

# God Not Pleased With the Death of the Wicked

by Charles Finney

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*Charles Finney's sermon emphasizes that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and desires their repentance and salvation instead.*

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:32, Ezekiel 33:11, Matthew 18:14, Luke 13:3, John 3:16, Acts 3:19, Romans 6:23, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 3:19

**Topics:** "God's Justice", "Repentance and Salvation"

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## Description

Charles Finney emphasizes that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, urging sinners to turn from their evil ways to avoid eternal death. He explains that the death referred to is not merely physical but represents eternal separation from God, which is a state of misery rather than annihilation. Finney discusses why God does not prevent the death of the wicked, highlighting the importance of human free will and the necessity of repentance and faith for salvation. Ultimately, he calls on sinners to recognize their own responsibility in choosing life over death, as God desires their salvation and has provided the means for it through Christ.

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## Transcript

"Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel xxxiii:11

In discussing these words it will be important to consider,

I. What the death spoken of is not.

II. What it is.

III. Why God has no pleasure in it.

IV. Why He does not prevent it.

V. The only possible way to escape it.

I. 1. Manifestly this death cannot be merely the death of the body; for all will die this death, whether they turn to God or not; and whether they live a spiritual life or not. The righteous are as really and as much

exposed to natural death as the wicked. But the death spoken of in the text is one which may be escaped by turning from one's wicked ways to obedience.

2. The death spoken of cannot be spiritual, or a state of sinfulness; for God represents them as being already in this state. They are now in sinful ways from which He entreats them to turn. But the death spoken of is prospective. God does not ask, Why are ye dead? but Why will ye die?

II. Positively, the death spoken of must be the opposite of the life here referred to. This life can not be natural life, for all, both saint and sinner, are conceived of as being alike in natural life. Of course, the life must be salvation--eternal life--that blessedness which saints enjoy in the favor and love of God, begun here, prolonged forever hereafter. Now, if such be the life alluded to, the death, being in contrast with it, must be eternal death; the misery experienced by all God's enemies. As the life referred to here is not a mere state of existence, but a state of positive blessedness, so the death placed over against it, cannot be annihilation--the natural opposite of mere existence--but must be misery--the natural opposite of blessedness.

These remarks must suffice on this point, it being one on which no rational doubt can exist.

III. Why has God no pleasure in the sinner's death?

A few days since you may recollect I preached a funeral sermon, to show that the death of saints is precious in God's sight. Their death is to Him an event of deep interest. But the sinner's death is not so. Here is death in which God has no pleasure. He gives us his own solemn word, nay more, his oath, that He takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked. We are now to consider why.

1. The death of saints in which God takes a special interest is only the death of the body; but the death of the wicked is the death of both soul and body together. Both together are involved in misery and ruin. By this I do not mean that either is annihilated. The body we know is not annihilated at death; its constituent elements only change their chemical relations; but do not by any means cease to exist. There is no more reason to suppose the soul experiences annihilation, than that the body does. Indeed there is no reason whatever for supposing that annihilation ever can be the lot of either soul or body. I was amazed to hear some of the Adventists maintain that the threatened death of the wicked is nothing but annihilation, for nothing could be more obvious than that this position of theirs utterly lacked all foundation either in scripture or reason.

2. God has no pleasure in the sinner's death because He is a moral being, and it is contrary to the nature of moral beings to delight in suffering for its own sake. To all moral beings happiness is intrinsically good, and unhappiness is intrinsically evil, and must be from the very constitution of moral beings. Hence unhappiness can never be a source of pleasure, in itself considered. The view of it as endured by others can not be deemed a good by any moral being, for its own sake, and considered simply as misery, for the reason that it is what it is--misery, and not happiness--the very constitution of a moral being demanding that happiness shall be held as the only good, and misery as intrinsically evil. Even Satan with all his malignity against God can never enjoy the sight any more than the endurance of misery, for its own sake. How much more must this be true of God! Selfishness may wickedly trample down the rights and happiness of others; but yet good to itself, and not misery to others, is its direct object. The consequent misery to others will in its time re-act upon selfish beings with terrible vengeance, harrowing up their souls with the bitterest torture. It is in the very nature of selfishness and sin to accumulate the resources for its own torment, just as benevolence accumulates the means of its own blessedness; and the reason in both

cases lies fixed in the changeless nature of moral beings. The selfish can not enjoy evil-doing let them try ever so much, for it is not in their nature as moral beings to enjoy misery. If it were, they might make a heaven of hell itself. But as it is, their selfish attempts to wrest away others' good will cause misery first to others, and next, ultimately and eternally, to themselves. Sin must be its own tormentor. Neither the sight nor the infliction of misery can ever in itself beget happiness. The nature of all moral beings forbids it.

