

# GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

IN A FAITHFUL ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND DEATH OF

**JOHN BUNYAN**

(1628-1688)

OR

A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST TO HIM

NAMELY

IN HIS TAKING HIM OUT OF THE DUNGHILL, AND  
CONVERTING HIM TO THE FAITH OF HIS BLESSED SON JESUS  
CHRIST. HERE IS ALSO PARTICULARLY SHOWN, WHAT  
SIGHT OF, AND WHAT TROUBLES HE HAD FOR SIN; AND  
ALSO, WHAT VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS HE HAS MET WITH,  
AND HOW GOD HAS CARRIED HIM THROUGH THEM.

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*Come and hear all you who fear God, and I will declare what  
He has done for my soul.—Psalm 66.16.*

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*Formatted, modernized, annotated, and corrected  
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## A note on modernization.

George Offor's Advertisement in the 1853 edition (which I added to this 1905 edition), describes John Bunyan as "unlettered." There's always a risk in modernizing old texts, that the author's "voice" will be changed — that he'll sound too modern, too educated, too unlike the person he really was. However, the choice is between that, and not having him heard at all, because his words are too archaic, his syntax too complicated, and his style too difficult for a modern age.

Typical of his day, Bunyan often left modifiers, pronouns, and articles out of the text; they were "understood." His sentences were often convoluted and parenthetical, making it difficult to follow; and his punctuation didn't help. I hope in modernizing it, I've made it more accessible, while remaining faithful to Bunyan's original. This edition is directed at those with English as a second language, and those for whom "King James English" is perhaps just as foreign.

I've added subheadings to *Grace Abounding* to mark the hurdles that Bunyan overcame on his way to Christ. It was more of a tortuous journey for him, than an event. At the end of this collection, I've appended a chronology of his life. I thought it might be helpful to put things in context, to appreciate how young he was when he entered the fray, and how dynamic and turbulent the times were in which he lived, which included three civil wars.

Bunyan's experience of God's grace in his conversion, sanctification, and preaching will be familiar to many believers. He found himself on a roller-coaster of confidence in Christ, and doubt in himself. "Am I saved, or not?" "Have I committed the unforgiveable sin?" "Am I a hypocrite?" It's honest, if not shocking at times, until it was finally settled in his heart, that God's grace *abounds*. What a blessing to see God at work in this faithful servant, knowing that He is likewise at work in all his people, *conforming us to the image of his son*.

William H. Gross

**NOTE:** Footnotes ending with '-Ed.' are George Offor's. Those with '-WHG' are mine. Others are from the Gutenberg Project digital text, my primary source. The few errors in that text (or in the 1905 edition which they used) have been corrected using Offor's edition.

## ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR.

*Taken from George Offor's 1853 edition of the text*

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

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

Bunyan's account of his singular trials and temptations may have excited alarm in the minds of some young Christians lest they be in an unconverted state, because they have not been called to pass through a similar mode of training. Pray recollect, my dear young Christian, that all are not called to such important public labours as Bunyan, or Whitfield, or Wesley. All the members of the Christian family are trained to fit them for their respective positions in the church of Christ. It is a pleasant and profitable exercise to look back to the day of our espousals, and trace the operations of Divine grace in digging us from the hole of the pit. But the important question with us all should be, not so much HOW we became enlightened, but NOW do we love Christ? *Now* do we regret our lack of greater conformity to his image? If we can honestly answer these questions in the affirmative, we are believers, and can claim our part in that precious promise, "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." Spiritual life is ours, and eternal life is essentially connected with it, and must be our portion without an inquiry into the means by which we were called, whether by the thunders and lighting of Sinai, as Paul was struck, or by the "still small voice" (Act 9.3,4; 1Kng 19.12; Job 4.16,17).

The value of such a narrative to a terror-stricken prodigal is vividly shown by Bunyan, in his *Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, in one of those colloquial pieces of composition in which he eminently shone.

Satan is loath to part with a great sinner. "What, my true servant," he quotes, "my old servant, will you forsake me now? Having so often sold yourself to me to work wickedness, will you forsake me now? You horrible wretch, do you not know that you have sinned yourself beyond the reach of grace, and do you think to find mercy now? Are you not a murderer, a thief, a harlot, a witch, a sinner of the greatest size, and do you look for mercy now? Do you think that Christ will foul his fingers with you? It is enough to make angels blush, says Satan, to see so vile a one knock at heaven-gates for mercy, and will you be so abominably bold to do it?"

“Thus Satan dealt with me,” says the great sinner, “when at first I came to Jesus Christ.” “And what did you reply?” Says the tempted. “Why, I granted the whole charge to be true,” says the other. “And what, did you despair, or how?” “No,” he says, I said, “I am Magdalene, I am Zacheus, I am the thief, I am the harlot, I am the publican, I am the prodigal, and one of Christ’s murderers; yes, worse than any of these; and yet God was so far off from rejecting of me, as I found afterwards, that there was music and dancing in his house for me, and for joy that I had come home to him.” “O blessed be God for grace,” says the other, for “then I hope there is favour for me.”

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

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

*Hopeful.* With all my heart.

*Christian.* Where shall we begin?

*Hopeful.* Where God began with us.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cheever.

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

During this time, he was ill at ease. He felt convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, without a hope of mercy. Hence his misery and internal conflicts, perhaps the most remarkable of any on record. His own Giant Despair seized him with an iron grasp. He felt himself surrounded by invisible beings, and in the immediate presence of a holy God. By day he was bewildered with tormenting visions; and by night alarming dreams presented themselves to him upon his bed. The fictitious appeared as realities to his terrified imagination. His excited spirit became familiar with shapeless forms and fearful powers. The sorrows of death, and the pains of hell, got hold of him. His internal conflict was truly horrible, as one who thought himself under the power of demons; they whispered in his ears—pulled at his clothes; he madly fought, striking at imaginary shades with his hands, and stamping with his feet at the destroyer. Thoughts of the unpardonable sin beset him; his powerful bodily frame became convulsed with agony, as if his breast-bone would split, and he be burst open like Judas.

He possessed a most prolific mind, affording constant nourishment to this excited state of his feelings. He thought that he would be bereft of his wits. Then a voice rushed in at the window like the noise of wind, very pleasant, and produced a great calm in his soul. His intervals of ease, however, were short—the recollection of his sins, and a fear that he had sold his Saviour, haunted his frightened spirit. His soul became so tormented, as to suggest to his ideas the suffering of a malefactor broken upon the wheel.<sup>3</sup> The climax of these terrors is narrated at paragraph No. 187.

Thus I was always sinking, whatever I thought or did. So one day I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down on a bench in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to. And after long musing, I lifted up my head, but I thought I saw, as if the sun that shines in the heavens grudged to give light; and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, bent themselves against me—I thought they all combined together to banish me out of the world. I was abhorred by them, unfit to dwell among them, or to be a partaker of their benefits, because I had sinned against the Saviour.

In this deep abyss of misery, that love which has heights and depths surpassing knowledge, laid under him the everlasting arms, and raised him from the horrible pit in miry clay, when no human powers could have reached his case. Dr. Cheever eloquently remarks that,

It was through this valley of the shadow of death, overhung by darkness, peopled with devils, resounding with blasphemy and lamentations—and passing amidst quagmires and pitfalls, close by the very mouth of hell—that Bunyan journeyed to that bright and fruitful land of Beulah, in which he sojourned during the latter days of his pilgrimage.

The only trace which his cruel sufferings and temptations seem to have left behind them, was an affectionate compassion for those who were still in the state in which he had once been.

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

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<sup>3</sup> George Offor, later notes that, "to be 'racked or broken upon the wheel,' was a horrid mode of torturing a criminal to death... The sufferer was stretched and made fast upon a large wheel, when the executioner, with a heavy iron bar, proceeded to break every bone in his body... How piercing must have been the convictions upon Bunyan's soul, to have led him to use such a simile!" – See Isa 38:13; Lam 3:4. – WHG

faculties, softened down and hallowed by this fearful experience, became fitted for most extensive usefulness.

To eulogize this narrative, would be like 'gilding refined gold;' but I cannot help remarking, among a multitude of deeply interesting passages, his observations upon that honest open avowal of Christian principles which brought down severe persecution upon him. They excite our tenderest sympathy. His being dragged from his home and wife and children, he says,

'has often been to me, like pulling my flesh from my bones my poor blind child what sorrow are you likely to have for your portion in this world! You must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure that the wind should blow upon you. O, I saw I was like a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet, recollecting myself, I thought, I must venture <sup>4</sup> you all with God.'<sup>5</sup>

How awful must be the state of the wretched persecutor, who occasions such sufferings to the children of the most high God!

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

GEORGE OFFOR.

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<sup>4</sup> *Venture*: to proceed in something despite the risk, in order to obtain the blessing. – WHG

<sup>5</sup> Taken from pars. 327, 328. – WHG



## PREFATORY NOTE

THE text in this 1905 edition is as nearly as possible that of the eighth, which was corrected by Bunyan himself a few weeks before his death. The text of 'A Relation' is that of the first edition of 1765. A few minor changes have been introduced for the convenience of the reader. The use of capital letters has been considerably modified, and the orthography has been in places modernized. In a few instances, the Scripture references have been added to quotations where they did not appear in the original.<sup>6</sup> It must be remembered that Bunyan often quoted Scripture inexactly, and it has not been deemed necessary to make all his quotations follow the text of the Authorized Version.

The marginal summary is not part of the original, but has been prepared for this edition in order that it may correspond with the Society's editions of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'<sup>7</sup>

The illustrations have been prepared for this work by Mr. Harold Copping, whose illustrations to the 'Pilgrim's Progress' have justly attracted much attention.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I likewise added other references. – WHG

<sup>7</sup> The marginal summaries have not been included in this Project Gutenberg eText.—DP.

<sup>8</sup> The illustrations are not included in this modernized digital edition - WHG



## A PREFACE

or,

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE PUBLISHING THIS WORK, WRITTEN BY ITS AUTHOR,  
AND DEDICATED TO THOSE WHOM GOD HAS COUNTED HIM WORTHY TO BRING TO FAITH,  
BY HIS MINISTRY IN THE WORD

CHILDREN, Grace be with you. Amen. I have been taken from you in presence, and so tied up that I cannot perform that duty which lies upon me from God toward you, for your further edifying and building up in faith and holiness, etc. Yet, so that you may see my soul has fatherly care and desire for your spiritual and everlasting welfare, now once again, as before *from the top of Shenir and Hermon*, so now *from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards*, Song 4.8, I yet look after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into the desired Haven.

I thank God upon every remembrance of you; and I rejoice, even while I stick between the teeth of the lion in the wilderness, that the grace, and mercy, and knowledge of Christ our Saviour, which God has bestowed upon you with abundance of faith and love — your hungerings and thirstings after further acquaintance with the Father, in the Son — your tenderness of heart, your trembling at sin, your sober and holy deportment also, before both God and men — is a great refreshment to me; *For you are our glory and joy*, 1The 2.20.

I have sent you here enclosed, a drop of that honey that I have taken out of the carcass of a lion, Jdg 14.5-8. I have eaten of it myself, and I am much refreshed by it. Temptations, when we meet them at first, are like the lion that roared at Samson. But if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we will find a nest of honey within them. The Philistines do not understand me. It is something of a relation of the work of God upon my soul, even from the very first till now, in which you may perceive my castings down and risings up. For He wounds, and his hands make whole. It is written in the Scripture, *The father shall make known Your truth to the children*, Isa 38.19. Yes, it was for this reason that I lay so long at Sinai, to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, Deu 4.10-11; that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life on earth, *and tell of his wondrous works to my children*. Psa 78.3-5.

Moses, in Num 33.1-2, wrote of the journeys of the children of Israel, from Egypt to the land of Canaan. He also commanded that they remember their forty years' travel in the wilderness. *You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, and to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not*, Deu 8.2. Therefore, I have endeavoured to do this; and not only so, but also to publish it, that if God wills, others may be put in remembrance of what He has done for their souls, by reading his work upon me.

It is profitable for Christians to often call to mind the very beginnings of grace with their souls. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. *This is that night of the Lord to be observed by all the children of Israel in their generations*, Exo 12.42. *O my God*, says David in Psa 42.6, *my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember you from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar*. He also remembered the lion and the bear when he went to fight with the giant of Gath, 1Sam. 17.36-37.

It was Paul's accustomed manner, as in Acts 22, and when tried for his life, Acts 24, to open before his judges the manner of his conversion. He would think of that day and that hour in which he first met with grace; for he found it supported him. When God had brought the

children of Israel out of the Red Sea, far into the wilderness, yet there they must completely turn around again in order to remember the drowning of their enemies, Num 14.19-23. For though they sang his praise before, *they soon forgot his works*, Psa 106.11-13.

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

My dear children, call to mind the former days, and the years of ancient times. *Remember also your songs in the night, and commune with your own hearts*, Psa 77.5-12. Yes, look diligently and leave no corner of it unsearched for that hidden treasure, even the treasure of your first and second experience of the grace of God towards you. Remember, I say, the word that first laid hold of you. Remember your terrors of conscience, and your fear of death and hell. Remember also your tears and prayers to God — yes, how you sighed under every hedge for mercy. Do you never have a hill Mizar to remember? (Psa 42.6) Have you forgotten the close,<sup>9</sup> the milk-house, the stable, the barn and the like, where God visited your souls? Remember also the word, *the word*, I say, upon which the Lord has caused you to hope. If you have sinned against light, if you are tempted to blaspheme, if you are drowned in despair, if you think God fights against you, or if heaven is hidden from your eyes, remember it was thus with your father. But the Lord delivered me out of them all.

I could have enlarged much in my discourse here, of my temptations and troubles for sin; and also of the merciful kindness and working of God with my soul. I could also have stepped into a style much higher than this in which I have discoursed here. And I could have adorned all things more than I have seemed to do here, but I dare not. God did not play in tempting me. Nor did I play when I sunk as into the bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold of me. Therefore I may not play in relating them, but must be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was. He that likes it, let him receive it; and he that does not, let him produce a better one. Farewell.

My dear Children, the milk and honey are beyond this wilderness. God be merciful to you, and grant that *you not be slothful to go in to possess the land*, Jdg 18.9.

JOHN BUNYAN.

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<sup>9</sup> *Close*: a vegetable garden sometimes included with a priest's benefice and housing. — WHG

# GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

OR,

A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST,  
TO HIS POOR SERVANT,

**JOHN BUNYAN**

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

2. For my descent then, it was, as is well-known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation — my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land. Therefore, I have nothing to boast here, as others may, of noble blood or a high-born estate according to the flesh. Though, all things considered, I magnify the heavenly Majesty, that He brought me into the world by this door, to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel.

3. 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, which I also attained according to the rate of other poor men's children. Though to my shame, I confess, I soon lost what I had learned, almost utterly, and that was long before the Lord worked his gracious work of conversion upon my soul.

## ***Without God in the World***

4. As for my own natural life, for the time that I was without God in the world, it was, indeed, *according to the course of this world and the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience*, Eph 2.2-3. It was my delight to be *taken captive by the devil at his will*, 2Tim 2.26. I was filled with all unrighteousness, which so strongly worked and displayed itself in both my heart and life, that from a child, I had but few equals — especially considering my years, which were tender, being few — both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.

5. Indeed, so settled and rooted was I in these things, that they became like a second nature to me. I have also considered since, with soberness, that this so offended the Lord, that even in my childhood he scared and frightened me with fearful dreams, and terrified me with fearful visions. For often, after I have spent this and the other day in sin, I have been greatly afflicted in my bed while asleep, with apprehensions of devils and wicked spirits who still, as I then thought, laboured to draw me away with them — which I could never be rid of.

6. Also in these years, I would be greatly afflicted and troubled with thoughts of the fearful torments of hellfire, still fearing that it would be my lot to be found at last among those devils and hellish fiends who are there bound down with the chains and bonds of darkness until the judgment of the great day.

7. These things, I say, when I was but a child, 'only nine or ten years old,' so distressed 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 with it. Yet I could not let go of my sins. Indeed, I was also then so overcome with despair of life and heaven, that I would often wish either that there had been no hell, or that I had been a devil — supposing

they were only tormentors; so that, if I needed to go there, I might be a tormentor rather than be tormented myself.

8. After a while, those terrible dreams left me, which I also soon forgot — for my pleasures quickly cut off the remembrance of them, as if they had never been. Therefore, with more greediness according to the strength of nature, I still let loose the reins of my lust, and delighted in all transgressions against the law of God. So that, until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the youth who kept me company in all manner of vice and ungodliness.

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

10. In these days, the thoughts of religion were very grievous to me. I could neither endure it myself, nor that anyone else should. So that, when I had seen someone read in those books which concerned Christian piety, it would be as it were a prison to me. Then I said to God, *Depart from me, for I do not desire the knowledge of Your ways*, Job 21.14-15. 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. O Lord, You know my life, and my ways were not hidden from You! (Jer 16.17)

11. But 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 at any time I had seen wicked things done by those who professed *goodness*, it would make my spirit tremble. Just as once, when I was in my height of vanity above all the rest, yet hearing someone swear who was reckoned to be a religious man, it had so great an impact upon my spirit, that it made my heart ache.

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

13. I have also taken notice of this event with thanksgiving: when I was a soldier, I was drawn out with others, to go to a place to besiege it. But just as I was ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my place. When I consented, he took my place. Coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel, he was shot in the head with a musket-bullet and died.

14. Here, as I said, were judgments and mercy. But neither of them awakened my soul to righteousness. Therefore I still sinned, and grew more and more rebellious against God, and careless of my own salvation.

### ***Marriage***

15. Soon after this, I changed my condition into a married state, and my mercy was to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly. This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon between us, yet she had this for her part: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*,

which her father had left her when he died. I would sometimes read these two books with her, in which I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me. But all this while I met with no conviction. She would also tell me often of what a godly man her father was, and how he would reprove and correct vice, both in his house and among his neighbours — what a strict and holy life he lived in his days, both in word and deed.

16. Therefore these books, with this relation, though they did not reach my heart to awaken it about my sad and sinful state, yet they stirred in me some desires toward religion. So that, because I knew no better, I fell in very eagerly with the religion of the times — namely, to go to church twice a day, and do that with the foremost persons. And there I would very devoutly both speak and sing as others did, yet retaining my wicked life. But in this, I was so over-run with the spirit of superstition, that I adored with great devotion, all things belonging to the church — both the high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and whatever else. I counted all things holy that were contained in it. And I especially counted the priest and clerk most happy, and without doubt greatly blessed, because they were the servants of God, as I then thought, and were principal in the holy temple to do his work in it.

17. This conceit grew so strong upon my spirit in a little time, that had I but seen a priest (however sordid and debauched in his life), I would find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit to him. Indeed, I thought, for the love I bore to them, supposing them to be the ministers of God, I could have laid down at their feet and been trampled on by them — their name, their garb, and their work had so intoxicated and bewitched me.

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

19. But all this while, I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin. I was kept from considering that sin would damn me, whatever religion I followed, unless I was found in Christ. No indeed, I never thought of Him, or whether there was such a person or not. Thus man, while blind, wanders but wearies himself with vanity, *for he does not know the way to the city of God*, Ecc 10.15.

### ***The Holy Sabbath***

20. But one day, among all the sermons our parson made, his subject was the Sabbath day, and the evil of breaking it either with labour, sports, or otherwise. Now, notwithstanding my religion, I was one who took great delight in all manner of vice. And *that* day was especially the one that I solaced myself with. Therefore, in my conscience I fell 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 for the present, I was greatly loaded down with it. And so I went home when the sermon was ended, with a great burden upon my spirit.

21. For that instant, this benumbed the sinews of my best delights, and embittered my former pleasures to me. But hold on, it did not last. 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 I was that this trouble was gone from me, and that the fire was put out, so that I might sin again without control! Therefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and I returned with great delight to my old custom of sports and gaming.

22. But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game of Cat,<sup>10</sup> and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice suddenly darted from heaven into my soul. It said, *Will you leave your sins and go to heaven, or have your sins and go to hell?* I was put to an exceeding amazement at this. Therefore, leaving my cat on the ground, I looked up to heaven. It was as if, with the eyes of my understanding, I had seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me; and as if He severely threatened me with some grievous punishment for these and other ungodly practices.

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

24. Thus I stood in the midst of my play, before all who were then present; yet I told them nothing. But, I say, having made this conclusion, I returned desperately to my sport again. And I well remember that shortly this kind of despair so possessed my soul, that I was persuaded I could never attain comfort other than what I would get in sin. For heaven was already gone, so I must not think on that. This is why I found within me a great desire to take my fill of sin, still considering 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 die before I had my desire; for I feared that greatly. In these things, I protest before God, I do not lie, nor do I feign this form of speech. These were my desires, really, strongly, and with all my heart. May the good Lord, whose mercy is unsearchable, forgive me my transgressions!

25. And I am very confident that this temptation of the devil is more usual among poor creatures than many are aware of, even to over-run the spirits with a scurvy, and a seared frame of heart, and a numbing of the conscience. He quietly and slyly supplies us with such despair that, even if not much guilt attends such souls, yet they continually have a secret conclusion within them, that there is no hope for them. For *they have loved sins*, Jer 2.25, and therefore, *after them they will go*, Jer 18.12.

### ***Outward Reformation***

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

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<sup>10</sup> Also called Tip-cat, a forerunner to the game of cricket. – WHG



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

28. But how it came to pass, I do not know. From this time forward, I so left my swearing that it was a great wonder to myself to observe it. Before I did not know how to speak unless I put an oath before, and another behind, to make my words have authority. Now, without it, I could speak better and with more pleasantness than I ever could before. All this while I did not know Jesus Christ, nor did I leave my sports and plays.

29. But quickly after this, I fell into company with one poor man who made a profession of religion. As I then thought, he talked pleasantly of the scriptures, and of the matters of religion. Therefore, falling into some love and liking for what he said, I took myself to my Bible, and began to take great pleasure in reading, but especially with the historical part of it. As for Paul's Epistles and like scriptures, I could not grasp them, being as yet ignorant either of the corruptions of my nature, or of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me.

30. Therefore I fell into some outward reformation both in my words and life, and I set the commandments before me as my way to heaven. I also strived to keep these commandments and, I thought, if I kept them pretty well sometimes; then I would have comfort. Yet now and then I would break one, and so afflict my conscience. But then I would repent, and say that I was sorry for it, and promised 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*, Heb 11.5.

31. I continued this way for about a year, all of which time our neighbours took me to be a very godly man, a new and religious man. And they marvelled much to see such a great and famous alteration in my life and manners. And indeed, so it was, though as yet I did not know Christ, nor grace, nor faith, nor hope. For, as I have well seen since, had I then died, my state would have been most fearful.

32. But I say, my neighbours were amazed at my great conversion, from prodigious profaneness to something like a moral life. And truly, so they well might, for this conversion was as great as for Tom of Bedlam to become a sober man.<sup>11</sup> Now, therefore, they began to praise, commend, and speak well of me, both to my face and behind my back. Now I had become 'godly,' as they said; now I had become a right honest man. But oh! when I understood these were their words and opinions of me, it pleased me mightily well. For though as yet I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of as one who was truly godly. I was *proud* of my godliness, and indeed, I did all that I did, either to be seen or to be well spoken of by men. Thus I continued for about twelve months or more.

### ***Fear of Death***

33. Now you must know that before this, I had taken much delight in ringing [the church bells]. But my conscience beginning to be tender, I thought such a practice was but vain, and therefore I forced myself to leave it. Yet my mind hankered; and so I would go to the steeple-house and look on, though I dared not ring. But I thought this did not become religion either. Yet I forced myself, and I would still look on. But quickly after, I began to think, *What if one of the bells should fall?* Then I chose to stand under a main beam that lay

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<sup>11</sup> 'Tom of Bedlam' was a byword for an inveterate drunkard, alluding to an old song describing the feelings of a poor maniac whose frenzy had been induced by intoxication, and who escaped from Bedlam. —Ed.

across the steeple from side to side, thinking that here I might stand secure. But then I would think again, that if the bell should fall with a swing, it might first hit the wall, and then rebounding upon me, it might kill me despite this beam. This made me stand in the steeple-door. Now, I thought, I am safe enough. For if the bell should fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding.

34. So after this I would still go to see them ring, but I would not go any farther than the steeple-door. But then it came into my head, what if the steeple itself should fall? And I thought as I stood and looked on, *It may, for all I know*. My mind so continually shook, that I dared not stand at the steeple-door any longer, but was forced to flee for fear the steeple might fall on my head.

35. Another thing was my dancing. It 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 anything that I thought was good by word or deed, I had great peace in my conscience. And I would think to myself, God cannot choose but to be pleased with me now. Indeed, to relate it in my own way, I thought, no man in England could please God better than I could.

36. But poor wretch that I was! I was all this while ignorant of Jesus Christ. I set about to *establish my own righteousness*, Rom 10.3. And I would have perished in this, if God in his mercy had not shown me more of my state by nature.

#### ***Four Poor Women***

37. But one day, the good providence of God called me to Bedford to work on my calling. And in one of the streets of that town, I came to where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God. And now being willing to hear them discourse, I drew near to hear what they said. For now I was also a brisk talker myself in the matters of religion. But I may say that I heard, but I did not understand, for they were far above, out of my reach. 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 about 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 about the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular. They told each other by which of these they had been afflicted, and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed about their own wretchedness of heart, and their unbelief. And they contemned, slighted, and abhorred their own righteousness, as filthy and insufficient to do them any good.

38. I thought they spoke as if *joy* made them speak. They spoke with such pleasantness of scripture language, and with such an appearance of grace in all they said, that to me it was as if they had found a new world — as if they were people who dwelt alone, and were *not to be reckoned among their neighbours*. Num 23.9.

39. At this I felt my own heart begin to shake; I mistrusted my condition as being nothing. For I saw that in all my thoughts about religion and salvation, the new-birth never entered into my mind. Nor did I know 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; nor did I understand what Satan's temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood and resisted, etc.

40. Thus, therefore, when I had heard and considered what they said, I left them, and went about my employment again. But their talk and discourse went with me; also my heart

would tarry with them, for I was greatly affected by their words. This was both because I was convinced by them that I lacked the true tokens of a truly godly man, and also because I was convinced by them of the happy and blessed condition of such a one.

41. Therefore I would often make it my business to go again and again into the company of these poor people; for I could not stay away. And the more I went among them, the more I questioned my condition. And as I still remember, I quickly found two things within me at which I sometimes marvelled, especially considering what a blind, ignorant, sordid and ungodly wretch I was just before. The one was a very great softness and tenderness of heart, which caused me to fall under the conviction of what they asserted by scripture. And the other was a great bending in my mind, to a continual meditating on scripture, and on all other good things which at any time I heard or read about.

42. By these things my mind was now so turned, that it lay like a horse-leech at the vein, still crying out, *Give, Give!* Pro 30.15. Indeed, it was so fixed on eternity, and on 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 loose it, nor make it let go of its hold. And though I may say it with shame, yet it is in very deed a certain truth: it would then have been as difficult for me to have taken my mind from heaven to earth, as I have found it often since to get it again from earth to heaven.

43. One thing I may not omit: There was a young man in our town, to whom my heart before was knit more than to any other. But being a most wicked creature for his cursing, swearing, and whoring, I now shook him off, and forsook his company. But about a quarter of a year after I had left him, I met him in a certain lane, and asked him how he was doing. In his old swearing and mad way, he answered that he was well. “But, Harry,” I said, “why do you curse and swear this way? What will become of you if you die in this condition?” He answered me in a great chafe, “What would the devil do for company, if it were not for such as me?”<sup>12</sup>

### ***The Ranters***

44. About this time I met with some Ranters’ books,<sup>13</sup> that were put forth by some of our countrymen. These books were also held in high esteem by several old professors. Some of these I read, but I was not able to make any judgment about them. Therefore, as I read and thought on them, and seeing myself as unable to judge, I would take myself to hearty prayer in this manner:

O Lord, I am a fool, and not able to know the truth from error: Lord, do not leave me to my own blindness, either to approve of or condemn this doctrine. If it is of God, let me not despise it; if it is of the devil, let me not embrace it. Lord, I lay my soul in this matter at Your foot alone. Let me not be deceived, I humbly beseech You.

I had one religious intimate companion all this while, and that was the poor man I spoke of before. But about this time, he also turned into a most devilish Ranter, 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 all the more, and pretend that he had gone through all religions, and could never settle on the right one till now. He also told me that in a little

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<sup>12</sup> *Chafe*: anger produced by an annoying irritation — an accusation, rejection, or challenge. — WHG

<sup>13</sup> The Ranters denied the authority of churches, scripture, ministers, and sacraments, instead calling on men to listen to the divine within them. This led to sinful excesses, having rejected all biblical authority and discipline. — WHG

while I would see all professors turn to the ways of the Ranters. Therefore, abominating those cursed principles, I left his company immediately, and became as great a stranger to him as I had before been a familiar.

