

Christian Witnesses for God

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

from "The Oberlin Evangelist" Publication of Oberlin College
Lecture IV
August 28, 1844

Public Domain Text
Reformatted by Katie Stewart

Text.--Isa. 42:10: "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord."

In this discourse I shall show:

- I. What is implied in an appeal to witness.*
- II. What is essential to the competency of a witness.*
- III. State some things that affect his credibility.*
- IV. God's cause must depend upon the faithfulness of his witnesses.*
- V. The conditions which make testimony for God available.*

I. What is implied in an appeal to witness.

It is implied,

- 1. That there is some question at issue, which can be settled by an examination of facts.
- 2. That the parties, or one of them, will have an appeal to the facts in the case, to settle the question at issue.
- 3. It implies an appeal to certain persons to establish the facts, as the vouchers thereof. The parties agree to appeal to persons to determine the real facts in the case, which persons are witnesses. Now all this is true with regard to God, and His cause, in this world. He has taken issue with men. The great question is concerning His moral character and government, and He has appealed to witnesses to set forth and establish the facts. His people are those witnesses. He has called them as witnesses and cast His cause, as it were, upon their testimony. The issue is

the moral character and government of God, and the appeal is to those who in this world know Him, who are best acquainted with Him, and who are therefore the most competent and credible witnesses.

II. What is essential to the competency of a witness.

But few things are required for competency.

Witnesses must be of suitable age, and have the necessary qualifications to understand the circumstances to which they testify; and they must have been so situated as to speak from personal knowledge of the things which they state, and not from report or hearsay, or conjecture. These are the principle things which go to make a person a competent witness. So God's witnesses must be able to speak from personal knowledge, it will be of no great account to tell what others know, or what you have heard reported. You must speak if you testify at all, and do any good by your testimony, from actual knowledge; you must state facts which your own eyes have seen, ears have heard, and hands have handled.

III. Mention some things that affect the credibility of a witness.

By credibility is meant the degree of credit to which a witness is entitled. It is very manifest witnesses may differ very much in the degree of credit which should be given to them. Some are entitled to the utmost confidence, and others to little or none at all. And a multitude of things must affect their credibility, must conspire to give them credibility or otherwise.

- 1. Substantial agreement with each other in the things to which they testify. If witness contradict one another on fundamental questions, they cannot be believed. But observe here, that some witnesses may be able to testify to things of which others can say nothing, and in this sense, there may be much difference in the testimony of different witnesses in the same case. One may speak of things which the other does not know. But this will not invalidate the testimony of either, provided there be no contradiction in their statements. One may see what another did not see; one may be so situated as to learn what another has no opportunity to learn. The fact that one did not see a thing is no proof against the testimony of another who did see it. But there must be no contradictory statements. One witness must not contradict another. If one swears that a man was at New York on a certain day, and at a certain hour, and another swears the same man was at Buffalo on the same day and hour, both cannot be true, and neither can be taken. There must be a mistake because the testimony is contradictory. Moreover,
- 2. The statement of a witness must be consistent with itself throughout. He must not contradict himself. If his story is contradictory, if it is not consistent throughout, if the parts do not hang together, the witness' credibility is destroyed. There must be, moreover, an agreement with statements made at other times. If at one time, he contradicts what he says at another time, you cannot generally know which is true, and the testimony cannot be received. Or if a witness' testimony is inconsistent with his practice, this in God's cause is fatal to the credibility of the witness. If he says one thing and does another, it is most fatal to his credibility, since the testimony respects his regard for God and his fellows, and since it is true that actions speak louder than words, it follows that though a man say he loves God, yet if he hate his brother, he

is counted, and justly too, a liar. Again--

- 3. The spirit and bearing of a witness taken as a whole, has much to do with his credibility. Where a witness manifests great prejudice and committal to one side or the other, where a wrong spirit is cherished, where he manifests hate to one party, and interested attachment to the other, where he is uncandid, where he has not investigated the subject, has not been candid and thorough in getting at the facts, in such cases the witness is plainly entitled to little credit.
- 4. The degree of acquaintance with the matter at issue. If it is clear that he is familiar with the whole subject, that he knows the whole question, and knows it perfectly, where it is manifest that he is qualified from character and position to be a good judge, and that he is perfectly at home in the whole question, he must be reckoned a credible witness in a high degree. A witness must know what he professes to testify. Where it is plain that he does not know, that he is in doubt as to the principle points in dispute, he is entitled to, and will receive in court, very little credit.

