

**General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.****Questions about Charles Finney. - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/8/25 18:16**

Questions about Charles Finney.

I have read several differing accounts as to whether Finney's revivals resulted in soundly saved believers or false converts that were nowhere to be found several years down the road. Many stats are quoted in apparent affirmation supporting both sides. Is it possible to find the truth in this matter?

It seems most of the issue revolves around his use and/or method of "alter call" and that these method(s) may have resulted from his beliefs/theology.

Does anyone know of any solid, perhaps primary, sources? Many articles claim to have just this...but several are conflicting.

Any and all info will be greatly appreciated.

Re: Questions about Charles Finney. - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/8/25 18:49

B. B. Warfield was a great theologian and critic of Finney, and had much to say about his "new measures".

I don't know if it is still in print, but Warfield wrote a book called "Studies in Perfectionism" in which he goes into his disagreements of Finney's methods and theology.

Of course the main point in this argument is the question of original sin, and the view one holds on if man is dead, or able to do what God commands.

The answer to that question ultimately shapes how you do what you do.

There is a 73 page Warfield document here-

(http://www.enterhisrest.org/ichabod/warfield_vol8.pdf) Oberlin Perfectionism

Have fun brother!

Re: - posted by TaylorOttwell (), on: 2008/8/25 22:09

Read with horror Finney's own words as a primary source:

"But for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd... As we shall see, there are many conditions, while there is but one ground, of the justification of sinners... As has already been said, there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but upon the ground of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law. This is of course denied by those who hold that gospel justification, or the justification of penitent sinners, is of the nature of a forensic or judicial justification. They hold to the legal maxim that what a man does by another he does by himself, and therefore the law regards Christ's obedience as ours, on the ground that he obeyed for us."

"The doctrine of imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption." After all, 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" This "representing of the atonement as the ground of the sinner's justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many"

Respect for Finney is based on pragmatic principles (surely since people were so stirred up in religion, Finney could not

have been a false prophet).

However, we must be honest with the Scripture. If Charles Finney believed what he claimed to believe, he was not a Christian at all and falls under the curse of bringing a false gospel. We can walk into almost any American church today and see his remnants in the form of entertaining, flesh stirring measures and "altar calls".

Finney demonstrates by his own writing that he was fully Pelagian and seems to know not the first thing about the Gospel of Christ.

Our own hesitance to renounce him as a false prophet proves our own bondage to believing that those with good morals must surely be Christian.

We renounce Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, etc.; however, why not Finney? What we fail to realize is that it is the exact same message. "Be good, and God will bless you." The only difference between the two is the tone of voice and demeanor of the delivery.

It is easily proved. Joel Osteen may say, "I believe God brings into heaven those who are good and upright" with a soft voice and a smile, while Finney declares the exact same thing with a roar and a frown.

The Gospel is much more radical. We are depraved in utter sin, and are only by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We have rebelled against the sovereign King of the universe and His holy wrath hangs over the head of the lost ready to strike. Yet, in infinite mercy, He has sent His Son to make full atonement for those would trust in Him. May we follow Him all of our days.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2nd Corinthians 5:21)

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1)

Contrary to what many may believe... Finney's view of sin was not too high, it was much too low.

Brothers and sisters, if you want to read books (outside of the Scripture) that talk about godliness and holiness of life. Look to the old Puritan-esque writers (Thomas Watson, Thomas Brooks, Jonathan Edwards, Spurgeon, Ryle, John Owen, John Bunyan, Jeremiah Burroughs, etc).

Also, I would recommend people to go all the way back to Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians. Crossway publishes a paperback edition in their classic commentaries series. It is about 300 pages.

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/8/25 22:34

Thank you brother.

Couldn't have said it better myself.

Re: Finney - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/8/26 0:04

(http://www.gospeltruth.net/1849OE/490425_savior_frm_sinnin.htm) JESUS, A SAVIOR FROM SINNING

Re: Questions about Charles Finney. - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/8/26 0:23

You should search and read, finney have some strange things going on, but no stranger then the ones that criticise him. Thinking of reformed and calvinistic followers. There has been a few threads before on SI, i dont have time right now to dig, but they are there.

Re: Questions about Charles Finney. - posted by passerby, on: 2008/8/26 0:55

Finneys literary works and sermons are publish at:

gospeltruth.net

A main issue here is that your response to Finney will be affected depending whether you are a calvinist or not or if you believe the doctrine of 'Once saved, Always Saved' and really, they are very long and complicated issues to tackle.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2008/8/26 1:25

Hi Taylor...

First of all, I think that it is unwise to judge our brother based upon a few quotes that are supposedly his. I'm not sure where you gathered those quotes (you forgot to leave a citation), but Finney only authored one book in his life (his autobiography). The rest of "his" books are actually gathered by hearers from notes of his sermons. The complete accuracy of all of these books can be called into question.

Moreover, I think that the autobiography of Charles Finney, written at the end of his life, is quite telling of his doctrinal views. I'm not an avid fan of Finney -- but I have been extremely blessed by the simple story of his life and accounts of his ministry. From what is written by Finney (and from diaries of his contemporaries), the messages that he preached during the Second Great Awakening throughout New York was extremely simple.

During those crusades, he didn't appear to preach about doctrinal questions about Calvinism (at least, we don't read much about him preaching such sermons). From what we know, Finney preached a very simple message about the dangers of false conversion (or those who couldn't seem to remain "converted"). We know that this had a profound effect on churches throughout New England. Even secular historians record the impact that Finney had on American society -- which mirrored the effect of men like George Whitefield (and hence the "Second Great Awakening").

Regardless, it is difficult to judge a man who has been dead for over 200 years based upon such a small collection of his words. Men are prone to make mistakes with their mouths from time to time. Some of them actually say things that they later regret (believe it or not!). I imagine that a 70 year old David Wilkerson might "second guess" some of the things that he preached when he was 25. The same can probably be said of men of God like Leonard Ravenhill, A. W. Tozer, Paris Reidhead, and other men included in this ministry's sermon database. But thank God that He does not leave us as we are! Each of us are maturing as we walk in the faith!

Quote:
-----We renounce Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, etc.; however, why not Finney? What we fail to realize is that it is the exact same message
.

Actually, I don't think that anyone renouces these men. Rather, we renounce the *things that they preach* that fail the test of Scriptural purity. Their hearts, motives and spiritual condition should be off limits.

You know, I don't think any less of the work of a man of God who has made mistakes with his preaching (especially if he corrects himself as he matures). If I remember correctly, the apostle Peter made a pretty good blunder in both word and action. The apostle Paul even had to rebuke him to his face. Does this negate anything that Peter did or said? No.

Since none of us have ever met Brother Finney, it is safe to assume that we might be hasty in our judgment. I have visit ed websites that pretty much call the man a "heretic" (and one website even concludes that Finney was "demon possess ed"). And the greatest irony? They claim such things as a matter of doctrinal difference. Most of these websites, if you search through them, are noticably quick to point the same "finger of heresy" at other preachers who do not wholeheartedly embrace their particular doctrinal views. Is this really what we are called to do? Can't we discuss the doctrine witho ut laying an accusation into the man?

I have long noticed that those who are the fastest to cry out for "discernment" are often the ones with the most "loud" im agination and "gift of suspicion." I have met people who will offer love, kindness, fellowship and respect UNTIL you say something that is contrary to their own particular doctrinal views or beliefs. Suddenly, their "gift of discernment" kicks in and they quickly part company. They become fiesty and are willing to dismiss anything that you say.

I wonder if the same can be said about Charles Finney? By the claims of some of these websites, you would actually think that Charles Finney was a sinister heretic! Yet I can sympathize with Brother Finney because his conversion experience so closely mirrors my own. I wept when I was a teen while reading Finney's own account of coming to Christ. He articulated his conversion in a manner that immediately brought to mind my own feelings of the night that I was converted in a lonely field at a summer camp. If anything, it seems that this sort of thing is difficult to simply "make up."

Charles Finney was certainly far from perfect. However, I don't think that it is wise to pass judgment upon the man. Yes, his doctrine may (or may not) have been flawed. Yet this is a poor excuse to call into question the integrity of this man's heart or his work -- as so many websites and ministers appear willing to do. Besides, even if he embraced a faulty doctrine at one time, that doesn't necessarily mean that he embraced it throughout his life. If I remember correctly, there were some good brethren here at SermonIndex who at one time held onto some very questionable doctrinal views or spiritual beliefs. Do we discount them simply because they had not matured to the point of where they stand now? As members of the Body of Christ, we should certainly be made of more fraternal stuff than that.

Re: - posted by boG (), on: 2008/8/26 3:29

Since there are some excerpts on the "horror of Finney's own words" I thought it proper to get some context to those quotes. And, by the way I have yet to find these words in context to be heretical.

But I guess the problem is that Finney was against key aspects of the Westminster Confession (Calvinism) and they didn't like that so much, thus a smear campaign began.

So if you would like to see some of these things for yourselves, feel free.

(http://www.gospeltruth.net/1849OE/490425_savior_frm_sinnin.htm) JESUS, A SAVIOR FROM SINNING
Sermon by Prof. C.G. Finney

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins." --Matt. 1:21.

As compared to saving people IN their sins!
A nice link crssck, thank you sir.

(http://www.gospeltruth.net/1861OE/610424_kingdom_conscious.htm) THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN CONSCIOUSNESS
By PRES. FINNEY.

In this discourse Finney defines righteousness.

I. What is the kingdom of God?

Answer: 1. It is not an outward organization; it is not the visible church, or any ecclesiastical establishment whatever.

2. It is not any material or worldly good.

3. But it is the reign of Christ, the King, in the soul of man.

II. I notice the three particulars which are here said to constitute this kingdom of God, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The following quote was taken from this sermon,

"It is Christ's righteousness imparted to the soul of man. It is Christ's law or will taking effect in the soul of man, and begeth

ting his own righteousness in us; and thus we come to be partakers of the righteousness of God, not merely by imputation, but by actual experience, and active love and service. I pray you, let no one overlook the true end of righteousness. Do not forget that true righteousness is the very love in kind that is in Christ's own heart, and that led him to do all he had done for mankind."

(http://www.gospeltruth.net/1843OE/430705_fulness_in_Christ.htm) FULNESS THERE IS IN CHRIST
Lectures by Professor Finney.

I. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE DECLARATION THAT CHRISTIANS ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED.

III. TO POINT OUT SOME THINGS WHICH ARE DEMANDED BY OUR NATURE, CIRCUMSTANCES, AND CHARACTER, IN ORDER TO COMPLETE WELL-BEING.

IV. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH THIS COMPLETENESS MAY BE REALIZED IN OUR OWN EXPERIENCE.

(<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?viewarticle&aid3761>) JUSTIFICATION by Charles G. Finney

'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.' Rom. 8:1.

In this discourse, I shall notice,

I. WHAT IT IS TO BE IN CHRIST JESUS.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED BY NO CONDEMNATION.

III. WHY THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.

IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY NOT WALKING AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

V. NONE, EXCEPT THOSE WHO WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT, ARE IN A JUSTIFIED STATE.

(<http://www.bibleteacher.org/finney4c.htm>) LECTURE 36 JUSTIFICATION
by Prof. C.G. Finney

Christ is represented in the gospel as sustaining to men three classes of relations.

1. Those which are purely governmental.

2. Those which are purely spiritual.

3. Those which unite both these.

We shall at present consider Him as Christ our justification.

This Lecture 36 contains the context for quote, "But for sinners to be forensically pronounced just ..."

And, also the following paragraph, "The doctrine of imputed righteousness ..."

Both of these previous paragraphs are under the question: What is gospel justification?

I believe the "horror" of these quotations is in the defining terms, such as "forensically" and "imputed". In such, Finney is not saying "righteousness" in its entirety but attacking specific perspectives that he defends to be unscriptural. I would have to say that I was confused at first myself until I understood that point.

Being familiar with more and more of Finney's lectures and sermons, it appears to be consistent that Finney defines a great deal of "salvation" and everything contained in that word in the following way, by his own words, "This love, it should be understood, must necessarily express itself in the life, because the connection between this love and outward action is a connection of necessity. This love consists in the will's devotion to God and to the good of man. It is consecration; it is making common cause with God and man, and unifying ourselves with God's state of mind."

That is to say, God and man working together in Christ. Or, again, in my own words, we must do those things that are only possible because God is at work in us.

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/8/26 7:39

The quotes I quoted are in his systematic theology, pages 320-322.

I will not be lovey and mushy on gross error that still leaves its remnants on much of the American church. It should be condemned and the true Gospel should be proclaimed faithfully.

It doesn't matter how holy we think Finney was, his view of the atonement was not Christian.

Finney's views are preached against from Baptists and Presbyterians alike, it is not solely because he didn't like the Westminster Confession. It is because he didn't like the Biblical fact that Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who believe which is the sole basis for our justification.

Read Galatians, Read Romans.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/8/26 9:16

Thank you all for taking the time to respond; much good info has been brought forth. I notice however, that those who are not so thoroughly opposed to Finney usually still issue a warning concerning some of his teachings. I, as I'm sure many of you as well, have become accustomed to picking out the "theological bones" found in my Christian diet. That being said, I believe we should not attempt to lump all theological disagreements into the same indiscriminate pile. Chris made a good point in reminding us all of the mistakes that are so easily made in our spiritual infancy; mistakes many of us would love to retract and abolish.

But I also believe it wise to make known the difference between mistakes stemming from immaturity in a young believer as compared to propagating a doctrinal error that could potentially shape a theological landscape. I wish not to engage in a Finney theological debate and will leave this topic for now.

However, the issue of "methods of invitation" particularly surrounding the "alter call" is of concern and interest to me. Also the results of Finney's revivals seem to be greatly conflicted. Many saying it changed the area permanently, while others say they did not have the lasting effects so many claim.

Anyone having additional insights and/or articles on the topics surrounding this issue please contribute.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/26 9:50

Quote:
-----We renounce Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, etc.; however, why not Finney? What we fail to realize is that it is the exact same message
."Be good, and God will bless you." The only difference between the two is the tone of voice and demeanor of the delivery.

The thing that gets lost in these conversations is the challenge that Finney faced in his day. He faced what AW Tozer has called 'a stalemate' between God and men. Men were stuck waiting on God to 'move them' and totally placed their own salvation into the hands of God. We cannot understand this today because we have a very much Armenian slant to things overall in our times. Tozer concluded that Finney helped break the stalemate between God and men to get things moving along again. He added that he did not agree with Finney on his conclusions. I think Tozer was right.

The altar call has a history that begins with Finney. But it is completely unfair to charge Finney with the condition of our times. I dare think we have not heard a preacher like Finney and if we had we may all well be different men and women.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2008/8/26 11:17

Hi Taylor...

Quote:
-----It doesn't matter how holy we think Finney was, his view of the atonement was not Christian.

Im not sure if you are being sarcastic, but I don't think that anyone is promoting just how "holy" that Finney was. Finney, like you and me and everyone else, was confined to his humanity. He was prone to error just like the rest of us. I don't think that anyone is promoting that he was "perfect" or "holy." Actually, he is rarely brought up here at SermonIndex. In fact, most of the discussions that I have noticed in the forum about Finney seem to be an effort to discredit him.

I think that there is a fine line between the spiritual integrity of a man and his doctrine.