3. God can not have pleasure in the sinner's death because his character forbids it. God is not only by nature a moral agent, but He is in character a good moral agent--a being of infinite benevolence. Hence He can not delight in misery any where, for its own sake, and in view of its own nature. The sight of misery endured is always distressing to a benevolent being, in itself considered. He can acquiesce in it and tolerate its infliction only when circumstances make it necessary as a means for a greater good. In such a case, He might truly say, I have no pleasure in their suffering.

So with God in regard to the sinner's death. Since He is purely and perfectly benevolent, it is contrary to his character that He should find pleasure in the misery of his creatures. Love desires evermore the happiness of all beings, and is from its very nature disposed to secure the highest possible degree of it. God pities the self-ruined sinner; never rejoices in his dreadful doom, for its own sake.

4. It must be that God regards the death of the sinner viewed in itself as a great evil. In its own nature it is an evil of the very greatest magnitude. No finite mind can begin to conceive how great and dreadful this evil is. It needs the sweep of an infinite mind to measure its length and breadth, its depth and its height. None other than the mind of a God can grasp its limitless dimensions, or measure its boundless magnitude. To his mind therefore, the death of the sinner must appear an immensely great evil.

5. God can have no pleasure in the death of sinners because it is a state in which He can wisely show them no more favor. Their relations to his government become such that He is constrained to debar them from all mercy and from all good. Unmingled retribution must now take its course. Mercy has had its day; simple justice must henceforth have unimpeded exercise. So long as the wicked were in this world of probation, God took pleasure in showing them all the favors he wisely could, for it is always in his heart to bless the guiltiest as far as he consistently can; and he seeks to constrain the sinner by his mercies to turn from his sins. But when the sinner has murdered all his probation-time and used up all his mercies upon his lusts, he passes away to another state unknown to Mercy. There he can have not one drop of water to cool his tongue. There his prayers to Father Abraham will be utterly unavailing. On all these points, the account given us by Jesus Christ himself of the rich man and Lazarus is most full and explicit. Whatever else this account teaches or does not teach, one thing is made plain by it; namely, that God finds it necessary to refuse the least favor to sinners in hell. "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things"--thou hast had them all, and there are no more to be given. Not so much as one drop of water is left for the lost sinner in hell. He begs for this smallest favor, but begs in vain. How dreadful this fact! The lost sinner is in such relations to God that God is compelled to restrain Himself from giving him one drop of water. Even infinite benevolence cannot give so small a favor as this.

Now it is plain that a God of love can have no pleasure in being brought into such a position as this. He took the greatest pleasure in bestowing good upon even the sinner, so long as he wisely could. It was his happiness to send his rain on the just and on the unjust; but when the dreaded hour at last came, and God as the great Executive Magistrate of the universe was compelled to cut down the guilty sinner and show his own eternal abhorrence of sin, then He could no longer show the sinner the least mercy. This removing the sinner beyond the range of mercy is a thing in which, considered by itself, God can have no pleasure.

The same is true of all benevolent beings.

It is remarkable to see how earnestly God repels the slander upon Him of taking pleasure in the sinner's death. The Jews in Ezekiel's time went so far as to use the proverb--"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The Most High solemnly rebukes his people for this slander; protests his own innocence of the implied charge, and finally closes with the explicit averment--"For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." (Ezek. 18:2, 32)) So also in our text, He takes his solemn oath, and since He could swear by no greater, He swears by Himself. "As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Therefore let no sinner seek to throw the blame of his own ruin off from himself and upon his Maker. No slander could be more groundless and more foul.

