

CONCISE ACCOUNT

OF THE

EXPERIENCE

OF

JAMES WELLS

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

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PREFACE

THE substance of the following little work, as far as it relates to my experience, was printed eight years ago, in a pamphlet called “ An Address to Joseph;” but as I wished to devote a little tract more exclusively to the purpose of giving a reason of the hope that is in me, I have thrown in a few more observations, and thus send it forth, with the hope of its being useful in the best of all causes.

I. W.

July 15, 1840

A CONCISE ACCOUNT, &c.

IN giving a reason of the hope that is in me, I begin with observing that in the month of December, 1824, the Lord was pleased to lay me on the bed of affliction, which affliction continued three months. After being ill about seven weeks, I was brought, to all human appearance, to the gates of death, when the innumerable multitude of my sins set themselves in array against me, and the terrors of the Almighty made me afraid. The weakness of my body, the anguish of my mind, the fear of death, the dread of condemnation, and the seeming assurance of endless woe; these things sunk me into a pit of such ghastly apprehensions, that I exclaimed, "I am lost; I am lost;" which horrible pit the psalmist knew something of when he said, "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." I well remember that one evening the terrors of my mind were so great, that my tormented imagination almost persuaded me that the old fiend of the bottomless pit was then in the room waiting to receive my soul into the vengeance of eternal fire, and that an angel would come directly and summon me to the judgment seat of God, and that God with his almighty arm and intolerable frown would send me down to the lowest hell, whilst I was convinced that if there was one place more awful than another, I deserved that place. I wanted to go to sleep, that I might forget my misery, yet I was afraid lest he should suddenly cut me off. However, I did sleep a little, but I was tormented in my sleep with such dreadful apprehensions, that of the two it was worse to be asleep than it was to abide awake. Job appears in this path when he speaks thus; "When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scare me with dreams, and terrifies me through visions." When the morning light appeared, and I found that I was still spared, the terror of my mind seemed a little abated; in a word, the Lord let me alone a few hours, and suffered me to take a little comfort. I then begged of my wife to teach me the Lord's prayer, which I had been taught when a child, but had now forgotten; but this I soon found was quite useless, for I felt that my guilt was too weighty, my sins too mighty, the law too holy, justice too inflexible, and the devil too daring for anything to be done by my repeating a form of words. I felt that I was indeed tied and bound with the chain of my sins, that the powers which held me in fearful suspense were not mere *nominal* powers, but *real* powers. "What," said I to myself, "can I do? Not one evil that I have done can I undo. Here are my sins present with me; I am possessing fresh in my memory sins which I had forgotten, which I had looked at as trifles, but which are now like burning mountains around me, and ready to roll in upon me and seal my awful doom. Ten thousand worlds could I have given if I had never sinned against the Lord, or if I could have seen anything like hope of mercy; but all was dark, even darkness that might be felt. I was at this time totally ignorant of the great atonement of Christ, never having been among Christians, either nominal or real. I had learnt nothing about religion, even in the letter of it. While I continued to get worse in body, and death seemed drawing near, what my feelings were I cannot fully describe. The holiness, majesty, and power of God were dreadful to think of. "Yes," said I, my soul is immortal, and must live to all eternity; the Lord will never forgive me, for I have done nothing but sin, I possess nothing but sin, and I deserve nothing but curse and condemnation for sin." How little, how trivial, what toys, what vanities the treasures, and pleasures, and honors of this world appeared! but how great, how important, how solemn, how weighty appeared the things of eternity! I felt as though I had done with this world, and had there been given to me by the Lord a hope of mercy, I believe I should have been perfectly willing to depart; for such was my state of mind, that it was not for the sake of continuing in this world that I had any desire to recover, but I desired to recover that I might

live a good life, get my past sins forgiven, and in this way get to heaven at last; so ignorant was I, as said one of old, “So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.” (Psalm 73:22) While in this state, a young man (a Wesleyan) came and talked to me. He told me that Jesus Christ died for every one of the sons and daughters of Adam, that God was merciful, and that if I would believe in Jesus Christ, and do my part, the mercy of God was so great that he would save me. My part, he said, was to repent and believe. He also knelt down by the side of my bed, and made a very great noise, which extorted from me a great many tears. However, his preaching and his praying, like my own prayer-saying, left me where they found me, or if there was any difference, sunk me lower, for I soon learnt that faith and repentance were out of my reach. Believe that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that God was merciful, I really did; but the question with me was, whether he would be merciful to me; this was what I could not believe. Repent I could, if repentance consisted in being sorry that I was such a great sinner, for the apprehension of everlasting destruction made me heartily sorry for the things I had done. I seemed to believe with a devil’s faith, for I believed and trembled. My repentance seemed to be the repentance of Judas; but my mind was not yet, even in the most distant manner, made acquainted with the great plan of salvation. I still thought that the matter lay in a great measure with myself, yet I felt that I could not help myself. But, thought I, if I should be restored to health, I shall be able to do many things. I can then read and pray, keep the Sabbath, tell no lies, say no bad words, and shall be better able to drive evil thoughts away; in a word, that I shall be all religion, inside and out, week days and Sundays, at home and abroad, among friends and foes, in adversity and prosperity. But then the thought would come that I should not be restored to health; I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world; I shall go to the gates of the grave. Wearisome nights were indeed appointed me, and I was full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My life, in my apprehension, hung in doubt. I feared night and day, and had none assurance of my life; “Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me; this I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” (Lamentations 3:19—21)

