

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Finney... Again****Finney... Again - posted by drifter (), on: 2022/7/18 23:26**

I am reading through Charles Finney's Systematic Theology (it's slow going: I brought it to work to read on my breaks so I typically read 10 pages or so per break; some of the concepts can be difficult to grasp because Finney uses very technical language typical of a lawyer.)

Anyhow, the reason I titled this post "Finney... Again" is because I have found some of his theology hard to grasp and so metimes hard to accept (and I have commented on his theology more than once on SI.)

He says that when someone is truly born of God, if they sin (which, I might add, is ALWAYS willingly, according to him; sin is a wilful breaking of God's law. I tend to agree with this as sin is never an accident), then the child of God stands condemned under the law, and is in exactly the same position as a sinner; if he were to die with sin not repented of, he would go to hell. The only difference between the sinner and the believer is that the believer is legally a child of God. He says that as soon as you sin, you cease to be holy; a person cannot be holy and sinful at the same time.

I should point out that Finney did not believe in original sin. I do (tentatively). My view is that humans are born with a propensity (or a bent, if you like) towards sin. We do not pay the penalty for Adam's sin, but we have a corrupted nature. I think that when a person is born again, he is given a new nature, a new heart, and the old nature is at war with the new. The way I see it, Romans 7 describes the christian's battle against the old nature.

Has anyone on here read Finney's Systematic Theology, or are you at least familiar with the concepts (and have not only read articles decrying him as a heretic)? I do agree with 95% of what he says, but I have a problem with this one teaching.

Re: Finney... Again - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/7/19 2:14

It is good to study the bible systematically, but when it comes to theology, every system will err and fail, and misrepresent God and cause pain and division, regardless how much effort and research is put into its development.

Look at Calvinism, Arminianism, Deism, Theism, open theism, dispensationalism... you name it. No 2 theologians agree completely with another.

God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit always agree.

The reason is simple. God is not a system, nor does he use one. God is God and he is a person with infinite depth and wisdom. Infact all of God's attributes are infinite. We will take forever to know God in all His depth.

Man needs systems and they all have their faults, because reality is always more complex than any system that tries to operate in it.

Even the law of God, perfect as it was, failed to cure man's ailments. God needed to come in person to sort us out.

If there was a perfect theological system, it would be in the bible. Instead God uses history, law, poetry, parables and narrative to reveal himself to man in his word. His word can only be understood by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is by far the best theologian, because he knows all the depth and riches and wisdom of God.

Re: NP - posted by JFW (), on: 2022/7/19 8:05

Your response is very well worded and (for me) addresses the crux of the matter, thank you ðŸ™•ðŸ•»

Nigel,
Finney is an interesting character whom has always found favor with me even when we donâ€™t share the same understanding, It is most likely due to his relentless pursuit (love) of the truth and his ruthless rejection of anything deemed not true (the world).
While, like us all, Finney had a limited perspective (light), he nonetheless seems to have been faithful to his â€œheavenly visionâ€ and like Paul, was zealous for the work of the ministry.

One of Finneyâ€™s strengths was the clear understanding of â€œpotential vs literalâ€ in his rendering of scripture. This is largely due to his legal training and carried over into his ministry. This line of demarcation was seemingly forever present in the cases he made whether in addressing faith or grace or salvation itself and figures heavily in his doctrine and subsequent theology.

In my understanding, Finney saw original sin in the same context as salvation,... as a precondition (potential) that is present but not active until we submit and serve it. Likewise he saw that it is only applicable (imparted) so long as we remain (abide) in it, which is to say that in either case it is only credited to our account when we act in faith regarding it.

Regarding your specific point, it would seem that Finney took Paulâ€™s admonition in 1 Cor 9:27 as a literal potential for us all-

â€œBut I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.â€

This is of course not the only verse that speaks so, there are many from Lord Jesus that share similar warnings/encouragements - tho historically not many have really given heed to such mainly because of the implications and demands it puts on the â€œbelieverâ€ where most of which would shrink back at the prospects. Finney attempted to make a clear point of God's requirement of holiness and squarely rejected any attempt to water down the gospel to allow for anything less

This quote would stand in sharp contrast to how the gospel is and has been preached over the past decade or so and illustrates where the opposition to his ministry resided and continues to this day. In fact there are few preachers who have stirred such controversy from their own brethren than did Charles Finney and tbh I tend to like those types of preachers, if for no other reason, their commitment to what they believe even if the whole world was against them :)

â€œ GRACE: The impression of many seems to be, that grace will pardon what it cannot prevent; in other words, that if the grace of the Gospel fails to save people from the commission of sin in this life; it will nevertheless pardon them and save them in sin, if it cannot save them from sin. Now, really, I understand the Gospel as teaching that men are saved from sin first, and as a consequence, from hell; and not that they are saved from hell while they are not saved from sin. Christ sanctifies when he saves. And this is the very first element or idea of salvation, saving from sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel, "for he shall save his people from their sins." "Having raised up his Son Jesus," says the apostle, "he hath sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities." Let no one expect to be saved from hell, unless the grace of the Gospel saves him first from sin.--Charles Finneyâ€

Hereâ€™s a link to a good source for Finney and those of like mind -
<http://www.charlesfinney.com/gospeltruth.php>

Re: Finney... Again - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/23 10:42

You should also study Pelagianism to see why Finneyâ€™s theology is suspect.

Here is a good article to explain:

<https://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-pelagius/>

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/7/27 13:54

I actually started reading "Lectures on Revivals of Religion" by Finney. It is easy to sit in your study and find fault in the theology of men God used. They all had their faults; Finney, Wesley, Luther, Spurgeon..

God looks at the fruit of our lives, and compared to them I guess any of us weighed in the balances will be found wanting. Their testimony stands, they walked the walk, shed the tears, and had callouses on their knees thanks to nights in prayer.

Without the revivals that these men were involved, I guess Tim Challies would not have the platform and audience he has today.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/28 12:56

Finney is a heretic and the author of so many ungodly church practices we now see today. The man does not deserve to be named among Wesley, Luther, and Spurgeon.

Finney self-aggrandized. And you are right about fruits. The burned over district, an incredibly high percentage of his converts abandoning the faith, and teaching demonic doctrines. I would say the fruits definitely show who he is.

Re: Pelagianism - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/7/28 14:07

Pelagius did not believe in Pelagianism, not even Semi-Pelagianism. Pelagius did not promote that man can get saved by his unaided will but believed more like Wesley in fallen man's ability to respond to God's prevenient grace.

