

# **Hell Hath No Fury . . .** **(And Other Lies That Fools Believe)**

by  
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# Hell Hath No Fury . . .

## (And Other Lies That Fools Believe)

**T**he following article contains a reprint of Charles Finney's article "Self Deceivers," from his work *Lectures to Professing Christians* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1878). I have bolded selected portions of the text for the purpose of emphasis. I have also included my own comments before and after the text.

Charles Finney (1792–1875) was a "fire and brimstone" preaching Presbyterian minister born just over two centuries ago. His evangelistic ministry spanned six decades and saw thousands come under the heavy conviction of the Holy Spirit and "pray through" to the newness of life that results from the new birth. Although evangelical "Christians" of all stripe pay homage to the efforts of this great evangelist today, most would undoubtedly condemn him for his "heavy-handed" methods and the "hell-fire and damnation" message he preached. After all, evangelicals in general and Presbyterians in particular have long since moved away from the notion of a God of Wrath to fervently embrace the Satanic illusion of an unconditionally forgiving god of grace.

Finney was also a contemporary of the village idiot and aspiring philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). [See "Satan's Fools are Satan's Tools," in the April 1994 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*.] However, about all these two men had in common was the fact that they were contemporaries. Kierkegaard was a mentally twisted and perverted little man who carried about a bitterness and venom that easily rivaled that of a king cobra. His only claim to fame lies in the fact that he left his ignorant speculations in writings that men of

lesser intellect than he would later pick up and use to make idiotic rambling a philosophical art form.

In contrast to the arrogant individual that Kierkegaard became in the later years of his short life, Charles Finney was brought to his knees as a young man through the overwhelming conviction of the Holy Spirit. He emerged from that confrontation with an experiential knowledge of the ringing Word of Truth. He subsequently preached that Word with astounding results. [See "Charles Finney: My Conversion to Christ" and "One Train. One Track. Two Rails." in the January 1992 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*.]

Finney's preaching was effective because, like that of John Wesley, it left few "gray areas" in which Pretenders could easily rationalize the Truth they heard. Although the most resolute Pretenders undoubtedly sat through his preaching totally unfazed by the Truth they heard, thousands more responded with sincere repentance and an honest desire to know the God he preached.

The God that Charles Finney knew and preached was not the goofy god of grace that most "Christians" serve today. By no means! His was a God of unmitigated vengeance and Wrath, a God Who demanded that every Believer deny himself/herself and live a life of complete dedication to Him alone. Most "Christians" in our day not only have no interest in knowing that God, they readily find fault with Him for His lack of "Christian" compassion. Unfortunately, folks, I'm here to tell you the God of Wrath that Charles Finney preached is the only God that exists. There is no other god, be it god of grace or god of unconditional compassion.

The ever-loving, all-forgiving god of grace conjured up by dolts like those who picked up the goofiness of Søren Kierkegaard is nothing more than the figment of the imagination of fools anyway. And the idiotic concept doesn't gain any more validity just because the evangelical wing of the Protestant Church has, over the past century, gradually borrowed it from the liberal theologians who fabricated this goofy god of grace as a god more to their liking around the turn of last century. Liberal theologians have no corner on stupidity. Folly comes in all theological persuasions. Keep that in mind as you read what Finney had to say about Pretenders. He knew whereof he spoke.

## *Self Deceivers*

*Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

*(James 1:22)*

There are two extremes in religion, equally false and equally fatal. And there are two classes of hypocrites that occupy these two extremes. The first class make religion to consist altogether in the belief of certain abstract doctrines, or what they call faith, and lay little or no stress on good works. The other class make religion to consist altogether in good works, (I mean, dead works) and lay little or no stress on faith in Jesus Christ, but hope for salvation by their own deeds.

The Jews belonged generally to the last-mentioned class. Their religious teachers taught them that they would be saved by obedience to the ceremonial law. And therefore, when Paul began to preach, he seems to have attacked more especially this error of the Jews. He was determined to carry the main question, that men are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, in opposition to the doctrine of the scribes and pharisees, that salvation is by obedience to the law. And he pressed this point so earnestly, in his preaching and in his epistles, that he carried it, and settled the faith of the church in the great doctrine of justification by faith. And then certain individuals in the church laid hold of this doctrine and carried it to the opposite extreme, and maintained that men are saved by faith altogether, irrespective of works of any kind. They overlooked the plain principle, that genuine faith always results in good works, and is itself a good work.

