GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS:

A BRIEF AND FAITHFUL RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST TO HIS POOR SERVANT, JOHN BUNYAN;

WHEREIN IS PARTICULARLY SHOWED THE MANNER OF HIS CONVERSION, HIS SIGHT AND TROUBLE FOR SIN, HIS DREADFUL TEMPTATIONS, ALSO HOW HE DESPAIRED OF GOD'S MERCY, AND HOW THE LORD AT LENGTH THROUGH CHRIST DID DELIVER HIM FROM ALL THE GUILT AND TERROR THAT LAY UPON HIM.

Whereunto is added a brief relation of his call to the work of the ministry, of his temptations therein, as also what he hath met with in prison. All which was written by his own hand there, and now published for the support of the weak and tempted people of God.

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."—Psa 66:16.

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This title page was afterwards altered, and instead of what follows the first line, he inserted,

Or a brief and faithful relation of the exceeding mercy of God in Christ to his poor servant, John Bunyan; namely, in his taking of him out of the dunghill, and converting of him to the faith of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ. Here is also particularly showed, what sight of, and what trouble he had for sin; and also what various temptations he hath met with, and how God hath carried him through them.

Corrected and much enlarged now by the Author, for the benefit of the tempted and dejected Christian.

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The great utility of remarkable accounts of the ways of God in bringing his sheep into the fold, must be admitted by all. The Bible abounds with these manifestations of Divine grace from the gentle voice that called Samuel, even unto the thunder which penetrated the soul of one, who followed the church with continued malignity, calling unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"—a voice so terrible, and accompanied by such a flood of light, as to strike the persecutor to the earth, and for a season to deprive him of sight.

The 'Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners' is doubly interesting, as it unfolds to us not only the return of a notorious prodigal, but a wondrous system of education, by which a chosen man was fitted for a wondrous work; heavenly and spiritual learning, which could not have been obtained in all the schools and universities in the world. It enabled a poor, vile, unlettered rebel—a blasphemous travelling tinker, to become a most eminent preacher; one whose native powers, sanctified by harrowing but hallowing feelings, attracted the deep attention of the most learned and pious of his contemporaries, while it carried conviction to the most impious and profane. Even beyond all this, his spiritual acquirements fitted him, without scholastic learning, to become the most popular, the most attractive, the most useful of English authors. His works increase remarkably in popularity. As time rolls on, they are still read with deeper and deeper interest, while his bodily presence and labours mingle in the records of the events of bygone ages.

Bunyan's account of his singular trials and temptations may have excited alarm in the minds of some young Christians lest they should be in an unconverted state, because they have not been called to pass through a similar mode of training. Pray recollect, my dear young Christian, that all are not called to such important public labours as Bunyan, or Whitfield, or Wesley. All the members of the Christian family are trained to fit them for their respective positions in the church of Christ. It is a pleasant and profitable exercise to look back to the day of our espousals, and trace the operations of Divine grace in digging us from the hole of the pit; but the important question with us all should be, not so much HOW we became enlightened, but NOW do we love Christ? *Now* do we regret our want of greater conformity to his image? If we can honestly answer these questions in the affirmative, we are believers, and can claim our part in that precious promise, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Spiritual life is ours, and eternal life is essentially connected with it, and must be our portion, without an inquiry into the means by which we were called, whether by the thunders and lighting of Sinai, as Paul was smitten, or by the "still small voice" (Act 9:3-4; 1Ki 19:12; Job 4:16-17).

The value of such a narrative to a terror-stricken prodigal is vividly shown by Bunyan, in his 'Jerusalem Sinner Saved,' in one of those colloquial pieces of composition in which he eminently shone. 'Satan is loath to part with a great sinner. "What, my true servant," quoth he, "my old servant, wilt thou forsake me now? Having so often sold thyself to me to work wickedness, wilt thou forsake me now? Thou horrible wretch, dost not know, that thou hast sinned thyself beyond the reach of grace, and dost think to find mercy now? Art not thou a murderer, a thief, a harlot, a witch, a sinner of the greatest size, and dost thou look for mercy now? Dost thou think that Christ will foul his fingers with thee? It is enough to make angels blush, saith Satan, to see so vile a one knock at heaven-gates for mercy, and wilt thou be so abominably bold to do it?" Thus Satan dealt with me, says the great sinner, when at first I came to Jesus Christ. And what did you reply? Saith the tempted. Why, I granted the whole charge to be true, says the other. And what, did you despair, or how? No, saith he, I said, I am Magdalene, I am Zacheus, I am the thief, I am the harlot, I am the publican, I am the prodigal, and one of Christ's murderers; yea, worse than any of these; and yet God was so far off from rejecting of me, as I found afterwards, that there was music and dancing in his house for me, and for joy that I was come home unto him. O blessed be God for grace, says the other, for then I hope there is favour for me.'

The 'Grace Abounding' is a part of Bunyan's prison meditations, and strongly reminds us of the conversation between Christian and Hopeful on the enchanted ground.

'Christian. Now then, to prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse.

'Hopeful. With all my heart.

'Christian. Where shall we begin?

'Hopeful. Where God began with us.'

To prevent drowsiness, to beguile the time, he looks back to his past experience, and the prison became his Patmos—the gate of heaven—a Bethel, in which his time was occupied in writing for the benefit of his fellow-Christians. He looks back upon all the wondrous way through which the Lord had led him from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion. While writing his own spiritual pilgrimage, his great work broke upon his imagination.

> 'And thus it was: I writing of the way,
> And race of saints, in this our gospel day,
> Fell suddenly into an allegory
> About their journey, and the way to glory.'

'As you read the "Grace Abounding," you are ready to say at every step, here is the future author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." It is as if you stood beside some great sculptor, and watched every movement of his chisel, having seen his design; so that at every blow some new trait of beauty in the future statue comes clearly into view.' [1]

A great difference of opinion has been expressed by learned men as to whether Bunyan's account of himself is to be understood literally, as it respects his bad conduct before his conversion, or whether he views himself through a glass, by which his evil habits are magnified. No one can doubt his perfect honesty. He plainly narrates his bad, as well as his redeeming qualities; nor does his narrative appear to be exaggerated. He was the son of a travelling tinker, probably a gipsy, 'the meanest and most despised rank in the land'; when, alarmed at his sins, recollection that the Israelites were once the chosen people of God, he asked his father, whether he was of that race; as if he thought that his family were of some peculiar people, and it was easy for such a lad to blend the Egyptians with the Israelitish race. When he was defamed, his slanderers called him a witch, or fortune teller, a Jesuit, a highwayman, or the like. Brought up to his father's trade, with his evil habits unchecked, he became a very depraved lad; and when he states his sad character, it is with a solemn pledge that his account is strictly true. Probably, with a view to the full gratification of his sinful propensities, he entered the army, and served among the profligate soldiers of Charles I at the siege of Leicester. [2]

During this time, he was ill at ease; he felt convinced of sin, or righteousness, and of judgment, without a hope of mercy. Hence his misery and internal conflicts, perhaps the most remarkable of any upon record. His own Giant Despair seized him with an iron grasp. He felt himself surrounded by invisible beings, and in the immediate presence of a holy God. By day, he was bewildered with tormenting visions, and by night alarming dreams presented themselves to him upon his bed. The fictitious appeared to his terrified imagination realities. His excited spirit became familiar with shapeless forms and fearful powers. The sorrows of death, and the pains of hell, got hold upon him. His internal conflict was truly horrible, as one who thought himself under the power of demons; they whispered in his ears—pulled his clothes; he madly fought, striking at imaginary shades with his hands, and stamping with his feet at the destroyer. Thoughts of the unpardonable sin beset him, his powerful bodily frame became convulsed with agony, as if his breast bone would split, and he burst asunder like Judas. He possessed a most prolific mind, affording constant nourishment to this excited state of his feelings. He thought that he should be bereft of his wits; than a voice rushed in at the window like the noise of wind, very pleasant, and produced a great calm in his soul. His intervals of ease, however, were short; the recollection of his sins, and a fear that he had sold his Saviour, haunted his affrighted spirit. His soul became so tormented, as to suggest to his ideas the suffering of a malefactor broken upon the wheel. The climax of these terrors is narrated at paragraph No. 187. 'Thus was I always sinking, whatever I did think or do. So one day I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and, after long musing, I lifted up my head, but methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light; and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me; methought that they all combined together, to banish me out of the world; I was abhorred of them, and unfit to dwell among them, or be a partaker of their benefits, because I had sinned against the Saviour.' In this deep abyss of misery, THAT love which has heights and depths passing knowledge, laid under him the everlasting arms, and raised him from the horrible pit in miry clay, when no human powers could have reached his case. Dr. Cheever eloquently remarks, that 'it was through this valley of the shadow of death, overhung by darkness, peopled with devils, resounding with blasphemy and lamentations; and passing amidst quagmires and pitfalls, close by the very mouth of hell, that Bunyan journeyed to that bright and fruitful land of Beulah, in which he sojourned during the latter days of his pilgrimage.' The only trace which his cruel sufferings and temptations seen to have left behind them, was an affectionate compassion for those who were still in the state in which he had once been.

Young Christians, you must not imagine that all these terrors are absolute prerequisites to faith in the Saviour. God, as a sovereign, calls his children to himself by various ways. Bunyan's was a very extraordinary case, partly from his early habits--his excitable mind, at a period so calculated to fan a spark of such feelings into a flame. His extraordinary inventive faculties, softened down and hallowed by this fearful experience, became fitted for most extensive usefulness.

To eulogize this narrative, would be like 'gilding refined gold'; but I cannot help remarking, among a multitude of deeply interesting passages, his observations upon that honest open avowal of Christian principles, which brought down severe persecution upon him. They excite our tenderest sympathy; his being dragged from his home and wife and children, he says, 'hath oft been to me, as the pulling my flesh from my bones; my poor blind child, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world! thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee. O, I saw I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet, recollecting myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God.' How awful must be the state of the wretched persecutor, who occasions such sufferings to the children of the most high God!

In this edition, the greatest care has been taken to preserve the exact words of the author, as he first published them; where he altered or added to the text in subsequent editions, it is marked with an inverted comma, or inserted in the notes. Obsolete words and customs are explained; the numbering of his sections is continued, in addition to which, it is divided into chapters for family reading, upon the plan of the late Rev. J. Ivimey; double inverted commas denote quotations of Scripture.

The reader is strongly pressed to keep in his recollection the peculiar use made of the word *should*, by the author in this narrative. It is from the Saxon *scealan*, to be obliged. Thus, in the Saxon gospels (Mat 27:15), "the governor *should* release unto the people a prisoner"; in our version it is, "was wont to release," meaning that custom compelled him so to do. In Bunyan's phraseology, the word *should* is used in the same sense, that is, to show that, under peculiar circumstances, his feelings or position involuntarily produced a certain result. Thus, in No. 6, Troubled with the thoughts of judgment and condemnation I *should* tremble; and in No. 15, The father of his wife having left her two books, in these I *should* sometimes read; probably the only books he then had. It is remarkable, that although the Saxon language had not been spoken in Bedfordshire for many centuries, still many valuable words remained in use.

The order in which this thrilling narrative of Bunyan's religious feelings and experience is now for the first time published, is, I. Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners--his call to the ministry, and his imprisonment for refusing to attend the Church of England service. II. His Relation of the Circumstances attending his incarceration in Bedford Jail. III. The continuation of his Life to his decease, written by one of his friends, and always printed with Grace Abounding. IV. His Dying Thoughts. V. His Prison Meditations--verses which were probably sold on a broadside or sheet of paper by his children, to procure necessaries for his family.

The length of the notes may need some apology; the only one the editor can make is his veneration for John Bunyan, and his earnest desire to render this inestimable book more deeply interesting, by explaining manners, customs, and words not now in use; the note on No. 232, occupied the time of one whole day.

The errors, omissions, and additions, which existed to a most extraordinary extent through the book, have been corrected, and the text restored to its primitive beauty; among many hundred of these errors, one may suffice as a specimen; it is in Bunyan's preface, 'God did not play in convincing of me, the devil did not play in tempting of me,' this is altered in many editions to 'God did not play in tempting of me.'

Most earnestly do I hope that this republication, now for the first time, for nearly two hundred years, given in its native excellence and purity, may be attended with the Divine blessing, to the comfort of many despairing Jerusalem sinners; to the building up of the church of Christ on earth; to the extension of pure, heart-felt, genuine Christianity; and to the confusion of the persecutors. They intended, by shutting the pious pilgrim up in a dungeon, to prevent his voice from being heard to the comfort of his poor neighbours, and by which violence, his persecutors have caused his voice to burst the prison doors and walls, and to be heard over the whole world. His 'Pilgrim's Progress,' which was written in prison, has been, and now is, a guide to Christian pilgrims of all nations, kindreds, tribes, and people, teaching them not to rest content in any national religion, but personally to search the Scriptures, with earnest supplications to the God of mercy and truth, that they may be guided to Christ, as the Alpha and Omega of their salvation.

GEORGE OFFOR.

A PREFACE, OR BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE PUBLISHING OF THIS WORK, WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR THEREOF, AND DEDICATED TO THOSE WHOM GOD HATH COUNTED HIM WORTHY TO BEGET TO FAITH, BY HIS MINISTRY IN THE WORD.

Children, grace be with you, Amen. I being taken from you in presence, and so tied up, that I cannot perform that duty that from God doth lie upon me to youward, for your further edifying and building up in faith and holiness, &c., yet that you may see my soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare; I now once again, as before, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, so 'now' from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards (Son 4:8), do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into the desired haven. [3]

I thank God upon every remembrance of you; and rejoice, even while I stick between the teeth of the lions in the wilderness, at the grace, and mercy, and knowledge of Christ our saviour, which God hath bestowed upon you, with abundance of faith and love. Your hungerings and thirstings also after further acquaintance with the Father, in his Son; your tenderness of heart, your trembling at sin, your sober and holy deportment also, before both God and men, is great refreshment to me; "For ye are my glory and joy" (1Th 2:20).

I have sent you here enclosed, a drop of that honey, that I have taken out of the carcase of a lion (Jdg 14:5-9). I have eaten thereof myself also, and am much refreshed thereby. (Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall find a nest of honey within them.) The Philistines understand me not. It is 'something of' a relation of the work of God upon my own soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my castings down, and raisings up; for he woundeth, and his hands make whole. It is written in the Scripture (Isa 38:19), "The father to the children shall make known the truth of God." Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai (Deu 4:10-11), to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life upon earth, and tell of his wondrous works to my children (Psa 78:3-5).

Moses (Num 33:1-2) writ of the journeyings of the children of Israel, from Egypt to the land of Canaan; and commanded also, that they did remember their forty years' travel in the wilderness. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deu 8:2). Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not only so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their souls, by reading his work upon me.

It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of grace with their souls. "It *is* a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this *is* that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations" (Exo 12:42). "O my God," saith David (Psa 42:6), "my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." He remembered also the lion and the bear, when he went to fight with the giant of Gath (1Sa 17:36-37).

It was Paul's accustomed manner (Acts 22), and that when tried for his life (Acts 24), even to open, before his judges, the manner of his conversion: he would think of that day, and that hour, in the which he first did meet with grace; [4] for he found it support unto him. When God had brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea, far into the wilderness, yet they must turn quite about thither again, to remember the drowning of their enemies there (Num 14:25). For though they sang his praise before, yet "they soon forgat his works" (Psa 106:11-13).

In this discourse of mine you may see much; much, I say, of the grace of God towards me. I thank God I can count it much, for it was above my sins and Satan's temptations too. I can remember my fears, and doubts, and sad months with comfort; they are as the head of Goliah in my hand. There was nothing to David like Goliah's sword, even that sword that should have been sheathed in his bowels; for the very sight and remembrance of that did preach forth God's deliverance to him. Oh, the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fears of perishing for ever! They bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of my great help, my great support from heaven, and that the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I.

My dear children, call to mind the former days, "and the years of ancient times: remember also your songs in the night; and commune with your own heart" (Psa 73:5-12). Yea, look diligently, and leave no corner therein unsearched, for there is treasure hid, even the treasure of your first and second experience of the grace of God toward you. Remember, I say, the word that first laid hold upon you; remember your terrors of conscience, and fear of death and hell; remember also your tears and prayers to God; yea, how you sighed under every hedge for mercy. Have you never a hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk house, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul? [5] Remember also the Word--the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope. If you have sinned against light; if you are tempted to blaspheme; if you are down in despair; if you think God fights against you; or if heaven is hid from your eyes, remember it was thus with your father, but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

I could have enlarged much in this my discourse, of my temptations and troubles for sin; as also of the merciful kindness and working of God with my soul. I could also have stepped into a style much higher than this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do, but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me, the devil did not play in tempting of me, neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me; wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was. He that liketh it, let him receive it; and he that does not, let him produce a better. Farewell.

My dear children, the milk and honey is beyond this wilderness. God be merciful to you, and grant 'that' you be not slothful to go in to possess the land.

JOHN BUNYAN.

GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS;

OR, A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST, TO HIS POOR SERVANT, JOHN BUNYAN.

[BUNYAN'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF PREVIOUS TO HIS CONVERSION.]

1. In this my relation of the merciful working of God upon my soul, it will not be amiss, if, in the first place, I do, in a few words, give you a hint of my pedigree, and manner of bringing up; that thereby the goodness and bounty of God towards me, may be the more advanced and magnified before the sons of men.

2. For my descent then, it was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation; my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land. [6] Wherefore I have not here, as others, to boast of noble blood, or of a high-born state, according to the flesh; though, all things considered, I magnify the heavenly Majesty, for that by this door he brought me into this world, to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel.

3. But yet, notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained, according to the rate of other poor men's children; [7] though, to my shame I confess, I did soon lose that little I learned, and that even almost utterly, and that long before the Lord did work his gracious work of conversion upon my soul.

4. As for my own natural life, for the time that I was without God in the world, it was indeed according to the course of this world, and "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2-3). It was my delight to be "taken captive by the devil at his will" (2Ti 2:26). Being filled with all unrighteousness: the which did also so strongly work and put forth itself, both in my heart and life, and that from a child, that I had but few equals, especially considering my years, which were tender, being few, both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.

5. Yea, so settled and rooted was I in these things, that they became as a second nature to me; the which, as I also have with soberness considered since, did so offend the Lord, that even in my childhood he did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrify me with dreadful visions; for often, after I had spent this and the other day in sin, I have in my bed been greatly afflicted, while asleep, with the apprehensions of devils and wicked spirits, who still, as I then thought, laboured to draw me away with them, of which I could never be rid.

6. Also I should, at these years, be greatly afflicted and troubled with the thoughts of the day of judgment, and that both night and day, and should tremble at the thoughts of the fearful torments of hell fire; still fearing that it would be my lot to be found at last amongst those devils and hellish fiends, who are there bound down with the chains and bonds of eternal darkness, "unto the judgment of the great day."

7. These things, I say, when I was but a child, 'but nine or ten years old,' did so distress my soul, that when in the midst of my many sports and childish vanities, amidst my vain companions, I was often much cast down and afflicted in my mind therewith, yet could I not let go my sins. Yea, I was 'also then' so overcome with despair of life and heaven, that I should often wish either that there had been no hell, or that I had been a devil--supposing they were only tormentors; that if it must needs be that I went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than 'be' tormented myself.

8. A while after, these terrible dreams did leave me, which also I soon forgot; for my pleasures did quickly cut off the remembrance of them, as if they had never been: wherefore, with more greediness, according to the strength of nature, I did still let loose the reins to my lusts, and delighted in all transgression against the law of God: so that, until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, into all manner of vice and ungodliness. [8]

9. Yea, such prevalency had the lusts and fruits of the flesh in this poor soul of mine, that had not a miracle of precious grace prevented, I had not only perished by the stroke of eternal justice, but had also laid myself open, even to the stroke of those laws, which bring some to disgrace and open shame before the face of the world.

10. In these days, the thoughts of religion were very grievous to me; I could neither endure it myself, nor that any other should; so that, when I have seen some read in those books that concerned Christian piety, it would be as it were a prison to me. Then I said unto God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:14). I was now void of all good consideration, heaven and hell were both out of sight and mind; and as for saving and damning, they were least in my thoughts. [9] O Lord, thou knowest my life, and my ways were not hid from thee.

11. Yet this I well remember, that though I could myself sin with the greatest delight and ease, and also take pleasure in the vileness of my companions; yet, even then, if I have at any time seen wicked things, by those who professed goodness, it would make my spirit tremble. As once, above all the rest, when I was in my height of vanity, yet hearing one to swear that was reckoned for a religious man, it had so great a stroke upon my spirit, that it made my heart to ache.

12. 'But God did not utterly leave me, but followed me still, not now with convictions, but judgments; yet such as were mixed with mercy. For once I fell into a creek of the sea, and hardly escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into Bedford river, but mercy yet preserved me alive. Besides, another time, being in the field with one of my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway; so I, having a stick in my hand, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers; by which act, had not God been merciful unto me, I might, by my desperateness, have brought myself to mine end.'

13. 'This also have I taken notice of with thanksgiving; when I was a soldier, I, with others, were drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it; but when I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room; to which, when I had consented, he took my place; and coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel, he was shot into the head with a musket bullet, and died.' [10]

14. 'Here, as I said, were judgments and mercy, but neither of them did awaken my soul to righteousness; wherefore I sinned still, and grew more and more rebellious against God, and careless of mine own salvation.'

15. Presently after this, I changed my condition into a married state, and my mercy was to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly. [11] This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both, yet this she had for her part, The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven, and The Practice of Piety, which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I should sometimes read with her, wherein I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me; but all this while I met with no conviction. She also would be often telling of me, what a godly man her father was, and how he would reprove and correct vice, both in his house, and amongst his neighbours; what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed.

16. Wherefore these books with this relation, though they did not reach my heart, to awaken it about my sad and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to religion: so that, because I knew no better, I fell in very eagerly with the religion of the times; to wit, to go to church twice a day, and that too with the foremost; and there should very devoutly, both say and sing as others did, yet retaining my wicked life; but withal, I was so overrun with a spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things, both the high place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else belonging to the church; counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially the priest and clerk most happy, and without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the holy temple, to do his work therein.

17. This conceit grew so strong in little time upon my spirit, that had I but seen a priest, though never so sordid and debauched in his life, I should find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit unto him; yea, I thought for the love I did bear unto them, supposing they were the ministers of God, I could have lain down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them; their name, their garb, and work, did so intoxicate and bewitch me.

18. After I had been thus for some considerable time, another thought came into my mind; and that was, whether we were of the *Israelites*, or no? For finding in the Scriptures that they were once the peculiar people of God, thought I, if I were one of this race, my soul must needs be happy. [12] Now again, I found within me a great longing to be resolved about this question, but could not tell how I should. At last I asked my father of it; who told me—No, we were not. Wherefore then I fell in my spirit as to the hopes of that, and so remained.

19. But all this while, I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin; I was kept from considering that sin would damn me, what religion soever I followed, unless I was found in Christ. Nay, I never thought of him, nor whether there was one, or no. Thus man, while blind, doth wander, but wearieth himself with vanity, for he knoweth not the way to the city of God (Ecc 10:15).

20. But one day, amongst all the sermons our parson made, his subject was, to treat of the Sabbath-day, and of the evil of breaking that, either with labour, sports, or otherwise. Now I was, notwithstanding my religion, one that took much delight in all manner of vice, and especially that was the day that I did solace myself therewith, [13] wherefore I fell in my conscience under his sermon, thinking and believing that he made that sermon on purpose to show me my evil doing; and at that time I felt what guilt was, though never before, that I can remember; but then I was, for the present, greatly loaden therewith, and so went home when the sermon was ended, with a great burden upon my spirit.

21. This, for that instant, did 'benumb' [14] the sinews of my 'best' delights, and did imbitter my former pleasures to me; but behold, it lasted not, for before I had well dined, the trouble began to go off my mind, and my heart returned to its old course: but oh! How glad was I, that this trouble was gone from me, and that the fire was put out, 'that I might sin again without control!' Wherefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and to my old custom of sports and gaming I returned with great delight.

22. But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game at cat, [15] and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell? At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore, leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was, as if I had, with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if he did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for these and other my ungodly practices.

