

JOHN BUNYAN

GRACE ABOUNDING TO
THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

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Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners

A PREFACE

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

Children, Grace be with you. *Amen.* I being taken from you in presence, and so tied up that I cannot perform that duty, that from God doth lie upon me to you-ward, for your farther edifying and building up in faith and holiness, etc., yet that you may see my soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare, I now once again, as before, from the top of *Shenir* and *Hermon*, so now from *the lions' dens*, *from the mountains of the leopards* (Song iv. 8), do look yet after you all,

greatly longing to see your safe arrival into THE desired Haven.

I thank God upon every remembrance of you; and 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 hath bestowed upon you, with abundance of faith and love; your hungerings and thirstings after farther 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 ye are our glory and joy.* 1 Thess. ii. 20.

I have sent you here enclosed, a drop of that honey that I have taken out of the carcase of a lion. Judg. xiv. 5–8. I have eaten thereof myself, and am much refreshed thereby. (Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon *Samson*; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall find a nest of honey within them.) The *Philistines* understand me not. It is something of a relation of the work of God upon my soul, even from the very first, till now, wherein you may perceive my castings down, and risings up: for He woundeth, and His hands make whole. It is written in the Scripture, Isa. xxxviii. 19, *The father to the children shall make known Thy truth.* Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai, Lev. iv. 10, 11, to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, *that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life upon earth, and tell of His wondrous works to my children.* Psalm lxxviii. 3–5.

Moses, Numb. xxxiii. 1, 2, writ of the journeys of the children

of *Israel*, from *Egypt* to the land of *Canaan*; and commanded also that they did remember their forty years' travel in the wilderness.

Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments, or no. Deut. viii. 2. Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not only so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what He hath done for their souls, by reading His work upon me.

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

1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37.

It was *Paul's* accustomed manner, Acts xxii., and that, when tried for his life, Acts xxiv., even to open before his judges the manner of his conversion: he would think of that day, and that hour, in which he first did meet 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 they must turn quite about thither again, to remember the drowning of their enemies

there, Numb. xiv. 25, for though they sang his praise before, yet they soon forgot his works. Psalm cvi. 11, 12.

In this discourse of mine, you may see much; much I say, of the grace of God towards me: I thank God, I can count it much; for it was above my sins and Satan's temptations too. I can remember my fears and doubts, and sad months, with comfort; they are as the head of *Goliah* in my hand: there was nothing to *David* like *Goliah's* sword, even that sword that should have been sheathed in his bowels; for the very sight and remembrance of that did preach forth God's deliverance to him. Oh! the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fear of perishing for ever! 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 years of ancient times: remember also your songs in the night, and commune with your own Hearts, Ps. lxxiii. 5–12. Yea, look diligently, and leave no corner therein unsearched for that treasure hid, 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 upon you: remember your terrors of conscience, and fear of death and hell: remember also your tears and prayers to God; yea, how you sighed under every hedge for mercy. Have you never a hill *Mizar* to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk-house, the stable, the barn, and the like,

where God did visit your souls? Remember also the word, the word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope: if you have sinned against light, if you are tempted to blaspheme, if you are drowned in despair, if you think God fights against you, or if heaven is hid from your eyes; remember it was thus with your father; *but out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

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

My dear Children,

The milk and honey are beyond this wilderness. God be merciful to you, and grant that you be not slothful to go in to possess the land.

JOHN BUNYAN.

GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS OR, A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST, TO HIS POOR SERVANT, JOHN BUNYAN

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

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

3. But yet, notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into

their hearts, to put me to school, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained, according to the rate of other poor men's children: though, to my shame, I confess, I did soon lose that I had learned, even almost utterly, and that long before the Lord did work His gracious work of conversion upon my soul.

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

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

6. Also I should, at these years, be greatly afflicted and troubled with the thoughts of the fearful torments of hell-fire;

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, unto the judgment of the great day.

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

8. A while after those terrible dreams did leave me, which also I soon forgot; for my pleasures did quickly cut off the remembrance of them, as if they had never been: wherefore with more greediness, according to the strength of nature, I did still let loose the reins 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 that kept me company, in all manner of vice and ungodliness.

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

of the world.