It was a malicious campaign by Augustin who attributed false teachings to Pelagius in order to cancel him for his own advantage in order to promote his own false teachings that include predetermination, infant baptism, baptismal regeneration and OSAS. He got him ousted by papal decree, which is absolutely shameful.

In a very similar fashion Jacob Arminius was condemned in the synode of Doort.

Wasn't Jesus also condemned by the chief priests and pharisees? Didn't they manipulate the secular and official religious authorities?

Matthew 10:17

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues,

Matthew 5:10-12

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

There is a good discourse by Leighton Flowers and Dr. Ali Bonner, who did extensive research Pelagius and his contemporaries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAMAYi1cjZw&t=5s>

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/28 15:02

I am not a huge fan of Augustine either, but that doesn't change that Finney was a heretic.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/28 15:22

And you don't have to take my word for it. Read Pelagius's words yourself. He condemns himself (erâ€technically he is justifying himself, ha!):

That is why we must now take precautions to prevent you from being embarrassed by something in which the ignorant majority is at fault for lack of proper consideration, and so from supposing, with them, that man has not been created truly good simply because he is able to do evil and is not obliged by the overpowering inclination of his own nature to do good on compulsion and without any possibility of variation. If you reconsider this matter carefully and force your mind to apply a more acute understanding to it, it will be revealed to you that man's status is better and higher for the very reason for which it is thought to be inferior: it is on this choice between two ways, on this freedom to choose either alternative, that the glory of the rational mind is based, it is in this that the whole honour of our nature consists, it is from this that its dignity is derived and all good men win others' praise and their own reward. Nor would there be any virtue at all in the good done by the man who perseveres, if he could not at any time cross over to the path of evil.²³

2. It was because God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative, that he made it his peculiar right to be what he wanted to be, so that with his capacity for good and evil he could do either quite naturally and then bend his will in the other direction too. He could not claim to possess the good of his own volition, unless he were the kind of creature that could also have possessed evil. Our most excellent creator wished us to be able to do either but actually to do only one, that is, good, which he also commanded, giving us the capacity to do evil only so that we might do his will by exercising our own. That being so, this very capacity to do evil is also good - good, I say, because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent, not bound by necessity but free to decide for itself. We are certainly permitted to choose, oppose, approve, reject, and there is no ground for preferring the rational creature to the others except that, while all the others possess only the good derived from their own circumstances and necessity, it alone possesses the good of free will also.

But most of those who, from lack of faith as much as of knowledge, deplore the status of man, are - I am ashamed to admit it - criticising the Lord's work and asserting that man ought to have been so made that he could do no evil at all, and we are then in a position where what is moulded says to its moulder: Why have you made me thus (Rom.9.20)? And these most shameless of men, while hiding the fact that they are managing quite well with what they have been made, would prefer to have been made otherwise; and so those who are unwilling to correct their own way of life appear to want to correct nature itself instead, the good of which has been so universally established in all that it sometimes reveals itself and brings itself to notice even in pagans who do not worship God. For how many of the pagan philosophers have we heard and read and even seen for ourselves to be chaste, tolerant, temperate, generous, abstinent and kindly, rejecters of the world's honours as well as its delights, lovers of justice no less than knowledge? Whence, I ask you, do these good qualities pleasing to God come to men who are strangers to him? Whence can these good qualities come to them, unless it be from the good of nature? And since we see the qualities of which I have spoken contained either all in one person or severally in several persons and since the nature of all is one and the same, by their example they show each other that all qualities which are found either all together in all or severally in each one are able to exist in all alike. But if even men without God can show what kind of creatures they were made by God, consider what Christians are able to do whose nature and life have been instructed for the better by Christ and who are assisted by the aid of divine grace as well.

4, 1. Come now, let us approach the secret places of our soul, let everyone examine himself more attentively, let us ask what opinion our own personal thoughts have of this matter, let our conscience itself deliver its judgement on the good of nature, let us be instructed by the inner teaching of the mind, and let us learn about each of the good qualities of the mind from no other source but the mind itself. Why is it, I ask you, that we either blush or fear at every sin we commit, displaying our guilt for what we have done at one moment by the blush on our countenance, at another by its pallor, anxiously trying to avoid any witness even of our smallest offences and suffering pangs of conscience all the while? And why, on the other hand, are we happy, resolute, bold after every good deed we have done and, if this fact is hidden from sight, desire and wish it to be seen in broad daylight? Why else unless it is because nature itself is its own witness and discloses its own good by the very fact of its disapproval of evil and, by putting its trust only in a good deed, shows what alone benefits it? Hence it comes about that frequently, though a murderer's identity remains concealed, torments of conscience make furious attacks on the author of the crime, and the secret punishment of the mind takes vengeance on the guilty man in hiding; nor is there any room for escape from punishment after the crime has been committed, since guilt is itself the penalty. That is why the innocent man, contrariwise, enjoys the peace of mind that comes from a good conscience even while undergoing torture and, though he fears punishment, still glories in his innocence.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/7/29 5:46

God uses people with imperfect theology, even today. He used both Wesley and Whitfield, Moody and Spurgeon, Luther and Arminius who but disagreed in major points in their theology. If Finney was a heretic, how then did his revivals operate? Miracles happened in his ministry and there was true repentance. Was it in the power of the devil or by the work of the Holy Spirit?

All true servants of God are maligned by some, the bible foretold us. If you want a clue, look at who persecuted whom in church history and it is always from within what calls itself Christendom. You always find the Pharisees, Priests, Herodians, Sadducees as chief enemies who manipulate the governments.

Jesus warned sternly about attributing the Holy Spirit's work to the devil. How many souls have his critics won?

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/29 5:58

Everything you have said could also be applied to Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism and Charles Taze Russell, the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses. The amount of rejection one receives from the church is not a measure of how godly someone is.

Pragmatism. That is what you are identifying as the method by which we determine if someone was used by God. Pragmatism asks "Did it produce the desired results?"

Biblical Christianity asks "Did it honor and obey the commands of God in the exaltation of Christ?" Finney failed in this. He is the author of many of the pragmatic, manipulative methods to garner a response that you are familiar with already in some churches today.

And you are right about God uses imperfect people. However, that argument bears no weight as that is as true for Paul the Apostle as it is for you and me, but that does not justify Finney.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/30 17:43

In response to the belief that Finney's critics did no work, I need only to point to Asahel Nettleton. Here is an excellent, well-researched article explaining the difference between the two.

