

**Articles and Sermons :: HOW TO OVERCOME SIN by CHARLES G. FINNEY****HOW TO OVERCOME SIN by CHARLES G. FINNEY - posted by proudpapa, on: 2014/4/16 15:59**

HOW TO OVERCOME SIN

BY PRESIDENT CHARLES G. FINNEY.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 1, 1874

In every period of my ministerial life I have found many professed Christians in a miserable state of bondage either to the world, the flesh, or the Devil. But surely this is no Christian state, for the apostle has distinctly said: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace." In all my Christian life I have been pained to find so many Christians living in the legal bondage described in the 7th chapter of Romans—a life of sinning, and resolving to reform and falling again. And what is particularly saddening, and even agonizing, is that many ministers and leading Christians give perfectly false instruction upon the subject of how to overcome sin. The directions that are generally given on this subject, I am sorry to say, amount to about this: "Take your sins in detail, resolve to abstain from them, and fight against them, if need be, with prayer and fasting, until you have overcome them. Set your will firmly against a relapse into sin, pray and struggle, and resolve that you will not fall, and persist in this, until you form the habit of obedience and break up all your sinful habits." To be sure, it is generally added: "In this conflict you must not depend upon your own strength, but pray for the help of God." In a word, much of the teaching, both of the pulpit and the press, really amounts to this: Sanctification is by works, and not by faith. I notice that Dr. Chalmers, in his lectures on Romans, expressly maintains that justification is by faith, but sanctification is by works. Some twenty-five years ago, I think, a prominent professor of theology in New England maintained in substance the same doctrine. In my early Christian life I was very nearly misled by one of President Edwards's resolutions; which was, in substance, that when he had fallen into any sin he would trace it back to its source, and then fight and pray against it with all his might until he subdued it. This, it will be perceived, is directing the attention to the overt act of sin, its source or occasions. Resolving and fighting against it fastens the attention on the sin and its source, and diverts it entirely from Christ.

Now it is important to say right here that all such efforts are worse than useless, and not infrequently result in delusion. First, it is losing sight of what really constitutes sin, and, secondly, of the only practicable way to avoid it. In this way the outward act or habit may be overcome and avoided, while that which really constitutes the sin is left untouched. Sin is not external, but internal. It is not a muscular act, it is not the volition that causes muscular action, it is not an involuntary feeling or desire; it must be a voluntary act or state of mind. Sin is nothing else than that voluntary, ultimate preference or state of committal to self-pleasing out of which the volitions, the outward actions, purposes, intentions, and all the things that are commonly called sin proceed. Now, what is resolved against in this religion of resolutions and efforts to suppress sinful and form holy habits? "Love is the fulfilling of the law." But do we produce love by resolution? Do we eradicate selfishness by resolution? No, indeed. We may suppress this or that expression or manifestation of selfishness by resolving not to do this or that, and praying and struggling against it. We may resolve upon an outward obedience, and work ourselves up to the letter of an obedience to God's commandments. But to eradicate selfishness from the breast by resolution is an absurdity. So the effort to obey the commandments of God in spirit—in other words, to attempt to love as the law of God requires by force of resolution—is an absurdity. There are many who maintain that sin consists in the desires. Be it so. Do we control our desires by force of resolution? We may abstain from the gratification of a particular desire by the force of resolution. We may go further, and abstain from the gratification of desire generally in the outward life. But this is not to secure the love of God, which constitutes obedience. Should we become anchorites, immure ourselves in a cell, and crucify all our desires and appetites, so far as their indulgence is concerned; we have only avoided certain forms of sin; but the root that really constitutes sin is not touched. Our resolution has not secured love, which is the only real obedience to God. All our battling with sin in the outward life, by the force of resolution, only ends in making us whited sepulchers. All our battling with desire by the force of resolution is of no avail; for in all this, however successful the effort to suppress sin may be, in the outward life or in the inward desire it will only end in delusion, for by force of resolution we cannot love.

All such efforts to overcome sin are utterly futile, and as unscriptural as they are futile. The Bible expressly teaches us that sin is overcome by faith in Christ. "He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "He is the way, the truth, and the life." Christians are said to "purify their hearts by faith" (Acts xv, 9). And in Acts xxvi, 18 it is affirmed that the saints are sanctified by faith in Christ. In Romans ix, 31, 32 it is

affirmed that the Jews attained not to righteousness because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. The doctrine of the Bible is that Christ saves His people from sin through faith; that Christ's Spirit is received by faith to dwell in the heart. It is faith that works by love. Love is wrought and sustained by faith. By faith Christians overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. It is by faith that they quench the fiery darts of the wicked. It is by faith that they are put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and put off the old man, with his deeds. It is by faith that we fight the good fight, and not by resolution. It is by faith that we stand, by resolution we fall. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. It is by faith that the flesh is kept under and carnal desires subdued. The fact is that it is simply by faith that we receive the Spirit of Christ to work in us, to will and to do, according to his good pleasure. He sheds abroad his own love in our hearts, and thereby enkindles ours. Every victory over sin is by faith in Christ; and whenever the mind is diverted from Christ, by resolving and fighting against sin, whether we are aware of it or not, we are acting in our own strength, rejecting the help of Christ, and are under a specious delusion. Nothing but the life and energy of the Spirit of Christ within us can save us from sin, and trust is the uniform and universal condition of the working of this saving energy within us. How long shall this fact be at least practically overlooked by the teachers of religion? How deeply rooted in the heart of man is self-righteousness and self-dependence? So deeply that one of the hardest lessons for the human heart to learn is to renounce self-dependence and trust wholly in Christ. When we open the door by implicit trust he enters in and takes up his abode with us and in us. By shedding abroad his love he quickens our whole souls into sympathy with himself, and in this way, and in this way alone, he purifies our hearts through faith. He sustains our will in the attitude of devotion. He quickens and regulates our affections, desires, appetites and passions, and becomes our sanctification. Very much of the teaching that we hear in prayer and conference meetings, from the pulpit and the press, is so misleading as to render the hearing or reading of such instruction almost too painful to be endured. Such instruction is calculated to beget delusion, discouragement, and a practical rejection of Christ as he is presented in the Gospel.