23. I had no sooner thus conceived in my mind, but suddenly this conclusion was fastened on my spirit, for the former hint did set my sins again before my face, that I had been a great and grievous sinner, and that it was now too too late for me to look after heaven; for Christ would not forgive me, nor pardon my transgressions. Then I fell to musing upon this also; and while I was thinking on it, and fearing lest it should be so, I felt my heart sink in despair, concluding it was too late; and therefore I resolved in my mind I would go on in sin: for, thought I, if the case be thus, my state is surely miserable; miserable if I leave my sins, and but miserable if I follow them; I can but be damned, and if I must be so, I had as good be damned for many sins, as to be damned for few.

24. Thus I stood in the midst of my play, before all that then were present; but yet I told them nothing: but I say, I having made this conclusion, I returned 'desperately' to my sport again; and I well remember, that presently this kind of despair did so possess my soul, that I was persuaded, I could never attain to other comfort than what I should get in sin; for heaven was gone already, so that on that I must not think; wherefore I found within me a great desire to take my fill of sin, still studying what sin was yet to be committed, that I might taste the sweetness of it; and I made as much haste as I could to fill my belly with its delicates, lest I should die before I had my desire; for that I feared greatly. In these things, I protest before God, I lie not, neither do I feign this sort of speech; these were really, strongly, and with all my heart, my desires; the good Lord, whose mercy is unsearchable, forgive me my transgressions.

25. And I am very confident, that this temptation of the devil is more usual amongst poor creatures than many are aware of, even to overrun their spirits with a scurvy and seared frame of heart, and benumbing of conscience; which frame, he stilly and slyly supplieth with such despair, that though not much guilt attendeth the soul, yet they continually have a secret conclusion within them, that there is no hopes for them; for they have loved sins, "therefore after them they will go" (Jer 2:25, Jer 18:12).

26. Now therefore I went on in sin with great greediness of mind, still grudging that I could not be so satisfied with it as I would. This did continue with me about a month, or more; but one day, as I was standing at a neighbour's shop-window, and there cursing and swearing, and playing the madman, after my wonted manner, there sat within, the woman of the house, and heard me, who, though she was a very loose and ungodly wretch, yet protested that I swore and cursed at that most fearful rate, that she was made to tremble to hear me; and told me further, That I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that ever she heard in all her life; and that I, by thus doing, was able to spoil all the youth in a whole town, if they came but in my company.

27. At this reproof I was silenced, and put to secret shame, and that too, as I thought, before the God of heaven; wherefore, while I stood there, and hanging down my head, I wished with all my heart that I might be a little child again, that my father might learn me to speak without this wicked way of swearing; [16] for, thought I, I am so accustomed to it, that it is in vain for me to think of a reformation, for I thought it could never be.

28. But how it came to pass, I know not; I did from this time forward so leave my swearing, that it was a great wonder to myself to observe it; and whereas before, I knew not how to speak unless I put an oath before, and another behind, to make my words have authority; now, I could, 'without it,' speak better, and with more pleasantness, than ever I could before. All this while I knew not Jesus Christ, neither did I leave my sports and plays.

29. But quickly after this, I fell in company with one poor man that made profession of religion; who, as I then thought, did talk pleasantly of the Scriptures, and of the matters of religion; wherefore, falling into some love and liking to what he said, I betook me to my Bible, and began to take great pleasure in reading, but especially with the historical part thereof; for, as for Paul's epistles, and Scriptures of that nature, I could not away with them, being as yet but ignorant, either of the corruptions of my nature, or of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me.

30. Wherefore I fell to some outward reformation, both in my words and life, and did set the commandments before me for my way to heaven; which commandments I also did strive to keep, and, as I thought, did keep them pretty well sometimes, and then I should have comfort; yet now and then should break one, and so afflict my conscience; but then I should repent, and say I was sorry for it, and promise God to do better next time, and there get help again, 'for then I thought I pleased God as well as any man in *England*.'

31. Thus I continued about a year; all which time our neighbours did take me to be a very godly man, a new and religious man, and did marvel much to see such a great and famous alteration in my life and manners; and, indeed, so it was, though yet I knew not Christ, nor grace, nor faith, nor hope; and, truly, as I have well seen since, had then died, my state had been most fearful; well, this, I say, continued about a twelvemonth or more.

32. 'But, I say, my neighbours were amazed at this my great conversion, from prodigious profaneness, to something like a moral life; and, truly, so they well might; for this my conversion was as great, as for Tom of Bedlam to become a sober man. [17] Now, therefore, they began to praise, to commend, and to speak well of me, both to my face, and behind my back. Now, I was, as they said, become godly; now, I was become a right honest man. But, oh! When I understood that these were their words and opinions of men, it pleased me mighty well. For though, as yet, I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly. I was proud of my godliness, and, indeed, I did all I did, either to be seen of, or to be well spoken of, by man. And thus I continued for about a twelvemonth or more.'

33. 'Now, you must know, that before this I had taken much delight in ringing, but my conscience beginning to be tender, I thought such practice was but vain, and therefore forced myself to leave it, yet my mind hankered; wherefore I should go to the steeple house, and look on it, though I durst not ring. But I thought this did not become religion neither, yet I forced myself, and would look on still; but quickly after, I began to think, How, if one of the bells should fall? Then I chose to stand under a main beam, that lay overthwart the steeple, from side to side, thinking there I might stand sure, but then I should think again, should the bell fall with a swing, it might first hit the wall, and then rebounding upon me, might kill me for all this beam. This made me stand in the steeple door; and now, thought I, I am safe enough; for, if a bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding.'

34. 'So, after this, I would yet go to see them ring, but would not go further than the steeple door; but then it came into my head, How, if the steeple itself should fall? And this thought, it may fall for ought I know, when I stood and looked on, did continually so shake my mind, that I durst not stand at the steeple door any longer, but was forced to flee, for fear the steeple should fall upon my head.'

35. 'Another thing was my dancing; I was a full year before I could quite leave that; but all this while, when I thought I kept this or that commandment, or did, by word or deed, anything that I thought was good, I had great peace in my conscience; and should think with myself, God cannot choose but be now pleased with me; yea, to relate it in mine own way, I thought no man in *England* could please God better than I.'

36. 'But poor wretch as I was, I was all this while ignorant of Jesus Christ, and going about to establish my own righteousness; and had perished therein, had not God, in mercy, showed me more of my state of nature."

[HIS CONVERSION AND PAINFUL EXERCISES OF MIND, PREVIOUS TO HIS JOINING THE CHURCH AT BEDFORD.]

37. But upon a day, the good providence of God did cast me to Bedford, to work on my calling; and in one of the streets of that town, I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, and talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear them discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker also myself in the matters of religion, but now I may say, I heard, but I understood not; for they were far above, out of my reach; for their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature; they talked how God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil. Moreover, they reasoned of the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular; and told to each other by which they had been afflicted, and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart, of their unbelief; and did contemn, slight, and abhor their own righteousness, as filthy and insufficient to do them any good.

38. And methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me, as if they had found a new world, [18] as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours (Num 23:9).

39. At this I felt my own heart began to shake, as mistrusting my condition to be nought; for I saw that in all my thoughts about religion and salvation, the new birth did never enter into my mind, neither knew I the comfort of the Word and promise, nor the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart. As for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them; neither did I understand what Satan's temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood and resisted, &c.

40. Thus, therefore, when I had heard and considered what they said, I left them, and went about my employment again, but their talk and discourse went with me; also my heart would tarry with them, for I was greatly affected with their words, both because by them I was convinced that I wanted the true tokens of a truly godly man, and also because by them I was convinced of the happy and blessed condition of him that was such a one. [19]

41. Therefore I should often make it my business to be going again and again into the company of these poor people, for I could not stay away; and the more I went amongst them, the more did question my condition; and as I still do remember, presently I found two things within me, at which I did sometimes marvel, especially considering what a blind, ignorant, sordid, and ungodly wretch but just before I was; the one was a very great softness and tenderness of heart, which caused me to fall under the conviction of what by Scripture they asserted; and the other was a great bending in my mind to a continual meditating on it, and on all other good things which at any time I heard or read of.

42. 'By these things' my mind was now so turned, that it lay like a horse leech at the vein, still crying out, Give, give (Pro 30:15); yea, it was so fixed on eternity, and on the things about the kingdom of heaven, that is, so far as I knew, though as yet, God knows, I knew but little; that neither pleasures, nor profits, nor persuasions, nor threats, could loosen it, or make it let go his hold; and though I may speak it with shame, yet it is in very deed a certain truth, it would then have been as difficult for me to have taken my mind from heaven to earth, as I have found it often since to get it again from earth to heaven.'

43. 'One thing I may not omit: There was a young man in our town, to whom my heart before was knit more than to any other, but he being a most wicked creature for cursing, and swearing, and whoring, I now shook him off, and forsook his company; but about a quarter of a year after I had left him, I met him in a certain lane, and asked him how he did; he, after his old swearing and mad way, answered, He was well. But, Harry, said I, why do you swear and curse thus? What will become of you, if you die in this condition? He answered me in a great chafe, What would the devil do for company, if it were not for such as I am?'

44. 'About this time I met with some Ranters' books, that were put forth by some of our countrymen, which books were also highly in esteem by several old professors; some of these I read, but was not able to make a judgment about them; wherefore as I read in them, and thought upon them, feeling myself unable to judge, I should betake myself to hearty prayer in this manner: O Lord, I am a fool, and not able to know the truth from error: Lord, leave me not to my own blindness, either to approve of, or condemn this doctrine; if it be of God, let me not despise it; if it be of the devil, let me not embrace it. Lord, I lay my soul, in this matter, only at thy foot; let me not be deceived, I humbly beseech thee. I had one religious intimate companion all this while, and that was the poor man that I spoke of before; but about this time he also turned a most devilish Ranter, [20] and gave himself up to all manner of filthiness, especially uncleanness: he would also deny that there was a God, angel, or spirit; and would laugh at all exhortations to sobriety. When I laboured to rebuke his wickedness, he would laugh the more, and pretend that he had gone through all religions, and could never light on the right till now. He told me also, that in a little time I should see all professors turn to the ways of the Ranters. Wherefore, abominating those cursed principles, I left his company forthwith, and became to him as great a stranger, as I had been before a familiar.'

45. 'Neither was this man only a temptation to me; but my calling lying in the country, I happened to light into several people's company, who, though strict in religion formerly, yet were also swept away by these Ranters. These would also talk with me of their ways, and condemn me as legal and dark; pretending that they only had attained to perfection that could do what they would, and not sin. Oh! These temptations were suitable to my flesh, I being but a young man, and my nature in its prime; but God, who had, as I hope, designed me for better things, kept me in the fear of his name, and did not suffer me to accept of such cursed principles. And blessed be God, who put it into my heart to cry to him to be kept and directed, still distrusting mine own wisdom; for I have since seen even the effect of that prayer, in his preserving me not only from ranting errors, but from those also that have sprung up since. The Bible was precious to me in those days.'

46. And now, methought, I began to look into the Bible with new eyes, and read as I never did before; and especially the epistles of the apostle Paul were sweet and pleasant to me; and, indeed, I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation; still crying out to God, that I might know the truth, and way to heaven and glory.

47. And as I went on and read, I lighted on that passage, 'To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; *and* to another faith,' &c. (1Co 12:8-9). And though, as I have since seen, that by this Scripture the Holy Ghost intends, in special, things extraordinary, yet on me it did then fasten with conviction, that I did want things ordinary, even that understanding and wisdom that other Christians had. On this word I mused, and could not tell what to do, 'especially this word faith put me to it, for I could not help it, but sometimes must question, whether I had any faith or no'; for I feared that it shut me out of all the blessings that other good people had give them of God; [21] but I was loath to conclude I had no faith in my soul; for if I do so, thought I, then I shall count myself a very cast-away indeed.

48. No, said I with myself, though I am convinced that I am an ignorant sot, and that I want those blessed gifts of knowledge and understanding that other good people have; yet, at a venture, I will conclude I am not altogether faithless, though I know not what faith is. For it was showed me, and that too, as I have since seen, by Satan, that those who conclude themselves in a faithless state, have neither rest nor quiet in their souls; and I was loath to fall quite into despair.

49. Wherefore, by this suggestion, I was for a while made afraid to see my want of faith; but God would not suffer me thus to undo and destroy my soul, but did continually, against this my blind and sad conclusion, create still within me such suppositions, 'insomuch' that I might in this deceive myself, that I could not rest content, until I did now come to some certain knowledge, whether I had faith or no; this always running in my mind, But how if you want faith indeed? But how can you tell you have faith? 'and, besides, I saw for certain, if I had not, I was sure to perish for ever.'

50. So that though I endeavoured at the first, to look over the business of faith, yet in a little time, I better considering the matter, was willing to put myself upon the trial, whether I had faith or no. But, alas, poor wretch, so ignorant and brutish was I, that I knew to this day no more how to do it, than I know how to begin and accomplish that rare and curious piece of art, which I never yet saw not considered.

51. Wherefore, while I was thus considering, and being put to my plunge about it, for you must know, that as yet I had in this matter broken my mind to no man, only did hear and consider, the tempter came in with his delusion, That there was no way for me to know I had faith, but by trying to work some miracle; urging those Scriptures that seem to look that way, for the enforcing and strengthening his temptation. Nay, one day as I was betwixt Elstow and Bedford, the temptation was hot upon me, to try if I had faith, by doing of some miracle: which miracle at that time was this, I must say to the puddles that were in the horse pads, Be dry; and to the dry places, Be you the puddles. And truly, one time I was agoing to say so indeed; but just as I was about to speak, this thought came into my mind, But go under yonder hedge and pray first, that God would make you able. But when I had concluded to pray, this came hot upon me, That if I prayed, and came again and tried to do it, and yet did nothing notwithstanding, then be sure I had no faith, but was a cast-away and lost. Nay, thought I, if it be so, I will never try yet, but will stay a little longer.

52. So I continued at a great loss; for I thought, if they only had faith, which could do so wonderful things, then I concluded, that, for the present, I neither had it, nor yet, for time to come, were ever like to have it. Thus I was tossed betwixt the devil and my own ignorance, and so perplexed, especially at some times, that I could not tell what to do.

53. About this time, the state and happiness of these poor people at Bedford was thus, in a dream or vision, represented to me. I saw, as if they were set on the sunny side of some high mountain, there refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with frost, snow, and dark clouds. Methought, also, betwixt me and them, I saw a wall that did compass about this mountain; now, through this wall my soul did greatly desire to pass; concluding, that if I could, I would go even into the very midst of them, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their sun.

54. About this wall I thought myself, to go again and again, still prying as I went, to see if I could find some way or passage, by which I might enter therein; but none could I find for some time. At the last, I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass; but the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many efforts to get in, but all in vain, even until I was well nigh quite beat out, by striving to get in; at last, with great striving, methought I at first did get in my head, and after that, by a sidling striving, my shoulders, and my whole body; then was I exceeding glad, and went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the light and heat of their sun.

55. Now, this mountain and wall, &c., was thus made out to me—the mountain signified the church of the living God; the sun that shone thereon, the comfortable shining of his merciful face on them that were therein; the wall, I thought, was the Word, that did make separation between the Christians and the world; and the gap which was in this wall, I thought, was Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father (Joh 14:6; Mat 7:14). But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow, that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter in thereat, it showed me that none could enter into life, but those that were in downright earnest, [22] and unless also they left this wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul, and sin. [23]

56. This resemblance abode upon my spirit many days; all which time, I saw myself in a forlorn and sad condition, but yet was provoked to a vehement hunger and desire to be one of that number that did sit in the sunshine. Now also I should pray wherever I was, whether at home or abroad, in house or field, and should also often, with lifting up of heart, sing that of the 51st Psalm, *O Lord, consider my distress*; for as yet I knew not where I was.

57. Neither as yet could I attain to any comfortable persuasion that I had faith in Christ; but instead of having satisfaction, here I began to find my soul to be assaulted with fresh doubts about my future happiness; especially with such as these, Whether I was elected? But how, if the day of grace should now be past and gone?

58. By these two temptations I was very much afflicted and disquieted; sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other of them. And first, to speak of that about my questioning my election, I found at this time, that though I was in a flame to find the way to heaven and glory, and though nothing could beat me off from this, yet this question did so offend and discourage me, that I was, especially at some times, as if the very strength of my body also had been taken away by the force and power thereof. This scripture did also seem to me to trample upon all my desires, "*It is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom 9:16).

59. With this scripture I could not tell what to do; for I evidently saw, that unless the great God, of his infinite grace and bounty, had voluntarily chosen me to be a vessel of mercy, though I should desire, and long and labour until my heart did break, no good could come of it. Therefore, this would still stick with me, How can you tell that you are elected? And what if you should not? How then?

60. O Lord, thought I, what if I should not, indeed? It may be you are not, said the tempter; it may be so, indeed, thought I. Why, then, said Satan, you had as good leave off, and strive no further; for if, indeed, you should not be elected and chosen of God, there is no talk of your being saved; "For *it is* neither of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

61. By these things I was driven to my wits' end, not knowing what to say, or how to answer these temptations. Indeed, I little thought that Satan had thus assaulted me, but that rather it was my own prudence, thus to start the question; for, that the elect only attained eternal life, that I, without scruple, did heartily close withal; but that myself was one of them, there lay all the question.

62. Thus, therefore, for several days, I was greatly assaulted and perplexed, and was often, when I have been walking, ready to sink where I went, with faintness in my mind; but one day, after I had been so many weeks oppressed and cast down therewith, as I was now quite giving up the ghost of all my hopes of ever attaining life, that sentence fell with weight upon my spirit, "Look at the generations of old and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?"

63. At which I was greatly lightened and encouraged in my soul; for thus, at that very instant, it was expounded to me, Begin at the beginning of Genesis, and read to the end of the Revelation, and see if you can find that there was ever any that trusted in the Lord, and was confounded. So, coming home, I presently went to my Bible to see if I could find that saying, not doubting but to find it presently; for it was so fresh, and with such strength and comfort on my spirit, that I was as if it talked with me.

64. Well, I looked, but I found it not ; only it abode upon me; then I did ask first this good man, and then another, if they knew where it was, but they knew no such place. At this I wondered, that such a sentence should so suddenly, and with such comfort and strength, seize and abide upon my heart, and yet that none could find it, for I doubted not but it was in holy Scripture.

65. Thus I continued above a year, and could not find the place; but at last, casting my eye into the Apocrypha books, I found it in Ecclesiasticus 2:10. This, at the first, did somewhat daunt me; but because, by this time, I had got more experience of the love and kindness of God, it troubled me the less; especially when I considered, that though it was not in those texts that we call holy and canonical, yet forasmuch as this sentence was the sum and substance of many of the promises, it was my duty to take the comfort of it; and I bless God for that word, for it was of God to me: that word doth still, at times, shine before my face.

66. After this, that other doubt did come with strength upon me, But how if the day of grace should be past and gone? How if you have over-stood the time of mercy? Now, I remember that one day, as I was walking into the country, I was much in the thoughts of this, But how if the day of grace be past? And to aggravate my trouble, the tempter presented to my mind those good people of Bedford, and suggested thus unto me, That these being converted already, they were all that God would save in those parts; and that I came too late, for these had got the blessing before I came.

67. Now was I in great distress, thinking in very deed that this might well be so; wherefore I went up and down bemoaning my sad condition, counting myself far worse than a thousand fools, for standing off thus long, and spending so many years in sin as I had done; still crying out, Oh, that I had turned sooner; Oh, that I had turned seven years ago! It made me also angry with myself, to think that I should have no more wit, but to trifle away my time till my soul and heaven were lost.

68. But when I had been long vexed with this fear, and was scarce able to take one step more, just about the same place where I received my other encouragement, these words broke in upon my mind, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"; "and yet there is room" (Luk 14:22-23). These words, but especially them, "And yet there is room" were sweet words to me; for, truly, I thought that by them I saw there was place enough in heaven for me; and, moreover, that when the Lord Jesus did speak these words, he then did think of me; and that he knowing that the time would come that I should be afflicted with fear that there was no place left for me in his bosom, did before speak this word, and leave it upon record, that I might find help thereby against this vile temptations. 'This, I then verily believed.'

69. In the light and encouragement of this word, I went a pretty while; and the comfort was the more, when I thought that the Lord Jesus should think on me so long ago, and that he should speak them words on purpose for my sake; for I did then think, verily, that he did on purpose speak them, to encourage me withal.

70. 'But I was not without my temptations to go back again; temptations, I say, both from Satan, mine own heart, and carnal acquaintance; but I thank God these were outweighed by that sound sense of death and of the day of judgment, which abode, as it were, continually in my view; I should often also think on Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is said, He had given him all the kingdoms of the earth (Dan 5:19). Yet, thought I, if this great man had all his portion in this world, one hour in hell fire would make him forget all. Which consideration was a great help to me.'

71. 'I was almost made, about this time, to see something concerning the beasts that Moses counted clean and unclean. I thought those beasts were types of men; the clean, types of them that were the people of God; but the unclean, types of such as were the children of the wicked one. Now, I read that the clean beasts chewed the cud; that is, thought I, they show us we must feed upon the Word of God. They also parted the hoof; I thought that signified we must part, if we would be saved, with the ways of ungodly men. And also, in further reading about them I found, that though we did chew the cud as the hare, yet if we walked with claws like a dog, or if we did part the hoof like the swine, yet if we did not chew the cud as the sheep, we were still, for all that, but unclean; for I thought the here to be a type of those that talk of the Word, yet walk in the ways of sin; and that the swine was like him that parteth with his outward pollutions, but still wanteth the Word of faith, without which there could be no way of salvation, let a man be never so devout (Deut 14).' After this I found, by reading the Word, that those that must be glorified with Christ in another world must be called by him here; called to the partaking of a share in his Word and righteousness, and to the comforts and first fruits of his spirit, and to a peculiar interest in all those heavenly things which do indeed fore fit the soul for that rest and house of glory which is in heaven above.

72. Here, again, I was at a very great stand, not knowing what to do, fearing I was not called; for, thought I, if I be not called, what then can do me good? 'None but those who are effectually called, inherit the kingdom of heaven.' But oh! how I now loved those words that spake of a Christian's calling! as when the Lord said to one, "Follow me," and to another, "Come after me." And oh! thought I, that he would say so to me too, how gladly would I run after him!

73. I cannot now express with what longings and breakings in my soul I cried to Christ to call me. Thus I continued for a time, all on a flame to be converted to Jesus Christ; and did also see at that day, such glory in a converted state, that I could not be contented without a share therein. Gold! could it have been gotten for gold, what could I have given for it! had I had a whole world it had all gone ten thousand times over for this, that my soul might have been in a converted state.

74. How lovely now was every one in my eyes that I thought to be converted men and women! they shone, they walked like a people that carried the broad seal of heaven about them. Oh! I saw the lot was fallen to them in pleasant places, and they had a goodly heritage (Psa 16:6). But that which made me sick was that of Christ, in Mark, He went up into a mountain and called to him whom he would, and they came unto him (Mar 3:13).

75. This scripture made me faint and fear, yet it kindled fire in my soul. That which made me fear was this, lest Christ should have no liking to me, for he called "whom he would." But oh! the glory that I saw in that condition did still so engage my heart that I could seldom read of any that Christ did call but I presently wished, Would I had been in their clothes; would I had been born Peter; would I had been born John; or would I had been by and had heard him when he called them, how would I have cried, O Lord, call me also. But oh! I feared he would not call me.

76. And truly the Lord let me go thus many months together and showed me nothing; either that I was already, or should be called hereafter. But at last, after much time spent, and many groans to God, that I might be made partaker of the holy and heavenly calling, that Word came in upon me—"I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion" (Joe 3:21). These words I thought were sent to encourage me to wait still upon God, and signified unto me, that if I were not already, yet time might come I might be in truth converted unto Christ. [24]

77. About this time I began to break my mind to those poor people in Bedford, and to tell them my condition, which, when they had heard, they told Mr. Gifford of me, who himself also took occasion to talk with me, and was willing to be 'well' persuaded of me, though I think but from little grounds: but he invited me to his house, where I should hear him confer with others, about the dealings of God with the soul; from all which I still received more conviction, and from that time began to see something of the vanity and inward wretchedness of my wicked heart, for as yet I knew no great matter therein; but now it began to be discovered unto me, and also to work at that rate for wickedness as it never did before. Now I evidently found that lusts and corruptions would strongly put forth themselves within me, in wicked thoughts and desires, which I did not regard before; my desires also for heaven and life began to fail. I found also, that whereas before my soul was full of longing after God, now my heart began to hanker after every foolish vanity; yea, my heart would not be moved to mind that that was good; it began to be careless, both of my soul and heaven; it would now continually hang back, both to, and in every duty; and was as a clog on the leg of a bird to hinder her from flying.