IV. The success of every cause decided by testimony must depend on the character of the witnesses and the testimony which they give.

- 1. This is true of any cause. The case is brought--an appeal is made to facts--who are to establish those facts? The witnesses. If they do so, the cause is gained, if they fail, it is lost. And it is true also of God's cause. What is God's cause, now trying? God is endeavoring to sustain His government over men and bring them to obey Him. This can only be done by subduing their hearts. That can be affected only by the truth--that truth must be presented: and this must be done by witnesses. An appeal must be made to the intelligence, such an appeal as to carry conviction--a course must be taken such as to bring men back to God, and to induce men readily and heartily to submit themselves to God's authority. How is this to be done? In as much as the matter is a subject for investigation and knowledge, and as the facts in the case are the criteria on which it is to turn, and as God has made an appeal to the facts and to men as the witnesses to establish the facts according to which the issue is to be decided,--as the cause rests thus--the success thereof--the question whether He shall get a verdict in His favor--whether all hearts shall be given to Him or at least, whether the universal judgment of conscience and reason shall turn for Him must depend on the ability and faithfulness of His witnesses. This is no mere speculation; it is a simple matter of fact--God's cause in the court of this world has depended and does depend on His people; the witnesses to whom He has made His appeal. Moreover, the witnesses are God's people and none others. He appeals to no others. He appeals to all His people, makes no exceptions among them, but calls every one to the stand, "ye are My witnesses," stand up before the whole world; arise in the court-room of the universe, give in your testimony on My behalf, testify what you know of Me, of My character, My government, tell what your eyes have seen, and your heart has known concerning Me and My cause. Take the stand and bear witness in this case between God and the world, and let us hear what you know of these great realities.
- 2. Inasmuch as God has thrown His cause upon an appeal to facts; He Himself perceives the issue depending upon the faithfulness of His witnesses. He has appealed Himself. He Himself has appointed His people to be His witnesses, and He sees His success in the eyes of men

depending upon their testimony.

The success of God's moral government is conditional on faith. Faith depends on conviction that the things are true. But how is conviction produced? By evidence. Whence comes evidence? From witnesses. Who are the witnesses? God's real people, and the Holy Spirit giving weight to their testimony. His true children are the only competent witnesses, the only ones qualified to testify. They are of lawful age, and can speak from personal knowledge. They are the best of all witnesses, and the only competent ones. Their testimony will decide the question, and ought to decide it.

V. The conditions of the availability of the testimony of Christians for God.

- 1. They must have personal knowledge, must be personally acquainted with God, so that they can tell, not what somebody else has said, not what they have heard reported, not what they have been told, that Paul said, that Peter said, that John had heard, that such and such things were thought to be so. They must tell what they know. When they come to the stand, the judge will ask, are you acquainted with the parties? Do you know any thing of the matter at issue? What do you know of this cause now in this court, pending between God of the one party, and wicked men of the other party? "I have heard"--you begin, "I have been assured by such a one,"--But what do you know? You have heard--Where is he that told you? You have only heard --Stand aside then. Is there anybody here that knows aught of this question between these two parties? If there be, let him appear and truly give testimony concerning it.
- 2. Consistency. Consistency of statement among the several witnesses. If one swears to one thing, and another contradicts it, unless God's witnesses agree substantially with each other, all will go to confusion and end in defeat. Consistency too, is requisite in the story of each witness throughout, and consistency of his practice with his testimony. But observe as I said before, one may testify to what others know nothing of, and yet not destroy the validity of the testimony. And moreover it requires a deep, a rich experience of divine things, a high insight into the dealings of God; a deep apprehension of God and His truth and salvation, to testify to some truths of the first importance. Superficial believers are utterly incompetent to testify in regard to some of the higher, in which yet are some of the chief positions needing to be sustained on God's part. Again,
- 3. Truthfulness is a condition of availability. If the witness is known to misrepresent or pervert or falsify, of what worth is his testimony?
- 4. The indwelling of God's Spirit, and the revealing of God to the soul by the Spirit, so as to give them personal knowledge of God, is requisite to make persons available witnesses. They can testify to no purpose unless God dwells in them, and they in God, unless so to speak, they live and move and have their being in Him, in such a sense as that they have constant communion with God, are conversing with Him day by day; unless they are thus, they cannot bring such evidence as to bear down upon the unbelief of wicked men, and drive it away from them.