45. Nor was this man alone a temptation to me, but my calling lying in the country, I happened to settle into several people's company, who though formerly strict in religion, yet were also swept away by these Ranters. These would also talk with me about their ways, and condemn me as legal and dark, pretending that they alone had attained perfection, and could do what they wanted and not sin. Oh! these temptations suited my flesh, I being but a young man and my nature in its prime. But God, who had, as I hoped, designed me for better things, kept me in the fear of his name, and did not suffer me to accept such cursed principles. And blessed be God, who put it into my heart to cry to Him to be kept and directed, still distrusting my own wisdom. For I have since seen the effects of that prayer in his preserving me not only from Ranting errors, but also from those who have sprung up since. The Bible was precious to me in those days.

### ***A New Perspective on Scripture***

46. And now I think I began to look into the Bible with new eyes, and to read it as I never did before. The epistles of the apostle Paul were especially 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 the way to heaven and glory.

47. And as I went on and read, I lighted upon 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, etc.*, 1Cor 12. And though, as I have since seen, what the Holy Ghost intends by this scripture, in special, extraordinary things, it then fastened on me with conviction, that I lacked *ordinary* things — even that understanding and wisdom that other Christians had. I mused on this word, and could not tell what to do — especially this word *faith* put me to it. For I could not help it, but sometimes I had to question whether I had any faith or not. For I feared that it shut me out of all the blessings that other good people were given by God. But I was loath to conclude that I had no faith in my soul. For if I did so, I thought, then I shall count myself a very cast-away indeed.

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

49. Therefore I was, for a while, made afraid by this suggestion, to see my lack of faith. But God would not allow me to thus undo and destroy my soul. He continually, against my blind and sad conclusion, created still within me such suppositions, that I could not rest content until I now came to some certain knowledge whether I had faith or not. This was always running in my mind: But *how*, if you lack faith indeed? And how can you tell if you have faith? And besides this, I saw for certain that if I did not, I was sure to perish forever.

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

## ***Proof of Faith***

51. Therefore, while I was thus considering, and plunging myself into it — for you must know that as yet in this matter, I had revealed my mind to no man, only heard and considered — the tempter came in with *this* delusion: that there was no way for me to know I had faith except by trying to work some miracle. He urged those scriptures that seem to look that way, to enforce and strengthen his temptation. Indeed, one day as I was between Elstow and Bedford, the temptation was hot upon me to test if I had faith, by doing some miracle. That miracle at this time was this: I must say to the puddles that were in the horse paddocks, *Be dry*; and to the dry places, *Be puddles*. And truly, one time I was going to say so indeed. But just as I was about to speak, this thought came into my mind: *Go under yonder hedge and pray first, that God would make you able*. And when I had concluded to pray, this thought came hot upon me: that if I prayed, and came back and tried to do it, and yet I did nothing, notwithstanding, then for sure I had no faith. Rather, I was a cast-away and lost. No, I thought, if this is so, then I will not try it yet, but I will wait a little longer.

52. So I continued at a great loss. For I thought, if they alone had faith, who could do such wonderful things, then I concluded that for the present I neither had it, nor for the time to come was I ever likely to have it. Thus I was tossed between the devil and my own ignorance. I was so perplexed, especially at some times, that I could not tell what to do.

53. About this time, the state and happiness of these poor people at Bedford was thus presented to me in a kind of a vision. I saw as if they were on the sunny side of some high mountain, refreshing themselves there with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with frost, snow and dark clouds. I also thought I saw a wall between me and them, that surrounded this mountain. Now, my soul greatly desired to pass through this wall, concluding that if I could, I would even go into the very midst of them, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their sun.

54. I thought to go again and again around this wall, prying as I went, to see if I could find some way or passage by which I might enter in. But I could find none for some time. At last I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass. Now the passage being very *strait and narrow*, I made many efforts to get in, but all in vain, until I was well-near exhausted by my striving. At last, with great striving, I thought I at first got my head in, and after that, by sidling, my shoulders, and my whole body. Then I was exceedingly glad. I went and sat down in the midst of them, and so I was comforted with the light and heat of their sun.

55. Now this mountain, and wall, etc., was thus made out to me: The mountain signified the church of the living God; the sun that shone on it was the comfortable shining of his merciful face on those who were within; the wall, I thought, was the word that made a separation between the Christians and the world; and the gap in the wall, I thought, was Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father, Joh 14.6; Mat 7.14. But because the passage was wonderfully narrow, even so narrow that I could not, except with great difficulty, enter in there, it showed me that none could enter into life except those who were in downright earnest, and unless they also left that wicked world behind them. For here there was only room for body and soul, but not for body, soul, and sin.

56. This image abided on my spirit many days, all of which time I saw myself in a forlorn and sad condition. Yet I was provoked to a vehement hunger and desire to be one of that number who sat in the sunshine. Now I would also pray wherever I was, whether at home or

abroad, in house or field. I would also, lifting up my heart, often sing that from Psalm 5.1,<sup>14</sup> *O Lord, consider my distress*; for as yet I did not know where I was.

### **Two Temptations** (i.e., testings)

57. Neither as yet could I attain to any comfortable persuasion that I had faith in Christ. But instead of having satisfaction here, I began to find my soul assaulted with fresh doubts about my future happiness, especially with such as these: *Am I elected?* And, *what if the day of grace is now past and gone?*

58. I was very much afflicted and disquieted by these two temptations — sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other. And first, to speak of questioning my election, I found at this time, that though I was inflamed to find the way to heaven and glory, and though nothing could beat me away from this, yet this question so offended and discouraged me that it was, especially at some times, as if the very strength of my body had also been taken away by the force and power of it. This scripture also seemed to trample on all my desires: *It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs; but of God who shows mercy*, Rom 9.16.

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

60. O Lord, I thought, what if I should not be indeed? ‘It may be that you are *not* elected,’ said the Tempter. ‘It may be so indeed,’ I thought. ‘Why then,’ said Satan, ‘you had better leave it, 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 not of him who wills, nor of him who runs; but of God who shows mercy.*’

61. I was driven to my wits’ end by these things, not knowing what to say, or how to answer these temptations. Indeed, I little thought that Satan had thus assaulted me, but rather it was my own prudence to thus raise the question. For without scruple I heartily closed with [the truth] that the elect alone attained eternal life. But whether I myself was one of them, *there* lay the question.

62. Therefore, I was greatly assaulted and perplexed for several days. And when walking, I was often ready to sink where I went, with faintness in my mind. But one day, after I had been oppressed and cast down with it for so many weeks, 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 any ever trust in the Lord and was confounded?’

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

64. Well, I looked, but I did not find it. Only, it *abided* on me: Then I asked first this good man, and then another, if they knew where it was, but they knew of no such place. At this I wondered that such a sentence should so suddenly, and with such comfort and strength,

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<sup>14</sup> George Offor’s 1853 edition (incorrectly) has “the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm;” but there is no such phrase in that Psalm. – WHG

seize and abide upon my heart; and yet none could find it. For I did not doubt that it was in holy scripture.

65. Thus I continued for over a year, and I could not find the place. But at last, casting my eye upon the Apocrypha, I found it in Ecclesiasticus 2.10.<sup>15</sup> At first, this somewhat daunted me. But because by this time I had gotten more experience of the love and kindness of God, it troubled me less, especially when I considered that although it was not in those texts that we call *holy* and *canonical*, yet because this sentence was the sum and substance of many of the promises, it was my duty to take comfort from it. And I bless God for that word, for it was from God to me. That word still at times shines before my face.

66. After this, that other doubt came upon me with strength: What if the day of grace were past and gone? What if you have overstayed the time of mercy? Now I remember that one day, as I was walking in the country, I was much in thoughts of this, *But what if the day of grace is past?* And to aggravate my trouble, the Tempter presented to my mind those good people of Bedford, and suggested to me that these having been converted already, they were all that God would save in those parts — and that I came too late, for these had gotten the blessing before I came.

67. Now I was in great distress, thinking that in very deed this might well be so. Therefore I went up and down bemoaning my sad condition, counting myself far worse than a thousand fools for standing off this 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 also made me angry with myself, to think that I should have no more wit than to trifle away my time till my soul and heaven were lost.

68. But when I had been long vexed with this fear, and was scarcely able to take one step more, just about the same place where I received my other encouragement, these words broke in upon my mind: *Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled; and yet there is room.* Luk 14.22-23. These words, but especially those, *and yet there is room*, were sweet words to me. For truly I thought that by them I saw there was room enough in heaven for me; and moreover, that when the Lord Jesus spoke these words, He then thought of me; and that knowing the time would come when I would be afflicted with fear that there was no room left for me in his bosom, He spoke this word and left it on record, that I might thereby find help against this vile temptation. This I then truly believed.

69. In the light and encouragement of this word, I went a pretty while. And the comfort was more when I thought that the Lord Jesus would think of me so long ago, and that He would speak those words on purpose for my sake. For I truly thought that He spoke them on purpose to encourage me with.

70. But I was not without my temptations to go back again — temptations I say, both from Satan, my own heart, and carnal acquaintances. But I thank God, these were outweighed by that sound sense of death, and of the day of judgment, which continually abided in my view, as it were. I would also think often of Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is said, God had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, Dan 5.18-19. Yet, I thought, if this great man had all his portion in this world, one hour in hellfire would make him forget it all. This consideration was a great help to me.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ecclesiasticus*, or Book of Sirach, consists of ethical teachings from roughly 200 to 175 BC. – WHG

## ***Clean and Unclean***

71. About this time, I was also made to see something concerning the beasts that Moses accounted clean and unclean. I thought those beasts were types of men. The clean types were the people of God; but the unclean types were the children of the wicked one. Now I read that clean beasts chewed the cud; that is, I thought, they show us that we must feed upon the word of God. They also parted the hoof. I thought that signified we must part with the ways of ungodly men if we would be saved. And also, in further reading about them, I found that even if we chewed the cud like the hare,<sup>16</sup> but also walked with claws like a dog, or parted the hoof, like the swine, yet if we did not chew the cud *like sheep*, we were still unclean, despite all that. For I thought the hare was a type of those who talk about the word, and yet walk in the ways of sin; and that the swine was like someone who parted with his outward pollutions, but still lacked the word of faith, without which there could be no way of salvation, however devout a man may be, Deu 14.1-8.

After this, I found by reading the word, that those who will be glorified with Christ in another world must be called by Him *here* — called to partake of a share in His Word and righteousness, and in the comforts and first-fruits of his Spirit; and called to a peculiar interest in all those heavenly things which indeed prepare the soul for that rest and house of glory, which are in heaven above.

72. Here again I was at a very great standstill, not knowing what to do, fearing that I was not called. For I thought, if I am 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 spoke of a Christian's calling! as when the Lord said to one, *Follow Me*; and to another, *Come after Me*: and oh, I thought that if He would say so to me too, how gladly I would run after Him!

73. I cannot now express with what longings and breathings in my soul, I cried to Christ to call me. Thus I continued for a time, all aflame to be converted to Jesus Christ. And I also saw at that day, such glory in a converted state, that I could not be contented without a share in it. *Gold!* If it could have been gotten for gold, what would I have given for it? If I had a whole world, it would all have gone ten thousand times over for this: that my soul might be in a converted state.

74. How lovely now was everyone in my eyes, who I thought to be converted men and women. They shone. They walked like a people who carried the broad seal of heaven about them. Oh! I saw *the lot had fallen to them in pleasant places, and they had a goodly heritage*, Psa 16.6. But what made me sick was that saying of Christ in St Mark. *He goes up into a mountain, and calls to Himself whom He would, and they came to Him*, Mar 3.13.

75. This scripture made me faint and fear; yet it kindled fire in my soul. What made me fear was this: that Christ might have no liking for me, for *He called whom He would*. But oh! the glory that I saw in that condition still so engaged my heart, that I could seldom read of any whom Christ called, without quickly wishing that if I had been in their clothes. If I had been born Peter; if I had been born John; or if I had been nearby and heard Him when He called them, how I would have cried, *O Lord, call me also!* But, oh! I feared He would not call me.

76. And truly, the Lord let me go on this way for many months together, and showed me nothing — neither that I was already, nor that I would be called hereafter. But at last, after

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<sup>16</sup> Lev 11.6. What rabbits and hares do is called "refection" or "coprophagy." They re-digest food after it passes out of the body. Rabbits also constantly move their mouths, similar to the chewing motion of cows and other ruminants.



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 dwells in Zion*, Joe 3.21. These words I thought were sent to encourage me to still wait upon God, and signified to me that if I were not already, yet the time might come when I might in truth be converted unto Christ.

### ***Public Confession of Sin***

77. About this time I began to reveal my mind to those poor people in Bedford, and to tell them my condition. When they heard this, they told Mr. Gifford about me, who himself also took occasion to talk with me. He was willing to be well-persuaded of me, though I think from little grounds. But he invited me to his house where I would hear him confer with others about the dealings of God with their souls. From all of this I received still more conviction. And from that time I began to see something of the vanity and inward wretchedness of my wicked heart. For as yet I knew no great matter in this. But now it began to be revealed to me, and also to work at such a rate as it never had before. Now I found evidently that lusts and corruptions were putting themselves forth within me, in wicked thoughts and desires, which I did not regard before. Also, my desires for heaven and life began to fail. I also found that whereas before my soul was full of longing after God, now it began to hanker after every foolish vanity. Indeed, my heart would not be moved to mind that which was good; it began to be careless, both of my soul and heaven. It would now continually hang back, both *toward* and *in* every duty. It was like a clog on the leg of a bird, to keep her from flying.

78. No, I thought, now I grow worse and worse. Now I am further from conversion than I ever was before. Therefore I began to sink greatly in my soul, and I began to entertain such discouragement in my heart that it laid me as low as hell. If now I had been burned at the stake, I could not believe that Christ had love for me. Alas! I could neither hear Him, nor see Him, nor feel Him, nor favour any of his things. I was driven as by a tempest. My heart would be unclean, and the Canaanites would dwell in the land.

79. Sometimes I would tell my condition to the people of God. When they heard it, they would pity me, and would tell me of the promises. But they might as well have told me that I must reach the sun with my finger, as to bid me to receive or rely on the promises. And as soon I would have done it, all my sense and feeling were against me. I saw I had a heart that would sin, and that lay under a law that would condemn it.

80. These things have often made me think of the child which the father brought to Christ, who, while he was still coming to Him, was thrown down by the devil, and so rent and torn by him that the child lay down and wallowed, foaming, Luk 9.42; Mar 9.20.

81. Furthermore, in these days I would find my heart shutting 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 was even when I cried with many a bitter sigh, Good Lord, break it open. Lord, *break these gates of brass, and cut these bars of iron in two*, Psa 107.16. Yet this word would sometimes create in my heart a peaceable pause: *I girded you, though you have not known Me*, Isa 45.5.

82. But all this while, as to the act of sinning, I was never more tender than now. My hinder parts were inward.<sup>17</sup> I dared not receive a pin or a stick [of condemnation], though no bigger than a straw, for my conscience now was sore, and it would smart at every touch. I could not

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<sup>17</sup> Or, "I was turned inside out." See par. 228, concerning his still tender conscience. – WHG

now tell how to speak my words, for fear I would misplace them. Oh, how gingerly I then went about in all I did or said! I found myself as on a miry bog that shook if I but stirred; and there I was left both by God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all good things.

83. But I observed that even though I was such a great sinner before conversion, God never charged the guilt of the sins of my ignorance upon me. He only showed me that I was lost if I did not have Christ, because I had been a sinner. I saw that I lacked a perfect righteousness to present myself without fault before God, and this righteousness was nowhere to be found but in the Person of Jesus Christ.

84. But my original and inward pollution, that, *that* was my plague and affliction. That, I say, at a dreadful rate, was always putting itself forth within me. I had the guilt of it, to my amazement. For that reason, 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 everyone had a better heart than I had. I could have exchanged my heart with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I therefore fell deeply into despair at the sight of my own vileness, for I concluded that this condition I was in, could not stand with a state of grace. Surely, I thought, I am forsaken by God; surely I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind. And thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.

85. While I was thus afflicted with the fears of my own damnation, there were two things that would make me wonder. The one was when I saw old people hunting after the things of this life, as if they would live here always. The other was when I found professors [of Christ] were much distressed and cast down when they met with outward losses, such as a husband, wife, child, etc. Lord, I thought, what a fuss there is 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 labour after and shed so many tears for the things of this present life, then how I should be bemoaned, pitied, and prayed for! *My soul is dying, my soul is damning*. If only my soul were in a good condition, and if only I were sure of it, then ah! how rich I would esteem myself, even if blessed with only bread and water! I would count those but small afflictions, and I would bear them as little burdens. *But who can bear a wounded spirit?* Pro 18.14.

86. And though I was much 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 entirely off my mind. For I found that unless guilt of conscience was taken away the right way, that is, by the blood of Christ, a man grew worse for the loss of his trouble of mind, rather than better. Therefore, if my guilt lay hard upon me, then I would cry that the blood of Christ might take it away. And if it was going away without it — for sometimes the *sense* of sin would be as if it would die, and go quite away — then I would also strive to fetch it back upon my heart, by bringing the punishment of sin in hellfire upon my spirit. And I would cry, Lord, let it not go off my heart but the right way, by the blood of Christ, and the application of Your mercy through Him to my soul. For that scripture lay much upon me, *without shedding of blood, there is no remission*, Heb 9.22. And what made me more afraid of this was because I had seen some who, when they were under wounds of conscience, would cry and pray. Yet seeking present ease from their trouble, rather than pardon for their sin, they did not care how they lost their guilt, just so they got it out of their mind. Now, having gotten it out the wrong way, it was not sanctified to them. Rather, they grew harder and blinder, and more wicked after their trouble. This made me afraid, and it made me cry to God more, that it might not be so with me.

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

88. Yes, I thought it impossible that I should ever 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 has made himself the most ignoble. The beasts, birds, fishes, etc.— I blessed their condition; for they did not have a sinful nature. They were not liable to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hellfire after death. I could therefore have rejoiced if my condition had been like any of theirs.

### ***The Call of Heaven***

89. I went a great while in this condition. But when a time of comforting had come, I heard someone preach a sermon on these words in Song 4.1: *Behold, you are fair, my love, behold, you are fair.* He made these two words, *my love*, his chief subject matter, from which, after he opened the text a little, he observed these several conclusions: 1. That the church, and so every saved soul, is Christ's love, when loveless. 2. Christ's love is without a cause. 3. Christ's love when hated by the world. 4. Christ's love when under temptation, and under desertion. 5. Christ's love from first to last.

90. I got nothing by what he said at first. It was only when he came to the application of the fourth particular. This was the word that he said; *If it is so, that the saved soul is Christ's love when under temptation and desertion, then poor tempted soul, when you are assaulted and afflicted with temptations, and God's face is hidden, yet still think on these two words, 'My love.'*

91. So as I was going home, these words came again into my thoughts. And I well remember, as they came in, I said this in my heart, *What will I get by thinking on these two words?* This thought had no sooner passed through my heart, than these words began to thus kindle in my spirit: *You are my love, you are my love*, twenty times together. And still as they ran in my mind, they grew 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 upon me, *He did not know that what was done by the Angel was true*, Acts 12.9.

92. Then I began to give way to the word which with power, over and over, made this joyful sound within my soul: *'You are my love, you are my love, and nothing shall separate you from my love.'* And with that, my heart was filled full of comfort and hope; and now I could believe that my sins would be forgiven me. Indeed, I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain myself till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of his love, have told of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat on the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable of understanding me. Therefore I said in my soul with much gladness, *Well, if 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 from now.* But, alas! within less than forty days, I began to question it all again; which made me begin to question it all still.

93. Yet at times I was still helped to believe that it was a true manifestation of grace unto my soul, even though I had lost much of the life and savour of it. Now, about a week or a two after this, I was much pursued by this scripture: *Simon, Simon; behold, Satan has desired to have you*, Luk 22.31. And sometimes it would sound so loudly within me, yes, and as it were, call so strongly after me, that once, above all the rest, I turned my head over my

shoulder, thinking truly that some man behind me had called me. I thought he called so loudly because he was at a great distance. As I have since thought, it came to stir me up to prayer, and to watchfulness. It came to make me aware that a cloud and a storm were coming down upon me. But I did not understand it.

94. Also, as I remember, that time that it called to me so loudly, was the last time that it sounded in my ears. But I think I still hear with what a loud voice these words, *Simon, Simon*, sounded in my ears. I thought truly, as I have told you, that somebody had called after me, who was half a mile behind me. And although that was not my name, yet it made me suddenly look behind me, believing that the one who called so loudly, meant *me*.

95. But so foolish was I, and ignorant, that I did not know the reason for this sound. This, as I both saw and felt soon after, was sent from heaven as an alarm, to awaken me to provide for what was coming. Only I would muse and wonder in my mind, to think what might be the reason for this scripture, and that at this rate, it should so often and so loudly still sound and rattle in my ears. But as I said before, I soon after perceived the end of God in it.

### ***Authority of Scripture***

96. For about 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 that they stirred up questions in me against the very being of God, and of his only beloved Son — such as, whether there was, in truth, a God or Christ? And whether the holy scriptures were not a fable and a cunning story, rather than the holy and pure word of God?

97. The tempter would also much assault me with this: How can you tell if the Turks do not have as good scriptures to prove their Mahomet is the Saviour, as we have to prove our Jesus is? And how could I think that so many tens of thousands in so many countries and kingdoms, would be without the knowledge of the right way to heaven, if there was indeed a heaven; and that only we, who live in a corner of the earth, should alone be blessed with it? Everyone thinks his own religion is rightest, both Jews, and Moors, and Pagans! And what if all our faith, and Christ, and the scriptures, were but a “think so” too?

98. Sometimes I endeavoured to argue against these suggestions, and to set some of the sentences of blessed Paul against them. But alas! when I did this, I quickly felt such arguings as these would turn back upon me: though we made so big a deal of Paul and of his words, how could I tell if in very deed — he being a subtle and cunning man — he might not give himself up to deceive with strong delusions, and also take both the pains and travel, to undo and destroy his fellows?

99. These suggestions, along with many others which at this time I may not and dare not utter either by word or pen, made such a seizure upon my spirit, and so overweighed my heart — both with their number, continuance, and fiery force — that I felt as if there was nothing else but these from morning to night within me. And I felt as though, indeed, there could be room for nothing else. I also concluded that God had, in very wrath to my soul, given me up to them, to be carried away with them as with a mighty whirlwind.

100. Only by the distaste they gave to my spirit, did I feel there was something in me that refused to embrace them. But I only had this consideration when God gave me leave to

swallow my spittle. Otherwise the noise, 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 would often find my mind suddenly put upon to curse and swear, or to speak some grievous thing against God, or Christ his Son, and about the Scriptures.

101. Now I thought, surely I am possessed by the devil. At other times, again, I thought I would be bereft of my wits. For instead of lauding and magnifying God the Lord with others, if I but heard Him spoken of, immediately some most horrible blasphemous thought or other would bolt out of my heart against Him. So that, whether I thought that God existed, or again, if I thought there was no such thing, I could feel no love, nor peace, nor gracious disposition within me.

102. These things sank me into very deep despair. For I concluded that such things could not possibly be found among those who loved God. Often, when these temptations had been upon me with force, I compared myself to the case of a child that some gipsy has taken up in her arms by force, and is carrying away from friend and country. Sometimes I kicked and also shrieked and cried. But yet I was as if bound in the wings of the temptation, and the wind would carry me away. I also thought of king Saul, and of the evil spirit that possessed him. And I greatly feared that my condition was the same as his, 1Sam 16.14.

### ***The Unpardonable Sin***

103. In these days, when I heard others talk of what was the sin against the Holy Ghost, then the tempter would so provoke me to desire to sin that sin against Him, that it was as if I could not, *must* not, nor *should* I be quiet until I had committed it. Now, no sin would serve but *that* sin. If it were to be committed by speaking such a word, then it was as if my mouth had spoken that word, whether I would or not. 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 keep my mouth from opening. And to that end also, I have had thoughts at other times of leaping with my head down into some muck hole or other, to keep my mouth from speaking.

104. Now again I beheld the condition of the dog and the toad, and counted the estate of everything that God had made, far better than this dreadful state of mine, and such a state as my companions were in. Yes, I would gladly have been in the condition of a dog or horse. For I knew they had no souls to perish under the everlasting weight of hell or sin, as mine was likely to do. Indeed, though I saw this, felt this, and was broken to pieces with it, yet what added to my sorrow was that I could not find that I desired *deliverance* with all my soul. That scripture also tore and rent 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, says my God, for the wicked, Isa 57.20-21.*

105. And now my heart was, at times, exceedingly hard. If I had been given a thousand pounds for a tear, I could not shed one; no, nor sometimes scarcely *desire* to shed one. I was greatly dejected to think that this would 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 alone was in the storm or tempest. This sunk me much. I thought my condition was alone. I would therefore much bewail my hard lot,<sup>18</sup> but I could not get out of, or get rid of these things.

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<sup>18</sup> Originally, “my hard hap,” in the sense of it being his fate to be in such a state. – WHG

106. While this temptation lasted, which was about a year, I could attend to none of the ordinances of God, except with sore and great affliction. Yes, I was then most distressed with blasphemies. If I had been hearing the word, then uncleanness, blasphemies and despair would hold me captive there. If I had been reading, then sometimes I had sudden thoughts to question all that 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 I had just now read.

107. I had also been greatly troubled in prayer at this time. Sometimes I thought I felt the tempter behind me pulling at my clothes. He would also be continually at me in time of prayer, to be done, break off, make haste — *you have prayed enough, and stay no longer* — still drawing my mind away. Sometimes he would also cast in such wicked thoughts as these: that I must *pray to him, or for him*. I thought sometimes of that verse, *Fall down; or, if you will fall down and worship me*, Mat 3.9.

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

109. Yet at times I would have some strong and heart-affecting apprehensions of God, and the reality of the truth of his gospel. But, oh! how my heart at such times would voice itself with inexpressible groanings. My whole soul was then in every word. I would cry with pangs after God, that He would be merciful to me. But then I would be daunted again with such conceits as these: I would think that God mocked at these prayers of mine, saying in the audience of the holy angels, *This poor simple wretch hankers after Me, as if I had nothing to do with My mercy but to bestow it on such as him. Alas, poor soul! how deceived you are! It is not for such as you, to have favour with the Highest.*

110. Then also, the tempter has come upon me with such discouragements as these: ‘You are very hot for mercy, but I will cool you; this frame will not last always. Many have been as hot as you for a spurt, but I have quenched their zeal.’ And with this, such and such who had fallen away, would be set before my eyes. Then I would be afraid that I too might do so. But, I thought, I am glad this comes into my mind. I will watch well, and take whatever care I can. ‘Even if you do,’ said Satan, ‘I will be too hard for you; I will cool you insensibly by degrees, little by little. What do I care,’ he says, ‘even if I am 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 closely, but I will have my end accomplished. Though you are burning hot at present, I can pull you from this fire. I will have you cold before long.’

111. These things brought me into great straits. For at present, as I could not find myself fit for present death, so I thought to live long would make me still more unfit. For time would make me forget all, and wear out even the remembrance of the evil of sin, the worth of heaven, and the need I had of the blood of Christ to wash out both my mind and thought. But I thank Christ Jesus, these things did not at present make me slack in my crying out, but rather put me more upon it, like her who met with the adulterer, Deu 22. 27. In those days, this was a good word to me, after I had suffered these things a while: *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, etc., shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom 8.38-39. And now I hoped long life would *not* destroy me, nor make me miss heaven.

112. Yet I had some supports in this temptation, though they were then all questioned by me. That place in Jeremiah 3, at the beginning, was something to me; and so was the consideration of the fourth verse of that chapter — that though we have spoken and done as evil things as we could, yet we should cry out to God, *My Father, You are the Guide of my youth*, and we should return to Him.

### ***Unworthy to be Saved***

113. I had also, once, a sweet glance from that saying in 2Cor 5.21: *For He has 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 I was sitting in a neighbour's house, and was very sad there at the consideration of my many blasphemies. And as I was saying in my mind, 'What ground do I have, who have been so vile and abominable, to say that I should ever inherit eternal life?' — that word came suddenly upon me, *What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* Rom 8.31. This also was a help to me: *Because I live, you shall live also*, Joh 14.19. Yet these words were but hints, touches, and short visits, even though very sweet when present. Only they did not last, but like Peter's sheet, they were suddenly taken up from me to heaven again, Act 10.16.