10. In these days the thoughts of religion were very grievous to me; I could neither endure it myself, nor that any other should; so that when I have seen some read in those books that concerned Christian piety, it would be as it were a prison to me. *Then I said unto God, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.* Job xxi. 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, Thou knowest my life, and my ways were not hid from Thee!*

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 I had at any time seen wicked things, by those who professed goodness, it would make my spirit tremble. As once above all the rest, when I was in the height of vanity, yet hearing one to swear, that was reckoned for a religious man, it had so great a stroke upon my spirit, that it made my heart ache.

12. But God did not utterly leave me, but followed me still, not now with convictions, but judgments; yet such as were mixed with mercy. For once I fell into a creek of the sea, and hardly escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into *Bedford* river, but, mercy yet preserved me alive: besides, another time, being in a field, with one of my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway, so I having a stick in my hand, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open

her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers; by which act had not God been merciful unto me, I might by my desperateness, have brought myself to my end.

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

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

15. Presently after this, I changed my condition into a married state, and my mercy was, to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly: 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 betwixt us both), yet this she had for her part: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*; which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I would sometimes read with her, wherein I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me (but all this while I met with no conviction). She also would be often telling of me what a godly man her father was, and how he would reprove and correct vice, both in his house, and among his neighbours; what a strict and holy life he lived in his days, both in word and deed.

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

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

18. After I had been thus for some considerable time, another thought came in my mind; and that was, whether we were of the *Israelites* or no? For finding in the scripture that they were once the peculiar people of God, thought I, if I were one of this race,

my soul must needs be happy. Now again, I found within me a great longing to be resolved about this question, but could not tell how I should: at last I asked my father of it; who told me, *No, we were not*. Wherefore then I fell in my spirit, as to the hopes of that, and so remained.

19. But all this while, I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin; I was kept from considering that sin would damn me, what religion soever I followed, unless I was found in Christ: nay, I never thought of Him, or whether there was such a One, or no.

Thus man, while blind, doth wander, but wearieth himself with vanity, for he knoweth not the way to the city of God. Eccles. x. 15.

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

21. This, for that instant did benumb the sinews of my best delights, and did imbitter my former pleasures to me; but hold, it lasted not, for before I had well dined, the trouble began to go off

my mind, and my heart returned to its old course: but oh! how glad was I, that this trouble was gone from me, and that the fire was put out, that I might sin again without control! Wherefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and to my old custom of sports and gaming, I returned with great delight.

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

23. I had no sooner thus conceived in my mind, but, suddenly, this conclusion was fastened on my spirit (for the former hint did set my sins again before my face), *That I had been a great and grievous sinner, and that it was now too late for me to look after heaven; for Christ would not forgive me, nor pardon my transgressions.* Then I fell to musing on this also; and while I was thinking of it, and fearing lest it should be so; I felt my heart sink in despair, concluding it was too late; and therefore I resolved in my mind I would go on in sin: for, thought I, if the case be thus,

my state is surely miserable; miserable if I leave my sins, and but miserable if I follow them; I can but be damned, and if I must be so, I had as good be damned for many sins, as be damned for few.

24. Thus I stood in the midst of my play, before all that then were present: but yet I told them nothing: but I say; having made this conclusion, I returned desperately to my sport again; and I well remember, that presently this kind of despair did so possess my soul, that I was persuaded I could never attain to other comfort than what I should get in sin; for heaven was gone already, so that on that I must not think; wherefore I found within me great desire to take my fill of sin, still studying what sin was yet to be committed, that I might taste the sweetness of it; and I made as much haste as I could to fill my belly with its delicates, lest I should die before I had my desire; for that I feared greatly.

In these things, I protest before God, I lye not, neither do I feign this form of speech; these were really, strongly, and with all my heart, my desires: *The good Lord, Whose mercy is unsearchable, forgive me my transgressions!*

25. And I am very confident, that this temptation of the devil is more usual among poor creatures, than many are aware of, even to over-run the spirits with a scurvy and seared frame of heart, and benumbing of conscience, which frame he stilly and slily supplieth with such despair, that, though not much guilt attendeth souls, yet they continually have a secret conclusion within them, that there is no hope for them; *for they have loved sins, therefore after them they will go.* Jer. ii. 25, and xviii. 12.

