

What is Saving Faith
John 2:23-25, Part Three

In the mid 1830's Charles G. Finney developed the invitational system as we know it today. And this was right about the time Elliott was writing Just as I am.

“Charles G. Finney was an Upstate New York lawyer with no formal theological training of any kind. He had a skilled logical mind. He was converted in 1821. He became a popular evangelist and revivalist. He believed completely that salvation was a human choice. He believed that man could make that human choice because he was not by nature depraved. He had a certain bent toward sin, but it was not his constitution and so he had the ability within him to choose what is right. And so Finney determined that since man could do what is right, since he was not innately depraved, that what you had to do was work on the will of man. And if you could activate the will of man, or motivate the will of man, he could make the right choice. And you could use almost any legitimate or even illegitimate means, including manipulation and emotion. He developed what came to be known as the “anxious bench” and began to call people forward. This is brand new. In the time before that, in the years of the great awakening of George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards, no such thing was ever done. But Finney began to call people forward to what he called the “anxious bench.” It later became known in Methodism as the “altar,” and people then became the objective. And as the preacher came to the conclusion, he began to call people forward because people wanted to see something visible since the invisible work of regeneration could not be seen.

The response to his ministry and his persuasive and logical powers was great. People came to the “anxious bench”. He was outwardly successful in getting them there. ... But as you went behind the scenes to check into what was left after Finney did his work, his fellow workers couldn't help realize the small number of converts who ever remained faithful.

In a letter to Finney dated December 25, 1834, James Boyle asked these questions: Let us look over the fields where you and others and myself have labored as revival ministers and what is now their moral state? What was their state within three months after we left them? I have visited and revisited many of these fields and groaned in spirit to see the sad frigid carnal contentious state into which the churches had fallen and fallen very soon after we first departed from among them.”

Let me say this: Someone may be saved without understanding the full scope of repentance. Someone may be saved without understanding the full truth of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Someone may be saved without fully understanding the

call to obedience because no one told them. But, one who is saved will not fail to repent, they will not fail to submit, and they will not fail to obey. It's that simple. In fact, it could be stated, that no one can be saved who is either unwilling to obey or consciously rebellious toward the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

One writer said, "There's really no reason to proclaim a shallow gospel. There's no reason not to tell people about the Lordship of Christ. There's no reason not to tell them to turn from their sin and repent. There's no reason not to tell them to submit their lives to Christ. There's no reason not to tell them to give up all they have for all that He is."

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