I said that these two extremes, that which makes religion to consist altogether in outward works and that which makes it consist altogether in faith, are equally false and equally fatal. Those who make religion consist altogether in good works, overlook the fact that works themselves are not acceptable to God unless they proceed from faith. For without faith it is impossible to please Him. And those who make religion consist altogether in faith overlook the fact that true faith always works by love, and invariably produces the works of love.

They are equally fatal, because, on the one hand, without faith persons cannot be pardoned or justified; and on the other, without sanctification they cannot be fitted either for the employments or enjoyments of heaven. **Let a sinner turn from his sins altogether, and suppose his works to be as perfect as he thinks them to be, and yet he could not be pardoned without faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ.** And so if any one supposed that he could be justified by faith while his works were evil, he ought to know that without sanctification his faith is but dead, and cannot even be the instrument of his justification.

It appears that the Apostle James, in this epistle, designed to put this matter upon the right ground, and show exactly where the Truth lay, and to explain the necessity, and reason of the necessity, of both faith and good works. This epistle is a very practical one, and it meets full in the face all the great practical questions of the day, and decides them.

Doctrines in religion are of two classes, those which refer to God, and those which refer to human practice. Many confine their idea of religious doctrines to the former class. They think nothing is properly called doctrine but what respects God, his attributes, mode of existence, decrees, and so on. When I gave notice that I should commence a course of "Practical Lectures," I hope you did not understand me to mean that the lectures would not be doctrinal, or would have no doctrine in them. My design is to preach, if the Lord will, a course of lectures on practical doctrines. The doctrine which I propose to consider now, is this—That professor of religion who does not practice what he admits to be true, is self-deceived.

There are two classes of hypocrites among professors of religion, those that deceive others and those that deceive themselves. One class of hypocrites are those that, under a specious outside of morality and

religion, cover up the enmity of their hearts against God, and lead others to think they are very pious people. Thus the pharisees obtained the reputation of being remarkably pious, by their outside show of religion, their alms and their long prayers.

**The other class is that referred to in the text, who do not deceive others but themselves. These are orthodox in sentiment, but loose in practice. They seem to suppose religion to consist in a parcel of notions, without regard to practice, and thus deceive themselves by thinking they are good Christians while destitute of true holiness. They are hearers of the word but not doers.** They love orthodox preaching, and take great pleasure in hearing the abstract doctrines of religion exhibited, and perhaps have flights of imagination and glowing feelings in view of the character and government of God, but they are not careful to practise the precepts of God's word, nor are they pleased with the preaching of those doctrines which relate to human practice.

Perhaps there are some present tonight of both these classes of hypocrites. Now mark! I am not going to preach tonight to those of you who, by great strictness of morals and outside show of religion, deceive others. I address, now, those of you who do not practise what you know to be true—who are hearers and not doers. Perhaps I had better say, to secure attention, that it is very probable there are a number here now of this character. I do not know your names; but I wish you to understand, that if you are that character, you are the persons I am speaking to, just as if I called out your names. I mean you. You hear the word, and believe it in theory, while you deny it in practice. I say to you, that "you deceive yourselves." The text proves it. Here you have an express "Thus saith the Lord" for it, that all such characters are self-deceivers. I might quote a number of other passages of Scripture, that are to the point, and there leave it. But I wish to call your attention to some other considerations beside the direct scripture testimony.

In the first place, you do not *truly* believe the word. You hear it, and admit it to be true, but you do not truly believe it. And here let me say, that persons are themselves liable to deception on this point. Not that their consciousness deceives them, but they do not understand what it is that consciousness testifies. **Two things are indispensable to evangelical, or saving faith. The first is, intellectual conviction of the truth of**

**a thing. And here I do not mean merely the abstract truth of it, but in its bearing on you. The truth, in its relation to you, or its bearing on your conduct, must be received intellectually. And then true faith includes a corresponding state of the heart. This always enters into the essence of true faith. When a man's understanding is convinced, and he admits the truth in its relation to himself, then there must be a hearty approbation of it in its bearing or relation to himself. Both these states of mind are indispensable to true faith. Intellectual conviction of the truth is not saving faith. But intellectual conviction, when accompanied with a corresponding state of the affections, is saving faith. Hence it follows that where there is true saving faith, there is always corresponding conduct.** The conduct always follows the real faith. Just as certain as the will controls the conduct, men will act as they believe. Suppose I say to a man, Do you believe this? "Yes, I believe it." What does he mean? A mere intellectual conviction? He may have that, and yet not have faith.