VI. The responsibility of the witnesses.

- 1. Great interests are at stake. Suppose you are a witness in a case of life and death, suppose that on your single word hangs the life of a fellow-being, you would feel your real responsibility to be great. Think that upon your testimony is poised the life of a fellow-man, and how greatly would it affect you. How it would make your heart sicken and sink within you. How carefully would you weigh every word and should utter, and consider every sentence. How important that you bear just the true testimony. How great the injury you might inflict on the accused if really innocent on the one hand, or on the public weal, if the accused were really guilty on the other. But advance a step. Suppose the temporal well or ill-being of a whole town was suspended upon your word or conduct. Suppose the lives of a regiment of men were thus pending, and you were called into the presence of the generalissimo, and your testimony would determine their doom, you would approach awe-stricken, all pale and trembling, and would inwardly, and perhaps audibly, groan out, how can I stand under such a weight--bear so heavy a load. O what if by an error of my tongue, the lives of all these should be sacrificed! But farther still--let the life, not temporal, but eternal, of a soul depend upon you--nay farther still, let there be all around you those whose eternal destiny hangs upon your words and deeds, those whose unbelief or faith, whose repentance or prolonged rebellion, whose submission or obstinacy, whose holiness or sin, whose sanctification or permanent purification, or deeper and deeper plunge into filth and pollution, whose everlasting good or endless ill, hangs upon your look, upon your words, your conduct, my friends, let this be the weight laid upon you,--and O, what angel can estimate the immensity of your responsibility, can reckon up the importance of your testimony. An immortal soul is arrested by God's Spirit, and enjoined to swear allegiance to God's throne; he turns to you a professed subject of God's kingdom,--he asks, What sort of a king is God? You have no testimony to bear for your sovereign, your mouth is closed, not a word to say--but only feeble and unintelligible, mumbling, or contradictory statements, and a practice that gives the lie direct to your words. What then? The Advocate is sad, no plea to make, His own witnesses have betrayed Him, His dependence has failed Him, and He is silent and confused. The judge charges the jury, he asks them, Have you agreed upon your verdict? They answer without leaving the jury-box. "We have," Gentlemen, what say you? worthy, or not worthy? And they answer, "Not Worthy." The Infinite God as lost His cause, it has gone by your perfidy, and the opponent makes his way from the court glad by the strength of the verdict, and the failure of the witnesses to stifle the voices disagreeable as they are, in his own breast, that say while they speak at all, false verdict! Treacherous witnesses! God is worthy! O, man be not deceived! But the case is decided against God, the soul is set, the course is taken, and it ends not till it descends down the sides of the bottomless pit. O, false witness, what hast thou done? Treacherous advocate see thy work! Faithless defender, cursed by thy memory! Soul, witness, beware, you are on the stand, a word, a look, falter, stammer, and it is gone!
- 2. Not only are great interests at stake--the world's salvation, the glory of the Infinite God among men, the honor and success of His moral government, but it is true, that you may be as fully furnished as you please, as thoroughly qualified to bear witness as you desire. Every facility is afforded, every opportunity is given for acquaintance. God has spread out all the glorious facts in the case for your full and thorough understanding. He has invited you, and He urges you, to search with the utmost diligence--He throws His kingdom open to your eye for the most familiar knowledge--He lets you study, if you will, and gives you ample time and leisure, and all needful aids to examine and learn all the great facts upon the establishment of which His

cause is to command a favorable verdict--He urges you to so complete a knowledge, and so deep, so rich and exquisite an experience, in all the parts of truth, in the whole great scheme of practical godliness, that you may stand up in the presence of the court as erect as an angel, and declare as with the tongue of a silver trumpet, from your own knowledge and great experience the wonderful things on which the world's salvation is hung. If you have such advantages, such facilities, such interests at stake, if you have such facilities for securing the requisite knowledge in the case, if you must be reckoned as a witness at any rate, and so much depends on your testimony, I ask you, what should you do? Ah, an angel might tremble under such responsibility.