114. But afterwards the Lord more fully and graciously revealed Himself to me, and indeed, not only quite delivered me from the guilt that was laid upon my conscience by these things, but also from the very filth of it. For the temptation was removed, and I was put into my right mind again, as other Christians were.

115. I remember that one day, as I was travelling into the country, and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and considering the enmity that was in me towards God, this scripture came into my mind: *Having made peace through the blood of his cross*, Col 1.20. By this I was made to see again and again, that God and my soul were friends by his blood. Indeed, I saw that the justice of God, and my sinful soul, could embrace and kiss each other through his blood. This was a good day to me. I hope I shall never forget it.

116. At another time, as I sat by the fire in my house, and was musing on my wretchedness, the Lord also made this a precious word to me: *Since 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 who had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver those 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 once and twice ready to swoon as I sat, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.

117. At this time, also, I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, did much for my stability. This man made it much his business to deliver the people of God from all those false and unsound tests that we are prone to by nature. He would bid us take special heed that we did not take up any truth on trust, as coming from this, that, or any other man or men. But we were to cry mightily to God, that He would convince us of the reality of it, and settle us in it by his own Spirit in the holy Word. For, he said, if you do otherwise when strong temptations come, not having received them with evidence from heaven, you will find that you now lack the help and strength to resist, that you once thought you had.

118. This was as seasonable to my soul, like the former and latter rains in their season. I had found by sad experience, the truth of his words. For I had felt *no man can say*, especially when tempted by the devil, *that Jesus Christ is Lord, except by the Holy Ghost*, 1Cor 12.3. Therefore 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, would He allow me to be without the confirmation of it from heaven. For now I saw clearly that there is an exceeding difference between the notions of flesh and blood, and the revelations of God in heaven. There is also a great difference between that faith which is feigned and according to man's wisdom, and that which comes by a man's being born to it of God, Mat 16.17; 1Joh 5.1.

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

120. Truly, I then found on this account, that the great God was *very* good to me. For, to my remembrance, there was nothing that I then cried unto God to make known and reveal to me, that He was not pleased to do it for me — I mean, not one part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, that I was not led into in an orderly way. I thought 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. I thought it 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 the 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 progression of his, this was dropped on my spirit: *He was ordained for the slaughter*, 1Pet 1.19-20.

121. When I considered also the truth of his resurrection, and remembered that word, *Do not touch Me, Mary*, etc., Joh 20.17, I saw it as if He leaped out of the grave's mouth for joy that He was risen again, and had conquered our dreadful foes. In the spirit, I have also seen Him a man on the right hand of God the Father for me; and I have seen the manner of his coming from heaven to judge the world with glory; and been confirmed in these things by the following scriptures: Act 1.9-10; 7. 56; 10.42; Heb 7.24; 9.28; Rev 1.18; 1The 4.17-18.

### ***Sound Doctrine***

122. Once I was much troubled to know whether the Lord Jesus was both man as well as God, and God as well as man. And truly, in those days, let men say what they would, unless I had it with evidence from heaven, it was all nothing to me. I did not consider myself settled in any truth of God. Well, I was much troubled about this point, and I could not tell how to be resolved. At last, Rev 5.6 came into my mind: *And I beheld, and look, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as though it had been slain.* 'In the midst of the throne,' I thought, there is the Godhead; 'in the midst of the elders,' there is his manhood. But, oh! I thought this sparkled! It was a goodly touch, and it gave me sweet satisfaction. This other scripture also helped me much in this: *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*, etc., Isa 9.6.

123. Also besides these teachings of God in His Word, the Lord made use of two things to confirm me in this truth. The one was the errors of the Quakers; and the other was the guilt of sin. For as the QUAKERS opposed this truth, so God more confirmed me in it by leading me into the scripture that wonderfully maintained it.

124. The errors that this people then maintained were:

1. That the holy scriptures were not the word of God.
2. That every man in the world had the spirit of Christ, grace, faith, etc.
3. That Christ Jesus, as crucified, and dying sixteen



hundred years ago, did not satisfy divine justice for the sins of the people. 4. That Christ's flesh and blood were within the saints. 5. That the bodies of the good and bad who are buried in the church-yard, shall not arise again. 6. That the resurrection is past with good men already. 7. That the man Jesus, who was crucified between two thieves on mount Calvary in the land of Canaan, by Jerusalem, was not ascended above the starry heavens. 8. That He — the same Jesus who died by the hands of the Jews — would not come again at the last day, and as man, judge all nations,' etc. <sup>19</sup>

125. Many more vile and abominable things were fomented by them in those days, by which I was driven to a narrower search of the Scriptures. And I was not only enlightened through their light and testimony, but greatly confirmed and comforted in the truth. As I said, the guilt of sin helped me much; for still, as that guilt would come upon me, the blood of Christ took it away again and again and again; and that too was sweetly, according to the Scripture. O friends! cry to God to reveal Jesus Christ to you; there is none who teaches like Him.

126. It would be too long to stay here, to tell you in particular how God settled me in all the things of Christ, and how He did so, that He might lead me into his words — yes, and also how He opened them to me, and made them shine before me, and caused them to dwell with me, talk with me, and comfort me over and over, both about his own being, and the being of his Son, and Spirit, and word, and gospel.

127. I will say only this to you again, as I said before, that in general He was pleased to take this course with me: first, to allow me to be afflicted with temptations concerning them, and then to reveal them to me. Such as, sometimes I would lie under great guilt for sin, even crushed to the ground with it. And then the Lord would show me the death of Christ. Yes, He would so sprinkle my conscience with his blood, that I would find — even before I was aware — that in that conscience where only just now the law had reigned and raged, even *there* the peace and love of God through Christ would rest and abide.

128. Now I had an evidence from heaven, I thought, of my salvation, with many golden seals upon it, all hanging in my sight. Now I could remember with comfort, this manifestation and the other discovery of grace. And I would often long and desire that the last day had come, that I might be forever inflamed with the sight, and joy, and communion of Him whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was spit upon and body broken, and whose soul was made an offering for my sins. For whereas before I lay continually trembling at the mouth of hell, I now thought that I had gotten so far from there, that I could not, when I looked back, scarcely discern it! And oh! I thought that if I were now eighty years old, I might die quickly so that my soul might be gone to rest.

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<sup>19</sup> George Offor's footnote here claimed that the difference between Quakerism and evangelical professors was merely "in terms and not in things." Joel Beeke provides a different view. He cites John Owen, a friend of Bunyan:

Why were Quakers opposed by the Puritans? Quaker pietism is justification by works (Pelagianism); they reject imputed righteousness. Puritan John Owen, had five primary criticisms of Quakerism: 1) He saw its teaching about the inner light is an attack on the work and person of the Holy Spirit; the role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, not himself. 2) Quakers deny that the sacraments are biblical; they forsake the gospel's emphasis on the atoning work of Christ, in order to focus on the inward light. 3) They deny the Trinity; "Convince any of them of the doctrine of the Trinity, and all the rest of their imaginations vanish into smoke." 4) They deny the necessity of Scripture and the doctrine of 'sola Scriptura' (Scripture alone). Quakers insist that Scripture is not needed once a person heeds the "inner light." The Scriptures, according to the Friends, are only "a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit," or in other words, to the inward light. 5) Their doctrine of the inner light is a denial of the fall of man into sin, and the consequent radical depravity of humanity. Since Adam's fall, his descendants are born in sin; and therefore they are by nature *in darkness*. — From *A Puritan Theology*, Joel Beeke & Mark Jones (Reform. Heritage, Grand Rapids MI, 2012), pp. 429-441.

## ***Christian Experiences***

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

130. Besides, in that book he also most gravely debates the rise of these temptations — namely, blasphemy, desperation, and the like — showing that the law of Moses has a very great hand in it, as well as the devil, death, and hell. At first, this was very strange to me; but considering and watching, I found it so indeed. I intend nothing in particular here. I only think that I must let this fall before all men. I prefer this book of Martin Luther on the Galatians, above all the books I have ever seen (except the Holy Bible), as most fit for a wounded conscience.

131. And now I found, as I thought, that I loved Christ dearly. Oh! I thought my soul clung to Him, my affections clung to Him; I felt love toward Him as hot as fire; and now, as Job said, *I thought I would die in my nest* (29.18). But I quickly found that my great love was but little; and that I, who thought I had such a burning love toward Jesus Christ, could let Him go again for a very trifle. — God can tell how to *humble us*, Dan 4.37; and He can *hide pride* from man, Job 33.17. Quickly after this, my love was tried to good purpose.

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

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

134. In my judgment, I was persuaded that those who were once effectually in Christ (as I hoped, through his grace, I had seen myself), they could never lose Him forever. For *the land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine, says God*, Lev 25.23. Yet it was a continual vexation to me to think that I should have so much as one such thought within me against a Christ, a Jesus, who had done for me as He had done. And yet, I then had almost no other thoughts than such blasphemous ones.

## ***Selling Christ***

135. But it was neither my dislike of the thought, nor any desire and endeavour to resist it, that in the least shook or abated the continuation, force, and strength of it. For in almost

whatever I thought, it always intermixed itself with it in such a way that I could neither eat my food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast my eye to look upon this or that, without this temptation still coming: *Sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that; sell Him, sell Him.*

136. Sometimes it would run in my thoughts, no fewer than a hundred times together, *Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him.* Against this, I may say for whole hours together, I have been forced to stand as if continually leaning and forcing my spirit against it, lest perhaps, before I was aware, some wicked thought might arise in my heart that might consent to it. And sometimes the tempter would make me believe that I *had* consented to it. And then I would be as if tortured on a rack for whole days together.

137. This temptation put me to such scares, lest at some times, I say, I might consent to it, and be overcome with it. So that, by the very force of my mind, in labouring to challenge and resist this wickedness, my very body would be put into action or motion by way of pushing or thrusting against it with my hands or elbows. As fast as the destroyer said, *Sell Him*, I would still be answering, 'I will not, I will not, I will not, I will not — NO, not for thousands, thousands, thousands of worlds.' Thus I reckoned, lest in the midst of these assaults, I would set too low a value on Him — even until I scarcely knew where I was, or how to be composed again.

138. At these seasons, the tempter would not let me eat my food in quiet. But truly, when I was sitting at the table at my meal, he would say I must go from here to pray; I must leave my food now, right now — so counterfeit-holy would this devil be. When I was thus tempted, I would say to myself, 'I am at meal now; let me finish.' 'No,' he said, you must do it now, or you will displease God, and despise Christ.' Therefore I was much afflicted with these things. And because of the sinfulness of my nature — imagining that these were impulses from God — I would refuse to do it, as if I denied God. And then I would be just as guilty because I did not obey a temptation of the devil, as if I had indeed broken the law of God.

### ***Let Him go, if He will***

139. But to be brief: one morning as I lay in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation *to sell and part with Christ*. The wicked suggestion still running in my mind, *Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him, sell Him, sell Him*, as fast as a man could speak. Against this, also in my mind as it was at other times, I answered, *No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands*, at least twenty times in a row. But at last, after much striving, even until I was almost out of breath, I felt this thought pass through my heart: *Let Him go, if He will*. And I also thought that I felt my heart freely *consent* to it. Oh! the diligence of Satan! Oh! the desperateness of man's heart!

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

### ***Esau Sold His Birthright***

141. And with this, that scripture seized upon my soul: *Or profane persons like Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* Heb 12.16-17.

142. Now I was like one who is bound. I felt myself shut up until the judgment to come. For two whole years, nothing now would abide with me except damnation, and an expectation of damnation. I say, nothing now would abide with me but this, save some few moments for relief, as you will see in the sequel.

143. These words were to my soul, like fetters of brass to my legs, in the continual sound of which I went for several months together. But about ten or eleven o'clock one day, as I was walking under a hedge, full of sorrow and guilt, God knows, and bemoaning myself for this hard lot, that such a thought should arise within me — suddenly this sentence rushed in upon me, 'The blood of Christ remits all guilt.' At this I made a stand in my spirit. Along with that, *this* word took hold of me: *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanses us from all sin*, 1Joh 1.7.

144. Now I began to conceive peace in my soul. And I thought I saw as if the tempter leered and ran away from me, being ashamed of what he had done. At the same time also, I had my sin and the blood of Christ thus represented to me: that my sin, when compared to the blood of Christ, was no more to it than this little clod or stone before me is to this vast and wide field that I see here. This gave me good encouragement for the space of two or three hours, during which time I also thought I saw, by faith, the Son of God, as suffering for my sins. But because it did not tarry, I therefore sunk in my spirit, under exceeding guilt again.

145. But this was chiefly by the aforementioned scripture concerning Esau's selling of his birthright. For that scripture would lie all day long, all week long, indeed, all year long in my mind, and hold me down, so that I could by no means lift myself up. For when I would strive to turn to this scripture or that for relief, that sentence would still be sounding in me: *For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*, Heb 12.17.

146. Sometimes, indeed, I would have a touch from that saying in Luke 22.31, *I have prayed for you, that your faith not fail*. But it would not abide upon me. Nor indeed, when I considered my state, could I find ground to conceive in the least that there might be the root of that grace in me, having sinned as I had done. Now I was torn and rent in heaviness for many days together.

### ***The Unpardonable Sin***

147. Then I began with sad and careful heart to consider the nature and largeness of my sin, and to search into the word of God, if I could espy a word of promise anywhere, or any encouraging sentence by which I might take relief. Therefore I began to consider Mark 3.28: *All sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies with which they shall blaspheme*. This place, I thought at a blush, contained a large and glorious promise for the pardon of high offences. But considering the place more fully, I thought it was rather to be understood as relating more chiefly to those who had, while in a natural estate, committed such things as were mentioned there — but not to me, who had not only received light and mercy, but who had afterward, and contrary to that, so slighted Christ as I had done.

148. I feared, therefore, that this wicked sin of mine might be that unpardonable sin which He speaks of there: *But he that blasphemes against the Holy Ghost, never has forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation*, Mar 3.29. And I rather gave credit to this because of that sentence in the Hebrews: *For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*. And this always stuck with me.

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

150. And now I began to recall again the time that was spent, wishing a thousand times twice over, that the day was yet to come when I might be tempted to such a sin. I concluded with great indignation, both against my heart and all assaults, how I would rather have been torn in pieces, than be found a consentor to it. But alas! these thoughts, and wishings, and resolvings were now too late to help me. This thought had passed my heart, ‘God has let me go, and I am fallen.’ Oh! I thought, *that it was with me as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me!* Job 29.2.

151. Then *again*, being loath and unwilling to perish, I began to compare my sin with others to see if I could find whether any of those who were saved, had done as I had done. So I considered David’s adultery and murder, and found them the most heinous crimes. And those too were committed *after* light and grace were received. Yet by considering them, I perceived that his transgressions were only against *the law of Moses*, from which the Lord Christ could deliver him, in accordance with his Word. But mine was against *the gospel*; indeed, against the Mediator of it. *I had sold my Saviour.*

152. Now I would again be as if racked on the wheel, when I considered that, besides the guilt that possessed me, I should be so void of grace, so *bewitched*. What, I thought, must it be no other sin than this? Must it be the *great transgression*? Psa 19.13. Must *that* wicked one touch my soul? 1Joh 5.18. Oh! what stings I found in all these sentences!

153. What, I thought, is there but one sin that is unpardonable? Is there but one sin that lays the soul outside the reach of God’s mercy; and must I be guilty of that? Must it be that? Is there but one sin among so many millions of sins, for which there is no forgiveness; and must I commit this? Oh! unhappy sin! Oh! unhappy man! These things would so break and confound my spirit, that I could not tell what to do. I thought at times that they would have broken my wits. And still, to aggravate my misery, this would run in my mind: *You know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected.* Oh! no one knows the terrors of those days but myself.

### ***Denial or Betrayal? Peter or Judas?***

154. After this I began to consider Peter’s sin which he committed in denying his Master. And indeed, this came nearest to mine of any that I could find. For he had denied his Saviour as I did, *after* light and mercy were received. Yes, and that too was after a warning was given to him. I also considered that he did it both once and twice; and that was after having time to consider between. But though I put all these circumstances together so that, if possible, I might find help, yet I considered again that his was but a *denial* of his Master; while mine was a *selling* of my Saviour. Therefore I thought to myself, that I came nearer to Judas, than to either David or Peter.

155. Here again my torment would flame up and afflict me. Indeed, it would grind me into powder, as it were, to consider the preservation of God towards others, while I fell into the snare. For in thus considering other men’s sins, and comparing them with my own, I could evidently see that God preserved them, notwithstanding their wickedness. And He would not let them become a *son of perdition*, as He had let me, Joh 17.12.

156. But oh! how my soul at this time prized the preservation that God set about his people! Ah, how safely I saw them walk, whom God had hedged in! They were within his care, protection, and special providence — even though they were fully as bad as I was by nature. Yet because He loved them, He would not allow them to fall outside the range of mercy. But as for me, I was gone, I had done it. He would not preserve me, nor keep me, but allowed me to fall as I had done, because I was a reprobate. Now those blessed places that speak of God's keeping his people, shine like the sun before me — though not to comfort me, but to show me the blessed state and heritage of those whom the Lord had blessed.

157. Now I saw that, just as God had his hand in all the providences and dispensations that overtook his elect, so He had his hand in all the temptations that they had to sin against Him. This was not to animate them to wickedness, but to choose their temptations and troubles for them; and also to leave them for a time only to those sins that might not destroy, but humble them; and that might not put them beyond, but lay them in the way of the renewing of His mercy. But oh! what love, what care, what kindness and mercy I now saw, mixing itself with the most severe and dreadful of all God's ways to his people! He would let David, Hezekiah, Solomon, Peter, and others fall; but He would not let them fall into unpardonable sin, nor into hell for sin. Oh! I thought, these are the men that God has loved; these are the men that God, though He chastises them, keeps in safety; and those whom He makes to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. But all these thoughts added sorrow, grief, and horror to me, because whatever I now thought on, was killing to me. If I thought on how God kept his own, that was killing to me. If I thought of how I was falling myself, that was killing to me. *As all things worked together for the best, and to do good to those who were the called according to His purpose*, Rom 8.28, so I thought that all things work for my damage, and for my eternal overthrow.

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

159. Yet in this consideration about Judas, his sin was some relief to me, for a while. For I saw that I had not, as to the circumstances, transgressed so fully as he. But this was quickly gone again; for I thought to myself, there might be more ways than one to commit this unpardonable sin. Also, I thought there might be *degrees* of that transgression, as well as of others. Therefore, for all I could yet perceive, this iniquity of mine might be such as might never be bypassed.

160. I was often now ashamed that I should be like such an ugly man as Judas. I also thought how loathsome I would be to all the saints at the day of judgment — insomuch that now I could scarcely see a good man, that I believed had a good conscience, without feeling my heart tremble at him while I was in his presence. Oh! now I saw a glory in walking with God, and what a mercy it was to have a good conscience before Him.

### ***No Place to Hide***

161. About this time I was greatly tempted to content myself by receiving some false opinion, such as, that there might be no such thing as a day of judgment; that we would not rise

again; and that sin was not such a grievous thing. The tempter suggested it this way: 'For if these things were indeed true, then to believe otherwise would yield ease for the present. If you must perish, then never torment yourself so much beforehand. Drive the thoughts of damning out of your mind by possessing your mind with such conclusions that Atheists and Ranters use to help themselves with it.'

162. But oh! when such thoughts have led through my heart, how within a step, as it were, death and judgment have been in my view! I thought the judge stood at the door. It was as if it had come already, so that such things could not be entertained. But I think I see by this, that Satan will use any means to keep the soul from Christ. He does not love an awakened frame of spirit. Security, blindness, darkness, and error are the very kingdom and habitation of the wicked one.

163. I found it a hard work now to pray to God, because despair was swallowing me up. I thought I was driven away from God, as with a tempest. For always, when I cried to God for mercy, this would come in: 'It is too late, I am lost. God has let me fall, not to my correction, but condemnation. My sin is unpardonable. And concerning Esau, I know *that after he had sold his birthright, he wanted to receive the blessing, but was rejected.*

About this time I lighted upon the dreadful story of that miserable mortal, FRANCIS SPIRA.<sup>20</sup> It was a book that to my troubled spirit was like salt when rubbed into a fresh wound. Every sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his grief — such as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twining and twisting, and languishing and pining away under that mighty hand of God that was upon him — were like knives and daggers in my soul. Especially this sentence of his was frightful to me: *Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the consequences of it?* Then that former sentence, as the conclusion of it all, would fall like a hot thunderbolt back upon my conscience. *For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

164. Then I would be struck into a very great trembling, so much that for whole days together I could feel my body, as well as my mind, shake and totter under the sense of this dreadful judgment of God, which would fall upon those who have sinned that most fearful and unpardonable sin. I also felt such a clogging and heat in my stomach because of this terror, that especially at some times, it was as if my breast-bone would split apart. Then I thought of that verse concerning Judas, who by *falling headlong, burst open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out*, Act 1.18.

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

166. Yet that saying would sometimes come into my mind, *He has received gifts for the rebellious*, Psa 68.18. The rebellious, I thought! Why surely they are those who once were under subjection to their Prince — even those who, after they have sworn subjection to his

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<sup>20</sup> In 1548, Spira converted to Lutheranism and began to spread the Lutheran message to others. Under pressure from the Catholic Church, however, he renounced his Protestant faith. He then became convinced that he was a reprobate, destined for hell. The story of Spira spread throughout Europe, surfacing in sermons and treatises dealing with despair. In England, an account of Spira's case by a first-hand witness, Matteo Gribalde, appeared in 1550. The most influential English account of Spira, however, was written by Nathaniel Bacon in 1638.  
<https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/260spira.html>

government, have taken up arms against Him. And this, I thought, is my very condition. I once loved Him, feared Him, served Him; but now I am a rebel. I have sold Him, I have said, *Let Him go, if He will*. If He still has gifts for rebels, then why not for me?

167. I sometimes thought on this, and would labour to take hold of it so some refreshment, even if a small amount, might have been conceived by me. But I missed my desire in this also. I was driven with force beyond it. I was like a man going to his execution, even past that place where he would gladly creep in and hide himself, but may not.

### ***Am I worse than other saints?***

168. Again, after I had thus considered the sins of the *saints* in particular, and found mine went beyond them, I then began to think to myself, ‘Set up the case: if I were to put all theirs together, and mine alone against them, might I not then find some encouragement? For if mine, though bigger than anyone’s, should be but equal to all theirs, then there is hope. For that blood which has virtue enough in it to wash away all theirs, also had virtue enough in it to do away with mine — even if this one sin is fully as big, if not bigger than all theirs.’ Here again, I would consider the sin of David, of Solomon, of Manasseh, of Peter, and the rest of the great offenders. I would also labour, as I might with fairness, to aggravate and heighten their sins by several circumstances.

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

170. Then I thought on Solomon, and how he sinned in loving foreign women, in falling away to their idols, in building them temples, in doing this after light, in his old age, after great mercy was received. But the same conclusion that cut me off in the former consideration, cut me off as to this one: namely, that all those were but sins against the law, for which God had provided a remedy; but I had sold my Saviour, and *there remained no more sacrifice for sin*, Heb 10.26.

171. I would then add to these men’s sins, the sins of Manasseh — that he built altars for idols in the house of the Lord; he also foretold times, used enchantments, dealt with wizards, was a wizard, had his familiar spirits, burned his children in the fire in sacrifice to devils, and made the streets of Jerusalem run with the blood of innocents. These, I thought, are great sins, sins of a bloody colour. Yet this would turn back upon me: none of them are of the nature of yours — you have parted with Jesus; you have sold your Saviour.

172. This one consideration would always kill my heart — that my sin was point-blank against my Saviour; and that was at such a height, that in my heart I had said of Him, *Let Him go, if He will*. Oh! I thought this sin was bigger than the sins of a country, of a kingdom, or of the whole world. No one pardonable sin, nor all of them together, was able to equal mine; mine out-did them, every one.

173. Now I would find my mind was to flee from God, as from the face of a dreadful judge. Yet this was my torment: that I could not escape his hand. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb 10.31. But blessed be his grace, in these flying fits, this scripture would call as if running after me: *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions; and as a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you*, Isa 44.22. This, I say, would come in upon my mind when I was fleeing from the face of God.



For I fled from his face; that is, my mind and spirit fled before Him — by reason of his highness, I could not endure it. Then the text would cry, *Return to Me*. It would cry aloud with a very great voice, *Return to Me, for I have redeemed you*. Indeed, this would make me stop a little, and as it were, look over my shoulder behind me to see if I could discern that the God of grace followed me with a pardon in his hand. But I would no sooner do that, than all would be clouded and darkened again by that sentence, *For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*. Therefore I could not refrain, but fled, even though at times it cried, *Return, return*, as if it bellowed after me. But I feared to close with it, lest it not come from God; for that other text, as I said, was still sounding in my conscience, *For you know that afterwards, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected*, etc.

### ***A Rushing Wind***

174. Once, as I was walking to and fro in a good man's shop, bemoaning myself in my sad and doleful state, afflicting myself with self-abhorrence for this wicked and ungodly thought — lamenting also this hard lot of mine, that I should commit so great a sin, greatly fearing that I would not be pardoned — I was also praying in my heart, that if this sin of mine differed from that against the Holy Ghost, the Lord would show it to me. Now being ready to sink with fear, there was suddenly — as if the noise of wind had rushed in upon me at the window, but very pleasant — as if I heard a voice speaking, *Did you ever refuse to be justified by the blood of Christ?* And with this, my whole life of profession past, was in a moment opened to me, in which I was made to see that designedly, *I had not*. So my heart answered groaningly, *No*. Then that word of God fell upon me, with power, *See that you do not refuse Him who speaks*, Heb 12.25. This made a strange seizure upon my spirit. It brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart, of all those tumultuous thoughts that before used to roar and bellow like masterless hell-hounds, and made a hideous noise within me. It also showed me that Jesus Christ still had a word of grace and mercy for me; that He had not, as I feared, quite forsaken and cast off my soul. Yes, this was a kind of chide for my proneness to desperation — a kind of threatening of me if I did not, notwithstanding my sins and the heinousness of them, venture my salvation on the Son of God. But as to my determining about this strange dispensation, what it was, I do not know; or where it came from, I do not know. I have not yet in twenty years' time been able to make a judgment about it. I thought then what I should be loath to say here. But truly, that sudden rushing wind was as if an angel had come upon me. But both it, and the salutation, I will leave until the day of judgment. I say only this, it commanded a great calm in my soul; it persuaded me that there might be hope: it showed me, as I thought, what the unpardonable sin was, and that my soul still had the blessed privilege to flee to Jesus Christ for mercy. But I say, concerning this dispensation, I do not yet know what to say to it. This was also, in truth, the reason that at first I did not speak of it in the book. I now also leave it to be thought on by men of sound judgment. I do not lay the stress of my salvation on it, but upon the Lord Jesus in the promise. Yet seeing that I am here unfolding my secret things, I thought it might not be altogether inexpedient to let this also show itself, though I cannot now relate the matter as I experienced it there. The savour of this lasted for about three or four days. And then I began to mistrust, and to despair again.

175. Therefore my life still hung in doubt before me, not knowing which way I should tip. Only I found *this* to be my soul's desire: even to cast itself at the foot of grace, by prayer and supplication. But oh! it was hard for me now, to have the boldness to pray to this Christ for mercy, against whom I had thus most vilely sinned. It was hard work, I say, to offer to look Him in the face, against whom I had so vilely sinned. And indeed, I have found it as difficult

to come to God by prayer after backsliding from Him, as to do any other thing. Oh! the shame that now attended me! especially when I thought, 'I am now a-going to pray to Him for mercy, whom I had so lightly esteemed but a while before!' I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because this villainy had been committed by me. But I saw that there was but one way for me. I *must* go to Him, and humble myself to Him, and beg that of his wonderful mercy, He would show pity to me, and have mercy upon my wretched sinful soul.

### ***Presumptuous Sin***

176. When the tempter perceived this, he strongly suggested to me that I ought not to pray to God, for prayer was not for any in my case. Nor could it do me any good, because I had rejected the Mediator by whom all prayers came with acceptance to God the Father, and without whom no prayer could come into His presence. Therefore, to pray now is but to add sin to sin. Indeed, to pray now, seeing that God has cast you off, is the next way to anger and offend Him more than you ever did before.

177. For God, he says, has been weary of you for these several years already, because *you are none of His*. Your bawlings in his ears have been no pleasant voice to Him. And therefore He *let* you sin this sin, that you might be quite cut off; and will you still pray? This the devil urged, and he set out that place in Numbers, when Moses said to the children of Israel, that because they would not go up to possess the land when God would have them, He therefore forever after barred them from there, even though they prayed with tears that they might, Num 14.36-37, etc.