A man may even feel an approbation of an abstract truth. This is what many persons suppose to be faith—the approbation which they feel for the character and government of God, and for the plan of salvation, when viewed abstractly. Many persons, when they hear an eloquent sermon on the attributes or government of God, are set all in a glow at the excellency displayed, when they have not a particle of true faith. I have heard of an infidel, who would be moved even to ecstasy at such themes.

The rational mind is so constituted that it naturally and necessarily approves of truth when viewed abstractedly. The wickedest devils in hell love it, if they can see it without its relation to themselves. If they could see the gospel without any relation that interferes with their own selfishness, they would not only see it to be true, but would heartily approve of it. All hell, if they could view God in his absolute existence, without any relation to themselves, would heartily approve his character. The reason why wicked men and devils hate God is, because they see him in relation to themselves. Their hearts rise up in rebellion, because they see him opposed to their selfishness.

**Here is the source of a grand delusion among men in regard to religion. They see it to be true, and they really rejoice in contemplating it; they do not enter into its relation to themselves, and so they love**

to hear such preaching, and say they are fed by it. But mark! They go away and do not practise. See that man! he is sick, and his feelings are tender. In view of Christ, as a kind and tender Saviour, his heart melts and he feels strong emotions of approbation towards Jesus Christ. Why? For the very same reasons that he would feel strong emotions toward the hero of a romance. But he does not obey Christ. He never practises one thing out of obedience to Christ, but views him abstractedly, and is delighted with his glorious and lovely character, while he himself remains in the gall of bitterness. Thus it is apparent that your faith must be efficient faith, such as regulates your practice and produces good works, or it is not the faith of the gospel, it is no real faith at all.

Again. It is further manifest that you are deceiving yourselves, because all true religion consists in obedience. And therefore, however much you may approve of Christianity, you have no religion unless you obey it. **In saying that all religion consists in obedience, I do not mean OUTWARD obedience. But faith itself, true faith, works by love, and produces corresponding action. There is no real obedience but the obedience of the heart; love is the fulfilling of the law; and religion consists in the obedience of the heart, with a corresponding course of life. The man, therefore, who hears the truth, and approves it, and does not practise it, deceiveth himself.** He is like the man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of a man he was.

Again. That state of mind which you mistake for religion, an intellectual conviction of truth, and approval of it in the abstract, so far from being evidence that you are pious, is as common to the wicked as to the good, whenever they can be brought to look at it abstractedly. This is the reason why it is often so difficult to convince sinners that they are opposed to God and his truth. Men are so constituted that they do approve of virtue, and do admire the character and government of God, and would approve and admire every truth in the Bible, if they could view it abstractedly, and without any relation to themselves. And when they sit under preaching that holds up the truth in such a way, that it has not much of a practical bearing on themselves, they may sit for years and never consider that they are opposed to God and his government.

And I am more and more persuaded, that great multitudes are to be found in all our congregations, where the abstract doctrines of the gospel are much preached, who like the preaching and like to hear about God, and all these things, and yet are unconverted. And no doubt multitudes of them get into the churches, because they love orthodox preaching, when, after all, it is manifest that they are not doers of the Word. And here is the difficulty; they have not had that searching preaching that made them see the truth in its bearing on themselves. And now they are in the church, whenever the truth is preached in its practical relation to them, they show the enmity of their hearts unchanged, by rising up in opposition to truth. They took it for granted that they were Christians, and so joined the church, because they could hear sound doctrinal preaching and approve of it, or because they read the Bible and approved of it. If their faith be not so practical as to influence their conduct, if they do not view the truth in its relation to their own practice, their faith does not affect them so much as the FAITH OF THE DEVIL.

## REMARKS

1. Great injury has been done by false representations regarding the wickedness of real Christians. A celebrated preacher, not long since, is said to have given this definition of a Christian—"A little grace and a great deal of devil." I utterly deny this definition. It is false and ruinous. A great deal is said that makes an impression that real Christians are the wickedest beings on the face of the earth. It is true that when they do sin they incur great guilt. For a Christian to sin is highly criminal. And it is also true that enlightened Christians see in their sins great wickedness.