Personally, I don't believe in most of the tenants of Calvinism. In fact, I utterly reject some of the arguments about "eternal security." I personally think that the doctrine can be dangerous in the hands of some people. I have met people who attempt to justify the relationship between their ongoing conduct and their eternal, spiritual condition on the grounds of their belief that salvation cannot be "lost" (attributed to the idea about "once saved, always saved"). When I remind them of Scriptures that emphatically state the end of individuals living in sin, they claim what seems to be an "easy way out" Scriptures about the "gifts and calling of God" being "without repentance" as they continue in their sin. Of course, the accusation is that I am promoting salvation through the fulfillment of the Law. I usually try my best to explain that this doesn't have anything to do with "fulfilling the Law" as it does to not continually fulfill the "lusts of the flesh" (and other sins).

In a sense, I personally find that this sort of doctrinal teaching is extremely flawed. But do I reject those who either teach or embrace such a doctrinal stand? Not at all!

As I stated before, Paul the Apostle was forced to confront Peter to his face regarding a doctrinal matter. Peter was a Jew living like a Gentile, yet forcing Gentiles to uphold the Old Covenant's rules and regulations for the Jews. Paul boldly confronted Peter -- even though Paul was barely starting out in his ministry. Obviously, Peter "came to his senses," because he spoke highly of Paul and his Scriptural teachings at a later time (II Peter 3:16).

The point that I am trying to make is that we often use quite a bit of effort to discredit men who simply disagree with us. I know that we should do this with doctrinal issues that are inarguably contrary to Scripture. Yet most of the conflicts within the Body of Christ deal with personal persuasions or inclinations that are not ultimately clear. To be clear: When I am asked which side of the "eternal security" conflict that I stand, I usually say, "Neither." I see some truth in what both sides are saying, mingled with what I feel to be misunderstandings.

Personally, I don't like to read very many books about doctrine. In fact, the only book that I have read completely that is attributed to Finney is his *Memoirs* -- which also happens to be the only book actually penned by his own hand. I just don't care to know what Finney preached. I just think that the best way to understand the truth of a doctrine is to focus only on the Word of God. It is not to say that I don't read books (from time to time) that include doctrinal views. Usually, how

ever, I consult these books only as a means to know what other people believed about an issue -- and not to either validate or criticize my own views.

I imagine that, if we tried hard enough, we could find some issues with any preacher. Yes, for some of them, their flaws are quite obvious to those of us who read and study the Word of God with eagerness. For instance, I know that the teachings of the "prosperity" movement are flawed. I know this because I know what the Word says (or doesn't say) about such things -- and not because I heard someone else explain it. This shouldn't be equated as an attack on prosperity preachers, just a realization that the doctrine that the preacher teaches is flawed. The same can be said about all such doctrines.

But I imagine that, if someone really sought to do so, they could find some flaws within the writings or teachings of men like Leonard Ravenhill. But is that what we are called to do? Are we called as *doctrinal examiners*? Are we supposed to "expose" anyone with whom we have a disagreement? Or are we simply supposed to expose error when we happen upon it?

Anyway, these are just a few thoughts. This shouldn't be construed as either an embrace for or attack upon the person of Charles Finney. However, I have read the autobiography of Finney, and I have been challenged and blessed. It isn't that I agree with everything that Finney might (or might not) have taught. However, I think that his aims are transparent enough. He saw a Church that was filled with individuals who did not have a relationship with God or a true conversion experience. He then preached about such things -- and many lives were caused to agonize over their spiritual and eternal status. Come to think of it, I pray that more preachers today would do the same.

:)

Re: - posted by Ruach34 (), on: 2008/8/26 11:24

Hello dear friends...Although I cannot gush over sources and references, I will make mention of a conversation I had with Richard Owen Roberts concerning this man Charles Finney.

These thoughts are not word for word what came out of Brother Roberts' mouth but his idea that he presented for concern:

First of all, Finney was saved in a revival that had already been going on, so the Work of God was being manifested as Finney started his own ministry. Finney was not the lone, responsible figure for the revival that he worked in.

Secondly, Finney's systematic theology speaks of revival as a man planting a crop and suggests that if the work is done properly then revival must happen. This is the famous 'if-then' statement. He asserted that if people would only properly use the means God has given, they could secure revival.

This brought the whole focus of revival down. It brought our eyes and focus off the giver of revival onto the workers in revival. This is the major error that is implied from Finney's systematic theology that Brother Roberts suggested.

In no way do I imply that Finney was a bad dude, or did not do a great work for the Lord, but his theology was messed up...It seems he has been known as the great Revivalist when, in fact, he was only riding the waves of something that God had started prior to his conversion...

Just a thought...anyone, anyone?

Re: - posted by boG (), on: 2008/8/26 16:42

It is always true that no "Revivalist" ever began a revival. God is the Revivalist and in every account that I have read it often begins with 2 or 3 old ladies or some people devoting themselves to praying off in a corner somewhere.

And as the Lord moves the body comes into action, thus, a leader, or leaders, of some sort are raised up as God calls them up.

The problem I have personally noticed is the extreme imbalances perceived in God's relations to man.

On one hand, we have God being utterly sovereign; even to the point that man becomes nothing more than God's "shoe

s".

On the other hand, we have God being utterly dependant upon man.

Both of these views have a portion of truth but the extremes to which they have gone in shaping the whole of theology is bizarre.

Though to me it is understandable how these things might happen, just as we have mentioned here for Finney.

If we have everybody waiting around for God to move (as I have heard it said before, "waiting for God to get off His behind and move") then it only stands to reason that we need someone to lead men to action, obedience.

While on the other hand, more so for today, we have a great deal of action and activity but we do not see on the whole God moving WITH US. I have seen a great deal of spirituality but ... where is the truth? God is working and man is working but they are not doing so together, there is a lack of unity.

The "if - then" statements are Scriptural, that should not need to be explained. God is a conditional God, that is exactly why we have a covenant.

"If you do this ... that ... etc."

"Then I will do this ... that ... etc. says God."

I like the way C.S. Lewis wrote it in the Chronicles of Narnia, The Silver Chair. Aslan says to the girl that He called them into Narnia for a purpose; she had work to do. But then she asks Aslan, "didn't we call you to let us in and then we opened the door?" But Aslan is straight-forward, "You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you."

This is not a new doctrine. God says "if you do ..." not because we can but because He is calling us to do those things that He Himself is already doing. And neither does He call us to go by ourselves but rather He will never leave us nor forsake us.

God working sovereignly in the unseen places and Christ and man working together in the world.

As I have said to many people about Matthew 25, the parable of the sheep and the goats. As we have done to the least of these we have done unto our Lord Jesus. Likewise, it is not I who live but Christ who liveth in me. Thus it is the same as saying, "Christ serving Christ" -- Christ Jesus all in all.

Re: - posted by TrueWitness, on: 2008/8/26 19:32

Finney was surely a complete Pelagianist and did not believe in the substitutionary work of Christ. Read more about this misguided soul here:

<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/articles/finney.htm>

He was the first to have "altar calls" at the end of his sermons and I don't object to them as long as those who respond don't think there is anything magical about walking to the front. It's what is in your heart (repentance, faith, love).

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2008/8/27 0:01

Hi TrueWitness...

Quote:

TrueWitness wrote:

Finney was surely a complete Pelagianist and did not believe in the substitutionary work of Christ. Read more about this misguided soul here:

<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/articles/finney.htm>

I very much disagree with both the tone and conclusion of this article. While the author calls Finney a "wolf in sheep's clothing" and uses "Clintonesque" answers to questions -- I don't think that it is fair to make such rash judgments based upon both limited sources (mostly secondhand) and mere disagreements in doctrinal persuasion.

If it comes down to the question of Calvinism (or Pelagianism -- like you assume about Finney), I must admit that I think

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

the basic tenants of Calvinism (or more precisely, the tenants of "once saved/always saved") are fundamentally flawed. It is my opinion that, in the wrong hands, such a teaching can cause great damage to an individual by offering "false security." From his autobiography, I don't think that Finney believed that people must "work" or "earn" their way to salvation. There is a difference between believing that works are necessary to save the soul -- and a belief that salvation doesn't exist if it is not exemplified by holiness. I believe that Finney was deeply concerned with *false security* much more than the concept of *eternal security* (if that makes sense). From reports written about Finney and Co. regarding the multitudes of conversions during the Second Great Awakening, it appears that he was highly successful in confronting false conversion that was rampant in the American Church at the time.

Quote:
-----He was the first to have "altar calls" at the end of his sermons and I don't object to them as long as those who respond don't think there is anything magical about walking to the front. It's what is in your heart (repentance, faith, love).

I agree. However, we might want to illustrate that Finney's "altar calls" (which were not called that at the time) did not resemble the modern "altar call" in the least! Finney pushed for individuals to agonize under the weight of their sin! According to Finney's own words (and contemporary news reports), people would sometimes crawl to the front of the Church in a desperate attempt to find a remedy for their dire eternal condition.

It is my belief that Finney did a good job of this. He confronted an American Church that had become filled with false converts who were merely going through a protestantized version of Catholic tradition. People really thought they were saved merely by making a decision to follow Christ and being baptized. This is not salvation. Finney tried to expose that those who continue to live a life of sin are not truly born again. This, in my opinion, is clear from the Scriptures. It was needed for the Church in his day -- and it is desperately needed in today's modern Church!

I'm not concerned at all about what Finney supposedly believed in regard to doctrinal persuasions. However, I find it extremely odd that people are willing to crucify a man based upon some articles that really cannot be verified or validated but by a very limited amount of material (mostly secondhand). It is extremely disheartening that someone is willing to label the man a "wolf in sheep's clothing" over a mere doctrinal issue for which Finney is rumored to have held at one time. Are we truly willing to strain such gnats? I wonder: How many people would say the same thing about Leonard Ravenhill if they knew every single details of what he believed and preached? Believe it or not, I have met people who have labeled Brother Ravenhill a "wolf" too.

It is extremely sad.

:-(

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/27 9:08

Quote:
-----He was the first to have "altar calls" at the end of his sermons and I don't object to them as long as those who respond don't think there is anything magical about walking to the front. It's what is in your heart (repentance, faith, love).

What is more grievous is the seated sinners prayer. Salvation comes about as the person responds to God. I believe Finney understood this. He was a great believer in Holy Ghost conviction. He believed that since God sent man out with a commission that God would back the man in the effort. You will recall that Finney had prayer warriors that showed up to the towns in advance of Finney to began praying with extreme fervency for the meetings. They were also praying during the preaching. I recall one of the statements made as Finney seemed to be a little leary of preaching, it was to the effect "It's OK Bro. Finney, God's come!" They had prevailed in prayer and God moved.

So by no means is Finney any where near the flip attitude of today towards souls. His works on counsel to anxious sinners are some of the best there is that I know of. He pressed the people to surrender to God on the point of controversy that they had with God. He knew that the Holy Spirit was performing His work. He attributed conversion to:

- 1) The Word of God
- 2) The Spirit of God
- 3) The preacher
- 4) The sinner themselves

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Finney showed from the scriptures that there is a 'sense' in which all of these are involved in the conversion of the sinner . Not one or the other- but ALL of them working together. I think Finney was right on *that* point.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/8/27 10:32

Quote:
-----I wonder: How many people would say the same thing about Leonard Ravenhill if they knew every single details of what he believed and preached? Believe it or not, I have met people who have labeled Brother Ravenhill a "wolf" too.

This is not to you in particular Chris...just building on this statement.

This is one of the reasons I started this investigation. I believe people have poured over the theology of men like Ravenhill, Wesley, and Tozer, just to name a few, and though they may disagree, you don't find the multitude or magnitude of opposition anywhere near that of what has historically been leveled at Finney.

Once again, we have had several 'opinions' for and against Finney expressed on this thread, a lot of 'I believe' and 'I once read' statements.

I am still looking for primary sources validating the lasting effects of his ministry. It would seem that history would be able to reveal this answer, but I am still finding equal amounts of information declaring both sides as the correct one; both having witnesses that have returned to the very towns and found contradictory evidence.

Strange that such controversy and skepticism surrounds this one man. I have heard many Arminian and Calvinistic preachers alike quote Ravenhill, Wesley and Tozer, all recognizing the work of God in their lives. But with Finney it is different, he is often portrayed as a hero...or zero.

Thank you all for sharing thus far.

Grace and peace

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/27 20:01

Quote:
-----I am still looking for primary sources validating the lasting effects of his ministry. It would seem that history would be able to reveal his answer, but I am still finding equal amounts of information declaring both sides as the correct one; both having witnesses that have returned to the very towns and found contradictory evidence.

Having been to Oberlin College and Finney's final resting place I found it discouraging that almost no one I met knew anything relevant about Finney. Other false religions were using the church named after him. Pagan insignia and paintings littered the front lawn of the college.

I read where a brother returned lately to where Edwards preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and the area is infested with New Age book stores and occult type things. From what I gather, one could hardly tell there had been an awakening.

But I am not sure that the *longevity* of a move of God is a valid means of discerning its legitimacy. We need look no farther than the book of Galatians to see how quickly folk can leave off of a genuine move of God to 'something else'. We see it at Corinth and in the Book of Hebrews.

Finney emphasized the need to return and break up the people over and over again as they fell down in their walk with God. This was due to hardness of heart that was believed to be caused by quenching the Spirit and remedied by 'breaking up the fallow ground and seeking the Lord.'

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Finney believed the 'Spirit of prayer' must pave the way for any effective preaching. He focused on how it was God's presence that was important. But he believed that if folk would pray and break up their hearts God would move. He targeted assurance and questioned whether folk were really saved.

Finney searched the consciences of men. He flushed out folk hiding in deception and brought them face to face with the question, "Am I really saved?"

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/8/27 20:15

Quote:
-----But I am not sure that the longevity of a move of God is a valid means of discerning its legitimacy. We need look no farther than the book of Galatians to see how quickly folk can leave off of a genuine move of God to 'something else'. We see it at Corinth and in the Book of Hebrews.

I was thinking more along the lines of a few years, but after considering your words and scriptures references, I do indeed see your point. I guess the old C & A debate comes to play on this point as well. Calvinists would claim that if they fell away they were never saved to begin with, where as Arminians would see it as back sliding. I guess this is why so many argue the results.

Sad to hear about the old stomping grounds of such profound men and events.

Thanks for your reply brother

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/8/27 20:29

I believe this question can be answered quickly if we stick to Scripture.

Does Scripture teach clearly that a man is justified(declared righteous)by faith in Christ alone?

If the answer to this is yes, then Finney and others who make the Christian's acceptance with God based upon moral behavior(sanctification) are wrong.

Indeed if the Gospel or good news is that Christ indeed died for the ungodly and made them righteous by faith, then Finney and others like him are preaching another gospel.

Of course if Scripture does not teach this, then Finney and his views are correct.

So now it is our duty to look at Scripture to see what the Book teaches.

What gets confusing in this discussion is that both sides use the same terms to mean entirely different things.

For example if I as a Calvinist(only using this to define what I believe) refer to grace, I mean God's unmerited and amazing act of regenerating me while I was dead in sin and unable to do anything to even come to Him.

However the others usually use the term grace to mean a spark, or force that must be co-operated with to make it work. Or if you like, a little boost to clear the broken rungs on the ladder to Heaven. After that however, the Christian must climb in his own ability and power.

This is only one of the many terms that mean different things in this conversation. It is the same in a discussion with Roman Catholics who view grace much as the Arminian or Finney type of ideologies.

Now if we were honest, and compared what Finney himself said to let's say the Council of Trent, we would be very surprised to see and echo of Finney's thought there.

For in one of the Canons, it clearly says that if a man says that a man is justified by faith alone, let him be anathema. I co

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

uld be wrong, but Finney seems to echo the same sentiments in his view of the Doctrine of imputed righteousness.