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

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

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

plays.

29. But quickly after this, I fell into company with one poor man that made profession of religion; who, as I then thought, did talk pleasantly of the scriptures, and of the matters of religion; wherefore falling into some love and liking to what he said, I betook me to my Bible, and began to take great pleasure in reading, but especially with the historical part thereof; for as for Paul's Epistles, and such like scriptures, I could not away with 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. Wherefore I fell to some outward reformation both in my words and life, and did set the commandments before me for my way to heaven; which commandments I also did strive to keep, and, as I thought, did keep them pretty well sometimes, and then I should have comfort; yet now and then should break one, and so afflict my conscience; but then I should repent, and say, I was sorry for it, and promise God to do better next time, and there get help again; for then I thought I pleased God as well as any man in *England*.

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

32. But, I say, my neighbours were amazed at this my great conversion, from prodigious profaneness, to something like a moral life; and truly, so they well might; for this my conversion was as great, as for Tom of Bethlehem to become a sober man.

Now therefore they began to praise, to commend, and to speak well of me, both to my face, and behind my back. Now I was, as they said, become godly; now I was become a right honest man. But oh! when I understood these were their words and opinions of me, it pleased me mighty well. For, though as yet I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet, I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly. I was proud of my godliness, and indeed, I did all I did, either to be seen of, or to be well spoken of, by men: and thus I continued for about a twelvemonth, or more.

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

bell should now fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding.

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

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

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

37. But upon a 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 where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear them discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker also myself, in the matters of

religion; but I may say, *I heard but understood not*; 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 how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported, against the temptations of the devil: moreover, they reasoned of the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular; and told to each other, by which they had been afflicted and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart, and of their unbelief; and did contemn, slight and abhor their own righteousness, as filthy, and insufficient to do them any good.

38. And, methought, they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me, as if they had found a new world; as if they were *people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours*. Numb. xxiii. 9.

39. At this I felt my own heart began to shake, and mistrust my condition to be naught; for I saw that in all my thoughts about religion and salvation, the new-birth did never enter into my mind; neither knew I the comfort of the word and promise, nor the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart.

As for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them; neither did I understand what Satan's temptations were, nor how they were to

be withstood, and resisted, 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 with their words, both because by them I was convinced that I wanted the true tokens of a truly godly man, and also because by them I was convinced of the happy and blessed condition of him that was such a one.

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

42. By these things my mind was now so turned, that it lay like an horse-leech at the vein, still crying out, *Give, Give*, Prov. xxx. 15; yea, it was so fixed on eternity, and on the things about the kingdom of heaven (that is, so far as I knew, though as yet, God knows, I knew but little), that neither pleasures, nor profits, nor persuasions, nor threats, could loose it, or make it let go its hold; and though I may speak it with shame, yet it is in very deed,

a certain truth, it would then have been as difficult for me to have taken my mind from heaven to earth, as I have found it often since, to get again from earth to heaven.

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

44. About this time I met with some Ranters' books, that were put forth by some of our countrymen, which books were also highly in esteem by several old professors; some of these I read, but was not able to make any judgment about them; wherefore as I read in them, and thought upon them (seeing myself unable to judge), I would betake myself to hearty prayer in this manner. *O Lord, I am a fool, and not able to know the truth from error: Lord, leave me not to my own blindness, either to approve of or condemn this doctrine; if it be of God, let me not despise it; if it be of the devil, let me not embrace it. Lord, I lay my soul in this matter only at Thy foot, let me not be deceived, I humbly beseech Thee.* I had one religious intimate companion all this while, and that was the poor man

I spoke of before; but about this time, he also turned 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 the more, and pretend that he had gone through all religions, and could never light on the right till now. He told me also, that in a little time I should see all professors turn to the ways of the Ranters. Wherefore, abominating those cursed principles, I left his company forthwith, and became to him as great a stranger, as I had been before a familiar.

