

God's Generals- the Revivalists

Charles G. Finney- "The Father of Modern Revivalism"



"Christian people, are you working to get a little property, yet neglecting your souls? Beware lest you ruin your souls that can never live again! Do you say- "I did not suppose you believed a word of it yourselves. You did not act as if you did. Are you going to heaven? Well, I am going down to hell! There is no help for me now. You will sometimes think of me then, as you see the smoke of my woe rising up darkly athwart the glorious heavens. After I have been there a long, long time, you will sometimes think that I, who once lived by your side, am there. O remember, you cannot pray for me then; but you will remember that once you might have warned and might have saved me."~ Charles G. Finney

- Born in August 1792 in Warren Connecticut- one year after the death of John Wesley.
- Grew up with NO religious background (no churches/bibles), but maintained a level of purity
- Excellent Athlete and brilliant student

LAW leads to SALVATION

Charles began working in the law offices of Judge Benjamin Wright in Adams, NY and attending church services for the first time in his life at Reverend George W. Gale's Presbyterian church.

- As Charles studied the law, he noticed the writers often quoted the Bible as an authority for the great principles of common law. This piqued his interest, so he began studying the bible.
- He also began attending church, though he found the sermons dry and "unmoving."

*"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, **through the law we become conscious of our sin.**" ~ Romans 3:19-20*

*"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore **the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ**, that we might be justified by faith."~ Gal 3:23-24*

"A little consideration convinced me that I was in no means in a state of mind to go to heaven if I should die." ~ Charles Finney.

Restlessness grew in Charles as he confronted the realization that he NEEDED a Savior, but could find no one to tell him how to properly seek Him.

SOME FAITH REQUIRED

The pervading belief of the American church at that time was based on the Calvinistic principle that only the "elect" who were "pre-destined" by God had the opportunity for salvation.

Charles concluded if God is a good and righteous judge, and if the Bible is His written Word/law to humanity, then either the Bible was a lie or the Calvinists were following a delusion.

- *Romans 10:9: "If you **confess** with your mouth, "**Jesus is Lord**," and **believe** in your heart that God raised him **from the dead**, you will be saved."*
- *Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."*

Holy Spirit speaks to Charles, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

EQUIPPING for MINISTRY

Charles received the Lord as His Savior when he sought Him with all his heart (*Jer 29:12-13*) and believed the Word of God. After this he found a peace that overwhelmed his Heart and Soul. Shortly thereafter he had a personal encounter with Jesus where he was baptized with the Holy Spirit and given a Prayer Language.

OPERATING EFFECTIVELY in MINISTRY

- PRAYER, INTERCESSION, and FASTING must occur before ministry in an area
 - Facilitated Healings. Romans 8:26
 - Intercession:
 - Daniel Nash (Lead Intercessor) would go to a city days or weeks ahead of Finney and soak the atmosphere in prayer → Argentine Revival
 - Praying Lists: targeted prayer over stubborn issues → RoL Prayer Tanks
 - Personal Prayer/Closeness to the Lord.
- FAITH is required to be SAVED and effective for the Lord
 - Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:24-26
 - God's Word was not a lie and had promises to be taken ahold of by faith.
- Baptism in the HOLY SPIRIT is necessary to be an EFFECTIVE preacher
 - For the first decade of his ministry, Charles never preached from notes or prepared sermons. He filled his heart with the Word of God, kept his life full of prayer, and allow Holy Spirit to give him the words to speak whenever he spoke to an audience.
- GOD FIRST- God must always come before man
 - Rejected accepted teachings of the day (Calvinistic pre-destination)
 - Approached sermons as an opportunity to convince people of the ability to make a decision for Christ rather than from an Authority position correcting in God's name.
- ALTAR CALLS- Reaching out to the lost/unsaved. CHURCH WITNESSING
 - Anxious Bench- a sectioned off area in the meetinghouse that people could come forward and pray for their salvation.
 - Made a point to his church that his goal was NOT to get other church-goers to join their church, but rather to reach out through witnessing to the lost and unsaved.

CHANGING the CULTURE of a NATION- The 2nd GREAT AWAKENING

Charles Finney preached at revivals up and down the East Coast (NY, Rochester, Boston, etc) as well as in Ohio, where he was a Professor of Theology and later President of Oberlin College. These Revivals touched all social classes- from civic and business leaders, to schoolteachers, physicians, shopkeepers, farmers, and migrant workers. The presence of God was so pervasive businesses closed to allow workers to attend meetings, bars and brothels closed for lack of patrons, and a spirit of Christian unity filled the entire community.

He preached against social injustices and advocated for causes such as: Abolition (abolishment of slavery), Temperance (abstinence from alcohol), and Women's rights to education. Oberlin College was the first to graduate a black woman with a college degree and when US President James Garfield spoke to Oberlin College, these were his words "...no college in the land has more effectively touched the nerve centers of the national life and thought and ennobled them than did this institution to which Charles Finney devoted so many years of Christian service."

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Finney learned at his first major revival in Rochester NY (over 100,000 saved) that the Gospel could not only change hearts, but given the chance- it could transform entire societies. These were the first flames of the Second Great Awakening to hit America.