- 3. It is impossible for any soul to tell how much may depend upon his own testimony--his own individual witness. When the judgment sits, and all the events of the world, and their causes and effects are spread out and laid open to the eyes of men, what wonders will there be revealed, what stupendous changes will be seen to have hinged, have turned on the agency of each child of God. What wonders will there be revealed! Once more--
- 4. God Himself feels keenly alive to the result of the investigation. Never did a person commit a cause to witnesses, who was so tremblingly alive to the issue, as God is in this very question. He is not selfish--does not seek His own ends--no self-gratification moves Him--His work is not to crush and discomfit His opponents, but He is moved by love, He wishes to save His foes, to draw them over, to subdue their wills, and draw them sweetly by the power of the truth to the "wells of salvation." His whole soul is set upon this. And God is tremblingly alive to the progress of the great suit (great to us, and great in its results) now pending between Himself and men, and in which we must testify before angels and men. He is infinitely regardful of His own reputation, because His reputation is necessary to the best good of the universe, and He is infinitely regardful of the interests at stake in the controversy. He engages in the proof with all His heart. How does a man feel when engaged in an important matter, having brought it to trial, and having called His witness to the stand--how alive to every word the witness shall say. And how grieved and indignant will he be, if a principal witness should prove careless, or ill-informed, should be inconsistent, or worse than that, wickedly perverse. Be placed yourself in such a position, the advocate of great interests, and let your witnesses fail you in the hour of trial, how would it affect you! God is really and deeply interested in the trial, He has thrown the cause on an appeal to facts, and sincerely calls on witnesses therefore, and expects of them a full knowledge, and a clear and explicit testimony, and in consequence an honorable verdict in His favor.

REMARKS.

1. The world is now, and always has been stumbled with the contradictory testimony that nominal Christians give, for they intrude their testimony, though God has not called them to testify, and does not wish their witness. He calls His own people, and none others to bear testimony; but multitudes pretend to be God's people, and perhaps sometimes think they are so, and set themselves up, and are reckoned by others as witnesses, who know nothing at all of God, and they bear false witness; for they think they know, and testify as if they do know; and by giving such testimony they overbear the true witnesses, and the minds of the jury and the by-standers are puzzled, and they are at a loss to know what to think, or else the verdict is given against God and religion.

2. The nominal Christians, mere professors, so greatly outnumber God's real people, that their witness in the minds of men generally, glad to get rid of an unwelcome subject, entirely outweighs that of the true witnesses, and the world taking the mass together say, There is nothing in religion. And if they were right in taking the mass of professors as the witnesses, they would be right in their decision. If the testimony of the great body is to be taken as the true Christian witness, what else can the decision be, what other verdict can be rendered? What in such a case must they say? Just what they do say. But observe, the evil lies herein, not that God loses His cause for lack of evidence, but that those come forward and obtrude themselves upon the stand who never have been summoned, and who know nothing at all of the matter. But I remark,

3. God will reject their testimony in the great court of equity and errors at the day of judgment, and with it both the persons who gave it, and the persons who have been blinded by it and have stumbled over it, and both classes together will be sent off to the eternal prison-house. For God has made no appeal to any such incompetent witnesses. To His true children He has appealed, and no others, and those who attend the trial should observe who are admitted and who are rejected from the stand. It is true indeed, that since multitudes press forward to bear witness, and it is not always decided on the spot who are competent, and who are incompetent, but they are allowed each to tell his story whether to the point or not, whether consistent or otherwise, there is great danger of deception, great danger of being stumbled, but it behooves by-standers to be on their guard, to be most particular whose testimony they receive, for if they carelessly rely on the testimony of a witness whom God does not call, they, and they only are responsible and must bear the consequence of their carelessness. It becomes men to understand well--what indeed they may fully understand if they will--who are true, and who are only pretended, and self-called witnesses. For their salvation hangs on their careful discrimination.