Again, we must look at Scripture to determine who our men we look up to are.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/27 20:44

Quote:
-----Calvinists would claim that if they fell away they were never saved to begin with, where as Arminians would see it as back sliding.

In modern times I think that many would say folk are eternally secure if they ever exercised one single act of saving faith . I personally know people that are unwavering in their view of eternal security. Falling away for them would have to mean a total renouncement of Christ. Personally I teach that folk must be genuinely born of the Spirit. I do not believe that if a person demonstrates a single act of faith it is evidence they were regenerated. This is the danger of our times. Many folk do not understand what it means to be truly born from above. They live in their proof texts and are satisfied. But with my soul on the line I think it wise to keep studying the matter. ;-)

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/27 21:05

Quote:
-----Does Scripture teach clearly that a man is justified(declared righteous)by faith in Christ alone?

We are saved by *grace through* faith. God is determined to bring many sons unto glory. To make a people like unto Him self. That would mean that man is perfected in love as God is perfect in love. This is universal distribution of benevolence in this present age. God demonstrates His love to the just and the unjust. In this passage we see the love aspect of God's design in bringing many sons unto glory:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5).

Do we love like this? God will not stop until we do. He will persist in His dealings. Why? Love is patient. Do we love like God loves? Not just friends (phileo) and family (storgos), but while they are yet enemies (agape). Do we love (agape) without hypocrisy? Do we love in kind affection (philostorgos) in brotherly love (philadelphia)? (Romans 12:9, 10) Do we love like Steven loved as he was being stoned? Has that love that reigned in Steven's heart, that asked God to forgive the men, that refused to be angry, but loved while he 'gave his body to be burned' been poured out in my heart? That's the question.

And God is determined to stop at nothing less. There is no shadow of turning in Him. There is no plan B. And God has determined that He will pour out His love by *grace*; the great love where with He loved us (Eph. 2) will provide it. The means of my receiving it is *faith*. Faith like we find in Hebrews 11 among the true pilgrims; those that were "other worldly". The tent dwellers that testified that this ole' earth is not their home. They stayed packed up and never settled down here. They were just passing through on their road to eternity.

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2008/8/27 21:42

Faith, believing, and works.

Romans 4:2-5

v2For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God...

...v5But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

This is one of the big issues as I understand it, the calvinists believe that faith or believing itself is 'works'.

Finney as I see it, thought otherwise, and he labored mightily in obedience to the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ.

And many who are sincere in their faith, look at Finney with admiration, in his passion, in his resolve, in his anointing. He finished his run well and fought a good fight.

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/8/27 22:45

So, the question still remains, was Finney's view of justification in error or no?

Is a man declared right with God *because of* Christ's righteousness or does the man himself have to *make himself righteous* to be accepted by God?

Let's leave the Calvinism/Arminianism thing on the side for now, and simply look at Scripture.

If man is only right with God by his own righteousness, then what is the purpose of Christ's death? Why would there need to be a New Covenant if man could by his own will keep the Old one?

Did Christ only die as an example for us, or was there a definite purpose for His death?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/28 0:10

Quote:

-----So, the question still remains, was Finney's view of justification in error or no?

Let me first answer by saying that Finney was a revivalist that focused on whether or not people were truly converted. His aim was to preach in such a way as to bring a person face to face with whether or not they had 'justifying faith' or something else. He pointed to a person's assurance and proceeded to 'destructive test' it.

Finney believed in imparted righteousness. He believed justification (past and present pardon) was conditioned upon obedience. He did not believe that Christ's righteousness could be imputed to us in such a way as to allow us to be positionally a Saint while *practically* (a sin practitioner) and 'actually' a sinner. That is, a person is not justified that lives with 'known sin' in their life.

Finney would write a thousand volumes it seems to explain why it is impossible for God to allow a person to continue in sin and think they are converted. Personally, I think he takes things too far. That is my opinion. But Finney was obviously compelled to strike at false assurance so as to make sure individuals had a genuine faith and conversion.

But I also think it is fair to say that few 'feel' justified when there is known sin in their life. I know justification has nothing to do with feelings, but when the heart condemns all the legal truth in the world cannot ease the uneasiness inside. The stirrings and troublings of that one voice within shouts as loud as a thousand accusers. Only acknowledgement of the sin, application of the blood and repentance can settle the conscience, I think.

Again, I think Finney took things too far. I do not agree with his conclusions on justification and atonement to name a few. But I equally disagree with unconditional eternal security. In my mind they are equal and opposite errors.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/28 0:19

Quote:
-----Is a man declared right with God because of Christ's righteousness or does the man himself have to make himself righteous to be accepted by God?

The person must respond rightly to God when He reveals His will. I think this is absolute trust and dependence. It results in justification and paves the way for the person to be Born Again of the Spirit. In any event, God's purpose is an exceedingly awesome one. Justification is like receiving a work permit to begin demolition and construction. Some people think they can get a permit and ignore the project. This, I believe, is what Finney rejected categorically.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/28 0:24

For those not familiar with Finney's reasoning I have pulled out some excerpts from 'justification'. This gives you a flavor of his views.

Finney's Definition of Justification vs. Unconditional Eternal Justification
(Excerpts Taken From Finney's "Justification")

1. It is the nature of a pardon, to set aside the execution of the penalty due to past violations of the law, and to restore the person to governmental favor, during good behavior.
2. Whatever penalty is due to any act of sin, is due therefore, from the nature of the case, so that every act of sin subjects the sinner to the penalty.
3. Pardon cannot then be prospective--sin cannot be forgiven in advance, and to maintain that it is, is to make Christ the minister of sin.
4. The Bible uniformly makes perseverance in holiness, that is, in obedience, just as much a condition of final acceptance with God, as repentance, or one act of faith. For my part, I must say, I don't know where the Bible makes salvation depend on one act of faith. Those who hold this dogma, ought to tell us where it is taught.
5. The Bible, on the contrary, expressly declares that 'when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquities, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die.' What can be more distinct or explicit than this declaration? I know not how it has been overlooked, or can be evaded.
6. Moreover, as I have before said, if the penalty (for sin) is abolished as it respects believers, the law must be. To them, its precept ceases to be anything else than simple advice, which they may do as they please about adopting.
7. The truth is, every Christian's conscience condemns the doctrine, and it obviously is evil, and only evil, and that continually, in its whole tendency.

Finney's View of 'Present' Justification

1. To be in Christ, is to have a personal, living faith in Him--it is to abide in Him by a living faith.
2. John 15:4-7. 'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch that is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' 1 John 3:5-6. 'And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins: and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen Him, neither known Him.' 2 Cor. 5:17. 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'
3. I might quote many other passages, all setting forth that there is no condemnation to those whose faith secures in the

m, an actual conformity to the divine will. To all others, there is.

4. To be in Christ, is to be so under his influence, as not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that is, to receive constant divine influence from Him, as the branches derive nourishment from the vine. This intimate connection with Christ, and spiritual subjection to his control, are fully taught in many passages in the Bible. Gal. 2:20. 'I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' And 5:16-25. 'This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which, I tell you before as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.'

5. When it is said there is no condemnation, it is not intended that they never were condemned, but that their past sin is all pardoned. They are wholly delivered from exposure to the penalty, due to their sins. In addition to this, it is intended, that in their present state of mind, they obey the law, so that the law does not condemn their present state. It does not mean that they will not be again condemned if they sin, but that while they are in Christ Jesus, they are free from all present condemnation.

6. But to him that is in Christ Jesus, there is now no condemnation, because he is in Christ Jesus in the sense above explained. Not that Christ shields him from the penalty while he continues to violate the precept, but that He saves him from sin, and thus, from desert of the penalty. Says the text, 'to those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

7. This assertion must either mean that when we are in Christ we do not sin, or that in Him we can sin without condemnation. Now, what does it mean? It cannot mean the last, for that would make Christ the minister of sin. No individual can sin without breaking the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. The first, then, must be the meaning, and this agrees with what the Scriptures teach-- 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

A Justified 'state'

1. None except those who walk after the Spirit are in a justified state. (Romans 8:1)

2. I do not mean that they are in no sense Christians. In the common acceptance of the term, it is not limited to those who are in a state of actual conformity to the will of God, but applies to all who give credible evidence of having been converted. Moreover, it is true of Christians, that they sustain a peculiar relation to God, and the term does not indicate that they never sin or fall into condemnation, but that they sustain a certain relation to God which others do not.

3. I mean that when one has truly repented, he is justified, and remains so just as long as he remains obedient, and no longer; and that when he falls into sin, he is as much condemned as any other sinner, because he is a sinner.

4. I also mean that justification follows and does not precede sanctification as some have vainly imagined. I here use the term sanctification, not in the high sense of permanent sanctification, but of entire consecration to God. It is not true that persons are justified, before they forsake sin. They certainly could not be thus legally justified, and the gospel proffers no pardon until after repentance, or hearty submission of the will to God. I add, that Christians are justified no longer than they are sanctified, or obedient, and that complete permanent justification depends upon complete and permanent sanctification.

5. Men are justified by faith in Christ, because they are sanctified by faith in Him. They do not have righteousness imputed to them, and thus stand justified by an arbitrary fiction, while they are personally unholy, but they are made righteous by faith, and that is the reason why they are justified.

6. To talk about depending on Christ to be justified by Him, while indulging in any form of known sin, is to insult Him. It is to charge him with being the minister of sin.

7. Why that such persons did not pretend to be holy, and professed to depend wholly on Christ. They acknowledged the

mselves sinners. And well they might! But what kind of religion is that? And how did he get such a notion? How else but by supposing that persons are not expected to be holy in this life, and that they can be justified while living in sin! Now I would as soon expect a pirate, whose hands are red with blood to be saved, as professors of religion who indulge in any form of sin, lust, pride, worldliness, or any other iniquity. 'Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the law.' But what a state of things must it be, when a minister can utter such a sentiment as that?

8. A circuit Judge, some years since said, "I cannot admit the Bible to be true. It teaches that men are saved by faith, and I therefore regard the gospel as injurious to good morals, and as involving a principle that would ruin any government on earth." Now, did he get this idea from the Bible? No, but from the false representations made of the teachings of the Bible. It teaches no such thing, but plainly asserts that a faith that does not sanctify is a dead faith.

9. There are many hoping that they are Christians, who yet live so that their conscience condemns them. 'For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' Now to teach that persons may be justified while their conscience condemns them, contradicts this passage. If our own conscience condemns us, God does. Shall He be less just than our own nature?

10. One who walks after the Spirit, has this inward testimony that he pleases God. An individual may think he does, when he does not, just as persons in a dream may think themselves awake, find it all a dream. So individuals may think they please God when they do not, but it is nevertheless true that those who please God know it. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.

11. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' While they abide in Christ, they are not condemned, but if they overlook what abiding in Christ is, they are sure to fall into sin, and then, they are condemned as a matter of course. The secret of holy living, and freedom from contamination, is to abide in Christ. Says Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' We must have such confidence in Him as to let Him have the entire control in all things.

12. Sinners can see how to be saved. They must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart. They must become holy and walk after the Spirit.

13. There is neither peace nor safety except in Christ, but in Him is all fulness, and all we need. In Him you may come to God, as children, with the utmost confidence.

14. The instant you experience a freedom from condemnation, your whole soul yearns with benevolence for others. You know what their state is. Ah, yes, you know what it is to drink the wormwood and the gall--to have the arrows of the Almighty drink up your spirit, and when you find deliverance you must of course, want to teach others what is the great salvation--to strengthen those that are weak.

15. And an individual who can sit down at ease, and not find his benevolence like fire shut up in his bones--who does not even feel agonized, not for himself, but for others, cannot have yet found that there is now no condemnation. He may dream that he has, but if he ever awakes, he will find it but a dream. Oh, how many need to be aroused from this sleep of death!

Re: Finney's Definition of Justification - posted by boG (), on: 2008/8/28 5:12

Thank you RobertW, indeed, good stuff!

Another article to read on this subject by Finney is the following:

(<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?viewarticle&aid569>) Justification By Faith (A good title for the question at hand, yes?)

By Charles G. Finney

TEXT--"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of th

e law shall no flesh be justified."--Gal 2:16

THIS last sentiment is expressed in the same terms, in the 3d chapter of Romans. The subject of the present lecture, as I announced last week, is Justification by Faith. The order which I propose to pursue in the discussion is this:

- I. Show what justification by law, or legal justification, is.
- II. Show that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified.
- III. Show what gospel justification is.
- IV. Show what is the effect of gospel justification, or the state into which it brings a person that is justified.
- V. Show that gospel justification is by faith.
- VI. Answer some inquiries which arise in many minds on this subject.

III. I am to show what Gospel Justification is.

First, Negatively.

1. Gospel Justification is not the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if He had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead. It is not an uncommon mistake to suppose that when sinners are justified under the gospel they are accounted righteous in the eye of the law, by having the obedience or righteousness of Christ imputed to them. I have not time to go into an examination of this subject now. I can only say that this idea is absurd and impossible, for this reason, that Jesus Christ was bound to obey the law for himself, and could no more perform works of supererogation, or obey on our account, than any body else. Was it not his duty to love the Lord his God, with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself? Certainly; and if he had not done so, it would have been sin. The only work of supererogation he could perform was to submit to sufferings that were not deserved. This is called his obedience unto death, and this is set down to our account. But if his obedience of the law is set down to our account, why are we called on to repent and obey the law ourselves? Does God exact double service, yes, triple service, first to have the law obeyed by the surety for us, then that he must suffer the penalty for us, and then that we must repent and obey ourselves? No such thing is demanded. It is not required that the obedience of another should be imputed to us. All we owe is perpetual obedience to the law of benevolence. And for this there can be no substitute. If we fail of this we must endure the penalty, or receive a free pardon.

2. Justification by faith does not mean that faith is accepted as a substitute for personal holiness, or that by an arbitrary constitution, faith is imputed to us instead of personal obedience to the law.

Some suppose that justification is this, that the necessity of personal holiness is set aside, and that God arbitrarily dispenses with the requirement of the law, and imputes faith as a substitute. But this is not the way. Faith is accounted for just what it is, and not for something else that it is not. Abraham's faith was imputed unto him for righteousness, because it was as itself an act of righteousness, and because it worked by love, and thus produced holiness. Justifying faith is holiness, so far as it goes, and produces holiness of heart and life, and is imputed to the believer as holiness, not instead of holiness.

3. Nor does justification by faith imply that a sinner is justified by faith without good works, or personal holiness.

Some suppose that justification by faith only, is without any regard to good works, or holiness. They have understood thi

s from what Paul has said, where he insists so largely on justification by faith. But it should be borne in mind that Paul was combating the error of the Jews, who expected to be justified by obeying the law. In opposition to this error, Paul insists on it that justification is by faith, without works of law. He does not mean that good works are unnecessary to justification, but that works of law are not good works, because they spring from legal considerations, from hope and fear, and not from faith that works by love. But inasmuch as a false theory had crept into the church on the other side, James took up the matter, and showed them that they had misunderstood Paul. And to show this, he takes the case of Abraham. "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 faith made perfect?--And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." This epistle was supposed to contradict Paul, and some of the ancient churches rejected it on that account. But they overlooked the fact that Paul was speaking of one kind of works, and James of another. Paul was speaking of works performed from legal motives. But he has everywhere insisted on good works springing from faith, or the righteousness of faith, as indispensable to salvation. All that he denies is, that works of law, or works grounded on legal motives, have anything to do in the matter of justification. And James teaches the same thing, when he teaches that men are justified, not by works nor by faith alone, but by faith together with the works of faith; or as Paul expresses it, faith that works by love. You will bear in mind that I am speaking of gospel justification, which is very different from legal justification.