When they compare their obligations with their lives, they are greatly humbled, and express their humility in very strong language. But it is not true that they are as bad as the devil, or anywhere in the neighborhood of it. This is perfectly demonstrable. When they do sin, their sins have great aggravation, and appear extremely wicked in the sight of God. But to suppose that men are real Christians while they live in the service of the devil, and have little of even the appearance of religion, is a sentiment that is not only false but of very dangerous tendency. It is calculated to encourage all that class of hypocrites who are Antinomians, and to encourage backsliders, as well as

to do a great injury to the cause of Christ in the estimation of scorners.

**The truth is, those who do not obey God are not Christians. The contrary doctrine is ruinous to the churches, by filling them up with multitudes whose claim to piety depends on their adoption of certain notions, while they never heartily intended to obey the requirements of the gospel in their lives.**

2. Those who are so much more zealous for doctrines than for practice, and who lay much more stress on that class of doctrines which relate to God than on that class which relate to their own conduct, are Antinomians. **There are many who will receive that class of the doctrines of the Bible which relate to God and approve and love them, who have not a particle of religion.** Those who are never "fed," as they call it, on any preaching but that of certain abstract points of doctrine, are Antinomians. They are the very persons against whom the apostle James wrote this epistle. They make religion to consist in a set of notions, while they do not lead holy lives.

3. That class of professors of religion who never like to hear about God or his attributes, or mode of existence, the Trinity, decrees, election, and the like, but lay all stress on religious practice to the exclusion of religious doctrine, are pharisees. They make great pretensions to outward piety, and perhaps to inward flights of emotion of a certain poetical cast, while they will not receive the great truths that relate to God, but deny the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

4. The proper end and tendency of all right doctrine, when truly believed, is to produce correct practice. Wherever you find a man's practice heretical, you may be sure his belief is heretical too. The faith that he holds in his heart is just as heretical as his life. He may not be heretical in his notions and theories. He may be right there, even on the very points where he is heretical in practice. But he does not really believe it.

For illustration: See that careless sinner there, grasping wealth, and rushing headlong in the search for riches. Does that man truly believe he is ever going to die? Perhaps you will say, he knows he must die. But I say, while he is in this attitude, he does not actually believe he is ever going to die. The subject is one which is not before his thoughts at all. And thus it is, therefore, impossible that he should believe it in his utter thoughtlessness. You ask him if he expect ever to die, and he will reply, "O yes, I know I must die; all men are

mortal." As soon as he turns his thoughts to it, he assents to the truth. And if you could fasten the conviction on his mind till he is really and permanently impressed with it, he would infallibly change his conduct, and live for another world instead of this. It is just so in religion; whatever a man really believes is just as certain to control his practice as that the will governs the conduct.

5. The church has for a long time acted too much on the Antinomian policy. She has been sticklish for the more abstract doctrines, and left the more practical too much out of view. She has laid greater stress on orthodoxy in those doctrines that are not practical, than in those that are practical. Look at the creeds of the church, and see how they all lay the main stress on those doctrines that have little relation to our practice.

A man may be the greatest heretic on points of practice, provided he is not openly profane and vicious, and yet maintain a good standing in the church, whether his life corresponds with the gospel or not. Is not this monstrous? And hence we see that when it is attempted to purify the church in regard to practical errors, she cannot bear it. Why else is it that so much excitement is produced by attempting to clear the church from participation in sins of intemperance, and Sabbath-breaking, and slavery? Why is it so difficult to induce the church to do anything effectual for the conversion of the world? Oh, when shall the church be purified, or the world converted? Not till it is a settled point, that heresy in practice is the proof of heresy in belief. Not while a man may deny the whole gospel in his practice every day, and yet maintain his standing in the church as a good Christian.

6. See how a minister may be deceived in regard to the state of his congregation. He preaches a good deal on the abstract doctrines, that do not immediately relate to practice, and his people say they are fed, and rejoice in it, and he thinks they are growing in grace, when in fact it is no certain sign that there is any religion among them. It is manifest that this is not certain evidence. But if when he preaches practical doctrines, his people show that they love the truth in relation to themselves, and show it by practising it, then they give evidence of real love to the truth.

If a minister find that his people love abstract doctrinal preaching, but that when he comes to press the practical doctrines they rebel, he may be sure that if they have any religion, it is in a low state; and if he

find, on fair trial, that he cannot bring them up to it, so as to receive practical doctrine, he may be satisfied they have not a particle of religion, but are a mere company of Antinomians, who think they can go to heaven on a dead faith in abstract orthodoxy.