45. Neither was this man only a temptation to me, but my calling lying in the country, I happened to light into several people's company, who though strict in religion formerly, yet were also swept away by these Ranters. These would also talk with me of their ways, and condemn me as legal and dark; pretending that they only had attained to perfection, that could do what they would and not sin. Oh! these temptations were suitable to my flesh, I being but a young man and my nature in its prime; but God, who had, as I 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 even the effects of that prayer, in His preserving me, not only from Ranting errors, but from those also that have sprung up since. The Bible was precious to me

in those days.

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

47. And as I went on and read, I lighted upon that passage, *To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word knowledge by the same Spirit; and to another faith*, etc. 1 Cor. xii.

And though, as I have since seen, that by this scripture the Holy Ghost intends, in special, things extraordinary, yet on me it did then fasten with conviction, that I did want things ordinary, even that understanding and wisdom that other Christians had. On this word I mused, and could not tell what to do, especially this word 'Faith' put me to it, for I could not help it, but sometimes must question, whether I had any faith, or no; but I was loath to conclude, I had no faith; for if I do so, thought I, then I shall count myself a very cast-away indeed.

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

quite into despair.

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

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

51. Wherefore while I was thus considering, and being put to my plunge about it (for you must know, that as yet I had in this matter broken my mind to no man, only did hear and consider), the tempter came in with this delusion, *That there was no way for me to know I had faith, but by trying to work some miracle*; urging those scriptures that seem to look that way, for the enforcing and strengthening his temptation. Nay, one day, as I was between *Elstow* and *Bedford*, the temptation was hot upon me, to try if I had faith, by doing some miracle; which miracle at this time

was this, I must say to the *puddles* that were in the horsepads, *Be dry*; and to the *dry places*, *Be you 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; *But go under yonder hedge and pray first, that God would make you able*. But when I had concluded to pray, this came hot upon me; That if I prayed, and came again and tried to do it, and yet did nothing notwithstanding, then to be sure I had no faith, but was a cast-away, and lost; nay, thought I, if it be so, I will not try yet, but will stay a little longer.

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

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

54. About this wall I bethought myself, to go again and again,

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

55. Now this mountain, and wall, etc., was thus made out to me: The mountain signified the church of the living God: the sun that shone thereon, the comfortable shining of His merciful face on them that were therein; the wall I thought was the word, that did make separation between the Christians and the world; and the gap which was in the wall, I thought, was Jesus Christ, Who is the way to God the Father. John xiv. 6; Matt. vii. 14.

But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter in thereat, it showed me, that none could enter into life, but those that were in downright earnest, and unless also they left that wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin.

56. This resemblance abode upon my spirit many days; all which time I saw myself in a forlorn and sad condition, but yet

was provoked to a vehement hunger and desire to be one of that number that did sit in the sunshine: Now also I should pray wherever I was: whether at home or abroad; in house or field; and would also often, with lifting up of heart, sing that of the fifty-first Psalm, *O Lord, consider my distress*; for as yet I knew not where I was.

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

58. By these two temptations I was very much afflicted and disquieted; sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other of them. And first, to speak of that about my questioning my election, I found at this time, that though I was in a flame to find the way to heaven and glory, and though nothing could beat me off from this, yet this question did so offend and discourage me, that I was, especially sometimes, as if the very strength of my body also had been taken away by the force and power thereof.

This scripture did also seem to me to trample upon all my desires; *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy.* Rom. ix. 16.

59. With this scripture I could not tell what to do: for I evidently saw, unless that the great God, of His infinite grace and bounty, had voluntarily chosen me to be a vessel of mercy,

though I should desire, and long, and labour until my heart did break, no good could come of it. Therefore this would stick with me, *How can you tell that you are elected? And what if you should not? How then?*

60. O Lord, thought I, what if I should not indeed? It may be you are not, said the Tempter; it may be so indeed, thought I. Why then, said Satan, you had as good leave off, and strive no farther; 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 that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy.*

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

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

63. At which I was greatly lightened, and encouraged in my soul; for thus, at that very instant, it was expounded to me: *Begin*

at the beginning of Genesis, and read to the end of the Revelations, and see if you can find, that there were ever any that trusted in the Lord, and were confounded. So coming home, I presently went to my Bible, to see if I could find that saying, not doubting but to find it presently; for it was so fresh, and with such strength and comfort on my spirit, that it was as if it talked with me.