Secondly, Positively.

4. Gospel justification, or justification by faith, consists in pardon and acceptance with God.

When we say that men are justified by faith and holiness, we do not mean that they are accepted on the ground of law, but that they are treated as if they were righteous, on account of their faith and works of faith. This is the method which God takes, in justifying a sinner. Not that faith is the foundation of justification. The foundation is in Christ. But this is the manner in which sinners are pardoned, and accepted, and justified, that if they repent, believe, and become holy, their past sins shall be forgiven, for the sake of Christ.

Here it will be seen how justification under the gospel differs from justification under the law. Legal justification is a declaration of actual innocence and freedom from blame. Gospel justification is pardon and acceptance, as if he was righteous, but on other grounds than his own obedience. When the apostle says, "By deeds of law shall no flesh be justified," he uses justification as a lawyer, in a strictly legal sense. But when he speaks of justification by faith, he speaks not of legal justification, but of a person's being treated as if he were righteous.

4. Another thing effected by justification is to secure all needed grace to rescue themselves fully out of the snare of the devil, and all the innumerable entanglements in which they are involved by sin.

Beloved, if God were merely to pardon you, and then leave you to get out of sin as you could by yourselves, of what use would your pardon be to you? None in the world. If a child runs away from his father's house, and wanders in a forest, and falls into a deep pit, and the father finds him and undertakes to save him; if he merely pardons him for running away, it will be of no use, unless he lifts him up from the pit and leads him out of the forest. So in the scheme of redemption, whatever helps and aids you need, are all guaranteed, if you believe. If God undertakes to save you, he pledges all the light and grace and help that are necessary to break the chains of Satan and the entanglements of sin, and leads you back to your Father's house.

I know when individuals are first broken down under a sense of sin, and their hearts gush out with tenderness, they look over their past lives and feel condemned and see that it is all wrong, and then they break down at God's feet and give themselves away to Jesus Christ; they rejoice greatly in the idea that they have done with sin. But in a little time they begin to feel the pressure of old habits and former influences, and they see so much to be done before they overcome them all, that they often get discouraged, and cry, "O, what shall I do, with so many enemies to meet, and so little strength of resolution or firmness of purpose to overcome them?" Let me tell you, beloved, that if God has undertaken to save you, you have only to keep near to him, and he will carry you through. You need not fear your enemies. Though the heavens s

ould thunder and the earth rock, and the elements melt, you need not tremble, nor fear for enemies without or enemies within. God is for you, and who can be against you? "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

5. Justification enlists all the divine attributes in your favor, as much as if you had never sinned.

See that holy angel, sent on an errand of love to some distant part of the universe. God's eye follows him, and if he sees him likely to be injured in any way, all the divine attributes are enlisted at once to protect and sustain him. Just as absolutely are they all pledged for you, if you are justified, to protect and support and save you. Notwithstanding you are not free from remaining sin, and are so totally unworthy of God's love, yet if you are truly justified, the only wise and eternal God is pledged for your salvation. And shall you tremble and be faint-hearted, with such support?

If a human government pardons a criminal, it is then pledged to protect him as a subject, as much as if he had never committed a crime. So it is when God justifies a sinner. The Apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Henceforth, God is on his side, and pledged as his faithful and eternal friend.

Gospel justification differs from legal justification, in this respect: If the law justifies an individual, it holds no longer than he remains innocent. As soon as he transgresses once, his former justification is of no more avail. But when the gospel justifies a sinner, it is not so; but "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." A new relation is now constituted, entirely peculiar. The sinner is now brought out from under the covenant of works, and placed under the covenant of grace. He no longer retains God's favor by the tenure of absolute and sinless obedience. If he sins, now, he is not thrust back again under the law, but receives the benefit of the new covenant. If he is justified by faith; and so made a child of God, he receives the treatment of a child, and is corrected, and chastised, and humbled, and brought back again. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The meaning of that is not, that God calls and saves the sinner without his repenting, but that God never changes his mind when once he undertakes the salvation of a soul.

I know this is thought by some to be very dangerous doctrine, to teach that believers are perpetually justified--because, say they, it will embolden men to sin. Indeed! To tell a man that has truly repented of sin, and heartily renounced sin, and sincerely desires to be free from sin, that God will help him and certainly give him the victory over sin, will embolden him to commit sin! Strange logic that! If this doctrine emboldens any man to commit sin, it only shows that he never did repent; that he never hated sin, and never loved God for his own sake, but only feigned repentance, and if he loved God it was only a selfish love, because he thought God was going to do him a favor. If he truly hated sin, the consideration that notwithstanding all his unworthiness God had received him as a child, and would give him a child's treatment, is the very thing to break him down and melt his heart in the most godly sorrow. O, how often has the child of God, melted in adoring wonder at the goodness of God, in using means to bring him back, instead of sending him to hell, as he deserved! What consideration is calculated to bring him lower in the dust, than the thought that notwithstanding all God had done for him, and the gracious help God was always ready to afford him, he should wander away again, when his name was written in the Lamb's book of life!

6. It secures the discipline of the covenant. God has pledged himself that if any who belong to Christ go astray, he will use the discipline of the covenant, and bring them back. In the 89th psalm, God says, putting David for Christ, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

Thus you see that professors of religion may always expect to be more readily visited with God's judgments, if they get out of the way, than the impenitent. The sinner may grow fat, and live in riches, and have no bands in his death, all according to God's established principles of government. But let a child of God forsake his God, and go after riches or any other worldly object, and as certain as he is a child, God will smite him with his rod. And when he is smitten and brought back, he will say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Perhaps some of you have known what it is to be afflicted in this way, and to feel that it was good.

7. Another effect of gospel justification is, to insure sanctification. It not only insures all the means of sanctification, but the actual accomplishment of the work, so that the individual who is truly converted, will surely persevere in obedience till he is fitted for heaven and actually saved.

V. I am to show that this is justification by faith.

Faith is the medium by which the blessing is conveyed to the believer. The proof of this is in the Bible. The text declares it expressly. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." The subject is too often treated of in the New Testament to be necessary to go into a labored proof. It is manifest, from the necessity of the case, that if men are saved at all, they must be justified in this way, and not by works of law, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

VI. I will now answer several inquiries which may naturally arise in your minds, growing out of this subject.

1. "Why is justification said to be by faith, rather than by repentance, or love, or any other grace."

Answer. It is nowhere said that men are justified or saved for faith, as the ground of their pardon, but only that they are justified by faith, as the medium or instrument. If it is asked why faith is appointed as the instrument, rather than any other exercise of the mind, the answer is, because of the nature and effect of faith. No other exercise could be appointed. What is faith? It is that confidence in God which leads us to love and obey him. We are therefore justified by faith because we are sanctified by faith. Faith is the appointed instrument of our justification, because it is the natural instrument of sanctification. It is the instrument of bringing us back to obedience, and therefore is designated as the means of obtaining the blessings of that return. It is not imputed to us, by an arbitrary act, FOR what it is not, but for what it is, as the foundation of all real obedience to God.

This is the reason why faith is made the medium through which pardon comes. It is simply set down to us for what it really is; because it first leads us to obey God, from a principle of love to God. We are forgiven our sins on account of Christ. It is our duty to repent and obey God, and when we do so, this is imputed to us as what it is, holiness, or obedience to God. But for the forgiveness of our past sins, we must rely on Christ. And therefore justification is said to be by faith in Jesus Christ.

2. The second query is of great importance: "What is justifying faith? What must I believe, in order to be saved?"

Answer. (1) Negatively, justifying faith does not consist in believing that your sins are forgiven. If that was necessary, you would have to believe it before it was done, or to believe a lie. Remember, your sins are not forgiven until you believe. But if saving faith is believing that they are already forgiven, it is believing a thing before it takes place, which is absurd. You cannot believe your sins are forgiven, before you have evidence that they are forgiven; and you cannot have evidence that they are forgiven until it is true that they are forgiven, and they cannot be forgiven until you exercise saving faith. Therefore saving faith must be believing something else.

Nor (2) does saving faith consist in believing that you shall be saved at all. You have no right to believe that you shall be saved at all, until after you have exercised justifying or saving faith.

But (3) justifying faith consists in believing the atonement of Christ, or believing the record which God has given of his Son.

The correctness of this definition has been doubted by some; and I confess my own mind has undergone a change on this point. It is said that Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. But what did Abraham believe? He believed that he should have a son. Was this all? By no means. But his faith included the great blessing that depended on that event, that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, should spring from him. This was the great subject of the Abrahamic covenant, and it depended on his having a son. Of course, Abraham's faith included the "Desire of all nations," and was faith in Christ. The apostle Paul has showed this, at full length, in the 3d chapter of Galatians, that the sum of the covenant was, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." In verse 16, he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

It is said that in the 11th of Hebrews, the saints are not all spoken of as having believed in Christ. But if you examine carefully, you will find that in all cases, faith in Christ is either included in what they believed, or fairly implied by it. Take the case of Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Why was his sacrifice more excellent? Because, by offering the firstlings of his flock, he recognized the necessity of the atonement, and that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Cain was a proud infidel, and offered the fruits of the ground, as a mere thank offering, for the blessings of Providence, without any admission that he was a sinner, and needed an atonement, as the ground o

n which he could hope for pardon. Some suppose that an individual might exercise justifying faith, while denying the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ. I deny this. The whole sum and substance of revelation, like converging rays, all center on Jesus Christ, his divinity and atonement. All that the prophets and other writers of the Old Testament say about salvation comes to him. The Old Testament and the New, all the types and shadows point to him. All the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in him. Their faith terminated in the coming Messiah, as that of the New Testament saints did in the Messiah already come. In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul shows what place he would assign to this doctrine: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Mark that expression, "first of all." It proves that Paul preached that Christ died for sinners, as the "first" or primary doctrine of the gospel. And so you will find it, from one end of the Bible to the other, that the attention of men was directed to this new and living way, as the only way of salvation. This truth is the only truth that can sanctify men. They may believe a thousand other things, but this is the great source of sanctification, "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." And this alone can therefore be justifying faith.

There may be many other acts of faith, that may be right and acceptable to God. But nothing is justifying faith, but believing the record that God has given of his Son. Simply believing what God has revealed on any point, is an act of faith; but justifying faith fastens on Christ, takes hold of his atonement, and embraces him as the only ground of pardon and salvation. There may be faith in prayer, the faith that is in exercise in offering up prevailing prayer to God. But that is not properly justifying faith.

3. "When are men justified?"

This is also an inquiry often made. I answer--Just as soon as they believe in Christ, with the faith which worketh by love. Sinner, you need not go home from this meeting under the wrath of Almighty God. You may be justified here, on the spot, now, if you will only believe in Christ. Your pardon is ready, made out and sealed with the broad seal of heaven; and the blank will be filled up, and the gracious pardon delivered, as soon as, by one act of faith, you receive Jesus Christ as he is offered in the gospel.

4. "How can I know whether I am in a state of justification or not?"

Answer. You can know it in no way, except by inference. God has not revealed it in the scriptures, that you, or any other individuals, are justified; but he has set down the characteristics of a justified person, and declared that all who have these characteristics are justified.

(1.) Have you the witness of the Spirit? All who are justified have this. They have intercourse with the Holy Ghost, he explains the Scriptures to them, and leads them to see their meaning, he leads them to the Son and to the Father, and reveals the Son in them, and reveals the Father. Have you this? If you have, you are justified. If not, you are yet in your sins.

(2.) Have you the fruits of the Spirit? They are love, joy, peace, and so on. These are matters of human consciousness; have you them? If so, you are justified.

(3.) Have you peace with God? The apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Christ says to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." And again, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you find rest in Christ? Is your peace like a river, flowing gently through your soul, and filling you with calm and heavenly delight? Or do you still feel a sense of condemnation before God?

Do you feel a sense of acceptance with God, of pardoned sin, of communion with God? This must be a matter of experience, if it exists. Don't imagine you can be in a justified state, and yet have no evidence of it. You may have great peace in reality, filling your soul, and yet not draw the inference that you are justified. I remember the time, when my mind was in a state of such sweet peace, that it seemed to me as if all nature was listening for God to speak; but yet I was not aware that this was the peace of God, or that it was evidence of my being in a justified state. I thought I had lost all my conviction, and actually undertook to bring back the sense of condemnation that I had before. I did not draw the inference that I was justified, till after the love of God was so shed abroad in my soul by the Holy Ghost, that I was compelled to cry out, "Lord, it is enough, I can bear no more." I do not believe it possible for the sense of condemnation to remain, where the act of pardon is already past.

(4.) Have you the spirit of adoption? If you are justified, you are also adopted, as one of God's dear children, and he has

sent forth his Spirit into your heart, so that you naturally cry, "Abba, Father!" He seems to you just like a father, and you want to call him father. Do you know any thing of this? It is one thing to call God your father in heaven, and another thing to feel towards him as a father. This is one evidence of a justified state, when God gives the spirit of adoption.

Re: Clarification - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/28 9:40

Quote:

-----Thank you RobertW, indeed, good stuff!

I just want to clarify that I am not promoting Finney's position on justification; I just wanted to set it out there for those that might wonder. But it is important to know that this was at the foundation of his preaching. The problem arises when the means of revival is a constant attack on assurance. It becomes the cure all for everything. I think this is highly dangerous.

Why? Because when folk get in step with much of the New Testament and the 'excitement' of revival might not be seen, an attempt might be made to attack assurance using some of the craziest fabrications of sins. Soon a person is damned for drinking tea or salting their food. It can become extremely legalistic. The key to revival is maintaining our First Love and 'occasionally' breaking up the fallow ground. But surely not with trivial things such as buying a nice dress or eating something for the enjoyment of it. So we need to BEWARE of this other 'extreme' that does not work the righteousness of God; it is nothing more than embalming a dead carcass. The Spirit has to come and give life.

Re: assurance - posted by boG (), on: 2008/8/28 16:43

And indeed, more good stuff!

Thank you sir. Certainly that "extreme" does not work the righteousness of God.

However, I would have to say attacking assurance is not the problem. But the way in which it is done because you are obviously referring to a false and divisive attack:

Colossians 2

14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;
15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:
17. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.
18. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
19. And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

And, Romans 14

11. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.
12. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.
13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.
14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.
15. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.
16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of:
17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
18. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.
19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.
20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.
21. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.
23. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

So then the attack of assurance ought always to be focused here:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

And we are always commended to test ourselves to see that we be in the faith, that we have full assurance of faith and that nothing hinders us in this divine "race".

WOF will proclaim that "we have everything already" we just need to act on it, which is nonsense. Just jump off a cliff before you have a parachute on your back and just believe, "I already have the parachute!"

I like the way Finney laid it out:

"Justifying faith does not consist in believing that your sins are forgiven. If that was necessary, you would have to believe it before it was done, or to believe a lie. Remember, your sins are not forgiven until you believe. But if saving faith is believing that they are already forgiven, it is believing a thing before it takes place, which is absurd. You cannot believe your sins are forgiven, before you have evidence that they are forgiven; and you cannot have evidence that they are forgiven until it is true that they are forgiven, and they cannot be forgiven until you exercise saving faith. Therefore saving faith must be believing something else."

