

# LECTURE #10 ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION - By: CHARLES G. FINNEY

Delivered in New York in 1835 – *words in italics added*

Finney won 500,000 souls to Christ; 85% were still living for Christ 10 years after conversion

## Part 2 - Bringing awakened and convicted sinners through to conversion

*(And, restoring re-awakened backslidden Christians to Jesus Christ)*

Pro 11:30 ***The fruit (word) of the righteous is a tree of life...He that wins souls is wise***

**Dealing with awakened sinners** *and re-awakened backslidden Christians:*

Finney: "You would be wise to distinguish between an awakened sinner, and one who is under conviction. When you find a person who is receptive on the subject of Christ, do not take it for granted that he is convicted of sin. People are often awakened by some circumstance, such as sickness, an accident, financial difficulty, death in the family, disappointment, or the like, or by the Spirit of God or preaching, so that their spiritual ears are open, and they are ready to hear on the subject of the Gospel. If you find a person awakened, lose no time to pour in the light of divine truth upon him. Don't be afraid. Search out his heart, find what is there, and bring it up before his thoughts. If possible, melt him down on the spot. When once you have got a sinner's attention, very often his conviction and conversion is the work of a few moments. You can sometimes do more in five minutes, than in years or a whole life while he is careless or indifferent *and asleep*."

I have been amazed at the conduct of some parents who will let an awakened sinner be in their families for days and weeks, and not say a word to him on the subject. Why, they say, if the Spirit of God has begun a work in him, he will certainly carry it on! Perhaps the person is anxious to converse, and puts himself in the way of Christians, as often as possible, expecting they will converse with him, and they do not say a word. Amazing!

Such a person ought to be spoken to immediately, as soon as he is awakened, and let a blaze of light be poured into his heart without delay. Whenever you have reason to believe that a person within your reach is awakened, do not sleep till you have poured in the light on him, and tried to bring him to immediate repentance. Then is the time to press the subject with effect. If that favorable moment is lost, it may never be recovered.

*Isa 50:4* ***The Lord God has given me the tongue of one taught, that I should know the word to speak to him that is weary...He awakens my ear to hear (Him)***

I have often seen Christians in revivals, who were constantly on the look-out to see if anyone appeared to be awakened. And as soon as they did, they would mark him, and when the meeting was over, invite him to a room and speak and pray with him, and if possible not leave him till he was converted. Such a case took place in a western town:

A merchant came to the place from a distance to buy goods. It was a time of powerful revival, but he was determined to keep out of its influence, and so he would not go to any meeting at all. There was so much religion there, he said, he could not do any business. He booked his seat on the stage, which was to leave at four o'clock the next morning. As he spoke of leaving, a fellow guest of the house, who was one of the young converts, asked him if he would not go to a meeting once before he left town. He finally consented,

and went to the meeting. The sermon took hold of his thoughts, but not with sufficient power to bring him into the kingdom. He returned to his lodgings, and called the landlord to pay his bill. The landlord, who had himself recently been converted to Christ, saw that he was agitated. He spoke to him on the subject of Christ, and the man burst into tears.

The landlord called in other young converts, they prayed and exhorted him, and at four o'clock in the morning, when the stage called, he went on his way rejoicing in God! When he got home, he called his family together, confessed to them his past sins, and avowed his determination to live differently, and prayed with them for the first time. It was so unexpected that it was soon noised abroad, people began to inquire, and a revival broke out in the place. Now, suppose these Christians had done as some do, been careless, and let the man go off, slightly awakened? It is probable he never could have been saved. Such opportunities are often lost for ever, when once the favorable moment has passed.

***Prov 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold (anointed fruit - to be eaten) In settings of silver (a priceless engraving of God's words on someone's heart)***

### **Dealing with convicted sinners who have been awakened (or re-converted Christians)**

By a convicted sinner I mean one who feels himself condemned by conscience, by the Holy Spirit and by the truth of God's word, as a guilty sinner. He has sufficient instruction as to understand something of the extent of God's law, and he sees and feels his guilty state, and knows what his remedy is. To deal with these often requires great wisdom:

1. When a person is convicted and not converted, but remains in an anxious state, there is generally some specific reason for it. You may preach, and pray, and exhort and not gain anything. You must then set yourself to inquire what the particular difficulty is.

(a) Sometimes the individual has some idol, something which he loves more than God, which prevents him from giving himself up. You must search out and see what it is. Perhaps it is wealth, perhaps a wrong friendship, or some favorite amusement. There is something on which his heart is so set that he will not yield to God; *like his self-image*.

(b) Sometimes there is a particular sin, which he will not forsake. He pretends it is only a small one, *such as: anger, pride, worry, drugs, alcohol, gluttony, lying, greed or jealousy*.

(c) Look to see if some wrong needs to be remedied. Perhaps he has defrauded somebody in trade, or taken some unfair advantage and is unwilling to make amends. This is a very common sin among men of business. I have known many instances where men have grieved away the Spirit of God, or else have been driven to despair over this.