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

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

66. After this, that other doubt did come with strength upon me, *But how if the day of grace should be past and gone?* How if you have overstood the time of mercy? Now I remember that one

day, as I was walking in the country, I was much in the thoughts of this, *But how 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 thus unto me, that these being converted already, they were all that God would save in those parts; and that I came too late, for these had got the blessing before I came.

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

68. But when I had been long vexed with this fear, and was scarce able to take one step more, just about the same place where I received my other encouragement, these words broke in upon my mind, *Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled; and yet there is room.* Luke xiv. 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 place enough in heaven for me; and moreover, that when the Lord Jesus did speak these words, He then did think of me: and that He knowing that the time would come, that I should be afflicted with fear, that there was no place left for me in His bosom, did before speak this word, and leave it upon record, that I might find help thereby

against this vile temptation. This I then verily believed.

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

70. But I was not without my temptations to go back again; temptations I say, both from Satan, mine own heart, and carnal acquaintance; but I thank God these were outweighed by that sound sense of death, and of the day of judgment, which abode, as it were, continually in my view: I would often also think on *Nebuchadnezzar*; of whom it is said, *He had given him all the kingdoms of the earth*. Dan. v. 18, 19. Yet, thought I, if this great man had all his portion in this world, one hour in hell-fire would make him forget all. Which consideration was a great help to me.

71. I was also made, about this time, to see something concerning the beasts that *Moses* counted clean and unclean: I thought those beasts were types of men; the *clean*, types of them that were the people of God; but the *unclean*, types of such as were the children of the wicked one. Now I read, that the clean beasts *chewed the cud*; that is, thought I, they show us, we must feed upon the word of God: they also *parted the hoof*. I thought that signified, we must part, if we would be saved, with the ways of ungodly men. And also, in further reading about them, I found, that though we did chew the cud, as the *hare*; yet if we walked with claws, like a dog; or if we did part the hoof, like the

swine, yet if we did not chew the cud, as the sheep, we were still, for all that, but unclean: for I thought the *hare* to be a type of those that talk of the word, yet walk in the ways of sin; and that the *swine* was like him that parted with his outward pollutions, but still wanteth the word of faith, without which there could be no way of salvation, let a man be never so devout. Deut. xiv.

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

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

73. I cannot now express with what longings and breathings in my soul, I cried to Christ to call me. Thus I continued for a time, all on a flame to be converted to Jesus Christ; and did also see at that day, such glory in a converted state, that I could not be contented without a share therein. Gold! could it have been gotten for gold, what would I have given for it? Had I had

a whole world, it had all gone ten thousand times over for this, that my soul might have been in a converted state.

74. How lovely now was every one in my eyes, that I thought to be converted men and women. They shone, they walked like a people that carried the broad seal of heaven about them. Oh! I saw the lot was fallen to them in pleasant places, and they had a goodly heritage. Psalm xvi. But that which made me sick, was that of Christ, in St Mark, *He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him.* Mark iii. 13.

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

76. And truly, the Lord let me go thus many months together, and shewed me nothing; either that I was already, or should be called hereafter: but at last after much time spent, and many groans to God, that I might be made partaker of the holy and heavenly calling; that word came in upon me: *I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.* Joel iii. 21. These words I thought were sent to encourage me to wait

still upon God; and signified unto me, that if I were not already, yet time might come, I might be in truth converted unto Christ.

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

78. Nay, thought I, now I grow worse and worse: now I am farther from conversion than ever I was before. Wherefore I began to sink greatly in my soul, and began to entertain such discouragement in my heart, as laid me as low as hell. If now I

should have 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 with 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; which, when they heard, they would pity me, and would tell me of the promises; but they had as good have told me, that I must reach the sun with my finger, as have bidden me receive or rely upon the promises: and as soon I should have done it. All my sense and feeling were against me; and I saw I had an heart that would sin, and that lay under a law that would condemn.

80. These things have often made me think of the child which the father brought to Christ, *who, while he was yet coming to Him, was thrown down by the devil, and also so rent and torn by him, that he lay down and wallowed, foaming.* Luke ix. 42; Mark ix. 20.