78. Nay, thought I, now I grow worse and worse; now am I further from conversion than ever I was before. Wherefore I began to sink greatly in my soul, and began to entertain such discouragement in my heart as laid me low as hell. If now I should have burned at a stake, I could not believe that Christ had love for me; alas, I could neither hear him, nor see him, nor feel him, nor savour any of his things; I was driven as with a tempest, my heart would be unclean, the Canaanites would dwell in the land.

79. Sometimes I would tell my condition to the people of God, which, when they heard, they would pity me, and would tell me of the promises; but they had as good have told me that I must reach the sun with my finger as have bidden me receive or rely upon the promise; and as soon as I should have done it, all my sense and feeling was against me; and I saw I had a heart that would sin, and 'that' lay under a law that would condemn.

80. These things have often made me think of that child which the father brought to Christ, who, while he was yet a coming to him, was thrown down by the devil, and also so rent and torn by him that he lay and wallowed, foaming (Luk 9:42; Mar 9:20).

81. Further, in these days I should find my heart to shut itself up against the Lord, and against his holy Word. I have found my unbelief to set, as it were, the shoulder to the door to keep him out, and that too even then, when I have with many a bitter sigh cried, Good Lord, break it open; Lord, break these gates of brass, and cut these bars of iron asunder (Psa 107:16). Yet that word would sometimes create in my heart a peaceable pause, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isa 45:5).

82. But all this while as to the act of sinning, I never was more tender than now; I durst not take a pin or a stick, though but so big as a straw, for my conscience now was sore, and would smart at every touch; I could not now tell how to speak my words, for fear I should misplace them. Oh, how gingerly [25] did I then go in all I did or said! I found myself as on a miry bog that shook if I did but stir; and 'was' there left both of God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all good things.

83. 'But, I observe, though I was such a great sinner before conversion, yet God never much charged the guilt of the sins of my ignorance upon me; only he showed me I was lost if I had not Christ, because I had been a sinner; I saw that I wanted a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God, and this righteousness was nowhere to be found, but in the person of Jesus Christ.'

84. 'But my original and inward pollution, that, that was my plague and my affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me; that I had the guilt of, to amazement; by reason of that, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad; and I thought I was so in God's eyes too; sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had; I could have changed heart with any body; I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind; and thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.'

85. 'While I was thus afflicted with the fears of my own damnation, there were two things would make me wonder; the one was, when I saw old people hunting after the things of this life, as if they should live here always; the other was, when I found professors much distressed and cast down, when they met with outward losses; as of husband, wife, child, &c. Lord, thought I, what ado is here about such little things as these! What seeking after carnal things by some, and what grief in others for the loss of them! if they so much labour after, and spend so many tears for the things of this present life, how am I to be bemoaned, pitied, and prayed for! My soul is dying, my soul is damning. Were my soul but in a good condition, and were I but sure of it, ah! how rich should I esteem myself, though blessed but with bread and water; I should count those but small afflictions, and should bear them as little burdens. "A wounded spirit who can bear?"'

86. And though I was thus troubled, and tossed, and afflicted, with the sight and sense and terror of my own wickedness, yet I was afraid to let this sight and sense go quite off my mind; for I found, that unless guilt of conscience was taken off the right way, that is, by the blood of Christ, a man grew rather worse for the loss of his trouble of mind, than better. Wherefore, if my guilt lay hard upon me, then I should cry that the blood of Christ might take it off; and if it was going off without it (for the sense of sin would be sometimes as if it would die, and go quite away), then I would also strive to fetch it upon my heart again, by bringing the punishment for sin in hell fire upon my spirits; and should cry, Lord, let it not go off my heart, but the right way, but by the blood of Christ, and by the application of thy mercy, through him, to my soul; for that Scripture lay much upon me, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22). And that which made me the more afraid of this was, because I had seen some, who, though when they were under wounds of conscience, then they would cry and pray; but they seeking rather present ease from their trouble, than pardon for their sin, cared not how they lost their guilt, so they got it out of their mind; and, therefore, having got it off the wrong way, it was not sanctified unto them; but they grew harder and blinder, and more wicked after their trouble. This made me afraid, and made me cry to God 'the more,' that it might not be so with me.

87. And now was I sorry that God had made me a man, for I feared I was a reprobate; I counted man as unconverted, the most doleful of all the creatures. Thus being afflicted and tossed about my sad condition, I counted myself alone, and above the most of men unblessed.

88. 'Yea, I thought it impossible that ever I should attain to so much goodness of heart, as to thank God that he had made me a man. Man indeed is the most noble by creation, of all creatures in the visible world; but by sin he had made himself the most ignoble. The beasts, birds, fishes, &c., I blessed their condition, for they had not a sinful nature, they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hell fire after death; I could therefore have rejoiced, had my condition been as any of theirs.'

89. In this condition I went a great while; but when comforting time was come, I heard one preach a sermon upon those words in the Song (Son 4:1), "Behold thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair." But at that time he made these two words, "My love," his chief and subject matter; from which, after he had a little opened the text, he observed these several conclusions: 1. That the church, and so every saved soul, is Christ's love, when loveless. 2. Christ's love without a cause. 3. Christ's love when hated of the world. 4. Christ's love when under temptation, and under desertion. 5. Christ's love from first to last.

90. But I got nothing by what he said at present, only when he came to the application of the fourth particular, this was the word he said; If it be so, that the saved soul is Christ's love when under temptation and desertion; then poor tempted soul, when thou art assaulted and afflicted with temptation, and the hidings of God's face, yet think on these two words, "My love," still.

91. So as I was a going home, these words came again into my thoughts; and I well remember, as they came in, I said thus in my heart, What shall I get by thinking on these two words? This thought had no sooner passed through my heart, but the words began thus to kindle in my spirit, "Thou art my love, thou art my love," twenty times together; and still as they ran thus in my mind, they waxed stronger and warmer, and began to make me look up; but being as yet between hope and fear, I still replied in my heart, But is it true, but is it true? At which, that sentence fell in upon me, He "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel" (Act 12:9).

92. Then I began to give place to the word, which, with power, did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul, thou art my love, thou art my love; and nothing shall separate thee from my love; and with that (Rom 8:39) came into my mind: Now was my heart filled full of comfort and hope, and now I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me; 'yea, I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home; I thought I could have spoken of his love, and of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me'; wherefore I said in my soul, with much gladness, well, I would I had a pen and ink here, I would write this down before I go any further, for surely I will not forget this forty years hence; but, alas! within less than forty days, I began to question all again; 'which made me begin to question all still.'

93. Yet still at times, I was helped to believe that it was a true manifestation of grace unto my soul, though I had lost much of the life and savour of it. Now about a week or fortnight after this, I was much followed by this scripture, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you" (Luk 22:31). And sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it were call so strongly after me, that once above all the rest, I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some man had, behind me, called to me; being at a great distance, 'methought he called so loud; it came, as I have thought since, to have stirred me up to prayer, and to watchfulness; it came to acquaint me that a cloud and a storm was coming down upon me, but I understood it not.'[26]

94. 'Also, as I remember, that time that it called to me so loud, was the last time that it sounded in mine ear; but methinks I hear still with what a loud voice these words, Simon, Simon, sounded in mine ears. I thought verily, as I have told you, that somebody had called after me, that was half a mile behind me; and although that was not my name, yet it made me suddenly look behind me, believing that he that called so loud meant me.'

95. But so foolish was I, and ignorant, that I knew not the reason of this sound; which, as I did both see and feel soon after, was sent from heaven as an alarm, to awaken me to provide for what was coming; only it would make me muse and wonder in my mind, to think what should be the reason that this scripture, and that at this rate, so often and so loud, should still be sounding and rattling in mine ears; but, as I said before, I soon after perceived the end of God therein.

96. For about the space of a month after, a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me twenty times worse than all I had met with before; it came stealing upon me, now by one piece, then by another; first, all my comfort was taken from me, then darkness seized upon me, after which, whole floods of blasphemies, both against God, Christ, and the Scriptures, were poured upon my spirit, to my great confusion and astonishment. These blasphemous thoughts were such as also stirred up questions in me, against the very being of God, and of his only beloved Son; as, whether there were, in truth, a God, or Christ, or no? and whether the holy Scriptures were not rather a fable, and cunning story, than the holy and pure Word of God?

97. The tempter would also much assault me with this, how can you tell but that the Turks had as good Scriptures to prove their Mahomet the Saviour, as we have to prove our Jesus is? And, could I think, that so many ten thousands, in so many countries and kingdoms, should be without the knowledge of the right way to heaven; if there were indeed a heaven, and that we only, who live in a corner of the earth, should alone be blessed therewith? Every one doth think his own religion rightest, both Jews and Moors, and Pagans! and how if all our faith, and Christ, and Scriptures, should be but a think-so too?

98. Sometimes I have endeavoured to argue against these suggestions, and to set some of the sentences of blessed Paul against them; but, alas! I quickly felt, when I thus did, such arguings as these would return again upon me, Though we made so great a matter of Paul, and of his words, yet how could I tell, but that in very deed, he being a subtle and cunning man, might give himself up to deceive with strong delusions; and also take both that pains and travel, to undo and destroy his fellows.

99. These suggestions, with many other which at this time I may not, nor dare not utter, neither by word nor pen, did make such a seizure upon my spirit, and did so overweigh my heart, both with their number, continuance, and fiery force, that I felt as if there were nothing else but these from morning to night within me; and as though, indeed, there could be room for nothing else; and also concluded, that God had, in very wrath to my soul, given me up unto them, to be carried away with them, as with a mighty whirlwind.

100. Only by the distaste that they gave unto my spirit, I felt there was something in me, that refused to embrace them. But this consideration I then only had, when God gave me leave to swallow my spittle, otherwise the noise, and strength, and force of these temptations, would drown and overflow; and as it were, bury all such thoughts or the remembrance of any such thing. While I was in this temptation, I should often find my mind suddenly put upon it, to curse and swear, or to speak some grievous thing against God, or Christ his Son, and of the Scriptures. [27]

101. Now I thought, surely I am possessed of the devil; at other times again, I thought I should be bereft of my wits; for instead of lauding and magnifying God the Lord with others, if I have but heard him spoken of, presently some most horrible blasphemous thought or other, would bolt out of my heart against him; so that whether I did think that God was, or again did think there were no such thing; no love, nor peace, nor gracious disposition could I feel within me.

102. These things did sink me into very deep despair; for I concluded, that such things could not possibly be found amongst them that loved God. I often, when these temptations have been with force upon me, did compare myself in the case of such a child, whom some gipsy hath by force took up under her apron, [28] and is carrying from friend and country; kick sometimes I did, and also scream and cry; but yet I was as bound in the wings of the temptation, and the wind would carry me away. I thought also of Saul, and of the evil spirit that did possess him; and did greatly fear that my condition was the same with that of his (1Sa 16:14).

103. In these days, when I have heard others talk of what was the sin against the Holy Ghost, then would the tempter so provoke me to desire to sin that sin, that I was as if I could not, must not, neither should be quiet until I had committed that; now, no sin would serve but that; if it were to be committed by speaking of such a word, then I have been as if my mouth would have spoken that word, whether I would or no; and in so strong a measure was this temptation upon me, that often I have been ready to clap my hand under my chin, to hold my mouth from opening; and to that end also I have had thoughts at other times, to leap with my head downward, into some muck hill hole or other, to keep my mouth from speaking.

104. Now I blessed the condition of the dog and toad, and counted the estate of everything that God had made far better than this dreadful state of mine, and such as my companions was; yea, gladly would I have been in the condition of dog or horse, for I knew they had no soul to perish under the everlasting weights of hell for sin, as mine was like to do. Nay, and though I saw this, felt this, and was broken to pieces with it, yet that which added to my sorrow was, that I could not find that with all my soul I did desire deliverance. That scripture did also tear and rend my soul, in the midst of these distractions, "The wicked *are* like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. *There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa 57:20-21).

105. 'And now my heart was, at times, exceeding hard; if I would have given a thousand pounds for a tear, I could not shed one; no, nor sometimes scarce desire to shed one. I was much dejected to think that this should be my lot. I saw some could mourn and lament their sin; and others, again, could rejoice, and bless God for Christ; and others, again, could quietly talk of, and with gladness remember, the Word of God; while I only was in the storm or tempest. This much sunk me; I thought my condition was alone. I should, therefore, much bewail my hard hap; but get out of, or get rid of, these things, I could not.'

106. While this temptation lasted, which was about a year, I could attend upon none of the ordinances of God but with sore and great affliction. Yea, then was I most distressed with blasphemies; if I have been hearing the Word, then uncleanness, blasphemies, and despair would hold me as captive there; if I have been reading, then, sometimes, I had sudden thoughts to question all I read; sometimes, again, my mind would be so strangely snatched away, and possessed with other things, that I have neither known, nor regarded, nor remembered so much as the sentence that but now I have read.

107. In prayer, also, I have been greatly troubled at this time; sometimes I have thought I should see the devil, nay, thought I have felt him, behind me, pull my clothes; he would be, also, continually at me in the time of prayer to have done; break off, make haste, you have prayed enough, and stay no longer, still drawing my mind away. Sometimes, also, he would cast in such wicked thoughts as these: that I must pray to him, or for him. I have thought sometimes of that—Fall down, or, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Mat 4:9).

108. Also, when, because I have had wandering thoughts in the time of this duty, I have laboured to compose my mind and fix it upon God, then, with great force, hath the tempter laboured to distract me, and confound me, and to turn away my mind, by presenting to my heart and fancy the form of a bush,

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108. Also, when, because I have had wandering thoughts in the time of this duty, I have laboured to compose my mind and fix it upon God, then, with great force, hath the tempter laboured to distract me, and confound me, and to turn away my mind, by presenting to my heart and fancy the form of a bush, a bull, a besom, or the like, as if I should pray to those; to these he would, also, at some times especially, so hold my mind that I was as if I could think of nothing else, or pray to nothing else but to these, or such as they.

109. Yet, at times I should have some strong and heart-affecting apprehensions of God, and the reality of the truth of his gospel; but, oh! how would my heart, at such times, put forth itself with inexpressible groanings. My whole soul was then in every word; I should cry with pangs after God that he would be merciful unto me; but then I should be daunted again with such conceits as these; I should think that God did mock at these, my prayers, saying, and that in the audience of the holy angels, This poor simple wretch doth hanker after me as if I had nothing to do with my mercy but to bestow it on such as he. Alas, poor fool! [29] how art thou deceived! It is not for such as thee to have a favour with the Highest.

110. Then hath the tempter come upon me, also, with such discouragements as these—You are very hot for mercy, but I will cool you; this frame shall not last always; many have been as hot as you for a spirit, but I have quenched their zeal. And with this, such and such who were fallen off would be set before mine eyes. Then I should be afraid that I should do so too; but, thought I, I am glad this comes into my mind. Well, I will watch, and take what heed I can. Though you do, said Satan, I shall be too hard for you; I will cool you insensibly, by degrees, by little and little. What care I, saith he, though I be seven years in chilling your heart if I can do it at last? Continual rocking will lull a crying child asleep. I will ply it close, but I will have my end accomplished. Though you be burning hot at present, yet, if I can pull you from this fire, I shall have you cold before it be long.

111. These things brought me into great straits; for as I at present could not find myself fit for present death, so I thought to live long would make me yet more unfit; for time would make me forget all, and wear even the remembrance of the evil of sin, the worth of heaven, and the need I had of the blood of Christ to wash me, both out of mind and thought; but I thank Christ Jesus these things did not at present make me slack my crying, but rather did put me more upon it, like her who met with the adulterer (Deu 22:27); in which days that was a good word to me after I had suffered these things a while: "I am persuaded that neither - height, nor depth, nor life," &c., "shall - separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:38). And now I hoped long life should not destroy me, nor make me miss of heaven.

112. Yet I had some supports in this temptation, though they were then all questioned by me; that in the third of Jeremiah, at the first, was something to me, and so was the consideration of the fifth verse of that chapter; that though we have spoken and done as evil things as we could, yet we should cry unto God, "My Father, thou *art* the guide of my youth"; and should return unto him.

113. I had, also, once a sweet glance from that in 2Co 5:21: "For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I remember, also, that one day as I was sitting in a neighbour's house, and there very sad at the consideration of my many blasphemies, and as I was saying in my mind, What ground have I to think that I, who have been so vile and abominable, should ever inherit eternal life? that word came suddenly upon me, "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?" (Rom 8:31). That, also, was an help unto me, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Joh 14:19). But these were but hints, touches, and short visits, though very sweet when present; only they lasted not; but, like to Peter's sheet, of a sudden were caught up from me to heaven again (Act 10:16).

114. But afterwards the Lord did more fully and graciously discover himself unto me; and, indeed, did quite, not only deliver me from the guilt that, by these things, was laid upon my conscience, but also from the very filth thereof; for the temptation was removed, and I was put into my right mind again, as other Christians were.

115. I remember that one day, as I was traveling into the country and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and considering of the enmity that was in me to God, that scripture came in my mind, He hath "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). By which I was made to see, both again, and again, and again, that day, that God and my soul were friends by this blood; yea, I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other through this blood. This was a good day to me; I hope I shall not forget it.

116. At another time, as I sat by the fire in my house, and musing on my wretchedness, the Lord made that also a precious word unto me, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:14-15). I thought that the glory of these words was then so weighty on me that I was, both once and twice, ready to swoon as I sat; yet not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.

[BUNYAN ATTENDS THE MINISTRY OF MR. GIFFORD, AND BECOMES INTENSELY EARNEST TO UNDERSTAND THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.]

117. At this time, also, I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability.[30] This man made it much his business to deliver the people of God from all those false and unsound rests that, by nature, we are prone to take and make to our souls. He pressed us to take special heed that we took not up any truth upon trust—as from this, or that, or any other man or men—but to cry mightily to God that he would convince us of the reality thereof, and set us down therein, by his own Spirit, in the holy Word; for, said he, if you do otherwise when temptations come, if strongly, you, not having received them with evidence from heaven, will find you want that help and strength now to resist as once you thought you had.

118. This was as seasonable to my soul as the former and latter rain in their season; for I had found, and that by sad experience, the truth of these his words; for I had felt [what] no man can say, especially when tempted by the devil, that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. Wherefore I found my soul, through grace, very apt to drink in this doctrine, and to incline to pray to God that, in nothing that pertained to God's glory and my own eternal happiness, he would suffer me to be without the confirmation thereof from heaven; for now I saw clearly there was an exceeding different betwixt the notions of flesh and blood, and the revelations of God in heaven; also, a great difference between that faith that is feigned, and according to man's wisdom, and of that which comes by a man's being born thereto of God (Mat 16:15-17; 1Jn 5:1).

119. But, oh! now, how was my soul led from truth to truth by God! even from the birth and cradle of the Son of God to his ascension and second coming from heaven to judge the world.

120. Truly, I then found, upon this account, the great God was very good unto me; for, to my remembrance, there was not anything that I then cried unto God to make known and reveal unto me but he was pleased to do it for me; I mean not one part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, but I was orderly led into it. Methought I saw with great evidence, from the relation of the four evangelists, the wonderful work of God, in giving Jesus Christ to save us, from his conception and birth even to his second coming to judgment, Methought I was as if I had seen him born, as if I had seen him grow up, as if I had seen him walk through this world, from the cradle to his cross; to which, also, when he came, I saw how gently he gave himself to be hanged and nailed on it for my sins and wicked doings. Also, as I was musing on this, his progress, that dropped on my spirit, He was ordained for the slaughter (1Pe 1:19-20).

121. When I have considered also the truth of his resurrection, and have remembered that word, "Touch me not, Mary," &c., I have seen as if he leaped at the grave's mouth for joy that he was risen again, and had got the conquest over our dreadful foes (Joh 20:17). I have also, in the spirit, seen him a man on the right hand of God the Father for me, and have seen the manner of his coming from heaven to judge the world with glory, and have been confirmed in these things by these scriptures following, Act 1:9-10, Act 7:56, Act 10:42; Heb 7:24, Heb 8:3; Rev 1:18; 1Th 4:17-18.

122. Once I was much troubled to know whether the Lord Jesus was both man as well as God, and God as well as man; and truly, in those days, let men say what they would, unless I had it with evidence from heaven, all was as nothing to me, I counted not myself set down in any truth of God. Well, I was much troubled about this point, and could not tell how to be resolved; at last, that in the fifth of the Revelation came into my mind, "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb." In the midst of the throne, 'thought I,' there is his Godhead; in the midst of the elders, there is his manhood; but oh! methought this did glister! it was a goodly touch, and gave me sweet satisfaction. That other scripture also did help me much in this, "To us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," &c. (Isa 9:6).

123. Also, besides these teachings of God in his Word, the Lord made use of two things to confirm me in these things; the one was the errors of the Quakers, and the other was the guilt of sin; for as the Quakers did oppose his truth, so God did the more confirm me in it, by leading me into the scriptures that did wonderfully maintain it.[31]

124. 'The errors that this people then maintained were, 1. That the holy Scriptures were not the Word of God. 2. That every man in the world had the spirit of Christ, grace, faith, &c. 3. That Christ Jesus, as crucified, and dying 1600 years ago, did not satisfy divine justice for the sins of the people. 4. That Christ's flesh and blood was within the saints. 5. That the bodies of the good and bad that are buried in the churchyard shall not arise again. 6. That the resurrection is past with good men already. 7. That that man Jesus, that was crucified between two thieves on Mount Calvary, in the land of Canaan, by Jerusalem, was not ascended up above the starry heavens. 8. That he should not, even the same Jesus that died by the hands of the Jews, come again at the last day, and as man judge all nations, &c.'

125. 'Many more vile and abominable things were in those days fomented by them, by which I was driven to a more narrow search of the Scriptures, and was, through their light and testimony, not only enlightened, but greatly confirmed and comforted in the truth'; and, as I said, the guilt of sin did help me much, for still as that would come upon me, the blood of Christ did take it off again, and again, and again, and that too, sweetly, according to the Scriptures. O friends! cry to God to reveal Jesus Christ unto you; there is none teacheth like him.

126. It would be too long for me here to stay, to tell you in particular how God did set me down in all the things of Christ, and how he did, that he might so do, lead me into his words; yea, and also how he did open them unto me, make them shine before me, and cause them to dwell with me, talk with me, and comfort me over and over, both of his own being, and the being of his Son, and Spirit, and Word, and gospel.

127. Only this, as I said before I will say unto you again, that in general he was pleased to take this course with me; first, to suffer me to be afflicted with temptation concerning them, and then reveal them to me: as sometimes I should lie under great guilt for sin, even crushed to the ground therewith, and then the Lord would show me the death of Christ; yea, and so sprinkle my conscience with his blood, that I should find, and that before I was aware, that in that conscience where but just now did reign and rage the law, even there would rest and abide the peace and love of God through Christ.

128. Now had I an evidence, 'as I thought, of my salvation' from heaven, with many golden seals thereon, all hanging in my sight; now could I remember this manifestation and the other discovery of grace, with comfort; and should often long and desire that the last day were come, that I might for ever be inflamed with the sight, and joy, and communion with him whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was spit on, and body broken, and soul made an offering for my sins: for whereas, before, I lay continually trembling at the mouth of hell, now methought I was got so far therefrom that I could not, when I looked back, scarce discern it; and, oh! thought I, that I were fourscore years old now, that I might die quickly, that my soul might be gone to rest.[32]

129. 'But before I had got thus far out of these my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man's experience, who had writ some hundreds of years before I was born; for those who had writ in our days, I thought, but I desire them now to pardon me, that they had writ only that which others felt, or else had, through the strength of their wits and parts, studied to answer such objections as they perceived others were perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep. Well, after many such longings in my mind, the God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hand, one day, a book of Martin Luther; it was his comment on the Galatians—it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart. This made me marvel; for thus thought I, This man could not know anything of the state of Christians now, but must needs write and speak the experience of former days.'