178. As it is said in another place, Exo 21.14, *The man who sins presumptuously shall be taken from God's altar, that he may die* — even as Joab was taken by King Solomon, when he thought to find shelter there, 1Kng 2.28, etc. These places pinched me very sorely. Yet my case being desperate, I thought to myself, I can but die; and if it must be so, it shall once be said that such a one died at the foot of Christ in prayer. This I did, but with great difficulty, God knows. And that was because, together with this, that saying about Esau would still be set at my heart, even like a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life, lest I take of it and live. Oh! who knows how hard a thing I found it to come to God in prayer!

179. I also desired the prayers of the people of God for me, but I feared that God would give them no heart to do it. Indeed, I trembled in my soul to think that some one or other of them would shortly tell me that God had said those words to them, that He once said to the prophet concerning the children of Israel, *Do not pray for this people, for I have rejected them*, Jer 11.14. So, Do not pray for him, for I have rejected him. Yes, I thought that He had whispered this to some of them already, only they dared not tell me so. Nor did I dare ask them about it, for fear that it might be so; it would make me quite beside myself. *Man knows the beginning of sin*, said Spira, *but who bounds the consequences of it?*

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

181. Now also the tempter began to mock me in my misery, saying that seeing I had thus parted with the Lord Jesus and provoked Him to displeasure, who would have stood between my soul and the flame of devouring fire? There was now but one way; and that was to pray that God the Father would be a Mediator between his Son and me; that we might be

reconciled again; and that I might have that blessed benefit in Him that his blessed saints enjoyed.

182. Then that scripture seized upon my soul, *He is of one mind, and who can turn Him!* Job 23.13. Oh! I saw, it was as easy to persuade Him to make a new world, a new covenant, or a new Bible, besides what we have already, as it was to pray for such a thing. This was to persuade Him that what He had done already was mere folly, and to persuade Him to alter, indeed, to disannul the whole way of salvation. And then this saying would tear my soul apart: *Nor is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved,* Act 4.12.

183. Now the most free, full, and gracious words of the gospel were the greatest torment to me. Yes, nothing so afflicted me as thoughts of Jesus Christ. The remembrance of a Saviour, because I had cast Him off, brought to mind the villainy of my sin, and my loss by it. Nothing made my conscience twinge like this. Every time I thought of the Lord Jesus, of his grace, love, goodness, kindness, gentleness, meekness, death, blood, promises, and blessed exhortations, comforts, and consolations, it went to my soul like a sword. For to my considerations of the Lord Jesus, these other thoughts would still make room for themselves in my heart:

Yes, this is the Jesus, the loving Saviour, the Son of God, whom you have parted with, whom you have slighted, despised, and abused. This is the only Saviour, the only Redeemer, the only One who could so love sinners, as to wash them from their sins in his own most precious blood. But you have no part nor lot in this Jesus. You have put Him away from you. You have said in your heart, *Let Him go, if He will.* Now, therefore, you are severed from Him; you have severed yourself from Him. Behold then his goodness, but yourself as no partaker of it.

Oh! I thought, what I have lost, what I have parted with! What has disinherited my poor soul! Oh! It is sad to be destroyed by the grace and mercy of God; to have the Lamb, the Saviour, turn lion and destroyer, Rev 6.<sup>21</sup> I also trembled, as I said, at the sight of the saints of God, especially those who greatly loved Him and made it their business to continually walk with Him in this world. For in their words, carriages, and all their expressions of tenderness and fear to sin against their precious Saviour, they condemned, laid guilt on, and also added continual affliction and shame upon my soul. The dread of them was upon me, and I trembled at them, who were God's Samuels. 1Sam 16.4.

### ***Christ may pity, but not save me***

184. Now also the tempter began afresh to mock my soul another way, saying that Christ indeed pitied my case, and was sorry for my loss. But because I had sinned and transgressed as I had done, He could by no means help me, nor save me from what I feared. For *my* sin was not of the nature of *theirs* for whom He bled and died. Nor was it counted with those that were laid to his charge when He was hung on a tree. Therefore, unless He were to come down from heaven and die anew for this sin, though indeed He greatly pitied me, I could have no benefit from Him. These things may seem ridiculous to others, even as ridiculous as they were in themselves. But to me they were most tormenting cogitations. Every one of them augmented my misery, that Jesus Christ should have so much love as to pity me, when yet He could not help me. Nor did I think that the reason why He could not help me was because his merits were weak, or that his grace and salvation were already spent on others

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<sup>21</sup> In Rev 5, only the *Lion* of Judah is worthy to open the scroll. The *Lamb* takes it from the right hand of the One who sits on the throne, to loose its seals. Rev 6 then describes the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. – WHG

— but because his faithfulness to his threatening would not let Him extend his mercy to me. Besides, I thought (as I already hinted) that my sin was not within the bounds of that pardon that was wrapped up in a promise. And if not, then I knew assuredly that it was easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for me to have eternal life. So that, the ground of all these fears of mine arose from a steadfast belief that I had of the stability of the holy word of God, and also from my being misinformed of the nature of my sin.

185. But oh! how this would add to my affliction, to conceive that I should be guilty of such a sin for which He did not die. These thoughts would so confound me, and imprison me, and tie me up from faith, that I did not know what to do. But oh! I thought, that He would come down again! Oh! that the work of man's redemption was yet to be done by Christ! How I would pray Him and entreat Him to count and reckon this sin among the rest for which He died! But this scripture would strike me down as dead: *Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him*, Rom 6.9.

186. Thus, by the strange and unusual assaults of the tempter, my soul was like a broken vessel, driven as by the winds, and tossed sometimes headlong into despair; sometimes upon the covenant of works; and sometimes to wish that the new covenant and its conditions might, so far as I thought myself concerned, be turned another way, and changed. But in all these, I was like those who are jostled against the rocks — more broken, scattered, and rent. Oh! the *unthought-of* imaginations, frights, fears, and terrors, that are affected by a thorough application of guilt yielding to desperation! This is the man who has his dwelling among the tombs with the dead; who is always crying out, and cutting himself with stones, Mar 5.1-3. But, I say, it was all in vain. Desperation will not comfort him; the old covenant will not save him. No, heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of the word and the law of grace will fail or be removed. This I saw; this I felt; and under this I *groaned*. Yet I got this advantage by it: namely, a further confirmation of the certainty of the way of salvation; and that the scriptures were the word of God. Oh! I cannot now express what I then saw and felt of the steadiness of Jesus Christ, the Rock of man's salvation. What was done could not be undone, added to, nor altered. I saw, indeed, that sin might drive the soul beyond Christ, even the unpardonable sin. But woe to him who was so driven, for the word would shut him out.

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

188. Then breaking out in the bitterness of my soul, I said to myself with a grievous sigh, 'How can God comfort such a wretch as I?' I had no sooner said it, than this returned to me, as an echo answers a voice: *This sin is not unto death*. At this, it was as if I had been raised out of the grave, and cried out again, 'Lord, how could You find such a word as this?' For I was filled with admiration at the fitness, and at the unexpectedness of the sentence — the fitness of the word, the rightness of its timing; the power, and sweetness, and light, and glory that also came with it — were marvellous for me to find. I was now, for the time, out of doubt as to that about which I had been so much in doubt before. My fears before were that

my sin was not pardonable, so that I had no right to pray, repent, etc., or that if I did, it would be of no advantage or profit to me. But now, I thought, if this sin is *not* unto death, then *it is* pardonable. Therefore I have encouragement from this to come to God by Christ for mercy, to consider the promise of forgiveness as that which stands with open arms to receive me as well as others. This therefore was a great easement to my mind — that my sin was pardonable, that it was not the *sin unto death*, 1Joh 5.16-17. None but those who know by their own experience what my trouble was, can tell what relief came to my soul by this consideration. It was a release to me from my former bonds, and a shelter from the former storm. I now seemed to stand upon the same ground with other sinners, and to have as good a right to the word and prayer as any of them.

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

### ***His Everlasting Love***

190. But the next day at evening, being under many fears, I went to seek the Lord. And as I prayed, I cried, and my soul cried to Him in these words, with strong cries: O Lord, I beseech You, show me that You *have loved me with everlasting love*, Jer 31.3. I had no sooner said it, than with sweetness, *this* returned upon me, like an echo or sounding again, *I have loved you with an everlasting love*. Now I went to bed in quiet. Also, when I awakened the next morning, it was fresh upon my soul; *and I believed it*.

191. Yet the tempter did not leave me. For it could not be less than a hundred times that he laboured that day to then break my peace. Oh! the combats and conflicts that I then met with. As I strove to hold by *this* word, then *that* of Esau would fly in my face like lightning. I would sometimes be up and down twenty times in an hour. Yet God bore me up, and kept my heart upon this word from which, for several days I also had very much sweetness and comfortable hopes of pardon. For thus it was made out to me: ‘I loved you while you were committing this sin; I loved you before; I love you still; and I will love you forever.’

192. Yet I saw my sin as a most barbarous and filthy crime, and could not but conclude, and do so with great shame and astonishment, that I had horribly abused the holy Son of God. Therefore I felt my soul greatly love and pity Him, and my compassion yearn towards Him. For I saw that He was still my friend, and rewarded me good for evil. Indeed, the love and affection that then burned within toward my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, worked at this time such a strong and hot desire for revenge upon myself for the abuse I had done to Him, that to speak as I then thought, if I had a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could then have freely spilled it all at the command and feet of my Lord and Saviour.

193. And as I was thus musing, and in my studies, considering how to love the Lord and to express my love to Him, that saying came in upon me, *If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared*, Psa 130.3-4. These were *good* words to me, especially the latter part — that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that He might be feared — that is, as I then understood it, that He might be loved and held in reverence. For thus it was made out to me: that the great God set so high

an esteem upon the love of his poor creatures, that rather than go without their love, He would pardon their transgressions.

194. And now that word was fulfilled upon me, and I was also refreshed by it: *That you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord God, Eze 16.63.* Thus my soul was at this time — and as I then thought, *forever* — set at liberty from being afflicted with my former guilt and amazement.

195. But before many weeks had gone by, I began to despond again, fearing lest, notwithstanding all that I had enjoyed, I might yet be deceived and destroyed at last. For this consideration came strongly into my mind, that whatever comfort and peace I thought I might have from the word of the promise of life, yet unless there could be found in my refreshment, a concurrence and agreement in the scriptures, let me think whatever I will about it, and hold it however fast, I would in the end find no such thing, *and the scripture cannot be broken, Joh 10.35.*

### **No Sacrifice Remains**

196. Now my heart began to ache again, and to fear that I might meet with disappointment at last. Therefore I began with all seriousness to examine my former comfort, and to consider whether someone who had sinned as I had done, might with confidence trust upon the faithfulness of God laid down in those words by which I had been comforted, and on which I had leaned myself. But now these sayings were brought to my mind: *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, Heb 6.4-6. For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries, Heb 10.26-27* — like Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright. *For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears, Heb. 12.16-17.*

197. Now the word of the gospel was forced from my soul, so that no promise or encouragement was to be found in the Bible for me. And now this saying would work upon my spirit to afflict me: *Do not rejoice, O Israel, for joy, like other peoples, Hos 9.1.* For I saw that indeed, there was cause for rejoicing for those who held to Jesus. But for me, I had cut myself off by my transgressions, and I had left myself neither foothold nor handhold among all the stays and props in the precious word of life.

198. And truly, I now felt myself sink into a gulf, like a house whose foundation is destroyed. I likened myself in this condition, to the case of some child that had fallen into a mill-pit. Though it could make some shift to scramble and sprawl in the water, yet because it could not find a hold either for hand or foot, it must therefore die at last in that condition. As soon as this fresh assault had fastened on my soul, this scripture came into my heart, *This for many days, Dan 10.14.* And indeed I found it was so; for I could not be delivered nor brought to peace again, until nearly two and a half years were finished. Therefore, though these words in themselves tended toward discouragement, yet to me who feared that this condition would be eternal, they were a help and refreshment to me at times.

199. For I thought, *many days* are not forever; *many days* will have an end. Therefore, seeing that I was to be afflicted not a few but many days, I was still glad that it was *only* for

many days. This, I say, I would recall sometimes to give myself a help. For as soon as the words first came into my mind, I knew that my trouble would be long. And yet this relief would only be sometimes. For I could not always think on this, nor ever be helped by it, even if I did.

200. Now, while the scriptures lay before me, and laid sin anew at my door, that saying in Luk 18.1, *men should always pray and not lose heart*, along with others, encouraged me to prayer. Then the tempter laid into me again very sorely, suggesting that neither the mercy of God, nor yet the blood of Christ, at all concerned me, nor could they help me for my sin. Therefore it was in vain to pray. Yet, I thought, *I will pray*. But the tempter said, *Your sin is unpardonable*. Well, I said, *I will pray*. It is to no advantage, he said. Yet I said, *I will pray*. So I went to prayer to God. And while I was at prayer, I uttered words to this effect: 'Lord, Satan tells me, that neither Your mercy, nor Christ's blood, is sufficient to save my soul. Lord, will I honour You most by believing You will, and can? or honor him by believing You neither will, nor can? Lord, I would gladly honour You by believing You will, and can.'

201. And as I was thus before the Lord, that scripture fastened on my heart, *O man, great is your faith*, Mat 15.28, as if someone had clapped me on the back as I was on my knees before God. Yet I was not able to believe this, that this was a *prayer of faith*, till almost six months after. For I could not think that I had faith, nor that there would be a word for me to act faith on. Therefore I was still stuck in the jaws of desperation, and went mourning up and down in a sad condition.

202. There was nothing now that I longed for more than to be put out of doubt as to this thing in question. And as I was vehemently desiring to know if there was indeed hope for me, these words came rolling into my mind: *Will the Lord cast off forever? and will He be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Does his promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up his tender mercies?* Psa 77.7-9. And all the while that they ran in my mind, I thought I still had this as the answer: It is a question of whether He has or not. It may be that He has not cast me off forever. Indeed, the interrogatory seemed to carry in it a sure affirmation that indeed *He had not*, nor would He so cast off, but He would be favourable; that his promise does not fail; and that He had not forgotten to be gracious, nor in anger would He shut up his tender mercy. There was also something on my heart at the same time, which I cannot now call to mind. But that, with this text, sweetened my heart, and made me conclude that his mercy might not be quite gone, nor clean gone forever.

203. At another time, I remember, I was again much under this question: Whether the blood of Christ was sufficient to save my soul? I continued in this doubt from morning till about seven or eight at night. And at last, when I was, as it were, quite worn out with fear lest it should not lay hold on me, these words suddenly sounded within my heart: *He is able*. But I thought this word *able* was spoken aloud to me. It showed as such a great word, that it seemed to be written in large letters. And it gave such a jostle to my fear and doubt — I mean for the time it tarried with me, which was about a day — as I never had from it in all my life, either before or after. Heb 7.25.

204. But one morning as I was again at prayer, and trembling under the fear that no word of God could help me, that piece of a sentence darted in upon me, *My grace is sufficient*. At this I thought I felt some stay, as if there might be hopes. But, oh! how good a thing it is for God to send His Word! For about a fortnight before this, I was looking at this very passage, and thought then that it could not come near my soul with comfort. Therefore I threw down my book in a peeve. Then I thought it was not large enough for me; no, not large enough.

But *now* it was as if it had arms of grace so wide that it could not only enclose me, but many more such as I besides.

### ***Weighing in the Scales***

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

206. Therefore I still prayed to God that He would come in with this scripture more fully on my heart. That is, that He would help me to apply the *whole sentence*, for as yet I could not. What He gave, I gathered. But I could not go further, for as yet it only helped me to hope there might be mercy for me. *My grace is sufficient*. And though it came no further, it answered my former question, whether there was hope. Yet, because “for you” was left out of the sentence, I was not contented; but I prayed to God for that also. Therefore, one day, when I was in a meeting of God's people, full of sadness and terror — for my fears again were strong upon me; and as I was now thinking that my soul was no better, but my case was most sad and fearful — these words with great power suddenly broke in upon me: ‘My grace is sufficient *for you*, My grace is sufficient *for you*, My grace is sufficient *for you*,’ three times together. And oh! I thought that every word was a mighty word to me; such as *My*, and *grace*, and *sufficient*, and *for you*. They were then, and sometimes still are, far bigger than others are.

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

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

### ***The City of Refuge***

209. Then I thought I saw myself as if both Peter and Paul, and John, and all the writers, looked with scorn upon me, and held me in derision; and as if they had said to me, ‘*All our words are truth; one has as much force as another*. It is not we that have cut you off, but that you have cast yourself away. There are none of our sentences that you must take hold of, but these and such as these: it is *impossible*, Heb 6.4; *there remains no more sacrifice for sin*,



Heb 10.26. And, *it would have been better for them not to have known the will of God, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them, 2Pet 2.21. For the Scriptures cannot be broken, Joh 10.35.*

210. These, like the elders of the city of refuge, I saw were to be judges of both my case and me, while I stood trembling at their gate for deliverance, with the avenger of blood at my heels. Also with a thousand fears and mistrusts, I doubted that they would shut me out forever, Jos 20.3-4.

211. Thus I was confounded, not knowing what to do or how to be satisfied in this question, whether the scriptures could agree in the salvation of my soul? I quaked at the apostles. I knew their words were true, and that they must stand forever.

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

213. Well, about two or three days after, they did so indeed. They both bolted upon me at the same time, and worked and struggled strangely in me for a while. At last, that one about Esau's birthright began to grow weak, and withdraw, and vanish; and this one about the sufficiency of grace prevailed with peace and joy. And as I was in a muse about this thing, that scripture came in upon me, *Mercy rejoices against judgment, Jas 2.13.*

214. This was a wonderment to me; yet truly, I am apt to think it was of God. For the word of the law and wrath, must give way to the word of life and grace. This is because, though the word of condemnation is glorious, yet the word of life and salvation far exceeds it in glory. 2Cor 3.8-11; Mar 9.5-7; Joh 6.37. Also, Moses and Elijah must both vanish, and leave Christ and his saints alone, Mat 17.8.

215. This scripture also most sweetly visited my soul: *And whoever comes to Me, I will in no way cast out, Joh 6.37.* Oh! the comfort that I had from this phrase, *in no way!* As if to say, 'By no means, for he has done nothing whatever.' But Satan would greatly labour to pull this promise from me, telling me that Christ did not mean *me*, and such as me, but sinners of a lower rank who had not done as I had done. But I would answer him back, 'Satan, in these words there is no such exception; but *whoever* comes, *anyone*. *Whoever comes to Me I will in no way cast out.* And this I still remember well, that of all the sleights that Satan used to take this scripture from me, he never so much as put this question to me: *But do you come rightly?* I thought the reason was because he thought I knew full well what coming *rightly* was. For I saw that to come rightly, was to come *as I was*: a vile and ungodly sinner, and to cast myself at the feet of mercy, condemning myself for sin. If ever Satan and I strove for any word of God in all my life, it was for this good word of Christ — he at one end, and I at the other. Oh! what work we made! It was for this verse in John, I say, that we so tugged and strove; he pulled, and I pulled. But God be praised, I got the better of him. I got some *sweetness* from it.

216. But notwithstanding all these helps and blessed words of grace, that of Esau's selling of his birthright would still at times distress my conscience. For although I had been most sweetly comforted (and that was just before), yet when that word about Esau came into my mind, it would make me fear again. I could not quite be rid of it. it would be with me every day. Therefore, I now went to work it out another way, even to consider the nature of this

blasphemous thought — I mean, if I should take the words at the largest, and give them their own natural force and scope, even every word in it. So when I had considered them this way, I found that if they were taken fairly, they would amount to this: That I had freely left the Lord Jesus Christ to his choice, whether He would be my Saviour or not. For the wicked words were these, *Let Him go, if He will*. Then this scripture gave me hope: *I will never leave you, nor forsake you*, Heb 8.5. ‘O Lord,’ I said, ‘but *I* have left *You*.’ Then it answered back, ‘But *I* will not leave *you*.’ For this I thank God also.

217. Yet I was grievously afraid He would, and I found it exceedingly hard to trust Him, seeing that I had so offended Him. I could have been exceedingly glad that this thought had never befallen me; for then I thought I could have leaned on his grace with more ease and freedom in abundance. I saw that it was with me as it was with Joseph’s brothers. The guilt of their own wickedness often filled them with fears that their brother would at last despise them, Gen 50.15-16, etc.

218. Yet, above all the scriptures I had yet considered, the one in Joshua 20 was the greatest comfort to me. It speaks of the slayer who was to flee for refuge. And if the avenger of blood pursued the slayer, then says Moses, those who are the elders of the city of refuge shall not deliver him into the avenger’s hands, because he struck his neighbour unwittingly, and did not hate him beforehand. Oh! blessed be God for this word. I was convinced that I was the slayer; and I felt with great terror that the avenger of blood pursued me. It only remained now that I inquire whether I have a right to enter the city of refuge. So I found that the one who lay in wait to shed blood must not. It was not the wilful murderer, but the one who killed unwittingly, who did it unawares — not out of spite, or grudge, or malice, but shed it unwittingly — even he who did not hate his neighbour beforehand. Therefore,

219. I thought truly that I was the man who must enter, because I had struck my neighbour unwittingly, and did not hate Him beforehand. I did not hate Him before; no, I *prayed* to Him. I was tender about sinning against Him. Indeed, I had striven against this wicked temptation for twelve months before. Yes, and also when it passed through my heart, it did it in spite of my teeth.<sup>22</sup> This is why I thought I had a right to enter this city; and the elders, who are the apostles, were not to deliver me up. This was therefore a great comfort to me, and it gave me much ground for hope.

### **Reconsidering the Charges**

220. Yet being very critical — for my pain had made me such that I did not know what ground was sure enough to bear me — I had one question that my soul much desired to be resolved about. And that was, whether it is possible for any soul, after he has sinned the unpardonable sin, to yet receive even the least true spiritual comfort from God through Christ? After I had much considered, I found the answer was, No, they could not; and that was for these reasons:—

221. *First*, because those who have sinned that sin, are debarred from a share in the blood of Christ. And being shut out of that, they must be void of the least ground of hope, and so of spiritual comfort. For them, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, Heb 10.26-27. *Secondly*, Because they are denied a share in the promise of life. They shall never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come, Mat 12.32. *Thirdly*, The Son of God excludes them also from a share in his blessed intercession, being forever ashamed to own them before both his holy Father, and the blessed angels in heaven, Mar 8.38.

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<sup>22</sup> That is, in opposition to every effort of his. — WHG

222. When I had considered this matter with much deliberation, and could only conclude that the Lord had comforted me, and that was even after my wicked sin, I then thought I dared risk coming to those most fearful and terrible scriptures with which all this while I had been so greatly frightened. Indeed, I scarcely dared cast my eye on them before. Yes, I had much ado a hundred times, to forbear wishing them out of the Bible — for I thought they would destroy me. But now, I say, I began to take some measure of encouragement, to come close to read them, and consider them, and to weigh their scope and tendency.

223. When I began to do this, I found their visage changed. For they did not look so grim as I thought they did before. And first I came to the sixth of Hebrews, still trembling for fear that it would strike me. When I had considered it, I found that the *falling* intended there, was falling entirely away. That is, as I conceived it, a falling from and absolute denying of the gospel of the remission of sins by Jesus Christ. For from them, the apostle begins his argument in verses 1-4. *Secondly*, I found that this falling away must be openly, even in the view of the world, even so as to put Christ to open shame. *Thirdly*, I found that those he intended there were forever shut up by God, in both blindness, hardness, and impenitency: *It is impossible they could be renewed again to repentance*. By all these particulars, I found to God's everlasting praise, that my sin was *not* the sin intended in this place. *First*, I confessed that I was fallen, but not fallen away — that is, fallen from the profession of faith in Jesus unto eternal life. *Secondly*, I confessed that I had put Jesus Christ to shame by my sin, but not to *open* shame. I did not deny Him before men, nor condemn Him as a fruitless one before the world. *Thirdly*, Nor did I find that God had shut me up, or denied me coming to Him by sorrow and repentance, though I found it hard work indeed to come. Blessed be God for his unsearchable grace!

224. Then I considered that passage in the 10th of the Hebrews, and found that the wilful sin mentioned there (10.26), is not *every* wilful sin, but that sin which throws off Christ, and then his commandments too. *Secondly*, That must also be done openly, before two or three witnesses according to the law, verse 28. *Thirdly*, This sin cannot be committed without great despite done to the Spirit of Grace — despising both his dissuasions from that sin, and his persuasions to the contrary. But the Lord knows, though my sin was devilish, it did not amount to these.

225. And touching that place in the 12th chapter of Hebrews about Esau's selling of his birthright — even though this was what killed me, and stood like a spear against me, yet I now considered: *First*, That his was not a hasty thought against the continual labour of his mind, but a thought that was consented to, and likewise put into practice; and that was after some deliberation, Gen 25. *Secondly*, It was a public and open action, even before his brother if not before many more. This made his sin of a far more heinous nature than it would have been otherwise. *Thirdly*, He continued to slight his birthright: He ate and drank, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. Indeed, twenty years later he was still found to despise it. *Esau said, I have enough, my brother, keep what you have to yourself*, Gen 33.9.

226. Now touching this — that Esau sought a place for repentance — I thought thus: *First*, This was not for the birthright, but for the blessing. This is clear from the apostle,<sup>23</sup> and is distinguished by Esau himself. *He took away my birthright* (that is, formerly); *and behold, now he has taken away my blessing*, Gen 27.36. *Secondly*, Now this being thus considered, I came again to the apostle, to see what the mind of God might be in a New-Testament style

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<sup>23</sup> As most did in the 1600s, Bunyan assumed that Paul was the unnamed writer of Hebrews. — WHG

and sense concerning Esau's sin. And so far as I could conceive, *this* was the mind of God: that the birthright signified *regeneration*, and the blessing, the eternal *inheritance*. For so the apostle seems to hint, *Lest there be any profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright*. It is as if he said, 'Lest there be any person among you who would cast off all those blessed beginnings of God that are upon him at present in order for a new-birth' — 'Lest they become like Esau, and be *rejected afterwards when they want to inherit the blessing*.'

227. For there are many who, in the day of grace and mercy, despise those things which are indeed the birthright to heaven, who yet when the deciding day appears, will cry as loud as Esau, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. But then, just as Isaac would not repent [of giving Jacob the blessing], no more will God the Father repent, but will say, *I have blessed these indeed, and they shall be blessed*, Gen 27.33. But as for you, *Depart, you are the workers of iniquity*, Luk 13.25-27.

228. When I had thus considered these scriptures, and found that to understand them this way was not *against*, but *according to* other scriptures, this added still further to my encouragement and comfort. And it also gave a great blow to that objection that the scriptures could not agree in the salvation of my soul. Now only the hinder part of the tempest remained. For the thunder had gone beyond me, and only some drops still remained, that now and then would fall upon me. But because my former frights and anguish were very sore and deep, it therefore often befalls me still — as it befalls those who have been seared with fire — I thought every voice was, *Fire! fire!* Every little touch would hurt my tender conscience.

### ***Righteousness in Christ***

229. But one day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest all was not yet right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul: *Your righteousness is in heaven*. And with this, I thought I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand. *There*, I say, was my righteousness. So that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, *He lacks My righteousness*; for that was right before Him. Moreover, I saw that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made it worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, *The same yesterday, today, and forever*, Heb 13.8.

230. Now my chains fell off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons. My temptations also fled away. So that, from that time onward those dreadful scriptures of God stopped troubling me. Now I went home rejoicing for the grace and love of God. So when I got home, I looked to see if I could find that sentence, *Your righteousness is in heaven*, but could not find such a saying. Therefore my heart began to sink again. Only this was brought to my remembrance: *Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*, 1Cor 1.30. By this word, I saw the other was true.

231. For by this scripture I saw that the Man Christ Jesus, as He is distinct from us regarding his bodily presence, so He is our righteousness and sanctification before God. Here I therefore lived for some time, very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. Oh! I thought, Christ! Christ! There was nothing but Christ before my eyes. I was not now only for looking at this and the other benefits of Christ *apart* — such as, of his blood, burial, or resurrection — but considering Him as a *whole* Christ! as the One in whom all these, and all his other virtues, relations, offices, and operations met together; and that He sat at the right hand of God in heaven.

232. It was glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and prevalence of all his benefits. And that was because now I could look from myself to Him, and might reckon that all those graces of God that were now green on me, were but like loose coins that rich men carry in their pockets,<sup>24</sup> while their gold is in their trunks at home. Oh! I saw that my gold was in my trunk at home, in Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all — all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification, and all my redemption.

233. Further, the Lord also led me into the mystery of UNION with the Son of God — that I was *joined* to Him, that I was *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone*, Eph 5.30; and now that word was sweet to me. By this also my faith in Him, like my righteousness, was more confirmed to me. For if He and I were one, then his righteousness was mine, his merits mine, his victory also mine. Now I could see myself in heaven and earth at once — in heaven by my Christ, my Head, my righteousness and life; though on earth by my body or person.