**7. See what a vast multitude of professors of religion there are who are deceiving themselves. Many suppose they are Christians from the emotions they feel in view of the truth, when in fact what they receive is truth presented to their minds in such a way that they do not see its bearing on themselves. If you bring the truth so to bear on them, as to destroy their pride and cut them off from their worldliness, such professors resist it.**

Look abroad upon the church. See what a multitude of orthodox churches and orthodox Christians live and feed upon the abstract doctrines of religion from year to year. Then look farther at their lives, and see how little influence their professed belief has upon their practice. Have they saving faith? It cannot be. I do not mean to say that none of these church members are pious, but I do say that those who do not adopt in practice what they admit in theory—who are hearers of the word but not doers, deceive themselves.

Inquire now how many of you really believe the truth you hear preached. I have proposed to preach a course of “practical” lectures. I do not mean that I shall preach lectures that have no doctrine in them. That is not preaching at all. But what I desire is, to see whether you will, as a church, do what you believe to be true. If I do not succeed in convincing you that any doctrine I may maintain is really true, that is another affair. That is reason enough why you should not do it. But if I do succeed in proving from the Scriptures, and convincing your understanding, that it is true, and yet you do not practice it, I shall then have the evidence before my own eyes what your character is, and no longer deceive myself with the idea that this is a Christian church.

Are you conscious that the gospel is producing a practical effect upon you, according to your advancement in knowledge? Is it weaning you from the world? Do you find this to be your experience, that when you receive any practical truth into your minds you love it, and love to feel its application to yourself, and take pleasure in practising it?

If you are not growing in grace, becoming more and more holy, yielding yourselves up to the influence

of the gospel, you are deceiving yourselves. How is it now with you who are elders of this church? How is it with you who are heads of families—all of you? When you hear a sermon, do you seize hold of it and take it home to you, and practise it? Or do you receive it into your minds, and approve of it, *and never practise it*? Woe to that man who admits the truth, and yet turns away and does not practise it, like the man beholding his natural face in a glass turning away and forgetting what manner of man he was.

## Conclusion

Did you notice that Finney said saving faith (belief) had to have a definite content? He said:

*Let a sinner turn from his sins altogether, and suppose his works to be as perfect as he thinks them to be, and yet he could not be pardoned without faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ.*

His point remains just as valid today as it was back then. Nobody will be saved unless they believe Jesus Christ died for their sins. That is an essential part of the *content* of saving faith. In these Last Days, however, saving faith must, because of events that are only now beginning to occur, contain a great deal more than that rudimentary little precept if it is to carry the Believer through to the End. Therefore, the Truth one needs to know in order to see through Satan’s grand delusion will eventually be available to all. But it may well be available too late to be of any benefit to the vast majority.

There is an incredible store of information that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Church once had knowledge of that information in its possession but lost it. (See “The Protestant Confession: The Church Lost The Teaching,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1992, and “Did You Mean That Literally?” and “The Origen of Folly,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1993.) Fools who have no “love of the truth” will deny that could ever be the case, that God would ever allow it. It is true nonetheless. Contrary to what some would like to believe, the Truth doesn’t become a lie just because fools prefer to believe whatever “conventional wisdom” they find embodied in their particular religious tradition. It only becomes hidden from the sight of those dumb enough to pay any attention at all to fools.

Finney hit the nail right on the head when he said this about the relationship that exists between Truth and salvation:

*Two things are indispensable to evangelical, or saving faith. The first is, intellectual conviction of the truth of a thing. And here I do not mean merely the abstract truth of it, but in its bearing on you. The truth, in its relation to you, or its bearing on your conduct, must be received intellectually. And then true faith includes a corresponding state of the heart. This always enters into the essence of true faith. When a man's understanding is convinced, and he admits the truth in its relation to himself, then there must be a hearty approbation of it in its bearing or relation to himself. Both these states of mind are indispensable to true faith. Intellectual conviction of the truth is not saving faith. But intellectual conviction, when accompanied with a corresponding state of the affections, is saving faith. Hence it follows that where there is true saving faith, there is always corresponding conduct.*

Finney can easily be excused for his ignorance concerning the true meaning of the term *heart* as it is used in the Scriptures. He was a man of his time, and his time came some fifteen or sixteen centuries after Satan stole that fundamental concept from the “hearts” of Christian leaders. The sense he has attached to the term does not negate the Truth of what he has stated, however. Only a fool bent on hiding in his/her own ignorance would argue that one does not act in accordance with what one believes. I've made that statement so many times in these pages that I've long since lost track of when and where. I will undoubtedly make it countless times to come because it is an essential verity without which one cannot understand the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*. People *always* act in accordance with what they believe is true.

