

Lecture Xiii. - How Churches Can Help Ministers.

by Charles Finney

Churches must work with ministers to promote revivals, as ministers cannot succeed without church support.

Scripture: Exodus 17:11

Topics: "Revival", "Church Support"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the critical role of the church in supporting ministers, drawing parallels from the story of Moses, Aaron, and Hur to illustrate how collective prayer and action are essential for spiritual revival. He argues that churches must actively participate in the ministry rather than adopt a passive role, warning against complacency and the dangers of expecting ministers to bear the burden alone. Finney outlines specific responsibilities for church members, including prayer, financial support, and active engagement in outreach efforts, to foster a thriving spiritual environment. He stresses that a church's failure to support its minister can lead to stagnation and the loss of revival opportunities. Ultimately, he calls for a united effort to uphold the minister's work, ensuring that both the church and its leaders are aligned in their mission to spread the gospel.

Transcript

TEXT. --And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses's hands were heavy, and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side: and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. --EXODUS xvii. 11-13.

You who read your Bibles will recollect the connection in which these verses stand. The people of God in subduing their enemies came to battle against the Amalekites, and these incidents took place. It is difficult to conceive why importance should be attached to the circumstance of Moses holding up his hands, unless the expression is understood to denote the attitude of prayer. And then his holding up his hands, and the success attending it, will teach us the importance of prayer to God, for his aid in all our conflicts with the enemies of God. The co-operation and support of Aaron and Hur have been generally understood to represent the duty of churches to sustain and assist ministers in their work, and the importance of this co-operation to the success of the preached gospel. I shall make this use of it on the present occasion. As

I have spoken of the duty of ministers to labor for revivals, I shall now consider,

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CO-OPERATION OF THE CHURCH IN PRODUCING AND CARRYING ON A REVIVAL.

There are a number of things whose importance in promoting a revival has not been duly considered by churches and ministers, which if not attended to will make it impossible that revivals should extend, or even continue for any considerable time. In my last two lectures, I have been dwelling on the duties of ministers, as it was impossible for me to preach a course of lectures on revivals without entering more or less extensively into that department of means. I have not done with that part of the subject, but have thought it important here to step aside and discuss some points in which the church must stand by and aid their minister, if they expect to enjoy a revival. In discussing the subject, I propose,

I. To mention several things which Christians must avoid, if they would support ministers.

II. Some things to which they must attend.

I. I am to mention several things that must be avoided.

1. By all means keep clear of the idea, both in theory and practice, that a minister is to promote revivals alone. Many people are inclined to take a passive attitude on this subject, and feel as if they had nothing to do. They have employed a minister and paid him, to feed them with instruction and comfort, and now they have nothing to do but to sit and swallow the food he gives. They are to pay his salary, and attend on his preaching, and they think that is doing a great deal. And he on his part is expected to preach good, sound, comfortable doctrine, to bolster them up, and make them feel comfortable, and so they expect to go to heaven. I tell you, **THEY WILL GO TO HELL**, if this is their religion. That is not the way to heaven.

Rest assured that where this spirit prevails in the church, however good the minister may be, the church have taken the course to prevent a revival. If he is ever so faithful, ever so much engaged, ever so talented and eloquent, he may wear himself out, and perhaps destroy his life, but he will have little or no revival.

Where there is no church, or very few members in the church, a revival may be promoted without any organized effort of the church, because it is not there, and in such a case, God accommodates his grace to the circumstances, as he did when the apostles went out, single-handed, to plant the gospel in the world. I have seen instances of powerful revivals where such was the case. But where there are means, God will have them used. I had rather have no church in a place, than attempt to promote a revival in a place where there is a church which will not work. God will be inquired of by his people to bestow blessings. The counteracting influence of a church that will not work is worse than infidelity. There is no possibility of occupying neutral ground, in regard to a revival, though some professors imagine they are neutral. If a professor will not lay himself out in the work, he opposes it. Let such a one attempt to take middle ground, and say he is going to wait and see how they come out--why, that is the very ground the devil wants him to take. Professors can in this way do his work a great deal more effectually than by open opposition. If they take open ground in opposition, everybody will say they have no religion. But by this middle course they retain their influence, and thus do the devil's work more effectually.

In employing a minister, a church must remember that they have only employed a leader to lead them on to action in the cause of Christ. People would think it strange if any body should propose to support a

general and then let him go and fight alone! This is no more absurd, or destructive, than for a minister to attempt to go forward alone. The church misconceive the design of the ministry, if they leave their minister to work alone. It is not enough that they should hear the sermons. That is only the word of command, which the church are bound to follow.

2. Do not complain of your minister because there is no revival, if you are not doing your duty. It is of no use to complain of there being no revival, if you are not doing your duty. That alone is a sufficient reason why there should be no revival. It is a most cruel and abominable thing for a church to complain of their minister, when they themselves are fast asleep. It is very common for professors of religion to take great credit to themselves, and quiet their own consciences by complaining of their ministers. And when the importance of ministers being awake is spoken of, this sort of people are ready to say, We never shall have a revival with such a minister, when the fact is that their minister is much more awake than they are themselves.

Another thing is true in regard to this point, and worthy of notice. When the church is sunk down in a low state, professors of religion are very apt to complain of the church, and of the low state of religion among them. That intangible and irresponsible being, the "church," is greatly complained of by them, for being asleep. Their complaints of the low state of religion, and of the coldness of the church or of the minister, are poured out dolefully, without their seeming to realize that the church is composed of individuals, and that until each one will take his own case in hand, complain of himself, and humble himself before God, and repent, and wake up, the church can never have any efficiency, and there never can be a revival. If instead of complaining of your minister, or of the church, you would wake up as individuals, and not complain of him or them until you can say you are pure from the blood of all men, and are doing your duty to save sinners, he would be apt to feel the justice of your complaints, and if he would not God would, and would either wake him up or remove him.

