

**LITTLE  
BOOKS**

—01—

BY JOHN BUNYAN

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Intro by: GEORGE OFFOR

A woman that was 'a loose and ungodly wretch' hearing a tinker lad most awfully cursing and swearing, protested to him that 'he swore and cursed at that most fearful rate that it made her tremble to hear him,' 'that he was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that ever she heard in all her life,' and 'that he was able to spoil all the youth in a whole town, if they came in his company.' This blow at the young reprobate made that indelible impression which all the sermons yet he had heard had failed to make. Satan, by one of his own slaves, wounded a conscience which had resisted all the overtures of mercy. The youth pondered her words in his heart; they were good seed strangely sown, and their working formed one of those mysterious steps which led the foul-mouthed blasphemer to bitter repentance; who, when he had received mercy and pardon, felt impelled to bless and magnify the Divine grace with shining, burning thoughts and words. The poor profligate, swearing tinker became transformed into the most ardent preacher of the love of Christ—the well-trained author of *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or Good News to the Vilest of Men*.

How often have the Saints of God been made a most unexpected blessing to others. The good seed of Divine truth has been many times sown by those who did not go out to sow, but who were profitably engaged in cultivating their own graces, enjoying the communion of Saints, and advancing their own personal happiness! Think of a few poor, but pious happy women, sitting in the sun one beautiful summer's day, before one of their cottages, probably each one with her pillow on her lap, dexterously twisting the bobbins to make lace, the profits of which

helped to maintain their children. While they are communing on the things of God, a traveling tinker draws near, and, over-hearing their talk, takes up a position where he might listen to their converse while he pursued his avocation. Their words distil into his soul; they speak the language of Canaan; they talk of holy enjoyments, the result of being born again, acknowledging their miserable state by nature, and how freely and undeservedly God had visited their hearts with pardoning mercy, and supported them while suffering the assaults and suggestions of Satan; how they had been borne up in every dark, cloudy, stormy day; and how they contemned, slighted, and abhorred their own righteousness as filthy and insufficient to do them any good. The learned discourses our tinker had heard at church had casually passed over his mind like evanescent clouds, and left little or no lasting impression. But these poor women, 'methought they spake as actually did make them speak; they speak with such pleasant as 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, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbors' (Num 23:9).

O! how little did they imagine that their pious converse was to be the means employed by the Holy Spirit in the conversion of that poor tinker, and that, by their agency, he was to be transformed into one of the brightest luminaries of heaven; who, when he had entered into rest would leave his works to follow him as spiritual thunder to pierce the hearts of the impenitent, and as heavenly consolation to bind up the broken-hearted; liberating the prisoners of Giant Despair, and directing the pilgrims to the Celestial City. Thus were blessings in rich abundance showered down upon the church by the instrumentality, in the first instance, of a woman that was a sinner, but most eminently by the Christian converse of a few poor but pious women.

The poor women in Bedford, whose conversation had been blessed to his thorough awakening, were sought for, and to them he unfolded his sorrows. They were members of a Baptist church, under the pastoral care of John Gifford, a godly, painstaking, and most intelligent minister, whose history is very remarkable. In early life he had been, like Bunyan, a thoroughly depraved character; like him had entered the army, and had been promoted to the rank of a major in the royal forces. Having made an abortive attempt to raise a rebellion in his native county of Kent,[90] he and eleven others were made prisoners, tried by martial law, and condemned to the gallows. On the night previous to the day appointed for his execution, his sister found access to the prison. The guards were asleep, and his companions drowned in intoxication. She embraced the favourable moment, and set him at liberty. He lay concealed in a ditch for three days, till the heat of the search was over, and in disguise escaped to London, and thence to Bedford, where, aided by some great people who favoured the royal cause, he commenced business as a doctor. Here his evil habits followed him, notwithstanding his merciful deliverance. Swearing, drunkenness, gambling, and other immoral practices, rendered him a curse to others, especially to the Puritans, whom he bitterly persecuted. One night he lost fifteen pounds at play, and, becoming outrageous, he cast angry reproaches upon God. In this state he took up a book by R. Bolton—he read, and his conscience was terror-stricken. Distress, under conviction of sin, followed him. He searched his Bible, and found pardon and acceptance. He now sought acquaintance with those whom before he had persecuted, but, like Paul, when in similar circumstances, 'they were all afraid of him.' His sincerity soon became apparent; and, uniting with eleven others, they formed a church. These men had thrown off the fetters of education, and were, unbiassed by any sectarian feeling, being guided solely by their prayerful researches into divine truth as revealed in the Bible. Their whole object was to enjoy Christian communion—to extend the reign of grace—to live