(d) They may have entrenched themselves somewhere, and fortified their will in regard to some particular point, which they are determined not to yield. I knew a man who was determined not to go into a certain grove (*a small wood*) to pray. Several other people during the revival had gone into the grove, and there, by prayer and meditation given themselves to God. The lawyer himself was awakened, but he was determined that he would not go into the grove. He had powerful convictions, and went on for weeks in this way, with no relief. He tried to make God believe it was not pride that kept him from Christ; and so, when he was going home from a meeting he would kneel down in the

street and pray and look round for a mud-puddle in the street, in which he might kneel, to show that he was not proud. He once prayed all night in his living room, but he would not go into the grove. His distress was so great, and he was so mad with God, that he was strongly tempted to do away with himself, and actually threw away his knife for fear he should cut his throat. At length he concluded he would go into the grove and pray, and as soon as he got there he was converted, and went and poured out his full heart to God.

So individuals are sometimes entrenched on a point. They say that they can be converted just as well without yielding this point, for Christianity doesn't consist in this. This is true, but by taking this stand they make it the material point. And so long as they are entrenched there, and determined to bring God to their terms – *like; "I don't need to attend such and such a church meeting to be saved"* - they never can be converted.

***Ezek 33:11 (GOD) I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die,***

(e) Perhaps he has a prejudice against someone, a member of the church perhaps and he hangs on to this, and will never be converted till he gives it up. Whatever it is, you should search it out and tell him the truth, plainly and faithfully. He may feel ill will towards someone, or be angry, and cherish strong feelings of resentment, which prevent him from obtaining mercy from God. ***Jesus: When you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father who is in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25***

(f) Perhaps he entertains some errors in doctrine, or some wrong ideas about what he now needs to do, or the way of doing it, which may be keeping him out of the kingdom. It is very common for people to try to make themselves good enough. They are so wicked, they say, that they can't come to Christ. They want to try, by humiliation, and suffering, and prayer, to make themselves right first. You will have to hunt them out of all these refuges. Sometimes sinners get the idea that they have been abandoned by God, and that they cannot be saved. It is often very difficult to move people off from this ground.

Once as I went to a revival meeting, I heard a low moaning noise. I saw several women gathered round the person who made it. They said it was a woman in despair. She had been a long time in that state. Her husband was a drunkard. He had brought her to the meeting and gone himself to the tavern. I talked with her but she insisted she had to leave for she could not hear praying or singing. I told her she must not go, and told the ladies to detain her, if necessary by force. I knew that if the devil had hold of her, God was stronger than the devil, and could deliver her.

The meeting began, and she made some noise at first, but then looked up. The subject was chosen with special reference to her case, as it continued, her attention was gained, and her eyes were fixed. I never shall forget how she looked--her eyes and mouth open, her head up and she almost rose from her seat as the truth poured in upon her. Finally, as the truth knocked away every foundation on which her despair had rested, she shrieked, put her head down, and sat perfectly still till the meeting was over. I went to her, and found her perfectly calm and happy in God. You can often do so much good by finding out where the difficulty lies, and then bring the truth to bear right on that point.

*Ps 45:2 ...Grace (the living word and wisdom of God) is poured upon your lips...*

*Prov 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.*

2. Be alert, in speaking with convicted sinners, not to make any compromise with them on any point where they have a difficulty. If you do, they will be sure to take advantage of it, and thus get a false hope. Convicted sinners often get into a difficulty, in regard to giving up some darling sin, or yielding some point where conscience and the Holy Spirit are opposing them. And if they come across an individual who will yield the point, they feel better, and are happy, and think they are converted. The rich young ruler who approached Christ had such a difficulty, and Jesus Christ knew just what it was.

He knew he loved his money, but instead of compromising and trying to comfort him, he put his finger on the issue and loved him and said "Go sell all that you have, and give it to the poor, and come follow me." What was the effect? The young man went away sorrowful (Mat. 19:20-22). If Christ had told him to do anything else, he would have felt relieved, been given hope; and professed himself a disciple, joined the church, and gone to hell.

*2 Tim 3:2-4 In the last days...people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud...unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*

*5 having a form of godliness but denying its power (the Holy Spirit). And from such people turn away (unless they are re-awakened then act quickly)*

*Heb 3:13 Warn, admonish, and encourage one another every day...that none of you may be hardened into settled rebellion, by the deceitfulness of sin. AMP*

*Pro 24:25 Blessings shall be showered on those who rebuke sin fearlessly. TLB*

People are often amazingly anxious to make a compromise. They will ask such questions as this: Whether or not you think a person can be a Christian and yet do such and such a thing. Now, do not yield an inch to any such questions. These questions themselves may often show you the very point that is laboring within them. They will show you that it is pride, or love of money or the world, or such like, which prevents their becoming Christians *or from their living as real Christians*. Here is the reason why the church is so full of false hopes. Men have been left to suppose they could be Christians, while holding on to their money, supposing they have a right to decide what to do with it. They have no idea that they belong to Jesus Christ and therefore their possessions also belong to Him.

Be sure to deal thoroughly on this point. The church is now filled up with hypocrites, because they were never taught to give up the world. Be diligent, in illustrating the subject, not to mislead and leave the impression that a selfish submission to Christ or a selfish acceptance of the atonement is acceptable. Man's selfish heart will eagerly seize such a view, if it is presented, and very likely close in with it, and thus get a false hope".

*Jam 5:20 ...Whoever turns a sinner from his evil course will save that one's soul AMP from death and will cover a multitude of sins (by procuring God's pardon).*

*1 Jo 3:10 ...Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother (by washing him with the water of the Word-Eph 5:26)*