

Prof. Finney's Letters.--No. 39.

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney argues that entire sanctification is attainable in this life and that it is a rational expectation for those who set their hearts on it.

Scripture: Romans 6:22, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 4:24, Philippians 3:12-14, Colossians 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14, James 1:4, 1 Peter 1:15-16, 1 John 3:2-3

Topics: "Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes that entire sanctification is attainable in this life, arguing against the notion that it is irrational to expect such a state based on the failures of past saints like Paul. He critiques the opposition's stance, which acknowledges the possibility of sanctification but denies its attainability in a practical sense. Finney asserts that believers are not only encouraged to aim for perfect holiness but are also rationally justified in expecting to achieve it during their earthly lives. He calls for a deeper understanding and acceptance of this doctrine within the church, urging believers to pursue sanctification with hope and expectation.

Transcript

DEAR BROTHER:

Let us now notice:

X. THAT A STATE OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE.

By this proposition I mean, that this state is attainable in a practicable sense, and in such a sense as to render the expectation of making this attainment rational to those who set their hearts upon it. To me it has appeared wonderful, that in so many articles which have been written by the opposers of this sentiment, there should be so much of the appearance of admitting the attainability of this state in the sense I have explained, while, in fact, they do not fully admit it.

In the celebrated article of Dr. Woods upon this subject, while he fully admits that it may be attained, he denies that it is attainable in such a sense as that we may rationally expect to make this attainment in this life. I do not recollect his words, but he sentiment is this: that is such men as Paul, and other eminent saints, have failed to make this attainment, the expectation on our part of making it is irrational. Now admitting that Paul did not make this attainment, and that as yet it has never been made by any being

merely human; yet it no more follows that it never will be made, or that it is irrational in the saints, in all future time to expect to make this attainment, than it would be irrational in them to expect the world's conversion, because it never had been converted.

It has been common with the opposers of this doctrine to admit, in general language, the attainability of this state, while their general course of argument makes it plain, that they do not consider it attainable in any such sense as that we may rationally expect to make this attainment in this life. They have refused to take issue with us upon the question of attainability, manifestly because they have felt, that before God and the church it would not do to deny the attainability of this state; and that neither the Bible nor the church would bear them out in making such denial. Furthermore, they have admitted the necessity of aiming at a state of entire sanctification as indispensable to any degree of religion in the soul; and yet, I do not recollect that any one of them has marched right up to the admission, that this state is attainable in such a sense that we may expect, and are bound to expect to make this attainment. They have strangely maintained, that we were bound to intend and really mean to be perfectly holy in this life--while it has been considered irrational to expect to be so; and even dangerous to entertain any such expectation.

As I have so repeatedly argued the attainability of this state, in you[r] paper, recently, I will not repeat the arguments in this place, but refer your readers to what they may find on this subject in my reply to the Troy Presbytery, and also in my "Views of Sanctification in this Life."

I have only introduced this head here for the sake of calling attention to the fact, that while there has been so much of the appearance of admitting the attainability of this state in this life; yet, as a matter of fact, it does not seem to have been admitted to be attainable in any practicable sense; that is, in such a sense that any body ever has made, or will make it, or can rationally expect or hope to make such an attainment.

Your Brother in the love and

fellowship of the blessed Gospel,

C.G. FINNEY

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