130. 'Besides, he doth most gravely, also, in that book, debate of the rise of these temptations, namely, blasphemy, desperation, and the like; showing that the law of Moses as well as the devil, death, and hell hath a very great hand therein, the which, at first, was very strange to me; but considering and watching, I found it so indeed. But of particulars here I intend nothing; only this, methinks, I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.'

131. 'And now I found, as I thought, that I loved Christ dearly; oh! methought my soul cleaved unto him, my affections cleaved unto him. I felt love to him as hot as fire; and now, as Job said, I thought I should die in my nest; but I did quickly find that my great love was but little, and that I, who had, as I thought, such burning love to Jesus Christ, could let him go again for a very trifle; God can tell how to abase us, and can hide pride from man. Quickly after this my love was tried to purpose.'

132. For after the Lord had, in this manner, thus graciously delivered me from this great and sore temptation, and had set me down so sweetly in the faith of his holy gospel, and had given me such strong consolation and blessed evidence from heaven touching my interest in his love through Christ; the tempter came upon me again, and that with a more grievous and dreadful temptation than before.

133. And that was, To sell and part with this most blessed Christ, to exchange him for the things of this life, for anything. The temptation lay upon me for the space of a year, and did follow me so continually that I was not rid of it one day in a month, no, not sometimes one hour in many days together, unless 'when' I was asleep.

134. And though, in my judgment, I was persuaded that those who were once effectually in Christ, as I hoped, through his grace, I had seen myself, could never lose him for ever—for "the land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine," saith God (Lev 25:23)[33]—yet it was a continual vexation to me to think that I should have so much as one such thought within me against a Christ, a Jesus, that had done for me as he had done; 'and yet then I had almost none others, but such blasphemous ones.'

135. But it was neither my dislike of the thought, nor yet any desire and endeavour to resist it that in the least did shake or abate the continuation, or force and strength thereof; for it did always, in almost whatever I thought, intermix itself therewith in such sort that I could neither eat my food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast mine eye to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come, Sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that; 'sell him, sell him.'

136. Sometimes it would run in my thoughts, not so little as a hundred times together, Sell him, sell him, sell him; against which I may say, for whole hours together, I have been forced to stand as continually leaning and forcing my spirit against it, least haply, before I were aware, some wicked thought might arise in my heart that might consent thereto; and sometimes also the tempter would make me believe I had consented to it, then should I be as tortured upon a rack for whole days together.

137. This temptation did put me to such scares, lest I should and some times, I say, consent thereto, and be overcome therewith, that by the very force of my mind, in labouring to gainsay and resist this wickedness, my very body also would be put into action or motion by way of pushing or thrusting 'with my hands or elbows,' still answering as fast as the destroyer said, Sell him; I will not, I will not, I will not, I will not; no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands of worlds. Thus reckoning lest I should in the midst of these assaults, set too low a value of him, even until I scarce well knew where I was, or how to be composed began.

138. 'At these seasons he would not let me eat my food at quiet; but, forsooth, when I was set at table at my meat, I must go hence to pray; I must leave my food now, and just now, so counterfeit holy also would this devil be. When I was thus tempted, I should say in myself, Now I am at my meat, let me make an end. No, said he, you must do it now, or you will displease God, and despised Christ. Wherefore I was much afflicted with these things; and because of the sinfulness of my nature, imagining that these things were impulses from God, I should deny to do it, as if I denied God; and then should I be as guilty, because I did not obey a temptation of the devil, as if I had broken the law of God indeed.'

139. But to be brief, one morning, as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation, to sell and part with Christ; the wicked suggestion still running in my mind, sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him, ' sell him,' as fast as a man could speak; against which also, in my mind, as and other times, I answered, No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands, at least twenty times together. But at last, after much striving, even until I was almost out of breath, I felt this thought pass through my heart, Let him go, if he will! and I thought also, that I felt my heart ' freely' consent thereto. 'Oh, the diligence of Satan![34] Oh, the desperateness of man's heart!'

140. Now was the battle won, and down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt, and fearful despair. Thus getting out of my bed, I went moping into the field; but God knows, with as heavy a heart as mortal man, I think, could bear; where, for the space of two hours, I was like a man bereft of life, and as now past all recovery, and bound over to eternal punishment.

141. And withal, that scripture did seize upon my soul, "Or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright; for ye know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, so he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb 12:16-17).

142. 'Now was I as one bound, I felt myself shut out unto the judgment to come; nothing now for two years together would abide with me, but damnation, and an expectation of damnation; I say, nothing now would abide with me but this, save some few moments for relief, as in the sequel you will see.'

143. These words were to my soul like fetters of brass to my legs, in the continual sound of which I went for several months together. But about ten or eleven o'clock one day, as I was walking under a hedge, full of sorrow in guilt, God knows, and bemoaning myself for this hard hap, that such a thought should arise within me; suddenly this sentence bolted in upon me, The blood of Christ remits all guilt. At this I made a stand in my spirit; with that, this word took hold upon me, begin, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jn 1:7).

144. Now I began to conceive peace in my soul, in methought I saw as if the tempter did leer[35] and steal away from me, as being ashamed of what he had done. At the same time also I had my sin, and the blood of Christ thus represented to me, that my sin, when compared to the blood of Christ, was no more to it, then this little clot or stone before me, is to this vast and wide field that here I see. This gave me good encouragement for the space of two or three hours; in which time also, methought I saw, by faith, the Son of God, as suffering for my sins; but because it tarried not, I therefore sunk in my spirit, under exceeding guilt again.

145. 'But chiefly by the afore-mentioned scripture, concerning Esau's selling of his birthright; for that scripture would lie all day long, all the week long, yea, all the year long in my mind, and hold me down, so that I could by no means lift up myself; for when I would strive to turn me to this scripture, or that, for relief, still that sentence would be sounding in me, "For ye know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing - he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."'

146. Sometimes also,[36] I should have a touch from that in Luk 22:32, "I have prayed for the, that thy faith fail not"; but it would not abide upon me; neither could I indeed, when I considered my state, find ground to conceive in the least, that there should be the root of that grace within me, having sinned as I had done. Now was I tore and rent in heavy case, for many days together.

147. Then began I with sad and careful heart, to consider of the nature and largeness of my sin, and to search in the Word of God, if I could in any place espy a word of promise, or any encouraging sentence by which I might take relief. Wherefore I began to consider that third of Mark, All manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. Which place, methought, at a blush, did contain a large and glorious promise, for the pardon of high offences; but considering the place more fully, I thought it was rather to be understood as relating more chiefly to those who had, while in a natural estate, committed such things as there are mentioned; but not to me, who had not only received light and mercy, but that had, both after, and also contrary to that, so slighted Christ as I had done.

148. I feared therefore that this wicked sin of mine, might be that sin unpardonable, of which he there thus speaketh. "But he they shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mar 3:29). And I did the rather give credit to this, because of that sentence in the Hebrews common "For ye know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." 'And this stuck always with me.'

149. 'And now was I both the burden and a terror to myself, nor did I ever so know, as now, what it was to be weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. Oh, how gladly now would I have been anybody but myself! Anything but a man! and in any condition but mine own! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind, than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from wrath to come.'

150. And now began I to labour to call again time that was past; wishing a thousand times twice told, that the day was yet to come, when I should be tempted to such a sin! concluding with great indignation, both against my heart, and all assaults, how I would rather have been torn in pieces, than found a consenter thereto. But, alas! these thoughts, and wishings, and resolvings, were now too late to help me; the thought had passed my heart, God hath let me go, and I am fallen. Oh! thought I, "that it was with me as in months past, as in the days *when* God preserved me!" [Job 29:2]

151. Then again, being loath and unwilling to perish, I began to compare my sin with others, to see if I could find that any of those that were saved had done as I had done. So I considered David's adultery and murder, and found them most heinous crimes; and those too committed after light and grace received; but yet but considering, I perceived that his transgressions were only such as were against the law of Moses; from which the Lord Christ could, with the consent of his Word, deliver him: but mine was against the gospel; yea, against the Mediator thereof; 'I had sold my Saviour.'

152. Now again should I be as if racked upon the wheel,[37] when I considered, that, besides the guilt that possessed me, I should be so void of grace, so bewitched. What, thought I, must it be no sin but this? Must it needs be the *great transgression*? (Psa 19:13) Must *that* wicked one touch my soul? (1Jn 5:18) Oh, what stings did I find in all these sentences!

153. 'What, thought I, is there but one sin that is unpardonable? But one sin that layeth the soul without the reach of God's mercy; and must I be guilty of that? Must it needs be that? Is there but one sin among so many millions of sins, for which there is no forgiveness; and must I commit this? Oh, unhappy sin! Oh, unhappy man! These things would so break and confound my spirit, that I could not tell what to do; I thought, at times, they would have broke my wits; and still, to aggravate my misery, that would run in my mind, "Ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected." Oh! none knows the terrors of those days but myself.'

154. After this I came to consider of Peter's sin, which he committed in denying his master; and indeed, this came nighest to mine, of any that I could find; for he had denied his Saviour, as I, and that after light and mercy received; yea, and that too, after warning given him. I also considered, that he did both once and twice; and that, after time to consider betwixt. But though I put all these circumstances together, that, if possible, I might find help, yet I considered again, that his was but a denial of his master, but mine was a selling of my Saviour. Wherefore I thought with myself, that I came nearer to Judas, than either to David or Peter.

155. Here again my torment would flame out and afflict me; yea, it would grind me, as it were, to powder, to discern the preservation of God towards others, while I fell into the snare; for in my thus considering of other men's sins, and comparing of them with my own, I could evidently see how God preserved them, notwithstanding their wickedness, and would not let them, as he had let me, to become a son of perdition.

156. But oh, how did my soul, at this time, prize the preservation that God did set about his people! Ah, how safely did I see them walk, whom God had hedge in! They were within his care, protection, and special providence; though they were full as bad as I by nature; yet because he loved them, he would not suffer them to fall without the range of mercy; but as for me, I was gone, I had done it; he would not preserve me, nor keep me; but suffered me, because I was a reprobate, to fall as I had done. Now, did those blessed places, that spake of God's keeping his people, shine like the sun before me, though not to comfort me, but to show me the blessed state and heritage of those whom the Lord had blessed.

157. 'Now I saw, that as God had his hand in all providences and dispensations that overtook his elect, so he had his hand in all the temptations that they had to sin against him, not to animate them unto wickedness, but to choose their temptations and troubles for them; and also to leave them, for a time, to such sins only as might not destroy, but humble them; as might not put them beyond, but lay them in the way off the renewing of his mercy. But oh, what love, what care, what kindness and mercy did I now see, mixing itself with the most severe and dreadful of all God's ways to his people! He would let David, Hezekiah, Solomon, Peter, and others fall, but he would not let them fall into sin unpardonable, nor into hell for sin. Oh! thought I, these be the men that God hath loved; these be the men that God, though he chastiseth them, keeps them in safety by him, and them whom he makes to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. But all these thoughts added sorrow, grief, and horror to me, as whatever I now thought on, it was killing to me. If I thought how God kept his own, that was killing to me. If I thought of how I was falling myself, that was killing to me. As all things wrought together for the best, and to do good to them that were the called, according to his purpose; so I thought that all things wrought for my damage, and for my eternal overthrow.'

158. Then, again, I began to compare my sin with the sin of Judas, that, if possible, I might find that mine differed from that which, in truth, is unpardonable. And, oh! thought I, if it 'should differ from it,' though but the breadth of an hair, what a happy condition is my soul in! And, by considering, I found that Judas did his intentionally, but mine was against my 'prayer and' strivings; besides, his was committed with much deliberation, but mine in a fearful hurry, on a sudden; 'all this while' I was tossed to and fro, like the locusts, and driven from trouble to sorrow; hearing always the sound of Esau's fall in mine ears, and of the dreadful consequences thereof.

159. Yet this consideration about Judas, his sin was, for a while, some little relief unto me; for I saw I had not, as to the circumstances, transgressed so foully as he. But this was quickly gone again, for, I thought with myself, there might be more ways than one to commit the unpardonable sin; 'also I thought' that there might be degrees of that, as well as of other transgressions; wherefore, for ought I yet could perceive, this iniquity of mine might be such, as might never be passed by.

160. 'I was often now ashamed, that I should be like such an ugly man as Judas; I thought, also, how loathsome I should be unto all the saints at the day of judgment; insomuch, that now I could scarce see a good man, that I believed had a good conscience, but I should feel my heart tremble at him, while I was in his presence. Oh! now I saw a glory in walking with God, and what a mercy it was to have a good conscience before him.'

161. 'I was much about this time tempted to content myself, by receiving some false opinion; as that there should be no such thing as a day of judgment, that we should not rise again, and that sin was no such grievous thing; the tempter suggesting thus, For if these things should indeed be true, yet to believe otherwise, would yield you ease for the present. If you must perish, never torment yourself so much before hand; drive the thoughts of damning out of your mind, by possessing your mind with some such conclusions that Atheists and Ranters do use to help themselves withal.'

162. 'But, oh! when such thoughts have led through my heart, how, as it were, within a step, hath death and judgment been in my view! Methought the judge stood at the door, I was as if it was come already; so that such things could have no entertainment. But, methinks, I see by this, that Satan will use any means to keep the soul from Christ; he loveth not an awakened frame of spirit; security, blindness, darkness, and error is the very kingdom and habitation of the wicked one.'

163. 'I found it hard work now to pray to God, because despair was swallowing me up; I thought I was, as with a tempest, driven away from God, for always when I cried to God for mercy, this would come in, It is too late, I am lost, God hath let me fall; not to my correction, but condemnation; my sin is unpardonable; and I know, concerning Esau, how that, after he had sold his birthright, he would have received the blessing, but was rejected. About this time, I did light on that dreadful story of that miserable mortal, Francis Spira;[38] a book that was to my troubled spirit as salt, when rubbed into a fresh wound; every sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his dolours, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twining and twisting, languishing and pining away under that mighty hand of God that was upon him, was as knives and daggers in my soul; especially that sentence of his was frightful to me, Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof? Then would the former sentence, as the conclusion of all, fall like a hot thunderbolt again upon my conscience; "for you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."'

164. Then was I struck into a very great trembling, insomuch that at sometimes I could, for whole days together, feel my very body, as well as my mind, to shake and totter under the sense of the dreadful judgment of God, that should fall on those that have sinned that most fearful and unpardonable sin. I felt also such a clogging and heat at my stomach, by reason of this my terror, that I was, especially at some times, as if my breast bone would have split in sunder; then I thought of that concerning Judas, who, by his falling headlong, burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out (Act 1:18).

165. I feared also that this was the mark that the Lord did set on Cain, even continual fear and trembling, under the heavy load of guilt that he had charged on him for the blood of his brother Abel. Thus did I wind, and twine, and shrink, under the burden that was upon me; which burden also did so oppress me, that I could neither stand, nor go, nor lie, either at rest or quiet.

166. Yet that saying would sometimes come to my mind, He hath received gifts for the rebellious (Psa 68:18). "The rebellious," thought I; why, surely they are such as once were under subjection to their prince, even those who, after they have sworn subjection to his government, have taken up arms against him; 'and this, thought I, is my very condition; once I loved him, feared him, served him; but now I am a rebel; I have sold him, I have said, Let him go if he will; but yet he has gifts for rebels, and then why not for me?'

167. This sometimes I thought on, and should labour to take hold thereof, that some, though small, refreshment might have been conceived by me; but in this also I missed of my desire, I was driven with force beyond it, 'I was' like a man that is going to the place of execution, even by that place where he would fain creep in and hide himself, but may not.

168. Again, after I had thus considered the sins of the *saints* in particular, and found mine went beyond them, then I began to think thus with myself: Set the case I should put all theirs together, and mine alone against them, might I not then find some encouragement? For if mine, though bigger than any one, yet should but be equal to all, then there is hopes; for that blood that hath virtue enough 'in it' to wash away all theirs, hath also virtue enough in it to do away mine, though this one be full as big, if no bigger, than all theirs. Here, again, I should consider the sin of David, of Solomon, of Manasseh, of Peter, and the rest of the great offenders; and should also labour, what I might with fairness, to aggravate and heighten their sins by several circumstances: but, alas! It was all in vain.[39]

169. 'I should think with myself that David shed blood to cover his adultery, and that by the sword of the children of Ammon; a work that could not be done but by continuance and deliberate contrivance, which was a great aggravation to his sin. But then this would turn upon me: Ah! but these were but sins against the law, from which there was a Jesus sent to save them; but yours is a sin against the Saviour, and who shall save you from that?'

170. 'Then I thought on Solomon, and how he sinned in loving strange women, in falling away to their idols, in building them temples, in doing this after light, in his old age, after great mercy received; but the same conclusion that cut me off in the former consideration, cut me off as to this; namely, that all those were but sins against the law, for which God had provided a remedy; but I had sold my Saviour, and there now remained no more sacrifice for sin.'

171. 'I would then add to those men's sins, the sins of Manasseh, how that he built altars for idols in the house of the Lord; he also observed times, used enchantment, had to do with wizards, was a wizard, had his familiar spirits, burned his children in the fire in sacrifice to devils, and made the streets of Jerusalem run down with the blood of innocents. These, thought I, are great sins, sins of a bloody colour; yea, it would turn again upon me: They are none of them of the nature of yours; you have parted with Jesus, you have sold your Saviour.'

172. This one consideration would always kill my heart, My sin was point blank against my Saviour; and that too, at that height, that I had in my heart said of him, Let him go if he will. Oh! methought, this sin was bigger than the sins of a country, of a kingdom, or of the whole world, no one pardonable, nor all of them together, was able to equal mine; mine outwent them every one.

173. Now I should find my mind to flee from God, as from the face of a dreadful judge; yet this was my torment, I could not escape his hand: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31). But blessed be his grace, that scripture, in these flying sins,[40] would call as running after me, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee" (Isa 44:22). This, I say, would come in upon my mind, when I was fleeing from the face of God; for I did flee from his face, that is, my mind and spirit fled before him; by reason of his highness, I could not endure; then would the text cry, "Return unto me"; it would cry aloud with a very great voice, "Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Indeed, this would make me make a little stop, and, as it were, look over my shoulder behind me, to see if I could discern that the God of grace did follow me with a pardon in his hand, but I could no sooner do that, but all would be clouded and darkened again by that sentence, "For you know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Wherefore I could not return, but fled, though at sometimes it cried, "Return, return," as if it did holloa after me. But I feared to close in therewith, lest it should not come from God; for that other, as I said, was still sounding in my conscience, "For you know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected," &c.

174. 'Once as I was walking to and fro in a good man's shop, bemoaning of myself in my sad and doleful state, afflicting myself with self-abhorrence for this wicked and ungodly thought; lamenting, also, this hard hap of mine, for that I should commit so great a sin, greatly fearing I should not be pardoned; praying, also, in my heart, that if this sin of mine did differ from that against the Holy Ghost, the Lord would show it me. And being now ready to sink with fear, suddenly there was, as if there had rushed in at the window, the noise of wind upon me, but very pleasant, and as if I heard a voice speaking, Didst ever refuse to be justified by the blood of Christ? And, withal my whole life and profession past was, in a moment, opened to me, wherein I was made to see that designedly I had not; so my heart answered groaningly, No. then fell, with power, that word of God upon me, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (Heb 12:25). This made a strange seizure upon my spirit; it brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart of all those tumultuous thoughts that before did use, like masterless hell-hounds, to roar and bellow, and make a hideous noise within me. It showed me, also, that Jesus Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me, that he had not, as I had feared, quite forsaken and cast off my soul; yea, this was a kind of a chide for my proneness to desperation; a kind of a threatening me if I did not, notwithstanding my sins and the heinousness of them, venture my salvation upon the Son of God. But as to my determining about this strange dispensation, what it was I knew not; or from whence it came I know not. I have not yet, in twenty years' time, been able to make a judgment of it; I thought then what here I shall be loath to speak. But verily, that sudden rushing wind was as if an angel had come upon me; but both it and the salvation I will leave until the day of judgment; only this I say, it commanded a great calm in my soul, it persuaded me there might be hope; it showed me, as I thought, what the sin unpardonable was, and that my soul had yet the blessed privilege to flee to Jesus Christ for mercy. But, I say, concerning this dispensation, I know not what yet to say unto it; which was, also, in truth, the cause that, at first, I did not speak of it in the book; I do now, also, leave it to be thought on by men of sound judgment. I lay not the stress of my salvation thereupon, but upon the Lord Jesus, in the promise; yet, seeing I am here unfolding of my secret things, I thought it might not be altogether inexpedient to let this also show itself, though I cannot now relate the matter as there I did experience it. This lasted, in the savour of it, for about three or four days, and the I began to mistrust and to despair again.'[41]

175. 'Wherefore, still my life hung in doubt before me, not knowing which way I should tip; only this I found my soul desire, even to cast itself at the foot of grace, by prayer and supplication. But, oh! it was hard for me now to bear the face to pray to this Christ for mercy, against whom I had thus most vilely sinned; it was hard work, I say, to offer to look him in the face against whom I had so vilely sinned; and, indeed, I have found it as difficult to come to God by prayer, after backsliding from him, as to do any other thing. Oh, the shame that did now attend me! especially when I thought I am now a-going to pray to him for mercy that I had so lightly esteemed but a while before! I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because this villany had been committed by me; but I saw there was but one way with me, I must go to him and humble myself unto him, and beg that he, of his wonderful mercy, would show pity to me, and have mercy upon my wretched sinful soul.'

176. 'Which, when the tempter perceived, he strongly suggested to me, That I ought not to pray to God; for prayer was not for any in my case, neither could it do me good, because I had rejected the Mediator, by whom all prayer came with acceptance to God the Father, and without whom no prayer could come into his presence. Wherefore, now to pray is but to add sin to sin; yea, now to pray, seeing God has cast you off, is the next way to anger and offend him more than you ever did before.'

177. 'For God, saith he, hath been weary of you for these several years already, because you are none of his; your bawlings in his ears hath been no pleasant voice to him; and, therefore, he let you sin this sin, that you might be quite cut off; and will you pray still? This the devil urged, and set forth that, in Numbers, when Moses said to the children of Israel, That because they would not go up to posses the land when God would have them, therefore, for ever after, God did bar them out from thence, though they prayed they might, with tears (Num 14:36-37), &c.'

178. 'As it is said in another place (Exo 21:14), the man that sins presumptuously shall be taken from God's altar, that he may die; even as Joab was by King Solomon, when he thought to find shelter there (1Ki 2:28), &c. These places did pinch me very sore; yet, my case being desperate, I thought with myself I can but die; and if it must be so, it shall once be said, that such an one died at the foot of Christ in prayer.[42] This I did, but with great difficulty, God doth know; and that because, together with this, still that saying about Esau would be set at my heart, even like a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life, lest I should taste thereof and live. Oh! who knows how hard a thing I found it to come to God in prayer.'

179. 'I did also desire the prayers of the people of God for me, but I feared that God would give them no heart to do it; yea, I trembled in my soul to think that some or other of them would shortly tell me, that God had said those words to them that he once did say to the prophet concerning the children of Israel, "Pray not thou for this people," for I have rejected them (Jer 11:14). So, pray not for him, for I have rejected him. Yea, I thought that he had whispered this to some of them already, only they durst not tell me so, neither durst I ask them of it, for fear, if it should be so, it would make me quite besides myself. Man knows the beginning of sin, said Spira, but who bounds the issues thereof?'

180. About this time I took an opportunity to break my mind to an ancient Christian, and told him all my case; I told him, also, that I was afraid that I had sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; and he told me he thought so too. Here, therefore, I had but cold comfort; but, talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much combat with the devil. Wherefore, I went to God again, as well as I could, for mercy still.

181. Now, also, did the tempter begin to mock me in my misery, saying, that, seeing I had thus parted with the Lord Jesus, and provoked him to displeasure, who would have stood between my soul and the flame of devouring fire, there was now but one way, and that was, to pray that God the Father would be the Mediator betwixt his Son and me, that we might be reconciled again, and that I might have that blessed benefit in him that his blessed saints enjoyed.

182. Then did that scripture seize upon my soul, He is of one mind, and who can turn him? Oh! I saw it was as easy to persuade him to make a new world, a new covenant, or new Bible, besides that we have already, as to pray for such a thing. This was to persuade him that what he had done already was mere folly, and persuade with him to alter, yea, to disannul, the whole way of salvation; and then would that saying rend my soul asunder, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12).