81. Further, in these days, I would find my heart to shut itself up against the Lord, and against His holy word: I have found my unbelief to set, as it were, the shoulder to the door, to keep Him out; and that too even then, when I have with many a bitter sigh, cried, Good Lord, break it open: *Lord, break these gates of brass, and cut these bars of iron asunder.* Psalm cvii. 16. Yet that word would sometimes create in my heart a peaceable pause, *I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.* Isaiah xlv. 5.

82. But all this while, as to the act of sinning, I was never

more tender than now: my hinder parts were inward: I durst not take a pin or stick, though but so big as a straw; for my conscience now was sore, and would smart at every touch: I could not now tell how to speak my words, for fear I should misplace them. Oh, how gingerly did I then go, in all I did or said! I found myself as on a miry bog, that shook if I did but stir, and was, as there, left both of God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all good things.

83. But I observed, though I was such a great sinner before conversion, yet God never much charged the guilt of the sins of my ignorance upon me; only He showed me, I was lost if I had not Christ, because I had been a sinner: I saw that I wanted a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God, and this righteousness was no where 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 saw at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me; that I had the guilt of, to amazement; by reason of that, I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than was a toad, and I thought I was so in God's eyes too: Sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain: I thought now, that every one had a better heart than I had; I could have changed heart with any body; I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell therefore at the sight of my own vileness deeply into despair; for I concluded, that this condition that I was in, could not stand with a state of grace.

Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure, I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind: and thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.

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

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 quite off my mind: that unless guilt of conscience was taken off the right way, that is, by the blood of Christ a man grew rather worse for the loss of his trouble of mind, than better. Wherefore, if my guilt lay hard upon me, then I should cry that the blood of Christ might take it off: and if it was going off without it (for

the sense of sin would be sometimes as if it would die, and go quite away), then I would also strive to fetch it upon my heart again, by bringing the punishment of sin in hell fire upon my spirit; and should cry, *Lord, let it not go off my heart, but the right way, by the blood of Christ, and the application of Thy mercy, through Him, to my soul,* for that scripture lay much upon me, *without shedding of blood is no remission.* Heb. ix. 22. And that which made me the more afraid of this, was, because I had seen some, who though when they were under wounds of conscience, would cry and pray; yet seeking rather present ease from their trouble, than pardon for their sin, cared not how they lost their guilt, so they got it out of their mind: now, having got it off the wrong way, it was not sanctified unto them; but they grew harder and blinder, and more wicked after their trouble. This made me afraid, and made me cry to God the more, that it might not be so with me.

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

88. Yea, I thought it impossible that ever I should attain to so much goodness of heart, as to thank God that He had made me a man. Man indeed is the most noble by creation, of all creatures in the visible world; but by sin he has made himself the most ignoble. The beasts, birds, fishes, etc. I blessed their condition;

for they had not a sinful nature; they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hell-fire after death; I could therefore have rejoiced, had my condition been as any of theirs.

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

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

91. So as I was going home, these words came again into my thoughts; and I well remember, as they came in, I said thus in my heart, *What shall I get by thinking on these two words?* This thought had no sooner passed through my heart, but these words began thus to kindle in my spirit, *Thou art My Love, thou art My Dove*, twenty times together; and still as they ran in my mind, they waxed stronger and warmer, and began to make me look

up; but being as yet, between hope and fear, I still replied in my heart, *But is it true, but is it true?* At which that sentence fell upon me, *He wist not that it was true, which was done by the Angel.* Acts xii. 9.

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

93. Yet still at times I was helped to believe, that it was a true manifestation of grace unto my soul, though I had lost much of the life and favour of it. Now about a week or a fortnight after this I was much followed by this scripture, *Simon, Simon; behold, Satan hath desired to have you,* Luke xxii. 31, and sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it was, call so strongly after me, that once, above all the rest, I turned my head over my

shoulder, thinking verily that some man had behind me, called me; being at a great distance, methought he called so loud: it came, as I have thought since, to have stirred me up to prayer, and to watchfulness: it came to acquaint me, that a cloud and a storm was coming down upon me: but I understood it not.