234. Now I saw that Christ Jesus was looked upon by God (and He should also be looked upon by us) as that common or public person <sup>25</sup> in whom the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned — that we fulfilled the law by Him, died by Him, rose from the dead by Him, got the victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell by Him. When He died, we died, and so too concerning his resurrection. *Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body they shall arise*, He says, Isa 26.19. And again, *After two days He will revive us, and the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight*, Hos 6.2. This is now fulfilled by the Son of Man sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, according to this place in Ephesians: *[God] has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Eph 2.6.

235. Ah! these blessed considerations and scriptures, with many others of a like nature, were made to sparkle in my eyes in those days. So that I have cause to say, *Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of his power; praise Him for his mighty acts: praise Him according to his excellent greatness*, Psa 150.1-2.

### ***Two Causes of Temptation***

236. Thus in a few words I have given you a taste of the sorrow and affliction that my soul went under by the guilt and terror that my wicked thoughts laid me under. I have also given you a touch of my deliverance from that, and of the sweet and blessed comfort that I met with afterwards. This comfort dwelt with my heart about twelve months, to my unspeakable admiration. Before I proceed any further, I will now, God willing, give you in a word or two, what I conceive was the cause of this temptation; and after that I will also give you what advantage, at last, it became to my soul.

#### ***1. Prayerlessness***

237. As for the causes, I conceived they were principally two, of which I was also deeply convinced all the time this trouble lay upon me. The first was that I did not, when I was delivered from the temptation that went before, still pray to God to keep me from the temptations that were to come. For though, as I can say in truth, my soul was much in prayer before this trial seized me, yet thereafter I prayed only, or at most *principally* for the removal of my present troubles, and for fresh discoveries of His love in Christ. I saw

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<sup>24</sup> Originally, “those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses...” - WHG

<sup>25</sup> *Common or public*: belonging equally to many. Christ is the federal head of his church, each member claiming an equal or *common* right to all His merits as a Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate. — Ed.

afterwards that it was not enough to do this. I should also have prayed that the great God would keep me from the evil that was to come.

238. I was made deeply sensible of this by the prayer of holy David, who when he was under present mercy, yet prayed that God would hold him back from sin and the temptation to come. *Then, he says, I will be upright, and I will be innocent from the GREAT transgression, Psa 19.13.* I was galled and condemned by this very word quite through this long temptation.

239. There was also another word that much condemned me for my folly, in the neglect of this duty. Heb 4.16: *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* I had not done this, and therefore I was allowed to sin and fall, according to what is written, *Pray, that you do not enter into temptation, Mat 26.41.* And truly, this very thing is to this day of such weight and awe upon me, that I dare not, when I come before the Lord, get off my knees, until I entreat Him for help and mercy against the temptations that are to come. And I beseech you, reader, that you learn to beware of my negligence, by the affliction for this thing, that I underwent with sorrow for days, and months, and years.

## *2. Tempting God*

240. Another cause of this temptation was that I had tempted God; and I did it in the following manner. At the time my wife was great with child, before her full time had come, her pangs, *as of a woman in travail*, were fierce and strong upon her, as if she would fall immediately into labour and be delivered of an untimely birth. It was at this very time that I had been so strongly tempted to question the being of God. Therefore, as my wife lay crying beside me, I said with all imaginable secrecy, thinking only in my heart, ‘Lord, if You will now remove this sad affliction from my wife, and cause her to be troubled no more with it this night — and now her pangs were just upon her — *then* I will know that You can discern the most secret thoughts of the heart.’

241. I had no sooner said it in my heart, than her pangs were taken from her, and she was cast into a deep sleep, and so she continued till morning. I greatly marvelled at this, not knowing what to think. But after I had been awake a good while, and heard her cry no more, I fell asleep also. So when I awoke in the morning, it came upon me again, even what I had said in my heart the previous night, and how the Lord had shown me that He knew my secret thoughts. This was a great astonishment to me for several weeks after.

242. Well, about a year and a half afterwards, that wicked sinful thought which I spoke of before, went through my wicked heart, even this thought: *Let Christ go, if He will.* So when I had fallen under guilt for this, the remembrance of my other thought, and of its effect, would also come upon me with this retort, which also carried a rebuke with it: *Now you may see that God knows the most secret thoughts of the heart.*

243. And with this remembrance, that of the passages concerning the Lord and his servant Gideon, fell upon my spirit — how because Gideon tempted God with his fleece, both wet and dry, when he should have believed and ventured upon His Word, the Lord therefore so tested him afterwards, as to send him against an innumerable company of enemies; and did that too, as to its outward appearance, without any strength or help, Jdg 6.7. Thus He served me, and did it justly. For I should have believed His Word, and not put an “if” upon the all-seeingness of God.

## ***Advantages of Temptation***

244. And now to show you something of the advantages that I have also gained by this temptation. First, by this I was made to continually possess in my soul a very wonderful sense both of the blessing and glory of God, and of his beloved Son. In the temptation that went before, my soul was perplexed with unbelief, blasphemy, hardness of heart, questions about the being of God, Christ, the truth of the word, and certainty of the world to come. I say, back then I was greatly assaulted and tormented with *atheism*. But now the case was otherwise. Now God and Christ were continually before my face, not in a way of comfort, but in a way of exceeding dread and terror. The glory of the holiness of God at this time broke me to pieces; and the bowels and compassion of Christ broke me as if on the wheel. For I could not consider Him except as a lost and rejected Christ to me, the remembrance of which was like the continual breaking of my bones.

245. The scriptures now were also *wonderful* things to me. I saw that the truth and verity of them were the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Those whom the scriptures favour will inherit bliss; but those whom they oppose and condemn, must perish forevermore. Oh! this word, *For the scriptures cannot be broken*, would rend the caul of my heart; and so would that other word, *Whose sins you remit, they are remitted; but whose sins you retain, they are retained*, Joh 20.23. Now I saw the apostles to be the elders of the city of refuge, Jos 20.4. Those that they were to receive in, were received to life; but those that they shut out, were to be slain by the avenger of blood.

246. Oh! one sentence of the scripture more afflicted and terrified my mind — I mean those sentences that stood against me, as sometimes I thought every one of them did — more, I say, than an army of forty thousand men that might have come against me. Woe be to him against whom the scriptures bend themselves!

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

248. By this temptation I was also greatly kept from my former foolish practice of putting aside the word of promise when saw it come into my mind. For now, though I could not suck that comfort and sweetness from the promise as I had done at other times, yet like a drowning man, I would catch at all I saw. Formerly, I thought I might not meddle with the promise unless I felt its comfort. But now was no time to do that; the avenger of blood too hotly pursued me.

249. Now I was therefore glad to catch at that word which I yet feared that I had no ground or right to own — and even to leap into the bosom of that promise that I yet feared had shut its heart against me. Now I would also labour to take the word as God has laid it down, without restraining the natural force of one syllable of it: O! what I now saw in that blessed sixth chapter of John: *And whoever comes to me, I will in no way cast out*, Joh 6.37. Now I began to consider to myself that God had a bigger mouth to speak with than I had a heart to conceive with. I also thought to myself that He did not speak his words in haste, nor in an unadvised heat, but with infinite wisdom and judgment, and in very truth and faithfulness.

250. In these days I would often in my greatest agonies, even flounce towards the promise, like horses do towards sound ground, yet get stuck in the mire. I concluded, though like someone almost bereft of his wits through fear, that I will rest and stay on this, and leave the fulfilling of it to the God of heaven who made it. Oh! my heart has had many a pull with

Satan for that blessed sixth chapter of John. I did not then, as at other times, look principally for comfort, though, O how welcome it would have been to me! But now a word, a *word* to lean a weary soul upon, so that it might not sink forever! It was *that* for which I hunted.

251. Indeed, often when I have been making toward the promise, I have seen it as if the Lord would refuse my soul forever. It was often as if I had run upon the pikes, and as if the Lord had thrust at me, as with a flaming sword, to keep me from Him. Then I would think of Esther who went to petition the king contrary to the law, Est 4.16. I also thought of Benhadad's servants who went to their enemies for mercy, with ropes on their heads, 1Kng 20.31, etc. Also of great encouragement to me was the woman of Canaan, who would not be daunted, even though called a dog by Christ, Mat 15.22, etc.; and the man who went to borrow bread at midnight, Luk 11.5-8, etc.

252. I never saw those heights and depths in grace, love, and mercy, as I saw *after* this temptation. Great sins draw out great grace; and where guilt is most terrible and fierce, there the mercy of God in Christ, when shown to the soul, appears most high and mighty. When Job had passed through his captivity, he had *twice as much as before*, Job 42.10. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ our Lord. I might observe many other things here, but I want to be brief, and therefore I will omit them at this time. And I pray God that my harms may make others fear to offend, lest they too be made to bear the iron yoke as I did.

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

### **Other Temptations**

253. Now I will go forward to give you a relation of other of the Lord's dealings with me at various other seasons, and of the temptations I then met with. I will begin with what I met with when I first joined in fellowship with the people of God in Bedford. After I had propounded to the church that my desire was to walk in the order and ordinances of Christ with them, I was admitted by them. While I thought of that blessed ordinance of Christ, which was his last supper with his disciples before his death, that scripture, *Do this in remembrance of Me*, Luk 22.19, was made a very precious word to me. For by it, the Lord came down upon my conscience with the revelation of his death for my sins. And as I then felt, it was as if He plunged me in the virtue of it. But behold, I had not long been a partaker at that ordinance, than such fierce and sad temptations attended me at all times in it, both to blaspheme the ordinance, and to wish some deadly thing to those who then ate of it. Lest I might at any time be guilty of consenting to these wicked and fearful thoughts, I was forced to bend myself all the while, to pray to God to keep me from such blasphemies — and also to cry to God to bless the bread and cup to them, as it went from mouth to mouth. I have since thought the reason for this temptation was because I did not at first approach to partake of it with that reverence which suited me.

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



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

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

257. At the apprehensions of these things, my sickness was doubled upon me. For now I was sick in my inward man. My soul was clogged with guilt. Now also, my former experience of God's goodness to me was quite taken out of my mind and hidden, as if it had never been, nor seen. Now my soul was greatly pinched between these two considerations: *Live I must not; die I dare not*. Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and I was giving up all for lost. But as I was walking up and down in the house, as a man in a most woeful state, that word of God took hold of my heart, *You are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, Rom 3.24. But oh! what a turn it made upon me!

258. Now I was like someone awakened out of some troublesome sleep and dream. And listening to this heavenly sentence, it was as if I had heard it thus expounded to me: 'Sinner, you think that because of your sins and infirmities, I cannot save your soul. But behold, My Son is by me, and I look upon Him and not on you, and I shall deal with you according to how I am pleased with Him.' At this I was greatly lightened in my mind, and made to understand that God could justify a sinner at any time. It was but his looking upon Christ, and imputing his benefits to us, that the work was immediately done.

259. And as I was thus in a muse, that scripture also came with great power upon my spirit, *Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy He has saved us*, etc., Tit 3.5; 2Tim 1.9. Now I had gotten on high. I saw myself within the arms of grace and mercy. And though before I was afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried, *Let me die*. Now death was lovely and beautiful in my sight. For I saw we will never live indeed, till we have gone to the other world. Oh! I thought this life is but a slumber in comparison with that above. At this time also, I saw more in these words, *Heirs of God* (Rom 8.17), than I shall ever be able to express while I live in this world. *Heirs of God!* God Himself is the portion of the saints. This I saw and wondered at, but I cannot tell you what I saw.

260. Again, as I was at another time very ill and weak, all that time also the tempter beset me strongly, labouring to hide from me my former experience of God's goodness. For I find that he is much for assaulting the soul when it begins to approach the grave. *Then* is his opportunity. He was also setting before me the terrors of death and the judgment of God, insomuch that at this time, through my fear of miscarrying forever should I now die, I was like someone dead before death came. And it was as if I felt myself already descending into the pit. I thought, I *said*, 'There is no other way, but to hell I must go.' But behold, just as I was in the midst of those fears, these words of the angel's carrying Lazarus into Abraham's bosom darted in upon me, as if to say, *So it shall be with you when you leave this world*. This sweetly revived my spirit, and it helped me to hope in God. When I had mused with comfort on this a while, that word fell with great weight upon my mind, *O death, where is*

*your sting? O grave, where is your victory?* 1Cor 15.55. At this, I at once became well in both body and mind, for my sickness quickly vanished, and I walked comfortably in my work for God again.

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

262. After I had been in this condition some three or four days, as I was sitting by the fire, I suddenly felt this word sound in my heart, *I must go to Jesus*. At this, my former darkness and atheism fled away, and the blessed things of heaven were set in my view. While I was on this, suddenly overtaken with surprise, 'Wife,' I said, is there such a scripture, *I must go to Jesus?* She said she could not tell. Therefore I sat still musing, to see if I could remember such a place. I had not sat more than two or three minutes, before that verse came bolting in upon me, *And to an innumerable company of angels;* and with that, Hebrews twelve, about Mount Sion, was set before my eyes, Heb 12.22-24.

263. Then with joy I told my wife, O! now I know, I know! And that night was a good night to me. I never had but few better. I longed for the company of some of God's people, that I might have imparted to them what God had shown me. Christ was a *precious* Christ to my soul that night. I could scarcely lie in my bed for joy, and peace, and triumph, through Christ. This great glory did not continue on me until morning, yet that twelfth of the Author to the Hebrews, Heb. 12.22-23, was a blessed scripture to me for many days after this.

264. The words are these:

*You have come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

Through this blessed sentence, the Lord led me over and over, first to this word, and then to that one. And He showed me wonderful glory in every one of them. Since that time, these words have often been a great refreshment to my spirit also.

Blessed be God for having mercy on me.

## A brief Account of the Author's Call to the Work of the Ministry

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

266. Though at first this greatly dashed and abashed my spirit, yet still being desired and entreated by them, I consented to their request. And twice, at two separate assemblies, but in private, though with much weakness and infirmity, I revealed my gift among them. At this, they not only seemed to be, but solemnly protested as in the sight of the great God, that they were both affected and comforted. And they gave thanks to the Father of mercies for the grace bestowed on me.

267. After this, sometimes, when some of them went into the country to teach, they wished me to go with them also. Though as yet I did not or dared not make use of my gift in an open way, yet there, more privately still, as I came among the good people in those places, I sometimes spoke a word of admonition to them also. They, like the others, received this with rejoicing at the mercy of God toward me, professing their souls were edified by it.<sup>26</sup>

268. Therefore, to be brief, at last — still being desired by the church — after some solemn prayer to the Lord, with fasting, I was more particularly called forth, and appointed to a more ordinary and public preaching of the word. This was not only to and among those who believed, but also to offer the gospel to those who had not yet received the faith of it. About this time, I evidently found in my mind a secret urging forward to it. Though I bless God, it was not a desire for vainglory. For at that time I was most sorely afflicted with the fiery darts of the devil concerning my eternal state.

269. Yet I could not be content unless I was found in the exercise of my gift, to which also I was greatly animated — not only by the continual desires of the godly, but also by that saying of Paul to the Corinthians: *I beseech you, brothers (you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints) that you submit yourselves to such, and to everyone who helps with us, and labours*, 1Cor 16.15-16.

270. By this text I was made to see that the Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and abilities, should bury them in the earth, but rather commanded and stirred up such

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<sup>26</sup> This is a very correct view of the excellent mode in which dissenting ministers are generally called to their important work. First, their gifts in prayer and conversation upon Divine things, and aptness in illustrating and confirming what they advance from the Scriptures, is noticed; and, secondly, they are encouraged to pray with and address the poor children in a Sunday school. If they manifest an aptness to teach, they are, thirdly, invited to give an exhortation to the church privately; and then, fourthly, they are encouraged to pray and preach among the poor in country villages and in workhouses. The God who gave the wish and the talent, soon opens a way to still more public usefulness. In most cases, they enter upon a course of study, to fit them for their momentous labours; but many of our most valuable ministers have, like Bunyan, relied entirely upon their prayerful investigation of the Scriptures. His college was a dungeon, his library the Bible; and he came forth with gigantic powers to grapple with the prince of darkness. No human learning could have so fitted him for this terrible and mysterious warfare. — Ed.

men to the exercise of their gift, and also commended those who were apt and ready to do so. They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. That scripture in those days, continually ran in my mind to encourage me, and to strengthen me in my work for God. I have also been encouraged from several other scriptures and examples of the godly, both specified in the word and other ancient histories: Act 8.4; 18.24-25ff; 1Pet 4.10; Rom 12.6; and Fox's *Acts and Monuments*.<sup>27</sup>

271. Therefore, though of myself the most unworthy of all the saints, it was with great fear and trembling at the sight of my own weakness, that I set upon the work. According to my gift and the proportion of my faith, I preached that blessed gospel that God had shown me in the holy word of truth. When the country understood it, they came in to hear the word by the hundreds, and that was from all parts, though upon sundry and diverse accounts.

272. And I thank God, He gave me some measure of compassion and pity for their souls, which also put me forward to labour with great diligence and earnestness, to find such a word as might (if God would bless it), lay hold of and awaken the conscience. In this also, the good Lord regarded the desire of his servant. For I had not preached long, before some began to be touched, and to be greatly afflicted in their minds at the apprehension of the greatness of their sin, and of their need of Jesus Christ.

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

274. Therefore, seeing them so constant in both their words and deeds, and also in their hearts so earnestly pressing after the knowledge of Jesus Christ, rejoicing that God ever sent me to where they were, I then began to conclude it might be so — that God had accepted in his work such a foolish one as I. And then came that word of God to my heart, with much sweet refreshment, *The blessing of him who was ready to perish, has come upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy, Job 29.13.*

275. I therefore rejoiced at this. Indeed, the tears of those whom God awakened by my preaching, would be both solace and encouragement to me. For I thought on those sayings, *Who is he then that makes me glad, but the one who is made sorrowful by me? 2Cor 2.2.* And again, *If I am not an Apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord, 1Cor 9.2.* Therefore, these things were to me like another argument that God had called me to this work, and stood by me in it.

276. In my preaching of the word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord led me to begin where His Word begins with sinners. That is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God by the law, belongs to and lays hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense. For the terrors of the law, and the guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt, what I painfully felt; even that under which my poor soul groaned and trembled to astonishment.

277. Indeed, I have been like someone sent to them from the dead. I went myself in chains, to preach to them in chains. And I carried that fire in my own conscience, that I persuaded

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<sup>27</sup> Published in 1563 by John Day. Later known as Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. – WHG

them to beware of. I can truly say, without dissembling, that when I have preached, I have gone full of guilt and terror, even to the pulpit door. And there it has been taken away, and I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work. Then immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit stairs, I have been as bad as I was before. Yet God carried me on, surely with a strong hand, for neither guilt nor hell could take me away from my work.

278. Thus I went on for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them. After this, the Lord came in upon my own soul, with some solid peace and comfort through Christ. For He gave me many sweet revelations of His blessed grace through Him. Therefore, I now altered my preaching, for I still preached what I saw and felt. Now, therefore, I laboured greatly to hold forth Jesus Christ in all his offices, relations, and benefits to the world. And I also strived to reveal, condemn, and remove those false supports and props on which the world both leans, and by them falls and perishes. I also stayed on these things as long as on the other.

279. After this, God led me into something of the mystery of the union of Christ. Therefore I revealed and showed that to them also. And when I had travelled through these three chief points of the word of God, about the space of five years or more, I was caught in my present practice, and cast into prison, where I have lain as long again to confirm the truth by way of suffering, as I was before in testifying of it by way of preaching according to the scriptures.

280. When I have been preaching, I thank God that my heart has often, all the time of this and the other exercise, cried out to God with great earnestness, that He would make the word effectual to the salvation of the soul. I was still being grieved lest the enemy take the word away from the conscience, and so it would become unfruitful. Therefore, I would labour to speak the word as that by which, if it were possible, the sin and person guilty of it, might be particularized by it.<sup>28</sup>

281. And when I have finished the exercise, it has gone to my heart to think the word should now fall like rain on stony places. I was still wishing from my heart, Oh! that those who heard me speak this day, would but see as I do, what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is — and also what the grace, love, and mercy of God is through Christ, to men in such a case as those who are still estranged from Him. And indeed, I often said in my heart before the Lord, that if to be hung up presently before their eyes would be a means to awaken them and confirm them in the truth, then I would gladly be contented.

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

283. When I first went to preach the word abroad, the doctors and priests of the country opened wide against me. But I was persuaded not to render railing for railing, but instead, to see how many of their carnal professors I could convince of their miserable state by the law, and of the want and worth of Christ. For I thought, This shall answer for me in time to come, when [those convinced professors] *will be my wages* before their face, Gen 30.32-33.

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<sup>28</sup> That is, personally applicable to the individual, Christ's atonement being particular, not universal. – WHG

284. I never cared to meddle with things that were controverted and in dispute among the saints, especially things of the lowest nature. Yet it pleased me much to contend with great earnestness for the word of faith, and for the remission of sins by the death and sufferings of Jesus. But I say, as to other things, I would leave them alone, because I saw they engendered strife; and because in doing, or in leaving undone, neither commended us to God to be His. Besides, I saw that my work before me ran into another channel, even to carry an awakening word. Therefore I stuck and adhered to that.

285. I never endeavoured to, nor dared to make use of other men's lines, Rom 15.18, though I do not condemn all who do. For I truly thought, and found by experience, that what was taught me by the Word and Spirit of Christ, could be spoken, maintained, and stood to, by the soundest and best-established conscience. And though I will not now say all that I know in this matter, yet my experience has more interest in that text of scripture, Gal 1.11-12, than many among men are aware. <sup>29</sup>

286. If any of those who were awakened by my ministry fall back after that (as sometimes too many did), I can truly say their loss has been more to me than if one of my own children, begotten of my own body, had been going to its grave. I think truly, I may say it without any offence to the Lord, nothing has gotten so near me as that, unless it was the fear of the loss of the salvation of my own soul. I have counted it as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born. My heart has been so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work, that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this, than if He had made me the emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it! Oh these words! *He who converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, Jas 5.20. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he who wins souls is wise, Pro 11.30. Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever, Dan 12.3. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy, 1The 2.19-20.* These, I say, with many others of a like nature, have been great refreshments to me.

287. I have observed that where I had a work to do for God, I first had God going, as it were, upon my spirit, to desire that I might preach there. I have also observed that such and such souls in particular have been strongly set upon my heart, and I was stirred up to wish for their salvation — and to wish that after this, these very souls, had been given in as the fruits of my ministry. I have observed that a word tossed in by-the-by,<sup>30</sup> has done more execution in a sermon, than all that was spoken besides. Sometimes also, when I thought I did no good, then I did most of all; and at other times, when I thought I would catch them, I fished for nothing.

288. I have also observed that where there has been a work to do upon sinners, there the devil has begun to roar in the hearts and by the mouths of his servants. Indeed, oftentimes when the wicked world has raged most, souls have been awakened by the word. I could give particular instances, but I forbear.

289. My great desire in fulfilling my ministry, was to get into the darkest places of the country, even among those people who were furthest from a profession. Yet it was not because I could not endure the light — for I did not fear to show my gospel to anyone — but

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<sup>29</sup> Gal 1:11-12t I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>30</sup> That is, said in passing; a side-comment; off-the-cuff. – WHG

because I found my spirit leaned most toward an awakening and converting work. And the word that I carried also leaned itself most that way. *And so I have strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I build on another man's foundation*, Rom 15.20.

290. In my preaching I have really been in pain, and I have, as it were, travailed to bring forth children to God. Nor could I be satisfied unless some fruits appeared in my work. If I were fruitless, it did not matter who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I did not care who condemned me. I have thought of that saying, *Lo! children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward.— As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate*, Psa 127.3-5.

291. It did not please me at all to see people drink in opinions if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ. But the worth of their own salvation, sound conviction of sin, especially of unbelief, and a heart set on fire to be saved by Christ, with strong breathings after a truly sanctified soul — *that* was what delighted me; *those* were the souls I counted blessed.

292. But in this work, as in all other work, I had my temptations attending me, and that was of diverse kinds. For example, sometimes I would be assaulted with great discouragement in it, fearing that I might not be able to speak a word at all to edification — indeed, that I might not be able to speak sense to the people. At these times I would have such a strange faintness and strengthlessness seize my body, that my legs have scarcely been able to carry me to the place of exercise.

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

294. Again, sometimes when I have been about to preach on some smart and searching portion of the word, I have found the tempter suggest, 'What! will you preach *this*? This condemns you; your own soul is guilty of this. Therefore do not preach about it at all. Or if you do, so mince it as to make way for your own escape lest, instead of awakening others, you lay that guilt upon your own soul, such that you will never get out from under.'

295. But I thank the Lord, I have been kept from consenting to these so horrid suggestions, and I have rather, as Samson did, bowed myself with all my might to condemn sin and transgression wherever I found it — yes, even though in this I also brought guilt upon my own conscience. *Let me die* (I thought) *with the Philistines*, Jdg 16.29-30, rather than deal corruptly with the blessed word of God. *You who teach another, do you not teach yourself?* Rom 2.21. It is far better to judge yourself, even by preaching plainly to others, than to *imprison the truth in unrighteousness* in order to save yourself, Rom 1.18. Blessed be God for his help also in this.

296. While found in this blessed work of Christ, I have also often been tempted to pride and liftings up of heart. Though I dare not say I have *not* been affected with this, yet truly the Lord, of his precious mercy, has so carried it towards me, that for the most part I have had but small joy from giving way to such a thing. For it has been my every-day's portion to be let into the evil of my own heart, and to still see such a multitude of corruptions and

infirmities in it, that it has caused me to hang my head under all my gifts and attainments. I have felt this *thorn in the flesh* to be the very mercy of God to me, 2Cor 12.7-9.

297. I have also had, together with this, some notable place or other of the word presented before me, which has contained in it some sharp and piercing sentence concerning the perishing of the soul, notwithstanding gifts and parts. For instance, this one has been of great use to me: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I have become like sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal*, 1Cor 13.1-2.

298. A *tinkling cymbal* is an instrument of music, with which a skilful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming music, that all who hear him play can scarcely keep from dancing. And yet behold, the cymbal does not have life, nor does the music come from it, but from the art of the one who plays it. So then, the instrument at last may come to nothing and perish, even though in times past such music has been made upon it.

299. I saw it was just this way, and it will be with those who have gifts, but lack saving grace. In the hand of Christ, they are like the cymbal in the hand of David. And just as David could make such mirth with the cymbal in the service of God, as to elevate the hearts of the worshippers, so Christ can use these gifted men to affect the souls of his people in his church. Yet when He has finished with them, He will hang them up as *lifeless*, even though *sounding cymbals*.

300. This consideration therefore, together with some others, was for the most part like a sledgehammer on the head of pride, and the desire for vainglory. What, I thought, will I be proud because I am a sounding brass? Is it so much to be a fiddle? Has not the least creature that has life, more of God in it than these? Besides, I knew it was love that would never die, but these must cease and vanish. So I concluded, a little grace, a little love, a little of the true fear of God, is better than all the gifts. Yes, and I am fully convinced that it is possible for souls who can scarcely give a man an answer without great confusion as to method — I say, it is possible for them to have a thousand times more grace, and so to be more in the love and favour of the Lord, than some who, by the virtue of the gift of knowledge, can deliver themselves like angels.

301. I therefore thus came to perceive that although gifts in themselves were good for the thing for which they are designed — namely, the edification of others — yet they are empty and without power to save the soul of the one who has them, if they are alone.<sup>31</sup> Nor are they, as such, any sign of a man's happy state. They are only a dispensation of God to some, of whose improvement, or non-improvement, they must give an account to Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead, when [the time for] "a little love" is over.

302. This showed me too, that gifts being alone, were dangerous, not in themselves, but because of those evils that attend those who have them; namely, pride, desire for vainglory, self-conceit, etc. All of these were easily inflated at the applause and commendation of every unadvised Christian, to the endangering of a poor creature to fall into the condemnation of the devil.

303. I therefore saw that the one who has gifts, needs to be let into a sight of the nature of them — namely, that they come short of putting him in a truly saved condition — lest he rest in them, and so fall short of the grace of God.

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<sup>31</sup> That is, if these gifts are exercised without grace, and without *faith*, Heb 11.6. — WHG



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

305. Let all men therefore prize a little with the fear of the Lord; gifts are indeed desirable. Yet great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. It does not say, the Lord gives *gifts* and glory, but *the Lord gives grace and glory*, Psa 84.11; and blessed is the one to whom the Lord gives grace, true grace; for that is a certain forerunner of glory.