I go on to observe, that a few days after the young man’s visit, I was put into a hackney coach, and taken to St. George’s Hospital, Knightsbridge, where my health began to improve, so that I was soon able to go to the chapel there, and very glad I was to go, hoping that as the Lord had not cut me off, he would yet show mercy; that is, if I did my part, I cannot expect it without, said I to myself. When I came to the chapel, the service consisting in Church of England formalities, I seemed full of confusion, I knew not when to sit down nor when to stand up; so I was guided by the people in this little piece of popish business I well remember when the following words were made use of, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,” my heart really went with the language, for I deeply felt my misery and need of mercy. The text was, “Make your calling and election sure,” which text came to my heart like a messenger of death, and struck quite dead what little comfort I seemed to have; for what making my calling and election sure could mean, I could not make out; and if the minister gave the meaning, it was in a way that put it out of my reach; but that was not doing much, seeing that I was so confused and distracted that I hardly knew where I was. However, the text continued to follow me, and increasingly alarmed and terrified me, for I thought it contained a secret I knew nothing about; and so, it certainly did. In the first place, what the term *election* meant I knew not; and in the next place, how this election whatever it was, could be made sure, I could not find out; and as I saw no one inclined to be serious in the ward where I was, except those who were really dying, I could not prevail on myself to ask any one, thinking I

should get no other answer than a laugh at my ignorance; and if I had, it would have been one fool laughing at another.

When I came out of the hospital, I went as soon as possible to a place of worship, comforting myself with the thought that I was yet out of hell; and as I went on regularly attending a place of formal worship, I soon began to conclude that to make my calling and election sure was to keep the ten commandments, believe in Jesus Christ, love God, and deal honestly with my fellow creatures; and that by being thus faithful, I was going on to do my part. There I was, laboring to be accepted in my own filthy rags, trying to enter the kingdom by the law of the bond children, working hard to make my old Adam nature holy enough for heaven, and all this time thought that I was certainly going the right way to work; yet somehow or another I could not succeed. I used in the evening to try to reckon up how many bad thoughts I had had through the day, but I thought I had so many bad ones that I began to question whether I had one good one. I felt that I was not half nor a quarter so religious as I ought to be, and as I must be if ever, I went to heaven. I could not think how it was, hard as I tried, that I could not be as good as I wished and worked hard to be. I was more and more dissatisfied with myself, and sometimes a scripture would come and make me tremble, especially the following; "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." These words, day after day, pierced me through and through. I felt and saw of all tribunals there was none so dreadful as the bar of God. Said I to myself, "What shall I do? where shall I appear? how shall I lift up my head, having not one thing in my favor? O that I could be good, that I could get rid of all evil thoughts and feelings, that I could love God with all my mind, that I could be holy even as he is holy. While in this state, I joined the Arminian camp, and as I heard a great noise, I thought it was the noise of war with the world, the flesh, and the devil; but in the course of a very few months I found that this noise was the voice of free-will boasting of the golden calf of creature sovereignty; for when Moses came with his fiery law, and burnt the calf, ground it to powder, and cast it into my cup, and made me drink it, I was very much dissatisfied with my situation. Bitter experience taught me the nothingness, helplessness, and vileness of the creature.

I went to a Sunday morning prayer meeting, and the people who came to this meeting seemed very happy, very holy, very zealous, and very noisy. They very kindly asked me what I had done for the Lord, and said they hoped I was not a stranger to these things. I told them that I really was, and feared I always should be. They then asked me what I had experienced; so, I begun in my feeble way to relate some of the soul-troubles, trials, hopes, and fears with which I had been exercised, and that my nature was so wicked that I seemed nothing but sin. They then told me that there needed a deeper work of grace to be done in me, which, said they, you may have if you will but believe and pray; yes, they told me also that the Lord would so sanctify me and make me so holy that I should not have one evil thought, nor have occasion to say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" for he said this when he was first under conviction; he went on to perfection; (perfection in himself they meant.) So I received these lies, and knew not but they were God's truth; for although they brought me no deliverance, yet I was very much pleased with these old wives' fables; a child is pleased with toys and rattles, which, when it arrives at manhood, it will scorn to be amused with. So these free-will rattles were at that time to me very amusing; for, thought I, if I can get rid of my native wretchedness, and become quite holy, I shall be happy at once, for I have no other trouble worth calling a trouble, when compared with the misery of sin which I daily feel. For this desirable object I strove and labored hard, and sometimes actually fancied that I was getting a little better. I

one day told one of the perfect ones that I thought I was getting more heavenly. "Aye," said he, that's right; you will be perfect if you go on." Aye, said I to myself, that I will. But this conceit lasted only a few hours, for the following reflections soon stripped me of my flattering notions. I bethought myself thus; what am I to do with my past sins, are they forgiven? I have no reason to believe they are forgiven, and tremble with fear that they never will be. Again, hath the Lord given me true repentance? am I really born again? have I ever been one moment free from sin? do I not feel the workings of pride, ingratitude, hypocrisy, worldly-mindedness, peevishness, yes, evils of all sorts? have I not promised that I would drive all those enemies out, and have I driven one out? do I not seem more instead of less under their power? do not these evils hinder me from setting my affections on things above? do I not feel as vile as sin can make me? and what one good thing have I done? not one; and what have I towards being righteous before God? not one thread; and where shall I look for comeliness? am I not deformity itself? can there be a more helpless worm under the sun? am I not beset, morning, noon and night, with thoughts and feelings which I should be ashamed to utter? and "he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole." Where is that perfection, or any signs of that perfection of which I was just now dreaming? Thus, to me sin revived, and thus far killed my false hope. I was working hard, and I believe the devil was too, to keep me ignorant of my real state as a sinner, that I might build myself up in delusion, and go on in enmity against the truth; but as fast as I built my hay and straw houses they were burnt, and I was driven about seeking to enter into the kingdom, but did not yet know the narrow way.