to the honour of Christ—and they formed a new, and at that time unheard-of, community. Water-baptism was to be left to individual conviction; they were to love each other equally, whether they advocated baptism in infancy, or in riper years. The only thing essential to church-fellowship, in Mr. Gifford's opinion, was—'UNION WITH CHRIST; this is the foundation of all saints' communion, and not any judgment about externals.' To the honour of the Baptists, these peaceable principles appear to have commenced with two or three of their ministers, and for the last two centuries they have been, like heavenly leaven, extending their delightful influence over all bodies of Christians.

Such was the man to whom Bunyan was introduced for religious advice and consolation; and he assisted in forming those enlarged and nonsectarian principles which made his ministry blessed, and will render his Works equally acceptable to all evangelical Christians in every age of the church. Introduced to such

His pastor, John Gifford, was a remarkably pious and sensible man, exactly fitted to assist in maturing the mind of his young member. Bunyan had, for a considerable time, sat under his ministry, and had cultivated acquaintance with the members of his church; and so prayerfully had he made up his mind as to this important choice of a church, with which he might enter into fellowship, that, although tempted by the most alluring prospects of greater usefulness, popularity, and emolument, he continued his church fellowship with these poor people through persecution and distress, imprisonment and the threats of transportation, or an ignominious death, until he crossed the river 'which has no bridge,' and ascended to the celestial city, a period of nearly forty years.

The church at Bedford having increased, Bunyan was chosen to fill the

honourable office of a deacon. No man could have been better fitted for that office than Bunyan was. He was honesty itself, had suffered severe privations, so as to feel for those who were pinched with want; he had great powers of discrimination, to distinguish between the poverty of idleness, and that distress which arises from circumstances over which human foresight has no control, so as to relieve with propriety the pressure of want, without encouraging the degrading and debasing habit of depending upon alms, instead of labouring to provide the necessaries of life. He had no fine clothes to be spoiled by trudging down the filthiest lanes, and entering the meanest hovels to relieve suffering humanity. The poor—and that is the great class to whom the gospel is preached, and by whom it is received—would hail him as a brother. Gifted in prayer, full of sound and wholesome counsel drawn from holy writ, he must have been a peculiar blessing to the distressed, and to all the members who stood in need of advice and assistance. Such were the men intended by the apostles, 'men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom' (Acts 6:3), whom the church were to select, to relieve the apostles from the duties of ministration to the wants of the afflicted members, in the discharge of which they had given offence.

He had now become deeply instructed in the school of Christ, and was richly furnished with the weapons of spiritual warfare; 'a scribe instructed into the kingdom of heaven, like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old' (Matt 13:12). Or, as 'the man of God, perfected, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Tim 3:17). It was powerfully impressed upon his mind that all his inward conflicts were to be made use of in preparing him to instruct others. All the events of his Saviour's life passed before his mind as if he had stood by as a witness to his birth—his walking with his disciples; his wondrous parables and stupendous miracles; his mental and bodily sufferings; his sacrifice, burial, ascension,

intercession, and final judgment; all passed in vivid review before the eye of his mind; and then, he says, 'as I was musing with myself what these things should mean, methought I heard such a word in my heart as this, I have set thee down on purpose, for I have something more than ordinary for thee to do'; which made me the more to marvel, saying, 'What, my Lord, such a poor wretch as I?'[162] Such was his inward call to the ministry; and it being attended with the three requisites usually insisted on among Dissenters—ability, inclination, and opportunity—he was sent out as an itinerant preacher in the surrounding villages in 1655, and laid the foundation of many churches, which now flourish to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. In some of these villages the gospel had never before been preached; they were strongholds of Satan. These were fit places for the full display of his intrepid energy.