3. Do not let your minister kill himself by attempting to carry on the work alone, while you refuse to help him. It sometimes happens that a minister finds the ark of the Lord will not move unless he lays out his utmost strength, and he has been so desirous of a revival that he has done this, and has died. And he was willing to die for it. I could mention some cases in this State, where ministers have died, and no doubt in consequence of their labors to promote a revival where the church hung back from the work.

I will mention one case. A minister, some years since, was laboring where there was a revival; and was visited by an elder of a church at some distance who wanted him to go and preach there. There was no revival there, and never had been, and the elder complained about their state, said they had had two excellent ministers, one had worn himself completely out and died, and the other had exhausted himself, and got discouraged, and left them, and they were a poor and feeble church, and their prospects very dark unless they could have a revival, and so he begged this minister to go and help them. He seemed to be very sorrowful, and the minister heard his whining, and at last replied by asking, Why did you never have a revival? I do not know, said the elder. Our minister labored hard, but the church did not seem to wake up, and somehow there seemed to be no revival. "Well, now," said the minister, "I see what you want; you have killed one of God's ministers, and broke down another so that he had to leave you, and now you want to get another there and kill him, and the devil has sent you here to get me to go and rock your cradle for you. You had one good minister to preach to you, but you slept on, and he exerted himself till he absolutely died in the work. Then the Lord let you have another, and still you lay and slept, and would not wake up to your duty. And now you have come here in despair, and want another minister, do you? God forbid that you should ever have another while you do as you have done. God forbid that you should ever

have a minister, till the church will wake up to duty." The elder was affected, for he was a good man. The tears came in his eyes, and he said it was no more than they deserved. "And now," said the minister, "will you be faithful, and go home and tell the church what I say? If you will, and they will be faithful and wake up to duty, they shall have a minister, I will warrant them that." The elder said he would, and he was true to his word; he went home and told the church how cruel it was for them to ask another minister to come among them, unless they would wake up. They felt it, and confessed their sins, and waked up to duty, and a minister was sent to them, and a precious and powerful revival followed.

Churches do not realize how often their coldness and backwardness may be absolutely the cause of the death of ministers. The state of the people, and of sinners, rests upon their mind, they travail in soul night and day, and they labor in season and out of season, beyond the power of the human constitution to bear, till they wear out and die. The church know not the agony of a minister's heart, when he travails for souls, and labors to wake up the church to help, and still sees them in the slumbers of death. Perhaps sometimes they will rouse up to spasmodic effort for a few days, and then all is cold again. And so many a faithful minister wears himself out and dies, and then these heartless professors are the first to blame him for doing so much.

I recollect a case of a good minister, who went to a place where there was a revival, and while there heard a pointed sermon to ministers. He received it like a man of God; he did not rebel against God's truth, but he vowed to God that he never would rest until he saw a revival among his people. He returned home and went to work; the church would not wake up, except a few members, and the Lord blessed them, and poured out his Spirit, but the minister laid himself down on his bed and died, in the midst of the revival.

4. Be careful not to complain of plain, pointed preaching, even when its reproofs fasten on yourselves. Churches are apt to forget that a minister is responsible only to God. They want to make rules for a minister to preach by, so as not to have it fit them. If he bears down on the church, and exposes the sins that prevail among them, they call it personal, and rebel against the truth. Or they say, he should not preach so plainly to the church before the world; it exposes religion, they say, and he ought to take them by themselves and preach to the church alone, and not tell sinners how bad Christians are. But there are cases where a minister can do no less than to show the house of Jacob their sins. If you ask, Why not do it when we are by ourselves? I answer, Just as if sinners did not know you did wrong. I will preach to you by yourselves, about your own sins, when you will get together by yourselves to sin. But as the Lord liveth, if you sin before the world, you shall be rebuked before the world. Is it not a fact that sinners do know how you live, and that they stumble over you into hell? Then do not blame ministers, when they see it their duty to rebuke the church openly, before the world. If you are so proud you cannot bear this, you need not expect a revival. Do not call preaching too plain because it exposes the faults of the church. There is no such thing as preaching too plain.

5. Sometimes professors take alarm, lest the minister should offend the ungodly by plain preaching. And they will begin to caution him against it, and ask him if he had not better alter a little to avoid giving offence, and the like. This fear is excited especially if some of the more wealthy and influential members of the congregation are offended, lest they should withdraw their support from the church, and no longer give their money to help to pay the minister's salary, and so the burden will come the heavier on the church. They never can have a revival in such a church. Why, the church ought to pray, above all things, that the truth may come on the ungodly like fire. What if they are offended? Christ can get along very well without their money. Do not blame your minister, nor ask him to change his mode of preaching to please and conciliate the ungodly. It is of no use for a minister to preach to the impenitent, unless he can preach the

truth to them. And it will do no good for them to pay for the support of the gospel, unless it is preached in such a way that they may be searched and saved.

Sometimes church members will talk among themselves about the minister's imprudence, and create a party, and get into a very wrong spirit, because the wicked are displeased. There was a place where there was a powerful revival, and great opposition. The church were alarmed, for fear that if the minister was not less plain and pointed, some of the impenitent would go and join some other congregation. And one of the leading men in the church was appointed to go to the minister and ask him not to preach quite so hard, for if he continued to do so, such and such persons would leave the congregation. The minister asked, Is not the preaching true? "Yes." Does not God bless it? "Yes." Did you ever see the like of this work before in this place? "No, I never did." "Get thee behind me, Satan, the devil has sent you here on this errand; you see God is blessing the preaching, the work is going on, and sinners are converted every day, and now you come to get me to let down the tone of preaching, so as to ease the minds of the ungodly." The man felt the rebuke, and took it like a Christian; he saw his error and submitted, and never again was heard to find fault with the plainness of preaching.

In another town, where there was a revival, a woman who had some influence, (not pious), complained very much about plain, pointed, personal preaching, as she called it. But by and by she herself became a subject of the work. After this some of her impenitent friends reminded her of what she used to say against the preacher for "preaching it out so hot." She now said her views were altered, and she did not care how hot the truth was preached, if it was red hot.