After a few weeks, I was again catechized to know what progress I had made, how much holiness I had obtained, how much sin I had got rid of, how much better I felt, what work I had done for the Lord, and whether I was going on to perfection; whether I truly loved God and all my fellow-creatures. But I had found, by distressing experience, that the Ethiopian could not change his color, nor the leopard his spots; for I found not only a law in my members warring against the law in my mind, but my mind was filled with such blasphemous thoughts that I trembled and feared that the Lord would cut me down as a cumberer of the ground, and at once sink me to perdition. This being my state, I told them what a sinner I saw and felt myself to be, and what fearful looking for of judgment I had, and that my wicked heart, since I had *been trying to make it better*, was, if possible, ten times worse than before. To this they gave but little heed, which made me begin to suspect that they were strangers to the deep waters I was then wading through. I then began to read the Bible more and more. I found many parts of the word seemed to contradict their doctrines; and then, again, many parts seemed to favor their doctrine. These apparent contradictions filled me with confusion.

About this time, one of the most pious and most perfect among them told me that those who had committed the unpardonable sin *could not repent*. This made me tremble, for I thought this was just my state, and although I did not know in what the unpardonable sin consisted, yet I felt such hardness of heart, darkness, deadness, vileness, evil workings, and confusion that, "surely," said I, "I have committed this sin." Yet, strange to say, at times I seemed careless, light, trifling, vain, and worldly minded; but still there was an uneasiness at the bottom, and I felt that these things were of the flesh, and tended to betray me into inconsistency of conduct. From this, however, I was, upon the whole, mercifully preserved, but the ten thousand abominations working within made me truly miserable. There I was with my heart like the nether millstone, and my mind like an old bush full of thorns, and destitute of all that was good, and seemingly destined to be burned. "Yes," said I, "if inability to repent be an evidence that I have committed the unpardonable sin,

then I certainly am lost, for I cannot repent, nor love God, nor cleanse my heart; and what is to be done? I have nothing but sin in me; I have done nothing but sin; there is nothing due to me but condemnation for sin; there is nothing else before me; there is nothing else for me.”

While under this state of mind I became so peevish that I could hardly give any one a civil word. I hated my own existence, and thought that the Lord made me see and feel my wretchedness that I might have a hell here as well as hereafter. Yet, now and then a little secret hope would spring up; and then, again, I thought it was nothing but a delusion for me to indulge in anything like hope; for, thought I, what have I to recommend me to God, to give me any hope that he will receive me? Nothing at all; and it is wonderful that he has spared me as he has, for I do nothing but break my promises which *I make to God*. I have promised to guard against bad thoughts, to be humble, not to think about this world, not to speak one idle word, not to forget God. “Now,” said conscience, “you have broken these vows again and again, therefore you are a downright hypocrite. You appear serious before men, while in your heart you are full of rottenness and everything which is abominable in the sight of God. You are a very monster.” “Well,” said I, “this is certainly all true, and my best way will be to forget heaven, to forget hell, to forget God and my own soul, and everything pertaining to religion, for there is no hope.” But the more I tried to carry this resolution into effect, the further I was from it. The words, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” came rolling in upon my mind like a mighty tempest, driving all before it, so that I could not trifle with the name, the ways, or the word of the living God. I *felt* that I was a sinner; I *felt* that there was a God; I felt that he was holy, that he was a consuming fire, that he was a sin-avenging God.

About this time, I went with a Wesleyan to hear an aged minister. He was a low Calvinist; therefore, the Wesleyan could hear him very well. His text was, “Love one another with a pure heart fervently.” He talked a great deal about its being the duty of Christians to love one another, and it was to me a season I shall never forget; the blasphemous thoughts, the dread of damnation, the vivid recollection of past sins without a seeding grain of hope; I would have given any thing if I could have got out of the chapel. (The chapel I now allude to is in Paradise-row, Chelsea.) The old gentleman, with his *duty-love* tale, was to me a miserable comforter, a physician of no value; aye, and I now believe that he was a forger of lies. I know he came not, in his ministration, into the prison where I was, nor even to the door. We came not near each other throughout the whole of his sermon. He did not preach like a sinner saved by grace, nor like a minister of the Spirit. “I was sick and in prison, and he visited me not; I was hungry, and he gave me no meat; thirsty, and he gave me no drink; naked, and he clothed me not; a stranger, and he took me not in.” And no wonder, for if he himself had never been sick and in prison, how could he know where to look for those whom God had wounded? How, if he had never been longing and thirsting, could he sympathize with these who were ready to perish, and whose tongues tailed with thirst? How, if he had never felt that he was a stranger, could he describe either what it is to be afar off, or what it is to be brought nigh? Such are false apostles. The Wesleyan with whom I went to hear the old gentleman was mightily pleased, and, of course, I was not offended, for I *then* thought the minister really was that good, holy, meek, humble creature which he seemed to be. Such, however, was the misery I had felt that I dreaded going to a place of worship again, lest I should again be beset in the like manner.

There was now given to me a ticket to be admitted to a love feast, on which ticket were written these words, "James Wells, admitted *on trial*:" The last two words were quite enough for me. On trial! On trial! thought I; on trial! they certainly begin to see that I am just such a poor creature as I feel myself to be. Well then, of what use will this love feast be to me? I have no love, nor life, nor light, nor anything else that accompanies salvation. In this way I reasoned myself out of the love feast, so that I did not go. I had not forgotten the old gentleman's *duty-love* sermon; or rather the anguish of mind and heart I experienced while trying to listen to it. But though I did not go to the love feast, yet I still attended the Sunday morning prayer meeting, where and when each was expected to say a little concerning his experience. My tale as usual being nothing but lamentation and woe, I was altogether out of their tone, I could neither be lively nor pleasant, nor glory even in appearance, although I kept my trouble as much as possible to myself, and tried hard to be as cheerful as I could. While I began to be convinced that there was something somewhere that I knew nothing about, these Wesleyans never seemed to feel either their vileness or helplessness in the way that I did.