183. 'Now, the most free, and full, and gracious words of the gospel were the greatest torment to me; yea, nothing so afflicted me as the thoughts of Jesus Christ, the remembrance of a Saviour; because I had cast him off, brought forth the villany of my sin, and my loss by it to mind; nothing did twinge my conscience like this. Every time that I thought of the Lord Jesus, of his grace, love, goodness, kindness, gentleness, meekness, death, blood, promises and blessed exhortations, comforts and consolations, it went to my soul like a sword; for still, unto these my considerations of the Lord Jesus, these thoughts would make place for themselves in my heart; aye, this is the Jesus, the loving Saviour, the Son of God, whom thou hast parted with, whom you slighted, despised, and abused. This is the only Saviour, the only Redeemer, the only one that could so love sinners as to wash them from their sins in his own most precious blood; but you have no part nor lot in this Jesus, you have put him from you, you have said in your heart, Let him go if he will. Now, therefore, you are severed from him; you have severed yourself from him. Behold, then, his goodness, but yourself to be no partaker of it. Oh, thought I, what have I lost! What have I parted with! What have I disinherited my poor soul of! Oh! it is sad to be destroyed by the grace and mercy of God; to have the Lamb, the Saviour, turn lion and destroyer (Rev 6).[43] I also trembled, as I have said, at the sight of the saints of God, especially at those that greatly loved him, and that made it their business to walk continually with him in this world; for they did, both in their words, their carriages, and all their expressions of tenderness and fear to sin against their precious Saviour, condemn, lay guilt upon, and also add continual affliction and shame unto my soul. The dread of them was upon me, and I trembled at God's Samuels' (1Sa 16:4).

184. Now, also, the tempter began afresh to mock my soul another way, saying that Christ, indeed, did pity my case, and was sorry for my loss; but forasmuch as I had sinned and transgressed, as I had done, he could by no means help me, nor save me from what I feared; for my sin was not of the nature of theirs for whom he bled and died, neither was it counted with those that were laid to his charge when he hanged on the tree. Therefore, unless he should come down from heaven and die anew for this sin, though, indeed, he did greatly pity me, yet I could have no benefit of him. These things may seem ridiculous to others, even as ridiculous as they were in themselves, but to me they were most tormenting cogitations; every of them augmented my misery, that Jesus Christ should have so much love as to pity me when he could not help me; nor did I think that the reason why he could not help me was because his merits were weak, or his grace and salvation spent on them already, but because his faithfulness to his threatening would not let him extend his mercy to me. Besides, I thought, as I have already hinted, that my sin was not within the bounds of that pardon that was wrapped up in a promise; and if not, then I knew assuredly, that it was more easy for heaven and earth to pass away than for me to have eternal life. So that the ground of all these fears of mine did arise from a steadfast belief that I had of the stability of the holy Word of God, and also, from my being misinformed of the nature of my sin.

185. But, oh! how this would add to my affliction, to conceit that I should be guilty of such a sin for which he did not die. These thoughts would so confound me, and imprison me, and tie me up from faith, that I knew not what to do; but, oh! thought I, that he would come down again! Oh! that the work of man's redemption was yet to be done by Christ! How would I pray him and entreat him to count and reckon this sin amongst the rest for which he died! But this scripture would strike me down as dead, "Christ being raised from the death dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom 6:9).[44]

186. Thus, by the strange and unusual assaults of the tempter, was my soul, like a broken vessel, driven as with the winds, and tossed sometimes headlong into despair, sometimes upon the covenant of works, and sometimes to wish that the new covenant, and the conditions thereof, might, so far forth as I thought myself concerned, be turned another way and changed. But in all these I was but as those that justle against the rocks; more broken, scattered, and rent. Oh, the unthought of imaginations, frights, fears, and terrors that are affected by a thorough application of guilt, yielded to desperation! This is the man that hath "his dwelling among the tombs" with the dead; that is, always crying out and "cutting himself with stones" (Mar 5:2-5). But I say, all in vain; desperation will not comfort him, the old covenant will not save him; nay, heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of the Word and law of grace shall fall or be removed. This I saw, this I felt, and under this I groaned; yet this advantage I got thereby, namely, a farther confirmation of the certainty of the way of salvation, and that the Scriptures were the Word of God! Oh! I cannot now express what then I saw and felt of the steadiness of Jesus Christ, the rock of man's salvation; what was done could not be undone, added to, nor altered. I saw, indeed, that sin might drive the soul beyond Christ, even the sin which is unpardonable; but woe to him that was so driven, for the Word would shut him out.

187. Thus was I always sinking, whatever I did think or do. So one day I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and, after long musing, I lifted up my head, but methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light, and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me; methought that they all combined together to banish me out of the world; I was abhorred of them, and unfit to dwell among them, or be partaker of their benefits, because I had sinned against the Saviour. O how happy, now, was every creature over [what] I was; for they stood fast and kept their station, but I was gone and lost.

188. Then breaking out in the bitterness of my soul, I said 'to myself,' with a grievous sigh, How can God comfort such a wretch as I? I had no sooner said it but this returned upon me, as an echo doth answer a voice, This sin is not unto death. At which I was as if I had been raised out of a grave, and cried out again, Lord, how couldest thou find out such a word as this? for I was filled with admiration at the fitness, and, also, at the unexpectedness of the sentence, 'the fitness of the Word, the rightness of the timing of it, the power, and sweetness, and light, and glory that came with it, also, was marvelous to me to find. I was now, for the time, out of doubt as to that about which I so much was in doubt before; my fears before were, that my sin was not pardonable, and so that I had no right to pray, to repent, &c., or that if I did, it would be of no advantage or profit to me. But now, thought I, if this sin is not unto death, then it is pardonable; therefore, from this I have encouragement to come to God, by Christ, for mercy, to consider the promise of forgiveness as that which stands with open arms to receive me, as well as others. This, therefore, was a great easement to my mind; to wit, that my sin was pardonable, that it was not the sin unto death (1Jn 5:16-17). None but those that know what my trouble, by their own experience, was, can tell what relief came to my soul by this consideration; it was a release to me from my former bonds, and a shelter from my former storm. I seemed now to stand upon the same ground with other sinners, and to have as good right to the Word and prayer as any of them.' [45]

189. Now, 'I say,' I was in hopes that my sin was not unpardonable, but that there might be hopes for me to obtain forgiveness. But, oh, how Satan did now lay about him for to bring me down again! But he could by no means do it, neither this day nor the most part of the next, for this sentence stood like a mill post at my back; yet, towards the evening of the next day, I felt this word begin to leave me and to withdraw its supportation from me, and so I returned to my old fears again, but with a great deal of grudging and peevishness, for I feared the sorrow of despair; 'nor could my faith now longer retain this word.'

190. But the next day, at evening, being under many fears, I went to seek the Lord; and as I prayed, I cried, 'and my soul cried' to him in these words, with strong cries:—O Lord, I beseech thee, show me that thou hast loved me with everlasting love (Jer 31:3). I had no sooner said it but, with sweetness, this returned upon me, as an echo or sounding again, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Now I went to bed at quiet; also, when I awaked the next morning, it was fresh upon my soul—'and I believed it.'

191. But yet the tempter left me not; for it could not be so little as an hundred times that he that day did labour to break my peace. Oh! the combats and conflicts that I did then meet with as I strove to hold by this word; that of Esau would fly in my face like to lightning. I should be sometimes up and down twenty times in an hour, yet God did bear me up and keep my heart upon this word, from which I had also, for several days together, very much sweetness and comfortable hopes of pardon; for thus it was made out to me, I loved thee whilst thou wast committing this sin, I loved thee before, I love thee still, and I will love thee for ever.

192. Yet I saw my sin most barbarous, and a filthy crime, and could not but conclude, and that with great shame and astonishment, that I had horribly abused the holy Son of God; wherefore I felt my soul greatly to love and pity him, and my bowels to yearn towards him; for I saw he was still my Friend, and did reward me good for evil; yea, the love and affection that then did burn within to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ did work, at this time, such a strong and hot desire of revengement upon myself for the abuse I had done unto him, that, to speak as then I thought, had I had a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could freely 'then' have spilt it all at the command and feet of this my Lord and Saviour.

193. And as I was thus in musing and in my studies, 'considering' how to love the Lord and to express my love to him, that saying came in upon me, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psa 130:3-4). These were good words to me, [46] especially the latter part thereof; to wit, that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that he might be feared; that is, as then I understood it, that he might be loved and had in reverence; for it was thus made out to me, that the great God did set so high an esteem upon the love of his poor creatures, that rather than he would go without their love he would pardon their transgressions.

194. And now was that word fulfilled on me, and I was also refreshed by it, Then shall they be ashamed and confounded, "and never open their mouth any more because of their shame, when I am pacified toward them for all that they have done, saith the Lord God" (Eze 16:63). Thus was my soul at this time, and, as I then did think, for ever, set at liberty from being again afflicted with my former guilt and amazement.

195. But before many weeks were over I began to despond again, fearing lest, notwithstanding all that I had enjoyed, that yet I might be deceived and destroyed at the last; for this consideration came strong into my mind, that whatever comfort and peace I thought I might have from the Word of the promise of life, yet unless there could be found in my refreshment a concurrence and agreement in the Scriptures, let me think what I will thereof, and hold it never so fast, I should find no such thing at the end; "for the Scripture cannot be broken" (Joh 10:35).

196. Now began my heart again to ache and fear I might meet with disappointment at the last; wherefore I began, with all seriousness, to examine my former comfort, and to consider whether one that had sinned as I have done, might with confidence trust upon the faithfulness of God, laid down in those words by which I had been comforted and on which I had leaned myself. But now were brought those sayings to my mind, "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance" (Heb 6:4-6). "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb 10:26-27). Even "as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb 12:16-17).

197. Now was the word of the gospel forced from my soul, so that no promise or encouragement was to be found in the Bible for me; and now would that saying work upon my spirit to afflict me, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as *other* people" (Hos 9:1). For I saw indeed there was cause of rejoicing for those that held to Jesus; but as for me, I had cut myself off by my transgressions, and left myself neither foot-hold, nor hand-hold, amongst all the stays and props in the precious word of life.

198. And truly I did now feel myself to sink into a gulf, as an house whose foundation is destroyed; I did liken myself, in this condition, unto the case of a child that was fallen into a mill-pit, who, though it could make some shift to scrabble and spraul in the water, yet because it could find neither hold for hand nor foot, therefore at last it must die in that condition. So soon as this fresh assault had fastened on my soul, that scripture came into my heart, "This *is* for *many* days" (Dan 10:14). And indeed I found it was so; for I could not be delivered, nor brought to peace again, until well nigh two years and an half were completely finished. Wherefore these words, though in themselves they tended to discouragement, yet to me, who feared this condition would be eternal, they were at sometimes as an help and refreshment to me.

199. For, thought I, many days are not, not for ever, many days will have an end, therefore seeing I was to be afflicted, not a few, but many days, yet I was glad it was but for many days. Thus, I say, I could recall myself sometimes, and give myself a help, for as soon as ever the words came 'into my mind' at first, I knew my trouble would be long; yet this would be but sometimes, for I could not always think on this, nor ever be helped 'by it,' though I did.

200. Now, while these Scriptures lay before me, and laid sin 'anew' at my door, that saying in the 18th of Luke, with others, did encourage me to prayer. Then the tempter again laid at me very sore, suggesting, That neither the mercy of God, nor yet the blood of Christ, did at all concern me, nor could they help me for my sin; 'therefore it was in vain to pray.' Yet, thought I, I will pray. But, said the tempter, your sin is unpardonable. 'Well, said I, I will pray. It is to no boot, said he.' Yet, said I, I will pray. So I went to prayer to God; and while I was at prayer, I uttered words to this effect, Lord, Satan tells me that neither thy mercy, nor Christ's blood, is sufficient to save my soul; Lord, shall I honour thee most, by believing thou wilt and canst? or 'him,' by believing thou neither wilt nor canst? Lord, I would fain honour thee, by believing thou wilt and canst.

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201. And as I was thus before the Lord, that scripture fastened on my heart, "O [wo]man, great *is* thy faith" (Mat 15:28), even as if one had clapped me on the back, as I was on my knees before God. Yet I was not able to believe this, 'that this was a prayer of faith,' till almost six months after; for I could not think that I had faith, or that there should be a word for me to act faith on; therefore I should still be as sticking in the jaws of desperation, and went mourning up and down 'in a sad condition,' crying, Is his mercy clean gone? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? And I thought sometimes, even when I was groaning in these expressions, they did seem to make a question whether it was or no; yet I greatly feared it was.

202. 'There was nothing now that I longed for more than to be put out of doubt, as to this thing in question; and, as I was vehemently desiring to know if there was indeed hopes for me, these words came rolling into my mind, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be a favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" (Psa 77:7-9). And all the while they run in my mind, methought I had this still as the answer, It is a question whether he had or no; it may be he hath not. Yea, the interrogatory seemed to me to carry in it a sure affirmation that indeed he had not, nor would so cast off, but would be favourable; that his promise doth not fail, and that he had not forgotten to be gracious, nor would in anger shut up his tender mercy. Something, also, there was upon my heart at the same time, which I now cannot call to mind; which, with this text, did sweeten my heart, and made me conclude that his mercy might not be quite gone, nor clean gone for ever.' [47]

203. At another time, I remember I was again much under the question, Whether the blood of Christ was sufficient to save my soul? In which doubt I continued from morning till about seven or eight at night; and at last, when I was, as it were, quite worn out with fear, lest it should not lay hold on me, these words did sound suddenly within my heart, He is able. But methought this word ABLE was spoke so loud unto me; it showed such a great word, 'it seemed to be writ in great letters,' and gave such a justle to my fear and doubt, I mean for the time it tarried with me, which was about a day, as I never had from that all my life, either before or after that (Heb 7:25).

204. But one morning, when I was again at prayer, and trembling under the fear of this, that no word of God could help me, that piece of a sentence darted in upon me, "My grace is sufficient." At this methought I felt some stay, as if there might be hopes. But, oh how good a thing it is for God to send his Word! For about a fortnight before I was looking on this very place, and then I thought it could not come near my soul with comfort, 'therefore' I threw down my book in a pet. 'Then I thought it was not large enough for me; no, not large enough'; but now, it was as if it had arms of grace so wide that it could not only enclose me, but many more besides.

205. By these words I was sustained, yet not without exceeding conflicts, for the space of seven or eight weeks; for my peace would be in and out, sometimes twenty times a day; comfort now, and trouble presently; peace now, and before I could go a furlong as full of fear and guilt as ever heart could hold; and this was not only now and then, but my whole seven weeks' experience; for this about the sufficiency of grace, and that of Esau's parting with his birthright, would be like a pair of scales within my mind, sometimes one end would be uppermost, and sometimes again the other; according to which would be my peace or trouble.

206. Therefore I still did pray to God, that he would come in with this Scripture more fully on my heart; to wit, that he would help me to apply the whole sentence, 'for as yet I could not: that he gave, I gathered; but further I could not go,' for as yet it only helped me to hope 'there might be mercy for me,' "My grace is sufficient"; and though it came no farther, it answered my former question; to wit, that there was hope; yet, because "for thee" was left out, I was not contented, but prayed to God for that also. Wherefore, one day as I was in a meeting of God's people, full of sadness and terror, for my fears again were strong upon me; and as I was now thinking my soul was never the better, but my case most sad and fearful, these words did, with great power, suddenly break in upon me, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my grace is sufficient for thee, my grace is sufficient for thee," three times together; and, oh! methought that every word as a mighty word unto me; as *my*, and *grace*, and *sufficient*, and *for thee*; they were then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be.

207. At which time my understanding was so enlightened, that I was as though I had seen the Lord Jesus look down from heaven through the tiles upon me, and direct these words unto me. This sent me mourning home, it broke my heart, and filled me full of joy, and laid me low as the dust; only it stayed not long with me, I mean in this glory and refreshing comfort, yet it continued with me for several weeks, and did encourage me to hope. But so soon as that powerful operation of it was taken off my heart, that other about Esau returned upon me as before; so my soul did hang as in a pair of scales again, sometimes up and sometimes down, now in peace, and anon again in terror.

208. Thus I went on for many weeks, sometimes comforted, and sometimes tormented; and, especially at some times, my torment would be very sore, for all those scriptures forenamed in the Hebrews, would be set before me, as the only sentences that would keep me out of heaven. Then, again, I should begin to repent that ever that thought went through me, I should also think thus with myself, Why, how many scriptures are there against me? There are but three or four: and cannot God miss them, and save me for all them? Sometimes, again, I should think, Oh! if it were not for these three or four words, now how might I be comforted? And I could hardly forbear, at some times, but to wish them out of the book.

209. Then methought I should see as if both Peter, and Paul, and John, and all the writers, did look with scorn upon me, and hold me in derision; and as if they said unto me, All our words are truth, one of as much force as another. It is not we that have cut you off, but you have cast away yourself; there is none of our sentences that you must take hold upon but these, and such as these: "It is impossible; there remains no more sacrifice for sin" (Heb 6). And "it had been better for them not to have known" the will of God, "than after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2Pe 2:21). "For the Scriptures cannot be broken." [48]

210. 'These, as the elders of the city of refuge, I saw were to be the judges both of my case and me, while I stood, with the avenger of blood at my heels, trembling at their gate for deliverance, also with a thousand fears and mistrusts, I doubted that they would shut me out for ever (Jos 20:3-4).'

211. Thus was I confounded, not knowing what to do, nor how to be satisfied in this question, Whether the scriptures could agree in the salvation of my soul? I quaked at the apostles, I knew their words were true, and that they must stand for ever.

212. And I remember one day, as I was in diverse frames of spirit, and considering that these frames were still according to the nature of the several scriptures that came in upon my mind; if this of grace, then was I quiet; but if that of Esau, then tormented; Lord, thought I, if both these scriptures would meet in my heart at once, I wonder which of them would get the better of me. So methought I had a longing mind that they might come both together upon me; yea, I desired of God they might.

213. Well, about two or three days after, so they did indeed; they bolted both upon me at a time, and did work and struggle strangely in me for a while; at last, that about Esau's birthright began to wax weak, and withdraw, and vanish; and this about the sufficiency of grace prevailed with peace and joy. And as I was in a muse about this thing, that scripture came home upon me, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (Jas 2:13).

214. This was a wonderment to me; yet truly I am apt to think it was of God; for the word of the law and wrath must give place to the word of life and grace; because, though the word of condemnation be glorious, yet the word of life and salvation doth far exceed in glory (2Co 3:8-12; Mar 9:5-7). Also, that Moses and Elias must both vanish, and leave Christ and his saints alone.

215. This scripture did also most sweetly visit my soul, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh 6:37). Oh, the comfort that I have had from this world, "in no wise"! as who should say, by no means, for no thing, whatever he hath done. But Satan would greatly labour to pull this promise from me, telling of me that Christ did not mean me, and such as I, but sinners of a lower rank, that had not done as I had done. But I should answer him again, Satan, here is in this word no such exception; but "him that comes," HIM, any him; "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And this I well remember still, that of all the sleights that Satan used to take this scripture from me, yet he never did so much as put this question, But do you come aright? And I have thought the reason was, because he thought I knew full well what coming aright was; for I saw that to come aright was to come as I was, a vile and ungodly sinner, and to cast myself at the feet of mercy, condemning myself for sin. If ever Satan and I did strive for any word 'of God in all my life, it was for this good word of Christ; he at one end and I at the other. Oh, what work did we make!' It was for this in John, 'I say, that we did so tug and strive'; he pulled and I pulled; but, God be praised, 'I got the better of him,' I got some sweetness from it.

216. But, notwithstanding all these helps and blessed words of grace, yet that of Esau's selling of his birthright would still at times distress my conscience; for though I had been most sweetly comforted, and that but just before, yet when that came into 'my' mind, it would make me fear again, I could not be quite rid thereof, it would every day be with me: wherefore now I went another way to work, even to consider the nature of this blasphemous thought; I mean, if I should take the words at the largest, and give them their own natural force and scope, even every word therein. So when I had thus considered, I found, that if they were fairly taken, they would amount to this, that I had freely left the Lord Jesus Christ to his choice, whether he would be my Saviour or no; for the wicked words were these, Let him go if he will. Then that scripture gave me hope, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). O Lord, said I, but I have left thee. Then it answered again, "But I will not leave thee." For this I thank God also.

217. Yet I was grievously afraid he should, and found it exceeding hard to trust him, seeing I had so offended him. I could have been exceeding glad that this thought had never befallen, for then I thought I could, with more ease and freedom abundance, have leaned upon his grace. I see it was with me, as it was with Joseph's brethren; the guilt of their own wickedness did often fill them with fears that their brother would at last despise them (Gen 50:15-17).

218. But above all the scriptures that I yet did meet with, that in the twentieth of Joshua was the greatest comfort to me, which speaks of the slayer that was to flee for refuge. And if the avenger of blood pursue the slayer, then, saith Moses, they that are the elders of the city of refuge shall not deliver him into his hand, because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not aforetime. Oh, blessed be God for this word; I was convinced that I was the slayer; and that the avenger of blood pursued me, that I felt with great terror; only now it remained that I inquire whether I have right to enter the city of refuge. [49] So I found that he must not, who lay in wait to shed blood: 'it was not the willful murderer,' but he who unwittingly did it, he who did unawares shed blood; 'not of spite, or grudge, or malice, he that shed it unwittingly,' even he who did not hate his neighbour before. Wherefore,

219. I thought verily I was the man that must enter, because I had smitten my neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not aforetime. I hated him not aforetime; no, I prayed unto him, was tender of sinning against him; yea, and against this wicked temptation I had strove for a twelvemonth before; yea, and also when it did pass through my heart, it did it in spite of my teeth: wherefore I thought I had right to enter this city, and the elders, which are the apostles, were not to deliver me up. This, therefore, was great comfort to me; and did give me much ground of hope.

220. Yet being very critical, for my smart had made me that I knew not what ground was sure enough to bear me, I had one question that my soul did much desire to be resolved about; and that was, Whether it be possible for any soul that hath indeed sinned the unpardonable sin, yet after that to receive though but the least true spiritual comfort from God through Christ? The which, after I had much considered, I found the answer was, No, they could not; and that for these reasons:--

221. First, Because those that have sinned that sin, they are debarred a share in the blood of Christ, and being shut out of that, they must needs be void of the least ground of hope, and so of spiritual comfort; for to such "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). Secondly, Because they are denied a share in the promise of life; they shall never be forgiven, "neither in this world, neither in that which is to come" (Mat 12:32). Thirdly, The Son of God excludes them also from a share in his blessed intercession, being for ever ashamed to own them both before his holy Father, and the blessed angels in heaven (Mar 8:38).

222. When I had, with much deliberation, considered of this matter, and could not but conclude that the Lord had comforted me, and that too after this my wicked sin; then, methought, I durst venture to come nigh unto those most fearful and terrible scriptures, with which all this while I had been so greatly affrighted, and on which, indeed, before I durst scarce cast mine eye, yea, had much ado an hundred times to forbear wishing of them out of the Bible; for I thought they would destroy me; but now, I say, I began to take some measure of encouragement to come close to them, to read them, and consider them, and to weigh their scope and tendency.

223. The which, when I began to do, I found their visage changed; for they looked not so grimly on me as before I thought they did. And, first, I came to the sixth of the Hebrews, yet trembling for fear it should strike me; which when I had considered, I found that the falling there intended was a falling quite away; that is, as I conceived, a falling from, and an absolute denial of the gospel of remission of sins by Christ; for from them the apostle begins his argument (vv 1-3). Secondly, I found that this falling away must be openly, even in the view of the world, even so as "to put Christ to an open shame." Thirdly, I found that those he there intended were for ever shut up of God, both in blindness, hardness, and impenitency: it is impossible they should be renewed again unto repentance. By all these particulars, I found, to God's everlasting praise, my sin was not the sin in this place intended.

'First, I confessed I was fallen, but not fallen away, that is, from the profession of faith in Jesus unto eternal life. Secondly, I confessed that I had put Jesus Christ to shame by my sin, but not to open shame; I did not deny him before men, nor condemn him as a fruitless one before the world. Thirdly, Nor did I find that God had shut me up, or denied me to come, though I found it hard work indeed to come to him by sorrow and repentance. Blessed be God for unsearchable grace.'