Alas! for the blindness that leads to bewilderment the soul that is longing after deliverance from the power of sin. I have sometimes listened to legal teaching upon this subject until I felt as if I should scream. It is astonishing sometimes to hear Christian men object to the teaching which I have here inculcated that it leaves us in a passive state, to be saved without our own activity. What darkness is involved in this objection! The Bible teaches that by trusting in Christ we receive an inward influence that stimulates and directs our activity; that by faith we receive his purifying influence into the very center of our being; that through and by his truth revealed directly to the soul he quickens our whole inward being into the attitude of a loving obedience; and this is the way and the only practicable way to overcome sin. But someone may say: Does not the Apostle exhort as follows: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure"? And is not this an exhortation to do what in this article you condemn? By no means. In the 12th verse of the 2d chapter of Philippians Paul says: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." There is no exhortation to work by force of resolution, but through and by the inworking of God. Paul had taught them, while he was present with them; but now, in his absence, he exhorts them to work out their own salvation, not by resolution, but by the inward operation of God. This is precisely the doctrine of this article. Paul had too often taught the Church that Christ in the heart is our sanctification, and that this influence is to be received by faith, to be guilty, in this passage of teaching that our sanctification is to be wrought out by resolution and efforts to suppress sinful and form holy habits. This passage of Scripture happily recognizes both the Divine and human agency in the work of sanctification. God works in us, to will and to do; and we, accepting by faith his inworking, will and do according to his good pleasure. Faith itself is an active and not a passive state. A passive holiness is impossible and absurd. Let no one say that when we exhort people to trust wholly in Christ we teach that anyone should be or can be passive in receiving and co-operating with the Divine influence within. This influence is moral, and not physical. It is persuasion, and not force. It influences the free will, and consequently does this by truth, and not by force. Oh! that it could be understood that the whole of spiritual life that is in any man is received direct from the Spirit of Christ by faith, as the branch receives its life from the vine. Away with this religion of resolutions! It is a snare of death. Away with this effort to make the life holy while the heart has not in it the love of God. Oh! that men would learn to look directly at Christ through the Gospel, and so close in with him by an act of loving trust as to involve a universal sympathy with his state of mind. This and this alone is sanctification.

Re: HOW TO OVERCOME SIN by CHARLES G. FINNEY - posted by amranger (), on: 2014/4/16 18:04

Proud papa, interesting read.

I'm confused by this article though. It seems to contradict the very teachings Finney is known for. Having read other writings from him, it makes me wonder did he change his mind? Or did he think this fit with all his other teaching? I did notice it was written (or at least published) the year before he died. Maybe he was rethinking what he had taught.

Thanks for posting.

-Andrew

Re: Loving Christ, on: 2014/4/16 20:08

"Away with this effort to make the life holy while the heart has not in it the love of God. Oh! that men would learn to look directly at Christ through the Gospel, and so close in with him by an act of loving trust as to involve a universal sympathy with his state of mind. "

This is PRECISELY where I have been for several months, what a blessing to read this teaching from someone I so highly respect!!! What good is anything that we do, either in living a holy life or in service for the Lord unless IT IS BORN OUT OF LOVE FOR CHRIST????

This teaching of Finney's should be pasted from one end of Christendom to the other to help the multitudes of professing Christians who daily struggle with sin and see no end in sight!

But the message goes even beyond this, to those who are so pressed to "DO SOMETHING" for God, yet their love for God is lacking. Isn't this the sin of the Ephesian church of Revelations? "You have lost your first love"? Is the answer then to do more for God or try harder for God or strive to sin less against God? No, heavens no!!!

We must fall in love with Jesus afresh...unless we do dear brothers and sisters we are all doomed...the rising tide of lukewarmness will sweep us away, yes even the elect. Be careful how you stand, lest you fall!

I read a lot as I seek to find out others who are seeking Christ, but what I find are so many who are seeking truth, seeking doctrine, seeking thoughts, ideas and new ways of looking at things. But how many of us are purely and simply just seeking Christ? Isn't that what Paul meant when he said, "that I might KNOW Him"???

The answer to all our pains, all our searching and all our longing is found only in a deeper, more intimate love walk with Christ.

"May I fall in love with You over and over again. Do this in me dear Lord, for even to love You as You must be loved is beyond me...I am so frail but you are so Mighty, do a new thing in me today - amen"

Re: HOW TO OVERCOME SIN by CHARLES G. FINNEY, on: 2014/4/16 20:25

"It is by faith that the flesh is kept under and carnal desires subdued. The fact is that it is simply by faith that we receive the Spirit of Christ to work in us, to will and to do, according to his good pleasure. He sheds abroad his own love in our hearts, and thereby enkindles ours. Every victory over sin is by faith in Christ; and whenever the mind is diverted from Christ, by resolving and fighting against sin, whether we are aware of it or not, we are acting in our own strength, rejecting the help of Christ, and are under a specious delusion. Nothing but the life and energy of the Spirit of Christ within us can save us from sin, and trust is the uniform and universal condition of the working of this saving energy within us. How long shall this fact be at least practically overlooked by the teachers of religion?"

WOW!!!

Re: , on: 2014/4/16 20:31

WOW WOW WOW...indeed TUC. This post needs to be CATAPULTED to the front and center of this forum, most if not all here need to read and read and read this again and again until it gets into their spirit.

Best post on SI for a long, long while...thank God!!!

Re: - posted by wayneman (), on: 2014/4/17 7:22

My first reaction was the same as Andrew's: "This is *Finney* talking?"

But in his memoirs, also written at the end of his life, he does confess that, in his reaction against hyper-calvinism, he so metimes placed too much emphasis on "the sinner's ability to accept or reject Christ," instead of just lifting up Christ so that He "may draw all men to Himself."

Be that as it may, THIS sermon is an excellent word and one that desperately needs to be heard today!

Re: , on: 2014/4/17 7:26

Or just read Romans 6 and 8. We can't live in Romans 7. To be saved we must be born into Romans 8 and live there.

Sin shall not have dominion over you!

You can't self-bootstrap into spiritual maturity. You must have His life living in you (Gal 2:20) and be totally committed to trusting in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, resisting the advances of the Devil or the old patterns of selfishness, sin and self-effort of the flesh. No self-efforts, we must always be looking to Him and responding to Him.

Dead to sin, Alive in Christ.

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

The key is your "first love". Many have left their total commitment of loving Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. They are trusting in other things, not wholly Christ. True trust in Christ is to love Him with all your being.

Re: - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2014/4/17 14:39

This is indeed Finney, and this has been the theme of his preaching throughout his whole life. Finney is the most misunderstood preacher of the gospel. If any have read something by him that seems to contradict this teaching, please post it here and let's examine it together.

Re: - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2014/4/17 15:00

Below is a sermon preached in September, 1839. The one in the OP was preached in Jan, 1874. You can see the big gap of time between the two, and yet they appear identical.

The Oberlin Evangelist.

September 11, 1839.

PROFESSOR FINNEY'S LECTURES.

LECTURE XVI.