I now began to run about to different chapels to see if I could hear a Bible experience described, and also to find if the doctrine of election were really a doctrine of the Bible; for I began to have some inclination to think that absolute election was a doctrine of the Bible, although I could not as yet receive it. I ran about on Sundays and week evenings from chapel to church, and from church to chapel. I found one preaching up human duties; another, charitable societies; another, universal offers and invitations; another saying election was a doctrine of the Bible but we had little or nothing to do with it; but as to entering into and opening up eternal election, divine predestination, the infinitely glorious atonement of Christ, the acceptance of the church in Christ, her oneness with him, her certain salvation by him, her coming through grace to him, her willingness to suffer for him, her resting upon him, her longing after him, the saving operations of the Holy Spirit, real soul trouble, distressing temptations, long and deep searching's of heart; these rising billows, these storms, these earthquakes, this rending of the vail from top to bottom leaving the sinner no shelter; these things, together with manifested mercy, are things with which the ministers I at that time heard were evidently unacquainted. Yet their sermons are often so feasible that, being themselves deceived, they would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect; but the Lord's elect are taught of God, and who teaches like him?

As I now had, from reading the Bible, some faint and distant views of the doctrines, I became (in addition to my concern and longing for mercy) anxious to know whether the high doctrines or the low doctrines were the doctrines the Bible. I had tried the low doctrines, and no poor creature could be more earnest than I had been and still was. I had found, that if the low doctrines were true, for me there was no hope; for I in my misery, beyond the reach of Wesleyanism, and low Calvinism. I was, in my apprehensions beyond the reach of mercy. Yet, as I went on reading the Bible, and hearing dead letter men, I became increasingly inclined to believe that election was a doctrine of the Bible.

About this time, I was led in the course of providence into the company of a man who was favored with a knowledge of the truth. He talked to me of Christian experience in a way that described a great deal of what I had been through, and when I found he had been where I then was, I related to him some of the fears and conflicts with which I was then exercised. He said that he believed the Lord had begun a work of grace in my heart; from which I felt very greatly encouraged. It quite

revived me, and made me feel as though I could almost hope that there might be mercy in reserve for me, so that I went on seeking mercy, at the same time fearing I should never find it. He told me also of election, but as I could not as yet believe the doctrine, I began to cavil at it, nor could he make me believe it; yet he brought scriptures enough to stop my saying any more against it. While I was thus staggered between high and low doctrines, a Wesleyan told me that the eighteenth of Ezekiel completely overturned all the high doctrines, for there it is written, "When a man turns from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive;" "But when a man turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, his righteousness shall not be mentioned." Now, said the Wesleyan, can you get over this? Well, I said, I certainly could not, but that, perhaps, there was a meaning in it that neither of us could see. I was at this time grown very cautious, for I began to see that there were deceivers gone out into the world, and that in the Lord's name. This eighteenth of Ezekiel tormented me considerably, until I came to these words, which began to open up the secret and make the matter clear; "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not according to the covenant I made with them when I took them by the hand and brought them out of Egypt; but this is the covenant that I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their hearts, and write them on their minds, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Well, said I, this new covenant is high doctrine all through. The laws of truth are to be written in the hearts of the people, their sins are to be forgiven and remembered no more for ever; the laws of truth are to be thus written and the sins of the people forgiven by the Lord himself, and that according to the council of his own will, for there is no if, but the promises are yea and amen. Moses set before the people life and death, good and evil, and they were to choose which they would, but Christ hath destroyed death. While Moses, in old covenant language, tells the people to choose which they will, Paul, in new covenant language, tells the saints that they were blest with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world. The old covenant came with, "If thou obey the voice of the Lord thy God, thou shalt be blest in the city and in the field, in thy basket and in thy store." The new covenant comes with, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me; I will be their God and they shall be my people." The old covenant comes with, "This people do err in their hearts for they have not known my ways." But the new covenant comes with, "And they shall all know me from the least to the greatest." The old covenant priesthood was after the law of a carnal commandment; the new covenant priesthood is after the power of an endless life. The deliverance from Egypt was after the order of the old covenant, and was temporal; but the salvation of the new covenant is eternal. The Lord took the old covenant people by the hand; he takes the new covenant people by the heart. The food, the raiment, and the victories of the old covenant people were after the flesh, and temporary; but the food, the raiment, the victories of the new covenant people of God are after the Spirit, and are eternal. The genealogy of the old covenant people was after the flesh; they were reckoned after the flesh; but the new covenant people are reckoned according to the Lamb's book of life; all their sins were laid on him; they are reckoned not as children of men but as children of God; "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;" "Reckoned not after the image of the earthy but after the image of the heavenly in which relation, likeness, and position, they are spotless, unblameable, without fault, and eternally safe. The throne of the old covenant is at an end; but of the throne of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The kingdom of David is no more; but of the kingdom of Christ there is no end. The royalty of the old covenant was tarnished; the royalty of the new covenant remains in perfection of beauty. The vineyard mentioned in the fifth of Isaiah was after the order of the old covenant,