After thus preaching and much suffering, for fifteen years, he was appointed to the pastoral office, or eldership.[163] Can a man enter upon the work of the ministry from a better school than this? Deeply versed in scriptural knowledge; thoroughly humbled by the assaults of sin and Satan; aware of his devices; with a keen perception of the value of the soul; its greatness; and, if lost, the causes and the unspeakable extent of its loss. Solemnly devout and fluent in prayer; ready in conversation upon heavenly things; speaking the truth without fear of consequences, yet avoiding unnecessary offence; first speaking in the church-meeting, and then more extensively in barns, or woods, or dells, to avoid the informers.[164] Such was his training; and the result was, that, when permitted to proclaim the gospel publicly, thousands hung upon his words with intense feeling; numerous converts were by his means added to the church; the proud became broken-hearted, and the lowly were raised, and blessings abounded; the drunkards were made sober; thieves and covetous were reclaimed; the blasphemers were made to sing the praises of God; the desert bid fair to blossom and bring

forth fruit as a garden. But, alas! his early labours were contrary to acts of parliament; the spirit of intolerance and persecution soon troubled, and eventually consigned him to a prison.

Bunyan's conversion from being a pest to the neighbourhood to becoming a pious man, might have been pardoned had he conformed to the Directory; but for him to appear as a Dissenter and a public teacher, without going through the usual course of education and ordination, was an unpardonable offence. The opinions of man gave him no concern; all his anxiety was to have the approbation of his God, and then to walk accordingly, braving all the dangers, the obloquy, and contempt that might arise from his conscientious discharge of duties, for the performance of which he knew that he alone must give a solemn account at the great day.

The ministry of Bunyan's pastor, whom he affectionately called holy Mr. Gifford, must have been wonderfully blessed. In 1650 only twelve pious men and women were formed into a Christian church, and, although subject to fierce persecution, they had so increased that in 1672 ten members had been solemnly set apart for the work of the ministry, and they became a blessing to the country round Bedford. The benighted state of the villages was a cause of earnest prayer that men might be sent out, apt to teach, and willing to sacrifice liberty, and even life, to promote the peaceful reign of the Redeemer. The names of the men who were thus set apart were—John Bunyan, Samuel Fenn, Joseph Whiteman, John Fenn, Oliver Scott, Luke Ashwood, Thomas Cooper, Edward Dent, Edward Isaac, and Nehemiah Coxe.[174] Four of these were permitted to fulfil their course without notoriety; the others were severely persecuted, fined and imprisoned, but not forsaken.

Upon one of his journeys, being upon the road near Cambridge, he was overtaken by a scholar, who concluded that he was an itinerant



preacher, whether from having heard him, or observing his serious deportment, or his Bible reading, does not appear, although the latter was probably the reason. But the student determined to have a brush with him, and said, 'How dare you preach from the Bible, seeing you have not the original, being not a scholar?' Then said Mr. Bunyan, 'Have you the original?' 'Yes, said the scholar.' 'Nay, but,' said Mr. Bunyan, 'have you the very self-same original copies that were written by the penmen of the Scriptures, prophets and apostles?' 'No,' said the scholar, 'but we have the true copies of these originals.' 'How do you know that?' said Mr. Bunyan. 'How?' said the scholar. 'Why, we believe what we have is a true copy of the original.' 'Then,' said Mr. Bunyan, 'so do I believe our English Bible is a true copy of the original.' Then away rid the scholar.[198] As neither persecution nor railing, nor temptations, nor the assaults of Satan, produced any effect upon Bunyan to prevent his preaching, but rather excited his zeal and energy, means of a more deadly nature were resorted to, to injure or prevent his usefulness.