THE REST OF FAITH.

Text. Heb. 3:19, & 4:1.--So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

The following is the order in which I will direct your attention.

I. INQUIRE OF WHOM THE APOSTLE IS SPEAKING IN THIS TEXT, AND INTO WHAT IT IS SAID THEY COULD NOT ENTER.

II. WHY THEY COULD NOT ENTER IN.

III. SHOW THAT TEMPORAL CANAAN WAS TYPICAL OF THE REST OF FAITH.

IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS REST.

V. HOW WE MAY SEEM TO COME SHORT OF IT.

VI. HOW WE MAY TAKE POSSESSION OF IT.

I. I am to inquire of whom the Apostle is speaking and into what they could not enter.

In this connexion the Apostle is speaking of the Jews; and that into which they could not enter was temporal Canaan, as is evident from the context.

II. Why they could not enter in.

It is asserted in the text, that they could not enter into Canaan, because of unbelief. The Jews had arrived upon the borders of the promised land. And Moses deputed a number of individuals as spies, and sent them to spy out the land. They went up and surveyed the land, and returned bringing some of the fruits of the land, and represented to the children of Israel, that it was an exceeding good land, but that it was impossible for them to take possession of it--that the towns and cities were walled up to heaven--that the country was inhabited by giants--and that therefore they were utterly unable to take possession of the land.

In this testimony all the spies agreed except Caleb and Joshua. This discouraged the people and produced a rebellion that prevented that generation from taking possession of Canaan. Their confidence in divine assistance was utterly shaken, and their unbelief prevented any such attempt to take possession of the land, as would otherwise have been made with complete success. The bringing up of the evil report, by those who were sent out to reconnoiter, and their failing to encourage and lead forward the people, were the means of that generation being turned back, and utterly wasted in the wilderness. God was so incensed against them for their want of confidence in his help, and of his ability, and willingness to give them possession, that he "swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest."

III. Show that temporal Canaan was typical of the rest of faith.

It is plain from the context that the Apostle supposes the land of Canaan to have been typical of the rest of faith. The land of Canaan was to have been their rest after their perilous journey from Egypt. In this land they were to have been secure from the power of all their enemies round about. He concludes the third chapter of this epistle, by asserting that "they could not enter into this rest because of unbelief." And he begins the fourth chapter, by exhorting the Jews, to whom he was writing "to fear lest a promise being left them of entering into rest" "any should seem to come short of it." And in the third verse he affirms, that "we who have believed do enter into rest."

IV. What is implied in this rest.

1. Not a state of spiritual indolence.

2. Not waiting for God to do his own work, and ours too. Some people seem to be waiting for God, and to have such an idea of his sovereignty as to throw upon him the responsibility of doing, not only that which belongs to him, but that also which belongs to themselves. They seem to forget that holiness in man is his own act, and talk as if God would make men holy without the proper and diligent exercise of their own powers. Others are waiting for God to convert their children, and their neighbors, and the world, without any instrumentality of theirs, affirming that God can, and will do his own work, in his own way, and in his own time. Thus entirely overlooking the fact, that when God works, he works by means. This is anything but a right view of the subject, and that is anything but faith which leads to these views, and to this course of conduct; and this state of spiritual indolence, and this waiting for God are any thing but gospel rest. Faith always implies a diligent and constant use of means. Faith respects not only the fact that God will do thus and thus, but also recognizes the fact that he will do it by the appointed means.--Consequently true faith in God leads to any thing but the neglect of employing the suitable instrumentality to effect the desired object.

3. The rest of faith does not imply that the Church is to be sanctified, and the world converted, without the diligent and effectual co-operation of those who are co-workers with God.

4. Nor rest from labors of love.

5. Nor rest from watchfulness. Nor from any of those holy exertions that are indispensable to guard against our enemies in this state of trial, and while in an enemy's country. Nor does it imply any cessation from a diligent use of all the means of instruction, and of grace, both for our own and others' edification, and salvation.

6. Nor the casting off responsibility, and the giving ourselves up to be drifted in any direction, by the tides of influence which surround us.

7. Nor does it imply an exemption from temptation. Christ was tempted in all points like as we are. And from our circumstances in this world, it is impossible that we should not continue to be the constant subjects of temptation, from the world, the flesh and the devil. Nor does it imply exemption from all heaviness and distress of mind. Christ was in heaviness. Paul had great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart on account of his brethren. And Peter in his general epistle to the saints says, "Now are we in heaviness through manifold temptations." Nor does it imply exemption from severe trials and mental conflicts, for these things may always be expected while we are in the flesh. And the gospel plainly teaches that to us it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake. But gospel rest does imply,

1. A complete cessation from all our own selfish works, the end of which is to promote our own interests, temporal or eternal.

2. It implies a cessation from all self-righteous efforts. By self-righteous efforts, I mean,

(1) All attempts to recommend ourselves to God by our own works.

(2) All efforts to avoid punishment, or escape from the wrath of God by any efforts of our own.

(3) All those things which originate in our own convictions, and are performed in the strength of our own resolutions without being influenced thereto by the love of God in our heart.

4. This rest implies a state of mind that feels no necessity for attempting anything in our own strength. There is a state of mind, which perhaps is better known by experience than described by words, in which an individual feels pressed with a necessity of doing something, and every thing in a manner which shall be acceptable to God. And yet, on account of his unbelief, he feels agonized with the thought that he is in no such sense strengthened by the Spirit of God, as shall, as a matter of fact, enable him, and cause him to do that which his convictions of duty demand of him. This is a distracting restless state of mind, and the exact opposite of the rest of faith. Faith so leans upon God, as to bring the mind into a state of sweet repose and confidence that God will help, and that there is no necessity for making any efforts in our own strength.

5. It implies exemption from all the carefulness induced by unbelief on every subject. Faith reposes in God for time and for eternity, for direction, and help, and provisions in temporal as well as spiritual matters. It excludes all carefulness, in t

he proper sense of that term, on every subject.

6. It implies exemption from the fear of death, and hell. Faith produces that perfect love that casteth out fear--the fear of future want--of the judgments of God--that we shall be overcome by our enemies spiritual or temporal--and of all that fear that hath torment.

7. It implies an exemption from a sense of condemnation. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

8. A rest from the reproaches of conscience. In a state of unbelief, conscience often inflicts grievous wounds upon the peace of the soul. But when we take possession of the rest of faith, the conscience is as quiet as a lamb.