therefore destructible; the vineyard mentioned in the twenty-seventh of Isaiah is after the order of the new covenant, and therefore indestructible. The parable of the prodigal son, as far as it concerns the prodigal, is the language of the new covenant; therefore the prodigal, notwithstanding the enormity of his sins, was joyfully received, abundantly forgiven and supplied, entertained and made welcome to all that a father's heart could devise or his hand provide; but the parable of the talents is after the order of the old covenant, and therefore the approbation of the Lord depended not upon the obedience of one for them. They could not be approved in another, but must each perform the conditions, in order to enjoy the reward. Mere creature obedience can receive, as a reward, nothing more than creature things; but the obedience of Christ is called the righteousness of God. Therefore, it is that those who are chosen in Christ are made partakers of the Spirit of God, are brought to live in the life of God, are upheld by the power of God, are guided by the counsel of God, are made acquainted with the mind of God, rest upon the immutability of God, glory in the salvation of God, are supplied from the fulness of God, and forever shall they dwell in the presence of God.

Again, as there was disparity between the two covenants, so there was some degree of likeness. The old covenant did not extend to all nations, neither does the new covenant extend to the whole race of Adam, for "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens." The paschal lamb was for the Israelites; Christ laid down his life for the sheep. The Lord put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel; true believers are not of the world, because the Lord hath chosen them out of the world. The Lord hath made them to differ. The manna and the water out of the rock were for the Israelites; Christ is the life, the sanctification, and the way in which the souls of his people are satisfied. The promised land was for Israel; the everlasting kingdom shall be given to those for whom it is prepared; the many sons who are brought to glory are those for whom Christ tasted death. These are the all for whom he died, the all that shall come unto him, the all who shall be taught of God and come to the knowledge of the truth.

I used to sit up frequently until two o'clock in the morning searching the Scriptures. "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress" was the only book, besides the Bible, that I had in the house, and that being allegorical, I could not understand much of it, and felt very little interest in it. My whole interest was in the Bible, which I searched with great eagerness. Sometimes the thought would come that there was no mercy for me, and what mattered it to me who were right or who were wrong. But then, again, a little encouragement would come. I was favored with a little help, by which means I continued for several weeks to sit up every night, after a hard day's work, searching the Scriptures, in order to find out whether the high doctrines or the low doctrines were the right, for I knew, from bitter experience, that if the low doctrines were true, I must lie down in eternal despair, but at the same time there were a thought and feeling sprung up in my mind that if the high doctrines were true it was possible there was mercy for me. When I began to have only distant views of the high doctrines, I saw they set forth richer grace, greater mercy, a better Savior, more abundant pardon, and more suitable promises than did the low doctrines. "The high doctrines," said I, "if true, set open a door of hope just suited to such a lost, ruined, vile, and helpless creature as I daily feel myself to be." After searching the Scriptures several weeks to find if election was a doctrine of the Bible, the two covenants, the two seeds, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, election and reprobation, the bond children and the free, the wheat and the tares, the goats and the sheep, that there was a people to be saved and a people to be lost, were to me made clear. I was now no longer at a loss to understand the eighteenth of Ezekiel. I saw that the righteousness

there spoken of consisted in a daily conformity to the laws and statutes which were given to the Jews, and that, in thus conforming to these laws and statutes, they should have temporal prosperity, and should thus save their souls alive; not save their souls in the Lord, but should preserve their lives from famine, from pestilence and the sword; but the day in which they turned from their righteousness they should be exposed to these calamities; but the righteousness of Christ is an everlasting righteousness; in it shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. These are born of an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever, and the Lord their God will never leave nor forsake them: they are preserved for ever.

Now, who in his senses can, under these circumstances, blame me for becoming high in doctrine? Spiritual sickness, spiritual poverty, misery, guilt, vileness, fear, distress, and dread of eternity drove me to seek that which the world could not produce, which no creature could bestow, which no human works could bring, and which low doctrines could not furnish. What then was I to do? Rest I could not; be put off with the mere form of godliness I could not, for I found every means fail and the low doctrines of no use. I was too deeply sunk in the miry clay of soul trouble for moderation systems to reach me. I felt that I was not a moderate sinner, therefore I needed something more than a moderate salvation. I needed an atonement, having in it *infinite* power to redeem, to cleanse, to pardon, to swallow up death, and to overcome all adverse powers. Such is the great atonement of our incarnate God, an atonement which has met, does meet, and shall meet and defy sin, death, hell, and the grave; an atonement which overcomes the enmity of the carnal mind, together with all the darkness, bondage, temptations, falls, fears, tribulations, and enemies of the children of God; an atonement by which God the Father appears in the sweet harmony of all the perfections of his nature, honoring the great atonement of his dear Son, by sending those for whom this atonement was made out of the pit wherein is no water, drawing them to the Savior, manifesting forgiving mercy and endearing love, lifting upon them the light of his countenance, thus showing that he is well pleased with us in Christ, and in this, his good pleasure, there is no variableness, neither *shadow* of turning. He thus, by the atonement of Christ, shows to the *heirs of promise* the immutability of his counsel, and that, in his love, mercy, and grace there is no scarcity, no littleness, no weakness, no mutation, no hesitation, no termination. Christ went to the end of the law, but there is no getting to the end of the gospel. To sin, tribulation, death, and the grave, there will be an end; but salvation is everlasting, consolation is everlasting, life is everlasting, glory is everlasting, God our Father's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. This mercy *comes by*, and is *according to* the atonement of Christ; it is sovereign, free, full, and eternal. Of this great mercy, by this great atonement, I was brought to feel my need. I knew that the possession of a thousand worlds, without this great atonement, would leave me miserably poor; for what could it profit me to gain all these and lose my own soul? and no remedy within my reach had I left untried while refuge continued to fail me. There I was, after all my doings, still sick and in prison; still hungry and thirsty, and a stranger to God. I saw him afar off; I beheld him in his great acts of mercy towards his people; I saw that God was good unto Israel, to such as are of a clean heart; but as for me, I knew not what a clean heart meant, for all the day long had I been plagued, and chastened every morning; therefore moderation systems were to me worse than nothing. These systems became vinegar to my teeth, smoke to my eyes, gall to my taste, a mockery to my ears, thorns to my hands, and miry clay to my feet. I knew sin was not a moderate evil; I knew not only my need of the obedient life, atoning death, and suretyship responsibility of Christ, together with the ancient provisions and settlements of mercy; but I knew also my need of a *divine* application of these things; for a human application I had found to be of no avail. Professors said it was my