6. Do not take part with the wicked in any way. If you do it at all, you will strengthen their hands. If the wicked accuse the minister of being imprudent, or of being personal, and if the church members, without admitting that the minister does so, only admit that personal preaching is wrong, and talk about the impropriety of personal preaching, the wicked will feel themselves strengthened by such remarks. Do not unite with them at all, for they will feel that they have you on their side against their minister. You adopt their principles, and use their language, and are understood as sympathizing with them. What is personal preaching? No individual is ever benefited by preaching unless he is made to feel that it means him. Now such preaching is always personal. It often appears so personal, to wicked men, that they feel as if they were just going to be called out by name before the congregation. A minister was once preaching to a congregation, and when describing certain characters, he said, "If I was omniscient, I could call out by name the very persons that answer to this picture." A man cried out, "Name me!" and he looked as if he was going to sink into the earth. He afterwards said that he had no idea of speaking out, but the minister described him so perfectly, that he really thought he was going to call him by name. The minister did not know there was such a man in the world. It is common for men to think their own conduct is described, and they complain, "Who has been telling him about me? Somebody has been talking to him about me, and getting him to preach at me." I suppose I have heard of five hundred or a thousand just such cases. Now if the church members will just admit that it is wrong for a minister to mean anybody in his preaching, how can he do any good? If you are not willing your minister should mean anybody, or preach to anybody, you had better dismiss him. Whom must he preach to, if not to the persons, the individuals before him? And how can he preach to them, when he does not mean them?

7. If you wish to stand by your minister in promoting a revival, do not by your lives contradict his preaching. If he preaches that sinners are going to hell, do not give the lie to it, and smile it all away, by your levity and unconcern. I have heard sinners speak of the effect produced on their minds, by levity in Christians, after a solemn and searching discourse. They feel solemn and tender, and begin to be alarmed at their

condition, and they see these professors, instead of weeping over them, all light and easy, as much as to say, "Do not be afraid, sinners, it is not so bad, after all; keep cool and you will do well; do you think we would laugh and joke if you were going to hell so fast? We should not laugh if only your house was on fire, still less if we saw you burning in it." Of what use is it for a minister to preach to sinners, in such a state of things?

8. Do not needlessly take up the time of your minister. Ministers often lose a great deal of time by individuals calling on them to talk, when they have nothing of importance to talk about, and no particular errand. The minister of course is glad to see his friends, and often too willing to spend time in conversation with his people, as he loves and esteems them. Professors of religion should remember that a minister's time is worth more than gold, for it can be employed in that which gold can never buy. If the minister is kept from his knees, or from his Bible, or his study, that they may indulge themselves in his conversation, they do a great injury. When you have a good reason for it, you should never be backward to call on him, and even take up all the time that is necessary. But if you have nothing in particular to say that is important, keep away. I knew a man in one of our cities, who was out of business, and he used to take up months of the minister's time. He would come to his study, and sit for three hours at a time, and talk, because he had nothing else to do, till finally, the minister had to rebuke him plainly, and tell him how much sin he was committing.

9. Be sure not to sanction any thing that is calculated to divert public attention from the subject of religion. Often when it comes the time of year to work, when the evenings are long, and business is light, and the very time to make an extra effort, at this moment, somebody in the church will give a party, and invite some Christian friends, so as to have it a religious party. And then some other family must do the same, to return the compliment. Then another and another, till it grows into an organized system of parties, that consume the whole winter. Abominable! This is the grand device of the devil, because it appears so innocent, and so proper, to promote good feeling, and increase the acquaintance of Christians with each other. And so, instead of prayer meetings they will have these parties.

The evils of these parties are very great. They are often got up at great expense, and the most abominable gluttony is practised in them. It is said that the expense is from one hundred to two thousand dollars. I have been told that in some instances, professed Christians have given great parties, and made great entertainments, and excused their ungodly prodigality in the use of Jesus Christ's money, by giving what was left, after the feast was ended, to the poor! Thus making it a virtue to feast and riot, even to surfeiting, on the bounties of God's providence, under pretence of benefiting the poor. This is the same in principle, with a splendid ball which was given some years since, in a neighboring city. The ball was got up for the benefit of the poor, and each gentleman was to pay a certain sum, and after the ball was ended, whatever remained of the funds thus raised, was to be given to the poor. Truly this is strange charity, to eat and drink and dance, and when they have rioted and feasted until they can enjoy it no longer, they deal out to the poor the crumbs that have fallen from the table. I do not see why such a ball is not quite as pious as such Christian parties. The evil of balls does not consist simply in the exercise of dancing, but in the dissipation, and surfeiting, and temptations connected with them.

But it is said they are Christian parties, and that they are all, or nearly all, professors of religion who attend them. And furthermore, that they are concluded, often, with prayer. Now I regard this as one of the worst features about them; that after the waste of time and money, the excess in eating and drinking, the vain conversation, and nameless fooleries, with which such a season is filled up, an attempt should be made to sanctify it, and palm it off upon God, by concluding it with prayer. Say what you will, it would not be more

absurd or incongruous, or impious, to close a ball, or a theatre, or a card party with prayer.

Has it come to this, that professors of religion, professing to desire the salvation of the world, when such calls are made upon them, from the four winds of heaven, to send the gospel, to furnish Bibles, and tracts, and missionaries, to save the world from death, that they should spend hundreds of dollars in an evening, and then go to the monthly concert and pray for the heathen!

In some instances, I have been told, they find a salve for their consciences, in the fact that their minister attends their parties. This, of course, would give weight to such an example, and if one professor of religion made a party and invited their minister, others must do the same. The next step they take may be for each to give a ball, and appoint their minister a manager! Why not? And perhaps, by and by, he will do them the favor to play the fiddle. In my estimation he might quite as well do it, as to go and conclude such a party with prayer.