9. It implies an exemption from being afflicted or distressed with the occurrences of life. The soul is able to meet with calmness and sweetness that which would otherwise throw the mind into a state of the utmost agitation and distress. By this I do not mean, as I have said above, that individuals will have no trials; but that this state of mind will enable them to pass through their trials with a composed and heavenly temper. Mrs. President Edwards says of herself, that for some years there were two trials which she thought she should be unable to bear. One was the loss of her husband's confidence, and ill treatment from him--the other was the loss of the confidence and respect of the people of the town in which they lived. But when she entered fully into the rest of faith, she declares, that it did not appear to her, as if those things could, in the least, affect her happiness or disturb the repose of her mind. It appeared to her as if she were as far above being discomposed by anything that could occur in the Providence of God, as the sun is high above the earth--that to be treated with the utmost disrespect by her husband--to be cast out by the people of the town to perish in the snow, would not break up the deep tranquillity and repose of her mind in God.

10. It implies exemption from the dominion of temptation. I have said, that in this life, we may always as a thing of course expect more or less temptation. But this rest is a state of mind in which temptation will not prevail. It will assail us, and make a greater or less impression upon our minds, i.e. it will in a greater or less degree agitate and ruffle our feelings in proportion to the strength of our faith.

11. Finally, and in a word, it implies exemption from the strength and dominion of sin in all its forms. The case supposed by the Apostle in the seventh chapter of Romans, to illustrate the influence of law over one who is carnal and sold under sin, is a striking exemplification of that state of slavery to lust and passion in which great multitudes, both in and out of the Church, are. And the striking transition from that state of mind into that described in the eighth chapter, exactly illustrates what I mean by an individual passing from a state of slavery and sin into a state of liberty and rest.

V. How we may seem to come short of it.

The word rendered seem here does not imply what is commonly meant by the English term seem, as if the coming short were only in appearance and not in fact. But from the manner in which it is rendered in other passages, it is manifest that it means to express the actual coming short, as if the Apostle had said, lest any of you should be seen to come short of it.

1. We may fail of entering into this rest by mistaking its nature, and thinking we have it while we have not. Many have seemed to suppose that it consists in spiritual indolence, or in such an exemption from responsibility as would give the mind up to be drifted without resistance in any direction in which the corrupt currents of this world might drive it. They seem to get the idea that all things are lawful to them in such a sense, that almost any kind of indulgence is consistent with spiritual purity, and the love of God. Gospel rest, to them, is the mere casting off of responsibility--a lolling and wallowing in their own filthy indulgences.

2. Many fail to enter into this rest, by not realizing that there is any such state. They seem not to know any thing about the tranquilizing effects of faith, and that state of deep repose in God which those enjoy who have taken possession of the promised rest. They seem to suppose that the christian warfare consists in that mental conflict which they are conscious is going on within themselves, with their hearts and consciences. They are conscious of a continual mutiny being kept up between the conflicting powers of their own minds, which they express by saying they are constantly sinning and repenting, by which nothing more can be meant than that their hearts and consciences are at fearful war with each other. They appear to be utter strangers to the sweet peace and repose of mind which results from a harmony of the powers of their own mind, where their conscience and their heart are at one. Understanding from the Bible that their warfare is to continue through this life, and mistaking their inward conflicts for the Christian warfare, they take it for granted that no such r

est as that of which I have spoken, exists.

3. Many fail to enter into this rest because they think it belongs exclusively to heaven. Now that this rest will be more perfect in heaven than it is on earth is undeniably true. But it is the same in kind, on earth as in heaven, just as holiness is. Now if persons do not become holy on earth, how should they hope to be holy in heaven? And if this rest be not begun on earth, it will never be enjoyed in heaven.

4. Many come short of this rest by supposing that the world, the flesh and Satan put the attainment of it utterly out of the question. It is amazing to see how little of the gospel is understood and received by the Church. It would seem that in the estimation of the great mass of the Church, the gospel itself has made no adequate provision for the entire sanctification of men in this world of temptation. Just as if God were unable to overcome these enemies in any other way than by snatching his children out of their reach; and that Christ came not so much to destroy the works of the devil in this world, as to drive his people out of it and get them off from his ground--that he destroys the flesh because he is unable to overcome it--and that he will burn up the world because he is unable to prevent its leading his people into sin. Now it does appear to me that God's glory demands, that the battle should be fought, and the victory won in this world. The Apostle plainly represents us, under the grace of God, as "not only conquerors but more than conquerors." And he certainly has but a very limited knowledge of the Bible, or of the grace of God who can assume that the world, the flesh, and Satan are too strong for Christ so that he cannot save his people from their sins.

5. Ignorance of the power of faith is another reason why persons do not enter into this rest. They do not understand that as a matter of fact, faith in the existence, power, goodness, providence and grace of God--that unwavering confidence in all he does and says, would in its own nature as a thing of course, bring them into the rest of which I am speaking.

Suppose a ship should be bestormed at sea, that all on board is confusion, dismay, and almost despair--the ship is driven by a fierce tempest upon a lee shore. Now suppose that in the midst of all the uncertainty, racking, and almost distracting anxiety of the passengers and crew, a voice should be heard from heaven, they knowing it to be the voice of the eternal God, assuring them that the ship should be safe--that not a hair of their heads should perish--and that they should ride out the storm in perfect safety. It is easy to see that the effect of this announcement upon different minds would be in precise proportion to their confidence in its truth. If they believed it, they would by no means throw up the helm, and give themselves up to indolence and let the ship drive before the waves, but standing, every man at his place, and managing the ship in the best manner possible, they would enjoy a quiet and composed mind in proportion to their confidence that all would be well. If any did not believe it, their anxiety and trouble would continue of course, and they might wonder at the calmness of those who did; and even reproach them for not being as anxious as themselves. You might see among them every degree of feeling from the despair and deep forebodings of utter unbelief, up to the full measure of the entire consolation of perfect faith. Now the design of this illustration is to show the nature of faith, and to demonstrate that entire confidence in God naturally hushes all the tumults of the mind, and settles it into a state of deep repose--that it does not beget inaction, presumption or spiritual indolence any more than the revelation of which I have spoken, would beget inattention to its management on board the ship.