6. Another reason still is that when sinners have outlived their probation and are cut off in their sins, their depravity will be thenceforth unrestrained. How shocking it must be to the pure and holy God to see his creatures giving themselves up to utter and unrestrained depravity--to see them giving boundless scope to the most odious and horrible rebellion. The book of Revelation speaks of the wicked, under God's punitive judgments, as "gnawing their tongues for pain, and blaspheming the God of heaven because of their pains and of their sores, and yet repenting not of their deeds." Their condition amid the dread realities of hell will not reform them; nay, so far from this, it will only drive them to desperation, and in the utter desperateness of their depraved hearts, they will break out in most horrid blasphemies. O how will sinners damn themselves to a deeper and still deeper damnation! What an unutterable state of depravity will hell be when sin takes its ample, unimpeded course, and has a whole eternity in which to range and ripen, and develop its horrid spirit and terrible tendencies! No wonder that God can take no pleasure in such a world as that.

In that world the sufferings of the wicked will be unmitigated. Here, although their depravity is great, nay, even total, yet so many restraints are upon them that many of them appear quite respectably among their fellow beings. They are induced to conform outwardly to the rules of good society. Consequently in this world they enjoy many comforts, and ordinarily they have an ample supply for their physical wants. The common pleasures of society, of earthly friendships and relationships, fall to their lot. Consequently they are by no means so miserable as they might be. Indeed they are often wont to think themselves quite happy. And they do doubtless have a sort of feverish enjoyment, poor enough at best, as the portion of the human soul, yet vastly unlike that dreadful state in which every source of enjoyment shall be utterly cut off. There shall be gnawing desire but no gratification; pressing want, but no supply, no employment but groans and sighs and such developments of their depravity as bring their own torturing punishment with them. If the Bible had said nothing about their case we might yet know that they must be purely and utterly miserable; for what source of happiness can remain to them in all the realms of nature, or in all the universe of God? Here they manage to get some good because God is sparing them to give them space to repent, and is trying them if so be He may subdue their hearts by his love; but when they have abused all this good till God can bestow it no longer, what shall remain then? When death shall have smitten their last pleasure, where are they!

IV. But it is time that we should ask, Why does not God prevent the death of the wicked? If He takes no pleasure in it, why should He suffer it to be?

You are aware that men have often inferred from God's benevolence that He will not suffer the wicked to be lost. But who has any right to infer this? How does it appear that benevolence cannot inflict a lesser evil

for the sake of preventing a greater? Who can prove it unwise for God to create beings and suffer them to continue their existence, although they may sin--yes, may sin, despite of any power which God can wisely use to prevent it? That is--for the question resolves itself into this--who can prove that on the whole more evil than good must result from the existence of a sinning race of moral agents? Who can show that it may not be indefinitely better to have such a race with all the attendant results than not to have created them, or having created them, to establish a government so different from the present as would have prevented it?

But if a God of infinite wisdom and love might give existence to a race who could and should sin, then surely it is no marvel that He should punish them. Indeed the only marvel is that He should ever do otherwise than punish--should ever pardon. Pardon, not punishment, is the strange thing. Revelation apart, who could ever infer rationally that God would pardon one sinner? From what data could man infer it? The wisest sinners that ever have lived have made the inference that God could save none. They have seen that God is a Moral Governor, and hence cannot be pleased with sinners. Hence they inferred, and most reasonably too, that He can save none. How could they have made any other rational inference without the aid of revelation?

2. God does not prevent the death of the wicked for the good reason that He cannot wisely do it. Some are shocked at this remark; but why should they be; for what God Himself says on this subject most surely implies that He cannot wisely prevent the sinner's death. He solemnly avers that He has no pleasure in it, and plainly implies that it is in itself an unpleasant and undesirable thing. If so, then He would prevent it if He wisely could. He says to sinners--"Turn ye, for why will ye die?" implying that He is grieved that they should die, and also that their own turning is the only means of preventing so dreadful a doom. No language could imply more plainly that He can not and will not do Himself what He commands and exhorts them to do.