224. Then I considered that in the tenth of the Hebrews, and found that the willful sin there mentioned is not every willful sin, but that which doth throw off Christ, and then his commandments too. Secondly, That must also be done openly, before two or three witnesses, to answer that of the law (v 28). Thirdly, This sin cannot be committed, but with great despite done to the Spirit of grace; despising both the dissuasions from that sin, and the persuasions to the contrary. But the Lord knows, though this my sin was devilish, yet it did not amount to these.

225. And as touching that in the twelfth of the Hebrews, about Esau's selling his birthright, though this was that which killed me, and stood like a spear against me; yet now I did consider, First, That his was not a hasty thought against the continual labour of his mind, but a thought consented to and put in practice likewise, and that too after some deliberation (Gen 25). Secondly, It was a public and open action, even before his brother, if not before many more; this made his sin of a far more heinous nature than otherwise it would have been. Thirdly, He continued to slight his birthright: "He did eat and drink, and went his way; thus Esau despised *his* birthright" (Gen 25:34). Yea, twenty years after, he was found to despise it still. "And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself" (Gen 33:9).

226. Now as touching this, that Esau sought a place of repentance; thus I thought, first, This was not for the birthright, but for the blessing; this is clear from the apostle, and is distinguished by Esau himself; "he took away my birthright [that is, formerly]; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing" (Gen 27:36). Secondly, Now, this being thus considered, I came again to the apostle, to see what might be the mind of God, in a New Testament style and sense, concerning Esau's sin; and so far as I could conceive, this was the mind of God, That the birthright signified regeneration, and the blessing the eternal inheritance; for so the apostle seems to hint, "Lest there *be* any profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright"; as if he should say, Lest there be any person amongst you, that shall cast off all those blessed beginnings of God that at present are upon him, in order to a new birth, lest they become as Esau, even be rejected afterwards, when they would inherit the blessing.

227. For many there are who, in the day of grace and mercy, despise those things which are indeed the birthright to heaven, who yet, when the deciding day appears, will cry as loud as Esau, "Lord, Lord, open to us"; but then, as Isaac would not repent, no more will God the Father, but will say, I have blessed these, yea, and they shall be blessed; but as for you, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity (Gen 27:33; Luk 13:25-27).

228. When I had thus considered these scriptures, and found that thus to understand them was not against, but according to other scriptures; this still added further to my encouragement and comfort, and also gave a great blow to that objection, to wit, that the scripture could not agree in the salvation of my soul. And now remained only the hinder part of the tempest, for the thunder was gone beyond me, only some drops did still remain, that now and then would fall upon me; but because my former frights and anguish were very sore and deep, therefore it did oft befall me still, as it befalleth those that have been scared with fire, I thought every voice was Fire, fire; every little touch would hurt my tender conscience. [50]

229. But one day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal, I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was adoing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever (Heb 13:8).

230. Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also fled away; so that, from that time, those dreadful scriptures of God left off to trouble me; now went I also home rejoicing, for the grace and love of God. So when I came home, I looked to see if I could find that sentence, Thy righteousness is in heaven; but could not find such a saying, wherefore my heart began to sink again, only that was brought to my remembrance, he "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"; by this word I saw the other sentence true (1Co 1:30).

231. For by this scripture, I saw that the man Christ Jesus, as he is distinct from us, as touching his bodily presence, so he is our righteousness and sanctification before God. Here, therefore, I lived for some time, very sweetly at peace with God through Christ; Oh methought, Christ! Christ! there was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes, I was not now only for looking upon this and the other benefits of Christ apart, as of his blood, burial, or resurrection, but considered him as a whole Christ! As he in whom all these, and all other his virtues, relations, offices, and operations met together, and that 'as he sat' on the right hand of God in heaven.

232. It was glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of all his benefits, and that because of this: now I could look from myself to him, and should reckon that all those graces of God that now were green in me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies [51] that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home! Oh, I saw my gold was in my trunk at home! In Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all; all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification, and all my redemption.

233. Further, the Lord did also lead me into the mystery of union with the Son of God, that I was joined to him, that I was flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, and now was that a sweet word to me in Eph 5:30. By this also was my faith in him, as my righteousness, the more confirmed to me; for if he and I were one, then his righteousness was mine, his merits mine, his victory also mine. Now could I see myself in heaven and earth at once; in heaven by my Christ, by my head, by my righteousness and life, though on earth by my body or person.

234. Now I saw Christ Jesus was looked on of God, and should also be looked upon by us, as that common or public person, [52] in whom all the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned; that we fulfilled the law by him, died by him, rose from the dead by him, got the victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell, by him; when he died, we died; and so of his resurrection. "Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise," saith he (Isa 26:19). And again, "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (Hosea 6:2); which is now fulfilled by the sitting down of the Son of man on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, according to that to the Ephesians, he "hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

235. Ah, these blessed considerations and scriptures, with many other of a like nature, were in those days made to spangle in mine eyes, 'so that I have cause to say,' "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness" (Psa 150:1-2).

236. Having thus, in few words, given you a taste of the sorrow and affliction that my soul went under, by the guilt and terror that this my wicked thought did lay me under! and having given you also a touch of my deliverance therefrom, and of the sweet and blessed comfort that I met with afterwards, which comfort dwelt about a twelve-month with my heart, to my unspeakable admiration; I will now, God willing, before I proceed any further, give you in a word or two, what, as I conceive, was the cause of this temptation; and also after that, what advantage, at the last, it became unto my soul.

237. For the causes, I conceived they were principally two: of which two also I was deeply convinced all the time this trouble lay upon me. The first was, for that I did not, when I was delivered from the temptation that went before, still pray to God to keep me from temptations that were to come; for though, as I can say in truth, my soul was much in prayer before this trial seized me, yet then I prayed only, or at the most, principally for the removal of present troubles, and for fresh discoveries of 'his' love in Christ! which I saw afterwards was not enough to do; I also should have prayed that the great God would keep me from the evil that was to come.

238. Of this I was made deeply sensible by the prayer of holy David, who, when he was under present mercy, yet prayed that God would hold him back from sin and temptation to come; "Then," saith he, "shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the GREAT transgression" (Psa 19:13). By this very word was I galled and condemned, quite through this long temptation.

239. That also was another word that did much condemn me for my folly, in the neglect of this duty (Heb 4:16), "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This I had not done, and therefore was suffered thus to sin and fall, according to what is written, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." And truly this very thing is to this day of such weight and awe upon me, that I dare not, when I come before the Lord, go off my knees, until I entreat him for help and mercy against the temptations that are to come; and I do beseech thee, reader, that thou learn to beware of my negligence, by the affliction that for this thing I did for days, and months, and years, with sorrow undergo.

240. Another cause of this temptation was, that I had tempted God; and on this manner did I do it. Upon a time my wife was great with child, and before her full time was come, her pangs, as of a woman in travail, were fierce and strong upon her, even as if she would have immediately fallen in labour, and been delivered of an untimely birth. Now, at this very time it was, that I had been so strongly tempted to question the being of God; wherefore, as my wife lay crying by me, I said, but with all secrecy imaginable, even thinking in my heart, Lord, if thou wilt now remove this sad affliction from my wife, and cause that she be troubled no more therewith this night, and now were her pangs just upon her, then I shall know that thou canst discern the most secret thoughts of the heart.

241. I had no sooner said it in my heart, but her pangs were taken from her, and she was cast into a deep sleep, and so she continued till morning; at this I greatly marveled, not knowing what to think; but after I had been awake a good while, and heard her cry no more, I fell to sleeping also. So when I waked in the morning, it came upon me again, even what I had said in my heart the last night, and how the Lord had showed me that he knew my secret thoughts, which was a great astonishment unto me for several weeks after.

242. Well, about a year and a half afterwards, that wicked sinful thought, of which I have spoken before, went through my wicked heart, even this thought, Let Christ go if he will; so when I was fallen under guilt for this, the remembrance of my other thought, and of the effect thereof, would also come upon me with this retort, which also carried rebuke along with it, Now you may see that God doth know the most secret thoughts of the heart. [53]

243. And with this, that of the passages that were betwixt the Lord and his servant Gideon fell upon my spirit; how because that Gideon tempted God with his fleece, both wet and dry, when he should have believed and ventured upon his word, therefore the Lord did afterwards so try him, as to send him against an innumerable company of enemies; and that too, as to outward appearance, without any strength or help (Judg 6, 7). Thus he served me, and that justly, for I should have believed his word, and not have put an IF upon the all-seeingness of God.

244. And now to show you something of the advantages that I also gained by this temptation; and first, By this I was made continually to possess in my soul a very wonderful sense both of the being and glory of God, and of his beloved Son; in the temptation 'that went' before, my soul was perplexed with 'unbelief, blasphemy, hardness of heart, questions about the being of God, Christ, the truth of the Word, and certainty of the world to come; I say, then I was greatly assaulted and tormented with' atheism; but now the case was otherwise, now was God and Christ continually before my face, though not in a way of comfort, but in a way of exceeding dread and terror. The glory of the holiness of God did at this time break me to pieces; and the bowels and compassion of Christ did break me as on the wheel; [54] for I could not consider him but as a lost and rejected Christ, the remembrance of which was as the continual breaking of my bones.

245. The Scriptures now also were wonderful things unto me; I saw that the truth and verity of them were the keys of the kingdom of heaven; those 'that' the Scriptures favour they must inherit bliss, but those 'that' they oppose and condemn must perish evermore. Oh this word, "For the Scripture cannot be broken": would rend the caul of my heart; and so would that other, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained." Now I saw the apostles to be the elders of the city of refuge (Jos 20:4), those 'that' they were to receive in, were received to life; but those that they shut out were to be slain by the avenger of blood. [55]

246. Oh! one sentence of the Scripture did more afflict and terrify my mind, I mean those sentences that stood against me, as sometimes I thought they every one did, more I say, than an army of forty thousand men that might have come against me. Woe be to him against whom the Scriptures bend themselves.

247. By this temptation I was made 'to' see more into the nature of the promises than ever I was before; for I lying now trembling under the mighty hand of God, continually torn and rent by the thunderings of his justice; this made me, with careful heart and watchful eye, with great seriousness, to turn over every leaf, and with much diligence, mixed with trembling, to consider every sentence, together with its natural force and latitude.

248. By this temptation, also, I was greatly beaten off my former foolish practice, of putting by the word of promise when it came into my mind; for now, though I could not suck that comfort and sweetness from the promise as I had done at other times, yea, like to a man a-sinking, I should catch at all I saw; formerly I thought I might not meddle with the promise unless I felt its comfort, but now it was no time thus to do, the avenger of blood too hardly did pursue me.

249. Now therefore I was glad to catch at that word, which yet I feared I had no ground or right to own; and even to leap into the bosom of that promise, that yet I feared did shut its heart against me. Now also I should labour to take the Word as God had laid it down, without restraining the natural force of one syllable thereof. O what did I now see in that blessed sixth of John, "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out" (v 37). Now I began to consider with myself, that God had a bigger mouth to speak with than I had heart to conceive with. I thought also with myself that he spake not his words in haste, or in unadvised heat, but with infinite wisdom and judgment, and in very truth and faithfulness (2Sa 3:18).

250. I should in these days, often in my greatest agonies, even flounce towards the promise, as the horses do towards sound ground that yet stick in the mire, concluding, though as one almost bereft of his wits through fear, on this I will rest and stay, and leave the fulfilling of it to the God of heaven that made it. Oh! many a pull hath my heart had with Satan for that blessed sixth of John. I did not now, as at other times, look principally for comfort, though, O how welcome would it have been unto me! But now a word, a word to lean a weary soul upon, that I might not sink for ever! 'it was that I hunted for.'

251. Yea, often when I have been making to the promise, I have seen as if the Lord would refuse my soul for ever. I was often as if I had run upon the pikes, and as if the Lord had thrust at me to keep me from him as with a flaming sword. Then I should think of Esther, who went to petition the king contrary to the law (Est 4:16). I thought also of Benhadad's servants, who went with ropes upon their heads to their enemies for mercy (1Ki 20:31). The woman of Canaan also, that would not be daunted, though called dog by Christ (Mat 15:20-28). And the man that went to borrow bread at midnight (Luk 11:5-8), were great encouragements unto me.

251. I never saw those heights and depths in grace, and love, and mercy, as I saw after this temptation. Great sins do draw out great grace; and where guilt is most terrible and fierce there the mercy of God in Christ, when showed to the soul, appears most high and mighty. When Job had passed through his captivity, he had "twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). Blessed be God for Jesus Christ our Lord. Many other things I might here make observation of, but I would be brief, and therefore shall at this time omit them, and do pray God that my harms may make others fear to offend, lest they also be made to bear the iron yoke as I 'did.'

'I had two or three times, at or about my deliverance from this temptation, such strange apprehensions of the grace of God, that I could hardly bear up under it, it was so out of measure amazing, when I thought it could reach me, that I do think, if that sense of it had abode long upon me, it would have made me incapable for business.'

[ENTERS INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT BEDFORD, IN WHICH HE AFTERWARDS BECAME A MINISTERING ELDER.]

253. Now I shall go forward to give you a relation of other of the Lord's dealings with me, of his dealings with me at sundry other seasons, and of the temptations I then did meet withal. I shall begin with what I met with when I first did join in fellowship with the people of God in Bedford. [56] After I had propounded to the church that my desire was to walk in the order and ordinances of Christ with them, and was also admitted by them; while I thought of that blessed ordinance of Christ, which was his last supper with his disciples before his death, that Scripture, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luk 22:19), was made a very precious word unto me; for by it the Lord did come down upon my conscience with the discovery of his death for my sins; and as I then felt, did as if he plunged me in the virtue of the same. But, behold, I had not been long a partaker at that ordinance, but such fierce and sad temptations did attend me at all times therein, both to blaspheme the ordinance, and to wish some deadly thing to those that then did eat thereof; that, lest I should at any time be guilty of consenting to these wicked and fearful thoughts, I was forced to bend myself all the while to pray to God to keep me from such blasphemies; and also to cry to God to bless the bread and cup to them as it went from mouth to mouth. The reason of this temptation I have thought since was, because I did not, with that reverence 'as became me,' at first approach to partake thereof.

254. Thus I continued for three quarters of a year, and could never have rest nor ease; but at last the Lord came in upon my soul with that same scripture by which my soul was visited before; and after that I have been usually very well and comfortable in the partaking of that blessed ordinance, and have, I trust, therein discerned the Lord's body as broken for my sins, and that his precious blood hath been shed for my transgressions.

255. Upon a time I was somewhat inclining to a consumption, wherewith, about the spring, I was suddenly and violently seized with much weakness in my outward man, insomuch that I thought I could not live. Now began I afresh to give myself up to a serious examination after my state and condition for the future, and of my evidences for that blessed world to come; for it hath, I bless the name of God, been my usual course, as always, so especially in the day of affliction, to endeavour to keep my interest in the life to come clear before my eye.

256. But I had no sooner began to recall to mind my former experience of the goodness of God to my soul, but there came flocking into my mind, an innumerable company of my sins and transgressions, amongst which these were at this time most to my affliction, namely, my deadness, dullness, and coldness in holy duties; my wanderings of heart, 'of' my wearisomeness in all good things, my want of love to God, his ways, and people, with this at the end of all, Are these the fruits of Christianity? are these the tokens of a blessed man?

257. At the apprehension of these things my sickness was doubled upon me, for now was I sick in my inward man, my soul was clogged with guilt; now also was my former experience of God's goodness to me quite taken out of my mind, and hid as if it had never been, nor seen. Now was my soul greatly pinched between these two considerations, Live I must not, Die I dare not; now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost; but as I was walking up and down in the house, as a man in a most woeful state, that word of God took hold of my heart, Ye are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). 'But oh what a turn it made upon me!'

258. Now was I as one awakened out of some troublesome sleep and dream, and listening to this heavenly sentence, I was as if I had heard it thus expounded to me: Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy sins and infirmities I cannot save thy soul, but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not on thee, and will deal with thee according as I am pleased with him. At this I was greatly lightened in my mind, and made to understand that God could justify a sinner at any time; it was but 'his' looking upon Christ, and imputing of his benefits to us, and the work was forthwith done.

259. And as I was thus in a muse that scripture also came with great power upon my spirit, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, &c. (Tit 3:5; 2Ti 1:9). Now was I got on high; I saw myself within the arms of grace and mercy; and though I was before afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried, Let me die. Now death was lovely and beautiful in my sight; for I saw we shall never live indeed till we be gone to the other world. Oh, methought this life is but a slumber in comparison of that above; at this time also I saw more in those words, "Heirs of God" (Rom 8:17), than ever I shall be able to express while I live in this world. "Heirs of God!" God himself is the portion of the saints. This I saw and wondered at, but cannot tell you what I saw. [57]

260. 'Again, as I was at another time very ill and weak, all that time also the tempter did beset me strongly, for I find he is much for assaulting the soul when it begins to approach towards the grave, then is his opportunity, labouring to hide from me my former experience of God's goodness; also setting before me the terrors of death and the judgment of God, insomuch that at this time, through my fear of miscarrying for ever, should I now die, I was as one dead before death came, and was as if I had felt myself already descending into the pit; methought, I said, there was no way, but to hell I must; but behold, just as I was in the midst of those fears, these words of the angels carrying Lazarus into Abraham's bosom darted in upon me, as who should say, So it shall be with thee when thou dost leave this world. This did sweetly revive my spirit, and help me to hope in God; which, when I had with comfort mused on a while, that word fell with great weight upon my mind, "O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?" (1Co 15:55). At this I became both well in body and mind at once, for my sickness did presently vanish, and I walked comfortably in my work for God again.'

261. At another time, though just before I was pretty well and savoury in my spirit, yet suddenly there fell upon me a great cloud of darkness, which did so hide from me the things of God and Christ, that I was as if I had never seen or known them in my life; I was also so overrun in my soul, with a senseless, heartless frame of spirit, that I could not feel my soul to move or stir after grace and life by Christ; I was as if my loins were broken, or as if my hands and feet had been tied or bound with chains. At this time also I felt some weakness to seize 'upon' my outward man, which made still the other affliction the more heavy and uncomfortable 'to me.'

262. After I had been in this condition some three or four days, as I was sitting by the fire, I suddenly felt this word to sound in my heart, I must go to Jesus; at this my former darkness and atheism fled away, and the blessed things of heaven were set within my view. While I was on this sudden thus overtaken with surprise, Wife, said I, is there ever such a scripture, I must go to Jesus? she said she could not tell, therefore I sat musing still to see if I could remember such a place; I had not sat above two or three minutes but that came bolting in upon me, "And to an innumerable company of angels," and withal, Hebrews the twelfth, about the mount Sion was set before mine eyes (vv 22-24).

263. Then with joy I told my wife, O now I know, I know! But that night was a good night to me, I never had but few better; I longed for the company of some of God's people that I might have imparted unto them what God had showed me. Christ was a precious Christ to my soul that night; I could scarce lie in my bed for joy, and peace, and triumph, through Christ; this great glory did not continue upon me until morning, yet that twelfth of the author to the Hebrews (Heb 12:22-23) was a blessed scripture to me for many days together after this.

264. The words are these, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Through this blessed sentence the Lord led me over and over, first to this word, and then to that, and showed me wonderful glory in every one of them. These words also have oft since this time been great refreshment to my spirit. Blessed be God for having mercy on me.

[A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S CALL TO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.]

265. And now I am speaking my experience, I will in this place thrust in a word or two concerning my preaching the Word, and of God's dealing with me in that particular also. For after I had been about five or six years awakened, and helped 'myself' to see both the want and worth of Jesus Christ our Lord, and 'also' enabled to venture my soul upon him, some of the most able among the saints with us, I say the most able for judgment and holiness of life, as they conceived, did perceive that God had counted me worthy to understand something of his will in his holy and blessed Word, and had given me utterance, in some measure, to express what I saw to others for edification; 'therefore' they desired me, and that with much earnestness, that I would be willing, at sometimes, to take in hand, in one of the meetings, to speak a word of exhortation unto them. [58]

266. The which, though at the first it did much dash and abash my spirit, yet being still by them desired and intreated, I consented to their request, and did twice at two several assemblies, but in private, though with much weakness and infirmity, discover my gift amongst them; at which they not only seemed to be, but did solemnly protest, as in the sight of the great God, they were both affected and comforted, and gave thanks to the Father of mercies for the grace bestowed on me.

267. After this, sometimes when some of them did go into the country to teach, they would also that I should go with them; where, though as yet I did not, nor durst not, make use of my gift in an open way, yet more privately still as I came amongst the good people in those places, I did sometimes speak a word of admonition unto them also; the which, they as the other received, with rejoicing, at the mercy of God to me-ward, professing their souls were edified thereby.

268. Wherefore, to be brief, at last, being still desired by the church, after some solemn prayer to the Lord, with fasting, I was more particularly called forth, and appointed to a more ordinary and public preaching the word, not only to, and amongst them that believed, but also to offer the gospel to those who had not yet received the faith thereof; about which time I did evidently find in my mind a secret pricking forward thereto; though I bless God, not for desire of vain glory, for at that time I was most sorely afflicted with the fiery darts of the devil concerning my eternal state.

269. But yet could not be content, unless I was found in the exercise of my gift, unto which also I was greatly animated, not only by the continual desires of the godly, but also by that saying of Paul to the Corinthians, "I beseech you, brethren (ye know the household of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaian, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth" (1Co 16:15-16).

270. By this text I was made to see that the Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and abilities should bury them in the earth, but rather did command and stir up such to the exercise of their gift, and also did commend those that were apt and ready so to do, "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." This scripture, in these days, did continually run in my mind, to encourage me and strengthen me in this my work for God; I have also been encouraged from several other scriptures and examples of the godly, both specified in the Word and other ancient histories (Act 8:4, Act 18:24-25; 1Pe 4:10; Rom 12:6; Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*).

271. Wherefore, though of myself, of all the saints the most unworthy, yet I, but with great fear and trembling at the sight of my own weakness, did set upon the work, and did according to my gift, and the proportion of my faith, preach that blessed gospel that God had showed me in the holy Word of truth; which, when the country understood, they came in to hear the Word by hundreds, and that from all parts, though upon sundry and divers accounts.

272. And I thank God he gave unto me some measure of bowels and pity for their souls, which also did put me forward to labour with great diligence and earnestness, to find out such a word as might, if God would bless it, lay hold of, and awaken the conscience, in which also the good Lord had respect to the desire of his servant; for I had not preached long before some began to be touched by the Word, and to be greatly afflicted in their minds at the apprehension of the greatness of their sin, and of their need of Jesus Christ.

273. But I at first could not believe that God should speak by me to the heart of any man, still counting myself unworthy; yet those who thus were touched would love me and have a peculiar respect for me; and though I did put it from me, that they should be awakened by me, still they would confess it and affirm it before the saints of God; they would also bless God for me, unworthy wretch that I am! and count me God's instrument that showed to them the way of salvation.

274. Wherefore, seeing them in both their words and deeds to be so constant, and also in their hearts so earnestly pressing after the knowledge of Jesus Christ, rejoicing that ever God did send me where they were; then I began to conclude it might be so, that God had owned in his work such a foolish one as I, and then came that word of God to my heart with much sweet refreshment, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" (Job 29:13).

275. At this therefore I rejoiced, yea, the tears of those whom God did awaken by my preaching would be both solace and encouragement to me; for I thought on those sayings, "Who is he that maketh me glad but the same which is made sorry by me?" (2Co 2:2); and again, Though "I be not an apostle to others, yet, doubtless, I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1Co 9:2). These things, therefore, were as another argument unto me that God had called me to, and stood by me in this work.

276. In my preaching of the Word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to being where his Word begins with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God, by the law, doth belong to, and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense; [59] for the terrors of the law, and guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my pour soul did groan and tremble to astonishment.

277. Indeed I have been as one sent to them from the dead; I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of. I can truly say, and that without dissembling, that when I have been to preach, I have gone full of guilt and terror even to the pulpit door, and there it hath been taken off, and I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work, and then immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit stairs, I have been as bad as I was before; yet God carried me on, but surely with a strong hand, for neither guilt or hell could take me off my work.

