now, perhaps, but a step between you and death. The moment that you appear in the presence of your Maker, and behold the infinite contrariety there is betwixt your character and his, your delusion will vanish forever. You pretend to love God, while you know that you have no delight in his word, or worship, or service. Oh! what would heaven be to you; you cannot enjoy a prayer meeting for one hour, and what would you do in heaven, employed in God's service forever and ever. Would heaven be heaven to you? Would you feel at home? Would you be happy there? what! without the love of God in you. Away with this delusion: "for verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."