The truth of the matter is, you can readily determine who is and who is not a True Believer just by watching their actions and listening to what they say. If their mouth doesn't tell you outright what they believe, their actions will. That's not just an opinion. It's the Truth. But if it needs any confirmation, Finney said exactly the same thing:

*Here is the source of a grand delusion among men in regard to religion. They see it to be true, and they really rejoice in contemplating it; they do not enter into its rela-*

*tion to themselves, and so they love to hear such preaching, and say they are fed by it. But mark! They go away and do not practise.*

Did you hear what he said about “a grand delusion”? He is talking about the circumstance in which someone firmly believes something other than the Truth to be true. People choose to do that for all sorts of reasons. But the primary reason a person chooses to believe a lie is because it provides some sort of mental comfort while they go on doing what they know they shouldn't do. That is normally called “rationalization.” Call it what you will, it will eventually be shown to be what it is—stupidity.

Finney knew all about the mind games that people play in order not to face the Truth head on. That's why it would not surprise me to find that, hidden somewhere in his writings, he has made a direct reference to the delusion of Pretenders in connection with the following passage of Scripture:

*Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains {will do so} until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {that is,} the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for **those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.***

(2 Thessalonians 2:5–12)

Paul made an awesome statement in that passage, didn't he? He said a whole lot of folks are going to be taken completely by surprise after they have chosen to believe the deception whereby Satan comes to power as the Antichrist. But how would they ever know that what they have chosen to believe is a lie? Paul said “God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false.” So if you

have already chosen to believe part of the lie that is going to allow the Antichrist to come to power, how would you know whether or not what I'm saying is true? Every last one of you who reads what I am writing here thinks God would never let something like that happen to you. That's the phenomenal thing about the delusion God is sending on this generation. If you do not "receive a love of the truth," you'll never know that you don't know the Truth until it is too late for you to rectify your error.

You see, folks, there is only one thing that prevents the Church of the *Living* God from being what God requires it to be before the Return of Jesus Christ. That is the vast crowd of Pretenders sitting in the pews alongside True Believers every Sunday. You know the ones I mean—those obstreperous individuals who clamor to be identified as children of God, but obviously aren't. That particular situation is nothing new. It's been that way for eighteen hundred years. But God intends to correct that unfortunate situation before the End. You don't believe that? Wait and see.

The one thing that distinguishes our generation from earlier generations is the thick haze of delusion that prevents True Believers from seeing Pretenders for the frauds they are. The haze was not so thick in Finney's day. He and most other evangelical leaders still understood a simple Truth that leaders in our own day have chosen to ignore:

*And I am more and more persuaded, that great multitudes are to be found in all our congregations, where the abstract doctrines of the gospel are much preached, who like the preaching and like to hear about God, and all these things, and yet are unconverted.*

That is nothing more or less than what I have been telling you for nigh on five years. You had best believe it. It is true, in spite of the fact that deluded "Christians" all around you will vehemently deny it. Why wouldn't they? They have a personal interest in not being found out as Pretenders.

Finney's preaching had a powerful impact on saint and sinner alike in his day because it helped people see right through their own pretense and that of other Pretenders in the Church. That simple fact offers hope to some of you who read what I write. Through my ministry you are going to be able to see the Truth for what it is as well. As Finney put it:

*The truth is, those who do not obey God are not Christians. The contrary doctrine is ruinous to the churches, by filling them up with multitudes whose claim to piety depends on their adoption of certain notions, while they never heartily intended to obey the requirements of the gospel in their lives.*

That sounds a lot like what I've been saying repeatedly over the last few years, doesn't it? The sad fact is, what Finney wrote well over a century ago is just as true today as it was back then. Pretenders in his day were no different than those in our own. He knew that Pretenders love to go to church, listen to the sermon, sing in the choir, even teach a Sunday School class, all the while believing a lie of Satan that tells them they are going to heaven when they die.