To the same purport He says again--"What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" Does not this forcibly imply that God could not do more to secure holiness and save from hell than He actually had done? Now it should be well considered that what God could not do wisely to save sinners, He could not do at all without sinning. There is no middle course between acting wisely and sinning. For God to act otherwise than with wisdom must be wrong.

[3.] God could not have prevented their destruction by refusing to create them. Many ask, Why did God create men if He knew they would sin? The answer is, He could not forbear to create without Himself sinning. He saw it would be wise to create moral agents, who would sin, and some of whom would be lost; and how could He act other than wisely without forever condemning Himself for wrong-doing? If God has ever in any instance acted unwisely, it has not been in his case as sometimes in ours--through ignorance. No; there never can be in his case this vindication for acting unwisely. If God in any case does more or less than infinite wisdom dictates, He can not but know it, and can not but regard it as sin.

Now therefore if wisdom dictated the creation of the beings who would become wicked, God could not forbear to create, without personal sin, nay, could not forbear without absolute self-ruin! Do we think it a small matter that God should sin? Then we have not yet begun to take right views of the subject. For God to sin would be to lose his own self-respect--destroy his own peace and blessedness--unfit Himself either to enjoy his own character and works, or to govern his universe.

4. God could not wisely have done more than He has done for the sinner's salvation. He has all along done all that Infinite Wisdom has demanded. To have done more or other at any moment would have been sin. And who does not see that it must be a far less evil for God to suffer moral agents to sin than to take Himself any course which is sinful? If either God or his creatures must be ruined by sin, let it be the sinner and not God. It is infinitely better that God should suffer the sinner to ruin himself than suffer Himself to be ruined. By so much the more is this true because the ruin of God by his own sinning would inevitably involve the ruin of the whole universe, a calamity the magnitude of which defies all our comprehension.

We should never lose sight of the great truth that God always acts considerately and wisely. If He creates moral agents who become sinners, He does it wisely, following evermore the dictates of his intelligence and of his benevolence. It is plain that God could not wisely abridge the liberty of moral agents, nor indeed could He save them even if He should, for the very idea of the salvation of a moral agent implies his own voluntary turning from sin. None but moral beings can have salvation from sin and from hell; the existence of moral beings involves a moral government over them, and over them as moral beings, which is the same thing as to say, that they must have the liberty of free voluntary action. If therefore God would have a moral government, He must let it have scope, and meet the results be they what they may. I do not mean that He must preclude Himself from throwing in moral influences to affect their action; but I do mean that their liberty of moral action must not be abridged. His interposing influences must evermore be of a moral and not of a physical or compulsory nature.

I have said that God acts wisely, and can not act otherwise. I mean this in its fullest extent. It is always true. At every hour and moment of each sinner's existence God could truly say--What could I have done more for thee that I have not done? The sinner may misapprehend the case, and may suppose that God might do, or might have done more; but God makes no mistakes;--God never misapprehends the real facts of the case.

[5.] God can not save men without their concurrence; in the nature of the case they could not be holy without their own concurrence; how then could they be happy without it? Being constituted moral agents, and made subjects of moral government, it must be in every point of view impossible to save them unless they will turn from their sins. God's government must remain moral, and hence He can do nothing inconsistent with its moral nature. If then God works upon the sinner by means of his providence and his Spirit, to the utmost extent He wisely can, and all in vain, there remains nothing more which as a Moral Governor He can do to save him.

6. Another reason why God does not prevent the death of the wicked is that He regards it as a less evil than to interpose in any way possible to Himself, to save them. If they would turn under such influences as He can wisely use, He would rejoice; but He is already going to the utmost limit of his discretion, and how can He go farther? Sooner than go farther, He would let ten thousand worlds go to ruin. Who can find fault with Him for this? Who can blame the all-wise God for following the dictates of his own wisdom? If He should in any single particular deviate from his own sense of propriety and from his own judgment of what is best for the universe, how dreadful the consequences! Perhaps we are not wont to consider that there are bounds beyond which God can not go, and beyond which He never does go. These bounds are always ascertained by Infinite Wisdom. They have their foundation in the nature of moral agents, and in the exigencies of God's vast government. Who but God Himself can decide how long He can safely bear with a lingering, self-hardening sinner--and how far He can wisely go in the strivings of his Spirit, and in the favoring arrangements of his providences?