<https://www.ccwtoday.org/2021/08/asahel-nettleton-the-forgotten-evangelist/>

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/7/31 10:42

"God uses people with imperfect theology, even today. He used both Wesley and Whitfield, Moody and Spurgeon, Luther and Arminius who but disagreed in major points in their theology."

You can't argue with the fact that Charles Finney was anointed by God, greatly used by the Lord and many souls were saved through his ministry.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/7/31 10:52

"Though controversial at the time, Finney's success in Rochester and other areas was enhanced by:

Encouraging the immediate reception of new converts as members in churches.

Conducting protracted meetings over a period of days or weeks.

Allowing women to pray and exhort during church services.

Utilizing women's prayer groups to capitalize on existing social networks for evangelism.

During his sermons those who felt the conviction of sin and their need of a Savior were invited to come to the front to sit in the pews reserved for them. This pew was called the "anxious seat." Others have termed this the "mourner's bench."

He would pray for people publicly by name.

âThe New York revivals spread from one church to another, and from one town to another.

âThese small churches, in towns with very low populations, were frequently reporting conversions in the amounts of: 50, 107, 140, 200, 250, 300, etc.

Results of the Revivals

âMany taverns closed because of a lack of customers.

âTheaters were known to shut down because few would frequent them. (Theaters were considered sinful places of amusement.)

âThe District Attorney stated that after the revival in Rochester, NY, the crime rate dropped by two-thirds and remained that way for years.

âHundreds of thousands became members of the churches.

This Revival was Typical of the Entire Nation

Though the revival in upstate New York was astounding in itself, it was typical of what was taking place throughout the nation at that time. This era is known as the Second Great Awakening (1790 â 1840).

From âBeautiful Feetâ

Re: - posted by deogloria, on: 2022/7/31 12:28

I have now also done a bit of reading and research about Finney.

I was mainly interested if he preached and taught a biblical Gospel or not.

His influence and "success" and how many churches were filled is not a proof that he was preaching sound Biblical truth.

Here are some quotes from Finneyâs âLectures on Systematic Theologyâ

1. âSeveral theologians have held that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit alone â but I might just as lawfully insist that it is the work of man alone.â
2. âThe doctrine of imputed righteousness, or that Christâs obedience to the Law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption/â
3. Christ âcould do no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us â it was naturally impossible, then, for him to obey on our behalf.â

So it soon becomes clear to me that I wouldn't read or study his teachings.

Again it shows me that it is paramount to know the Word of God and the true Gospel.

To copy any bible teacher or theologian, without testing it, without proper discernment, is dangerous and can easily lead us astray.

"In Christ alone my hope is found he is my light my strength my song this cornerstone this solid ground..."

Blessings

Markus

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/7/31 14:58

I am not going to get into a debate over Finney, but I have seen many men of God totally misrepresented on this forum.

âIt would be impossible to estimate the influence exerted on revival movements all over the world during the past hundred years by Charles Finneyâs lectures on prayer in his Revivals of Religion.â Arthur Wallis â

âFinney never made an altar call within the first twenty eight nights of preaching. Most of our evangelists donât have twenty eight sermons. Twenty eight nights in a row and he never made an altar call. He didnât preach the love of

God. He didn't say "you're a sinner, God loves you." He said "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11) which the Word of God says. He didn't preach grace, he preached Law. He didn't preach love, he preached judgment. He didn't preach heaven, he preached hell. He didn't say "you're a wonderful person" he said "you're a rebel". But he got results. 64% of D. L. Moody's converts backslid, 72% of the converts Finney got stood because he knew how to attack the human will, not just the emotions. Leonard Ravenhill

Re: - posted by ChrisA, on: 2022/7/31 15:53

Many fine preachers and evangelists have espoused Finney as a great revivalist and soul winner, but when I dug into his own writings I was stunned to read that he did not believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins at Calvary's cross. This is absolutely fundamental to the Christian faith.

Finney also wrote that many of his converts in New York's "burned out district" had quickly fallen away with reprobate behavior.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/7/31 16:00

Many fine preachers and evangelists have espoused Finney as a great revivalist and soul winner, but when I dug into his own writings I was stunned to read that he did not believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins at Calvary's cross. This is absolutely fundamental to the Christian faith.

Please give the source for the quote where Finney said this.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/7/31 16:05

It does not say, you will recognize them by sound theology, but you will recognize them by their fruits.

Read Matthew 7:15-20

Be careful not to attribute the Spirit's work of the devil nor the devil's work to the Spirit. Will you retract your words on judgment day?

If have no doubt that the Holy Spirit worked in Finney's revivals. There was prayer, repentance, worship, reduction in crime and many were swept into the kingdom. All hype and smoke and mirrors? One day we will know. Yes there are fake revivals, fake evangelism, fake miracles, promoted by false doctrine, especially in our time. I have been there and got out of it. Every true revival or move of God will be smeared by those who claim to have orthodoxy on their side. This was the case in Christ's time and will be to the end.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/7/31 16:42

"Just at this point the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvellous to me at that time. I think I then saw, as clearly as I ever have in my life, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that his work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ. Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of something to be accepted; and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and accept Christ. Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented himself before me as my God and my Saviour."

Charles Finney

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/31 16:51

â€œYou canâ€™t argue with the fact that Charles Finney was anointed by God, greatly used by the Lord and many souls were saved through his ministry.â€

I can argue with that â€œfact.â€ I have objectively looked at Finneyâ€™s theology, practices, and conversion. I must admit that the effect he had was profound and long-lasting. The claims he made about his ministry were amazing and to be grateful for, if indeed done in the power of the Spirit. However, an incredibly high percentage of his converts fell away (see the article I posted earlier). The methods he used were, by his own mouth, contrived and man-centered. His theology was Pelagian at best. I know a lot of people love Finney, but He has done a great deal of damage to the Church and introduced pragmatic means by which he successfully filled churches with false converts and poor practices.

You cannot measure any ministerâ€™s success by the number of professing conversions. You measure it by Ephesians 4, 1 John, and Matthew. 7.

Re: - posted by ChrisA, on: 2022/7/31 18:30

Replying to Mike's question, chapter 21 of Finney's Systematic Theology will give the answer. Many online researchers have analyzed Finney's writings. Here is an excerpt of one, regarding the aforementioned book, which sheds some light on Finney's theology:

The first thing we must note about the atonement, Finney says, is that Christ could not have died for anyone elseâ€™s sins than his own. His obedience to the law and his perfect righteousness were sufficient to save him, but could not legally be accepted on behalf of others. That Finneyâ€™s whole theology is driven by a passion for moral improvement is seen on this very point: "If he had obeyed the Law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a sine qua non of our salvation" (p.206)? In other words, why would God insist that we save ourselves by our own obedience if Christâ€™s work was sufficient? The reader should recall the words of St. Paul in this regard, "I do not nullify the grace of Godâ€™, for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing." It would seem that Finneyâ€™s reply is one of agreement. The difference is, he has no difficulty believing both of those premises.