It is true, that our sins HAVE BEEN forgiven by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But that is still not the same as BEING forgiven by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The first says, "it is finished" and "come unto me ... I will give you rest for your souls". The second says, when Thou said "seek My face," O Lord, my heart said, "Thy face shall I seek" -- and comes unto Him.

This is the same principle for healing and anything else that is to be received from God.

We might as well describe it like a covenant, yes? God signed His Name in blood, swearing by Himself, and the covenant now awaits for us to make it a valid contract between us. And, before anyone gets pointy, I will continue to say it over and over: thus, God has called us, we respond as He has bid us to obey, He helps our infirmities and makes all things possible for us to do WITH Christ.

Then, just as the parable of the Vine and the Branches, Peter writes in his second epistle:

2 Peter 1

8. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.
10. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;
11. for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Marked note:

if these qualities are yours

and are increasing

It is not good enough to be "forgiven once" or "one act of faith" but it must CONTINUE and INCREASE, ABOUND, GROW.

So we may very well attack this assurance to see that it is firmly founded in faith towards God and BEARING fruit in keeping with repentance from dead works, thus, growing in faith, righteousness, peace, joy and love in the Holy Ghost. As we well know that no one can separate us from the Love of God, but this says nothing concerning our own purposed walking away from Him and giving ourselves to be carried away by the lusts of our flesh. So if we honestly consider, even if someone comes against us with a clever argument, we shall not be shaken for we know in Whom we have believed; unless we are indeed found in sin and our accusers (though they be liars) speak the truth to our shame.

A proper attack would be like this:

2 Timothy 3

10. Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,
11. persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!
12. Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
13. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
14. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,
15. and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
16. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
17. so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

(and walking in every good work for which the Lord has equipped them and prepared before-hand for them to walk in.)

This is relationship.

Re: - posted by awakenwithin (), on: 2008/8/28 17:43

Tj,
Thank you for your humble heart in the way you ask the question. May God's grace give you wisdom, from His holy word. Blessing in your seeking.
May God help us to seek wisdom from The Word of God. Indeed it is our rock.

In Christ Alone
Cahrlene

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/8/28 21:35

Brother RobertW, thank you for your hard work in stating brother Finney more accurately. These other brothers who are so quick to judge him concerning his salvation over a few misunderstood words when he spoke thousands & thousands of words. It is easy to take any man's words out of the context of the spirit and passion of his love for God and his creation like Finney.

I'm sure my friends who are so eager to judge brother Charles that if you are fortunate enough to get to heaven I'm sure it will be hard for you to get to see Finney because he will be so close to the throne and there will be so many former Calvinists surrounding him and thanking him for stirring them from their false conversion.

God used Finney to awaken the people to make sure of a real conversion. God used this man because of his great love for sinners. I believe God saw the damage that Calvinism and religion had caused in damning so many people to hell with a false sense of security in a false conversion that left people still in their sins. True conversion results in a new creature

e saved from sin. True conversion will result in a growing in sanctification. Justification that does not lead to sanctification is false. The bible tells us to make our calling and election sure.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (KJV) 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Just my thoughts brethren since others on here seem to have theirs in judging a brother who has done more for the kingdom of God than his judges have ever done for the kingdom of God or possible could ever do unless they get the same passion of the Holy Ghost that so filled brother Finney.

Oops! I did it again. I just seem to get ruffled about religionists. We need to bring forth fruit! Jesus said except we all repent we are going to perish. What ever you believe, have you repented, have you been justified and sanctified, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God and this is clear from the scriptures. We are justified by faith because of the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Our righteousness comes from the Lord. We have none of ourselves. But a justification that does not result in a washing from our sins in the name of the Lord and does not sanctify us by the spirit of the Lord is not a fully justification by the Lord at all.

The same bible that says we are justified by faith also says we are justified by a working faith meaning a faith that works in bringing forth fruit. Read Romans and the book of James. It tells us a faith that we say we have but does not result in works (meaning fruitfulness) is dead. Now real faith is not dead but living and producing the fruit of the Spirit. A person needs to know that the conversion he thinks he has is really a true one instead of a false one. We don't need to die to find out, for that will be too late. I don't want to go to hell to find out I wasn't really saved. The bible tells me to make sure. Amen brother Finney, Amen. Sorry I was just getting excited a little!! I thank God for people like Finney and you don't have to appreciate him and that to your own sorrow. I also, believe it or not, appreciate people like John Calvin, Owens, and other puritans that have such rich teachings that are a blessing even though they have made errors as we all have.

I could list others like Finney who have blessed me and also were called heretics and blasphemers but I will just list the one I love the most, Jesus my Lord and Savior. Amen! And he will silence all His accusers.

Blessings to all!

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/8/28 22:58

I am still waiting for someone to address the Scripture alone and what it says about justification.

Re: Justification By Faith - posted by boG (), on: 2008/8/29 0:54

Allow me to ask a question in turn,

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, does he truly love God?

If someone says, "I have come to know Him (the Lord)," and does not keep His commandments, shall he inherit eternal life?

Quote:
-----Is a man declared right with God because of Christ's righteousness or does the man himself have to make himself righteous to be accepted by God?

No, man does not "make himself" righteous.

Quote:
-----If man is only right with God by his own righteousness, then what is the purpose of Christ's death? Why would there need to be a New Covenant if man could by his own will keep the Old one? Did Christ only die as an example for us, or was there a definite purpose for His death?

If you had read either of these posts of Finney's articles you would know that this is not what he is teaching.

The parable of the Vine and the Branches: If the branches do not bear fruit they are cut off and cast into the fire. Yet, the branches can not bear fruit of themselves unless they are in the True Vine.

Quote:
-----Does Scripture teach clearly that a man is justified (declared righteous) by faith in Christ alone?

If the answer to this is yes, then Finney and others who make the Christian's acceptance with God based upon moral behavior (sanctification) are wrong.

Finney says,

Faith is the medium by which the blessing is conveyed to the believer. The proof of this is in the Bible. The text declares it expressly. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." The subject is too often treated of in the New Testament to be necessary to go into a labored proof. It is manifest, from the necessity of the case, that if men are saved at all, they must be justified in this way, and not by works of law, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

We are forgiven our sins on account of Christ. It is our duty to repent and obey God, and when we do so, this is imputed to us as what it is, holiness, or obedience to God. But for the forgiveness of our past sins, we must rely on Christ. And therefore justification is said to be by faith in Jesus Christ.

Quote:
-----However the others usually use the term grace to mean a spark, or force that must be co-operated with to make it work. Or if you like, a little boost to clear the broken rungs on the ladder to Heaven. After that however, the Christian must climb in his own ability and power.

"the Christian must climb in his own ability and power" -- that is absurd. We still must remember the Parable of the Vine and the Branches.

Matthew 19

26. But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Quote:
-----For in one of the Canons, it clearly says that if a man says that a man is justified by faith alone, let him be anathema. I could be wrong, but Finney seems to echo the same sentiments in his view of the Doctrine of imputed righteousness.

Now this is a little tricky, the question arises, what did the Council of Trent mean by "faith alone"?

I do know what Finney means by his view of "imputed righteousness". It goes like this,

James 2

17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
24. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

In this regard Finney said,

3. Nor does justification by faith imply that a sinner is justified by faith without good works, or personal holiness.

Some suppose that justification by faith only, is without any regard to good works, or holiness. They have understood this from what Paul has said, where he insists so largely on justification by faith. But it should be borne in mind that Paul was combating **the error of the Jews, who expected to be justified by obeying the law.** In opposition to this error, Paul insists on it that justification is by faith, without works of law.

He does not mean that good works are unnecessary to justification, but that works of law are not good works, because they spring from legal considerations, from hope and fear, and NOT from faith that works by love.

But inasmuch as a false theory had crept into the church on the other side, James took up the matter, and showed them that they had misunderstood Paul. And to show this, he takes the case of Abraham. "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 faith made perfect?--**And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God,**

and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is **justified, and not by faith only.**"

This epistle was supposed to contradict Paul, and some of the ancient churches rejected it on that account. But they overlooked the fact that **Paul was speaking of one kind of works, and James of another.** Paul was speaking of works performed from legal motives. **But he has everywhere insisted on good works springing from faith, or the righteousness of faith, as indispensable to salvation.** All that he denies is, that works of law, or works grounded on legal motives, have anything to do in the matter of justification. And James teaches the same thing, when he teaches that men are justified, not by works nor by faith alone, **but by faith together with the works of faith; or as Paul expresses it, faith that works by love.**

You will bear in mind that I am speaking of gospel justification, which is very different from legal justification.

I hope this helps clear up some confusion on Finney's teachings.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/8/29 9:49

Praise God brother boG for your excellent posts in trying to explain the truth about justification and I am thankful for your work.

I decided to take a portion of your latest post.

Quote:

boG wrote:

This epistle was supposed to contradict Paul, and some of the ancient churches rejected it on that account. But they overlooked the fact that **Paul was speaking of one kind of works, and James of another.** Paul was speaking of works performed from legal motives. **But he has everywhere insisted**

d on good works springing from faith, or the righteousness of faith, as indispensable to salvation. All that he denies is, that works of law, or works grounded on legal motives, have anything to do in the matter of justification. And James teaches the same thing, when he teaches that men are justified, not by works nor by faith alone, **but by faith together with the works of faith; or as Paul expresses it, faith that works by love.**

You will bear in mind that I am speaking of gospel justification, which is very different from legal justification.

I hope this helps clear up some confusion on Finney's teachings.

This is a very good explanation. I agree wholeheartedly with the proper attitude of works in James with faith. The bible tells us that it is our faith alone in Christ and his righteousness that brings about our justification. Our works God will not accept. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Romans 4:16 says it is of faith that it might be by grace. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. He imparts his righteousness to the true believer and we have a real conversion that results in a new creation that brings forth fruit. 1John chapters 1-5 tells us how we can have assurance of our salvation. Let us not think that we don't need to check our life by the fruit it is bringing forth and see that the good works of God are evident.

Blessings to all!

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/8/29 10:35

Quote:
-----I do not believe that if a person demonstrates a single act of faith it is evidence they were regenerated. This is the danger of our times. Many folk do not understand what it means to be truly born from above. They live in their proof texts and are satisfied. But with my soul on the line I think it wise to keep studying the matter.

This is the truth. At times too much emphasis is placed on the physical action of coming forward. I have personally heard people defend their salvation by telling of their trip to the altar, as if the actual action of walking and kneeling were the key ingredients.

Thanks for all your efforts in attempting to bring clarity to the issues surrounding Mr. Finney. I, like you, do not find myself in agreement with all his conclusions, but I am beginning to understand it all a bit better.

Grace and peace

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/8/30 10:21

Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if He had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead. -- Charles Finney

That is one of the most soul-damning, pernicious statements a person could utter out of their mouth.

As for me and my house, I'm not going to court this harlot doctrine that damns men. And, I don't believe anyone will escape the fire of hell who does court it. May God give the grace to endure if my blood must soak the ground with the other martyrs who died speaking against this pagan notion that cries down the sovereignty of God and promotes the goodness and power of man's moral aptitude. May we not worship this golden calf while proclaiming a feast to the Lord on the morrow.

May the Lord keep us from such sinful errors, and work in us both to will and do his good pleasure as we believe the wrath satisfying propitiation that Christ has made for his people.

To claim that believing in justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ makes men loose in living is a plain denial of history. The men that are most remembered for holiness and mortification would have wept at such a denial of the gospel. It is a plain fact that men such as the Puritans, Edwards, Brainerd, Ryle, Spurgeon, etc. were strictly holy.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Charles Finney's teaching on justification is Roman Catholic, and that is a fact. Charles Finney believed what his systematic theology states. The book was published in 1851; Finney died in 1875.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, **he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. -- Isaiah 61:10

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/8/30 11:45

Quote:

TaylorOtwell wrote:

Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if He had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead. -- Charles Finney

That is one of the most soul-damning, pernicious statements a person could utter out of their mouth.

As for me and my house, I'm not going to court this harlot doctrine that damns men. And, I don't believe anyone will anyone escape the fire of hell who does court it. May God give the grace to endure if my blood must soak the ground with the other martyrs who died speaking against this pagan notion that cries down the sovereignty of God and promotes the goodness and power of man's moral aptitude.

Brother I don't know you but I fear for you in the attitude of judgment that you have taken. I believe you have taken Finney out of context and accused him of promoting man's goodness over God's sovereignty.

I believe what Finney was trying to convey is that Christ obedience is not a substitute for our obedience. God wants us to be obedient also.

Look at what Finney said

"sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if He had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead"

Brother it was not the obedience of Jesus that was set down to our account as if he obeyed the law for us and we don't have to fulfill the righteousness of the Law.

The bible says-

Ro 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Ro 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Jesus being obedient to the Law as a man was not what was imputed to us. Jesus obeyed the Law and was made a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was already righteous before he became a man. We are justified by his blood. God justifies all who have faith in Jesus. He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

The things you have accused Finney of by taking a few words out of the context of what he was trying to convey is not right.

If you will look at more of his words you will see that He exalts the Lord Jesus and not man. Who has made you a judge over Finney? I'm very sure it is not God.

Jas 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Jas 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Grace to you!

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/8/30 12:13

rbanks, Finney consistently preached against the imputed righteousness of Christ, and I think that is what he is conveying here (and in numerous other places). You also state that you do not believe that Christ's righteousness (fulfilling of the Law) was imputed to us.

However, I would suggest this verse:

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: -- 1st Corinthians 1:30

Christ is not only our innocence, but our righteousness.

Also, remember this:

In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. - Jeremiah 23:6.

I think if I could bring brothers who know me in person to testify about me here today, they would testify, by God's grace, that I am an understanding person and accepting of those who differ in some matters.

However, I don't think people are fully comprehending the seriousness of the differences between the views of Finney/Pelagius and the views of Christians throughout the ages. It is not a mere wrangling over words and straining at gnats, it is the very gospel at stake.

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/8/30 13:06

Romans 4,

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And **therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.**

23 Now **it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;**

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

By faith in Christ's power and redemptive work we lay hold of his substitutionary death. He died as a substitute, being delivered for the offenses of others. On the cross Jesus was made sin, as it were, on our behalf, and we receive the merit of his righteousness for justification by faith in his work.

Imputed righteousness received by faith is the gospel in plainest terms.

If this is denied, I am convinced the gospel is denied.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2008/8/30 13:23

Hi Taylor...

Is it wise to take such a vicious manner in regard to this man (Finney)? I don't totally agree with many brethren in respect to their doctrinal beliefs, yet it doesn't cause me to spew fierce anger in regard to their views. I don't believe in modern teaching of "once saved, always saved" in the least; however, I don't think that those who do are preaching "soul-damning, pernicious statements." Rather, they are simply sharing their views about the nature of salvation. Yes, they probably shouldn't teach a matter that is not ultimately clear from the Scriptures.

When asked what I believe, I usually tell people that I agree with neither "side" on the issue. Rather, I understand that our justification is by faith...but that such faith is illustrated by our love for God—a love that is demonstrated by an ever-present desire to be holy. However, if a soul consciously lives in a constant state of sin, then what kind of "justification" remains? It is easy to claim that such a person was "never truly saved in the first place." That may be true in the sense of the timelessness of eternity, but are we so willing to dismiss the faith of men who once walked

wholeheartedly in the faith but strayed away? The doctrine of "justification by faith" is one thing: The idea that is taught by which a person who once professed and demonstrated faith in Christ is now forever secure from ever "falling away" is another.