When Bunyan was advised to escape by dismissing the meeting, which consisted of about forty persons, he replied, 'No, by no means; I will not stir, neither will I have the meeting dismissed. Come, be of good cheer, let us not be daunted; our cause is good, we need not be ashamed of it; to preach God's Word is so good a work, that we shall be well rewarded if we suffer for that.' [215] All this took place about an hour before the officers arrived. The service was commenced with prayer at the time appointed, the preacher and hearers had their Bibles in their hands to read the text, when the constable and his attendants came in, and, exhibiting the warrant, ordered him to lave the pulpit and come down; but he mildly told him that he was about his Master's business, and must rather obey his Lord's voice than that of man. Then a constable was ordered to fetch him down, who, coming up and taking hold of his coat, was about to remove him, when Mr. Bunyan fixed his eyes steadfastly

upon him; having his Bible open in his hand, the man let go, looked pale, and retired; upon which he said to the congregation, 'See how this man trembles at the Word of God.' Truly did one of his friends say, 'he had a sharp, quick eye.' But being commanded in the king's name, he went with the officer, accompanied by some of his friends, to the magistrate's residence. Before they left, the constable allowed him to speak a few words to the people of counsel and encouragement. He declared that it was a mercy when called to suffer upon so good an account.

Imagination can hardly realize the miseries of fifty or sixty pious men and women, taken from a place of public worship and incarcerated in such dens or dungeons with felons, as was the case while Bunyan was a prisoner. Twelve feet square was about the extent of the walls; for it occupies but one pier between the center arches of the bridge. How properly does the poor pilgrim call it a certain DEN! What an abode for men and women who had been made by God kings and priests—the heirs of heaven! The eyes of Howard, a Dissenter, penetrated these dens, these hidden things of darkness, these abodes of cruelty. He revealed what lay and clerical magistrates ought to have published centuries before, that they were not fit places in which to imprison any, even the worst of criminals. He denounced them, humanity shuddered at the discovery, and they were razed to their foundations. In this den God permitted his honoured servant, John Bunyan, to be incarcerated for more than twelve years of the prime of his life. A man, whose holy zeal for the salvation of sinners, whose disinterested labours, whose sufferings for Christ prove his apostolical descent much better than those who claim descent from popes, and Wolsey or Bonner—those fiends in human shape.

Bedford bridge was pulled down in the year 1811, when the present handsome bridge was built. One of the workmen employed upon the ruins found, among the rubbish, where the prison had stood, a ring

made of fine gold, bearing an inscription which affords strong presumptive evidence that it belonged to our great allegorist. Dr. Abbot, a neighbouring clergyman, who had daily watched the labours of the workmen, luckily saw it, and saved it from destruction. He constantly wore it, until, drawing near the end of his pilgrimage, in 1817, he took it off his own finger and placed it upon that of his friend Dr. Bower, then curate of Elstow,[221] and at present the dean of Manchester, charging him to keep it for his sake. This ring must have been a present from some person of property, as a token of great respect for Bunyan's pious character, and probably from an indignant sense of his unjust and cruel imprisonment.

Bunyan was thus left in a dreary and hopeless state of imprisonment, in which he continued for somewhat more than twelve years, and it becomes an interesting inquiry how he spent his time and managed to employ his great talent in his Master's service. The first object of his solicitude would be to provide for his family, according to 1 Timothy 5:8. How to supply his house with bare necessaries to meet the expenses of a wife and four children, must have filled him with anxiety. The illness, death, and burial of his first beloved wife, had swept away any little reserve which otherwise might have accumulated, so that, soon after his imprisonment commenced, before he could resume any kind of labour, his wife thus pleaded with the judge for his liberty, 'My lord, I have four small children that cannot help themselves, of which one is blind, and have nothing to live upon but the charity of good people.' How inscrutable are the ways of Providence; the rich reveling in luxury while using their wealth to corrupt mankind, while this eminent saint, with his family, were dependent upon charity! As soon as he could get his tools in order he set to work; and we have the following testimony to his industry by a fellow-prisoner, Mr. Wilson, the Baptist minister, and of Charles Doe, who visited him in prison:—'Nor did he, while he was in

prison, spend his time in a supine and careless manner, nor eat the bread of idleness; for there have I been witness that his own hands have ministered to his and his family's necessities, making many hundred gross of long tagged laces, to fill up the vacancies of his time, which he had learned to do for that purpose, since he had been in prison. There, also, I surveyed his library, the least, but yet the best that e'er I saw—the Bible and the Book of Martyrs.[245] And during his imprisonment (since I have spoken of his library), he writ several excellent and useful treatises, particularly The Holy City, Christian Behaviour, The Resurrection of the Dead, and Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.'[246] Besides these valuable treatises, Charles Doe states that, of his own knowledge, in prison Bunyan wrote The Pilgrim's Progress, the first part, and that he had this from his own mouth.[]