4. As the nominal Christians are a vast majority, the true are suspected of heresy, of fanaticism, of insanity. Those who know God, are so few among the vast many, (for sure "so many can't be wrong,") that their witness is counted false. They are declared not to know, to be presuming, and over-zealous, who are in fact the only ones who do know anything as they ought to know it. It is sad to think how the truth is perverted, and pronounced false, for the hypocrisy and ignorance of professors, and carelessness of sinners.

5. How true this fact is of ministers, that even they are false witnesses of God. O, how many are crying out against the most precious truths of the Gospel, and thus leading others to doubt their truth and power.

6. The true witnesses themselves have often fallen into gross inconsistencies, and thus destroyed the weight of their own testimony, and greatly weakened the force of the testimony of others. And this is the special aim of the adversary. It is Satan's chosen policy to prevail over the real people of God, and thus to strike away at a blow what they have before done. If he can nullify the true testimony--the witness of those who do know, he is safe enough, for that of others only turns on his own account.

How often have real Christians fallen under powerful temptations, and then the force of their testimony is gone--its value is lost, it will not be believed. They have fallen, and who will credit what

they said before? When a person of high religious reputation falls into sin, it emboldens scoffers to excess, and leads multitudes to turn away, and dispirits numbers of real seekers after piety. That's the way it goes--exclaims the scoffing crew. There is nothing real there--say the careless. O my God, he has fallen! Can I hope to succeed? --cries the timid inquirer. What influence does such conduct exert! When there is a traitor among the disciples, what havoc does his defection produce!

7. Many who are, perhaps, or may be supposed to be true witnesses, have very little to say. They seem to have their abode among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; they have tapered away and dwindled down in religion; they have grown almost none at all--or perhaps grown downwards; they know little more--perhaps no more than at first. The command, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," has by no means engaged their attention. They do not seem to know what is meant by growing in the knowledge of Christ. Many seem to stop on the threshold--they appear to know next to nothing of Christ by personal experience--they have not grown up into Him, they do not go on and increase, learning first one and then another, and another of Christ's offices and relations. Instead of gaining new knowledge every day--of being able to say, "There, I did not know that; I have learned something about God; I never thought of that before"--instead of learning something here and something there, of growing day by day in experience of the grace of Christ, they do not grow at all, but remain your babes, mere tyros in divine knowledge. And when they are called to testify, they have to say they know very little of the matter. And when a witness know but little of the case, when he stammers and hesitates, the jury get weary of hearing his pother, and the judge will say--"That man know not what he's talking of. It is not worth while to waste the time in hearing him." How remarkable it is that Christians can say so little from personal acquaintance with God. How exceedingly little they can say. Live with them for years, attend prayer and conference meeting with them for years--and what do you hear them say? Their experience is not more than an inch long--they will tell all they ever knew in ten minutes. Long ago they were converted, now and then they have a conviction, they feel compunction and sorrow for sin, a desire to do better, faint feelings of worship and adoration arise continually. But O, they have never gone within the veil, they have tarried without in the outer courts, and the glorious inner sanctuary, which was opened by the sacrifice of the great Atonement--the sacred Holy of Holies their eyes have never looked upon--those deep and flowing springs which rise beneath the very throne, they never drank of--they never have felt flowing through their enraptured souls, that deep, broad river of peace, which pours its streams through the channels of salvation--their eyes have never been opened to behold the great things of God, and with ever new revelations, brighter and yet brighter still, to sit entranced in joy so that they can tell and tell and never be tired of telling the things which God has done for them, and the beauties which He has showed them. No, alas! their story is soon told--the same oft repeated, mournful tale, alike dishonorable to God and disgraceful to themselves.