Having never met him (but being familiar with his autobiography and biographies of the man), I think that this may be what Finney was trying to say. You called Finney's supposed teaching a "Catholic doctrine." That doctrine teaches "safety" by fulfilling the rituals of that corrupt Church. However, I think that Finney was trying to expose the dangers of a Protestant Church that was becoming just as corrupt as the Catholic (but from a different reason). Many Protestants at the time held a false sense of security similar to what is present in the Catholic Church. However, whereas the Catholics obtained their false sense of security from fulfilling the requirements of the Church, the Protestants were attaining their false sense of security from the idea that they are justified entirely by their faith.

While I certainly believe in justification by faith – I don't think that the Protestants of Finney's day truly understood the concept of "faith." The faith that justifies is not the result of simply believing in Christ (like believing in gravity...nor is it believing in the Christ that is taught by many preachers standing on podiums). The faith that justifies is not demonstrated by a public confession, baptism in water and a mandatory "Church" lifestyle. Rather, this "faith" is demonstrated by our hunger for the things of God and our distaste for the things of this world! However, Finney's *Memoirs* contain the shock he received before and after his conversion of men who just didn't care. Many men and women of his day – who were faithful to the Church – simply didn't care about the things of God. Yes, they went through the motions of worship, prayer, and works. But Finney seemed to equate such things with the same non-conversion "evidence" demonstrated by constituents of the Catholic Church!

Finney's manner of "revival" was probably birthed by his own unique conversion experience. He was a fairly agnostic Law School student. One of his textbooks for Law School was the Old Testament (since it was the foundation for law in a "Christian" society like the United States). As such, he began to fear for the status of his soul. He began attending prayer meetings – but wouldn't pray. After months of this, the prayerful Church-goers approached Finney and asked if he would like prayer. Finney said no. He told them, *"I suppose I need to be prayed for, for I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see that it will do any good for you to pray for me; for you are continually asking, but you do not receive. You have been praying for a revival of religion ever since I have been in Adams, and yet you have it not. You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness. You have prayed enough since I have attended these meetings to have prayed the devil out of Adams, if there is any virtue in your prayer s. But here you are praying on, and complaining still."*

Finney became more and more miserable in regard to the condition of his soul. He had resolved that he would divert attention from everything in his life in order to make peace with God. Yet he was too prideful to publicly acknowledge the woeful condition of his soul. He knew that his heart was growing hard, yet he was completely miserable in his state. He eventually became so painfully aware of his wretched condition, that he decided that he was going to attempt to make peace with God. He knew of a lonely stretch of woods just north of town, and he decided to walk there and attempt to find salvation. He proceeded to cry out to God in prayer. Yet he was still full of pride. In his own words:

Quote:

But still my pride must show 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. Yet 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 recollect that I skulked along under the fence, till I got so far out of sight that no one from the village could see me. I then penetrated into the woods, I should think, a quarter of a mile, went over on the other side of the hill, and found a place where some large trees had fallen across each other, leaving an open place between. There I saw I could make a kind of closet. I crept into this place and knelt down for prayer. As I turned to go up into the woods, I recollect to have said, "I will give my heart to God, or I never will come down from there." I recollect repeating this as I went up: "I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again."

But when I attempted to pray I found that my heart would not pray. I had supposed that if I could only be where I could speak aloud, without being overheard, I could pray freely. But lo! when I came to try, I was dumb; that is, I had nothing to say to God; or at least I could say but a few words, and those without heart. In attempting to pray I would hear a rustling in the leaves, as I thought, and would stop and look up to see if somebody were not coming. This I did several times.

Finally I found myself verging fast to despair. I said to myself, "I cannot pray. My heart is dead to God, and will not pray." I then reproached myself for having promised to give my heart to God before I left the woods. When I came to try, I found I could not give my heart to God. My inward soul hung back, and there was no going out of my heart to God. I began to feel deeply that it was too late; that it must be that I was given up of God and was past hope. The thought was pressing me of the rashness of my promise, that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt. It seemed to me as if that was binding upon my soul; and yet I was going to break my vow. A great sinking and discouragement came over me, and I felt almost too weak to stand upon my knees.

Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it were so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner I am, on my knees confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

Just at that point this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before; but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state. I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God's veracity. Somehow I knew that that was a passage of Scripture, though I do not think I had ever read it. I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, as it were, that spoke to me. I cried to Him, "Lord, I take Thee at Thy word."

Now Thou knowest that I do search for Thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to Thee; and Thou hast promised to hear me." That seemed to settle the question that I could then, that day, perform my vow. The Spirit seemed to lay stress upon that idea in the text, "When you search for me with all your heart." The question of when, that is of the present time, seemed to fall heavily into my heart. I told the Lord that I should take Him at his word; that He could not lie; and that therefore I was sure that He heard my prayer, and that He would be found of me.

Such as is true with many of us, Finney's salvation was sudden and dramatic! Christ had just become the center of his universe—the focal point of his heart and mind. Finney described just how his life became immediately and immeasurably consumed by his newfound relationship with God! Naturally, he was shocked with the nonchalant manner in which other "Christians" spoke about God. Finney had just had a powerful conversion and was consumed by the things of God—and he was shocked that others in Church did not share his same zeal. In fact, many of the Church didn't even seem to have a relationship with God at all.

I believe that this revelation consumed Finney. His life had just been turned upside down by his conversion and newfound focus on Christ—yet so many other "believers" approached the things of God as though it was just another part of life. The revival that began in New York (that was considered the Second Great Awakening) was the result of Finney's realization that the Church was filled with false converts. Sure, they were good people who believed in Jesus, were baptized in water, and regularly attended meetings. They were even highly moral. Yet Finney agonized over the realization that people assumed that this was "salvation." There was no evidence of the agony over sin or separation from God for which Finney knew firsthand. Rather, people were settled in their own Protestant brand of Christianity that resembled Roman Catholicism much more than they were willing to admit. People thought that they were saved simply because they believed and fulfilled the non-ritualistic rituals of the Church. And Finney set out to destroy such a myth!

Brother Taylor, I imagine that Finney might have gone too far in his messages about some things (including justification). But it is helpful to understand the issues in which he faced. He saw the Church being infiltrated with accepted standards of false conversion. People were "joining" the Church rather than being "born again" or converted into it. Finney saw that the Church was "sitting in ease in Zion" (so to speak) with little care about the things of God other than the "Sunday Christianity" that was now the norm. Indeed, the Church of Finney's day was in desperate need of a revival of true faith—and not a "faith" that was based upon the idea of it as accepted by the Church of the day. Faith, in Finney's mind, only existed when evidenced by a hungry desire to please God. It is entirely different than a mere public decision or profession of faith. It is existent only when it is accompanied by deep, heartfelt repentance and then by focus on the things of God.

It is sometimes easy to pick and choose a short passage from a book that is attributed to Finney and then criticize it as a "harlot doctrine that damns men." It would be far more relevant if you would include the entire quote. For instance, it is common for anti-Christian men (such as abortions rights groups, atheists or homosexuals) to quote a single phrase from Scripture that almost appears to justify their behavior or beliefs. However, if we were to look at the passage as a whole, it would clarify the matter. In the same way, if we are going to pass judgment upon a man based upon a sentence that is taken from one of "his books" (actually compiled, edited and released by other men), then it would be helpful to mull over the entire section or chapter.

The passage that you quoted is from Chapter 16 of the book entitled "Lectures to Professing Christians." The chapter deals with the concept of "Justification by Faith," and is taken from section 3, "Show what justification is." Here is that section in its entirety:

Quote:

III. I am to show what Gospel Justification is.

First, Negatively.

1. Gospel Justification is not the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if He had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead. It is not an uncommon mistake to suppose that when sinners are justified under the gospel they are accounted righteous in the eye of the law, by having the obedience or righteousness of Christ imputed to them. I have not time to go into an examination of this subject now. I can only say this idea is absurd and impossible, for this reason, that Jesus Christ was bound to obey the law for Himself, and could no more perform works of supererogation, or obey on our account, than anybody else. Was it not His duty to love the Lord his God, with all His heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love His neighbor as Himself? Certainly; and if he had not done so, it would have been sin. The only work of supererogation He could perform was to submit to sufferings that were not deserved. This is called his obedience unto death, and this is set down to our account. But if His obedience of the law is set down to our account, why are we called on to repent and obey the law ourselves? Does God exact double service, yes, triple service, first to have the law obeyed by the surety for us, then that He must suffer the penalty for us, and then that we must repent and obey ourselves? No such thing is demanded. It is not required that the obedience of another should be imputed to us. All we owe is perpetual obedience to the law of benevolence. And for this there can be no substitute. If we fail of this we must endure the penalty, or receive a free pardon.

2. Justification by faith does not mean that faith is accepted as a substitute for personal holiness, or that by an arbitrary constitution, faith is imputed to us instead of personal obedience to the law.

Some suppose that justification is this, that the necessity of personal holiness is set aside, and that God arbitrarily dispenses with the requirement of the law, and imputes faith as a substitute. But this is not the way. Faith is accounted for just what it is, and not for something else that it is not. Abraham's faith was imputed unto him for righteousness, because it was itself an act of righteousness, and because it worked by love, and thus produced holiness. Justifying faith is holiness, so far as it goes, and produces holiness of heart and life, and is imputed to the believer as holiness, not instead of holiness.

3. Nor does justification by faith imply that a sinner is justified by faith without good works, or personal holiness.

Some suppose that justification by faith only, is without any regard to good works, or holiness. They have understood this from what Paul has said, where he insists so largely on justification by faith. But it should be borne in mind that Paul was combating the error of the Jews, who expected to be justified by obeying the law. In opposition to this error, Paul insists on it that justification is by faith, without works of law. He does not mean that good works are unnecessary to justification, but that works of law are not good works, because they spring from legal considerations, from hope and fear, and not from faith that works by love. But inasmuch as a false theory had crept into the church on the other side, James took up the matter, and showed them that they had misunderstood Paul. And to show this, he takes the case of Abraham. "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 faith made perfect?---And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

This epistle was supposed to contradict Paul, and some of the ancient churches rejected it on that account. But they overlooked the fact that Paul was speaking of one kind of works, and James of another. Paul was speaking of works performed from legal motives. But he has everywhere insisted on good works springing from faith, or the righteousness of faith, as indispensable to salvation. All that he denies is, that works of law, or works grounded on legal motives, have anything to do in the matter of justification. And James teaches the same thing, when he teaches that men are justified, not by works nor by faith alone, but by faith together with the works of faith; or as Paul expresses it, faith that works by love. You will bear in mind that I am speaking of gospel justification, which is very different from legal justification.

Secondly, Positively.

4. Gospel justification, or justification by faith, consists in pardon and acceptance with God.

When we say that men are justified by faith and holiness, we do not mean that they are accepted on the ground of law, but that they are treated as if they were righteous, on account of their faith and works of faith. This is the method which God takes, in justifying a sinner. Not that faith is the foundation of justification. The foundation is in Christ. But this is the manner in which sinners are pardoned, and accepted, and justified, that if they repent, believe, and become holy, their past sins shall be forgiven, for the sake of Christ.

Here it will be seen how justification under the gospel differs from justification under the law. Legal justification is a declaration of actual innocence and freedom from blame. Gospel justification is pardon and acceptance, as if he was righteous, but on other grounds than his own obedience. When the apostle says, "By deeds of law shall no flesh be justified", he uses justification as a lawyer, in a strictly legal sense. But when he speaks of justification by faith, he speaks not of legal justification, but of a person's being treated as if he were righteous.

The entire chapter is listed under this table of content:

Quote:

Chapter 16

"JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

TEXT:-- "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

This last sentiment is expressed in the same terms, in the 3rd chapter of Romans. The subject of the present lecture, as I announced last week, is Justification by Faith. The order which I propose to pursue in the discussion is this:

I. Show what justification by law, or legal justification, is.

II. Show that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified.

III. Show what gospel justification is.

IV. Show what is the effect of gospel justification, or the state into which it brings a person that is justified.

V. Show that gospel justification is by faith.

VI. Answer some inquiries which arise in many minds on this subject.

You can read the text in its entirety (<http://www.godrules.net/library/professing/professing16.htm>) here.

As I said earlier, I am not a fan of books that deal primarily with doctrine. As a result, I don't read many books that try to explain the author's notion of doctrinal truth. I suppose that this is why I am not a fan of Watchman Nee or other such men. It isn't that I don't approve of some (or even all) of what they might say. I view such works as the written opinions of men. Rather, I prefer to learn my doctrinal views primarily from the Word of God – and then, afterward, to simply compare what I believe to be correct with what is found in books. However, even if I never agree, I would hesitate before dismissing the author as a “wolf in sheep's clothing” or as someone who conveys “soul damning, pernicious statements.” While I agree that some doctrines are exceedingly clear from the Scriptures – we can't really allow for Finney to clarify his position since he is long dead, and if we initially base his position upon what we think he is saying from books that were compiled from someone's notes taken from his lectures. We don't know if this is something that Finney said once by error, eventually changed his mind or stood behind it but simply lacked clarity when expressing it. However, I think that we can afford some grace when considering such things.

:-)

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/8/30 16:10

Quote:

TaylorOtwell wrote:

However, I don't think people are fully comprehending the seriousness of the differences between the views of Finney/Pelagius and the views of Christians throughout the ages. It is not a mere wrangling over words and straining at gnats, it is the very gospel at stake.

Brother Taylor, you say strong things, maybe rightly so, but i have read you recomend people to read Luther, and in the same breath speak at Finney as a heretic and as someone who bring the entire Gospel to danger?

have you read some of Luthers less known writings? his writings about the jews? in my opinion you can not understand some things about the gospel rightly and the church and the mystery if you get this wrong. As Luther did.

have you read Luthers personal letters to Zwingli? the reformer in Schweitz?

how Luther recommend him how he should deal with those who have baptised twice? he says translated paraphrased "drive them out with a stick as one drives out a mad dog".

And about zwingli who murdered and persecuted men , women and children?

these mens reformed and Calvinistic doctrines which they held to more or less degrees lead to several thousands of murders of the anabaptists.

sure some of what they did God used for good, as he always do. But please dont warn people about Finney and in same breath recommend the reformers.

who was way more off then Finney.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

many hold these reformers as heroes, but under the surface there are some nasty things, much worse than any Finney ever wrote or did. So let us clean out our own pet doctrine heroes first, they are all mere men. Some off in doctrine, some off in their life, some even murderers. What Good is a correct doctrine about justification? when you don't have the life in reality to back it up?

it's worth nothing, it does not matter how loud they yell their five points or justification by faith, the proof you have that faith is evident in the life we live.

I have read so many letters, and other things from the reformers translated to Swedish. And it makes me sick when ever I hear people lift these people up. Yes they gave us the bible, praise God for that.

I know I am stepping on some toes here, but dear people, we need to really discern and know what we promote, I know it is fashion to be in the reformed bible believing camp, it's like I am a "real" christian, I got the doctrines down, I know everything and I have the discernment and I do this and that.

it's all rubbish without life!

we need to get down to this truth, it has burned in me for sometime, it's so easy to get into this carousel round and round, oh God give us life!

I am sorry brethren, let us face the truth, the reality in men, may it be Finney, may it be the reformers, they are all men. The bible tells us about followers of men.

take heed, if any man thinks he stands....

God's grace and peace in truth

Christian

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/8/30 17:47

Quote:

-----we need to really discern and know what we promote

I agree.

Would you have us believe the Anabaptists innocent?

"ALL" the reformers had their problems. The Anabaptists were reformers as well.

I could easily fill this forum with articles and info that color the Anabaptists far from appealing.

This is just one of hundreds of articles on the other side.