That is not entirely fair, of course, because Finney did believe that Christ died for somethingâ€™not for someone, but for something. In other words, he died for a purpose, but not for people. The purpose of that death was to reassert Godâ€™s moral government and to lead us to eternal life by example, as Adamâ€™s example excited us to sin. Why did Christ die? God knew that "The atonement would present to creatures the highest possible motives to virtue. Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted ... If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless" (p.209). Therefore, we are not helpless sinners who need to,â€™ be redeemed, but wayward sinners who need a demonstration of selflessness so moving that we will be excited to leave off selfishness. Not only did Finney believe that the "moral influence" theory of the atonement was the chief way of understanding the cross; he explicitly denied the substitutionary atonement, which

"assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement ... It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one" (p.217).

Then there is the matter of applying redemption. Throwing off Reformation orthodoxy, Finney argued strenuously against the belief that the new birth is a divine gift, insisting that "regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference; or in changing from selfishness to love or benevolence," as moved by the moral influence of Christâ€™s moving example (p.224). "Original sin, physical regeneration, and all their kindred and resulting dogmas, are alike subversive of the gospel, and repulsive to the human intelligence" (p.236).

Having nothing to do with original sin, a substitutionary atonement, and the supernatural character of the new birth, Finney proceeds to attack "the article by which the church stands or falls"â€™ justification by grace alone through faith alone.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/31 19:46

<https://www.monergism.com/charles-finney-vs-westminster-confession>

Here are some quotes:

“It is a monstrous and blasphemous dogma, that a holy God is angry with any creature for possessing a nature with which he was sent into being without his knowledge or consent.”

“Original or constitutional sinfulness, physical regeneration, and all their kindred and resulting dogmas, are alike subversive of the gospel, and repulsive to the human intelligence.”

“There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature.”

“It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature. It is just that and nothing else. When mankind become religious, they are not enabled to put forth exertions which they were unable before to put forth. They only exert powers which they had before, in a different way, and use them for the glory of God. A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of constituted means--as much as any other effect produced by the application of means.”

The man was a heretic and a pragmatist. His own words prove it.

I am not being hard on Finney just to ruffle your feathers or win some debate. Finney's theology and influence is destroying my denomination right now (SBC). The emphasis on the number of responses/baptisms, the pragmatic use of psychological manipulation and the “New School” view of depravity have gutted any genuine Gospel that was left.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/7/31 19:53

Narrowpath,

If what we believe (theology) does not count as fruit, then why did God inspire the Pauline Epistles, John's writings (read John 1!!!), Peter's writings, Jude's, James, Hebrews? Those books are replete with theology and many doctrines are essential to even be considered Christian (read 1 John, Jude, 2 Peter, Hebrews, and Romans for proof on that.)

What you believe has everything to do with this. Finney taught ungodly ideas:

“The doctrine of an imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption, for Christ's righteousness could do no more than justify himself. It can never be imputed to us....It was naturally impossible, then, for him to obey in our behalf. Representing the atonement as the ground of the sinner's justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many.” — Finney

And I am not committing blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because Finney's words no more align with the Gospel of Christ than Joseph Smith's did.

Re: - posted by Altimus, on: 2022/7/31 20:30

Finney's theology was full of Pelagianism. Though I confess I have not read anything by him explicitly. I have gathered a baseline knowledge to his rejection of original sin from various sources which is further cemented by the Quotes by ChrisA and Havoc20x.

Pelagianism is a dangerous heresy as it undermines one of the core tenants of man's state before God: His utter depravity. Man is born in his sin and cannot come to God by any means. Any righteousness he does is already his due (Romans 4:4) and any works are similarly not clean in God's sight but instead filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). By denying the state of man as lost and in need of a savior and instead moving them from completely dead to just sick due to their own idiocy, you destroy the need for a savior. If man is not evil but simply wicked though he could be good, he does not need a regeneration, or a new birth by the power of the Holy Spirit but instead in inspiration to change his mind and revert his course. This the moral influence theory asserted by ChrisA that is present in Finney's writings.

If one holds to a pelagian doctrine of man's state there is no need for a savior as many only needs to be reverted or perhaps healed but not redeemed from his death to sin. He can make his way to God if he so chooses, he just must be persuaded.

Understanding this denial of original sin and the sin nature of man, makes Finney's tactics much more understandable since he believed man only needed to be corrected to reach his true potential not saved out of the death of his sin. As a result he used manipulative tactics that brought "results" but rarely actual true salvation.

Finney's key contribution was the sinner's prayer in which he stated that a 15 minute prayer will bring you out of God's condemnation and into his favor. He asserted that once this was completed a man was saved (in essence by his own merit). This was one reason why the burned over districts were created as these were led to believe that were saved as a result of this prayer and no further action was needed to punch their ticket to heaven. They missed the glory of God and the joy of walking with Christ as the gospel of Jesus was perverted from a need of salvation to the uttermost sinner to instead a formulaic action to get into heaven.

To the member who asserted that Finney was a man of God because of the "salvations" this does not stand up against scripture. Many can profess to know Christ but we know true faith from the changed life that it produces and the fruits it yields in the long-term.

The Gospel conversion often requires further investigation as occurred in the book of Acts when Peter and John were sent to Samaria to discern whether the gospel had indeed come to the gentiles (Acts 8:9-25) and lay hands on the new believers. Furthermore, we are to test every spirit against the scripture to see whether or not it is from God (1 John 4:1). Many movements have come and gone and we can know whether or not they are of the Lord based upon whether they agree with the Gospel that is given us in Christ. Anything that disagrees on the Gospel is counterfeit, and no matter the perceived results is not from God. After all, many will be led away in the last days by the false prophet. Just because something appears to be getting results does not mean it is from God.

The judge of Finney will not be his mark on history, but ultimately how his teachings reflected the true gospel of salvation from utter depravity and sin through Christ alone. And I believe from what has already been said this judge will be everyting but favorable.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiss (), on: 2022/8/1 1:05

Hi ChrisA,

Quote:

Many fine preachers and evangelists have espoused Finney as a great revivalist and soul winner, but when I dug into his own writings I was stunned to read that he did not believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins at Calvary's cross. This is absolutely fundamental to the Christian faith.