This view of the case is not only in accordance with the Bible, but it is inferred irresistibly from the known attributes of God. Some of you may ask--How does it appear that God does as much as He can do for the good of each sinner? I answer--we all know that God is a good and not a wicked being. He is moreover a moral agent, possessing attributes of mind and of heart, of which our own are a copy, for we are made in the image of God. Of course when we speak of God as a good being, we may, nay, we must reason by analogy drawn from other good beings. If we are good men, we shall of course seek to prevent all possible evil and produce all possible good. This is necessarily implied in our being good men.

Now what is implied in God's being good? That He consecrates Himself to the good of being. Goodness in God implies that He is all awake to prevent all the mischief He wisely can, and secure all the good He wisely can. He knows intuitively that if He is a moral agent as we are; if He has a conscience as we have; if He has moreover a good heart, He will evermore do all He wisely can both to prevent evil and produce good.

7. Yet another reason is that although the evil of the sinner's death is great, yet He can make a good use of it. He can ove[r]rule it for important good to others and to various interests in his kingdom. The sufferings of the wicked may be in themselves a very great evil; yet God can bring those sufferings into such relations to his government, and can make them so useful in their influence on other beings, that the good results become in his mind a sort of compensation for the evil, so that on the whole He may see it wise to admit sin with all its results, rather than exclude it by any means possible to Himself.

V. We may now see that the only possible way in which the sinner's death can be avoided, is for the sinner himself to turn from his evil way and live. The sinner need not look for God to change the policy of his government. He need not expect God to pardon sin without the sinner's repentance and the sinner's faith in Christ. He need not wait for some other name than that of Jesus given among men, whereby they may be saved, or for any other mode in which the sinner may avail himself of that name. God's government being what it is, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are natural and necessary means of the sinner's salvation. He might as well ask Jehovah to come down from his throne, as ask Him to do anything more or anything different from what He is doing to save sinners. The sinner, therefore, who would be saved, must meet Jehovah's own revealed conditions.

#### REMARKS.

1. The goodness of God is really no encouragement to those who continue in sin. Hear the rebuke given by the Psalmist--"Why boastest thou thyself in mischief. O mighty man! The goodness of God endureth continually." Why should you be proud of mischief? Know thou that God is good; and a good God is terrible to the wicked.

I am often amazed to hear persons talk as if the goodness of God afforded some security to those who live in sin. Some of you may be resting on this assumption. But how is this? If the goodness of God has hitherto prevented his using such means as have actually saved you from sin, how can you know but it may likewise prevent his saving you from hell? God has been good all along; but you are yet in sin. If his goodness has not stopped your sinning, how can you hope it will prevent your suffering? If his goodness has not availed to secure your conversion under the most favorable circumstances which even infinite love could arrange, how can you hope it will save you without your being converted? How can you venture on the assumption that God will recede from his ground, and since you will not come to his terms, He will come to yours? Suppose you that goodness and wisdom will ever do this?

It may be that you have not duly estimated the fact that God is immutable--always good, and always having the same sort of goodness. If then his goodness has not prevented your sinning, and your suffering too, in this world;--if all the efforts which goodness has been continually putting forth have hitherto failed, how can you infer that the same goodness may not fail hereafter? Especially when He assures you that now is the accepted time, and now his day of salvation? If his goodness cannot arrest you in your course of sin, in the most favoring hour, how can you hope it will arrest you from going straight down to hell? What can you find either in the Bible or out of the Bible to warrant such an inference as that of your salvation from the goodness of God?

One thing you may certainly know to be fact. God has been always as good as He is now, or as He ever will be. Yet He has created this world; it has fallen into sin; He has visited it with many and sore judgments and much suffering for its sins; has declared that He will send every sinner to hell who will not turn from his evil ways, and has done all He wisely could to make you believe it. And now, can you rationally infer from God's goodness, that you as a sinner have no hell to fear? Ah, no, sinner NO. You are moving on fast through the only period of your existence in which salvation is possible; you can not arrest your progress towards the grave; you can never change the course of God's government towards sinners. God is too good to suffer any sinner to triumph over justice, or to subvert his own throne.