306. But when Satan perceived that his tempting and assaulting me this way would not fit his design; namely, to overthrow the ministry and make it ineffectual as to its ends, then he tried another way. This was to stir up the minds of the ignorant and malicious to load me down with slanders and reproaches. I may now say that what the devil could devise, and his instruments invent, was whirled up and down the country against me, thinking, as I said, that by that means they would make me abandon my ministry.

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

308. To all of this I will only say, God knows that I am innocent. But as for my accusers, let them prepare to meet me before the tribunal of the Son of God, there to answer for all these things, with all the rest of their iniquities — unless God gives them repentance for them, which I pray for with all my heart.

309. But that which was reported with the boldest confidence, was that I had my misses, my whores, my bastards — indeed, two wives at once — and the like. Now, I glory in these slanders with the others, because they *are* slanders, foolish or knavish lies and falsehoods that are cast upon me by the devil and his seed. And if I were not to be dealt with so wickedly by the world, I would lack one sign of a saint and a child of God. *Blessed are you*, said the Lord Jesus, *when men revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you*, Mat 5.11-12.

310. These things therefore, on my own account, do not trouble me — no, even if they were twenty times more than they are. I have a good conscience. Whereas they speak evil of me as an evil-doer, those who falsely accuse my good conduct in Christ will be ashamed.

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

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

313. I also call them fools or knaves, who have thus made it their business to affirm any of the aforementioned things about me; namely, that I have been naughty with other women, or the like — when they have used the utmost of their endeavours, and made the fullest inquiry that they can to prove against me truly, that there is any woman in heaven, or earth, or hell, who can say that I have at any time, in any place, by day or night, so much as attempted to

be naughty with them. Will I so speak as to beg my enemies into a good esteem of me? No, not I. I will beg belief of no man. Believe or disbelieve me in this, it is all the same to me.

314. My foes have missed their mark in shooting at me this way. *I am not the man*. I wish that they themselves were guiltless. If all the fornicators and adulterers in England were hung by the neck till dead, John Bunyan, the object of their envy, would still be alive and well. I do not know whether there is such a woman breathing under the whole vault of heaven —not by their apparel, their children, or by common fame — except my wife.

315. And in this I admire the wisdom of God, that He made me shy of women from my first conversion until now. Those know, with whom I have been most intimately concerned, and can also bear me witness, that it is a rare thing to see me carry on pleasantly towards a woman. I abhor the common greeting of women. It is odious to me in whomever I see it. Their company alone, I cannot avoid. I seldom so much as touch a woman's hand; for I think these things are not very becoming of me. When I have seen good men kiss those women they have visited, or who have visited them, I have at times made my objection against it. And when they answered that it was but a piece of civility, I told them it is not a pretty sight. Some indeed have urged the "holy kiss." But then I asked why they baulked at some? Why did they kiss the most attractive and let the ill-favoured go? Thus, however laudable such things have been in the eyes of others, they have been unseemly in my sight.

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

317. Now, just as Satan laboured by reproaches and slanders to make me vile among my countrymen, so that if possible, my preaching might be made of no effect, so there was added to this a long and tedious imprisonment, so that I might thereby be frightened away from my service for Christ, and the world be terrified and made afraid to hear me preach. I will give you a brief account of this in the next part.

## A Brief Account of the Author's Imprisonment

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

319. At the sessions, after I was indicted as an upholder and maintainer of unlawful assemblies and conventicles,<sup>32</sup> and for not conforming to the national worship of the church of England. After some conference there with the justices, taking my plain dealing with them as a confession (as they termed it) of the indictment, sentenced me to a perpetual banishment because I refused to conform. So again being delivered up to the jailer's hands, I was sent to prison, and have lain there now a complete twelve years, waiting to see what God would suffer these men to do with me.

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

321. I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the word of God as now. Those scriptures that I saw nothing in before, were made to shine upon me in this place and state. Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now. Here I have seen and felt Him indeed: Oh! that word, *We have not preached to you cunningly devised fables*, 2Pet 1.16, and, *God raised Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God*, 1Pet 1.21, were blessed words to me in this, my imprisoned condition.

322. These three or four scriptures also have been great refreshments to me in this condition: Joh 14.1-4; Joh 16.33; Col 3.3-4; and Heb 12.22-24. So that sometimes, when I have been in the savour of them, I have been able to laugh at destruction, and to fear neither the horse nor his rider, Exo 15.1. I have had sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world. Oh! the mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and God the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus, have all been sweet to me in this place. I have seen here what I am persuaded I will never be able to express while in this world: I have seen a truth in this scripture: *whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1Pet 1.8.

323. I never knew what it was for God to stand by me at all turns, and at every offer of Satan 'to afflict me,' etc., as I have found Him since I came in here. For look how fears have presented themselves; so have supports and encouragements. Yes, when I have startled at nothing but my shadow, as it were, yet God, being very tender of me, has not suffered me to be molested, but would strengthen me against it all with one scripture or another, so much

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<sup>32</sup> This took place in 1660 when Bunyan was just 32 years of age. The Conventicle Act of 1593 prohibited conducting religious services outside the bailiwick of the Church of England. It was reinstated by Charles II, despite his prior promises of religious toleration. See George Offor's "[Note on the Conventicle Act.](#)" – WHG

so, that I have often said, if were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for greater comfort's sake, Ecc 7.14; 2Cor 1.5.

324. Before I came to prison, I saw what was coming, and had especially two considerations warm upon my heart. The first was how to be able to encounter death should that be my portion here. For the first of these, that scripture, Col 1.11, was great information to me — namely, *to pray to God to be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness*. I could seldom go to prayer before I was imprisoned. But for no less than a year, this sentence, or sweet petition would, as it were, thrust itself into my mind, and persuade me that if I ever went through long-suffering, I must have all patience, especially if I would endure it joyfully.

325. As to the second consideration, this saying was of great use to me: *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead*, 2Cor 1.9. By this scripture, I was made to see that if I would ever suffer rightly, I must first pass a sentence of death upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life — even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and *all* as dead to me; and myself as dead to them.

326. The second was to live upon God, who is invisible, as Paul said, the way not to faint is *to not look at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal*, 2Cor 4.18. And thus I reasoned with myself — if I provide only for a prison, then the whip will come at me unawares; and so also the pillory. Again, if I only provide for *these*, then I am not fit for banishment. Furthermore, if I conclude that banishment is the worst, then if death comes, I am surprised. So that I see the best way to go through sufferings, is to trust in God through Christ, as touching the world to come. And as touching *this* world, to count the grave as my house, to make my bed in darkness; and to say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'You are my mother and my sister' — that is, to make these things familiar to me.

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

328. Poor child! I thought, what sorrow are you likely to have for your portion in this world! You must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure that the wind should blow upon you. Yet recalling myself, I thought I must entrust you all to God, though it goes to the quick to leave you. Oh! I saw in this condition that I was like a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children. And yet, I thought, I must do it, I *must* do it. And now I thought on those two milk cows that were to carry the ark of God into another country, and left their calves behind them, 1Sam 6.10-12.

329. But what helped me in this temptation were diverse considerations, of which I will name three in particular here. The first was the consideration of these two scriptures: *Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive*. And, *let your widows trust in me*; and again, *The Lord said, Truly it will be well with your remnant. Truly, I will cause the enemy to entreat you well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction*. Jer 49.11; 15.11.

330. I also had this consideration: that if I should now risk all for God, then I engaged God to take care of my concerns. But if I forsook Him and his ways, for fear of any trouble that might come to me or mine, then I would falsify my profession. I would also reckon that my concerns were not as sure if left at God's feet while I stood to and for his name, as they would be if they were under my own care, though with the denial of the way of God. This was a smarting consideration and like spurs to my flesh. That scripture also greatly helped to fasten it more upon me, where [prophetically] Christ prays against Judas, that God would disappoint him in his selfish thoughts which moved him to sell his Master. I pray, read it soberly: Psa 109.6-20.

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

332. When I have indeed conceived I might be banished for my profession, then I thought of this scripture: *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins, and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy,* Heb 11.37-38. For they all thought they were too bad to dwell and abide among them. I also thought of that saying, *the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, that chains and afflictions await me,* Act 20.23. I have truly thought that my soul and my profession have sometimes reasoned about the sore and sad estate of a banished and exiled condition — how they were exposed to hunger, to cold, to perils, to nakedness, to enemies, and a thousand calamities; and at last, maybe to die in a ditch, like a poor and desolate sheep. But I thank God, up to now I have not been moved by these most delicate reasonings, but rather, I have more approved my heart to God by them.

333. I will tell you a pretty business. I was once, above all the rest, in a very sad and low condition for many weeks. At this time, being but a young prisoner and not acquainted with the laws, I had this lying much upon my spirits: that my imprisonment might end at the gallows for all I could tell. Now, therefore, Satan laid hard at me, to beat me out of heart by suggesting *this* to me: 'But what if, when you indeed come to die, you should be in this condition? That is, as not savouring the things of God, nor having any evidence on your soul for a better state hereafter?' For indeed, at that time all the things of God were hidden from my soul.

334. This is why, when I began to think of this at first, it was a great trouble to me. For I thought to myself that in the condition I was now in, I was not fit to die, nor indeed did I think I *could* if I were called to it. Besides, I thought to myself, if I were to make a scrambling shift to clamber up the ladder, I might — either with quaking or other symptoms of fainting — give occasion to the enemy to reproach the way of God and his people for their timidity. This, therefore, lay with great trouble upon me. For I thought I was ashamed to die with a pale face and tottering knees, in such a cause as this.

335. Therefore I prayed to God that He would comfort me, and give me strength to do and to suffer whatever He might call me to. Yet no comfort appeared, but all continued hidden. At this time I was also so really possessed with the thought of death, that often it was as if I was on a ladder with the rope around my neck. This alone was some encouragement to me: I thought I might now have an opportunity to speak my last words to a multitude, who I

thought would come to see me die. And I thought if it must be so, if God will convert but one soul by my very last words, then I will not count my life thrown away or lost.

336. Yet all the things of God were kept out of my sight, and still the tempter followed me with this: ‘But where will you go when you die? What will become of you? Where will you be found in another world? What evidence do you have for heaven and glory, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified?’ Thus I was tossed for many weeks, and I did not know what to do. At last this consideration fell with weight upon me — that it was for the word and the way of God that I was in this condition. Therefore I was engaged not to flinch a hair’s breadth from it.

337. I also thought that God might choose whether to give me comfort now, or at the hour of death. And therefore I might not choose whether I would hold my profession or not. I was *bound*; but He was *free*. Yes, it was my duty to stand to His Word, whether He would ever look upon me or save me at last. Therefore, I thought, except for the point being thus, I am for going on, and venturing my eternal state with Christ, whether I have comfort here or not. If God does not come in, I thought, I will leap off the ladder even blindfolded into eternity — sink or swim, come heaven, come hell, Lord Jesus, if You will catch me, *do*; if not, I will yet venture for Your name.

338. I was no sooner fixed in this resolution, than this word dropped upon me: *Does Job serve God for nothing?* It was as if the accuser had said, ‘Lord, Job is no upright man. He serves You for personal gain.’<sup>33</sup> *Have You not made a hedge about him? etc. But put out Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face,* Job 1.9-11. What now! I thought, is this the sign of an upright soul, to desire to serve God when all is taken from him? Is a godly man the one who will serve God for nothing, rather than give up? Blessed be God! Then I hope I have an upright heart, for I am resolved — God giving me the strength — never to deny my profession, even if I have nothing at all for my pains. And as I was thus considering, this scripture was set before me: Psa 44.12, etc.<sup>34</sup>

339. Now my heart was full of comfort; for I hoped it was sincere. I would not have been without this trial for anything. I am comforted every time I think of it, and I hope I shall bless God forever for the teaching I have had by it. I might relate many more of the dealings of God towards me, but I have *dedicated these out of the spoils won in battle, to maintain the house of God,* 1Chr 26.27.

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<sup>33</sup> Originally, ‘he serves thee for by-respects.’ — WHG

<sup>34</sup> **Psa 44:12-18** You sell Your people for *next to* nothing, And are not enriched by selling them. <sup>13</sup> You make us a reproach to our neighbors, A scorn and a derision to those all around us. <sup>14</sup> You make us a byword among the nations, A shaking of the head among the peoples. <sup>15</sup> My dishonor is continually before me, And the shame of my face has covered me, <sup>16</sup> Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, Because of the enemy and the avenger. <sup>17</sup> All this has come upon us; *But we have not forgotten You, Nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant.* <sup>18</sup> *Our heart has not turned back, Nor have our steps departed from Your way.*

## The Conclusion

1. Of all the temptations that I ever met with in my life, to question the being of God and the truth of his gospel is the worst, and the worst to be borne. When this temptation comes, it takes my girdle away from me, and removes the foundation from under me: Oh! I have often thought of that word, *Have your loins girded about with truth*, Eph 6.14; and this, *When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?* Psa 11.3.
2. Sometimes, after sin is committed, when I have looked for sore chastisement from the hand of God, the very next thing I had from Him has been the discovery of his grace. Sometimes when I have been comforted, I have called myself a fool for so sinking under trouble. And then again, when I have been cast down, I thought I was not wise to give such sway to comfort. Both of these have been upon me with such strength and weight.
3. I have wondered much at this one thing: that though God visits my soul with ever so blessed a discovery of Himself, yet I found again, that such hours attended me afterwards, that I have been so filled with darkness in my spirit, that I could not even once conceive of what that God and that comfort was, with which I have been refreshed.
4. I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible, than I could well tell how to stand under. And yet at another time, the whole Bible has been to me as dry as a stick. Or rather, My heart has been so dead and dry to it, that I could not conceive of the refreshment, even though I have looked it 'all' over.
5. Of all tears, those are best that are made by the blood of Christ; and of all joy, that is the sweetest that is mixed with mourning over Christ. Oh! it is a goodly thing to be on our knees before God, with Christ in our arms. I hope I know something of these things.
6. I find to this day seven abominations in my heart: 1. Inclining to unbelief; 2. Suddenly forgetting the love and mercy that Christ manifests; 3. Leaning toward the works of the law; 4. Wanderings and coldness in prayer; 5. Forgetting to watch for what I pray for; 6. Aptness to murmur because I no not have more, and yet ready to abuse what I have; 7. I can do none of those things which God commands me, without my corruptions thrusting themselves in — *When I would do good, evil is present with me*, Rom 7.21.
7. These things I continually see and feel, and I am afflicted and oppressed with them. Yet the wisdom of God orders them for my good. 1. They make me abhor myself; 2. They keep me from trusting my heart; 3. They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness; 4. They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus; 5. They press me to pray to God; 6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober; 7. And they provoke me to pray to God, through Christ, to help me, and to carry me through this world. Amen.

## A RELATION OF MY IMPRISONMENT IN THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 1660

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. — Mat 5:10-12*

By the good hand of my God, I had freely preached the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for five or six years together, without any interruption. And I also had, through his blessed grace, some encouragement by his blessing upon it. The devil, that old enemy of man's salvation, took his opportunity to inflame the hearts of his vassals against me, insomuch that at last, I was laid for by the warrant of a justice, and was taken and committed to prison. The relation of it is as follows:—

On the 12th of this past November 1660, some friends in the country desired me to come to teach at Samsell, by Harlington, in Bedfordshire. I made a promise to them, that if the Lord permitted, I would be with them at the aforesaid time. The justice hearing of it (whose name is Mr. Francis Wingate), immediately issued his warrant to take me and bring me before him, and in the meantime to keep a very strong watch about the house where the meeting would be kept — as if we who were to meet together in that place intended to do some fearful business, to the destruction of the country. When alas! the constable came in, he found us only with our Bibles in our hands, ready to speak and hear the word of God. For we were just about to begin our exercise. Indeed, we had begun in prayer for the blessing of God upon our opportunity, intending to preach the word of the Lord to those present there. But the constable coming in prevented us.<sup>35</sup>

So I was taken and forced to depart the room. But if I had been minded to play the coward, I could have escaped and kept out of his hands. For when I had come to my friend's house, there was whispering that I would be taken that day, for there was a warrant out to take me. When my friend heard this, being somewhat timid, he questioned whether it would be best to have our meeting or not; and whether it might not be better for me to depart, lest they take me and have me before the justice, and after that send me to prison. For he knew better than I did *what spirit they were of*, living nearby them. I said to him,

‘No, by no means; I will not stir. Nor will I have the meeting dismissed for this. 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, or to this purpose.’

But as for my friend, I think he was more afraid of me, than of himself. After this, I walked into the close where, as I somewhat seriously considered the matter, this came into my mind — That I had shown myself hearty and courageous in my preaching, and I had, blessed be grace, made it my business to encourage others. Therefore, I thought, if I should now run and make an escape, it will be of a very ill savour in the country. For what will my weak and newly-converted brethren think of it, but that I was not as strong in *deed* as I was in *word*? Also I feared that if I were to run now that there was a warrant out for me, by doing so I might make them afraid to stand, when only great words alone should be spoken to them. Besides, I thought, seeing that God of his mercy would choose me to go upon the forlorn

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<sup>35</sup> The text from which he intended to preach was, *Do you believe in the Son of God?* Joh 9.35. See the Preface to Bunyan's *Confession of Faith*.



hope in this country — that is, to be the first to be opposed for the gospel — if I should then flee, it might be a discouragement to the whole body that might follow after. And further, I thought the world would thereby take occasion at my cowardliness, to blaspheme the gospel, and to have some ground to suspect worse of me and my profession than I deserved.

These things with others considered by me, I came back into the house with a full resolution to keep the meeting, and not to go away, even though I could have been gone about an hour before the officer apprehended me. But I would not; for I was resolved to see the utmost of what they could say or do to me. For blessed be the Lord, I knew of no evil that I had said or done. And so, as I said before, I began the meeting. But being prevented by the constable's coming in with his warrant to take me, I could not proceed. But before I went away, I spoke a few words of counsel and encouragement to the people, declaring to them that they saw we were prevented of our opportunity to speak and hear the Word of God, and were likely to suffer for that. I desired that they not be discouraged, for it was a mercy to suffer upon so good an account. For we might have been apprehended as thieves or murderers, or for other wickedness. But blessed be God, it was not so. Rather, we suffer as Christians for doing good. And it was better for us to be the persecuted, than the persecutors, etc.

But the constable and the justice's man waiting on us, would not be quiet till they took me away and we departed the house. Because the justice was not at home that day, a friend of mine engaged to bring me to the constable the next morning. Otherwise the constable must have charged a watch with me, or secured me some other way, my crime was so great. So on the next morning we went to the constable, and so to Justice Wingate. He asked the constable what we did, where we had met together, and what did we have with us? I believe he meant whether we had armour or not. But when the constable told him that only a few of us met together to preach and hear the Word, with no sign of anything else, he could not well tell what to say. Yet because he had sent for me, he ventured to put out a few proposals to me, which were to this effect — namely, What did I do there? And why did I not content myself with following my calling? For it was against the law that such as I should be allowed to do as I did.,

**John Bunyan.** To which I answered that the intent of my coming there and to other places, was to instruct and counsel people to forsake their sins, and to close in with Christ, lest they miserably perish; and that I could do both of these without confusion, *i.e.*, follow my calling, and also preach the Word.

He was chafed at these words, as it appeared. For he said that he would break the neck of our meetings.

**Bun.** I said, It may be so.

Then he wished me to get sureties to be bound for me, or else he would send me to the jail. My sureties being ready, I called them in. And when the bond for my appearance was made, he told them that they were bound to keep me from preaching; and that if I did preach, their bonds would be forfeited. To which I answered that then I should break them.<sup>36</sup> For I could not cease speaking the Word of God — even to counsel, comfort, exhort, and teach the people among whom I came. And I thought this to be a work that had no hurt in it, but was worthy of commendation rather than blame.

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<sup>36</sup> That is, he would be compelled by his conscience to break them. — WHG

**Wing.** At which he told me that if they would not be so bound, my *mittimus* <sup>37</sup> must be made out, and I be sent to the jail, there to await the quarter sessions.

Now while my *mittimus* was being made, the justice was withdrawn; and in comes an old enemy to the truth, **Dr. Lindale**, who, when he had come in, fell to taunting me with many reviling terms.

**Bun.** To whom I answered that I did not come there to talk with him, but with the justice. At which he supposed that I had nothing to say for myself, and triumphed as if he had gotten the victory, charging and condemning me for meddling with that for which I could show no warrant. And he asked me if I had taken the oaths? And if I had not, it was a pity, but that I would be sent to prison, etc.

I told him, that if I was minded, I could answer any sober question that he should put to me. He then urged me again, how I could prove it was lawful for me to preach, with a great deal of confidence of the victory.

But at last, because he saw that I could answer him if I was so inclined, I cited to him that verse in Peter, which says, *as every man has received the gift, even so let him minister the same*, etc.

**Lind.** Yes, he says, to whom is that spoken?

**Bun.** To whom? I said. Why to every man who has received a gift from God. Mark that the apostle says, *As every man who has received a gift from God*, etc. [1Pet 4.10]. And again, *You may all prophesy one by one*. [1Cor 14.31] At this the man was stopped a little, and went at a softer pace. But not being willing to lose the day, he began again and said:—

**Lind.** Indeed, I do remember that I have read of one Alexander, a *coppersmith*, who much opposed and disturbed the apostles. He was likely aiming it at me, because I was a tinker.

**Bun.** To which I answered that I also had read of very many priests and pharisees who had their hands in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Lind.** Yes, he says, and you are one of those scribes and pharisees. For you, with a pretence, make long prayers to devour widows' houses.

**Bun.** I answered that if he had gotten no more by preaching and praying than I had, he would not be as rich as he was now. But that scripture came into my mind, *Do not answer a fool according to his folly*, [Pro 26.4]. I was as sparing of my speech as I could be, without prejudice to the truth.

Now by this time my *mittimus* was made, and I committed to the constable, to be sent to the jail in Bedford, etc.

But as I was going, two of my brethren met with me by the way, and desired the constable to stay, supposing that they might prevail with the justice through the favour of a pretended friend, to let me go at liberty. So we stayed while they went to the justice. And after much discourse with him, it came to this: that if I would come to him again, and say some certain words to him, I would be released. When they told me this, I said that if the words were such that they might be said with a good conscience, I would; or else I should not. So through their importunity I went back again, but not believing that I would be delivered. For I feared their spirit was too full of opposition to the truth to let me go, unless I would, in something or other, dishonour my God and wound my conscience. Therefore, as I went, I lifted up my

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<sup>37</sup> *Mittimus*: A warrant to send someone to prison. – WHG

heart to God, for light and strength to be kept, that I might not do anything that might either dishonour Him, or wrong my own soul, or be a grief or discouragement to anyone who was inclining after the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, when I came to the justice again, there was Mr. Foster of Bedford, coming out of another room. Seeing me by the light of the candle, for it was dark night when I went there, he said to me, Who is there? John Bunyan? He said it with such seeming affection, as if he would have leaped on my neck and kissed <sup>38</sup> me. This made me somewhat wonder that such a man as he, with whom I had so little acquaintance, and besides that, had ever been a close opposer of the ways of God, should carry himself so full of love toward me. But afterwards, when I saw what he did, it caused me to remember those sayings, *Their tongues are smoother than oil, but their words are drawn swords*, [Psa 55.21]. And again, *Beware of men*, etc. When I answered him that blessed be God, I was well, he said, What is the occasion of your being here? or something to that effect. I answered that I was at a meeting of people a little way off, intending to speak a word of exhortation to them. The justice hearing of it, I said, was pleased to send his warrant to fetch me before him, etc.

**Fost.** So, he said, I understand. But well, if you will promise to no longer call the people together, you shall have your liberty to go home. For my brother is very loath to send you to prison, if you will only be ruled.

**Bun.** Sir, I said, what do you mean by “calling the people together”? My business is nothing else among them, when they have come together, than to exhort them to look after the salvation of their souls, so that they may be saved, etc.

**Fost.** He says, We must not enter into explication or dispute now. But if you will say that you will no longer call the people together, you may have your liberty; if not, you must be sent away to prison.

**Bun.** Sir, I said, I will not force or compel any man to hear me. Yet if I come into any place where people are meeting together, I should, according to the best of my skill and wisdom, exhort and counsel them to seek after the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls.

**Fost.** He said that was none of my work. I must follow my calling; and if I would only cease preaching, and follow my calling, then I would have the justice’s favour, and be acquitted immediately.

**Bun.** I said to him that I could follow my calling, and *that* too, namely, preaching the Word. And I looked upon it as my duty to do them both, as I had an opportunity.

**Fost.** He said, to have any such meetings was against the law; and therefore he would have me cease, and to say that I would no longer call the people together.

**Bun.** I said to him that I dared not make any further promise; for my conscience would not allow me to do it. And again, I looked upon it as my duty to do as much good as I could, not only in my trade, but also in communicating to all people wherever I went, the best knowledge I had in the Word.

**Fost.** He told me that I was the nearest to the Papists of anyone, and that he would convince me of it immediately.

**Bun.** I asked him, In what?

**Fost.** He said, In that we understood the Scriptures literally.

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<sup>38</sup> As Judas did with Christ.

**Bun.** I told him that those which were to be understood literally, we understood them so. But for those that were to be understood otherwise, we endeavoured to so understand them.

**Fost.** He said, Which of the Scriptures do you understand literally?

**Bun.** I said this, *He that believes shall be saved*. This was to be understood just as it is spoken; *that whoever believes in Christ shall*, according to the plain and simple words of the text, *be saved*.

**Fost.** He said that I was ignorant, and did not understand the Scriptures. For how, he said, can you understand them when you do not know the original Greek? etc.

**Bun.** I said to him that if that was his opinion, then none could understand the Scriptures except those who had the original Greek, etc. And very few of the poorest sort would then be saved (this is harsh). Yet the Scripture says that *God hides these things from the wise and prudent* (that is, from the learned of the world), *and reveals them to babes and sucklings*.

**Fost.** He said there were none who heard me except a company of foolish people.

**Bun.** I told him that the wise as well as the foolish hear me; and again, those who were most commonly counted foolish by the world, are the wisest before God. Also, that God had rejected the wise, and mighty, and noble, and chosen the foolish, and the base, [1Cor 1.27].

**Fost.** He told me that I made people neglect their calling; and that God had commanded people to work six days, and serve Him on the seventh.

**Bun.** I told him that it was the duty of people, both rich and poor, to look out for their souls on those days, as well as for their bodies; and that God would have his people exhort one another *daily*, while it is called today, [Heb 3.13].

**Fost.** He said again that there were none but a company of poor, simple, ignorant people who came to hear me.

**Bun.** I told him that the foolish and the ignorant had the most need of teaching and information; and therefore it would be profitable for me to go on in that work.

**Fost.** Well, he said to conclude, but will you promise that you will not call the people together anymore? And then you may be released and go home.

**Bun.** I told him that I dared say no more than I had said, for I dared not cease that work which God had called me to.

So he withdrew from me, and then several of the justice's servants came to me, and told me that I stood too much on a subtlety. Their master, they said, was willing to let me go; and if I would only say that I would no longer call the people together, I might have my liberty, etc.

**Bun.** I told them there were more ways than one in which a man might be said to *call the people together*. For instance, if a man got up in the marketplace, and there read a book or the like, even if he does not say to the people, *Sirs, come here and hear*, yet if they come to him because he reads, then by his very reading, he may be said to *call them together*. This is because they would not have been there to hear, if he had not been there to read. And seeing this might be termed "calling the people together," I dared not say that I would not call them together; for then, by the same argument, my *preaching* might be said to call them together.

**Wing.** and **Fost.** Then the justice and Mr. Foster came to me again. We had a little more discourse about preaching; but because the method of it is out of my mind, I will bypass it. When they saw I was at a fixed point, and would not be moved or persuaded, Mr. Foster, the

man who at first expressed so much love to me, told the justice that he must then send me away to prison. He told him that he would also do well if he would present all those who were the cause of my coming among them to meetings. Thus we parted.

And truly, as I was going out the doors, it took great effort to forbear saying to them that I carried the peace of God along with me. But I held my peace, and blessed be the Lord, I went away to prison with God's comfort in my poor soul.

After I had lain in the jail five or six days, the brethren again sought means to get me out by bondsmen. For so read my *mittimus* — that I would lie there till I could find sureties. They went to a justice at Elstow, one Mr. Crumpton, to desire him to take bond for my appearing at the quarter sessions. At first he told them he would. But afterwards he demurred at the business, and desired first to see my *mittimus*, which read to this effect: That I went about to several conventicles in this county, to the great disparagement of the government of the church of England, etc. When he had seen it, he said that there might be something more against me than was expressed in my *mittimus*; and that he was but a young man. Therefore he dared not do it. My jailer told me this, and I was not at all daunted by it, but rather glad, and saw evidently that the Lord had heard me. For before I went down to the justice, I begged of God that if I might do more good by being at liberty than in prison, that I might then be set at liberty; but if not, His will be done. For I was not altogether without hopes that my imprisonment might be an awakening to the saints in the country. Therefore I could not really tell which to choose. Only, I committed the thing to God in that manner. And truly, at my return I met my God sweetly in the prison again, comforting me and satisfying me that it was His will and mind that I should be there.