I have heard with pain, that a circle of parties, I know not to what extent, has been held in ROCHESTER--that place so highly favored of the Lord. I know not through whose influence they have been got up, or by what particular persons they have been patronized and attended. But I should advise any congregation who are calculating to have a circle of parties, in the mean time to dismiss their minister, and let him go and preach where the people would be ready to receive the word and profit by it, and not have him stay and be distressed, and grieved, and killed, by attempting to promote religion among them, while they are engaged heart and hand in the service of the devil.

Professors of religion should never get up anything that may divert public attention from religion, without first having consulted their minister, and made it a subject of special prayer. And if they find it will have this effect, they ought never to do it. Subjects will often come up before the public which have this tendency; some course of lectures, or show, or the like. Professors ought to be wise, and understand what they are about, and not give countenance to any such thing, until they see what influence it will have, and whether it will hinder a revival. If it will do that, let them have nothing to do with it. Every such thing should be estimated by its bearing upon Christ's kingdom.

In relation to parties, say what you please about their being an innocent recreation, I appeal to any of you who have ever attended them, to say whether they fit you for prayer, or increase your spirituality, or whether sinners are ever converted in them, or Christians made to agonize in prayer for souls?

II. I am to mention several things which churches must DO, if they would promote a revival and aid their minister.

1. They must attend to his temporal wants. A minister, who gives himself wholly to the work, cannot be engaged in worldly employments, and of course is entirely dependent on his people for the supply of his temporal wants, including the support of his family. I need not argue this point here, for you all understand this perfectly. It is the command of God, that "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." But now look around and see how many churches do in this matter. For instance, when they want a minister, they will cast about and see how cheap they can get one. They will calculate to a farthing how much his salt will cost, and how much his meal, and then set his salary so low as to subject him to extreme inconvenience to get along and keep his family. A minister must have his mind at ease, to study and labor with effect, and he cannot screw down prices, and banter, and look out for the best chances to buy to advantage what he needs. If he is obliged to do this, his mind is embarrassed. Unless his temporal wants are so supplied, that his thoughts may be abstracted from them, how can he do his duty?

2. Be honest with your minister.

Do not measure out and calculate with how much salt and how many bushels of grain he can possibly get along. Remember, you are dealing with Christ. And he calls you to place his ministers in such a situation that with ordinary prudence temporal embarrassment is out of the question.

3. Be punctual with him.

Sometimes churches, when they are about settling a minister, have a great deal of pride about giving a salary, and they will get up a subscription, and make out an amount which they never pay, and very likely never expected to pay. And so, after one, two, three, or four years, the society gets three or four hundred dollars in arrears to their minister, and then they expect he will give it to them. And all the while they wonder why there is no revival! This may be the very reason, because the church have LIED; they have faithfully promised to pay so much, and have not done it. God cannot consistently pour out his Spirit on such a church.

4. Pay him his salary without asking.

Nothing is so embarrassing, often, to a minister as to be obliged to dun his people for his salary. Often he gets enemies, and gives offence, by being obliged to call, and call, and call for his money, and then not get it as they promised. They would have paid it if their credit had been at stake, but when it is nothing but conscience and the blessing of God, they let it lie along. If any one of them had a note at the bank, you would see him careful and prompt to be on the ground before three o'clock. That is because the note will be protested, and they shall lose their character. But they know the minister will not sue them for his salary, and they are careless and let it run along, and he must suffer the inconvenience. This is not so common in the city as it is in the country. But in the country, I have known some heart-rending cases of distress and misery, by the negligence and cruelty of congregations in WITHHOLDING that which is due. Churches live in habitual lying and cheating, and then wonder why they have no revival. How can they wonder?

5. Pray for your minister.

I mean something by this. And what do you suppose I mean? Even the apostles used to urge the churches to pray for them. This is more important than you imagine. Ministers do not ask people to pray for them simply as men, nor that they may be filled with an abundance of the Spirit's influences, merely to promote their personal enjoyment. But they know that unless the church greatly desires a blessing upon the labors of a minister, it is tempting God for him to expect it. How often does a minister go into his pulpit, feeling that his heart is ready to break for the blessing of God, while he also feels that there is no room to expect it, for there is no reason to believe the church desire it! Perhaps he has been two hours on his knees in supplication, and yet because that the church do not desire a blessing, he feels as if his words would bound back in his face.

I have seen Christians who would be in an agony, when the minister was going into the pulpit, for fear his mind should be in a cloud, or his heart cold, or he should have no unction, and so a blessing should not come. I have labored with a man of this sort. He would pray until he got assurance in his mind that God would be with me in preaching, and sometimes he would pray himself sick. I have known the time, when he has been in darkness for a season, while the people were gathering, and his mind was full of anxiety, and he would go again and again to pray, till finally he would come into the room with a placid face, and

say, "The Lord has come, and he will be with us." And I do not know that I ever found him mistaken.

I have known a church bear their minister on their arms in prayer from day to day, and watch with anxiety unutterable, to see that he has the Holy Ghost with him in his labors! When they feel and pray thus, Oh, what feelings and what looks are manifest in the congregation! They have felt anxiety unutterable to have the word come with power, and take effect, and when they see their prayer answered, and they hear a word or a sentence come WARM from the heart, and taking effect among the people, you can see their whole souls look out of their eyes. How different is the case, where the church feel that the minister is praying, and so there is no need of their praying! They are mistaken. The church must desire and pray for the blessing. God says he will be inquired of by the house of Israel. I wish you to feel that there can be no substitute for this.

I have seen cases in revivals, where the church was kept in the back ground in regard to prayer, and persons from abroad were called on to pray in all the meetings. This is always unhappy, even if there should be a revival, for the revival must be less powerful and less salutary in its influences upon the church. I do not know but I have sometimes offended Christians and ministers from abroad, by continuing to call on members of the church in the place to pray, and not on those from abroad. It was not from any disrespect to them, but because the object was to get that church which was chiefly concerned, to desire, and pray, and agonize for a blessing.