own fault, that I might have these things if I applied for them, that I ought to pray more, that I ought to give the Lord no rest, that I ought not to allow mine eyes to sleep until I was satisfied that matters were right between God and my own soul. All this seemed very true in *theory*, but the *practical* department was quite another thing. The practical part substantiated this one truth, that I was shut up and could not come forth. So true it is, that when he shuts up none can open, and when he hides his face, who then can behold him? This experience stripped me of my fondness for low doctrines, moderate systems, and rounds of dead works. To me, moderate power, moderate mercy, and a moderate gospel were of no use. It mattered not what un-humbled, talkative, prating, and formal professors said, for I felt they could not persuade me that I had experienced what I knew I had not experienced, nor could I be kept under the delusion that prayer was at my command. I learned, from feeling, that prayer, real spiritual prayer, is as much the gift of God as is salvation itself; and, if it were not, why is the Holy Spirit called the Spirit of grace and supplication? As we hunger and thirst by the laws of nature, so we thirst for God by the laws of grace; and, where the Holy Spirit does not bring these laws into the mind, there is no real thirsting for God; for he who brings these laws into the soul keeps them in operation as seems good in his sight. These laws are the law of life, the law of liberty, the law of love, and the law of faith; and those who are regulated by these laws wrought in them by power from on high, are said to walk by faith, that is, they walk in a believing hold of the truths of the gospel. God is a God of truth; he lives in the truth; and brings his people into the belief of the truth; so that in this truth, which is yea and amen in Christ Jesus, they have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Thus, by the laws of truth, they come forth just as the Spirit of truth is pleased to lead them; for he it is who guides them into all truth; he it is that testifies of Christ and makes him precious to the soul; he it is that sheds abroad in the heart the love of God the Father; he it is that breaks up the fountains of the great deep within; he it is that opens up to the mind the counsels of eternity. He is the four winds that breathe upon the slain and bring into the soul life eternal. Of this Almighty Testifier of Jesus, I felt my need. I felt that the flesh profited nothing, and that in my flesh dwelt no good thing. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform that which was good, I found not. I knew the Holy Spirit would do nothing without Christ; I knew Christ came into the world to save sinners; I knew I needed the Lord Jesus to be my everything, my all in all, for I possessed nothing, could do nothing, and could deserve nothing but cursing, bitterness, and woe.

From an experience of need I searched the Scriptures with great eagerness, ardor, and diligence, and was led to the conclusion that the election had obtained it and the rest were blinded. Now, when I came to this conclusion, several temptations entered into my mind; one of which was, that I was amongst those that were lost; and another came in this way, "You had better go back and enjoy the pleasures of the world; and, if you are one of God's elect, he will call you, for either you are one of his, or you are not. If you are, he will save you without your troubling yourself about it; and if you are not one of his, all your seeking, trying, doubting, and fearing will be of no use, for the elect are sure to be saved, and those whose names are not in the book of life are sure to be lost." All this appeared very feasible, and indeed is solemnly true, but it was thrown into my mind in a way that tended to create in me a spirit of awful, devilish, and destructive presumption. The enemy, in this temptation, was trying to get me so to use the doctrines of divine decrees, as to trifle with the holiness, justice, majesty, power, and truth of the ever-blessed God; and to trifle also with my own soul. But while, on the one hand, I knew none but those who are chosen to salvation could be saved, and that I could be saved in no other way than by the grace which is set forth in the high doctrines; yet, on the other hand, I knew that the promise was not to those who *trifled*, but to those

who *trembled*. I knew I should have to meet my Maker. I knew I was a sinner in his sight, that he is true to his threatening's as well as to his promise; that while not one word of the gospel can pass away, so not one jot nor tittle of the law can fail. These things lay heavy on my mind; with me the world had lost its charms. In a word, I saw no beauty in anything but in Christ. I could behold the beauty of the Lord afar off. I could see his salvation was not in one, two, or three respects, but in every respect suited to my state; but to call it mine was no more in my power than it was to hide the waters of the ocean in the hollow of my hand, to hold the winds in my fists, or make the clouds the dust of my feet. I felt that I had no reason, no right to conclude that I was one of the Lord's people; yet I did hunger and thirst after his righteousness, but then I could not believe that my hunger and thirst were of the right kind. I was tormented with blasphemous thoughts, and my experience seemed to be all blackness, bondage, and fear. A dreadful blasphemous thought, directed against God, tormented me almost incessantly for about three months. This thought was so awful, that I never did, and I feel to this day as though I never could name it, either by word or writing. It followed me everywhere, and the more I thought of God the more I was tortured with this infernal suggestion; and yet this same thought, which tormented me three months, though it is at this moment, while I write, fresh in my memory, it has not the least power over me; it is now a broken chain, a powerless foe, a dead body. The monster is slain, never, I hope, in my mind again to revive.