When I came back again to prison, as I was musing at the slender answer of the justice, this word dropped in upon my heart with some life: *For He knew that for envy they had delivered Him*, [Mat 27.18].

Thus I have declared, in short, the manner and occasion of my being in prison, where I lay awaiting the good will of God, to do with me as He pleases — knowing that not one hair of my head can fall to the ground without the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Let the rage and malice of men be ever so great, they can do no more, nor go any further, than God permits them. But when they have done their worst, *We know all things shall work together for good to those who love God*, [Rom 8.28].

Farewell.

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### **Here is the Sum of my Examination before the Justices**

Justices KEELIN, CHESTER, BLUNDALE, BEECHER, SNAGG, etc.

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AFTER I had lain in prison for over seven weeks, the quarter-sessions were to be kept in the county of Bedford. I was to be brought there. And when my jailer had set me before those justices, there was a bill of indictment preferred against me. The extent of it was as follows:

That John Bunyan, of the town of Bedford, labourer, being a person of such and such conditions, he has since such a time, devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear Divine service, and is a common upholder of several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the great disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our sovereign lord the King, etc.

**Clerk.** When this was read, the clerk of the sessions said to me, What do you say to this?

**Bun.** I said, that as to the first part of it, I was a common frequenter of the Church of God. And was also, by grace, a member with the people over whom Christ is the Head.

**Keel.** But, says Justice Keelin, who was the judge in that court? Do you come to church — you know what I mean — to the *parish* church, to hear Divine service?

**Bun.** I answered, No, I do not.

**Keel.** He asked me, Why?

**Bun.** I said, Because I did not find it commanded in the Word of God.

**Keel.** He said, We were commanded to pray.

**Bun.** I said, But not by the Common Prayer-Book.

**Keel.** He said, How then?

**Bun.** I said, With the Spirit. As the apostle says, *I will pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding*, 1Cor 14.15.

**Keel.** He said, We might pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding, and with the Common Prayer-Book also.

**Bun.** I said that the prayers in the Common Prayer-Book were made by other men, and not by the motions of the Holy Ghost within our hearts. The apostle says he will pray with the Spirit and with the understanding — not with the Spirit and the Common Prayer-Book.

**Another Justice.** What do you count as prayer? Do you think it is to say a few words over, before, or among a people?

**Bun.** I said, No, not so. For men might have many elegant or excellent words, and yet not pray at all. But when a man prays, through a sense of those things which he wants — which sense is begotten by the Spirit — he pours out his heart before God through Christ, even if his words are not so many and so excellent as others are.

**Justices.** They said, That is true.

**Bun.** I said, This might be done without the Common Prayer-Book.

**Another.** One of them said (I think it was Justice Blundale, or Justice Snagg), How would we know that you do not write out your prayers first, and then read them afterwards to the people? This he spoke in a laughing way.

**Bun.** I said, it is not our habit to take a pen and paper, write a few words on it, and then go and read it over to a company of people.

**Him.** But how would we know it, he said?

**Bun.** Sir, it is not our custom, I said.

**Keel.** But, said Justice Keelin, It is lawful to use the Common Prayer and similar forms, for Christ taught his disciples to pray, just as John also taught his disciples. And furthermore, he said, cannot one man teach another to pray? Faith comes by hearing; and one man may convince another of sin. And therefore, prayers made by men, and read over, are good to teach and help men to pray.

While he was speaking these words, God brought that word into my mind, in the eighth of the Romans, at the 26th verse. I say, God brought it, for I did not think on it before. But as he was speaking, it came so fresh into my mind, and it was set so evidently before me, as if the scripture had said, *Take me, take me*. So when he was done speaking,

**Bun.** I said, Sir, the scripture says that *it is the Spirit that helps our infirmities. For we do not know what we should pray for as we should, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered*, [Rom 8.26]. Notice, I said, it does not say the Common Prayer-Book teaches us how to pray, but the Spirit. And it is the Spirit that helps our infirmities, says the apostle. He does not say it is the Common Prayer-Book.

And as to the Lord's prayer, although it be an easy thing to say, *Our Father*, etc., with the mouth, yet very few can, in the Spirit, say the two first words in that prayer — that is, who can call God their Father, knowing what it means to be born again, having experienced that they are begotten of the Spirit of God. If they do not, it all is but babbling, etc.

**Keel.** Justice Keelin said that this was a truth.

**Bun.** And I say further, as to your saying that one man may convince another of sin, and that faith comes by hearing, and that one man may tell another how he should pray, etc., I say that men may tell each other of their sins, but it is the Spirit that must convince them.

And though it is said that *faith comes by hearing*, yet it is the Spirit that works faith in the heart through hearing, or else they are not profited by hearing, Heb 4.12.

And that although one man may tell another how he should pray, yet, as I said before, he cannot pray, nor make his condition known to God, except with the Spirit's help. It is not the Common Prayer-Book that can do this. It is the Spirit that shows us our sins, and the Spirit that shows us a Saviour, Joh 16.13-14, and the Spirit that stirs up in our heart's desire to come to God for those things we stand in need of, even sighing out our souls to Him for them, with *groans which cannot be uttered* — with other words to the same purpose.

At this they were set.

**Keel.** But says Justice Keelin, What do you have against the Common Prayer-Book?

**Bun.** I said, Sir, if you will hear me, I will lay down my reasons against it.

**Keel.** He said I might have liberty; but first, he said, let me give you one caution. Take heed of speaking irreverently of the Common Prayer-Book; for if you do so, you will bring great damage upon yourself.

**Bun.** So I proceeded, and said, My first reason was because it was not commanded in the Word of God, and therefore I could not use it.

**Another.** One of them said, Where do you find it commanded in the Scripture, that you should go to Elstow, or Bedford, and yet it is lawful to go to either of them, is it not?

**Bun.** I said, To go to Elstow, or Bedford was a civil thing, and not material, even though not commanded. And yet God's Word allowed me to go about my calling. And therefore if it lay there, then to go there, etc. But to pray, was a great part of the Divine worship of God, and therefore it ought to be done according to the rule of God's Word.

**Another.** One of them said, He will do harm; let him speak no further.

**Keel.** Justice Keelin said, No, no, never fear him. We are better established than he is. He can do no harm. We know the Common Prayer-Book has existed ever since the apostles' time, and it is lawful for it to be used in the church.

**Bun.** I said, Show me the place in the epistles where the Common Prayer-Book is written, or one text of Scripture that commands me to read it, and I will use it. Notwithstanding, I said, those who have a mind to use it, have their liberty. That is, I would not keep them from it. But for our parts, we can pray to God without it. Blessed be his name!

**Another.** With that, one of them said, Who is your God? Beelzebub? Moreover, they often said that I was possessed with the spirit of delusion, and of the devil. All of these statements I ignored; the Lord forgive them! And further, I said, Blessed be the Lord for it. We are encouraged to meet together, and to pray, and to exhort one another; for we have had the comfortable presence of God among us. Forever blessed be his holy name!

**Keel.** Justice Keelin called this *peddler's French*, saying, that I must cease my canting.<sup>39</sup> The Lord open his eyes!

**Bun.** I said that we ought to exhort one another daily, while it is called today, etc.

**Keel.** Justice Keelin said that I should not preach; and asked me where I got my authority? with other similar words.

**Bun.** I said that I would prove that it was lawful for me, such as I am, to preach the Word of God.

**Keel.** He said to me, By what Scripture?

**Bun.** I said, By that in the first epistle of Peter, chapter 4.10-11, and Acts 18.24-28, with other Scriptures which he would not suffer me to mention. But, he said, hold on; not so many. Which is the first?

**Bun.** I said this: *As every man has received the gift, even so let him minister the same to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God, etc.*

**Keel.** He said, Let me open that Scripture a little for you. As every man has received the gift; that is, he said, as every one has received a *trade*, so let him follow it. If any man has received a gift of tinkering, as you have, let him follow his tinkering. And so other men their trades. And the divine, *his calling*, etc.

**Bun.** No, sir, I said, but it is most clear that the apostle speaks here of preaching the Word. If you just compare both the verses together, the next verse explains what this gift is, saying, *if any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*. So it is plain, that the Holy Ghost does not so much exhort us to civil callings in this place, as to the exercising those gifts we have received from God. I would have gone on, but he would not give me leave.

**Keel.** He said, We might do it in our families, but not otherwise.

**Bun.** I said, If it was lawful to do good to some, it was lawful to do good to more. If it was a good duty to exhort our families, it was good to exhort others. But if they held it is a sin to meet together to seek the face of God, and to exhort one another to follow Christ, then I must sin; for so we must do.

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<sup>39</sup> *Peddler's French, or canting*: an insult alluding to the secretive slang used by thieves, beggars, and hustlers of the time. Such phrases, the judge implies, are affectedly pious, like an incantation. – WHG



**Keel.** He said he was not so well versed in Scripture as to dispute — or words to that effect. And he said, moreover, that they could not wait upon me any longer; but said to me, Then you confess the indictment, do you not?

Now, and not until now, I saw that I was indicted.

**Bun.** I said, This I confess — that we have had many meetings together, both to pray to God, and to exhort one another, and that we had the sweet comforting presence of the Lord among us for our encouragement, blessed be His name therefore. I confessed myself guilty in no other way.

**Keel.** Then, he said, hear your judgment. You must be taken back to prison, and there lie for three months following. And at three months' end, if you do not submit to go to church to hear Divine service, and leave your preaching, then you must be banished from the realm. And if after such a day as shall be appointed to you to be gone, you are found in this realm, etc., or are found to come back again without special licence from the king, etc., you must stretch by the neck for it, I tell you plainly. And so he bid my jailer take me away.

**Bun.** I told him, as to this matter, I was at an impasse with him. For if I were out of prison today, I would preach the Gospel again tomorrow, by the help of God.

**Another.** To which one of them gave some answer, but my jailer pulling me away to be gone, I could not tell what he said.

Thus I departed from them; and I can truly say, I bless the Lord Jesus Christ for it; that my heart was sweetly refreshed in the time of my examination, and also afterwards at my returning to the prison. So that, I found Christ's words more than bare trifles where He says, *I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist*, Luk 21.15. And that no man can take His peace from us.

Thus I have given you the substance of my examination. The Lord make this profitable to all who read or hear it.

Farewell.

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### **The Substance of some Discourse between the Clerk of the Peace and myself**

when he came to admonish me according to the tenor of that Law by which I was in prison.

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I had lain in prison another twelve weeks, not knowing what they now intended to do with me. On the third of April 1661, Mr. Cobb comes to me (as he told me), being sent by the justices to admonish me; and to demand my submission to the church of England, etc. The extent of our discourse was as follows.

**Cobb.** When he had come into the house, he sent for me out of my chamber. When I had come to him, he said, Neighbour Bunyan, how do you do?

**Bun.** I thank you, Sir, I said, very well, blessed be the Lord.

**Cobb.** He says, I come to tell you it is desired that you would submit yourself to the laws of the land, or else at the next sessions, it will go worse with you — even to be sent away out of the nation, or else worse than that.

**Bun.** I said that I desired to humble myself in the world, both as becomes a man and a Christian.

**Cobb.** But, he says, you must submit to the laws of the land, and cease those meetings you usually had, for the statute-law is directly against it. And I have been sent to you by the justices to tell you that they intend to prosecute the law against you if you do not submit.

**Bun.** I said, Sir, I conceive that the law by which I am in prison at this time, does not reach or condemn either me or the meetings which I frequent. That law was made against those who designed to do evil in their meetings, making the exercise of religion their pretence to cover their wickedness. It does not forbid the private meetings of those who plainly and simply make it their only end to worship the Lord, and to exhort one another to edification. My end in meeting with others is simply to do as much good as I can, by exhortation and counsel, according to that small measure of light which God has given me, and not to disturb the peace of the nation.

**Cobb.** Everyone will say the same, he said. You see in the recent insurrection at London,<sup>40</sup> under what glorious pretences they went. And yet, indeed, they intended no less than the ruin of the kingdom and commonwealth.

**Bun.** That practice of theirs, I abhor, I said. Yet it does not follow that because *they* did so, therefore all others will do so. I look upon it as my duty to behave myself under the King's government, both as becomes a man and a Christian, and if an occasion were offered me, I would willingly manifest my loyalty to my Prince, both by word and deed.

**Cobb.** Well, he said, I do not profess myself to be a man who can dispute, but I say this: truly, neighbour Bunyan, I would have you consider this matter seriously, and submit yourself. You may have your liberty to exhort your neighbour in private discourse, so long as you do not call together an assembly of people. And truly, you may do much good to the church of Christ if you would go this way. And you may do this, and the law will not abridge you in it. It is your *private* meetings that the law is against.

**Bun.** Sir, I said, if I may do good to *one* by my discourse, then why may I not do good to *two*? And if to two, why not to *four*, and so to eight? etc.

**Cobb.** Yes, he says, and to a hundred, I warrant you.

**Bun.** Yes, Sir, I said, I think I should not be forbidden to do as much good as I can.

**Cobb.** But, he says, you may only be pretending to do good, and instead, notwithstanding, do harm by seducing the people. You are therefore denied meeting with so many together, lest you do harm.

**Bun.** And yet, I said, you say the law tolerates me to discourse with my neighbour. Surely there is no law that tolerates me seducing any one person. Therefore, if I may discourse with *one* by the law, then surely it is to do him good; and if by discoursing I may do good to one, then surely, by the same law, I may do good to many.

**Cobb.** The law, he says, expressly forbids your private meetings. Therefore they are not to be tolerated.

**Bun.** I told him that I would not entertain so much uncharitableness of that Parliament in the 35th of Elizabeth, or of the Queen herself, as to think that by this law, they intended the oppressing of any of God's ordinances, or the interrupting of anyone in the way of God. But

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<sup>40</sup> Cobb refers to the insurrection led by Thomas Venner and his Fifth Monarchists on January 6, 1661. – WHG

men may, in twisting it, turn it against the way of God. But take the law in itself, and it only fights against those who drive at mischief in their hearts and in their meeting, making religion only their cloak, colour, or pretence. For so are the words of the statute: *If any meetings under colour or pretence of religion*, etc.

**Cobb.** Very good. Therefore the king, seeing that pretences are usually in and among people so as to make religion their pretence only, he therefore, and the law before him, forbids such *private* meetings, and tolerates only *public* meetings. You may meet in public.

**Bun.** Sir, I said, let me answer you in a similitude. Set the case that at the corner of some wood, thieves usually came out to do mischief. Must a law therefore be made, that everyone who comes out there should be killed? May not true men come out from there, as well as thieves? So it is in this case. I think there may be many who design the destruction of the commonwealth. But it does not follow that all private meetings are therefore unlawful. Those who transgress, let them be punished. And if at any time I should do any act in my conduct that does not become a man and a Christian, let me bear the punishment.

As for your saying that I may meet in public, if I may be allowed, I would gladly do it. Let me have but enough meetings in public, and I would care less to have them in private. I do not meet in private because I am afraid to have meetings in public. I bless the Lord that my heart is at that point, that if any man can lay anything to my charge, either in doctrine or in practice, in this particular — that it can be proved to be *error* or *heresy* — I am willing to disown it, even in the very marketplace. But if it is *truth*, then I will stand to it to the last drop of my blood. And Sir, I said, you ought to commend me for so doing. To err, and to be a heretic, are two different things. I am no heretic, because I will not stubbornly defend any one thing that is contrary to the Word. Prove anything which I hold, to be an error, and I will recant it.

**Cobb.** But good man Bunyan, he said, I think you do not need to stand so strictly on this one thing, which is to have meetings of such public assemblies. Can you not submit and, notwithstanding, do as much good as you can in a neighbourly way, *without* having such meetings?

**Bun.** Truly Sir, I said, I do not desire to commend myself, but to think humbly of myself. Yet when I most despise myself, taking notice of that small measure of light which God has given me, the people of the Lord — by their own statements — are also edified by it. Besides, when I see that the Lord, through grace, has in some measure blessed my labour, I dare not keep from exercising that gift which God has given me for the good of the people. And I said further that I would willingly speak in public if I might.

**Cobb.** He said that I might come to the public assemblies and *hear*. What if you do not preach? You may hear. Do not think you are so well enlightened, and have received a gift so far above others, that you may not hear other men preach (or to that effect).

**Bun.** I told him I was as willing to be taught as to give instruction, and I saw it as my duty to do both. For, I said, a man who is a teacher, may himself learn from another who teaches. As the apostle says, *We may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn*, 1Cor 14.31. That is, every man who has received a gift from God may dispense it so that others may be comforted. And when he is done, he may hear and learn and be comforted himself by others.

**Cobb.** But, he said, what if you should forbear awhile, and sit still, till you see further how things will go?

**Bun.** Sir, I said, Wycliffe says that whoever leaves off preaching and hearing the Word of God for fear of excommunication by men, is already excommunicated of God, and in the day of judgment shall be counted a traitor to Christ.<sup>41</sup>

**Cobb.** Yes, he says, those who do not hear shall be so counted indeed. Do you, therefore, hear?

**Bun.** But Sir, I said, he says, *he that leaves off either preaching or hearing*, etc. That is, if he has received a gift for edification, then it is his sin if he does not lay it out by way of exhortation and counsel, according to the proportion of his gift — as well as to spend his time altogether in hearing others preach.

**Cobb.** But, he said, how shall we know that you have received a gift?

**Bun.** I said, Let any man hear, and search, and prove the doctrine by the Bible.

**Cobb.** But will you be willing, he said, to have two indifferent persons determine the case, and will you stand by their judgment?

**Bun.** I said, Are they infallible?

**Cobb.** He said, No.

**Bun.** Then, I said, it is possible that my judgment may be as good as theirs. Yet I will bypass either, and be judged by the Scriptures in this matter. I am sure *that* is infallible, and cannot err.

**Cobb.** But, he said, who will be judge between you, for you take the Scriptures one way, and they another?

**Bun.** I said the Scripture should, and that is by comparing one Scripture with another. For that will open itself, if it is rightly compared. For instance, if under the different apprehensions of the word *Mediator*, you would know the truth of it, the Scriptures open it and tell us that the one who is a mediator must take up the business between two, and *a mediator is not a mediator of one—but God is one*, Gal 3.20. And, *there is one Mediator between God and men, even the man Christ Jesus*, 1Tim 2.5. So likewise, the Scripture calls Christ a complete, or perfect, or able High Priest. That is opened in his being called man, and also God. His blood is also revealed to be efficacious by these same things. So the Scripture, as touching the matter of meeting together, etc., likewise sufficiently opens itself and reveals its meaning.

**Cobb.** But are you willing, he said, to stand to the judgment of the *church*?

**Bun.** Yes Sir, I said, to the approval of the church of God. But the church's judgment is best expressed in Scripture. We had much other discussion which I cannot well remember, about the laws of the nation, and submission to governments. To this I told him that I looked upon myself as bound in conscience to walk according to all righteous laws, and that is whether there was a king or not. And if I did anything that was contrary, I held it to be my duty to bear patiently the penalty of the law that was provided against such offenders — with many more words to the same effect. And moreover, I said that to cut off all occasions of suspicion from anyone, touching the harmlessness of my doctrine in private, I would willingly take the pains to give anyone the notes of all my sermons. For I sincerely desire to live quietly in my country, and to submit to the present authority.

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<sup>41</sup> Bunyan here refers to a translation of Wycliffe's doctrine in John Foxe's *Martyrology*, a favourite book of his.

**Cobb.** Well, neighbour Bunyan, he said, indeed I would only wish you to seriously consider these things, between this and the quarter-sessions, and to submit yourself. You may do much good if you still continue in the land. But alas, what benefit will it be to your friends, or what good can you do them, if you should be sent away beyond the seas into Spain, or Constantinople, or some other remote part of the world? Pray, be ruled.

**Jailer.** Indeed, Sir, I hope he *will* be ruled.

**Bun.** I desire, I said, in all honesty to behave myself in the nation, while I am in it. And if I must be so dealt with as you say, then I hope God will help me to bear what they will lay upon me. I know of no evil that I have done in this matter, to be so used. I speak as in the presence of God.

**Cobb.** You know, he says, that the Scripture says the powers that be are ordained by God.

**Bun.** I said, Yes, and that I was to submit to the King as supreme, and also to the governors, as to those who are sent by Him.

**Cobb.** Well then, he said, the King then commands you, that you should not have any private meetings; because it is against his law, and he is ordained by God. Therefore you should not have any.

**Bun.** I told him that Paul accepted that the powers in his day were of God. And yet he was often in prison under them for all that. And also, even though Jesus Christ told Pilate that He had no power against him, except of God, yet He died under the same Pilate. Yet, I said, I hope you will not say that either Paul or Christ were those who denied magistracy, and so sinned against God in slighting the ordinance.

Sir, I said, the law has provided two ways of obeying: the one is to do what I, in my conscience, believe I am bound to do actively. And where I cannot obey actively, I am willing to lie down, and to suffer what they will do to me.

At this he sat still, and said no more. When he was done, I thanked him for his civil and meek discoursing with me; and so we parted.

O! that we might meet in heaven!

Farewell. J. B.

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### A Discourse between my Wife and the Judges

Here follows a discourse between my Wife and the Judges, with others, touching my deliverance at the Assizes.<sup>42</sup> I took the following from her own mouth.

AFTER I had received this sentence of banishing, or hanging, from them, and after the former admonition touching the determination of the justices if I did not recant — just when the time drew near in which I might have abjured or done worse (as Mr. Cobb told me), came the time in which the King was to be crowned.<sup>43</sup> Now, at the coronation of kings, there is usually a release of diverse prisoners, by virtue of his coronation. I might also have had my share in this privilege, except that they took me for a convicted person. Therefore, unless I sued out a *pardon*, as they called it, I could have no benefit thereby. Yet notwithstanding,

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<sup>42</sup> Assizes: the county courts of England at the time. — WHG

<sup>43</sup> April 23, 1661. Charles II.

the coronation proclamation gave liberty from the day the King was crowned to that day twelve months later, to sue them out. Therefore, though they would not let me out of prison, as they had let out thousands, yet they could not meddle with me touching the execution of their sentence, because of the liberty offered for the suing out of pardons. Thereupon I continued in prison till the next assizes, which are called *Midsummer assizes*, which were then being held in August 1661.

Now, at that assizes, because I would not leave unattempted any possible means that might be lawful, I presented by my wife a petition to the judges three times, that I might be heard, and that they would impartially take my case into consideration.

The first time my wife went, she presented it to Judge Hale, who very mildly received it from her hand, telling her that he would do her and me the best good he could. But he feared, he said, he could do none. The next day, again, lest through the multitude of business, they might forget me, we threw another petition into the coach to Judge Twisdon. When he had seen it, he snapped her up and angrily told her that I was a convicted person, and could not be released unless I would promise to preach no more, etc.

Well, after this, she presented yet another to judge Hale as he sat on the bench. It seemed he was willing to give her audience. Only, Justice Chester being present, he stepped up and said that I was convicted in the court, and that I was a hot-spirited fellow (or words to that effect). At this he waived it, and did not meddle with it. Yet my wife, being encouraged by the high-sheriff, ventured once more into their presence — as the poor widow did before the unjust judge, in Luke 18 — to test what she could do with them for my liberty, before they went out of town. The place where she went to them was the Swan-chamber, where the two judges, and many justices and gentry of the country, were in company together. Coming into the chamber with abashed face and a trembling heart, she began her errand to them in this manner:—

**Woman.** My lord (directing herself to judge Hale), I make bold to come once again to your Lordship, to know what may be done with my husband.

**Judge Hale.** To whom he said, Woman, I told you before I could do you no good; because they have taken what your husband spoke at the sessions for a conviction; and unless there is something done to undo that, I can do you no good.

**Wom.** My lord, she said, he is kept unlawfully in prison. They clapped him up before there was any proclamation against the meetings; the indictment also is false. Besides, they never asked him whether he was guilty or not; nor did he confess the indictment.

**One of the Justices.** Then one of the justices who stood nearby, whom she did not know, said, My Lord, he was lawfully convicted.

**Wom.** It is *false*, she said. For when they said to him, Do you confess the indictment? he said only this, that he had been at several meetings, where there was both preaching the Word and prayer, and that they had God's presence among them.

**Judge Twisdon.** At this Judge Twisdon answered very angrily, saying, What, do you think we can do whatever we wish? Your husband is a breaker of the peace, and is convicted by the law, etc. Upon which Judge Hale called for the Statute Book.

**Wom.** But, she said, my lord, he was *not* lawfully convicted.

**Chester.** Then Justice Chester said, My lord, he was lawfully convicted.

**Wom.** It is *false*, she said. It was but a word of discourse that they took for a conviction, as you heard before.

**Chest.** But it is recorded, woman; it is *recorded*, said Justice Chester — as if it must of necessity be true, because it was recorded. With these words he often endeavoured to stop her mouth, having no other argument to convince her; but *it is recorded, it is recorded*.

**Wom.** My Lord, she said, I was at London a while ago, to see if I could get my husband's liberty. And there I spoke with my lord Barkwood, one of the House of Lords, to whom I delivered a petition. He took it from me and presented it to some of the rest of the House of Lords, for my husband's release. When they had seen it, they said that they could not release him, but had committed his release to the judges at the next assizes. He told me this; and now I have come to you to see if anything may be done in this business, and you give neither release nor relief. To which they gave her no answer, but made as if they did not hear her.

**Chest.** Only Justice Chester was often up with this — *He is convicted, and it is recorded*.

**Wom.** If it is, it is *false*, she said.

**Chest.** My lord, said Justice Chester, he is a pestilent fellow. There is not another such fellow in the country.

**Twis.** What, will your husband leave preaching? If he will do so, then send for him.

**Wom.** My lord, she said, he dares not leave preaching as long as he can speak.

**Twis.** See here, *what*, should we talk anymore about such a fellow? Must he do what he wishes? He is a breaker of the peace.

**Wom.** She told him again that he desired to live peaceably, and to follow his calling, so that his family might be maintained. And moreover, she said, My Lord, I have four small children who cannot help themselves, one of whom is blind. And we have nothing to live on but the charity of good people.

**Hale.** You have four children? said Judge Hale. You are but a young woman to have four children.

**Wom.** My lord, she said, I am but a mother-in-law to them, not yet having been married to him two full years. Indeed, I was with child when my husband was first apprehended; but being young, and unaccustomed to such things, she said, being dismayed at the news, I fell into labour, and so I continued for eight days, and then was delivered. But my child died.

**Hale.** At which, looking very soberly on the matter, he said, *Alas, poor woman!*

**Twis.** But Judge Twisdon told her that she made poverty her cloak. And he said, moreover, that he understood I was maintained better by running up and down preaching, than by following my calling.

**Hale.** What is his calling? asked Judge Hale.

**Answer.** Then some of the company who stood nearby, said, A tinker, my lord.

**Wom.** Yes, she said; and because he is a tinker, and a poor man, he is therefore despised, and cannot have justice.

**Hale.** Then Judge Hale answered very mildly, saying, I tell you, woman, seeing it is so, that they have taken what your husband said for a conviction, you must either apply yourself to the King, or sue out his pardon, or get a writ of error.

**Chest.** But when Justice Chester heard him give her this counsel; and especially (as she supposed) because he spoke of a writ of error, he chafed, and seemed to be very much offended; saying, My lord, he will preach and do what he wishes.

**Wom.** He preaches nothing but the Word of God, she said.

**Twis.** He preaches the Word of God! said Twisdon. And with that, she thought he would have struck her. He runs up and down, and does harm!

**Wom.** No, my lord, she said, it is not so. God has owned him, and done much good by him.

**Twis.** God! he said. His doctrine is the doctrine of the devil.

**Wom.** My lord, she said, when the righteous Judge shall appear, it will be known that his doctrine is not the doctrine of the devil.

**Twis.** My lord, he said to Judge Hale, do not mind her, but send her away.

**Hale.** Then Judge Hale said, I am sorry, woman, that I can do you no good. You must do one of those three things I said before — namely, either apply yourself to the King, or sue out his pardon, or get a writ of error. But a writ of error will be cheapest.

At which Chester again seemed to be in a chafe, and took off his hat, and as she thought, scratched his head for anger.