In a certain place, a protracted meeting was held, with no good results, and great evils produced. I was led to make inquiry for the reason. And it came out, that in all their meetings, not one member of their own church was called on to pray, but all the prayers were made by persons from abroad. No wonder there was no good done. The church was not interested. The leader of the meeting meant well, but he undertook to promote a revival without getting the church there into the work. He let a lazy church lie still and do nothing, and so there could be no good.

Churches should pray for ministers as the agents of breaking down sinners with the word of truth. Prayer for a minister is often done in a set and formal way, and confined to the prayer meetings. They will say their prayers in the old way, as they have always done: "Lord, bless thy ministering servant, whom thou hast stationed on this part of Zion's walls," and so on, and it amounts to nothing, because there is no heart in it. And the proof often is, that they never thought of praying for him in secret, they never have agonized in their closets for a blessing on his labors. They may not omit it wholly in their meetings. If they do that, it is evident that they care very little indeed about the labors of their minister. But that is not the most important place. The way to present effectual prayer for your minister is to take it to your closet, and when you are in secret, wrestle with God for success to attend his labors.

I knew a case of a minister in ill health, who became depressed and sunk down in his mind, and was very much in darkness, so that he did not feel as if he could preach any longer. An individual of the church was waked up to feel for the minister's situation, and to pray that he might have the Holy Ghost to attend his preaching. One Sabbath morning, this person's mind was very much exercised, and he began to pray as soon as it was light, and prayed again and again for a blessing that day. And the Lord in some way directed the minister within hearing of his prayer. The person was telling the Lord just what he thought of the minister's situation and state of mind, and pleading, as if he would not be denied, for a blessing. The minister went into the pulpit and preached, and the light broke in upon him, and the word was with power, and a revival commenced that very day.

6. A minister should be provided for by the church, and his support guaranteed[sic.], irrespective of the ungodly. Otherwise he may be obliged either to starve his family, or to keep back a part of the truth so as not to offend sinners. I once expostulated with a minister who I found was afraid to come out fully with the truth. I told him I was surprised he did not bear down on certain points. He told me he was so situated that he must please certain men, who would be touched there. It was the ungodly that chiefly supported him, and that made him dependent and temporizing. And yet perhaps that very church which left their minister dependent on the ungodly for his bread, will turn round and abuse him for his want of faith, and his fear of men. The church ought always to say to their minister, "We will support you; go to work; let the truth pour down on the people, and we will stand by you."

7. See that everything is so arranged, that people can sit comfortably in meeting. If people do not sit easy, it is difficult to get or to keep their attention. And if they are not attentive, they can not be converted. They have come to hear for their lives, and they ought to be so situated that they can hear with all their souls, and have nothing in their bodily position to call for attention. Churches do not realize how important it is that the place of meeting should be made comfortable. I do not mean showy. All your glare and glory of rich chandeliers, and rich carpets, and splendid pulpits, is the opposite extreme, and takes off the attention just as badly, and defeats every object for which a sinner should come to meeting. You need not expect a revival there.

8. See that the house of God is kept cleanly. The house of God should be kept as clean as you would want your own house to be kept. Churches are often kept excessively slovenly. I have seen them, where people used so much tobacco, and took so little care about neatness, that it was impossible to preach with comfort. Once in a protracted meeting, the thing was charged upon the church, and they had to acknowledge it, that they paid more money for tobacco than they did for the cause of missions. They could not kneel in their pews, and ladies could not sit without all the time watching their clothes, and they had to be careful where they stepped, because the house was so dirty, and there was so much tobacco juice running all about the floor. If people cannot go where they can hear without being annoyed with offensive sights and smells, and where they can kneel in prayer, what good will a protracted meeting do? There is an importance in these things, which is not realized. See that man! What is he doing? I am preaching to him about eternal life, and he is thinking about the dirty pew. And that woman is asking for a footstool to keep her feet out of the tobacco juice. Shame!

9. It is important that the house should be just warm enough, and not too warm. Suppose a minister comes into a house, and finds it cold; he sees as soon as he gets in, that he might as well have staid home; the people are shivering, their feet cold, they feel as if they should take cold, they are uneasy, and he wishes he was at home, for he knows he cannot do anything, but he must preach, or they will be disappointed.

Or he may find the house too warm, and the people, instead of listening to the truth, are fanning, and panting for breath, and by and by a woman faints, and makes a stir, and the train of thought and feeling is all lost, and so a whole sermon is wasted to no good end. These little things take off the attention of people from the words of eternal life. And very often it is so, that if you drop a single link in the chain of argument, you lose the whole, and the people are damned, just because the careless church do not see to the proper regulation of these little matters.

10. The house should be well ventilated. Of all houses, a church should be the most perfectly ventilated. If there is no change of the air, it passes through so many lungs it becomes bad, and its vitality is exhausted,

and the people pant, they know not why, and feel an almost irresistible desire to sleep, and the minister preaches in vain. The sermon is lost, and worse than lost. I have often wondered that this matter should be so little the subject of thought. The elders and trustees will sit and hear a whole sermon, while the people are all but ready to die for the want of air, and the minister is wasting his strength in preaching where the room is just like an exhausted receiver, and there they sit and never think to do any thing to help the matter. They should take it upon themselves to see that this is regulated right, that the house is just warm enough, and the air kept pure. How important it is that the church should be awake to this subject, that the minister may labor to the best advantage, and the people give their undivided attention to the truth, which is to save their souls.