However, Finney knew, as do I, that belief in a lie doesn't make a bit of difference as far as God is concerned. If you have not been born again, God doesn't know you. And as I've told you before, belief in the Truth is the only thing that will save you. That's why Paul wrote what he did about all those Pretenders who are going to choose to believe Satan's delusion in our own day:

*... God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

*(2 Thessalonians 2:11–12)*

Belief in a lie has never saved anyone. Yet the multitudes in the churches today go on believing they will be saved just because they choose to believe they will be saved. Ultimately, they are only deceiving themselves. Those of you who are True Believers are eventually going to come to the realization that what I am saying is true. You can believe that if you care to. You can disbelieve it if you dare to. It is true nonetheless. Truth is truth; lies are a dime a dozen. Only a fool would argue that something is true just because he wants it to be. That's where Finney's explanation of the situation is instructive. He knew that some religious folks are a bit more devious than others:

*There are two classes of hypocrites among professors of religion, those that deceive others and those that deceive themselves. One class of hypocrites are those that, under a*

*specious outside of morality and religion, cover up the enmity of their hearts against God, and lead others to think they are very pious people.... The other class is that referred to in the text, who do not deceive others but themselves. These are orthodox in sentiment, but loose in practice. They seem to suppose religion to consist in a parcel of notions, without regard to practice, and thus deceive themselves by thinking they are good Christians while destitute of true holiness. They are hearers of the word but not doers.*

The most destitute of the two types of deluded individuals he mentions is the latter. These poor dupes have not the slightest doubt that they stand in God's favor. Yet all they have to go on is an emotional attachment to some figment of their own imagination. They should be able to see the Truth for what it is, if for no other reason than the fact that their life in no way lines up with the standard they find presented in the Scriptures. They can't see the Truth, however, because they have chosen to firmly believe the lie that tells them all is well with their soul. Finney understood their situation perfectly. Their delusion rests on nothing more than an emotional fiction:

*Many suppose they are Christians from the emotions they feel in view of the truth, when in fact what they receive is truth presented to their minds in such a way that they do not see its bearing on themselves. If you bring the truth so to bear on them, as to destroy their pride and cut them off from their worldliness, such professors resist it.*

Do they ever! Try this experiment: Tell one of these religious imbeciles the Truth and see if they don't get hot in a hurry. You want to know why the Truth makes them angry? Because they have a vested interest in not knowing the Truth. You see, the lies they believe allow them to do whatever they want to do and still believe that God accepts them as they are. The Truth is not quite so open to personal interpretation. Keep that in mind if you decide to share what I write with others. It might help you avoid the wrath of one of those good "Christians" out there who thinks it is all right to preach love and practice hatred.

The only difference between our day and Finney's is the sheer number of Pretenders who claim to be "Christians." That situation arises from the Pretenders' definition of who is, and who is not, a "Christian." I pre-

fer a narrower definition in which the only legitimate "Christians" are those who have repented and been born again. After all, those are the only ones that God accepts. Yet I dare say that nine out of ten people attending *fundamental/evangelical* churches today have never been born again. Most of them probably think they have had that all-essential personal experience with God, but they will discover too late that a lifetime of thinking won't buy you a good cold cup of water in hell.

The God of Wrath that Finney preached is currently crafting a specific set of circumstances that will bring this present era to a stunning, horrifying conclusion. You can believe that if you care to. You can disbelieve it if you dare to. I don't really care one way or the other, because I'm just doing what God called me to do. So you go ahead and live your life any way you want to; I'll live mine the only way I know how. Then we'll both see whose view of the Truth is vindicated after we're pushing up daisies. I'm game if you are.

You see, the God of Wrath has endured the stupidity of fools for just about as long as He intends to. Take a good look around you. If you have any ability at all to see with the "eyes of your heart," you should be able to see that lies and liars control this realm through the creation of a climate of uncertainty. But that is only because fools learn early on that lying allows them to do whatever they want and get away with it. Unfortunately, the "get away with it" part of their philosophy is just an illusion.

The Truth is, everybody dies, yet nobody knows anything at all about the hell that awaits them on the other side. They've just heard "rumors," and perhaps read the *parabolic* description they can find in the Scriptures, which they choose not to believe. Charles Finney told his generation all about the hell that awaits the fool who chooses not to believe the Truth. That was because he had experienced a personal encounter with the same God of Wrath that I know. Some of you who read what I write have had a similar experience. To you I have but one word: Now is the time for you to drop the pretense you learned from the Pretenders all around you and get back to the basics you understood when you first believed. ■