Well might Mr. Doe say, 'What hath the devil or his agents got by putting our great gospel minister in prison?' They prevented his preaching to a few poor pilgrims in the villages round Bedford, and it was the means of spreading his fame, and the knowledge of the gospel, by his writings, throughout the world. Thus does the wrath of man praise God. In addition to the works above enumerated, he also published some extremely valuable tracts, several editions of a work which ought to be read by all young Christians

He had at times, while a prisoner, an extraordinary degree of liberty; like Joseph in Egypt, some of his jailers committed all to his hands. There can be little doubt but that he went from the prison to preach in the villages or woods, and at one time went to London to visit his admiring[269] friends; but this coming to the ears of the justices, the humane jailer had well nigh lost his place, and for some time he was not permitted to look out at the door. When this had worn off, he had again opportunities of visiting his church and preaching by stealth. It is said that many of the Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire owe their origin to his midnight

preaching.

Upon one occasion, having been permitted to go out and visit his family, with whom he intended to spend the night, long before morning he felt so uneasy that at a very late hour he went back to the prison.

Information was given to a neighbouring clerical magistrate that there was strong suspicion of Bunyan having broke prison. At midnight, he sent a messenger to the jail, that he might be a witness against the merciful keeper. On his arrival, he demanded, 'Are all the prisoners safe?' the answer was, 'Yes.' 'Is John Bunyan safe?' 'Yes.' 'Let me see him.' He was called up and confronted with the astonished witness, and all passed off well. His kind-hearted jailer said to him, 'You may go out when you will, for you know much better when to return than I can tell you.'

The most extraordinary circumstance that took place at this time was, that while Bunyan was a prisoner in a wretched dungeon for preaching the glad tidings of salvation, or, in the mysterious legal jargon of the period, 'holding conventicles,' he received his Majesty's license to preach, and thus to hold conventicles—it was one of the first that was granted. His Majesty continued to keep him a prisoner for preaching more than six months after he had licensed him to preach!! At the same time that the permission to preach was granted to Bunyan, the house of Josiah Roughed, Bedford, was licensed by his Majesty's command, for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England. In this John Bunyan was authorized to teach, or in any other licensed place.[275] These were among the first licenses that were granted.

His first object, upon recovering his liberty, appears to have been the proper arrangement of his worldly business, that he might provide for

the wants of his family, a matter of little difficulty with their frugal habits. He, at the same time, entered with all his soul into his beloved work of preaching and writing, to set forth the glories of Immanuel. The testimony of one who was his 'true friend and long acquaintance,' is, that one of the first fruits of his liberation was to visit those who had assisted him and comforted his family during his incarceration, encouraging those who were in fear of a prison, and collecting means of assistance to those who still remained prisoners; traveling even to remote counties to effect these merciful objects.[282]

While the premises occupied by Mr. Roughed were being converted into a capacious meeting-house, the pastor was indefatigable in visiting the sick, and preaching from house to house, settling churches in the villages, reconciling differences, and extending the sacred influences of the gospel, so that in a very short time he attained the appellation of Bishop Bunyan—a title much better merited by him than by the downy prelates who sent him to jail for preaching that which they ought to have preached.