Thanks for sharing. Did you read this directly while reading through his writings or is this something that you read in other sources about Finney's writings?

If the former, let me pose two questions:

- 1.) Did he ever write or say something that is effectively contrary to the statement that you asserted (i.e., "...he did not believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins at Calvary's cross.")?
- 2.) Is it possible that Finney ever changed his mind during his very long life?

For the first question, I think that it is important to know whether this is something that Finney clearly believed -- having never said/wrote anything else that could be construed otherwise.

This would rule out that this statement than a small morsel of something from a particular context. Because, if he did, in fact, ever write something contrary to the statement of belief that you've attributed to him, then it would contradict that attributed statement.

As for the second question: There are individuals who have been known to change their views on many such matters. I've known hyper-Calvinists who later disavowed any belief in Calvinism and I've known anti-Calvinists who later became hyper-Calvinists. The same can be said of many different views -- even among believers who have regularly posted here on SermonIndex over the last nearly two decades.

Many of the writings from Finney books were actually transcribed from lectures and notes early periods in his ministry. Moreover, some of his teaching may have been more personal views that may have been taught in a theological setting (such as Oberlin) as opposed to what he would have taught to a congregation of believers.

I must admit that I am not an expert on the life and teachings of Charles Finney. Apart from his Memoirs, I haven't read much in terms of theology from Finney (or most other preachers for that matter).

I do know that Finney was mentioned in my U.S. history class in public high school (at a time when I didn't even believe in Christ) as well as in two of my required undergraduate history courses that I took at a secular university. Those particular courses included sections on the impact of the "Second Great Awakening" and the role that Finney played in it during the first century of this nation's history.

So, I suppose, that my questions are more cautionary -- but also to ascertain whether or not this statement of belief (that you asserted) was never contradicted by something else that Finney said or wrote. Moreover, I think that it is important to know whether he believed this throughout his life (rather than merely at a point in which that particular lecture was not attended).

I have previously read many claims about Finney and "Pelagianism." However, I've noticed that a handful of those sources seem to be an exercise in confirmation bias -- seeing something that would confirm a suspicion.

On the other hand, I haven't read anything from Finney apart from his Memoirs. So, I am unaware of his statements that would affirm what you wrote or any potential conflicting statements where Finney may have actually written or uttered something about the work of the cross that might contradict what you've stated.

Quote:

Finney also wrote that many of his converts in New York's "burned out district" had quickly fallen away with reprobate behavior.

Interesting point. However, I think that the same can be said of many of the "revivals" and evangelical crusades that are more widely embraced too. I do think that, in a historic perspective, the Second Great Awakening wasn't just about people coming to Christ but about an "awakening" where people thought about and became concerned with the condition of their souls. The historic impact of that movement is cemented in the history of this country.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/8/1 1:37

Good questions Chris. Finney ascribed to the New Haven / New School theology. He stated that his theology did not change at all, but it absolutely did. He didn't start out a pelagian (he didn't even know that term, truthfully). However, he was insistent that his understanding of Scripture was superior to all others. Finney's systematic theology, which we have been quoting is written by him and for the purpose of codifying his teachings.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/8/1 19:34

Finney's conversion testimony:

In studying the law, I found that the authors frequently quoted Scripture, and referred especially to Moses as authority for many of the principles of common law. This excited my curiosity so much that I went and purchased a Bible, the first I had ever owned; and whenever I found a reference to the Bible, I turned to the passage and consulted it in its connection. This soon led to my taking a new interest in the Bible, and I read and meditated on it much more than I had ever done before in my life. However, much of it I still did not understand.

I began to talk to the local minister, but found it impossible to attach any meaning to many of the terms which he used.

What did he mean by repentance? And what did he mean by faith? And I was particularly struck by the fact that the prayers that I listened to, from week to week, were not, that I could see, answered. And so as I read my Bible and attended prayer meetings, I became very restless.

But I was very proud without knowing it. I had no regard for the opinions of others, and was unwilling to have anyone know that I was seeking the salvation of my soul. When I prayed I would only whisper, after having stopped the key-hole to the door, lest someone should discover me. And I kept my Bible out of sight. If I was reading it when anybody came in, I would throw my law books upon it, to create the impression that I had not had it in my hand. I was unwilling to converse with the minister, because I did not want to let him know how I felt, and for the same reason I avoided conversation with the elders of the church.

Then one night in October 1821 a strange feeling came over me, as if I was about to die. I knew that if I did I should sink down to hell; but I quieted myself as best I could until morning.

At an early hour I started for the office. But just before I arrived at the office, something seemed to confront me: "What are you waiting for? What are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

Just at this point the whole question of salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me. I saw, as clearly as I ever have since, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that his work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ.

Salvation seemed to me an offer to be accepted; it was full and complete; and all that was necessary on my part, was to give up my sins, and to accept Christ. North of the village lay a piece of woods, and I turned and bent my course toward these woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.

But still my pride showed itself. As I went over the hill, it occurred to me that someone might see me and suppose that I was going away to pray. Probably there was not a person on earth that would have suspected such a thing, had he seen me going. But so great was my pride, and so much was I possessed with the fear of man, that I crept along under the fence, till I got so far out of sight that no one could see me. Then I penetrated into the woods and knelt down for prayer, vowing that I would give my heart to God, or never come down from the woods again.

As I returned to the village, I found that my mind had become wonderfully quiet and peaceful.

No words can express the love that was in my heart. I wept aloud with joy; and I literally bellowed out the unutterable glories of my heart.

The next morning, a client came into the office and said to me, "Mr. Finney, do you recollect that my cause is to be tried at ten o'clock this morning? I suppose you are ready?" I had been retained to attend this suit as his attorney. I replied to him, "Mr. B-, I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and can no longer plead yours." He looked at me with astonishment, and said, "What do you mean?" I told him, in a few words, that I had enlisted in the cause of Christ; and that he must go and get somebody else to attend court; I could not do it. Without making any reply, he went out, and I sallied forth from the office to converse with those whom I should meet about their souls. I had the impression, which has never left my mind, that God wanted me to preach the Gospel, and that I must begin immediately.

No longer had I any desire to practice law. Everything in that direction was shut up. My whole mind was taken up with Jesus and his salvation; the world seemed to me of very little consequence. Nothing, it seemed, could be put in competition with the worth of souls; no labor could be so sweet, and no employment so exalted, as that of holding up Christ to a dying world.