Previously to my deliverance I was miserable to the last degree. Duty-faith, duty-love, duty repentance, rounds of formalities, universal offers, the dead letter doctrines of free-willism and low Calvinism were all husks to me. Fain indeed would I have filled my belly with these husks, which the swine eat with pleasure, while my language was, "I perish with hunger, and no man giveth unto me." I was therefore compelled to arise, for I needed what these did not, could not bring. I felt that I was weakness itself, that I was as vile as it was possible for a creature to be. There I was, without even a fig leaf to cover me, without a mite towards the payment of the mighty debt, without one reason to assign why I should not be lost, without a good thought, good word, or good work. But the day of salvation was not far off. I had before been told by men that "now is the day of salvation." "Yes," said I, "it is no doubt the day of salvation with some; it was the day of salvation with those to whom the apostle said, "Now is the day of salvation;" but with me it was the day, not of salvation, but of condemnation. To tell me, while I was in that state, that with me it was the day of salvation, was like trying to persuade the sick man that he is in health, or the double-ironed prisoner that he is not in bondage, or the debtor that he owes nothing, or the blind that he can see, or the deaf that he can hear, or the dumb that he can speak, or the totally paralyzed that he can walk, and work, and leap like the hart upon the mountains. It is true that conviction of sin and living desire after God are evidences that the good work is begun, but there must be the experience of forgiving mercy before any real resting in the Lord can be enjoyed. When the desire comes it is indeed a tree of life; then is the day of salvation; then saving health, holy liberty, and royal release are known and felt; then the eyes that see are not dim, the ear listens with delight, the tongue moves with joy, the previously paralyzed mind works, and walks, and glories in the way of gospel commandments.

Under a feeling sense of my need of these things I continued until the day of salvation arrived, which was but a comparatively little while, for it was not more than twelvemonths from the time I began to be abidingly concerned about eternal things. Though these twelve months were to me anything but short or pleasant, yet they were truly profitable; for the things I experienced emptied

me, and made me long for a full Christ; humbled, and made me bow to an exalted Savior; stripped, and made me desire the garments of salvation and robe of righteousness; wounded, and made me look for the healing balm of atoning blood, brought my helplessness to light, and made me feel my need of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in a covenant ordered in all things and sure; and nothing but almighty power kept me from entire desperation and destruction. After thus continuing in this prison-house of fear, distress, and bondage, the day of mercy arrived.

On returning home from my work one evening, much cast down, melancholy, and miserable, weary in body, and worn out in mind with soul-trouble, I went and laid down on the bed, and thought of the awful state I was in, as being without hope and without God in the world, and that my portion at last would be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; that I was reserved in the chain of my sins unto the judgment of the last day; that I should then sink to endless woe to rise no more. After reflecting awhile in these gloomy regions of almost black despair, I rose from the bed and went to the Bible, with no more thought of finding mercy than of being king of England. However, I opened it, and began to read the 54th chapter of Isaiah, until I came to the 8th verse, which reads thus; "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." These words, as I read them, came with such power that they filled me with astonishment, overwhelmed me with wonder, and caused me to exclaim, "What means this?" I found my guilt depart, darkness passed away, fears were removed, my heart enlarged, my mind released, my feelings changed, my soul delivered, and all my powers absorbed in the treasures of the text. I sat and wept, and wondered, and said there was mercy for me after all; that Jesus was certainly my Redeemer; that he shed his blood for me; that he wrought out and brought in everlasting righteousness for me. I read the text again, and again, and still it remained mighty to my soul, put the enemy under my feet, put my trouble far away, and with its precious contents filled my soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Again, I looked and wept, and wondered, and could hardly believe such a treasure could be mine; and then again, the text would come, "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." This again would make me say, "It certainly is mine, even mine." "Then," said I to myself, "I shall never leave off rejoicing; no, never; now I am happy forever." I was thus brought into a new world; old things were passed away, and all things were become new; The truths which I had seen afar off were now brought nigh, and made unto me spirit and life. The God at whose name I had trembled was now all my delight, all my salvation, and all my desire; he was now near and dear to me. I now felt that he was on my side, and I loved him sincerely in all the settlements and purposes of his love. I looked at election, and could rejoice that my name was written in heaven. I looked at predestination, and could give thanks unto the Lord that he had not appointed me unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. I looked at my sins, and saw that they were all laid upon his dear Son. I looked at the law, and saw it fulfilled, its curse removed, and my soul delivered from going down to the pit. I could look at the great work of Christ, and see that I was complete therein, and forever perfected thereby. I knew the Holy Spirit had begun the good work, and that he would carry it on. I knew that this God was my God for ever and ever; that he would be my guide even unto death.

The next morning, as I went to my work, everything appeared new; the heavens and the earth, the trees, the winds, all seemed to remind me of the voice of that salvation which I now so abundantly enjoyed. I now went to my daily labor with joy, and ate my bread with gladness and singleness of heart. In this enjoyment of pardoning mercy, in this liberty wherewith Christ had made me free, in

this fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, in this large and wealthy place, in this mount of trans-figuration, in this assurance of interest in God, in this dominion over enemies internal and external, I walked for several weeks; and although my sins, discouragements, castings down, doubts, fears, and perplexities, have since been numerous, yet I have never been sunk into such a state as I was in previous to this deliverance, this mount Hermon, this hill Mizar, this coming into the banqueting house, I hope never to forget.