7. Another reason is, many are discouraged by the misrepresentations of the spies who have been sent to spy out the land. It is a painful and really an alarming consideration, that so many of those who are leaders in Israel, and who are supposed by the Church to have gone up and reconnoitered the whole land of spiritual experience, that almost with united voice they should return to the Church, and represent that we are unable to go up and possess the land. Of all those that were sent by Moses to spy out the land only two had any faith in the promise of God, whereas all the rest united in their testimony that they were unable to possess the land.--And that rest was unattainable to them in this life. So it appears to me in these days. Those that are appointed to direct and encourage the people, by first acquainting themselves thoroughly with the ground to be possessed, and then carrying to the people the confidence of faith, encouraging them, not only by the promises of God, but by their own experience and observation, that the land may be possessed--instead of this they bring up an evil report, discourage the hearts of the people of God, maintain that the grace of God has made no sufficient provisions for their taking possession of the land of holiness in this life, that the world, the flesh and the devil are such mighty Anakims as that to overcome them is utterly out of the question, and that no hope remains, only as we flee from their territories and get out of the world the best way we can. Now I greatly fear that will happen to them which came upon the spies in the days of Moses. They were driven back, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. God swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest. And not only they, but that entire generation who were deceived by them, and who could not enter in because of unbelief, were wasted away and died without rest in the wilderness. How many generations of the Church of God shall thus be wasted away in the wilderness of sin! How long will generation after generation of spies continue to bring up their evil report, discouraging the hearts, and confirming the unbelief of the people, and effectually preventing their taking possession of that rest which remains for the people of God!

8. Many are discouraged by the present and past attainments of Christians. They are constantly stumbled by the consideration that holy men of former and present times have known so little of full gospel salvation. They might just as reasonably let the past and present state of the world shake their confidence in the fact that the world will ever be converted. And indeed, whether they are aware of it or not, I suppose they have as much confidence in the one as in the other. They seem not to be aware of the fact that they are full of unbelief in regard to the world's conversion, while they are sensible that they have no confidence in the attainableness of rest from all their sins in this life.--The reason why they are sensible of unbelief in the one case and not in the other is, the one is placed before them as a present duty, in attempting to perform which they experience the chilling influence of unbelief--while the other is a thing which they have never tried to do, and which they do not understand to be their duty to do. Consequently a want of confidence in respect to this, is not the object of the mind's attention. Certainly a state of mind that can be discouraged by the past or present history of the Church, would of course feel the same discouragement, and have the same reason for discouragement, in regard to the world's conversion.

9. Others fail to take possession of this rest on account of the ignorance of the real attainments of the ancient and modern saints. They have taken but little pains to examine carefully into the history of eminent saints either ancient or modern, and of course do not know what the grace of God has actually done for men.

10. Many fail from a regard to their reputation. They have so much fear of being called heretics, fanatics, perfectionists or some other opprobrious name, that they resist the Spirit and truth of God.

11. Pride and prejudice prevent a careful and honest examination of the subject. I have been amazed, and I might add ashamed, to witness the great ignorance of the Bible, and of the real merits of this question, in the articles that have appeared in the different periodicals of the present day.--They have reminded me of the conduct of Dr. Hill in the late General Assembly, when the discussion of the question of slavery came up. He arose and read certain passages of scripture, with as much assurance as if he supposed they had been overlooked by the abolitionists--as if he supposed it would be entirely manifest that these scriptures were a "Thus saith the Lord" in the face of all abolitionism. He afterwards intimated that he was master of the subject, and seemed not to understand that all his arguments and scriptures, and grounds of objection had often been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Now just so it has appeared to me when I have read the various articles that have appeared of late against the attainableness of entire sanctification in this life. The least I could say, would be in the words of President Edwards, that "they have not well considered the matter."

12. Many fail because they are too proud to confess their ignorance and want of spirituality, and put themselves in the attitude of inquirers. A vast many individuals are not aware of their own ignorance and want of spirituality, and many who are convinced of their ignorance and their destitution of spirituality, seem to think it indispensable to their usefulness to conceal their defects and to keep up the appearance, at least, of sound knowledge and sound piety. And some, how many I cannot say, have adopted it as a principle not to speak much of their own experience in the divine life.

13. Many are ashamed to be taught by the ignorant, though spiritual christians. There are perhaps but few among ministers and church officers who might not take some most useful and salutary lessons from some obscure female or other unnoticed person in the Church. Unless a man is willing to sit at the feet of any spiritual child of God, he is never likely to know what that rest is that remaineth for the people of God.

14. Pride of learning and dependence upon their own powers of criticism, have done and are doing much to shut the learned world out of faith. There is a great tendency in a certain class of minds to substitute their own reasonings for faith, to believe what they can establish by reasoning and argument, and to hold as fanatical or doubtful any depth of spirituality that they cannot fathom by their "inch of line." Nor do they seem aware that the confidence which they have in those things which they cannot establish by reason, is not faith in the truth of God, but a leaning to their own understanding. God's testimony is to be set aside unless it is backed up and established by their own profound reasonings and criticisms.

15. Another reason is many settle down into a stereotyped orthodoxy and are opposed to all advances in religious knowledge and experience.

16. Others fail because they are waiting and struggling for some preparation before they go up and take possession of the land. They do not understand that they are immediately to enter into this rest by faith. They are waiting for certain feelings and views to prepare them to exercise faith, not knowing that these very views and feelings are the effects of faith. Thus they expect the effect to precede the cause.

17. Others fail through sheer carelessness. The Apostle exhorts the Church to take heed in this matter, and certainly without attention and inquiry this rest will not be attained.

VI. How we may take possession of it.

This rest is to be possessed at once by anchoring down in naked faith upon the promises of God. Take the illustration which I have already given, viz: the ship at sea. Suppose she were dashing upon the rocks, and a voice from heaven should cry out, "Let go your sheet anchor and all shall be safe." Suppose they believed that. With what confidence and composure would they let go the anchor, understanding it to be certain that it would bring them up and that they should ride out the storm. Now this composure of mind, any one may see, might and would be entered upon at once by an act of naked faith. Just so there are no circumstances in which men are ever placed, where they may not enter into rest at once by anchoring down in naked faith upon the promises of God. Let the first six verses of the 37 Psalm be an illustration of what I mean. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity: For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." Now suppose an individual to be borne down by the persecution of his enemies, or to be so situated in his temporal circumstances as not to know what he should do for bread. Let him take hold upon these promises, and peace and rest would flow in upon his mind, and light and joy would spring up like the sun breaking through an ocean of storm.

Take the promise in Isa. 42:16. Suppose the soul to be surrounded with darkness, perplexity, and doubt, with regard to the path of duty, or with regard to any other matter--borne down under a weight of ignorance, and crushed with a sense of responsibility, however deep his agony and his trials may be. Hark! Hear Jehovah saying, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them." Now who does not see that faith in this promise would make the soul in a moment as quiet as a weaned child. It would at once become as calm as an ocean of love.

Take Isa. 41:10-14. Suppose a soul to be under circumstances of great temptation from the world, the flesh and the devil, and ready to exclaim, "my feet are slipping, and I shall fall into the hand of my enemies, I have no might against this host. All my strength is weakness, and I shall dishonor my God." Hark again! Hear the word of the Lord. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." What is here but an ocean of consolation to a mind that has faith?