2. The goodness of God is not the security of the impenitent sinner's salvation, but the guarantee of his damnation. Sinners know this. They are not afraid of God because they think Him wicked, but because they think Him good, and dread the consequences of his goodness. What sinner ever feared injustice from God? Not one. Their fear is that God will deal with them as they deserve. Not without reason is it that they fear his goodness and his justice. These are the very qualities in his character which they have to fear; just as they fear good men and the best men most, not because they are bad men, but because they are good men.

3. The death of the wicked is not inconsistent with God's happiness. I have heard persons say that they never could be happy even in heaven, if they knew that any of their own friends or relatives were in hell; and they seem to wonder how God can be happy while He knows that sinners are in hell. The reason why God will not be unhappy is that He will have the eternal consciousness of having Himself done right, and of not being in any sense or degree to blame for the death of the wicked. When the smoke of their torments shall go up forever and ever, his consciousness will forever affirm--no blood of theirs is on my raiment. With this consciousness God need not be unhappy in the sinner's eternal death.

4.\*\* God will have the eternal consciousness of having laid Himself out to the utmost to save sinners. He knows that He has gone to the very verge of propriety,--just as far as He wisely could, at every successive step in their course through a life of sin to their eternal death. What a satisfaction that must be to such a mind as his to be able to say--"What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done" in it? It is no fault of mine that when I looked for it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes, fit only for burning.

In this view of the case it is easy to see that God will be content with having done the best thing He could do. Conscious of this, He will be satisfied, and will have no occasion to wish that He had been more than infinite, or to regret in any respect that He has not done more or better than He has.

He will be well satisfied on the whole with all the results of all He has done. He will indeed see that the misery of the wicked is, as viewed in itself, a great and almost an infinite evil; but when all the results are

considered, He will be satisfied. For, it should be considered, God had foreseen all these results. They do not break upon Him by surprise. He did not commence a plan with which He should be in its development, dissatisfied. He foresaw all the evils incidental to his plan--all the sin and all the suffering consequent upon sinning. In full view of all, He asked Himself--Shall I be satisfied with these results? He did not go forward without making up his mind that this course was, on the whole, altogether wise and good. Hence the evils which are to be developed in the sinner's death are not new to Him. They do not break forth suddenly upon Him so as to embarrass his movements and turn Him aside from his course. By no means. Right onward move his eternal counsels, as certain as his own existence. What infinite wisdom has devised, infinite power will execute. God never can lack the necessary firmness to do the very best thing in the best way.

These results, therefore, do not interfere at all with the happiness of God. The death of the sinner may be in itself a very great evil, and yet God sees that on the whole--taking all results into view, He has the best of reasons to be satisfied with his own plan, and with all that He has Himself done in its execution. He will be satisfied with the results as a whole, although there may be things connected with it which are in themselves to be regretted.

Again, the death of the wicked will not be inconsistent with the happiness of heaven. Persons have often said, that they could not be happy in heaven, if they knew the wicked were in hell. Some of you may have thought so; but why? Are you a great deal better than God? Are you more benevolent or more wise than God is? Suppose you stand on the shore and you see a ship in the offing beating hard against a dreadful storm, and laden with precious human lives. You see their signals of distress; ah, you can even hear their shrieks and cries for help, and in your inmost soul you feel that you would save them all if you could. No doubt you would. God has the power to do it, but yet He lets the noble ship strike the breakers! You would have saved them;--but are you therefore better than God? No; the reason why your course differs from God's course in the matter is, that you are not so good and not so wise as He. If you were as benevolent as He, you would act as He does.

But with your short vision of results, it would fill you with great anguish to see a ship's crew and passengers all dash upon the dreadful rocks and go to the bottom. Yet God can look calmly on, and trace the whole course of the dreadful calamity, satisfied that all shall be well in the end.