It is very common, when things are wrong, to have it all laid to the sexton. This is not so. Often the sexton is not to blame. If the house is cold and uncomfortable, very often it is because the fuel is not good, or the stoves not suitable, or the house is so open it cannot be warmed. If it is too warm, perhaps somebody has intermeddled when he was out, and heaped on fuel without discretion. Or, if the sexton is in fault, perhaps it is because the church do not pay him enough for his services, and he cannot afford to give the attention necessary to keep the church in order. Churches sometimes screw down the sexton's salary, to the lowest point, so that he is obliged to slight his work. Or they will select one who is incompetent, for the sake of getting him cheap, and then the thing is not done. The fault is in the church. Let them give an adequate compensation for the work, and it can be done, and done faithfully. If one sexton will not do right, another will, and the church are bound to see it done right, or else let them dismiss their minister, and not keep him, and at the same time have other things in a state so out of order that he loses all his work. What economy! To pay the minister's salary, and then for the want of fifty dollars added to the sexton's wages, every thing is so out of order that the minister's labors are all lost, souls are lost, and your children and neighbors go down to hell!

Sometimes this uncleanness, and negligence, and confusion are chargeable to the minister. Perhaps he uses tobacco, and sets the example of defiling the house of God. Perhaps the pulpit will be the filthiest place in the house. I have sometimes been in pulpits that were to loathesome to be occupied by human beings. If a minister has no more piety and decency than this, no wonder things are at loose ends in the congregation. And generally it is even so.

11. People should leave their dogs, and very young children at home. I have often known contentions arise among dogs, and children to cry, just at that stage of the services, that would most effectually destroy the effect of the meeting. If children are present and weep, they should instantly be removed. I have sometimes known a mother or a nurse sit and toss her child, while its cries were diverting the attention of the whole congregation. This is cruel. And as for dogs, they had infinitely better be dead, than to divert attention from the word of God. See that deacon; perhaps his dog has in this way destroyed more souls than the deacon will ever be instrumental in saving.

12. The members of the church should aid the minister by visiting from house to house, and trying to save souls. Do not leave all this to the minister. It is impossible he should do it, even if he gives all his time, and neglects his study and his closet. Church members should take pains and qualify themselves for this duty, so that they can be useful in it.

13. They should hold Bible classes. Suitable individuals should be selected to hold Bible classes, for the instruction of the young people, and where those who are awakened or affected by the preaching, can be received and be converted. As soon as any one is seen to be touched, let them be invited to join the Bible

class, where they will be properly treated, and probably they will be converted. The church should select the best men for this service, and should all be on the look out to fill up the Bible classes. It has been done in this congregation, and it is a very common thing, when persons are impressed, that they are observed by somebody, and invited to join the Bible class, and they will do it, and there they are converted. I do not mean that we are doing all we ought to do in this way, or all we might do. We want more teachers, able and willing to take charge of such classes.

14. Churches should sustain Sabbath schools, and in this way aid their ministers in saving souls, How can a minister attend to this and preach? Unless the church will take off these responsibilities, and cares, and labors, he must either neglect them, or be crushed. Let the church be WIDE AWAKE, watch and bring in children to the school, and teach them faithfully, and lay themselves out to promote a revival in the school.

15. They should watch over the members of the church. They should visit each other, in order to stir each other up, know each other's spiritual state, and provoke one another to love and good works. The minister cannot do it, he has not time; it is impossible he should study and prepare sermons, and at the same time visit every member of the church as often as it needs to be done to keep them advancing. The church are bound to do it. They are under oath to watch over each other's spiritual welfare. But how is this done? Many do not know each other. They meet and pass each other as strangers, and never ask about their spiritual condition. But if they hear anything bad of one, they go and tell it to others. Instead of watching over each other for their good, they watch for their halting. How can they watch for good when they are not even acquainted with each other?

16. The church should watch for the effect of preaching. If they are praying for the success of the preached word, they will watch for it of course. They should keep a look out, and when any in the congregation give evidence that the word of God has taken hold of them, they should follow it up. Wherever there are any exhibitions of feeling, those persons should be attended to instantly, and not left till their impressions wear off. They should talk to them, or get them visited, or get them into the anxious meeting, or into the Bible class, or bring them to the minister. If the members of the church do not attend to this, they neglect their duty. If they attend to it, they may do incalculable good.

There was a pious young woman, who lived in a very cold and wicked place. She alone had the spirit of prayer, and she had been praying for a blessing upon the word. At length she saw one individual in the congregation who seemed to be affected by the preaching, and as soon as the minister came from the pulpit, she came forward, agitated and trembling, and begged him to go and converse with the person immediately. He did so, and the individual was soon converted, and a revival followed. Now one of your stupid professors would not have seen that individual awakened, and would have stumbled over half a dozen of them without notice, and let them go to hell. Professors should watch every sermon, and see how it affects the congregation. I do not mean that they should be stretching their necks and staring about the house, but they should observe, as they may, and if they find any person affected by preaching, throw themselves in his way, and guide him to the Saviour.

17. Beware and not give away all the preaching to others. If you do not take your portion, you will starve, and become like spiritual skeletons. Christians should take their portion to themselves. If the word should be quite searching to them, they should make the honest application, and lay it along side their heart and practise it, and live by it. Otherwise preaching will do them no good.

18. Be ready to aid your minister in effecting his plans for doing good. When the minister is wise to devise plans for usefulness, and the church ready to execute them, they may carry all before them. But when the church hang back from every enterprise until they are actually dragged into it, when they are opposing every proposal, because it will cost something, they are a dead weight upon a minister. If stoves are needed, Oh, no, they will cost something. If lamps are called for, to prevent preaching in the dark, Oh, no, they will cost something. And so they will stick up candles on the posts, or do without evening meetings altogether. If they stick up candles, it soon comes to pass that they either give no light, or some one must run round and snuff them. And so the whole congregation are disturbed by the candle-snuffer, their attention taken off, and the sermon lost.

I was once attending a protracted meeting, where we were embarrassed because there were no lamps to the house. I urged the people to get them, but they thought it would cost too much. I then proposed to get them myself, and was about to do it, but found it would give offence, and we went on without. But the blessing did not come, to any great extent. How could it? The church began by calculating to a cent how much it would cost, and they would not go beyond, to save souls from hell.