Now what wait ye for. Anchor right down upon these promises. They can give you instant rest. Nothing but faith is wanting to put you in possession of it. And nothing else than faith can do you any good. There is no need of going around, or waiting to come at this rest by degrees. It is to be entered upon at once. The land may be possessed now in the twinkling of an eye.

I designed to have added several remarks, but as I intend to pursue this subject at another time, I will defer them till then

Here is another good one about faith, on: 2014/4/18 7:00

The Oberlin Evangelist
January 16, 1839
Lecture II.

FAITH

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--John 6:28,29: "Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

The following is the train of thought I shall pursue:

I. Notice several erroneous answers, commonly given to the question proposed in the text, viz: What shall we do that we may work the works of God?

II. Show that Christ gave the only proper answer, under the circumstances in which the question was asked.

III. Show that, under other circumstances, another answer might, with propriety, be given.

I. I am to notice several erroneous answers commonly given to the question proposed in the text.

1. Should the question be proposed to a Jew, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?" he would answer, keep the law, both moral and ceremonial, i.e. keep the commandments.

2. To the same inquiry, an Arminian would answer, improve common grace, and you will obtain converting grace, i.e. use the means of grace, according to the best light you have, and you will obtain the grace of salvation. In this answer, it is not supposed, that the inquirer already has faith, and is using the means of grace in faith; but that he is in a state of impenitency, and is inquiring after converting grace. The answer, therefore, amounts to this: you must get converting grace by your impenitent works; you must become holy by your hypocrisy; you must work out sanctification by sin.

3. To this question, most professed Calvinists would make, in substance, the same reply. They would reject the language, while they retained the idea. Their direction would imply, either that the inquirer already has faith, or that he must perform works to obtain it, i.e. to obtain grace by works.

Neither an Arminian nor a Calvinist, would formally direct the inquirer to the law, as the ground of justification. But nearly the whole Church would give directions that would amount to the same thing. Their answer would be a legal, and not a gospel answer. For whatever answer is given to this question, that does not distinctly recognize faith, as the foundation of all virtue in sinners, is legal. Unless the inquirer is made to understand that this is the first grand fundamental duty, without the performance of which all virtue, all giving up of sin, all acceptable obedience, is impossible, he is misdirected. He is led to believe, that it is possible to please God without faith; and to obtain grace by works of law. There are but two kinds of works--works of law, and works of faith. Now if the inquirer has not the "faith that works by love," to set him upon any course of works to get it, is certainly to direct him to get faith by works of law. Whatever is said to him that does not clearly convey the truth, that both justification and sanctification are by faith, without works of law, is law, and not gospel. Nothing before, or without faith, can possibly be done by the unbeliever, but works of law. His first duty, therefore, is faith; and every attempt to obtain faith by unbelieving works, is to lay works at the foundation, and make grace a result. It is the direct opposite of gospel truth.

Take facts as they arise in every day's history, to show that what I have stated is the experience of almost all, professors and non-professors. Whenever a sinner begins in good earnest to agitate the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" he resolves, as a first duty, to break off from his sins, i.e. in unbelief. Of course his reformation is only outward, he determines to do better--to reform in this, that, and the other thing, and thus prepare himself to be converted. He does not expect to be saved without grace and faith, but he attempts to get grace by works of law.

The same is true of multitudes of anxious Christians, who are inquiring what they shall do to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. They overlook the fact that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith," that it is with "the shield of faith" that they are "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." They ask, why am I overcome by sin? Why can I not get above its power? Why am I thus the slave of my appetites and passions, and the sport of the devil?

They cast about for the cause of all this spiritual wretchedness and death. At one time they think they have discovered it in the neglect of one duty; and at another time, in the neglect of another. Sometimes they imagine they have found the cause to lie in yielding to one sin, and sometimes in yielding to another. They put forth efforts in this direction, and in that direction, and patch up their righteousness on one side, while they make a rent in the other. Thus they spend years in running around in a circle, and making dams of sand across the current of their own corruptions. Instead of at once purifying their hearts by faith, they are engaged in trying to arrest the overflowing of its bitter waters. Why do I sin? they inquire; and casting about for the cause, they come to the sage conclusion, it is because I neglect such a duty, i.e. because I do sin. But how shall I get rid of sin? Answer: by doing my duty, i.e. by ceasing from sin. Now the real inquiry is, why do they neglect their duty? Why do they commit sin at all? Where is the foundation of all this mischief? Will it be replied, the foundation of all this wickedness is in the corruption of our nature--in the wickedness of the heart--in the strength of our evil propensities and habits? But all this only brings us back to the real inquiry, again: How are this corrupt nature, this wicked, and these sinful habits to be overcome? I answer, by faith alone. No works of law have the least tendency to overcome our sins; but rather confirm the soul in self-righteousness and unbelief.

The great and fundamental sin, which is at the foundation of all other sin, is unbelief. The first thing, is to give up that--to believe the word of God. There is no breaking off from one sin without this. "Whatever is not faith is sin," "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Thus we see that the backslider and convicted Christian, when agonizing to overcome sin, will, almost always, betake themselves to works of law to obtain faith. They will fast, and pray, and read, and struggle, and outwardly reform, and thus endeavor to obtain grace. Now all this is in vain and wrong. Do you ask, shall we not fast, and pray, and read, and struggle? Shall we do nothing, but sit down in Antinomian security and inaction? I answer, you must do all that God commands you to do; but begin where He tells you to begin, and do it in the manner in which he commands you to do it, i.e. in the exercise of that faith that works by love. Purify your hearts by faith. Believe in the Son of God. And say not in your heart, "who shall ascend into heaven i.e. to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep, i.e. to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach."

Now these facts show that even under the gospel almost all professors of religion, while they reject the Jewish notion of justification by works of the law, have, after all, adopted a ruinous substitute for it, and suppose that in some way they are to obtain grace by their works.

II. I am to show, that Christ gave the only proper answer, under the circumstances in which the question was asked.

In order to understand the propriety of the answer, we must understand the meaning of the question. The context shows that the question was asked by certain unbelieving Jews, who inquired what they could do, to work the works of God?--in other words, to obtain the favor of God? Christ understood them as inquiring what works would be acceptable without faith. He therefore answers: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." As if He had said, nothing is a work of God which you would recognize as such. Faith is the first great work of God, without which it is impossible to please Him. To a Jew, this answer would imply, that he believed Him to be the Messiah foretold in the scriptures. And to all persons the answer implies not only a general confidence in the character of God, but a trust in his atonement and saving grace, in opposition to all works of law for justification.