WERE THE ANABAPTISTS PERSECUTED FOR THEIR FAITH?

It is fairly common to hear the claims that the Reformers persecuted the Anabaptists just because they "were not willing to baptise babies." One correspondent wrote that rather than celebrate the Reformation "would it not be preferable to study the Scriptures?"

Of course, our highest priority is to "study the Scriptures daily to see if these things be true". In fact that is the heritage of the Reformation. The Reformation gave us back the Bible freely available, translated into our own languages, and the Reformers championed "Scripture alone is our final authority". The Reformation succeeded in bringing about greater freedom

oms than had ever been experienced before in human history.

Those who accuse the Reformers of persecuting the Anabaptists are being unfair and selective in not reporting the whole context. The Anabaptists were not so much opposed and convicted for not being willing to baptise babies, but because the Anabaptists in the 1520's and 1530's were radical, violent revolutionaries.

While the Anabaptists claimed to be the only true Christians, they denied many of the key elements of the Faith. They rejected Biblical Law, Christian ministry, worship and sacraments, and the Anabaptists proclaimed socialism, egalitarianism and revolution. They claimed "it is impossible to be Christian and wealthy at the same time"; "all authorities, secular and clerical, must be deprived of their offices once and for all or be killed by the sword..."

Igor Shafarevich in his book *The Socialist Phenomenon*, documents the teachings and activities of two important Anabaptist leaders, Thomas Muntzer and John of Leyden. Muntzer, an itinerant preacher and organiser of rebellions, established his revolutionary base in Muhlhausen from where he issued proclamations damning landowners, magistrates, and the Reformers. "I would like to smell your frying carcass" he wrote to Martin Luther.

In 1525, Muntzer was successful in rousing up many of the peasants of central Germany in the bloody, so called Peasants Revolt, which it should be noted attracted several nobles to his side. "Let your swords be ever-warm with blood!" Muntzer exhorted his faithful followers. Muntzer's army of Anabaptists struck terror throughout the countryside, robbing, burning and destroying the property of the faithful, killing many thousands.

Frederick Engels praised Muntzer's "robust vandalism" and explained "by the Kingdom of God Muntzer meant a society without class differences, private property and the state authority... All the existing authorities... were to be overthrown, all work and property shared in common and complete equality introduced."

Engels praised Muntzer's doctrines in this way: "Under the cloak of Christianity he preached a kind of pantheism, which curiously resembled modern speculative contemplation and at times even approached atheism. He repudiated the Bible both as the only and as the infallible revelation. The real and living revelation, he said, was reason, a revelation which existed and always exists amongst all people at all times. To hold up the Bible against reason, he maintained, was to kill the spirit with the letter, "...faith is nothing but reason come alive in man, and pagans could therefore also have faith... just as there is no heaven in the beyond, there is no hell and no damnation. Similarly, there is no devil... Christ was a man, as we are, a prophet and a teacher..."

In 1534, Anabaptist leader Jan Matthijs siezed the town of Munster. "Armed Anabaptists broke into houses and drove out everyone who was unwilling to accept second baptism. Winter was drawing to a close; it was a stormy day and wet snow was falling. An eyewitness account describes crowds of expelled citizens walking through the knee-deep snow. They had not been allowed even to take warm clothing with them. Women carrying children in their arms, old men leaning on staffs. At the city gate they were robbed once more." (*The Socialist Phenomenon* - Shafarevich)

Jan Matthijs and Johan Bokelson then instituted a reign of terror in Munster, ordering the socialisation of all property, and ordaining apostles of revolution to preach throughout Europe. The communist paradise of Munster attracted thousands of Anabaptists from throughout Germany and Holland. Matthijs was killed in one of the early battles with surrounding cities. Johan Bokelson took command and established a dictatorship in Munster. He then issued the order for holding everything in common, including wives.

As Frederick Engels observed: "It is a curious fact that in every large revolutionary movement the question of free-love comes to the foreground". No woman was allowed to be exempt - there was a law against being unmarried, which meant that every girl was forced to be passed around amongst the men. Every woman in Munster became fair game for the lusts of these Anabaptist men. Rapes, suicides, severe punishments and mass executions took place almost every day. On one notable occasion, Bokelson himself beheaded a virtuous woman who had refused his sexual advances. As he ceremoniously chopped her head off in the public square, a choir of his wives sang "Glory to God in the Highest"! (*Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators* by David Chilton).

This reign of terror continued for a year and a half until the city was freed by Protestant forces who put Bokelson and his lieutenants to death for their crimes - crimes committed in the name of love, equality and spirituality.

I have left out most of the sordid and horrifying details of the 1525 Peasants Revolt and the 1534 Anabaptist "Kingdom of God" established in Munster. But these few examples should be sufficient to explain why Anabaptists were opposed. It

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

was not that they were being persecuted for taking the Scriptures seriously, but because they were violent revolutionaries subverting the entire social order and guilty of the deaths of many thousands of innocent people.

Those who would claim that the Anabaptists have changed dramatically since that time, should recognise that it is for that very reason therefore unfair to portray the Reformers as supporting the persecution of poor innocent Anabaptists, as that is plainly not the case. Yes, the Anabaptists have changed since. So we should not continue to propagate the false accusation that Reformers were persecuting pacifist Anabaptists who were seeking to mind their own business. The Anabaptists that were opposed by the Reformers in the 1520's and 1530's were violent revolutionaries guilty of abominable atrocities and abuses.

For further reading, I would encourage you to read - *When All Men Speak Well of You and Why Is There So Much Hostility Against the Bible and Christianity?* and obtain these outstanding books: *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born* by Dr. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *Under the Influence - How Christianity Transformed Civilisation* by Alvin Schmidt, and *The Great Christian Revolution* by Otto Scott. We all owe a tremendous debt to the Reformation in so many different ways. The Reformation was the greatest movement for faith and freedom that the world has ever seen.

Dr. Peter Hammond

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/30 18:43

Quote:
-----However, I don't think people are fully comprehending the seriousness of the differences between the views of Finney/Pelagius and the views of Christians throughout the ages. It is not a mere wrangling over words and straining at gnats, it is the very gospel at stake

I personally understand the concern and that is why I would never promote Finney's views of original sin, imputed righteousness or the atonement. The thing we have to grasp is the *times* in which Finney ministered. He had a specific focus that emphasized man's responsibility. So one cannot bring all of his preaching into our times without that consideration because our experience is different. If he preached today he no doubt had had a different emphasis. But certainly Finney's view of the atonement are no more alarming than unconditional election and reprobation or taken to extreme a view that makes God to have decreed the fall, sin and Satan. Not just is the Gospel at risk with Finney, but the very nature of God is in danger with unconditional reprobation.

So there are concerns everywhere, not just with Finney. We need to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good.
;-)

Re:, on: 2008/8/31 9:58

Quote:
-----The thing we have to grasp is the times in which Finney ministered. He had a specific focus that emphasized man's responsibility. So one cannot bring all of his preaching into our times without that consideration because our experience is different

Robert,

I hear what you are saying, but if that is true, then that is where Finney went wrong. As far as I can see, nowhere in scripture does it allow for us to change the Gospel to suit our times. If this was Finney's motivation, then he is no different than those that many criticise today.

For example...the emergent movement...and Brian McLaren. His main focus is the church being missional, and being concerned with social justice. Why, because he says that we, the church, are too concerned about doctrine and our own personal salvation (deeds not creeds) But I don't think there are too many on this forum that would recommend him as a theologian. In fact, there are many that would condemn his teaching altogether. Is he any different than Finney. He is changing the Gospel to fit the times....to fit the culture.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

We are not called to take the Word of God and try to motivate men. We are called to Preach The Gospel and be confident in the Word of God that it will produce Fruit. We are not called to change the story. There is only one Gospel...One Faith, One Baptism, and that Gospel only makes sense in the context of mankind being lost and dead in their sins.

We have no right to judge Finney's salvation because none of us knew him. But we do have an obligation to condemn any Theology that changes the only Gospel that has the power to save men.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/31 15:19

Quote:

-----Is he any different than Finney.

I think he is very different, from what I understand of him. More because of what I know about Charles Finney. I doubt the world knows of a Finney in our times. The emphasis is drifting towards compromise in our times. Finney would have withstood this compromise to the face. ;-)

Quote:

-----We are not called to take the Word of God and try to motivate men. We are called to Preach The Gospel and be confident in the Word of God that it will produce Fruit.

Finney gets misrepresented a lot as if he believed that man could save himself. This is not true. I mentioned in an earlier posting that Finney believed there was a sense in which the word, the preacher, the Holy Spirit and the individual worked together in conversion. Not one to the exclusion of others, but all together.

Personally i don't like Finney's atonement or limited atonement. I don't like Finney's no-assurance view or eternal unconditional assurance. But I think that Finney was profitable to the ministry just as I believe Spurgeon was.

Re:, on: 2008/8/31 18:17

Quote:

----- Finney would have withstood this compromise to the face

What is compromise but denying the truth of the Word of God? Charles Finney denied the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. He denied that Christ was our substitute in His obedience, in His death and in His resurrection. He taught that Christ did not do those things for us, but that He did them for himself, because, as the Son of God, He had to fulfill all righteousness.

Quote:

Finney gets misrepresented a lot as if he believed that man could save himself. This is not true. I mentioned in an earlier posting that Finney believed there was a sense in which the word, the preacher, the Holy Spirit and the individual worked together in conversion. Not one to the exclusion of others, but all together.

I don't think this is about Calvinism and Armenianism. I don't think there is one preacher on this website that would deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and there are many denominations represented here, both Calvinists and Armenians alike.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Personally, before I really started learning the doctrines of Grace, I read Charles Finney. In fact, being from the Philadelphia area, a friend of mine and I made a sort of pilgrimage to the Presbyterian museum to learn more about Finney. He was a sort of hero to us. I still have one his books today... True and False Repentance. I like many on this forum use to labor under the law. I labored to please God in my own strength and I did not know the Joy of my Salvation. Authors, preachers, like Finney led me along in that type of Christianity. But when God started to free me up and show me His love and His Grace, that is when I put books like Charles Finney's away. No one told me to. I did not know anything specific about doctrine. I did not really know anything about Calvinism and Armenianism. But I knew that there was freedom in Christ and I wanted it. I knew I wanted to walk with God in freedom. I wanted to love Him and know that He loved me. Charles Finney's writings did not help me in that endeavor.

It is only recently that I have learned why Finney did not help me in being free in Christ. It is only recently that I have learned and understood his Theology. As I said before, there is only one Gospel that has the power to save men, and none of us are called to change to change that story. No matter what the state of our culture and what are motive is.

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/8/31 21:26

Quote:
-----What is compromise but denying the truth of the Word of God? Charles Finney denied the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. He denied that Christ was our substitute in His obedience, in His death and in His resurrection. He taught that Christ did not do those things for us, but that He did them for himself, because, as the Son of God, He had to fulfill all righteousness.

Amen, brother.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2008/8/31 22:09

Hi Mahoney...

I am surprised by the amount of hostility directed toward Charles Finney! I had heard some remarks that disagreed with some of his doctrinal views in the past, but some of these statements in this thread seem to be bordering on a witness of the man's true motives and ultimate doctrinal views. Yet none of us have ever spoken with Finney.

Are we so quick as to make such a harsh, final judgment based upon what we think he meant in books that were compiled by men who listened to a series of lectures? What if Finney *didn't* entirely believe what so many are attributing to him? Are we in danger of becoming a false witness?

I agree with Robert. Some of the websites seem to convey the idea that Finney believed that we must work or earn our way into Heaven. This is just not true. While this whole debate may not be about Calvinism, it appears that those who are the most vocally opposed to Finney are upset at his opposition to the teachings of Calvinism.

For the most part, I am opposed to the teachings of Calvinism. Yet I understand many of the arguments put forth by our brethren who embrace such teachings. I do believe that we are saved by the grace of God -- and that none of our works could make us justified, righteous or entirely perfect in the sight of God. Yet I also realize that it is ridiculous to claim that God will accept a person who has walked away from him simply because they once believed. In my opinion, there is no such thing as "eternal security" in the sense that a believer can live in a constant, unrepentant state of sin.

After reading the oft-quoted chapter, I think that this is what Finney was trying to say. He certainly realizes that it is our faith in God that justifies. In fact, he went on to say in that chapter that it is only our "faith in God that justifies." However, he seemed to shy away from making that claim as a basis for "giving up" in regards to holy living. I don't believe for once that Finney thought that we could earn our way to Heaven -- or that we are justified on the basis of works or our efforts to be holy. Rather, it seems like Finney is trying to distinguish between those who claim to have faith (but are filled with dead works and unholy living) and those who have a lasting faith that causes them to have concern for the conditions of their souls and hunger deeply for God.

The Church in Finney's day was filled with false converts. Many thought that they were saved entirely based upon a concept that they had believed in God, realized that Christ was the only way to salvation, professed this belief publicly, were

baptized, and continued to attend Church. In other words, the only difference between these men and the Catholics was in the doctrine! Catholics thought that they were saved due to their adherence to the false teachings of the "Church." Protestants in New England thought that they were saved because they had once believed, professed and were baptized! Much of New England was filled with this idea of dead religion! Yet inside, many of them were cold and callous to the things of God. They might have believed in their minds (or were convinced that this was the correct path), but they didn't have a "road to Damascus" born again experience like Finney in that grove of woods! I truly believe that this was the reasoning behind Finney's words. It is hypocritical to claim "justification" if the "justified" don't passionately live for God!

I know that there are many different views on the subject of justification. However, I really think that it is a disservice to point out Charles Finney as a "wolf" (as one preacher said) simply because of our limited understanding of what Charles Finney meant. Finney, if he were here, might actually be able to clarify his beliefs. But he is not here. He has been dead for over a century and a half! Yet we are willing to base our opinion about the man -- and all of the testimonies about the revival in New England known as the Second Great Awakening -- based solely upon our limited understanding of what we think Finney meant about "justification."

I believe that it would be difficult to find a brother or sister who is perfect in every word. We all make slips of the tongue when sharing our doctrinal views. This is evident on an almost daily basis here at SermonIndex. It is amazing that tempers flare so quickly when discussing some things. Since we know that Finney did believe in "justification by faith," can't we assume that he might have been saved? Do we really need to attack the man and his work? Can't we just clarify or correct the doctrine...and move on?

Personally, I don't really read much about Finney outside of his autobiography. I really don't even care about what doctrinal views he had. I am extremely glad that he was able to play a role in a move of God in New England during the 1800s. I am glad that he was able to confront and prompt "Churchy" individuals about the true eternal condition of their souls. Perhaps we can simply thank God for as much, while cautioning the brethren about what Biblical justification really means?

Just a thought.

:-(

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/8/31 22:41

Quote:
-----What is compromise but denying the truth of the Word of God? Charles Finney denied the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. He denied that Christ was our substitute in His obedience, in His death and in His resurrection.

Finney taught that faith without works is dead. He believed that imputed righteousness was imparted righteousness. He did not believe that God imputed a righteousness to our account that allowed us to sin that grace may abound. And I think we do well to consider that salvation is a package deal. God does not save sinners to continue in sin- He saves them *from* their sins. I believe this is what Finney meant. The compromise I am referring to is the easy believism that says that Christ is my righteousness so I can live however I want and make heaven.

Quote:
-----As I said before, there is only one Gospel that has the power to save men, and none of us are called to change to change that story. No matter what the state of our culture and what are motive is.

