

Superficial Revivals

By Charles G. Finney
in "Dawn"

I have observed that for the last ten years, revivals have been gradually becoming more and more superficial. Christians are much less prevalent in prayer, not so deeply humbled and quickened and thoroughly baptized with the Holy Ghost as they were formerly.

There is much less probing of the heart by a deep and thorough exhibition of human depravity, than was formerly the case. From my own experience and observation, as well as from the Word of God, I am fully convinced that the character of revivals depends very much upon stress that is laid upon the depravity of the heart. Its pride, enmity, windings, deceitfulness, and everything else that is hateful to God, should be exposed in the light of His perfect law.

Stress enough is not laid upon the horrible guilt of this depravity. Pains enough are not taken, by a series of cutting and pointed discourse, to show the sinner the utter inexcusableness, the utter wickedness and guilt, of his base heart. No revival can be thorough until sinners and backsliders are so searched and humbled that they can not hold up their heads.

It is a settled point with me, that while backsliders and sinners can come to an anxious meeting, and hold up their heads, and look you and others in the face without blushing and confusion, the work of searching is by no means performed, and they are in no state to be thoroughly broken down and converted.

I wish to call the attention of my brethren especially to this fact. When sinners and backsliders are greatly convicted by the Holy Ghost, they are greatly ashamed of themselves. Until they manifest deep shame, it should be known that the probe is not used sufficiently.

When I go to a meeting of inquiry and look over the people, if I see them with their heads up, looking at me and at each other, I have learned to understand what work I have to do. Instead of pressing them immediately to come to Christ, I must go to work to convict them of sin. Generally, by looking over the room, a minister can tell, not only who are convicted and who are not, but who are so deeply convicted as to be prepared to receive Christ.

Some are looking around, and manifest no shame at all; others cannot look you in the face, and yet can hold up their heads, others still can not hold up their heads, and yet are silent; others by their sobbing, and breathing, and agonizing, reveal at once the fact that the Sword of the Spirit has wounded them to their very heart.

Now, I have learned that a revival does not take on a desirable and wholesome type any further than the preaching and the means are so directed, and so efficient as to produce that kind of genuine and deep conviction which breaks unutterably ashamed and confounded before the Lord, until he is not only stripped of every excuse, but driven to go to all lengths in justifying God and condemning himself.

I have thought that, at least in a great many instances, stress enough has not been laid upon the necessity of divine influence upon the hearts of Christians and of sinners. This has grieved the Spirit of God. His work not being honored by being made sufficiently prominent, and not being able to get the glory to Himself, He has withheld His influences.

Again, it is a dangerous thing in revivals to address too exclusively the hopes and fears of men; for the plain reason that, selfish as man is, addressing his hopes and fears almost exclusively, tends to beget in him a selfish submission to God—a selfish religion to which he is

moved, on the one hand, by fear of punishment, and, on the other, by hope of reward.

If sinners will repent and turn away from their sins, and disinterestedly consecrate themselves to the good of the universe and the glory of God, He promises through the Atonement of Christ, to forgive their sins. But this promise is not made to a selfish giving up of sin. Outward sin may be given up from selfish motives, but the sin of the heart never can be; for that consists in selfishness, and it is nonsense and absurdity to speak of really giving up sin from selfish motives.

There can be no doubt that when sinners are careless, addressing their hopes and fears is the readiest and perhaps the only way of arousing them, and getting their attention to the subject of salvation; but it should be forever remembered that when their attention is thus secured, they should, as far as possible, be kept from taking a selfish view of the subject. —Dawn

IS HOLINESS IMPORTANT?

(Continued from Page One)

Perhaps we as holiness people have been a little afraid of this truth lest we be identified with a sinning religion. We certainly do not believe in that. Have some of us gone to a worse extreme? Are we inclined to be complacent and forget our share of responsibility for evangelizing the world? Forgiveness for our half-heartedness and lack of sacrifice is a necessary step to that whole-hearted service which is so necessary in this late hour to bring men to Christ.

A Christian may be free from all scandal both in creed and conduct and yet be a grievous obstruction to all spiritual good. Unless the fountain of our heart is broken from a burden for lost souls, our ministry may repel men from holiness, even when with words we proclaim it. May God help us to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves before God. Only as we keep the tender compassionate touch of Jesus upon us can we hope to promote true holiness.

PREACHING HOLINESS

(Continued from Page One)

speech and preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (I Cor. 2:4). To preach with the anointing and power of the Holy Ghost is the privilege of every holiness preacher, for there is a fullness of power that only sanctified preachers know. A speaker addressing a group of preachers spoke highly of John Wesley's preaching and his message. Later he was asked by one of the group if he did not think we were doing better preaching today than Wesley did in his day. His reply was, "Is our preaching producing the same results?"

Holiness is the message that God has entrusted with the holiness people. We must declare it. "Holiness," declared the late Bishop Foster, "is definitely a Bible doctrine. It breathes in the prophecies, it thunders in the law; it murmurs in the narratives; it whispers in the promises; it supplicates in the prayers; sparkles in the poetry; resounds in the Psalms; speaks in the types; glows in the imagery; voices in the language; burns in the spirit of the whole scheme from the Alpha to the Omega—from the beginning to the end.

"Holiness! Holiness needed—holiness required—holiness offered—holiness attainable—holiness a present duty, a present privilege, a present enjoyment."

Preach Holiness!