So where a minister appoints a meeting, such people cannot have it, because it will cost something. If they can offer unto the Lord that which costs nothing, they will do it. Miserable helpers they are! Such a church can have no revival. A minister might as well have a millstone about his neck as such a church. He had better leave them, if he cannot learn them better, and go where he will not be so hampered.

19. Church members should make it a point to attend prayer meetings, and attend in time. Some church members will always attend on preaching, because there they have nothing to do, but to sit and hear, and be entertained, but they will not attend prayer meetings, for fear they shall be called on to do something. Such members tie up the hands of the minister, and discourage his heart. Why do they employ a minister? Is it to amuse them by preaching? or is it that he may teach them the will of God that they may do it?

20. Church members ought to study and inquire what they can do, and then do it. Christians should be trained like a band of soldiers. It is the duty and office of a minister to train them for usefulness, to teach them and direct them, and lead them on in such a way as to produce the greatest amount of moral influence. And then they should stand their ground and do their duty, otherwise they will be right in the way.

There are many other points which I noted, and intended to touch upon, but there is not time. I could write a book as big as this Bible, in detailing the various particulars that ought to be attended to. I must close with a few

REMARKS.

1. You see that a minister's want of success may not be wholly on account of a want of wisdom in the exercise of his office. I am not going to plead for negligent ministers. I never will spare ministers from the naked truth, nor apply flattering tides to men. If they are blameworthy, let them be blamed. And no doubt they are always more or less to blame when the word produces no effect. But it is far from being true that they are always the principal persons to blame. Sometimes the church is much more to blame than the minister, and if an apostle or an angel from heaven were to preach, he could not produce a revival of religion in that church. Perhaps they are dishonest to their minister, or covetous, or careless about the conveniences of public worship. Alas! what a state many country churches are in, where, for the want of a hundred dollars, everything is inconvenient and uncomfortable, and the labors of the preacher are lost.

They live in ceiled houses themselves, and let the house of God lie waste. Or the church counteract all the influence of preaching by their ungodly lives. Or perhaps their parties, their worldly show, as in most of the churches in this city, annihilate the influence of the gospel.

2. Churches should remember that they are exceedingly guilty to employ a minister, and then not aid him in his work. The Lord Jesus Christ has sent an ambassador to sinners, to turn them from their evil ways, and he fails of his errand, because the church refuse to do their duty. Instead of recommending his message, and seconding his entreaties, and holding up his hands in all the ways that are proper, they stand right in the way, and contradict his message, and counteract his influence, and souls perish. No doubt in most of the congregations in the United States, the minister is often hindered so much that he might as well be on a foreign mission a great part of the time, as to be there, for any effect of his preaching in the conversion of sinners, while he has to preach over the heads of an inactive, stupid church.

And yet these very churches are not willing to have their minister absent a few days to attend a protracted meeting. "We cannot spare him; why he is our minister, and we like to have our minister here;" while at the same time they hinder all he can do. If he could, he would tear himself right away, and go where there is no minister, and where the people would be willing to receive the gospel. But there he must stay, though he cannot get the church into a state to have a revival once in three years, to last three months at a time. It might be well for him to say to the church, "Whenever you are determined to take one of these long naps, I wish you to let me know it, so that I can go and labor somewhere else in the mean time, till you are ready to wake again."

3. Many churches cannot be blessed with a revival, because they are spunging[sic.] out of other churches, and out of the treasury of the Lord for the support of their minister, when they are abundantly able to support him themselves. Perhaps they are depending on the Home Missionary Society, or on other churches, while they are not exercising any self-denial for the sake of the gospel. I have been amazed to see how some churches live. One church that I was acquainted with actually confessed that they spent more money for tobacco than they gave for missions. And yet they had no minister, because they were not able to support one. And they have none now. And yet there is one man in that church who is able to support a minister. And still they have no minister, and no preaching.

The churches have not been instructed in their duty on this subject. I stopped in one place last summer, where there was no preaching. I inquired of an elder in the church why it was so, and he said it was because they were so poor. I asked him how much he was worth. He did not give me a direct answer, but said that another elder's income was about \$5000 a year, and I finally found out that this man's was about the same. Here, said I, are two elders, each of you able to support a minister, and because you cannot get help from abroad, you have no preaching. Why, if you had preaching, it would not be blessed, while you were thus spunging out of the Lord's treasury. Finally, he confessed that he was able to support a minister, and the two together agreed that they would do it.

It is common for churches to ask help, when in fact they do not need any help, and when it would be a great deal better for them to support their own minister. If they get funds from the Home Missionary Society, when they ought to raise them themselves, they may expect the curse of the Lord upon them, and this will be a sufficient reason for the Gospel's proving to them a curse rather than a blessing. Of how many churches might it be said, "Ye have robbed God, even this whole church."

I know a church who employed a minister but half the time, and felt unable to pay his salary for that. A female working society in a neighboring town appropriated their funds to this object, and assisted this church in paying their minister's salary. The result was as might be expected. He did them little or no good. They had no revival under his preaching, nor could they ever expect any, while acting on such a principle. There was one man in that congregation who could support a minister all the time. I was informed by a member that the church members were supposed to be worth TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. Now if this is true, here is a church with an income, at seven per cent., of \$14,000 a year, who felt themselves too poor to pay \$200 for support of a minister to preach half the time, and would suffer the females of a neighboring town to work with their own hands to aid them in paying this sum. Among the elders of this church, I found that several of them used tobacco, and two of them who lived together signed a covenant written on the blank leaf of their Bible, in which they pledged themselves to abandon that sin for ever.

It was in a great measure for want of right instruction that this church was pursuing such a course. For when the subject was taken up, and their duty laid before them, the wealthy man of whom I am speaking said that he would pay the whole salary himself, if he thought it would not be resented by the congregation, and do more hurt than good; and that if the church would procure a minister, and go ahead and raise a part of his salary, he would make up the remainder. They can now not only support a minister half the time, but all the time, and pay his salary themselves. And they will find it good and profitable to do so.