He formed branch churches at Gamlingay, Hawnes, Cotton-end, and Kempston, in connection with that at Bedford. When he opened the new meeting-house, it was so thronged that many were constrained to stay without, though it was very spacious, every one striving to partake of his instructions. Here he lived, in much peace and quiet of mind, contenting himself with that little God had bestowed upon him, and sequestering himself from all secular employments to follow that of his call to the ministry.[283] The word 'sequestering' would lead us to conclude, that his business was continued by his family, under his care, but so as to allow him much time for his Christian duties, and his benevolent pursuits. His peaceful

His spirit was greatly refreshed by finding that his precept and example

had been blessed to his son Thomas. On the 6th of the 11th month, 1673, he passed the lions, and was welcomed into the house called Beautiful, uniting in full communion with his father's church. There doubtless was, as Mercy expresses it, 'music in the house, music in the heart, and music also in heaven, for joy that he was here.' [284] He afterwards became a village preacher.

The time was drawing near when, in the midst of his usefulness, and with little warning, he was to be summoned to his eternal rest. He had been seriously attacked with that dangerous pestilence which, in former years, ravaged this country, called the sweating sickness, a malady as mysterious and fatal as the cholera has been in later times. The disease was attended by great prostration of strength; but, under the careful management of his affectionate wife, his health became sufficiently restored to enable him to undertake a work of mercy; from the fulfillment of which, as a blessed close to his incessant earthly labour, he was to ascend to his Father and his God to be crowned with immortality. A father had been seriously offended with his son, and had threatened to disinherit him. To prevent the double mischief of a father dying in anger with his child, and the evil consequence to the child of his being cut off from his patrimony, Bunyan again ventured, in his weak state, on his accustomed work, to win the blessings of the peace-maker. He made a journey on horseback to Reading, it being the only mode of travelling at that time, and he was rewarded with success. Returning home by way of London to impart the gratifying intelligence, he was overtaken by excessive rains, and, in an exhausted state, he found a kindly refuge in the house of his Christian friend Mr. Strudwick, and was there seized with a fatal fever. His much-loved wife, who had so powerfully pleaded for his liberty with the judges, and to whom he had been united thirty years, was at a great distance from him. Bedford was then two days' journey from London. Probably at first, his friends had hopes of his

speedy recovery; but when the stroke came, all his feelings, and those of his friends, appear to have been absorbed, by the anticipated blessings of immortality, to such an extent, that no record is left as to whether his wife, or any of his children, saw him cross the river of death. There is abundant testimony of his faith and patience, and that the presence of God was eminently with him.

He bore his trying sufferings with all the patience and fortitude that might be expected from such a man. His resignation was most exemplary; his only expressions were 'a desire to depart, to be dissolved, to be with Christ.' His sufferings were short, being limited to ten days. He enjoyed a holy frame of mind, desiring his friends to pray with him, and uniting fervently with them in the exercise. His last words, while struggling with death, were, 'Weep not for me, but for yourselves. I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, no doubt, through the mediation of his blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner; where I hope we ere long shall meet, to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy, world without end. Amen.' He felt the ground solid under his feet in passing the black river which has no bridge, and followed his pilgrim into the celestial city in August, 1688, in the sixtieth year of his age.

Note:

164. This secrecy became needful after the Restoration, as noticed more fully afterwards, p. lix. During those years of persecution, a frequent place of resort was a dell in Wain-wood, about three miles from Hitchin. Of this locality the following notice will be acceptable:—On the 19th of May, 1853, a splendidly hot day, my pilgrimage to the shrines of Bunyan was continued at Hitchin and its vicinity, in company with S. B. Geard, Esq. Here it was my honour to shake hands with honest Edward Foster,