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

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

96. For, about the space of a month after, a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me twenty times worse than all I had met with before; it came stealing upon me, now by one piece, then by another: First, all my comfort was taken from me; then darkness seized upon me; after which, whole floods of blasphemies, both against God, Christ, and the scriptures, were

poured upon my spirit, to my great confusion and astonishment.

These blasphemous thoughts were such as stirred up questions in me against the very being of God, and of His only beloved Son: As, whether there were in truth, a God or Christ? And whether the holy scriptures were not rather a fable, and cunning story, than the holy and pure word of God?

97. The tempter would also much assault me with this, *How can you tell but that the Turks had as good scriptures to prove their Mahomet the Saviour, as we have to prove our Jesus is? And, could I think, that so many ten thousands, in so many countries and kingdoms, should be without the knowledge of the right way to heaven, (if there were indeed a heaven); and that we only, who live in a corner of the earth, should alone be blessed therewith?*

Every one doth think his own religion rightest, both Jews and Moors, and Pagans; and how if all our faith, and Christ, and scriptures, should be but a think so too?

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

99. These suggestions, (with many others which at this time I may not, and dare not utter, neither by word or pen,) did make

such a seizure upon my spirit, and did so overweigh my heart, both with their number, continuance, and fiery force, that I felt as if there were nothing else but these from morning to night within me; and as though indeed there could be room for nothing else; and also concluded, that God had, in very wrath to my soul, given me up to them, to be carried away with them, as with a mighty whirlwind.

100. Only by the distaste that they gave unto my spirit, *I felt there was something in me that refused to embrace them.* But this consideration I then only had, when God gave me leave to swallow my spittle; otherwise the noise, and strength, and force of these temptations would drown and overflow, and as it were, bury all such thoughts, or the remembrance of any such thing.

While I was in this temptation, I often found my mind suddenly put upon it to curse and swear, or to speak some grievous thing against God, or Christ His Son, and of the scriptures.

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

102. These things did sink me into very deep despair; for I concluded that such things could not possibly be found amongst

them that loved God. I often, when these temptations had been with force upon me, did compare myself to the case of such a child, whom some gipsy hath by force took up in her arms, and is carrying from friend and country. Kick sometimes I did, and also shriek and cry; but yet I was bound in the wings of the temptation, and the wind would carry me away. I thought also of Saul, and of the evil spirit that did possess him: and did greatly fear that my condition was the same with that of his. 1 Sam. x.

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

104. Now again I beheld the condition of the dog and toad, and counted the estate of every thing that God had made, far better than this dreadful state of mine, and such as my companions were. Yea, gladly would I 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 like to do. Nay,

and though I saw this, felt this, and was broken to pieces with it; yet that which added to my sorrow was, I could not find, that with all my soul I did desire deliverance. That scripture did also tear and rend my soul in the midst of these distractions, *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

Isa. lvii. 20, 21.

105. And now my heart was, at times, exceeding hard; if I would have given a thousand pounds for a tear, I could not shed one: no nor sometimes scarce desire to shed one. I was much dejected, to think that this 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 only was in the storm or tempest. This much sunk me, I thought my condition was alone, I should therefore much bewail my hard hap, but get out of, or get rid of these things, I could not.

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

the sentence that but now I have read.

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

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

109. Yet at times I should have some strong and heart-affecting apprehensions of God, and the reality of the truth of His gospel. But, oh! how would my heart, at such times, put forth itself with unexpressible groanings. My whole soul was then in every word; I should cry with pangs after God, that He would be merciful unto me; but then I should be daunted again with such conceits as these: I should think that God did mock at these my prayers, saying, and that in the audience of the holy angels, *This*

poor simple wretch doth hanker after Me, as if I had nothing to do with My mercy, but to bestow it on such as he. Alas, poor soul! how art thou deceived! It is not for such as thee to have favour with the Highest.

110. Then hath the tempter come upon me, also, with such discouragements as these: *You are very hot for mercy, but I will cool you; this frame shall not last always: many have been as hot as you for a spurt, but I have quenched their zeal* (and with this, such and such, who were fallen off, would be set before mine eyes). Then I should be afraid that I should do so too: But, thought I, I am glad this comes into my mind: well, I will watch, and take what care I can. *Though you do*

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