278. Thus I went for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them. After which the Lord came in upon my own soul with some staid peace and comfort through Christ; for he did give me many sweet discoveries of his blessed grace through him. Wherefore now I altered in my preaching, for still I preached what I saw and felt; now therefore I did much labour to hold forth Jesus Christ in all his offices, relations, and benefits unto the world; and did strive also to discover, to condemn, and remove those false supports and props on which the world doth both lean, and by them fall and perish. On these things also I staid as long as on the other.

279. After this, God led me into something of the mystery of union with Christ; wherefore that I discovered and showed to them also. And when I had traveled through these three chief points of the Word of God, about the space of five years or more, I was caught in my present practice and cast into prison, where I have lain [60] above as long again, to confirm the truth by way of suffering, as I was before in testifying of it according to the Scriptures in a way of preaching.

280. When I have been preaching, I thank God, my heart hath often all the time of this and the other exercise, with great earnestness, cried to God that he would make the Word effectual to the salvation of the soul; still being grieved lest the enemy should take the Word away from the conscience, and so it should become unfruitful. Wherefore I did labour so to speak the Word, as that thereby, if it were possible, the sins and person guilty might be particularized by it.

281. Also, when I have done the exercise, it hath gone to my heart to think the Word should now fall as rain on stony places, still wishing from my heart, O that they who have heard me speak this day did but see as I do what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is; and also what the grace, and love, and mercy of God is, through Christ, to men in such a case as they are, who are yet estranged from him. And, indeed, I did often say in my heart before the Lord, That if to be hanged up presently before their eyes would be a means to awaken them, and confirm them in the truth, I gladly should be contented.

282. For I have been in my preaching, especially when I have been engaged in the doctrine of life by Christ, without works, as if an angel of God had stood by at my back to encourage me. Oh, it hath been with such power and heavenly evidence upon my own soul, while I have been labouring to unfold it, to demonstrate it, and to fasten it upon the consciences of others, that I could not be contented with saying, I believe, and am sure; methought I was more than sure, if it be lawful so to express myself, that those things which then I asserted were true.

283. When I went first to preach the Word abroad, the doctors and priests of the country did open wide against me. [61] But I was persuaded of this, not to render railing for railing, but to see how many of their carnal professors I could convince of their miserable state by the law, and of the want and worth of Christ; for, thought I, This shall answer for me in time to come, when they shall be for my hire before their faces (Gen 30:33).

284. I never cared to meddle with things that were controverted, and in dispute amongst the saints, especially things of the lowest nature; yet it pleased me much to contend with great earnestness for the word of faith and the remission of sins by the death and sufferings of Jesus; but I say, as to other things, I should let them alone, because I saw they engendered strife, and because that they neither, in doing nor in leaving undone, did commend us to God to be his. Besides, I saw my work before me did run in another channel, even to carry an awakening word; to that therefore did I stick and adhere. [62]

285. I never endeavoured to, nor durst make use of other men's lines (Rom 15:18), [63] though I condemn not all that do, for I verily thought, and found by experience, that what was taught me by the Word and Spirit of Christ, could be spoken, maintained, and stood to by the soundest and best established conscience; and though I will not now speak all that I know in this matter, yet my experience hath more interest in that text of Scripture than many amongst men are aware (Gal 1:11-12).

286. If any of those who were awakened by my ministry did after that fall back, as sometimes too many did, I can truly say their loss hath been more to me than if one of my own children, begotten of my body, had been going to its grave; I think, verily, I may speak it without an offence to the Lord, nothing hath gone so near me as that, unless it was the fear of the loss of the salvation of my own soul. I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born; my heart hath been so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work, that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this than if he had made me the emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of 'the' earth without it! O these words, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death" (Jas 5:20). "'The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise" (Pro 11:30). "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan 12:3). "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1Th 2:19-20). These, I say, with many others of a like nature, have been great refreshments to me.'

287. I have observed, that where I have had a work to do for God, I have had first, as it were, the going of God upon my spirit to desire I might preach there. I have also observed that such and such souls in particular have been strongly set upon my heart, and I stirred up to wish for their salvation; and that these very souls have, after this, been given in as the fruits of my ministry. I have also observed, that a word cast in by the by hath done more execution in a sermon than all that was spoken besides; sometimes also when I have thought I did no good, then I did the most of all; and at other times when I thought I should catch them I have fished for nothing.

288. 'I have also observed, that where there hath been a work to do upon sinners, there the devil hath begun to roar in the hearts, and by the mouths of his servants. Yea, oftentimes when the wicked world hath raged most, there hath been souls awaked by the Word. I could instance particulars, but I forbear.'

289. My great desire in my fulfilling my ministry was to get into the darkest places of the country, even amongst those people that were furthest off of profession; yet not because I could not endure the light, for I feared not to show my gospel to any, but because I found my spirit leaned most after awakening and converting work, and the Word that I carried did lead itself most that way 'also'; "yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom 15:20).

290. In my preaching I have really been in pain, and have, as it were, travailed to bring forth children to God; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless it mattered not who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn. I have thought of that, "He that winneth souls *is* wise" (Pro 11:30); and again, "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the Lord; *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that hath filled his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Psa 127:3-5).

291. 'It pleased me nothing to see people drink in opinions if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ, and the worth of their own salvation, sound conviction for sin, especially for unbelief, and an heart set on fire to be saved by Christ, with strong breathing after a truly sanctified soul; that it was that delighted me; those were the souls I counted blessed.'

292. But in this work, as in all other, I had my temptations attending me, and that of diverse kinds, as sometimes I should be assaulted with great discouragement therein, fearing that I should not be able to speak the word at all to edification; nay, that I should not be able to speak sense unto the people; at which times I should have such a strange faintness and strengthlessness seize upon my body that my legs have scarce been able to carry me to the place of exercise.

293. Sometimes, again, when I have been preaching, I have been violently assaulted with thoughts of blasphemy, and strongly tempted to speak the words with my mouth before the congregation. I have also at some times, even when I have begun to speak the Word with much clearness, evidence, and liberty of speech, yet been before the ending of that opportunity so blinded, and so estranged from the things I have been speaking, and have also been so straitened in my speech, as to utterance before the people, that I have been as if I had not known or remembered what I have been about, or as if my head had been in a bag all the time of the exercise.

294. Again, when as sometimes I have been about to preach upon some smart and scorching [64] portion of the Word, I have found the tempter suggest, What, will you preach this? this condemns yourself; of this your own soul is guilty; wherefore preach not of it at all; or if you do, yet so mince it as to make way for your own escape; lest instead of awakening others, you lay that guilt upon your own soul, as you will never get from under.

295. 'But, I thank the Lord, I have been kept from consenting to these so horrid suggestions, and have rather, as Samson, bowed myself with all my might, to condemn sin and transgression wherever I found it, yea, though therein also I did bring guilt upon my own conscience! "Let me die," thought I, "with the Philistines" (Jdg 16:29-30), rather than deal corruptly with the blessed Word of God, "Thou that teachest another, teachest not thou thyself?" It is far better that thou do judge thyself, even by preaching plainly to others, than that thou, to save thyself, imprison the truth in unrighteousness; blessed be God for his help also in this.'

296. I have also, while found in this blessed work of Christ, been often tempted to pride and liftings up of heart; and though I dare not say I have not been infected with this, yet truly the Lord, of his precious mercy, hath so carried it towards me, that, for the most part, I have had but small joy to give way to such a thing; for it hath been my every day's portion to be let into the evil of my own heart, and still made to see such a multitude of corruptions and infirmities therein, that it hath caused hanging down of the head under all my gifts and attainments; I have felt this thorn in the flesh, the very mercy of God to me (2Co 12:7-9).

297. I have had also, together with this, some notable place or other of the Word presented before me, which word hath contained in it some sharp and piercing sentence concerning the perishing of the soul, notwithstanding gifts and parts; as, for instance, that hath been of great use unto me, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal" (1Co 13:1-2).

298. A tinkling cymbal is an instrument of music, with which a skillful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming music, that all who hear him play can scarcely hold from dancing; and yet behold the cymbal hath not life, neither comes the music from it, but because of the art of him that plays therewith; so then the instrument at last may come to nought and perish, though, in times past, such music hath been made upon it.

299. Just thus I saw it was and will be with them who have gifts, but want saving grace, they are in the hand of Christ, as the cymbal in the hand of David; and as David could, with the cymbal, make that mirth in the service of God, as to elevate the hearts of the worshippers, so Christ can use these gifted men, as with them to affect the souls of his people in his church; yet when he hath done all, hang them by as lifeless, though sounding cymbals. [65]

300. This consideration, therefore, together with some others, were, for the most part, as a maul on the head of pride, and desire of vain glory; what, thought I, shall I be proud because I am a sounding brass? Is it so much to be a fiddle? Hath not the least creature that hath life, more of God in it than these? Besides, I knew it was love should never die, but these must cease and vanish; so I concluded, a little grace, a little love, a little of the true fear of God, is better than all these gifts; yea, and I am fully convinced of it, that it is possible for a soul that can scarce give a man an answer, but with great confusion as to method, I say it is possible for them to have a thousand times more grace, and so to be more in the love and favour of the Lord than some who, by virtue of the gift of knowledge, can deliver themselves like angels. [66]

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301. 'Thus, therefore, I came to perceive, that though gifts in themselves were good to the thing for which they are designed, to wit, the edification of others; yet empty and without power to save the soul of him that hath them, if they be alone; neither are they, as so, any sign of a man's state to be happy, being only a dispensation of God to some, of whose improvement, or non-improvement, they must, when a little love more is over, give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.'

302. 'This showed me too, that gifts being alone, were dangerous, not in themselves, but because of those evils that attend them that have them, to wit, pride, desire of vain glory, self-conceit, &c., all which were easily blown up at the applause and commendation of every unadvised Christian, to the endangering of a poor creature to fall into the condemnation of the devil.'

303. 'I saw therefore that he that hath gifts had need be let into a sight of the nature of them, to wit, that they come short of making of him to be in a truly saved condition, lest he rest in them, and so fall short of the grace of God.'

304. 'He hath also cause to walk humbly with God, and be little in his own eyes, and to remember withal, that his gifts are not his own, but the church's; and that by them he is made a servant to the church; and he must give at last an account of his stewardship unto the Lord Jesus; and to give a good account, will be a blessed thing.'

305. 'Let all men therefore prize a little with the fear of the Lord; gifts indeed are desirable, but yet great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. It doth not say, the Lord gives gifts and glory, but the Lord gives grace and glory; and blessed is such an one, to whom the Lord gives grace, true grace, for that is a certain forerunner of glory.'

306. 'But when Satan perceived that his thus tempting and assaulting of me would not answer his design, to wit, to overthrown my ministry, and make it ineffectual, as to the ends thereof; then he tried another way, which was to stir up the minds of the ignorant and malicious, to load me with slanders and reproaches; now therefore I may say, That what the devil could devise, and his instruments invent, was whirled up and down the country against me, thinking, as I said, that by that means they should make my ministry to be abandoned.'

307. 'It began therefore to be rumoured up and down among the people, that I was a witch, a Jesuit, a highwayman, and the like.'

308. ' To all which, I shall only say, God knows that I am innocent. But as for mine accusers, let them provide themselves to meet me before the tribunal of the Son of God, there to answer for all these things, with all the rest of their iniquities, unless God shall give them repentance for them, for the which I pray with all my heart.'

309. 'But that which was reported with the boldest confidence, was, that I had my misses, my whores, my bastards, yea, two wives at once, and the like. Now these slanders, with the other, I glory in, because but slanders, foolish, or knavish lies, and falsehoods cast upon me by the devil and his seed; and should I not be dealt with thus wickedly by the world, I should want one sign of a saint, and a child of God. "Blessed are ye [said the Lord Jesus] when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Mat 4:11).'

310. 'These things, therefore, upon mine own account, trouble me not; no, though they were twenty times more than they are. I have a good conscience, and whereas they speak evil of me, as an evil doer, they shall be ashamed that falsely accuse my good conversation in Christ.' [67]

311. 'So then, what shall I say to those that have thus bespattered me? shall I threaten them? Shall I chide them? Shall I flatter them? Shall I intreat them to hold their tongues? No, not I, were it not for that these things make them ripe for damnation, that are the authors and abettors, I would say unto them, Report it, because it will increase my glory.'

312. 'Therefore I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament, it belongs to my Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached and reviled; and since all this is nothing else, as my God and my conscience do bear me witness; I rejoice in reproaches for Christ's sake.'

313. 'I also calling all those fools, or knaves, that have thus made it anything of their business, to affirm any of the things afore-named of me, namely, that I have been naught with other women, or the like. When they have used to the utmost of their endeavours, and made the fullest inquiry that they can, to prove against me truly, that there is any woman in heaven, or earth, or hell, that can say, I have at any time, in any place, by day or night, so much as attempted to be naught with them; and speak I thus, to beg mine enemies into a good esteem of me; no, not I: I will in this beg relief of no man; believe or disbelieve me in this, all is a case to me.' [68]

314. 'My foes have missed their mark in this their shooting at me. I am not the man. I wish that they themselves be guiltless. If all the fornicators and adulterers in England were hanged by the neck till they be dead, JOHN BUNYAN, the object of their envy, would be still alive and well. I know not whether there be such a thing as a woman breathing under the copes of the whole heaven, but by their apparel, their children, or by common fame, except my wife.'

315. 'And in this I admire the wisdom of God, that he made me shy of women from my first conversion until now. Those know, and can also bear me witness, with whom I have been most intimately concerned, that it is a rare thing to see me carry it pleasant towards a woman; the common salutation of a woman I abhor, it is odious to me in whomsoever I see it. Their company alone, I cannot away with. I seldom so much as touch a woman's hand, for I think these things are not so becoming me. When I have seen good men salute those women that they have visited, or that have visited them, I have at times made my objection against it, and when they have answered, that it was but a piece of civility, I have told them, it is not a comely sight; some indeed have urged the holy kiss; but then I have asked why they made baulks, [69] why they did salute the most handsome, and let the ill-favoured go; thus, how laudable soever such things have been in the eyes of others, they have been unseemly in my sight.'

316. 'And now for a wind up in this matter, I calling not only men, but angels, to prove me guilty of having carnally to do with any woman save my wife, nor am I afraid to do it a second time, knowing that I cannot offend the Lord in such a case, to call God for a record upon my soul, that in these things I am innocent. Not that I have been thus kept, because of any goodness in me more than any other, but God has been merciful to me, and has kept me; to whom I pray that he will keep me still, not only from this, but from every evil way and work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom. *Amen*.'

317. 'Now as Satan laboured by reproaches and slanders, to make me vile among my countrymen, that if possible, my preaching might be made of none effect, so there was added hereto a long and tedious imprisonment, that thereby I might be frighted from my service for Christ, and the world terrified, and made afraid to hear me preach, of which I shall in the next place give you a brief account.'

[A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S IMPRISONMENT]

318. Having made profession of the glorious gospel of Christ a long time, and preached the same about five years, I was apprehended at a meeting of good people in the country, among whom, had they let me alone, I should have preached that day, but they took me away from amongst them, and had me before a justice; who, after I had offered security for my appearing at the next sessions, yet committed me, because my sureties would not consent to be bound that I should preach no more to the people.

319. At the sessions after, I was indicted for an upholder and maintainer of unlawful assemblies and conventicles, and for not conforming to the national worship of the Church of England; and after some conference there with the justices, 'they taking my plain dealing with them for a confession, as they termed it, of the indictment,' did sentence me to perpetual banishment, because I refused to conform. So being again delivered up to the jailer's hands, I was had home to prison again, and there have lain now [70] 'complete twelve years,' waiting to see what God would suffer these men to do with me.

320. In which condition I have continued with much content, through grace, but have met with many turnings and goings upon my heart, both from the Lord, Satan, and my own corruptions; by all which, glory be to Jesus Christ, I have also received among many things, much conviction, instruction, and understanding, of which at large I shall not here discourse; only give you in a hint or two, a word that may stir up the godly to bless God, and to pray for me; and also to take encouragement, should the case be their own, not to fear what man can do unto them.

321. I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the Word of God as now; those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before, are made in this place and state to shine upon me; Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now; here I have seen him and felt him indeed: O that word, We have not preached unto you cunningly devised fables (2Pe 1:16); and that, God raised Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God (1Pe 1:2), were blessed words unto me in this my imprisoned condition.

322. These three or four scriptures also have been great refreshment in this condition to me (Joh 14:1-4, Joh 16:33; Col 3:3-4; Heb 12:22-24). So that sometimes when I have been in the savour of them, I have been able to laugh at destruction, and to fear neither the horse nor his rider (Job 39:18). I have had sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world: O, "the mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus" (Heb 12:22-24), have been sweet unto me in this place: I have seen THAT here, that I am persuaded I shall never, while in this world, be able to express; I have seen a truth in that scripture, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye se *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1Pe 1:8). [71]

323. I never knew what it was for God to stand by me at all turns, and at every offer of Satan 'to afflict me,' &c., as I have found him since I came in hither; for look how fears have presented themselves, so have supports and encouragements, yea, when I have started, even as it were at nothing else but my shadow, yet God, as being very tender of me, hath not suffered me to be molested, but would with one scripture and another strengthen me against all; insomuch that I have often said, Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comfort's sake (Ecc 7:14; 2Co 1:5).

324. Before I came to prison, I saw what was a-coming, and had especially two considerations warm upon my heart; the first was how to be able to endure, should my imprisonment be long and tedious; the second was how to be able to encounter death, should that be here my portion; for the first of these, that scripture (Col 1:11) was great information to me, namely, to pray to God to be "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." I could seldom go to prayer before I was imprisoned, but not for so little as a year together, this sentence, or sweet petition, would, as it were, thrust itself into my mind, and persuade me, that if ever I would go through long-suffering, I must have all patience, especially if I would endure it joyfully.

325. As to the second consideration, that saying (2 Cor 1:9), was of great use to me, But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. By this scripture I was made to see, that if ever I would suffer rightly, I must first pass a sentence of death upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me" (Mat 10:37).

326. The second was, to live upon God that is invisible; as *Paul* said in another place, the way not to faint, is to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal" (2Co 4:18). And thus I reasoned with myself; if I provide only for a prison, then the whip comes at unawares; and so does also the pillory; again, if I provide only for these, then I am not fit for banishment; further, if I conclude that banishment is the worst, then if death come I am surprised. So that I see the best way to go through sufferings is to trust in God through Christ, as touching the world to come; and as touching this world, to count "the grave my house, to make my bed in darkness, and to say to corruption, Thou *art* my father, and to the worm, *Thou art* my mother *and my sister*." That is, to familiarize these things to me. [72]

327. But notwithstanding these helps, I found myself a man, and compassed with infirmities; the parting with my wife and poor children hath oft been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones, and that not only because I am somewhat too too fond of those great mercies, but also because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides; O the thoughts of the hardship I thought my blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces.

328. Poor child, thought I, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world? Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee. But yet recalling myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. O, I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet thought I, I must do it, I must do it. And now I thought on those two milch kine that were to carry the ark of God into another country, and to leave their calves behind them (1Sa 6:10-12).

329. But that which helped me in this temptation was divers considerations, of which three in special here I will name; the first was the consideration of those two scriptures, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve *them* alive, and let thy widows trust in me." And again, "The Lord said, Verily it shall *be* well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well* in the time of evil," &c. (Jer 49:11, Jer 15:11).

330. I had also this consideration, that if I should now venture all for God, I engaged God to take care of my concernments; but if I forsook him and his ways, for fear of any trouble that should come to me or mine, then I should not only falsify my profession, but should count also that my concernments were not so sure, if left at God's feet, while I stood to and for his name, as they would be, if they were under my own tuition, [73] though with the denial of the way of God. This was a smarting consideration, and was as spurs unto my flesh. That scripture also greatly helped it to fasten the more upon me, where Christ prays against Judas, that God would disappoint him in all his selfish thoughts, which moved him to sell his master: pray read it soberly (Psa 109:6-20).

331. I had also another consideration, and that was, the dread of the torments of hell, which I was sure they must partake of, that for fear of the cross, do shrink from their profession of Christ, his words, and laws, before the sons of men; I thought also of the glory that he had prepared for those that, in faith, and love, and patience, stood to his ways before them. These things, I say, have helped me, when the thoughts of the misery that both myself and mine, might for the sake of my profession be exposed to, hath lain pinching on my mine.

332. When I have indeed conceited that I might be banished for my profession, then I have thought of that scripture, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb 11:37), for all they thought they were too bad to dwell and abide amongst them. I have also thought of that saying, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me." I have verily thought that my soul and it [74] have sometimes reasoned about the sore and sad estate of a banished and exiled condition, how they are exposed to hunger, to cold, to perils, to nakedness, to enemies, and a thousand calamities; and at last, it may be, to die in a ditch, like a poor forlorn and desolate sheep. But I thank God, hitherto I have not been moved by these most delicate reasonings, but have rather, by them, more approved my heart to God.

333. I will tell you a pretty business; I was once above all the rest in a very sad and low condition for many weeks; at which time also I being but a young prisoner, and not acquainted with the laws, had this lay much upon my spirit, That my imprisonment might end at the gallows for aught that I could tell. Now, therefore, Satan laid hard at me to beat me out of heart, by suggesting thus unto me, But how if when you come indeed to die, you should be in this condition; that is, as not to savour the things of God, nor to have any evidence upon your soul for a better state hereafter? For indeed at that time all the things of God were hid from my soul.

334. Wherefore, when I at first began to think of this, it was a great trouble to me; for I thought with myself, that in the condition I now was in, I was not fit to die, neither indeed did think I could, if I should be called to it: besides, I thought with myself, if I should make a scrabbling [75] shift to clamber up the ladder, yet I should either with quaking, or other symptoms of faintings, give occasion to the enemy to reproach the way of God and his people, for their timorousness. This therefore lay with great trouble upon me, for methought I was ashamed to die with a pale face, and tottering knees, for such a cause as this.

335. Wherefore, I prayed to God that he would comfort me, and give me strength to do and suffer what he should call me to ; yet no comfort appeared, but all continued hid: I was also at this time so really possessed with the thought of death, that oft I was as if I was on the ladder with a rope about my neck; only this was some encouragement to me, I thought I might now have an opportunity to speak my last words to a multitude, which I thought would come to see me die; and, thought I, if it must be so, if God will but convert one soul by my very last words, I shall not count my life thrown away, nor lost.

336. But yet all the things of God were kept out of my sight, and still the tempter followed me with, But whither must you go when you die? What will become of you? Where will you be found in another world? What evidence have you for heaven and glory, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified? Thus was I tossed for many weeks, and knew not what to do; at last this consideration fell with weight upon me, That it was for the Word and way of God, that I was in this condition, wherefore I was engaged not to flinch a hair's breadth from it.

337. I thought also, that God might choose, whether he would give me comfort now or at the hour of death, but I might not therefore choose whether I would hold my profession or no: I was bound, but he was free: yea, it was my duty to stand to his word, whether he would ever look upon me or no, or save me at the last: wherefore, thought I, the point being thus, I am for going on, and venturing my eternal state with Christ, whether I have comfort here or no; if God doth not come in, thought I, I will leap off the ladder even blindfold into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell, Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; 'if not,' I will venture for thy name.

338. I was no sooner fixed upon this resolution, but that word dropped upon me, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" As if the accuser had said, Lord, Job is no upright man, he serves thee for by-respects: hast thou not made a hedge about him, &c. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." How now, thought I, is this the sign of an upright soul, to desire to serve God, when all is taken from him? Is he a godly man, that will serve God for nothing rather than give out? blessed be God, then, I hope I have an upright heart, for I am resolved, God giving me strength, never to deny my profession, though I have nothing at all for my pains; and as I was thus considering, that scripture was set before me (Psa 44:12-26). [76]

339. Now was my heart full of comfort, for I hoped it was sincere: I would not have been without this trial for much; I am comforted every time I think of it, and I hope I shall bless God for ever for the teaching I have had by it. Many more of the dealings of God towards me I might relate, but these, "Out of the spoils won in battles have I dedicated to maintain the house of the LORD" (1Ch 26:27).

THE CONCLUSION.

1. Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being 'of God,' and truth of his gospel, is the worst, and the worst to be borne; when this temptation comes, it takes away my girdle from me, and removeth the foundation from under me: O, I have often thought of that word, "have your loins girt about with truth"; and of that, "When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

2. 'Sometimes, when, after sin committed, I have looked for sore chastisement from the hand of God, the very next that I have had from him hath been the discovery of his grace. Sometimes, when I have been comforted, I have called myself a fool for my so sinking under trouble. And then, again, when I have been cast down, I thought I was not wise, to give such way to comfort. With such strength and weight have both these been upon me.'

3. I have wondered much at this one thing, that though God doth visit my soul with never so blessed a discovery of himself, yet I have found again, that such hours have attended me afterwards, that I have been in my spirits so filled with darkness, that I could not so much as once conceive what that God and that comfort was with which I have been refreshed.

4. I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under, and yet at another time the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least drachm of refreshment, though I have looked it 'all' over.

5. Of all tears, they are the best that are made by the blood of Christ; and of all joy, that is the sweetest that is mixed with mourning over Christ. Oh! it is a goodly thing to be on our knees, with Christ in our arms, before God. I hope I know something of these things.

6. I find to this day seven abominations in my heart: 1. Inclinings to unbelief. 2. Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth. 3. A leaning to the works of the law. 4. Wanderings and coldness in prayer. 5. To forget to watch for that I pray for. 6. Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have. 7. I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves, "when I would do good, evil is present with me."

7. These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with; yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. 1. They make me abhor myself. 2. They keep me from trusting my heart. 3. They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. 4. They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus. 5. They press me to pray unto God. 6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober. 7. And provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Dr. Cheever. BACK TO TEXT

2. Leicester was only *besieged* by the royal army, who took it, and cruelly treated the inhabitants; upon the republicans appearing before it, the city surrendered at once without a siege.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

3. This should be the prayer and effort of every Christian for his brethren and sisters in Christ, and more especially of those who are called to the public ministry.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

4. The people of God look back on the day of their espousals with holy joy and thanksgiving to the God of their mercies; and they delight in telling his goodness to others. "Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul" (Psa 66:16).—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

5. How unspeakable the mercy that our omnipresent God will hear the prayer of the heart under all circumstances, at all times, in all places. Had he limited it to certain forms, in certain buildings, read by certain men, what fearful merchandise of souls they would have made.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

6. Bunyan says very little about his parents in his treatise on 'Christian Behaviour'; he concludes his observations on the duties of a pious son to ungodly parents with this remarkable prayer, 'The Lord, if it be his will, convert OUR poor parents, that they, with us, may be the children of God.' Although this does not demonstrate that his own parents were ungodly, yet his silence as to their piety upon all occasions when speaking of them, and the fervent feeling expressed in this short prayer, inclines me to conclude that they were not pious persons in his judgment.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

7. Mr. Bunyan alludes to the poverty of his education in several of his works. Thus, in his Scriptural poems—

'I am no poet, nor a poet's son
But a mechanic, guided by no rule
But what I gained in a grammar school,
In my minority.'

And in the preface to 'The Law and Grace': 'Reader, if thou do find this book empty of fantastical expressions, and without light, vain, whimsical, scholar-like terms; thou must understand, it is because I never went to school to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up at my father's house, in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

8. 'I have been vile myself, but have obtained mercy; and I would have my companions in sin partake of mercy too.'—*Preface to Jerusalem Sinner Saved*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

9. Every careless sinner, or wicked professor, carries upon his forehead the name of Infidel and Atheist, a practical unbeliever in the Bible, in the day of judgment, and in the existence of a holy God.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

10. Bunyan served in the wars between Charles I and his country, but it is not known on which side. Judging from his 'delight in all transgressions against the law of God,' as he describes his conduct to have been at that time, he must have served on the king's side, as one of his drunken cavaliers. Probably this event took place when Leicester was besieged by the king's troops.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

11. The notice of his wife's father being a godly man, and not mentioning anything of the kind with regard to his own parents, strengthens my conclusion that they were not professors of religion. This very copy of the Pathway to Heaven here noticed, with the name of Bunyan on the title, is in the Editor's possession.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

12. Asking his father this question, looks a little as if the family had been connected with the gipsy tribe.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

13. 'The king (James, 1618) put forth an order to permit everybody, as he had before given leave in the county of Lancaster, who should go to evening prayer on the Lord's day, to divertise themselves with lawful exercises, with leaping, dancing, playing at bowls, shooting with bows and arrows, as likewise to rear May poles, and to use May games and Morris dancing; but those who refused coming to prayers were forbidden to use these sports.'—(Camden's *Annals*). The head of the Church of England had wondrous power thus to dispense with God's laws.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

14. 'Did cut the sinews,' first edition; properly altered by Bunyan afterwards to 'did benumb.' BACK TO TEXT

15. Tip cat, or cat, is an ancient English game, thus described in Strutt's Sports and Pastimes:—The game of cat is played with a cudgel. Its denomination is derived from a piece of wood, about six inches long and two thick, diminished from the middle to form a double cone. When the cat is placed on the ground, the player strikes it smartly—it matters not at which end--and it will rise with a rotatory motion high enough for him to strike it; if he misses, another player takes his place; if he hits, he calls for a number to be scored to his game; if that number is more than as many lengths of his cudgel, he is out; if not, they are scored, and he plays again.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

16. This wish looks as if Bunyan's father had not checked him for this wicked propensity; if so, he could not have pretended to piety or religion.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

17. 'Tom of Bedlam'; a byword for an inveterate drunkard, alluding to an old interesting song describing the feelings of a poor maniac whose frenzy had been induced by intoxication, and who escaped from Bedlam.

'Poore naked Tom is very drye
A little drinke for charitye!'

It ends with this verse—

'The man in the moone drinkes claret,
Eates powder'd beef, turnip, and carret,
But a cup of old Malaga sacke
Will fire the bushe at his backe.'

Probably the tale is connected with the drummer's tune, 'Drunk or sober, go to bed *Tom*.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

18. When the Lord, in his blessed work upon the soul, illuminated the mind, he opens to it a new world; he leads the blind by a way that they know not, crooked things become straight, rough places plain, and he never forsakes his charge.--*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

19. 'Their talk went with me; my heart would tarry with them'; nothing is so powerfully attractive as a community of feeling under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Bunyan's wish to be 'tried and searched,' reminds me of one who, when alarmed for his soul's safety, earnestly prayed that he might be made increasingly wretched, until he had found safety in Jesus, and knew him, whom to know is joy unspeakable in this life, and felicity in the eternal world.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

20. That bitter fanatic, Ross, calls the ranters 'a sort of beasts,' who practiced sin that grace might abound. Many under that name were openly profligate; they denied the sacraments, but were disowned by the Quakers. It seems, from Bunyan, that they were infatuated with some idea that the grossest sins of the flesh did not injure the sanctity of the spirit!—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

21. Faith comes by venturing wholly on Christ, as he is freely offered in the Word—mercy to the miserable—salvation to the lost and self-condemned. If we honour God's veracity by giving credit to his Word, he will honour that faith by giving us joy and peace in believing.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

22. 'In downright earnest'; as one who is in imminent danger of drowning, or in a house on fire, eager to escape. Reader, have you ever felt thus 'in downright earnest' for salvation? Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they SHALL be filled.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

23. This is an interesting view of church fellowship; and the admission of a convert to Christian communion. See also Christiana at the Interpreter's House, and the preface to Bunyan's 'Christian Behaviour.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

24. The Christian who is found waiting upon God, is the thriving one; the best way to be assured of our election is to examine our state with the touchstone of truth, the Scriptures. The elect of God know Christ savingly, esteem him precious, and obey him cheerfully from love and gratitude.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

25. 'Gingerly'; cautiously. BACK TO TEXT

'Has it a corn? or do's it walk on conscience,
It treads so *gingerly*.'
Love's Cure, Act ii., Scene 1.—Ed.

26. Manifestations of love and grace are not to be rested in, or made a saviour of; they are given to strengthen and prepare us for future trials.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

27. Here we have Christian in the valley of the shadow of death. 'One thing I would not let slip, I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded, that he did not know his own voice; and thus I perceived it, just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stept up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind.'—*Pilgrim's Progress*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

28. 'Under her apron,' was altered in subsequent editions to 'in her arms.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

29. 'Poor fool'; altered, in later editions, to 'poor soul.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

30. John Gifford, Bunyan's pastor, was a Kentish man, and had been a major in the King's army, a roistering cavalier. For some crimes, he, with eleven others, was condemned to be hung, but made his escape to London, and thence to Bedford, where, being unknown, he practiced physic. Addicted to swearing, drinking, and gambling, he, in distress at a serious loss, vowed repentance; he became greatly distressed under conviction of sin; at length his mind was enlightened, the Holy Spirit led him to forgiveness by the atonement of Christ, and his heart was filled with a hitherto unknown source of blessedness. This he imparted to others, and at length, in 1650, formed a church, with which the soul-harassed pilgrim Bunyan cast in his lot as a member in 1653. There appears to have been a strong mutual affection between him and his pastor. In 1658, Mr. Gifford published a preface to Bunyan's 'Few Sighs from Hell,' in which he speaks of him with the warmest affection, as one 'that I verily believe God hath counted faithful, and put him into the ministry—one that hath acquaintance with God, and taught by his Spirit, and hath been used to do souls good. Divers have felt the power of the word delivered by him, and I doubt not but that many more may, if God continue him in his work.' Judging from Gifford's preface, he must have been an excellent teacher to train Bunyan for his important labours as a Christian minister. He uses the same fervid striking language. Thus, on the value of the soul: 'Consider what an ill bargain thou will make to sell thy precious soul for a short continuance in sin and pleasure. If that man drives an ill trade, who to gain the whole world should lose his own soul, then certainly thou art far worse that sells thy soul for a very trifle. Oh, 'tis pity that so precious a thing should be parted withal to be made a prey for the devouring lion, for that which is worse than nothing. If they were branded for desperate wretches that caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch, surely thou much more that gives thy soul to devouring flames. What meanest thou, O man! to truck* with the devil?'—See *Sighs*, 1st Edition, and Brooks' *Puritans*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

* 'To truck'; to barter or exchange.

31. That persons *called* Quakers held these heresies, there can be no doubt; but they were never held by that respectable and useful body of Christians, the Society of Friends, is equally clear. Barclay, in his *Theses*, 1675, says of the Scriptures:--'They are the doctrine of Christ, held forth in precious declarations, spoken and written by the movings of God's Spirit.' He goes on to say, that the same Spirit can alone guide man into these sacred truths. In all important doctrines, the difference between the Quakers and evangelical professors is in terms and not in things. Their distinguishing difference relates to the work of the ministry.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

32. How natural is it for man to build up vain hopes of long life! Bunyan's vigorous constitution, had he enjoyed the free air of liberty, might have prolonged his pilgrimage to extreme old age. But his long imprisonment shortened his valuable life: it almost amounted to legal murder.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

33. Bunyan, in his treatise on 'Jesus Christ the Advocate,' admirably shows the analogy between the year of jubilee and the Christian's reversion to his inheritance, although deprived for a time of the comfort of it during his pilgrimage, by reason of sin.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

34. He is a restless, powerful, and malicious enemy; ever striving to drive the sinner to desperation. Let the tempted look to Jesus the serpent-bruiser to shield him, so that the fiery darts of the wicked one may be quenched.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

35. Printed 'did hear' in first edition.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

36. Altered to 'indeed' in later editions.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

37. 'Racked or broken upon the wheel,' was a horrid mode of torturing a criminal to death, formerly used in France. The sufferer was stretched and made fast upon a large wheel, when the executioner, with a heavy iron bar, proceeded to break every bone in his body; beginning with the toes and fingers, and proceeding to crush those bones that the least affected life, and ending by crushing the skull into the brains. How piercing must have been the convictions of sin upon Bunyan's soul, to have led him to such a simile!—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

38. 'A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira.'

'Here see a soul that's all despair; a man
All hell; a spirit all wounds.
Reader, would'st see what may you never feel,
Despair, racks, torments, whips of burning steel?
Behold this man, this furnace, in whose heart,
Sin hath created hell.'

From the address to the reader, in a copy of this awful narrative in possession of the Editor. Spira was filled with remorse and despair for having been induced, by improper motives, to become a papist.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

39. No Christian minister ever dwelt more richly on the 'Saint's Knowledge of Christ's Love' than Bunyan. See vol. ii. p. 1. It was the result of this soul-harrowing experience. He there shows its heights exceeding the highest heavens, depths below the deepest hell, lengths and breadths beyond comprehension. That treatise ought to be read and cherished by every trembling believer.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

40. Alter, in later editions, to 'flying fits.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

41. Internal conflicts, dreams, or visions *ought* not to be the source of peace or of bitterness to the soul. If they drive us to Christ, we may hope that they are from heaven for our relief; but if their tendency is to despair, by undervaluing the blood of atonement, or to lasciviousness, they are from Satan. Our real dependence must be upon 'a more sure word of prophecy': if we are well-grounded in the promises, it will save us from many harassing doubts and fears which arise from a reliance upon our feelings.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

42. That a poor penitent should perish at the feet of Jesus is an utter impossibility. God, when manifest in the flesh, decreed, that 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' 'I will give him rest.' His Word must stand fast for ever.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

43. How soul-rending a thought! but it can only be the case with those who continue to their death *despising* the Saviour. Those who love him are kept by almighty power, everlasting love, and irresistible grace.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

44. Happy would it be for tempted souls, in their distress, to look simply to the declarations and promises of God in the Word; we there find salvation completed by Christ. Our duty is to look in faith and prayer to the Spirit of God for the application and comfort of it.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

45. However humbling, this is a truth not to be disputed. The wisest philosopher and most illiterate peasant are upon a level, fallen from God. None will be excluded who come to Christ, whose gracious invitation is general, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev 22:17).—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

46. This is the proper source of comfort—the records of infallible truth. There is found mercy for the miserable, redemption for the captive, salvation for the lost, heaven for the hell-deserving sinner.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

47. Though we may wait long for mercy, yet the hand of faith never knocked in vain at the door of heaven. Mercy is as surely ours as if we had it, if it be given us in faith and patience to wait for it.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

48. To sin against light and knowledge, received in and by the gospel, is a very heinous aggravation of sin. The condition of persons simply ignorant is not so sad by far, as theirs who have been enlightened and yet afterwards apostatized. Let the formalist and lukewarm professors read this and tremble.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

49. The Holy Spirit is the candle of the Lord, by whose light the awakened conscience is brought to see something of the mystery of iniquity lurking in the heart. He first convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and then points to Jesus as the only security: 'Behold the Lamb of God.'—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

50. This is very beautifully expressed; nothing can be more descriptive of a poor pilgrim who has been toiling through the valley of the shadow of death, and upon whose soul the day-spring from on high has arisen.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

51. 'Cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies.' The humility of our author is here most unobtrusively apparent. He had some treasure in his 'earthen vessel'; but, in comparison with his store in Christ, it was like a few cracked groats by the side of massive pure gold. What he meant by 'fourpence-halfpennies' somewhat puzzled me, there never having been any piece of English money coined of that value. I found that a proclamation was issued shortly before Mr. Bunyan's time (April 8, 1603), to save the people from being deceived with the silver harp money of Ireland, purporting to be twelve and sixpenny pieces. It fixed the value of the Irish twelvepence to be ninepence English; so that the Irish sixpence was to pass current for fourpence-halfpenny in England. That accomplished antiquary, Mr. Hawkins, the curator of the coins in the British Museum, shewed me this Irish silver money; and agreed with me in believing that Bunyan alludes to these Irish sixpences, placing them in company with cracked groats, depreciated in value. Mr. Hawkins was not aware that they had been in common circulation in England.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

52. 'Common or public,' belonging equally to many. Christ is the federal or covenant head of his church, each member claiming an equal or *common* right to all his merits as a Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

53. This retort, or rebuke, is inserted twice in the first edition, probably a typographical error.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

54. See note on No. 152. The feelings of Bunyan must have been exceedingly pungent.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

55. This is a view of the power given to the apostles to forgive or retain sins worthy of our serious consideration. That mysterious power, under the pretence of possessing which merchandise is made of souls, if it was not limited to the apostles personally, was intended to be used by all those whom God sends to preach the gospel; an authority to proclaim salvation or condemnation to those who receive or reject the Saviour. Bunyan considers it a similar power to that given to the governors of the city of refuge; to admit the terror-stricken soul that 'shall declare his cause'—or confess his guilt—into the city, there *to abide the judgment* upon him, as in Christ the Refuge. This is very different to turning God out of his judgment-seat; as is the case when a poor worm says to his fellow-worm, 'I absolve thee from all thy sins.' See the visitation of the sick, in the *Book of Common Prayer*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

56. The mode of admitting members into the church, among the Baptists, appears to have been the same in Bunyan's days as it is now practiced. It is, first to be introduced to the minister, who endeavours to ascertain whether there is an earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come, sincere repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If so, he mentions it to the church; and visitors are appointed, to encourage the young convert, and to scrutinize into moral character. If they are satisfied, he is invited to attend a private church meeting; and if the members have a good hope that he is a decided believer in Jesus, they receive him into their fellowship; and if he requests it, he is publicly baptized in water, and communicates with the church at the Lord's table. This appears to have been the mode in which Bunyan was admitted into the church at Bedford. Most of the Baptist churches now agree with Bunyan, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or inward spiritual regeneration, is, alone, the essential pre-requisite to the Lord's table; and they leave members to their own conclusions as to the validity of their having been sprinkled in infancy, or the necessity of immersion in water upon a profession of faith.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

57. Many will be surprised that Bunyan, who was so ready a writer, should be unable to tell what he saw and felt when in these holy enjoyments; but all who have had similar feelings will unite with him in saying, they are inexpressible, great, and full of glory.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

58. This is a very correct view of the excellent mode in which dissenting ministers are generally called to their important work. First, their gifts in prayer and conversation upon Divine things, and aptness in illustrating and confirming what they advance from the Scriptures, is noticed; and, secondly, they are encouraged to pray with and address the poor children in a Sunday school. If they manifest an aptness to teach, they are, thirdly, invited to give an exhortation to the church privately; and then, fourthly, they are encouraged to pray and preach among the poor in country villages and in work-houses. The God who gave the wish and the talent, soon opens a way to still more public usefulness. In most cases, they enter upon a course of study, to fit them for their momentous labours; but many of our most valuable ministers have, like Bunyan, relied entirely upon their prayerful investigation of the Scriptures. his college was a dungeon, his library the Bible; and he came forth with gigantic power to grapple with the prince of darkness. No human learning could have so fitted him for this terrible and mysterious warfare.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

59. 'With great sense,' means with great *feeling*, arising from his own acute experience.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

60. In the first edition Bunyan says, 'I have lain as long,' (five years). This was in 1666.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

61. When God sends forth a zealous ambassador to publish the glad tidings of salvation to perishing sinners, he will be sure to meet with the fiercest opposition from proud pharisaical professors: so it was from the beginning, and will be to the end of time; but the Lord will work, and none shall hinder. Experimental preaching will always be offensive to the carnal and profane.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

62. It is impossible to identify the sect to which Bunyan belonged by reading his works. He rises above all sectarian bias in his earnest efforts to win souls to Christ, and to keep them in a heavenly frame of mine.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

63. 'Other men's lines,' other men's compositions. Bunyan went himself to the fountain head of Divine truth, and was not taught by the wisdom of his fellow-men in the things that pertained to salvation. He spoke as he felt; and, while he copied no sentence from others, no man that ever wrote has been so copied from by others. Application was once made to the Editor, to publish an admirable sermon which had been taken in short hand from the lips of a D.D.; when, to the surprise of the applicant, he was shown the whole sermon in Bunyan's *Heavenly Footman*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

64. Altered, in later editions, to 'searching.'—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

65. Gifts are no evidence of God's favour; they are like the gold which adorned the temple, but grace, the saving grace of the Spirit, is like the altar which sanctifies the gold.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT

66. In this paragraph is displayed that modest genuine humility which shone so conspicuously in Bunyan. He possessed that popular natural eloquence, by which he could deliver himself like an angel; but when pride began to rise, he knocked it on the head with that severe maul, 'Is it so much to be a fiddle' that Satan once so played upon?—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

67. One circumstance from which these vile slanders were raised, is narrated in the thrilling narrative of God's gracious dealings with Mrs. Agnes Beaumont. She was waiting in hopes of attending a meeting, when 'at last, quite unexpectedly, came Mr. Bunyan. The sight of him caused a mixture of joy and grief. I was glad to see him, but afraid he would not be willing to take me up behind him, and how to ask him I knew not. At length my brother did; but Mr. Bunyan answered, with some degree of roughness, "No, I will not carry her." These words were cutting indeed, and made me weep bitterly. My brother, perceiving my trouble, said, "Sir, if you do not carry her, you will break her heart"; but he made the same reply, adding, "Your father would be grievously angry if I should." "I will venture that," said I. And thus, with much entreaty, he was prevailed on; and O how glad was I to think I was going. Soon after we set out, my father came to my brother's, and asked his men whom his daughter rode behind? They said, Mr. Bunyan. Upon hearing this, his anger was greatly inflamed; he ran down the close, thinking to overtake me, and pull me off the horse, but we were gone out of his reach.

'I had not ridden far, before my heart began to be lifted up with pride at the thoughts of riding behind this servant of the Lord; and was pleased if any looked after us, as we rode along. Indeed, I thought myself very happy that day: first, that it pleased God to make way for my going; and then, that I should have the honour to ride behind Mr. Bunyan, who would sometimes be speaking to me about the things of God. My pride soon had a fall; for, in entering Gam'gay, we were met by one Mr. Lane, a clergyman who lived at Bedford, and knew us both, and spoke to us, but looked very hard at us as we rode along; and soon after raised a vile scandal upon us, though, blessed be God, it was false.'

No Christian should be without that deeply interesting volume of Christian experience, James' *Abstract of the Gracious Dealings of God with several Eminent Christians*. The persecutions that Mrs. Beaumont went through were like a dreadful tempest, yet was she joyfully delivered out of them all.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

68. 'All is a case,' all the same. A case—that which falls, comes, or happens; an event. See Blackie's *Imperial Dictionary*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

69. 'Baulks,' missing, omitting, leaving untouched. 'This was looked for at your hand, and this was baulked; the double gill of this opportunity you let time wash off, and you are now sailed into the north of my lady's opinion; where you will hang like an icicle on a Dutchman's beard.'—*Twelfth Night*, Act iii. Scene 2; and *Imperial Dictionary*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

70. 'Above five year and a quarter' are the words in the first edition, 1666. His imprisonment commenced November 1660; the order for his release bears date September 13, 1672, but it was some months before he was discharged.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

71. Angel visits may be expected when Antichrist persecutes the Christian to bonds and imprisonment. An angel released Peter from prison; angels revealed to John, when exiled to Patmos, the wonders of his book of Revelation. The Lord of angels, the angel of the covenant, communes with Bunyan in his dungeon, and converts it into a Bethel to his soul; and this, for refusing obedience to the laws of his country, because those laws violated God's prerogative, and impiously dared to assume authority which belongs exclusively to the Almighty. They remain to this day a disgrace to our statutes, but are never enforced.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

72. Bunyan did well to prepare for the worst. He must have been familiar with the horrid cruelties practiced upon Dr. Leighton by that fiend in human shape, Archbishop Laud. The pious and learned doctor was caught in Bedfordshire; and the story of his unparalleled sufferings strengthened the Roundheads to deeds of valour, in putting an end to such diabolical cruelties. The spirit of the charges against him were his saying that no king may make laws in the house of God; and that the bishops were ravens and magpies that prey upon the state. His sufferings are narrated in Brooke's *Puritans*, vol. ii. p. 478.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

73. 'Tuition' was altered to 'care' in later editions.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

74. i.e., My profession—the soul, shrinking from pain, moving him one way, and his profession another.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

75. 'To scrabble,' to go on all fours—'to move along on the hands and knees, by clawing with the hands.'—Blackie's *Imperial Dictionary*.—Ed. BACK TO TEXT

76. This is the language of a heaven-born soul, which sees such beauty and excellency in Christ, that it would not part with him for a thousand worlds; if there were no heaven hereafter, his delight in the ways of God renders his service preferable to all the wealth, grandeur, and vain pleasures of the ungodly.—*Mason*. BACK TO TEXT