**Wom.** But when I saw, she said, that there was no prevailing to have my husband sent for, even though I often desired that they would send for him so that he might speak for himself — telling them that he could give them better satisfaction than I could in what they demanded of him, with several other things which now I forget — I remember only this: that even though I was somewhat timid at my first entrance into the chamber, yet before I went out, I could not help but break forth into tears. This was not so much because they were so hard-hearted against me and my husband, but to think what a sad account such poor creatures will have to give at the coming of the Lord, when they will answer there for all things, whatever they have done in the body, whether it is good, or whether it is bad.

So, when I departed from them, the book of statutes was brought. But what they said about it, I know nothing at all, nor did I hear any more from them.

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### **Some Carriages of the Adversaries of God's Truth with me**

at the next Assizes, which was on the 19th of January 1662.

I will bypass what happened between these two assizes, how I had some liberty granted to me by my jailer, more than at first, and how I followed my usual course of preaching, taking all occasions that were put into my hand to visit the people of God — exhorting them to be steadfast in the faith of Jesus Christ, and to take heed that they did not touch the Common Prayer, etc., but to mind the Word of God, which gives direction to Christians in every point, being *able to make the man of God perfect in all things through faith in Jesus Christ, and to thoroughly furnish him for all good works*, 2Tim 3.17.

I will also bypass how, having somewhat more liberty I say, I went to see the Christians at London. My enemies, hearing of this, were so angry that they almost threw my jailer out of his position, threatening to indict him, and to do what they could against him. They also charged me, that I went there to plot and raise division, and make an insurrection, which



God knows was a slander. Whereupon my liberty was more restricted than it was before, so that now I must not even look out the door.

Well, when the next sessions came, which was about the 10th of November 1661, I expected to have been very roundly dealt with. But they passed me by, and would not call me. So that I rested till the assizes, which was held the following 19th of January 1662. And when they came, because I had a desire to come before the judge, I desired my jailer to put my name into the calendar among the felons, and made friends of the judge and high-sheriff, who promised that I would be called. So I thought what I had done might have been effectual to obtain my desire. But it was all in vain; for when the assizes came, even though my name was in the calendar, and also both the judge and sheriff had promised that I would appear before them, yet the justices and clerk of the peace worked it out, so that notwithstanding, I was deferred, and was not allowed to appear.

Although, I say, I do not know of all their carriages towards me, yet this I know, that the clerk of the peace (Mr. Cobb) revealed himself to be one of my greatest opposers. For first he came to my jailer and told him that I must not go down before the judge; and therefore I must not be put into the calendar. My jailer said to him that my name was already in. He bid him pull it out again. My jailer told him that he could not, for he had given the judge a calendar with my name in it, and also given the sheriff another. Mr. Cobb was very much displeased at this, and desired to see the calendar that was still in my jailer's hand. When he had given it to him, he looked at it, and said it was a false calendar. He also took the calendar and blotted out my accusation, as my jailer had written it. I cannot tell what the accusation was, because it was so blotted out. And he himself put in words to this effect — that John Bunyan was committed to prison, being lawfully convicted for holding unlawful meetings and conventicles, etc.

Yet for all this, and fearing that what he had done would not do unless he added to it, it, he first ran to the clerk of the assizes, then to the justices, and afterwards — because he would not leave any means unattempted to hinder me — he came back to my jailer and told him that if I went down before the judge, and I was released, he would make him pay my fees, which he said was due him. And further, he told him that he would complain about him at the next quarter-sessions for making false calendars, even though my jailer himself, as I afterwards learned, had entered my accusation worse by far than it was in itself. And thus I was also hindered and prevented at that time from appearing before the judge, and left in prison.

Farewell.

**JOHN BUNYAN.**

## George Offor's Note on the Conventicle Act of 1593

The statute under which Bunyan suffered is the 35th Eliz.,<sup>44</sup> cap. 1, re-enacted with all its rigour in the 16th Charles II., cap. 4, 1662:

‘That if any person, above sixteen years of age, shall forbear coming to church for one month, or persuade any other person to abstain from hearing Divine service, or receiving the communion according to law, or come to any unlawful assembly, conventicle, or meeting—every such person shall be imprisoned, without bail, until he conform, and do in some church make this open submission following:—

I do humbly confess and acknowledge that I have grievously offended God in contemning his majesty's godly and lawful government and authority, by absenting myself from church, and from hearing Divine service, contrary to the godly laws and statutes of this realm. And in using and frequenting disordered and unlawful conventicles and assemblies, under pretence and colour of exercise of religion ; and I am heartily sorry for the same. And I do promise and protest, that from henceforth I will, from time to time, obey and perform his Majesty's laws and statutes, in repairing to the church and Divine services, and do my uttermost endeavour to maintain and defend the same.

And for the third offence he shall be sent to the jail or house of correction, there to remain until the next sessions or assizes, and then to be indicted; and being thereupon found guilty, the court shall enter judgment of transportation against such offenders, to some of the foreign plantations (Virginia and New England only excepted), there to remain seven years; and warrants shall issue to sequester the profits of their lands, and to distrain and sell their goods to defray the charges of their transportation; and for want of such charges being paid, the sheriff may contract with. any master of a ship, or merchant, to transport them; and then such prisoner shall be a servant to the transporter or his assigns; that is, whoever he will sell him or her to, for five years. And if any under such judgment of transportation shall escape, or being transported, return into any part of England, shall SUFFER DEATH as felons, without benefit of clergy.’

Notwithstanding this edict, mark well his words on the next leaf,

‘Exhorting the people of God to take heed, and touch not the Common Prayer.’

Englishmen, blush! This is *now* the law of the land we live in (1853). Roman Catholics alone are legally exempted from its cruel operations, by an Act passed in 1844. The overruling hand of God alone saved the pious and holy Bunyan from having been legally murdered.

The third section of 16th Charles II., cap. 4, also enacts,

‘That any person above sixteen years old, present at any meeting under pretence of exercise of religion, in a manner other than is allowed by the liturgy or practice of the Church of England, where there shall be present five persons or more above those of the household, upon proof thereof made, either by confession of the party, or oath of witness, or notorious evidence of the fact; the offence shall be recorded under the hands of two justices, or the chief magistrate of the place, which shall be a perfect conviction.

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<sup>44</sup> That is, the 35<sup>th</sup> law enacted under Elizabeth's reign. – WHG

## A CONTINUATION OF MR. BUNYAN'S LIFE

*Beginning where he left off, and concluding with the Time and Manner of his Death and Burial, together with his true Character, etc.*

READER, the painful and industrious author of this book has already given you a faithful and very moving relation of the beginning and middle of the days of his pilgrimage on earth. But there still remains something worthy of notice and regard, which occurred in the last scene of his life, and which he has not left behind him in writing — for lack of time or for fear that some over-censorious people might impute it to him as an earnest coveting of praise from men. Therefore, as a true friend, and long acquaintance of Mr. Bunyan's, so that his good end may be known, as well as his evil beginning, I have taken it upon myself, from my knowledge and the best accounts given by other friends of his, to attach this to the thread that was too soon broken off, and so lengthen it out to his entering upon eternity.

He has told you at large of his birth and education; the evil habits and corruptions of his youth; the temptations he so frequently struggled and conflicted with; the mercies, comforts, and deliverances he found; how he came to take upon himself the preaching of the Gospel; the slanders, reproaches, and imprisonments that attended him; and the progress he notwithstanding made, by the assistance of God's grace, no doubt to the saving of many souls. Therefore take these things as he himself has methodically laid them down in the words of verity. And so I pass on to what remains.

He was freed from his upward of twelve years' imprisonment for nonconformity, in which he had time to furnish the world with assorted good books, etc., By his patience, he moved Dr. Barlow, then Bishop of Lincoln, and other church-men, to pity his hard and unreasonable sufferings, so far as to stand very much as his friends in procuring his liberty — or he would perhaps have died there by the noxiousness and ill usage of the place. Now being at liberty again, I say, and having shaken off his bodily fetters through mercy — for those upon his soul were previously broken by the abounding grace that filled his heart — he went to visit those who had been a comfort to him in his tribulation. He did this with a Christian-like acknowledgment of their kindness and enlargement of charity. He gave encouragement by his example. If it happened to be their hard lot to fall into affliction or trouble, then to suffer patiently for the sake of a good conscience, and for the love of God in Jesus Christ towards their souls. And by many cordial persuasions, he supported some whose spirits began to sink low through the fear of danger that threatened their worldly concerns. So that, the people found a wonderful consolation in his discourse and admonitions.

As often as opportunity would allow, he gathered them together in convenient places, even though the law was then in force against meetings. And he fed them with the sincere milk of the Word, that they might thereby grow in grace. To those who were anywhere taken and imprisoned on these accounts, he made it another part of his business to extend his charity, and gather relief for those who were in want.

He took great care to visit the sick, and strengthen them against the suggestions of the tempter, which are very prevalent at such times. So that they had cause to bless God forever, who had put it into his heart at such a time to rescue them from the power of the roaring lion who sought to devour them. Nor did he spare any pains or labour in travel, even to remote counties where he knew or imagined any people might stand in need of his assistance. This was so often that some, by these visitations that he made — which was two or three every year — gave him the epithet of "Bishop Bunyan," though in a jeering manner

no doubt; while others envied him for so earnestly labouring in Christ's vineyard. Yet the seed of the Word that all this while he sowed in the hearts of his congregation, watered with the grace of God, brought forth in abundance, in bringing in disciples to the church of Christ.

Another part of his time is spent in reconciling differences, by which he hindered many mischiefs, and saved some families from ruin. In such fallings-out, he was uneasy till he found a means to work a reconciliation and become a peace-maker, on whom a blessing is promised in holy writ. And indeed, in doing this good office he may be said to have summed up his days, it being the last undertaking of his life, as will appear at the close of this paper.

When in the recent reign, liberty of conscience was unexpectedly given and indulged to dissenters of all persuasions, Bunyan's piercing wit penetrated the veil. He found that it was not for the dissenters' sakes that they were so suddenly freed from the hard prosecutions that had long lain heavy upon them, and in a way, set on an equal footing with the Church of England — which the papists were undermining, and about to subvert. He foresaw all the advantages that might have redounded to the dissenters, would have been no more than what Polyphemus, the monstrous giant of Sicily, would have allowed Ulysses — namely, that the giant would eat his men first, and do Ulysses the favour of being eaten last. Mr. Bunyan, following the examples of others, laid hold of this liberty as an acceptable thing in itself — knowing God is the only Lord of conscience, and that it is good at all times to do according to the dictates of a good conscience, and that preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel is beautiful in the preacher. Yet in all this he moved with caution and a holy fear, earnestly praying for averting the impending judgments which he saw, like a black tempest, hanging over our heads for our sins, and ready to break in upon us; and that the Ninevites' remedy was now highly necessary (Jon 3.4).

Hereupon he gathered his congregation at Bedford, where he mostly lived, and had lived and spent the greatest part of his life. And there being no convenient place to be had for entertaining so great a confluence of people as followed him on account of his teaching, he consulted with them for building a meeting-house. They made their voluntary contributions to it with all cheerfulness and alacrity. And the first time he appeared there to edify, the place was so thronged that many were constrained to stay outside, even though the house was very spacious. Everyone was striving to partake of his instructions, who were of his persuasion, and to show their good-will towards him by being present at the opening of the place. And here he lived in much peace and quiet of mind, contenting himself with the little that God had bestowed on him, and sequestering himself from all secular employments, to follow his call to the ministry. For as God said to Moses, *He that made the lips and heart, can give eloquence and wisdom*, without extraordinary acquirements in a university.

During these things, regulators were sent into all corporate cities and towns, to newly model the government in the magistracy, etc., by removing some and putting in others. Mr. Bunyan expressed his zeal against it, with some weariness. He foresaw the bad consequence that would attend it, and laboured with his congregation to prevent their being imposed on in this way. And when a great man in those days, coming to Bedford on some such errand, sent for him, to give him a place of public trust (it is supposed), he would by no means come to him, but sent his excuse.

When he was at leisure from writing and teaching, he often came up to London, and there went among the congregations of the non-conformists, and used his talent to the great good-liking of the hearers. Even some to whom he had been misrepresented on account of his education, were convinced of his worth and knowledge in sacred things — perceiving

him to be a man of round judgment, delivering himself plainly and powerfully. This was insomuch that many who came as mere spectators for novelty's sake, rather than to edify and be improved, went away well-satisfied with what they heard. And they wondered, as the Jews did at the Apostles, from where this man got these things — perhaps not considering that God more directly assists those who make it their business to industriously and cheerfully labour in His vineyard.

Thus he spent his latter years in imitation of his great Lord and Master, the ever-blessed Jesus. He went about doing good, so that the most prying critic, or even Malice herself, is defied to find, even upon the narrowest search or observation, any sully or stain on his reputation, with which he may be justly charged. And we note this as a challenge to those who have the least regard for him, or those of like persuasion, and have one way or another appeared in the forefront of those who oppressed him. He frequently prayed for the turning of their hearts, and sometimes sought a blessing for them, in obedience to the commission and commandment given him by God — even with tears. They may, perhaps, even if undeservedly, have found the effects of this in their persons, friends, relations, or estates. For God will hear the prayer of the faithful, and answer them, even for those who vex them. This is what happened in the case of Job's praying for the three persons who had been grievous in their reproaches against him, even in the day of his sorrow.

Yet let me come a little nearer to particulars and periods of time, to better refresh the memories of those who knew his labour and suffering, and to satisfy all who read this book.

After he was sensibly convicted of the wicked state of his life, and converted, he was baptized into the congregation, and admitted a member of it in the year 1655,<sup>45</sup> and speedily became a very zealous professor. But upon the return of King Charles to the crown in 1660, he was taken the 12th of November, as he was edifying some good people who had gotten together to hear the word. He was confined in Bedford jail for the space of six years, till the act of Indulgence to dissenters was allowed. He obtained his freedom by the intercession of some in trust and power, who took pity on his sufferings. But within six years afterwards, he was again arrested, in the year 1666, and confined for six more years. This was when even the jailer took such pity on his rigorous sufferings, that he did as the Egyptian jailer did for Joseph: he put all the care and trust in his hand.

When he was taken this last time, he was preaching on these words, *Do you believe the Son of God?* This imprisonment continued six years. And when it was over, another short affliction, which was an imprisonment of half a year, fell to his share. During these confinements he wrote the following books: *Of Prayer by the Spirit; The Holy City's Resurrection; Grace Abounding;* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, the first part.

In the last year of his twelve years' imprisonment, the pastor of the congregation at Bedford died, and Bunyan was chosen to that care of souls on the 12th of December 1671. In this charge, he often had disputes with scholars who came to oppose him, supposing him to be an ignorant person. Even though he argued plainly, and by Scripture, without phrases and logical expressions, yet he nonplussed one who came to oppose him in his congregation, by demanding whether or not we had the true copies of the original Scriptures. Another, when Bunyan was preaching, accused him of uncharitableness for saying that it was very hard for most to be saved — saying, by that, he went about excluding most of his congregation. But Bunyan confuted and silenced him with the parable of the stony ground, and other texts out of the 13th chapter of St Matthew, and in our Saviour's sermon given out of a boat, Luk 5.3.

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<sup>45</sup> At 27 years of age. — WHG

All his methods were to keep close to the Scriptures. And what he found that was not warranted there, he would not warrant nor determine himself, except in plain cases, in which no doubts or scruples arose.

But not to make any further mention of this kind, it is well known that Bunyan managed *all* his affairs with such exactness. He did this as if he had made it his study, above all other things, not to give occasion for offence, but rather to suffer many inconveniences. This was to avoid ever being heard to reproach or revile anyone, whatever injury he received, but rather to rebuke those who did. And as it was in his conduct, so it is manifested in those books he caused to be published to the world. There, like the archangel disputing with Satan about the body of Moses (as we find it in the epistle of Jude) he brings no railing accusation, but leaves the rebukers, those who persecuted him, to the Lord.

In his family, he kept up a very strict discipline in prayer and exhortation. In this, he was like Joshua, as that good man expressed it, *Whatever others do, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*. And indeed, a blessing awaited his labours and endeavours, so that his wife, as the Psalmist says, *was like a pleasant vine upon the walls of his house, and his children like olive branches round his table; for so shall it be with the man who fears the Lord*, Psa 128.3-4. Because he sustained many losses by imprisonment and spoil, and because of his consequent sickness, etc., his earthly treasure did not swell to excess. Yet he always had sufficient to live decently and creditably. And with that, he had the greatest of all treasures, which is contentment. For as the wise man says, *That is a continual feast*.<sup>46</sup>

But where contentment dwells, even a poor cottage is a kingly palace. And he had this happiness all his life, not so much minding this world, knowing that he was here as a pilgrim and stranger. He had no tarrying city, but looked for one *made with hands eternal in the highest heavens*, 2Cor 5.1. But at length, worn out with sufferings, age, and teaching often, the day of his dissolution drew near. And death, which unlocks the prison of the soul to liberate it for a more glorious mansion, put a stop to acting his part on the stage of mortality.<sup>47</sup> Like earthly princes, when heaven threatens war, being always so kind as to call home its ambassadors before war is declared, even his last act or undertaking was a labour of love and charity. For it so fell out that a young gentleman, a neighbour of Mr. Bunyan's, happening into the displeasure of his father, and being much troubled in mind on that account — and also because he heard his father purposed to disinherit him, or otherwise deprive him of what he had to leave behind — he begged Mr. Bunyan, as a fit man to make way for his submission, to prepare his father's mind to receive him. Bunyan, as willing to do any good office as could be requested, readily undertook it. And so, riding to Reading in Berkshire, he there used such pressing arguments and reasons against anger and passion, and also for love and reconciliation, that the father was mollified, and his passion yearned for his returning son.

But after Mr. Bunyan had disposed all things to the best for accommodation, returning to London, and being overtaken with excessive rains, he came to his lodgings extremely wet. He fell sick of a violent fever, which he bore with great constancy and patience. He expressed himself as desiring nothing more than to be dissolved, and be with Christ. In that case, he esteemed death as gain, and life as only a tedious delaying of the expected felicity. Finding his vital strength decay, and having settled his mind and affairs as well as the shortness of time and violence of his disease would permit — doing so with a constant and

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<sup>46</sup> Pro 15.15-17. – WHG

<sup>47</sup> An allusion to Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 2, scene 7. – WHG

Christian patience — he resigned his soul into the hands of his most merciful Redeemer, following his *Pilgrim* from the City of Destruction, to the New Jerusalem. His better part had been there all along, in holy contemplation, pantings, and breathings after the hidden manna and water of life. These he expressed by many holy and humble consolations in his letters to several persons, in prison and out of prison, too many to be inserted here at present.<sup>48</sup>

He died at the house of one Mr. Struddock, a grocer, at the Star on Snow Hill, in the parish of St Sepulchre's, London, on the 12th of August 1688, in the sixtieth year of his age,<sup>49</sup> after ten days' sickness. He was buried in the new burying place near the Artillery Ground, where he sleeps till the morning of the resurrection, in hopes of a glorious rising to an incorruptible immortality of joy and happiness; where no more trouble and sorrow shall afflict him, but all tears be wiped away; when the just shall be incorrupted, as members of Christ their head, and reign with Him as kings and priests forever.

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## A BRIEF CHARACTER OF MR. JOHN BUNYAN

HE appeared in countenance to be of a stern and rough temper, but in his conversation mild and affable; not given to loquacity or much discourse in company, unless some urgent occasion required it; observing never to boast of himself or his parts, but rather seem low in his own eyes, and submit himself to the judgment of others, abhorring lying and swearing, being just in all that lay in his power to his word, not seeming to revenge injuries, loving to reconcile differences, and make friendship with all; he had a sharp quick eye, accompanied with an excellent discerning of persons, being of good judgment and quick wit. As for his person, he was tall of stature, strong boned, though not corpulent, somewhat of a ruddy face, with sparkling eyes, wearing his hair on his upper lip, after the old British fashion; his hair reddish, but in his latter days, time had sprinkled it with grey; his nose well set, but not declining or bending, and his mouth moderately large; his forehead somewhat high, and his habit always plain and modest. And thus we have impartially described the internal and external parts of a person whose death has been much regretted; a person who had tried the smiles and frowns of time; not puffed up in prosperity, nor shaken in adversity; always holding the golden mean.

*In him at once three great worthies shine:  
Historian, poet, and a choice divine:  
Then let him rest in undisturbed dust,  
Until the resurrection of the just.*

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<sup>48</sup> *George Offor notes* (1853): "All these letters, and nearly all his autographs, have disappeared. Of his numerous manuscripts, books, and letters, not a line is now known to exist. If discovered, they would be invaluable." – WHG

<sup>49</sup> His friend was mistaken as to the date. George Offor writes, "It is an established fact that John Bunyan died on Friday, August 31, 1688. He is recorded to have preached his last sermon on August 19th."

## **POSTSCRIPT**

IN this, his pilgrimage, God blessed him with four children, one of whom, named Mary, was blind, and died some years before. His other children were Thomas, Joseph, and Sarah. His wife Elizabeth, having lived to see him overcome his labour and sorrow, and pass from this life to receive the reward of his work, did not long survive him. She died in 1692, to follow her faithful pilgrim from this world to the other where he had gone before her — while his works, which consist of sixty books, remain for the edifying of the reader, and the praise of the author.

**Vale.**

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**FINIS**



## CHRONOLOGY OF JOHN BUNYAN'S LIFE

Adapted from: <https://johnbunvansociety.org/bunyan-chronology/>  
His current age is in [brackets]

- 1628** Bunyan born at Elstow, near Bedford (baptized 30 November), the eldest child of Thomas Bunyan (1603–76), a brazier, and his second wife Margaret Bentley (1603–44).
- 1643-47** (July) Westminster Assembly. Scots enter the civil war on Parliament's side (Royalists).
- 1644** [16] Bunyan's mother and sister Margaret die (in June and July respectively). His father remarries within two months. Bunyan joins the Parliamentary forces stationed in the garrison of Newport Pagnell (Buckinghamshire) under the command of Sir Samuel Luke, but seems not to have taken part in much military combat.
- 1645** [17] Bunyan's half-brother Charles is born (in May), but dies shortly afterwards.
- 1646** [18] Bunyan volunteers for service in Ireland, but his regiment is disbanded.
- 1647** [19] Bunyan is demobilised (in July) and returns to his father's house in Elstow.
- 1649** [21] (January) Trial and execution of Charles I. Probably in October, Bunyan marries his first wife (name unknown); four children will be born of the union. Bunyan attends the parish church in Elstow, but feels himself to be a grievous sinner and endures what will be a prolonged period of spiritual crisis (lasting until about 1655).
- 1650** [22] Birth of Bunyan's first child Mary (baptized 20 July), who is blind. He experiences a spiritual awakening after hearing 'three or four poor women' in Bedford talking about their religious beliefs, and begins attending the separatist open-communion Baptist congregation of John Gifford in Bedford. Around this time he comes into contact with the Ranters. Cromwell invades Scotland and defeats the Scots at Dunbar.
- 1651** Publication of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (advocating the "Social Contract")
- 1653** [25] Puritan Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector. Quaker tracts first published.
- 1655** [27] Bunyan moves from Elstow to Bedford. He is converted and admitted a full member of the Bedford congregation, possibly after accepting baptism by total immersion, and begins to preach, first to the Bedford congregation and then more widely. John Gifford dies.
- 1656** On at least three occasions, Bunyan engages in public controversy with the Quakers.
- 1657** [29] Bunyan's *A Vindication of the Book Called, Some Gospel-Truths Opened*. (April)
- 1658** [30] Bunyan's popular *A Few Sighs from Hell* is published, an attack on professional clergy and the rich. Death of Bunyan's first wife.
- 1659** [31] Publication of *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, Bunyan's most important exposition of his theological principles. He marries his second wife, Elizabeth (three children born of the union). Bunyan is attacked by George Fox in *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (1659). His right to preach is challenged by Thomas Smith, keeper of Cambridge University Library and Professor of Arabic, at a public disputation at Toft, near Cambridge.
- 1660** [32] On November 12<sup>th</sup>, Bunyan is arrested for illegally preaching at the hamlet of Lower Samsell (Bedfordshire), and is sent to prison in Bedford to await trial. His wife Elizabeth gives premature birth to an infant who dies shortly afterwards.
- 1661** [33] (January) Bodies of Oliver Cromwell and two other regicides are exhumed and hung on the gallows at Tyburn. Thomas Venner leads a Fifth-Monarchist uprising in London, quickly suppressed. In early January Bunyan is tried under an Elizabethan statute of 1593 which had outlawed preaching at conventicles. Bunyan writes an account of his trial and imprisonment in a series of five letters to members of the Bedford congregation (later published as *A Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan* (1765)). Widespread persecution of Nonconformists begins. (November) Quaker Act singles out Quakers for special persecution.
- 1662** [34] Probably towards the later part of this year, Bunyan's *I Will Pray with the Spirit* is published, attacking the use of the Book of Common Prayer in worship. (May) Act of Uniformity, outlawing Puritan views. (August) Ejection from the Church of England of about 2,000 Puritan ministers, for refusing to submit to the Act of Uniformity.
- 1664** (November) First Conventicle Act outlaws all religious meetings not conducted according the Book of Common Prayer.

- 1665** [37] Publication of Bunyan's *The Holy City*. Anglo-Dutch War begins. (October) Five Mile Act prohibits ejected ministers from coming within five miles of where they had previously ministered, or living in any incorporated town. The Great Plague begins in London.
- 1666** [38] Publication of *Grace Abounding*. (September) Great Fire of London.
- 1667** Publication of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- 1668** [40] Bunyan begins writing *The Pilgrim's Progress* (not published until 1678).
- 1669** Isaac Newton appointed Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge.
- 1670** (February) Second Conventicle Act, leading to harsher persecution of Nonconformists.
- 1671** [43] On 21 December Bunyan is elected pastor of the Bedford congregation.
- 1672** [44] Bunyan is included in a list of Nonconformists to be granted a royal pardon and is allowed out of prison in Feb/Mar. (May) A meeting place is purchased in Bedford. On Oct 6<sup>th</sup>, Bunyan preaches in Leicester. *A Confession of my Faith* is published, with an attack on closed-communication Baptists.
- 1673** [45] Publication of Bunyan's *The Barren Fig-Tree*. Henry Danvers includes a postscript in his *Treatise of Baptism* (1673) attacking Bunyan for his views on baptism.
- 1674** [46] Publication of Bunyan's *Peaceable Principles And True*, a response to the attacks on him by Thomas Paul and Henry Danvers. Some time later, Wm. Kiffin quotes from Bunyan's book in *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (1681). Death of John Milton.
- 1675** [47] In March, a warrant for Bunyan's arrest is issued in Bedford, and he apparently goes into hiding for a few months, possibly finding refuge with Nonconformists in London. In April he is excommunicated from the Church of England, and arrested the following December.
- 1676** [48] Bunyan's father dies. Beginning of his second imprisonment.
- 1677** [49] Bunyan is released from prison in June, probably owing to the intervention of John Owen who obtained an order from the chancellor, Heneage Lord Finch.
- 1678** In February, Nathaniel Ponder publishes the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
- 1679** [51] Publication of Bunyan's *A Treatise of the Fear of God*.
- 1680** Nathaniel Ponder publishes Bunyan's *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*.
- 1681** Whigs Purged from public offices, and savage persecution of Nonconformists.
- 1682** [54] Bunyan preaches at Pinners' Hall in London, one of the most important meeting-places of Nonconformists. Publication of his sermon-treatise, *The Greatness of the Soul*.
- 1683** [55] Publication of Bunyan's *A Case of Conscience Resolved*, in which he argues against separate women assemblies.
- 1684** Nathaniel Ponder publishes the authentic Second Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
- 1685** [57] Publication of Bunyan's *Questions about the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day-Sabbath*, arguing against Sabbatarians who worshipped on Saturdays. He preaches in Southwark at Stephen More's open-communication church. On 23 December Bunyan draws up a deed of gift giving all his property to his wife, concerned he might be arrested and his property confiscated.
- 1688** [60] On August 19<sup>th</sup>, Bunyan preaches to John Gammon's open-communication congregation meeting in Boar's Head Yard, off Petticoat Lane in London. While staying at the house of the grocer John Strudwick, in Holborn, he falls ill and dies on August 31<sup>st</sup>, probably from a fever contracted while riding to London in heavy rain from Reading (where he had been engaged in pastoral business, seeking to reconcile an estranged father and son). (November) William of Orange lands at Brixham, initiating "The Glorious Revolution" with a Bill of Rights. John Locke writes his first letter *Concerning Toleration*.
- 1691** Death of Elizabeth Bunyan.
- 1698** Charles Doe publishes *The Heavenly Foot-man*, probably written by Bunyan in early 1668, its central metaphor of the Christian life is a race, sparking the idea of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.