When saints reach heaven they will have more confidence in God than many people have now. They will see more than they do now, and will have indefinitely more confidence in the wisdom of what they cannot see. It will then appear plain to them that they have the same reason for being happy in all the results of moral government that God has. They will begin to see these results as they have never done before. With enlarged views they will see most clearly that God has done right, perfectly and infinitely right. O how their minds will be eternally solemnized by a view of hell! What a spectacle! What could make more solemn impressions of the fearfulness of sin, and of the firmness that prevails forever in the counsels of Jehovah! I have sometimes been greatly edified by seeing how Christians have borne the loss of friends dying in their sins. For a long time I could not understand this, and was greatly stumbled to conceive how Christians could be reconciled to such a trial. Is it stupidity, said I to myself, or is it unbelief? Subsequent reflection however, and observation, showed that it was neither. I saw how they might be happy in God, confiding in his wisdom and love. I no more suppose that heaven would be unhappy because of their vision of hell, than I suppose a virtuous community would be in seeing a man punished who was bent upon their ruin. Suppose there were in this community a man full of all mischief, a child of the devil, reckless of law and right, periling and even taking life, whenever excited passion maddened him to the deed; suppose this

man seized, convicted, and shut up in the state's prison, or even suppose him to be hung: you see it and you say--this is in itself a great evil, but in view of all the results, you would say, Amen. Better that the guilty wretch should suffer as he deserves, than that society should be broken up--other lives be destroyed, and an evil vastly greater than one man's death be done.

Now if in this world you may be brought to acquiesce in condign punishment brought upon the guilty, how much more so in the future world! There we shall see that their case is hopeless--that nothing more could be done wisely to save them--that they forced their way down to hell in full view of Calvary, despite of the tenderest entreaties and the most affecting invitations; then we shall see that nothing remained but for God to shut them up in the state's prison of the universe!

Persons sometimes say-- O if my relatives, my husband or my children must go to hell, I never can be reconciled with God's doings, never, NEVER! I never can be happy in heaven myself and see them in hell! What! Do you say to God--You may send anybody else's children to hell if you please, but spare mine! All this will have passed away if you ever reach heaven. There God's friends are my friends, and God's enemies are my enemies. I have only one question to ask there:--Is he a friend of God, or is he an enemy? All these distinctions about self and self's friends, or self's children, will then have vanished forever away. Does that pious mother think now that she could not be happy to see her own son sent to hell? Once in heaven, or even once fitted for heaven, your soul will rest calmly in God, sinking down sweetly into his will, and rejoicing that He never does and never can do otherwise than right.

But we must revert to the exhortation in our text. God says to each sinner, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Many sinners in this house have continued long in sin, expecting God to do something more than He has yet done, and indeed enough to save them;--but will He? Do you know that He will? How do you know that He will? All this time while you have been waiting for Him, He has been waiting for you. He has come to you by all his servants, rising up early and sending them, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" This you will observe assumes that you are bent on your own death, and that you act as if you thought yourselves to have good reasons for choosing death. Your God asks to know what those reasons are. He tells you most solemnly that you need not die because He wants to have you, or because He has any pleasure at all in your death; nor because any one else--unless it be Satan--wants to have you die. No; if you have reasons they must be your own, and God asks you what they are. Now go home and ask yourself what they are. Press home to your own heart this question--put to you by your Maker--Why will ye die? Take your pen and write the reasons down, for you may have occasion enough to review them in the coming years and ages of your existence. Then write them down. I should like to know what they are, and it might be of use to yourself to study them more attentively than you have been wont to do. You will do well to write them all out fully, so that your own mind can measure them and weigh them and estimate soberly their real value. Won't you do this; do it seriously, in the stillness and solitude of your own chamber; write them all down; get upon your knees and spread them out before God. Say, Lord, Thou hast put this question to me--Why wilt thou die?" Here is the answer. Lord, it is because Thou hast no mercy on sinners. It is because Thou hast done nothing to save me. Because I can't help going on in my sins. Because I can't repent and can't believe. \* \* \* But stop, sinner, read this over again before God. Is there a word of truth in all you have written? Will it stand the test of even your own conscience? Will it bear to come before your Maker? Can it be of any use to you to "deny the Lord that bought you," and "make God a liar" to his very face--in contempt of his own solemn oath?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/god-not-pleased-with-the-death-of-the-wicked/>

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