



Revivals And Church History :: Falling Under The Power of God

Falling Under The Power of God - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2003/11/22 15:52

The following excerpt is taken from The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney, condensed and edited by Helen Wessel, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publications, 1977) pages 100-101.

From Gouverneur I went to DeKalb, another village still farther north some sixteen miles. Here were a Presbyterian church and minister, but the church was small and the minister did not seem to have a very strong hold upon the people. However, I think he was decidedly a good man. I began to hold meetings in different parts of the town.

A few years previously there had been a revival in DeKalb under the labors of the Methodists. It had been attended with a good deal of excitement, and many cases had occurred of what the Methodists call "falling under the power of God." The Presbyterians had resisted; consequently a bad state of feeling had arisen between the Methodists and the Presbyterians. The Methodists accused the Presbyterians of having opposed the revival among them because of these cases of falling. As nearly as I could learn, there was a good deal of truth in this, and the Presbyterians had been decidedly in error.

I had not preached very long one evening when just at the close of my sermon, I observed a man fall from his seat near the door, and the people gathered around him to take care of him. From what I saw I was satisfied that it was a case of falling under the power of God, as the Methodists would express it, and supposed that it was a Methodist. I must say I had a little fear that it might reproduce that state of division and alienation which had existed before. But on inquiry I learned that it was one of the principal members of the Presbyterian church that had fallen! And it was remarkable that during this revival there were several cases of this kind among the Presbyterians but none among the Methodists. This led to such confessions and explanation among the members of the different churches as to secure a state of great cordiality and good feeling among them.

In his Memoirs (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1876), Finney described the following events in Adams, New York, in 1822: "Before the week was out I learned that some of them, when they would attempt to observe this season of prayer, would lose all of their strength and be unable to rise to their feet, or even stand upon their knees in their closets" (pp. 44-45)

He also describes a church in Antwerp, New York: "The congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cried for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them off their seats as fast as they fell" (p. 103)