To show that this is the only proper answer to be given to a person in a state of unbelief, I will state,

1. What I DO NOT mean by the proposition; and

2. What I DO mean by it.

1. I do not mean that it is the only proper answer, because there is no good and acceptable work but faith.

2. Nor do I mean that faith without works is acceptable to God.

3. Nor do I mean that faith makes void the law, and sets aside the obligation and necessity of good works. The Apostle, in James 2:17-26, sets the necessity of works, as the result of faith, in a strong light. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew you my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteous"

ness: and he was called the son, of God. Ye see, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise, also, was not Rahab, the harlot, justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

4. Nor do I mean that there are no other directions that may be given to an inquiring sinner or Christian that, if followed, would not in the end amount to the same thing as the direction in the text. In number eighteen of my "Revival Lectures," I said, "You may give the sinner any direction, or tell him to do anything, that includes a right heart." To repent--to submit--to give the heart to God; and all the directions there specified imply faith. Were I to preach that sermon again, I should give a greater prominence to faith, and show that the exercise of faith is the first thing to be done; and that upon the exercise of this, repentance, submission, love and every other grace depend.

5. But, by the above proposition, I do mean, that no works are good works, or are in any sense acceptable to God, only as they proceed from faith. Let it be forever remembered, that "without faith, it is impossible to please God," and "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin."

6. It is the proper answer, because both justification and sanctification are by faith alone. Rom. 3:30: "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith;" and 5:1: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Also, 9:30, 31: "What shall we say then? that the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law." But perhaps you will not clearly see the truth of this, unless I make a remark or two upon the nature of faith.

The first element of saving faith is a realizing sense of the truth of the Bible. But this is not alone saving faith, for Satan has this realizing sense of truth, which makes him tremble.

But a second element in saving faith is the consent of the heart or will to the truth perceived by the intellect. It is a cordial trust or resting of the mind in those truths, and a yielding up of the whole being to their influence. Now it is easy to see, that without the consent of the will, there can be nothing but an outward obedience to God. A wife, without confidence in her husband, can do nothing more than perform outwardly her duty to him. It is a contradiction to say that without confidence, she can perform her duty from the heart. The same is true of parental and all other governments. Works of law may be performed without faith; i.e. we may serve from fear or hope, or some selfish consideration; but without the confidence that works by love, obedience from the heart is naturally impossible. Nay, the very terms, obedience from the heart without love, are a contradiction.

7. By the above, I mean that to seek the grace of faith by works of law, is an utter abomination. It is as abominable as to attempt to purchase the Holy Ghost with money. It is to set aside the testimony of God with respect to our utter depravity, and attempt to palm off our unbelieving, heartless works upon an infinitely holy God. It is an attempt to purchase his favor, instead of accepting grace as a sovereign gift.

8. It is as preposterous as it is wicked. It is seeking to please God by our sins--to purchase the grace of faith by making God a liar.

9. To give any other answer to one in unbelief, and to set him to perform any work, with the expectation that by it he shall obtain faith, is to confirm him in self-righteousness--to prolong his rebellion--to lead him either to settle down in a self-righteous hope, or to produce, in the end, discouragement and blasphemy.

10. Because that repentance, faith, love, and every other holy exercise, both imply and proceed from faith. Without confidence in the character and requirements of God, it is impossible to repent. For what is repentance but heartily to justify God, and condemn ourselves. So it is equally impossible to exercise a complacent love to God, without faith. Submission to God also implies and presupposes the exercise of confidence in God, and in His requirements.

11. This is a proper answer, because all right affection, and all good works will necessarily proceed from faith. Christ was not afraid of begetting an Antinomian spirit, by laying so much stress upon faith. He knew full well, that true faith as naturally and necessarily begets every other inward grace, and all outward good works, as a cause produces its effects.

12. It is the only proper answer, because faith is the only exercise that receives Christ with all His powerfully sanctifying influences into the heart. The Bible every where represents the sanctified soul, as being under the influence of an indwelling Christ.

elling Christ. Now the exercise of faith is that opening of the door by which Christ is received to reign in the heart. Who will pretend that any works are properly good, or that any true faith exists in the mind, except as the result of the operation or influence of Christ in the mind. Now if this is so, the proper direction plainly is, to do that which receives Christ. If this is done, all else will be done. If this is neglected, all else will be neglected, of course.

III. I am to show, that under other circumstances another answer might, with propriety, have been given.

1. The careless, unawakened sinner, who knows nothing of his depravity, or helplessness, it might be important and proper to direct to the law of God as the rule of his duty. Not with the expectation of directly promoting holiness thereby, but of convicting him of sin. Thus we find Christ requiring the young man who was wrapped up in self-righteousness, "to keep the commandments," and taking such a course as to bring out before his mind his supreme love of the world. This produced regret and discouragement in him; and when required to "part with all that he had," and follow Christ, he "went away sorrowful."

2. To the anxious sinner, who makes this inquiry, Christ, as I have shown, gave the only appropriate answer. Also, to the Christian, inquiring after sanctification, this is the only appropriate answer. In short, to anyone who is convinced of his real character, this is the proper, and the only proper answer.

3. But to one already full of faith and love, and of the Holy Spirit, another answer may be given; simply because, by the inquiry he means a different thing. When he asks, "what shall I do to work the works of God," his heart breaks forth with the inquiry, "what shall I do to honor and glorify God?" --not "what shall I do to be saved?" Let such an one be directed to the whole preceptive part of the Bible. Do this, and avoid that, is just the instruction which he needs, and upon which he will eagerly seize, to glorify God with all his heart. Such a mind needs instruction, not command and threatening. To him the preceptive part of the Bible is just what his circumstances and state of feeling demand. The commands of the Bible will not beget in him, a legal spirit, and thus prove a stumbling block to his soul. He will not set himself self-righteously to perform the duties enjoined; but his heart goes forth to meet his responsibilities, and perform the requirements of God.

REMARKS

1. You see, from this subject, how to understand Rom. 9:20-32, which I have before quoted, "What shall we say, then, &c. The Jews sought by their own doings to please God, without faith; but all their righteousness was as filthy rags.--While the Gentiles, who had lived in open rebellion, when they heard the gospel, believed it at once, instead of betaking themselves to works of law; and thus exercising faith that works by love, they attained to the righteousness which is of God, by faith.