Re: - posted by Altimus, on: 2022/8/1 20:03

It is encouraging to hear the conversion testimony of Finney as it appears to be strong and real. According to his testimony he has a strong understanding of the atonement and the need for the righteousness of Christ. However, I believe we need to continue to observe what he taught and what fruit came from this conversion. Simon the sorcerer was converted, but then he sought to buy the power of the Holy Spirit and only made himself a greater son of hell. I could give you further examples of individuals who acknowledged and had an understanding of the true gospel and a repentance of their former false teaching, yet did not turn to Christ and instead continued preaching false doctrine to the people they lead.

I do not suppose to say that like Simon, Finney was unregenerate. I have not studied his writing as much as some of you have and will have to cede in large part to your research as I don't have access to Finney's writings beyond what I already know. Still, the discussion does not need to be settled by one conversion story, but instead by the fruit that this conversion produced.

Were his teachings in line with the atonement of Christ alone through faith alone? Was he calling on sinners to repent of their sin and to turn to Christ as their only hope? Did he exhort sinners to come with no righteousness but only a repentant heart as that is all they can provide and that by the work of the Holy Spirit? That is the question that needs to be answered based on his teachings.

Though there may have been a difference in style to different audiences as Chris noted, the message of any man of integrity will remain the same. So the question remains, what was the message that he taught?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/8/2 7:32

In the recent thread titled "Deal Radically with Impure Thoughts by Zac Poonen" he says in effect that failure to stop sinning will end a Christian in hell.

Isn't that, in effect, what Finney said?

Are both correct or neither correct? Both put a very high bar on personal holiness to the point that failing to be personally holy puts a person at risk of hellfire. But is this what the gospel teaches? Surely a person should strive to be holy but if he fails in moments of weakness or is in a period of backsliding is he doomed to hell if he has truly accepted Christ?

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/8/2 9:58

I believe that Leonard Ravenhill would not speak highly of any minister that is preaching heresy. This is what Ravenhill had to say about Finney.

"The greatest preacher America ever had in my judgment was Charles Finney."

Ravenhill speaking on Wesley and Finney:

<https://youtu.be/CWc1OMGvTBg>

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/8/2 14:30

TMK, thank you for posting Finney's conversion testimony. I would not attempt to pick this apart. There is no need for it. The Bible tells us that there are many who are false teachers, false converts, and those who shipwrecked their faith. Ultimately, when you look at the teachings of Charles Finney, they are not good. They moralize men, use pragmatic and ungodly means to garner responses, and lead to many false converts. Look at what we are doing today. There are so many false professions of faith. There are so many pastors who, rather than preach the gospel, make men to make decisions instead of come to know God through salvation in Jesus Christ. We see the fruit of this every day. Finney is the author of much of that "much of the methodology, much of the means, and much of the pragmatic systems that are used. Read his writings. Look at the things that we have quoted from his mouth. Go look at the context, and you will not find that are quotes are merely proof texts. Finney did say some orthodox things, but he also said heretical things. The orthodox things that he said do not justify him. That is called talking out of both sides of your mouth.

As far as Leonard Ravenhill is concerned, an endorsement from another man does not mean that the man wasn't a heretic.

Will committing since send you to hell after you have come to know Jesus Christ? Absolutely not! I have not listen to the sermon by Zach Poonen, so I will not comment on it nor it's contents. What I will say is that Finney preached a "Gospel" that emphasized and demanded a perfectionistic and self driven obedience as the means to salvation. Jesus was merely, in his theology, the ultimate example to garner and produce the emotional response needed for people to choose to be saved. That is heresy, no matter how you look at it.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/8/2 14:38

The logical conclusion of anyone that believes Finney was teaching heresy would be that those that were converted at his meetings were false converts, and that the revivals that came about as a result of his ministry were not true Holy Spirit revivals, but were the work of another spirit.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/8/2 14:57

Havok-

I am curious about your stance on the crusades of Billy Graham. It has been said that many of the thousands (millions?) "perhaps a very high percentage" of those who came forward fell away or were not truly converted.

PS- the Zac Poonen thread I referenced is not a sermon but rather an article recently posted in this forum. Not a long read.

I am not necessarily disagreeing with you regarding Finney- it just seems there may be some gray area so we should be a little careful.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/8/2 16:28

Most revivalists were maligned, even as Christ himself and Paul and the apostles. What will you do when you meet Finney and all the souls won through his preaching, in heaven?

All yours words are on record.

Where are the Finneys of today? I hear much preaching "about" the cross and the atonement, penal substitution, imputed righteousness, all good but where is the power?..We say we preach forgiveness of sin, but actually we give away indulgences for free! At best we try to preserve conservative evangelicalism! Who preaches Christ am Him crucified nowadays? Who dares to preach the foolishness of the cross?

Where is the scare of hellfire and judgement? Where is the presentation of the fierce wrath of God, where is the preaching of the law that shuts every hypocrite up? Why not make sinners feel miserable by the blazing brightness of presented truth so that they cry out to God and get saved? This is what Finney preached. Finney preached a great deal to the unconverted but religious churchgoers. Today churches are again full of pseudo-religious people who were never born again let alone filled with the Holy Spirit.

We live in a day and age where behavior in church is tolerated that 100 years ago would make unregenerate roughnecks in whiskey bars blush.

Have a problem with that? You Americans owe to preachers like Edwards and Finney all the collateral Christian blessings, thousands of churches and seminars, missionaries, literature, prosperity, peace and greatness you enjoyed.

May God raise up more men like him, and I believe he will. When did we last see a tumult because of gospel preaching?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/8/2 17:14

Great questions NP.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/8/2 17:56

Narrowpath,

You are essentially saying to me: because your life and others' lives do not produce the results that Finney saw, we are obviously not as godly. I do not need to defend myself in this. God knows that I faithfully preach and teach the Gospel when I have opportunity. You are in a pragmatic hole that pits the results against the truth. Finney had results. I won't deny that, but did he tell them the truth? No. No he did not. The impact he had on Christianity has caused all the modern false converts you see today. And to be very clear, the "blessings" if which you speak come from God alone. Finney is a man. Nothing more.

TMK,

Thank you for the question. I am sad that Graham used the strategy he did. His theology was closer to what the scriptures said. His methods, which descended from Finney and the 2nd Great Awakening New Methods, were lamentable. Toward the end of his life, he did begin to espouse some odd theology, but did not elaborate much. So many of his converts fell away. But I have not read nearly the amount of information on Graham as I have on Finney. Please do not think that is a copout. I just don't know enough about him to even make a definitive call on it.

Re: - posted by BranchinVINE (), on: 2022/8/3 1:23

havok20x,

Quote:

----- Finney is a heretic and the author of so many ungodly church practices we now see today.