whose grandfather often entertained and sheltered John Bunyan. So singular a case I had never met with, that three lives should connect, in a direct line, evidence of transactions which occurred at a distance of 190 years. His grandfather was born in 1642, and for many years was a friend and companion of the illustrious dreamer. In 1706, when he was sixty-four years of age, his youngest son was born, and in 1777, when that son was seventy-one years of age, his youngest son was born, and in 1853 he has the perfect use of limbs and faculties, and properly executes the important office of assistant overseer to his extensive parish. With such direct testimony, we visited the very romantic dell, where, in the still hours of midnight, the saints of God were wont to meet and unite in Divine worship. It is a most romantic dell, in Wain-wood, which crowns a hill about three miles from Hitchin. We had some difficulty in making our way through the underwood—crushing the beautiful hyacinths and primroses which covered the ground in the richest profusion, and near the top of the hill came suddenly upon this singular dell—a natural little eminence formed the pulpit, while the dell would hold under its shade at least a thousand people—and now I must give you the countryman's eloquent description of the meetings of his ancestors. "Here, under the canopy of heaven, with the rigour of winter's nipping frost, while the clouds, obscuring the moon, have discharged their flaky treasures, they often assembled while the highly-gifted and heavenly-minded Bunyan has broken to them the bread of life. The word of the Lord was precious in those days. And here over his devoted head, while uncovered in prayer, the pious matrons warded off the driving hail and snow, by holding a shawl over him by its four corners. In this devoted dell these plain unpolished husbandmen, like the ancient Waldenses, in the valleys of Piedmont, proved themselves firm defenders of the faith in its primitive purity, and of Divine worship in its primitive style."

Their horses on which they rode, from various parts, were sheltered in

neighbouring friendly farms, while they, to avoid suspicion, ascended the hill by scarcely visible footpaths. Could fine weather be insured, it would form a lovely spot for a meeting to celebrate the third jubilee of religious toleration—there listen to a Bunyan of our age, and devise measures for religious equality. Then we might close the service by solemnly objuring every system which gave power to tyrannise over the rights of conscience. Here, as in other places where Bunyan founded churches, the cause of Christ hath spread. At Hitchin, in 1681, about thirty-five Christians united in the following covenant:—

'We who, through the mercy of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have obtained grace to give ourselves to the Lord, and one to another by the will of God, to have communion with one another, as saints in one gospel fellowship:—Do, before God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy angels, agree and promise to walk together in this one gospel communion and fellowship as a church of Jesus Christ, in love to the Lord and one to another, and endeavour to yield sincere and hearty obedience to the laws, ordinances, and appointments of our Lord and Lawgiver in his church. And also do agree and promise, the Lord assisting, to follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another, that so living and walking in love and peace, the God of love and peace may be with us. Amen.'

This was probably drawn by Bunyan, and so simple and comprehensive has it proved, that the church has flourished, and lately a spacious and handsome place of worship has been erected, to accommodate a thousand worshippers, at a cost of £3000, all paid for, with a surplus fund in hand for contingencies, of £500. In addition, there are also large and commodious chapels for the Independents, Wesleyans, and Quakers.

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## Autobiography by John Bunyan

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.

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.

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.

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" (2 Tim 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.

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.

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."

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

'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.

'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.'

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 wearieith himself with vanity, for he knoweth not the way to the city of God (Eccl 10:15).

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.

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.

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.

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.



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 delicacies, 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.

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, 18:12).

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.'

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.

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

'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.]

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.

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).

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.

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]

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.

'By these things' my mind was now so turned, that it lay like a horse leech at the vein, still crying out, Give, give (Prov 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.'

'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.'

'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.'

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.

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. (1 Cor 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.

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.

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.'

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 (John 14:6; Matt 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]

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.

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?

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).

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?

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."

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.

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?"

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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" (Luke 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.'

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.

'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.'

'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.

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!

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.

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 (Mark 3:13).

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.

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" (Joel 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]

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.

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. 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.

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.

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 (Luke 9:42; Mark 9:20).

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).

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<sup>[25]</sup> 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.

'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.'

'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.'

'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?"'

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.

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.

'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.'

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 (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.

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.

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" (Acts 12:9).

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.'

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" (Luke 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]

'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.'

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.

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?

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?

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.

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.

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]

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.

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 (1 Sam 16:14).

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.

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).

'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.'

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.

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" (Matt 4:9).

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.

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.

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.

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 (Deut 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.

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.

I had, also, once a sweet glance from that in 2 Corinthians 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" (John 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 (Acts 10:16).

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.

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.

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.]

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.

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 (Matt 16:15-17; 1 John 5:1).

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.

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 (1 Peter 1:19,20).

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 (John 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, Acts 1:9, 10, 7:56, 10:42; Hebrews 7:24, 8:3; Revelation 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 18.