

Think About It

One of the greatest deceptions ever thrust upon the body of Christ, came from one of the most popular evangelists to rise up on the shores of our nation by the name of Charles Finney. He preached during the 19th century in New England but gained an international following mostly by his heretical demands of “Christian perfection” from his followers who at the time in New England were at their hearts man-centered and open for such nonsense. Man can obey God’s laws perfectly and thus be ushered into the kingdom of God. This is a quote from Finney’s theology, introduction:

II. I am to show what Christian perfection is; or what is the duty actually required in the text.

It is perfect obedience to the law of God. The law of God requires perfect, disinterested, impartial benevolence, love to God and love to our neighbor. It requires that we should be actuated by the same feeling, and to act on the same principles that God acts upon; to leave self out of the question as uniformly as he does, to be as much separated from selfishness as he is; in a word, to be in our measure as perfect as God is.

“This, and nothing less than this, is Christian Perfection.”

Why do I bring up a false preacher who has been dead now for over 150 years? Because the impact of that man’s damnable heresies are still taking their toll on the American church.

And what does the Bible say? How about this for starters, ²⁰
Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. (Eccl. 7:20 NAU) In other words, the best of us sin.

And what does God say about mankind?

¹⁰ *as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;*

¹¹ *THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;*

¹² *ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."*

¹³ *"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";*

¹⁴ *"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";*

¹⁵ *"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,*

¹⁶ *DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,*

¹⁷ *AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."*

¹⁸ *"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."*

¹⁹ *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;*

²⁰ *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

²¹ **But now** *apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

²² **even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;** *for there is no distinction;*

²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

²⁴ *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (Rom. 3:10-24 NAU*

And one of the most popular heretics to ever curse our land denies it all, including our being justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, through the preaching of the gospel alone, for the glory of God alone.

Now, brace yourselves.

Do you realize that you and I are no better now than we were before by the grace of God we were born of the Spirit? I did not say we are no better "off" than before our conversion, we are immensely better

off. I mean we're forgiven, and we have eternal life, we are children of God. We are just no better than we were before God graciously saved us.

Think about it. Do you still sin now that you are a Christian? Of course, you do; and so do I. And if you try and try and try to stop sinning because you are convinced by faulty teaching that God expects you to be sinless, I will tell you who is a miserable and pitiable human being. You are. You really are wretched. You are laboring in vain under a grand delusion and you think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. You are living according to the law and not according to the gospel. **The law says "Do!" The gospel says, "Done!"**

And if you are living according to the law while simultaneously trying to be sinless, you are wracked with overwhelming guilt. And if you are not, then you are seriously deluded by delusions of your own grandeur, or, you just don't care. To have a clear conscience while living under the law is an oxymoron. That is the definition of a Pharisee.

Think about it. Read this. I saw this just last night. It has been there for 2,000 plus years, but it stood out like the proverbial sore thumb last night. Romans 7:24,

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

Do not miss what Paul is saying and not saying in that verse. He is **not** saying "Who **has set me free** from the body of this death." He is plainly saying, "Who **will set me free** from the body of this death?" Do you see it? What a tremendous difference. If Paul had meant to say that God has already set us free from the body of this death, he would have said so. But he didn't. And the Holy Spirit never makes slip-ups or mistakes.

Beloved, it hasn't been done yet!

We, no one, has been set free from the body of this death **yet**. God has not yet given life to our flesh and blood mortal bodies, the source of Paul's and our wretchedness. But on the day of the rapture or the day of our passing whichever comes next, He will. ¹⁰ *If Christ is in you, though*

the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

¹¹ *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.** (Rom. 8:10-11) The setting us free from the body of this death is in our future, not our past and not in our present. “...it hasn’t been done yet!”*

Where is it written in the word of God that Christians never sin? Where? Show it to me and I will never preach the word again. What we find instead is an in-your-face-kind-of reality check coming from the Spirit that demands that we not only face our remaining sinfulness but that we also agree with what God Himself says about our remaining sinfulness. “If we confess our sins...”

Beloved of God, **it hasn’t been done yet, but it is as good as done.**

Again, brace yourselves.

²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! **It hasn’t been done yet, but it is as good as done.** And here is the reason I tell you to brace yourselves.*

Paul concludes, *So then*, that means he has reached a conclusion and he is about to share it with the body of Christ. “... *on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, I myself with my flesh am serving the law of sin.*” And that, beloved, is present tense. “... *on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, I myself with my flesh am serving the law of sin.*” And because that is how God intentionally left us while in these bodies of death, He can say and mean it,

^{NAU} **Romans 8:1** *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

³ *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,*

⁴ *so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 7:24-8:4 NAU)*

That is not what one might expect, for God to tell us on one hand that we are still serving with our flesh the law of sin, but on the other He will never condemn us. And that is why grace is so amazing.

And if that seems foreign to your way of thinking, it is. God says that one of the big mistakes we human beings make is thinking that He is like one of us. *You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes. (Ps. 50:21 NAU)*

He is not.

Finney or the grace of God?

Works or grace?

Finney's works of theology? Or the word of God?

You choose.