No one has the power to change the Gospel. Some men preach the Gospel to varying levels of its fullness and power. Finney was a preacher of righteousness and repentance. He got things moving along in the lives of people that waited on God to change them.

Finney showed man his responsibility before God. His theology is very complicated and difficult to follow, so it is easily misrepresented. We almost need him around to explain it. But God has often used imperfect men to accomplish His pur

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

poses. As A.W. Tozer stated, I also do not agree with some of Finney's conclusions. So I do not glean from those bad parts. I focus on what is good and hold fast to that. I disregard the bad points. I do that with every minister I read or listen to. Only a few people I know are true Finney-ites and we have challenged their views also. But I refuse to throw the baby out with the bath water whether it is Calvin, Luther, Arminius or Finney.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/8/31 22:55

Quote:

ccchhrrriiisss wrote:

I am glad that he was able to confront and prompt "Churchy" individuals about the true eternal condition of their souls. Perhaps we can simply thank God for as much, while cautioning the brethren about what Biblical justification really means?

I think we need a Finney every now and then to "shake" us up, we are so comfortable in our doctrines that nothing happens, we live same defeated lives and think just because we have a right doctrine we will be saved, it is a deception.

I do hope for all who are openly swinging at Finney not just glory in the fact they have a better doctrine, if that doctrine does not have lead them to a better, higher standard of life than Finney lived. Otherwise there is a word for such people

hypocrites

Mat 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

I don't understand why so many are at Finney, I do see they don't like his doctrines, but they attack Finney much more than any other. For my self Finney was God's man in times where there was no one else who could get the job done, no one else of the thousands of Christians in those days who claimed "we have the doctrine", none of them could bring heaven closer to earth.

It took a man like Finney, sure our pride gets a prick when someone with the "wrong" theology are closer to God than we with our "right" doctrine we learned second hand from the popular teachers.

but I hope we recognize our sin and repent of it.

Pro 11:9 An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Re: - posted by BenK (), on: 2008/8/31 23:14

ccchhrrriiisss said

"For the most part, I am opposed to the teachings of Calvinism...it is ridiculous to claim that God will accept a person who has walked away from him simply because they once believed. In my opinion, there is no such thing as "eternal security" in the sense that a believer can live in a constant, unrepentant state of sin."

brother, that is not Calvinism

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/8/31 23:28

Quote:

BenK wrote:
ccchhrrriiisss said

"For the most part, I am opposed to the teachings of Calvinism...it is ridiculous to claim that God will accept a person who has walked away from him simply because they once believed. In my opinion, there is no such thing as "eternal security" in the sense that a believer can live in a constant, unrepentant state of sin."

brother, that is not Calvinism

depends on who you ask, according to some, you can live in constant sin if you are elected and yet be in heaven. Because no matter what you do, God has chosen you, and nothing can change that.

so define calvinism, whos calvinism are we talking about?

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiisss (), on: 2008/8/31 23:33

Hi BenK...

Those are two separate statements. I am opposed to the teachings of Calvinism AND in my opinion, there is no such thing as "eternal security" in the sense that a believer can live in a constant, unrepentant state of sin.

Sorry for the confusion.

:)

Re:, on: 2008/9/1 8:30

Quote:
-----Personally, I don't really read much about Finney outside of his autobiography. I really don't even care about what doctrinal views he had. I am extremely glad that he was able to play a role in a move of God in New England during the 1800s.

\

Not that it matters, but I do want to clarify something. I did not in any way call into question, Charles Finney's standing before God. In fact, my exact quote was

Quote:
-----We have no right to judge Finney's salvation because none of us knew him. But we do have an obligation to condemn any Theology that changes the only Gospel that has the power to save men.

I know that many times people do not read the entire post...I do it too. I just wanted to clarify what I wrote. In fact, my thoughts on Charles Finney, or any preacher for that matter are really 180 degrees from your statement. I am not so much concerned about men and their accomplishments, but I am more concerned about...do they teach Truth! If they do not then I do not want any part of it, nor do I want those around me to have any part of it, regardless of their "accomplishments".

Look, Ghandi, accomplished much in his life. He moved men to action. He challenged the status quo, and much of his life was based upon the teachings of Jesus. When I watch the movie about him, I am challenged and I even ask myself, "Could I do what he did? Would I have that self-discipline to follow my convictions like he did?" But Ghandi would deny the Gospel.

Am I saying that Finney was like Ghandi? No. I am saying that men can accomplish great things and men can gather a f

Following, but men, no matter how zealous they are about righteousness and goodness and the law, cannot save anyone !

They Jews in Paul's day had a tremendous zeal for the law of God. Paul had a tremendous zeal for the law of God, but even he had to admit that the Law could not save.

And when I talk about Salvation and the Gospel being the only thing that has the power to save. I am not talking about being saved so that I might live like I want to. Salvation includes, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation to all those that believe. Real Christians love righteousness, but they understand that that righteousness, imputed and imparted, is a Gift of God.

It was said that Finney did not believe in imputed righteousness. If that is so, then he did not believe the Gospel. Yes, that is a strong statement. It is not against the man, but it is against his teaching.

If we get rid of imputed righteousness we DO NOT HAVE A GOSPEL. I need a perfect righteousness. If I do not have Christ's righteousness imputed to me, then where do I get a perfect righteousness? How am I reconciled to a Holy God. He is Holy...right? The death of Christ pays for the penalty of sin. The death of Christ turns away God's anger and wrath from my sin, but I still need a perfect righteousness to walk with God.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Concerning the vehemence towards Finney. I think much of the criticism of Charles Finney has to do with the teachings that surround him. He is not the first to push law righteousness and he will not be the last. But, I think he is a sort of figure head for that sort of teaching. It's the teaching that people despise, not the man. Again, we do not know that man, but we can read reams upon reams of his sermons. Maybe he is a target because he really has been a huge influence upon the evangelical church of today.

I personally do get upset when I read or hear men who deny imputed righteousness, or deny, substitutionary atonement...not for myself. I have many friends and family members....many (I have 5 brothers and sisters...and many nephews and nieces) who seem to be walking around in a daze. They were brought up under law righteousness. They were told they HAD TO BE HOLY! They were told to stop watching TV and DON'T BE OF THE WORLD. They were whipped on the back by LAW PREACHERS and scolded and exhorted that they did not pray enough and did not witness enough. They were told that they had to obey God!

BUT THEY WERE NEVER TOLD WHAT GOD DID FOR THEM IN CHRIST SO THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE THE POWER TO OBEY GOD!

We have the obligation to tell men that they are lost, that they abide under the wrath of God. We have the obligation tell men that they are slaves to sin, and that their very life is a living rebellion because the image of God that they portray is marred, for all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. We have an obligation to convince men of their state by putting showing them the law of God. For the law is not for the righteous but the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, etc. **WE ARE TO USE THE LAW LAWFULLY.**

But...

We are also obligated to tell men...WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR THEM IN CHRIST JESUS SO THAT THEY MAY BECOME RIGHTEOUS. Jesus Christ was born under the law and was subject to the law, so that He could obey the law for us. His perfect obedience to the law is then imputed to us by faith. Jesus Christ died on the Cross as payment for sin, turning away the Wrath of God from all those that believe. Though he was not subject to death because He was not a descendant of Adam, He died. He did not have to die. He chose to give His life for all those that believe. Jesus Christ rose from the dead showing that He had power of death, hell and the grave. He rose from the dead, and all those that believe in Him will one day rise from the dead also.

Death no longer has a sting because He met all the righteous requirements and suffered all the righteous judgment that was necessary.

The sting of death is sin - paid for

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.

The strength of sin is the law - obeyed it completely.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ

If Charles Finney believes that, then I am with him as a brother. If any man believes that then I am with him as a brother. If any preacher or teacher does not believe that then maybe they should follow the exhortation to "wait on their teaching" for Paul says of them...

6From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

7Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/9/1 8:46

Quote:

-----brother, that is not Calvinism

Some people brand of Calvinism is pray the sinners prayer and you are eternally secure. I have debated people with this view. However, I can swallow John Macarthur's brand of Calvinism a whole lot better. :-)

Quote:

-----If Charles Finney believes that, then I am with him as a brother

The thing about Finney is that he stripped away the notion that folk can live in sin and be saved. He focused on the passages that flushed men out of their hiding places. He was the master of being able to say two things at one time. He would say "saving faith saves unto good works" in such a way that justification and sanctification were inseparable.

The reason why Finney is so hated is because folk are stripped of their assurance that do not have a genuine conversion. Finney was practical. He is hated for the same reason Luther wanted James out of the Canon. The desire to over stress faith alone in Luther was no different than Finney's desire to stress man duty before God. And I would never esteem Luther as a heretic because he questioned the word of God.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/9/1 9:41

Quote:

-----Some people brand of Calvinism is pray the sinners prayer and you are eternally secure.

This is some peoples brand of Arminianism as well.

I have never visited or attended a Calvinistic church, but I have heard this preached many times.

Quote:

-----The thing about Finney is that he stripped away the notion that folk can live in sin and be saved.

Paul Washer does a good job of this as well. :-)

Reading the Bible makes it clear to me.

Re: Finney or Copeland? - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/9/1 13:51

Quote:
-----The thing about Finney is that he stripped away the notion that folk can live in sin and be saved. He focused on the passages that flushed men out of their hiding places. He was the master of being able to say two things at one time.

Pardon my jumping into the fray, will make just as quick an exit ... This is key to grasping certain men of God for *such a time as this* which was alluded to earlier. Times, conditions, culture do matter after all. Manner, delivery, focus as Robert mentions, so many variables. Over the years have attempted to draw attention to the very variety of preachers\teachers\pastors that are available here on SI. Our brother Paul exemplified the same thought recently;

Three men who I believe exemplify the constancy of God's dealings yet preach in an entirely individualistic manner are Art Katz, Keith Daniel, and Zac Poonen. All three, in my estimation, minister from level of God that imparts the divine life which we spoke about in the previous post. They offer no nominal sermons of oratorical prowess, no exacting theology, nothing in the classical sense that leaps out and smacks of sermonizing textbookism. Art Katz is a razor-thin scalpel, going deep into the inner most secret parts of the spirit to bring forth divine truth with an extreme articulation and precision. Keith Daniel thunders Holy Scripture with an authority unlike any brother I've ever heard, with the life of God flowing from his ministry like a mighty river. Poonen speaks in a conversational tone, never moves from behind the pulpit, totally relaxed, with messages and teachings revealing a supernatural wisdom teamed with a supernatural simplicity. His vocabulary in comparison to Katz's is maybe a third in size, yet both men arrive at the same impartation of divine life; their individualistic waters converge at the same massive, common delta all such men of God meet at - where the transforming power of God, the divine flow of unction galvanizes the inner man of the hearer and effectuates a deep stirring and hunger for more of the pure essence of God. The inexorable steering toward a greater Christ-likeness in every facet of our being.

(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?viewmode=flat&order0&topic_id24976&forum34&post_id&refreshGo) THE ANATOMY OF PREACHING

Personally I have kept something of almost purposeful ignorance of constructs of most all the men of God who are available here. I see as little difference reading Calvin as I do Chambers, Spurgeon as Wesley or Whitefield or as far as any one wishes to go. In fact even amongst these names listed I couldn't tell you which held to which construct, short of John Calvin and even then it's his followers ;-)

I digress and am only poking a bit of fun at that. There came a saturation point going from one extreme to the other, the great swinging pendulumitis that Zac Poonen coined from the modern forms and wearing, weak, surface level, WOF ... etc. I have of late been wanting to suggest something; Where would we be without our categories?

It's interesting to note what is latched on to and that which is ignored. The problems seem to stem from what aspect is latched off on and then made into further 'doctrine' - Finney, Luther, Calvin - is it truly all that they expressed? Did they even get around to it? Did they tell us everything that they were chewing on and what we might be chewing on? We seem to be so constituted by an either/or construct that we are often incapable of holding seemingly conflicting thoughts in tension. It's either legalism or abusing grace and easy believe-ism. Either 5 points or none of the above. It just goes on and on and on. I do not think it is without problem or discussion, comparison to the scriptures - but what of the Scriptures themselves? This hour has a strange way of desecrating the scriptures without any issue whatsoever to what particular version is in question. I am want to say, where did all the cut up versions come from? They seem completely bereft of whole sections as the focus is now far different than what it was in the days and times and circumstances of the likes of these, such as Finney and others. Now it has turned out that the scriptures were really never about God's glory and His purposes after all, but *ours!*

A thought. I wonder if we did something of the opposite and dragged today's constructs and focus of prophecy and healing's and finances, "how to's", claim jumpings, Christian celebrity and commercial enterprise et al. back to the times and likes of these men what tone and focus they would have had? Somehow I cannot shake the sense of a solidarity amongst them all. We do that here by bringing them forward as example all the time and surely they had their share of it and spoke towards it, but *now* just look at the state of matters.

Two bits.

Re: Questions about Charles Finney. - posted by iansmith (), on: 2008/9/1 16:30

Am I the only one who finds it ironic that on a website where we 'adore' men like Ravenhill, Wilkerson, Keith Green etc. we attack one of the men that they all draw upon for their own teachings.

Leonard Ravenhill was the one who recommended the book of Finney's sermons, 'Promise of the Spirit' to Keith Green, who used it in his own ministry and newsletters.

Much of the teaching on this forum on sanctification has a tinge of Finney, even the 'respectable' teachers. Can't we just admit that Christians come in all shapes and sizes, with teachings that sometimes don't fit together like puzzle pieces but have blessed many people on both sides of the Calvin/Arminian debate?

Re: - posted by jsisrl (), on: 2008/9/1 23:29

This is a blessing to read when it comes to Charles Finney and Rick Warren:

The Gospel: A Method or a Message? How the Purpose Driven Life Obscures the Gospel

<http://www.crossroad.to/Excerpts/biblical-teaching/DeWaay/gospel-method-message.htm>

God bless you all here who Love the Appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Connie

Re: It is time, I Believe therefore i speak - posted by ANewInHim, on: 2008/9/2 13:38

Quote:
-----For the most part, I am opposed to the teachings of Calvinism. Yet I understand many of the arguments put forth by our brethren who embrace such teachings. I do believe that we are saved by the grace of God -- and that none of our works could make us justified, righteous or entirely perfect in the sight of God. Yet I also realize that it is ridiculous to claim that God will accept a person who has walked away from him simply because they once believed. In my opinion, there is no such thing as "eternal security" in the sense that a believer can live in a constant, unrepentant state of sin.

Quote:
-----After reading the oft-quoted chapter, I think that this is what Finney was trying to say. He certainly realizes that it is our faith in God that justifies. In fact, he went on to say in that chapter that it is only our "faith in God that justifies." However, he seemed to shy away from making that claim as a basis for "giving up" in regards to holy living. I don't believe for once that Finney thought that we could earn our way to Heaven -- or that we are justified on the basis of works or our efforts to be holy. Rather, it seems like Finney is trying to distinguish between those who claim to have faith (but are filled with dead works and unholy living) and those who have a lasting faith that causes them to have concern for the conditions of their souls and hunger deeply for God.

Hi BenK...

Those are two separate statements. I am opposed to the teachings of Calvinism AND in my opinion, there is no such thing as "eternal security" in the sense that a believer can live in a constant, unrepentant state of sin.

Sorry for the confusion.

I don't understand this "Statement", there is no such thing as "eternal security". When looking at the Cross and identifying who hung on that cross and the purpose of the crucifixion. If this is not "Eternal Security", once you believed -- then I don't know what is. This is something that I would never dare to question.

General Topics :: Questions about Charles Finney.