There is a great fault in these witnesses. With every facility afforded them to make them able to bear a most impressive testimony for God and His Christ, they neglect them all, and their mouths are shut. Impressive testimony? Hear a Christian, one indeed, one in a high degree, tell his story. See the tears start, see them trickle down the cheek all over the assembly. He will make more impression than 500 unfeeling sermons. His statements, how simple! His faith, how artless! His trust, how child-like! I knew a young man, a sailor, converted on board ship. He had been brought up at sea, and was an infidel; or rather knew nothing of religion. On a voyage to China, in a most remarkable manner, he became convinced of the truth of the Bible. He became very anxious to have a Bible, and at length got

one of an old sailor who had one, but cared nothing about it. The Bible was old--he covered it carefully to preserve it choice, and then he read it. But with what emotion! how his bosom swelled! how his tears flowed! It was the word of God; every word of it was true; every promise was sure. How wonderful it appeared to him--he sat and wondered, and read, and wept, and wept, and read; so happy was he, he forgot every thing but God, and Christ, and his Bible. On their voyage, the ship stopped at a port for supplies. The city was illuminated, it was a perfect blaze of light. As the ship lay at anchor, our sailor walked the deck and looked at the illuminated town, "I was so happy" said he, "with my bible and my God, I could not help exclaiming--I am happier than all of you." He said he did not once think whether he were a Christian, but his soul was all absorbed in love and joy.

After this relation, our sailor told his experience of the faithfulness of God. It appeared to him a small thing indeed that God should answer prayer--nothing remarkable or strange. God has said he would hear His people's cry, and why should He not? He said it seemed no way strange that God should change the wind and give them a favorable breeze in answer to his prayer. He would take his watch on deck, the wind would be contrary, he would pray for a fair wind, and there was never so much as a doubt but God would give him his request. He would kneel to pray, the wind would be blowing on his larboard cheek, and before he arose, often it would turn and come from the starboard. This he would do many a night. "I did not think it strange or wonderful," said he, "I supposed He answered every body's prayer just so. I never thought of doubting His faithfulness and His readiness to answer my prayer." Thus he went on through the voyage, constantly trusting, and praying, and rejoicing, and learning every day a new lesson in the unsearchable riches of the knowledge of Christ. His story, as he told it, ran through the congregation like a stream of electricity. He told a multitude of things, all tending to unfold the simple and child-like faith and joy in Christ which his soul possessed, and which, but for the hearty simplicity, and undeniable sincerity and truthfulness on the very fact of it, would not have been believed. He was full of it; he would come to my room after I became acquainted with him, with a whole budget full which the Lord had taught him of the Bible and his own soul. I wish you could hear his testimony--it was as simple-hearted as a little child's. He did not know what spiritual pride was. He took not the least credit to himself, as though he were anything, or as though God had favored him especially, for he did not know but that every body thought, and felt, and trusted just as he did, and was answered just as he was. Now if Christians could testify as he could, they would exert a power well nigh irresistible--it would be most over-whelming. When he told his story, many things were so remarkable, I went and inquired of a friend who I knew was acquainted with the sailor, (it was the seaman's minister,) concerning the young man. "Ah," said the minister, "he is a true bill, depend upon it." And indeed, every body could see it was so, and yet it was remarkable, to hear a man relate so much about God from personal experience; for he had not learned it from man I assure you; no indeed, it was not what he had heard another say, but the Lord Himself had, at the opening of the door, come in, and they had sat down to a feast of fat things--to a banquet of love. O it was rich, delightful. I would rather hear him speak, than five hundred merely learned men, who should have no Christian experience. His very looks were preaching, and all he said was preaching of a most excellent kind, for it came direct from a heart overflowing with love, and full of the Spirit of the Lord.

8. There is there and here a most precious witness springing up in the church. God is never wholly without such witnesses. Blessed be His name! once in a while one will arise. And, glory to God! He is multiplying such through the land. Go through and visit the churches, and every now and then you

will find a soul full; so heavenly, so Christ-like, so deeply in communion with God--listen to its experience, and you will seem to be fanned by the wings of angels. They are multiplying where the truth has been proclaimed in its fullness, and received in simplicity of heart. Such witnesses are bearing their testimony, and it is taking effect; and though there is much to overcome thereby, it will be overcome, as certainly as truth can affect human minds, and the Spirit can convert them.