I am not familiar with Finney's teaching.

Can you list some of these ungodly church practices?

Thanks.

Re: - posted by BranchinVINE (), on: 2022/8/3 1:25

Quote:

----- You Americans owe to preachers like Edwards and Finney all the collateral Christian blessings, thousands of churches and seminars, missionaries, literature, prosperity, peace and greatness you enjoyed.

It is the saddest day when we exalt men and not God.

Ps. 115:1 --

Not to us, O LORD, not to us,

But to Your name give glory

Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.

Quote:

----- May God raise up more men like him, and I believe he will.

Judges 7:

The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, "My own power has delivered me."

So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many."

The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the 300."

1 Cor. 2:5

so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Re: - posted by BranchinVINE (), on: 2022/8/3 1:28

Just a general comment:

A very large number of people went out of Egypt with Moses but all, except Caleb and Joshua, died in the wilderness and did not enter the land flowing with milk and honey.

It is possible to begin victoriously by the Spirit and then lose all by endeavouring to be perfected by the flesh.

Gal.3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/8/3 15:36

Here is a researched article that views Finney's "renew measures" in a positive light: <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1976/11/charles-g.-finney>

Do I think they are all bad? No. So I think he used them in a strictly utilitarian way? Yes. He was a pragmatist.

Here is a link to his lecture on How to Preach: https://biblehub.com/library/finney/lectures_on_revivals_of_religion/lecture_xii_how_to_preach.htm

You can see here that he teaches people how to drum up a response. Is everything wrong? No. But it is a pragmatic approach designed to garner a decision.

What do we have today as a result?

We have revival preachers who focus on decisions made and the means to garner those decisions. They rely more on their methods than they do the power of the Gospel.

A sermon that is a mixture of truth and error: https://biblehub.com/library/finney/sermons_on_gospel_themes/xvii_christ_our_advocate.htm

Do I think 0 people were saved during his ministry? No. I do not believe that. But the ungodly practices he introduced: pragmatic (does-it-work?) preaching, Decisionism, using music to illicit emotional responses, a rejection of penal substitutionary atonement, and the detached Itinerant revivalists who make their living on this style of preaching while having ZERO accountability to a local body of believers cannot be ignored.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/8/3 18:27

For those of you who are interested here is a chapter from his book on revival about being filled with the Spirit

<https://ccel.org/ccel/finney/revivals/revivals.iii.iv.html>

Hey knows what he is talking about. You will either be filled with comfort or think it is nonsense.

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2022/8/3 22:00

Can the accusers of Finney enumerate in their own best actual knowledge their charges against him with the corresponding evidence/s (not from hearsays) for each charge.

I remember how chaotic the scenes were when the Lord Jesus, Stephen, or the Apostle Paul were accused of blasphemies.

Re: - posted by BranchinVINE (), on: 2022/8/4 1:31

Finney is not in the same league as the Lord Jesus, Stephen, or the Apostle Paul. To be acceptable, his teachings must be in line with the teachings of the Lord Jesus, Stephen and the Apostle Paul. This applies to all Bible teachers.

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2022/8/4 3:07

No one is saying that, but if someone accuses another person, then it has to be presented properly and not in a manner seeming of a black propaganda.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/8/4 7:06

Passerby,

You are absolutely correct. I went back and reviewed my discourse and it is disjointed and not easy to follow. I did post a lot of articles to bolster what I was saying, but I will outline here within a few days a case with references about what I believe to be wrong with Finney. Please bear with me as I just started my shift rotation on nights last night. I will be off this weekend and will devote some time to giving an articulate and concise case.

Thanks for pointing that out.

Re: - posted by deogloria, on: 2022/8/4 8:45

Don't know if we are now going a bit too far...

Quote: "Can the accusers of Finney enumerate ..."

We shouldn't be accusers of him...but we need to test his teachings that we still have, to see if they are according to scripture. It is our duty to test all things, one day we are accountable to God for what we believe and teach.

Several of us, including myself are either very careful or are avoiding his teaching altogether.

This is our own decision and our own responsibility.

Some more thoughts:

Finney may have started well but this is no proof that he also finished the race well.

Some examples from scripture:

some have made shipwreck of their faith, (1 Timothy 1:19)

others were turning away so soon from God,...and were following a different way that pretends to be the Good News(Galatians 1:6)

So we should rejoice that through Finney the Gospel was preached and many were saved.

But there seems enough evidence that his teachings turned to heresy.

We should remind ourselves of some basic biblical teachings:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19)

And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, (Matthew 24:14)

It is not about big numbers, success, our great nations, the benefits, the comfort, prosperity etc.

Most Christians even today probably have none of the above

Just one more quick thought:

Quote: "Finney's theology and influence is destroying my denomination right now (SBC)..."

This is not quite true. It is a bit like saying the serpent was responsible for the fall of mankind.

That's why it is so important to test all things and to know, "it is written...it is also written...thus says the Lord..."

And then take responsibility for our own actions and teachings.

Markus

Re: - posted by Altimus, on: 2022/8/4 21:43

Very well said Deogloria. I wanted to add on to what you said about numbers and success. We have, especially in America, this idea that those who get results those who do great things are truly spiritual. How can I say that? I heard a preacher give an example of how whenever a seminary or Christian university calls in a guest speaker who is it? Who is it that gets you excited? Those who have "done something in the world." We often forget that it is God who raises up men in the world and similarly it is God who changes the heart and brings men to salvation. Yet, apparent fruits have no bearing on true spirituality and faithfulness.

Paul has a claim that goes similarly to this in 1 Thessalonians 2:4: "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." This is the goal of every gospel minister, not to produce results, but to preach a gospel in line with the word the Lord has given us. That is the test of being truly filled with the spirit. The most Godly man in the world I can almost guarantee you no one has ever heard of. He's a layman I'm sure, loving the Lord with all his heart in some small town in an unknown corner of the world.

Back to the evangelist seeing massive results and is God using him? Does God use those men to bring people to him even if he they are not preaching a full gospel? Yes, yes he does. In these cases we glorify God as Paul does in Philippians 1:18 that though the message or the intentions may have been wrong, people were brought to Christ regardless. For their salvation we have reason to praise! However, we only emulate these men and commend them in the ways that they imitate and follow Christ. Otherwise, we cast off their works and teachings.