As I have gone from place to place laboring in revivals, I have always found that churches were blessed in proportion to their liberality. Where they have manifested a disposition to support the gospel, and to pour their substance liberally into the treasury of the Lord, they have been blessed both in spiritual and temporal things. But where they have been parsimonious, and let the minister preach for them for little or nothing, these churches have been cursed instead of blessed. And as a general thing, in revivals of religion, I have found it to be true that young converts are most inclined to join those churches which are most liberal in making efforts to support the gospel.

The churches are very much in the dark on this subject. They have not been taught their duty. I have, in many instances, found an exceeding readiness to do it when the subject was laid before them. I knew an elder in a church who was talking about getting a minister for half the time, because the church were poor, although his own income was considerable. I asked him if his income was not sufficient to support a minister all the time himself. He said it was. And on being asked what other use he could make of the Lord's money which he possessed, that would prove so beneficial to the interest of Christ's kingdom, as to employ a minister not only half but all the time in his own town, he concluded to set himself about it. A minister has been accordingly obtained, and I believe they find no difficulty in paying him his full salary.

The fact is, that a minister can do but little by preaching only half the time. If on one Sabbath an impression is made, it is lost before a fortnight comes round. As a matter of economy, a church should lay themselves out to support the gospel all the time. If they get the right sort of a minister, and keep him steadily at work, they may have a revival, and thus the ungodly will be converted and come in and help them. And thus in one year they may have a great accession to their strength. But if they employ a minister but half the time, year after year may roll away, while sinners are going to hell, and no accession is made to their strength from the ranks of the ungodly.

The fact is, that professors of religion have not been made to feel that all their possessions are the Lord's. Hence they have talked about giving their property for the support of the gospel. As if the Lord Jesus Christ was a beggar, and they called upon to support his gospel as an act of almsgiving! A merchant in one of the towns in this State, was paying a large part of his minister's salary. One of the members of the church was relating the fact to a minister from abroad, and speaking of the sacrifice which this merchant was making. At this moment the merchant came in. "Brother," said the minister, "you are a merchant. Suppose you employ a clerk to sell goods, and a schoolmaster to teach your children. You order your clerk to pay your schoolmaster out of the store such an amount, for his services in teaching. Now suppose your clerk should give out that he had to pay this schoolmaster his salary, and should speak of the sacrifices that he was making to do it, what would you say to this?" "Why," said the merchant, "I should say it was ridiculous." "Well," says the minister, "God employs you to sell goods as his clerk, and your minister he employs to teach his children, and requires you to pay his salary out of the income of the store. Now, do you call this your sacrifice, and say that you are making a great sacrifice, to pay this minister's salary? No, you are just as much bound to sell goods for God as he is to preach for God. You have no more right to sell goods for the purpose of laying up money, than he has to preach the gospel for the same purpose. You are bound to be just as pious, and to aim as singly at the glory of God, in selling goods, as he is in preaching the gospel. And thus you are as absolutely to give up your whole time for the service of God as he does. You and your family may lawfully live out of the avails of this store, and so may the minister and his family, just as lawfully. If you sell goods from these motives, selling goods is just as much serving God as preaching. And a man who sells goods upon these principles, and acts in conformity to them, is just as pious, just as much in the service of God, as he is who preaches the gospel. Every man is bound to serve God in his calling, the minister by teaching, the merchant by selling goods, the farmer by tilling his fields, the lawyer and physician by plying the duties of their profession.

"It is equally unlawful for any one of these to labor for the meat that perisheth. All they do is to be for God, and all they can earn, after comfortably supporting their families, is to be dedicated to the spread of the gospel and the salvation of the world."

It has long enough been supposed that ministers must be more pious than other men, that they must not love the world, that they must labor for God: they must live as frugally as possible, and lay out their whole time, and health, and strength, and life, to build up the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is true. But although other men are not called to labor in the same field, and to give up their time to public instruction, yet they are just as absolutely bound to consider their whole time as God's, and have no more right to love the world, or accumulate wealth, or lay it up for their children, or spend it upon their lusts, than ministers have.

It is high time the church was acquainted with these principles; and the Home Missionary Society may labor till the day of judgment to convert the people, and they will never succeed, till the churches are led to understand and feel their duty in this respect. Why, the very fact that they are asking and receiving aid in supporting their minister from the Home Missionary Society while they are able to support him themselves, is probably the very reason why his labors among them are not more blessed.

I would that the American Home Missionary Society possessed a hundred times the means that it now does, of aiding feeble churches, that are unable to help themselves. But it is neither good economy nor piety, to give their funds to those who are able but unwilling to support the gospel. For it is in vain to attempt to help them, while they are able but unwilling to help themselves.

If the Missionary Society had a ton of gold, it would be no charity to give it to such a church. But let the church bring in all the tithes to God's storehouse, and God will open the windows of heaven and pour down a blessing. But let the churches know assuredly that if they are unwilling to help themselves to the extent of their ability, they will know the reason why such small success attends the labors of their ministers. Here they are spunging their support from the Lord's treasury. How many churches are laying out their money for tea and coffee and tobacco, and then come and ask aid from the Home Missionary Society! I will protest against aiding a church who use tea and tobacco, and live without the least self-denial, and who want to offer God only that which costs nothing.

FINALLY--If they mean to be blessed, let them do their duty, do all their duty, put shoulder to the wheel, gird on the gospel armor, and come up to the work. Then, if the church is in the field, the car of salvation will move on, though all hell oppose, and sinners will be converted and saved. But if a church will give up all the labor to the minister, and sit still and look on, while he is laboring, and themselves do nothing but complain of him, they will not only fail of a revival of religion, but if they continue slothful and censorious, will by and by find themselves in hell for their disobedience and unprofitableness in the service of Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/lecture-xiii-how-churches-can-help-ministers/>

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