9. Many Christians are afraid and ashamed to say much. They have feared to be reminded of their inconsistencies. And indeed it would be so. It is best that such as cannot show a consistent walk, should keep silent. The stiller they keep the better, till they come and walk with God and do His will.

10. The relations that Christians sustain to God and the world, should be with them a most powerful argument in prayer to God. I fear Christians do not enough consider this, that they may come to God and say reverently--O Lord, Thou hast required such and such a thing of me, to testify for Thee, Thou wilt call me as a witness for Thee--now Lord, make me able to testify, let me know Thee, bring me into Thy pavilion and let me be ravished with Thy love. O, teach me the hidden glories of Thy word, that I may be able to speak what I know, to testify what I have seen. Make up your mind, Christian, be single-hearted, and go to God and say--O Lord, I wish to bear emphatic testimony, so that men shall be constrained to believe--urge it on the Lord, and rely on His word, expecting to be heard. This is a most cogent argument at the throne of grace, one that will prevail with God for you.

11. God's witnesses should realize that they are watched on every hand--that they are watched for inconsistencies--that there is a continual endeavor to impeach them as witnesses, to destroy their credibility. And if any thing can be found in the least degree erroneous--that can throw any shadow of doubt over your testimony, it will surely be taken up. Bear this in mind, and take care to live so, and speak so that they shall be compelled to say, however their hearts may writhe under it, that you are in the right.

12. There is nothing so fatal to a party in court, as the failure of its own witnesses through ignorance, or inconsistent testimony, or perfidy. Where a party's own witnesses know nothing of his case, or tell contradictions, or will not tell what they know, how can he maintain his cause? Who shall stand up for him?

13. Since God throws Himself upon our integrity, and uprightness, and candor, we should consider where we are. Consider, God casts His cause on you, Christians, "Ye are My witnesses," "Ye are Hy witnesses." How deeply should you realize your position; how you should be weighed down with the burden of your responsibility--with the importance of knowing all you may know, of testifying all you may testify, of bearing so straight forward and unassailable a testimony as to carry conviction irresistibly to all around you.

14. Christians should remember that they are always under oath. The making a profession is, so to speak, taking an oath for God. They are bearing testimony all the time, are all the time on the stand in court, before the judge, and jury, and bystanders, constantly under the eye of those who are to decide the case. This should be borne in mind. There is no discharge in this suit while life lasts.

15. Professors will of course be considered as witnesses, whether God calls them or not. Your

testimony, professor, will be taken, though you be only a false one. How fearful is your position if you have made a profession of religion--the eyes of the world, of God, of all are upon you; your deposition will be written, counted upon, read in court, have its weight in settling the question in the mind of those concerned in the issue. How incalculably important for you to remember who and what you are.

Brethren, do we live, act in such a manner that those around us, by taking knowledge of us, by taking pattern of us, shall get and exhibit a true picture of religion? How solemn a question this is! What a responsibility is assumed by ministers and young men preparing for the ministry, and by all young people educating for the Christian field! What a cloud of witnesses are here! What testimony might here be given. Are you resolved, young men, young women, that nothing shall be wanting in your testimony, in your life, in your experience, that can be obtained by the utmost diligence on your part? Are you resolved? If you are, how shall we rejoice to lend you all the help possible in effecting your noble purpose, to fit you to go out and proclaim aloud your testimony. But if you are only serving yourself and the devil, if you are seeking your own, and not the things of Christ, how much will your labor and our labor be misapplied. How are we mis-employed in fitting you--for what? For what? To fight against God and good in the world, and then be food for the flames of hell! A church is a cloud of witnesses--this people is a host of witnesses. And if ever a people were looked upon as witnesses, this is the people. Your testimony, whatever it be, is going out through all the land; the church and the world are hearing it; when one of you falls, the tale is told with trumpet-tongue through America, through Europe, in the islands of the sea. The missionaries in the far off isles hear it and mourn, from the rising to the setting sun. O, brethren, how shall we give such a testimony as to be heard till holiness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea?

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.

3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.