I will end this here: we need to be men of the word who can say as Paul said "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." We may look up to men like Spurgeon, Ravenhill, MacArthur and others. But we must remember it is not any

fruits that prove them to be faithful as these are all gifts from God, brought about by God, and by nothing they did. We imitate and look up to men, only as they imitate Christ and live and teach in accordance with his word.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/8/5 3:47

We may look up to men like Spurgeon, Ravenhill, Macarthur and others. But we must remember it is not any fruits that prove them to be faithful as these are all gifts from God, brought about by God, and by nothing they did.

Really? Mat 7

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Fruits are not gifts but the result of a man's labour in faith, love, and obedience.

Re: - posted by BranchinVINE (), on: 2022/8/5 11:56

Fruits are produced by grace, IN Christ.

John 15:4-5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

1 Cor. 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

1 Cor. 1:28-29,31

and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.

so that, just as it is written, LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.

Re: - posted by Altimus, on: 2022/8/5 15:57

Branchvine I will begin by saying excellent response. The scriptures are supreme and these powerful texts illustrate the point I was attempting to make.

In response to narrowpath: I did not use the correct terminology, fruits was not the most appropriate word that could have been used, looking back I was using it synonymously with results. The believer will absolutely bring forth fruits in Christ. However, as Branchvine illustrated in their response this is the gift of God and his grace working in us. Not our own works.

Furthermore,

Results.

never.

equal.

faithfulness.

You cannot confuse and equate these two (results and spiritual fruit). That will lead not only to pragmatism but to a tiered Christianity where individuals are lifted up for getting results and men are glorified rather than God. Ministers will get praised or shamed based on the size of their church or the number of their baptisms, not their obedience to the word of God. Theology always Directs practice so it is paramount to understand the error in this statement (that results = spiritual fruit). That is not a theology taught in the scriptures, it is abhorrent.

Finally, God is the one who does these things and he is the one who gives these gifts of grace to us according to Christ's gift (Ephesians 4:8). Must we run with endurance, of course. But in the end all results and glory is given to the Father above who opens hearts and minds.

That is all I will say on this. I believe we have addressed it enough with both the word of God and dialogue. We need to move back to the central discussion here. Not whether or not Finney saw results, but whether his teachings were based and guided by the scriptures. Ultimately that will decide this discussion.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/8/5 16:55

Charles Finney

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

Revival follows his preaching

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

Conviction follows Finney

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

Finney's converts stayed the course

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

The secret: Prayer

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

Daniel Nash
Father Nash

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

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

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Re: - posted by Altimus, on: 2022/8/5 22:35

Though interesting, this still does not address the crux of this discussion:

measuring the apparent results of Finney's revivals and his teachings against the revealed word of God.

I believe I might have to bow out of this conversation. We seem to be going in circles. Instead of addressing the scriptures directly on Finney's teachings and whether he was truly a man of God, each query is answered with a testimony or story that supersedes the scriptures stated.

Furthermore, I could probably find a similar testimony of Joseph Smith or Ghandi as great men of God and a man of peace. Bottom line: Experience must be tested against the scripture (Test every spirit 1 John 4:1). That's the only way heretic is delineated from saint. If we can't do that, then y'all can continue on but I'm out.

Re: - posted by deogloria, on: 2022/8/6 2:19

"measuring the apparent results of Finney's revivals and his teachings against the revealed word of God."

"And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth." (Acts 17:11 NLT)

Paul probably never had such a "successful " ministry as some of today's preachers.

"But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it." (Matthew 7:14 NLT)

With those words I'm also leaving this discussion.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2022/8/30 15:53

I am halfway through Finney's book Lectures on Revival of Religion and I find it to be very eye opening. He exposes a lot of the pseudo piety in the churches of his day and age.

No wonder this man is held in high regard by some and trashed by others. No doubt, God used this man a great deal. Where are the Finneys of today?

Here is a little excerpt from chapter 16

THE NECESSITY AND EFFECT OF UNION

where he expounds on the use of prayer for revival

How often do you hear people pray for sinners in this style, "O Lord, help this poor soul to do what he is required to do" "O Lord, enable him to do so and so." Now this language implies that they take the sinner's part, and not God's. If it was understood by those who use it, as it is sometimes explained, and if people meant by it what they ought to mean when they plead for sinners, I would not find so much fault with it, But the truth is, that when people use this language, they often mean just what the language itself would be naturally at first sight, understood to mean, which is just as if they should pray, "Lord, thou commandest these poor sinners to repent, when, O Lord, thou knowest they cannot repent unless thou givest them thy Spirit, to enable them to do it, though thou hast declared that thou wilt send them to hell if they do not, whether they ever receive the Spirit or not, and now, Lord, this seems very hard, and we pray thee to have pity upon these poor creatures, and do not deal so hardly with them, for Christ's sake." Who does not see that

t such a prayer, or a prayer which means this, whatever language it may be couched in, is an insult to God, charging him with infinite injustice, if he continues to exact from sinners a duty which they are unable to perform without that aid which he will not grant. People may pray in this way till the day of judgment, and never obtain a blessing, because they take the sinners part against God. They cannot pray successfully, until they understand that the sinner is a rebel, and obstinate in his rebellion—so obstinate that he never will, without the Holy Spirit, do what he might do as well as not, instantly, and this obstinacy is the reason, and the only reason, why he needs the influence of the Holy Spirit for his conversion. The only ground on which the sinner needs divine agency is to overcome his obstinacy, and make him willing to do what he can do, and what God justly requires him to do. And a church are never in an attitude in which God will hear their united prayers, unless they are agreed in so understanding their dependence on God, as to feel it in perfect consistency with the sinner's blame. If it is the other way, they are agreed in understanding it wrong, and their prayers for divine help to the unfortunate instead of divine favor to make a rebel submit, are wide of the mark, are an insult to God, and they never will obtain favor in heaven.

302

(3.) They must be agreed in understanding that revivals are not miracles, but that they are brought about by the use of means like other events. No wonder revivals formerly came so seldom and continued so short a time, when people generally regarded them as miracles, or like a mere shower of rain, that will come on a place and continue a little while, and then blow over; that is, as something over which we have no control. For what can people do to get a shower of rain? Or how can they make it rain any longer than it does rain? It is necessary that those who pray should be agreed in understanding a revival as something to be brought about by means, or they never will be agreed in using them.

(4.) They must be agreed in understanding that human agency is just as indispensable to a revival as divine agency. Such a thing as a revival of religion, I venture to say, never did occur without divine agency, and never did occur without human agency. How often do people say, "God can, if he pleases, carry on the work without means." But I have no faith in it, for there is no evidence of it. What is religion? Obedience to God's law. But the law cannot be obeyed unless it is known. And how can God make sinners obey but by making known his commandments?"