2. You see why the church is not sanctified.--They overlook the office and necessity of faith, as that which alone can produce acceptable obedience to God. They are engaged in efforts to obtain faith by works, instead of first exercising that faith which will beget within them a clean heart. In this way they seek in vain for sanctification. How common is it to see persons full of bustle and outward efforts and works--fasting and praying, giving and doing, and struggling; and after all, they have not the fruits of the Spirit--love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law. They have not, after all, crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. They do not live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit. They do not, in their own experience, realize the truth of that saying, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Without that trust they cannot have peace; cannot be sanctified.

Others endeavor to force themselves to exercise the various Christian graces, of love, submission, &c., without faith, overlooking the fact that it is faith that works by love, and that repentance and submission imply faith, and are the results of faith. They are the surrendering of our wills to the will of God. But this certainly cannot be, without confidence in the character of God. In short, every Christian grace implies the exercise of faith as its foundation.

3. You see why the Bible lays so much stress upon faith.

4. You see what is the difficulty with those who are constantly in a complaining state, on the subject of religion. They seem to know they are wrong; but do not understand wherein the foundation of their wrong consists. They sometimes think that a neglect of this duty is the grand difficulty, and sometimes something else is that upon which their minds fasten, as the prime difficulty in the case. They set themselves to break off from one sin and another, and practice this self-denial, and that duty, and all without that faith that fills the heart with love. Thus they go round and round in a circle, and do not see that unbelief is their great, their damning sin; without the removal of which no other sin can be repented of or forgiven.

n. All their efforts are entirely legal, hypocritical, and vain till they exercise faith.

5. You see the mistake of Antinomian Perfectionists, in setting aside all preceptive religion, and understanding obedience to the commands of God as legality. They do not make the discrimination here made. If persons without faith, in an unsanctified state, set themselves to obey the commandments of God, their efforts must necessarily be legal, self-righteous and ruinous. To them the precepts of the Gospel, as well as the commandments of the law, are a horrible pit of miry clay. You cast a man into a horrible pit of miry clay, and the more he struggles, the deeper he sinks. Now to a man without faith, the precepts of the law and gospel are fitly compared to miry clay. Every effort at obedience without faith is sin; and as it confirms self-righteousness, is sinking him farther and farther from God, and rational hope. And the more vehemently he struggles, the more desperate and alarming his case becomes. The clay surrounds him, and cleaves to him, suffocates and kills him. Just so the commands of God to an unbelieving heart, are a snare and a pit. They are miry and suffocating clay. Without faith, there is ruin and damnation in them.

6. You see how to the Jews, and to all unbelievers, the commandments of God are a stumbling block. All outward conformity to them is useless, yea, ruinous. Love without faith is impossible. And consequently, the merciful direction and instructions contained in the preceptive parts of the Gospel, are made the food of self-righteousness, and the snare of death. But to those whose souls are full of faith and love, the commandments of God are just the instruction which they need, when, in their ignorance, they earnestly inquire, what they shall do to glorify God. Do this, and avoid that, and the like, are just the things upon which hearts of love will seize, as the needed directions of their heavenly Father.

7. But someone may inquire, do not men learn to exercise faith, by what you call legal efforts, and in obedience to legal directions? No. They only learn by experience, that all such directions are vain, and that they are totally depraved and dependent, which they ought to have believed before. They set themselves to pray, and read, and struggle, expecting at every meeting they attend, every prayer they make, to obtain grace and faith. But they never do until they are completely discouraged, and despair of obtaining help in this way. And the history of every self-righteous sinner's conversion, and every anxious Christian's sanctification would develop this truth--that deliverance cometh not until their self-righteous efforts were proved, by their own experience, to be utterly vain, and abandoned as useless, and the whole subject thrown upon the sovereign mercy of God. This submitting a subject to the sovereign mercy of God is that very act of faith, which they should have put forth long before, but which they would not exercise until every other means had been tried in vain.

8. But perhaps you will say, if by this self-righteous struggle they learn their depravity and dependence, and in this manner come to prove, by their own experience, the truth of God, why not encourage them to make these efforts, as, at least, an indirect way of obtaining faith? Answer: Blasphemy and drunkenness, and any of the most shocking sins, may be, and often have been the means of working conviction, which has resulted in conversion. Why not encourage these things, as such is sometimes their indirect effect? The truth is, when a sinner's attention is awakened, and he is convicted, and puts forth the inquiry, "what shall I do?" and when a Christian, struggling with his remaining corruption, puts forth the same inquiry, why should they be thrown into the horrible pit of which I have spoken? Why not tell them at once, in the language of the text, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent"?

9. Let me say to you who would make the inquiry in the text, don't wait to fast, read, pray or any thing else; don't expect to break off from any sin in your unbelief. You may break off from the outward commission--you may substitute praying for swearing, reading your Bible for reading novels, outward industry and honesty for theft and idleness, sobriety for drunkenness, and any thing you please; and it is, after all, only exchanging one form of sin for another. It is only varying the mode of your warfare. But remember that in unbelief, whatever your conduct is, you are in high-handed rebellion against God. Faith would instantly sanctify your heart, sanctify all your doings, and render them, in Christ Jesus, acceptable to God. Unbelief is your great, your crying, your damning sin--against which the heaviest thunderbolts of Jehovah are hurled.

10. Don't wait for any particular view of Christ before you believe. When persons in the state of mind of which I have been speaking hear those who live in faith describe their views of Christ, they say, "O, if I had such views, I could believe; I must have these before I can believe." Now you should understand that these views are the result and effect of faith. These views of which you speak are that which faith discovers in those passages of Scripture which describe Christ. Faith apprehends the meaning of those passages, and sees in them these very things which you expect to see, before you exercise faith, and which you imagine would produce it. Take hold, then, on the simple promise of God. Take God at his word. Believe that he means just what he says. And this will at once bring you into the state of mind after which you inquire.

11. Let what has been said be an answer to that sister in New York, who inquired, by letter, what she should do to obtain

ain the blessing of sanctification. My dear child, you inquire whether you shall obtain by reading the Bible, or by prayer, fasting, or by all these together. Now let this sermon answer you, and know that by neither, nor by all these, in the absence of faith, are you to grow any better, or find any relief. You speak of being in darkness, and of being discouraged. No wonder you are so, since you have plainly been seeking sanctification by works of law. You have "stumbled at this stumbling stone." You are in the horrible pit and miry clay of which I have just spoken. Immediately exercise faith upon the Son of God. It is the first--the only thing you can do to rest your feet upon the rock, and it will immediately put a new song in to your mouth.

Re: Here is another good one about faith - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2014/4/19 16:42

Great sermon tuc,

There is no contradiction in Finney's teachings, but you can easily see how he can be misunderstood, just as Apostle paul was.