I say I hope never to forget; but, alas! when the Lord hides his face, and the enemy comes in like a flood, my old nature siding with the enemy, the Bible a sealed book, no power in prayer, the earth under me as iron, the heavens over my head as brass, and seemingly destitute of thought or feeling, or even inclination to anything spiritual, full of self, the devil, and the world; when thus dead and stupid, when thus shut up, when thus carnally minded, I seem as though I knew nothing of the Lord, and as though I never did know anything. There seems to be no going out after God, no communication from God, no reproof from the precept, no transforming power from the promise, no pleasure in the service of the Lord; yet I cannot give up the truth, cannot be at home in the world, cannot approve of nor receive doctrines that oppose the free-grace honors of the dear Lamb of God. My harp is hung upon the willows, and I sit down by the rivers of Babylon, the rivers of confusion, the confusing and confused system of false doctrines. I sit down by the side of these rivers; they roll along, carrying their thousands, and I should go with them too, but mercy follows and holds me. Nor can I mingle my songs with theirs, for if I cannot sing of free grace, and free grace alone, I must remain in silence. Thus, though the feelings of my mind change, yet the *sentiments* of my heart remain the same, for I am no more willing to give up the truth when I am dark and dead in my feelings, than I am when I am on the mount of enjoyment I thus walk by faith; but when darkness of mind prevails, there is unbelief in exercise, and a very great many doubts, fears, and reasonings opposing faith; and herein is the conflict, which can be settled to my satisfaction only by the presence of the Lord. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Not all the duties, all the prayers, nor all the sermons in the world can enable me to call the Lord mine. Nothing can do this but his presence, the light of his countenance, the anointing of his Holy Spirit, the diffusing through the soul the savouriness of Jesus' name, the shedding abroad a Father's love. Without this authority I feel no right to call the Redeemer mine. Nothing like having for our conclusion's good authority; for if I conclude that I am a real Christian, then the question is, who or what has brought me to this conclusion? One poor lunatic concludes that he is a great scholar, and another that he is a mighty warrior, and another that he is a celebrated emperor; but where it is the lot of these poor things to come to their senses, they soon find that their conclusions were wrong; and are not unregenerate men as much deceived in matters pertaining to eternity? Thousands of thousands are concluding that they are Christians, while they have not one iota of divine authority so to conclude. A man who lives and dies ignorant of, and an enemy to, the great truth of the gospel, dying in all the enmity which is nursed and fostered by free will and low Calvinism, dying in a state of aversion to the rightful sovereignty of the Most High, dying in the delusive charm of so called Christian charity, dying without having been *experimentally* humbled, stripped, and emptied; what must be the portion of such an one? It is one thing to say in the light of the letter of the word that Christ is the only Savior and only hope, and another thing to have been cut down and raised up, wounded and healed, and torn to pieces and put together by the Spirit of the living God. Dying in any state short of this regenerating work of God, is to die in our sins.

Knowing as I do, and that from experience, that my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and knowing also that many are deceived, that eternal things, in importance, infinitely surpass all other things, and that narrow is the way, and few there be that find it; knowing these things, nothing can give me rest but the Lord himself making these matters clear; and though my evidences are obscured again, again, and again, yet does not the Lord forsake the work of his own hands, but repeats the tokens of his favor. In the light of his countenance is life, and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain.

All the chastisements of the Lord which he lays upon his people are called a little wrath, that is, fatherly, not vindictive wrath. Christ endured all the retributive wrath due to the church. Her chastisements, therefore, are light afflictions; the heaviest of her troubles are light compared with that which the Lord of life and glory endured for her. If the curse which he endured had fallen upon the church, it would have held her in everlasting chains, because she could have no ransom at command, no righteousness to plead, no holiness in which to appear; but Christ hath redeemed her from the curse of the law, and that by his own blood; therefore, all her afflictions are comparatively light, and endure but a moment; her glory infinitely outweighs her afflictions, and eternally outlives all her troubles. A very little affliction outweighs the pleasures of this world, but all the adversities of the righteous amount not to the weight of a feather compared with those things which are reserved for them.

All I have felt, experienced, passed through, and seen in the profane and in the professing world, among Christians, nominal and real, in prosperity or adversity; all I have felt, seen, and known since I have tasted that the Lord is gracious, confirms in me the truth that salvation is entirely of grace. God the Father is called the God of all grace, and grace and truth came by the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace; thus, is the Lord a God of grace *for* his people, *to* his people, *in* his people, and *with* his people. Such has been, and such is my experience of my own nothingness, vileness, helplessness, and loathsomeness, that were not election to eternal life an election of grace; were not predestination according to the riches of his grace; were not justification freely by his grace; were not redemption and forgiveness of sin entirely of grace; did not the Holy Spirit carry on his work as a Spirit of grace; were not salvation thus, from first to last, all of grace, I know by experience, and from the word of God, that I should have no more hope than those who are now in perdition. I am not, through mercy, ashamed to own that I do sincerely love the great doctrines of omnipotent grace. These words, these doctrines were found, and I did eat them, and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart; "I rejoice at thy word as one that finds great spoil; I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food." These great truths swallow up all the curses of the Bible, overcome all adverse powers, and defy anything to be laid before God to the charge of his elect; and as the gospel, as it were, swallows up the law, so the promise swallows up the precept. The gospel does not make void the law, but establishes, magnifies, and honors it; so, the promise does not make void the precept, but the promise is broader than the precept; that is, it promises all, and more than all the precept demands. All the precepts are wrapped up in these two; "Believe in me," and "Love one another." Faith purifies the heart from enmity against the truth, overcomes the world, and endears the Savior, and the love of Christ constrains us to every good word and work. The precepts are followers of the promises, and not the promises followers of the precepts. The Jewish Sabbath followed the six days of the week, but our Sabbath goes first, and the six days follow after. Now our rest, our repose, our Sabbath speaks on this wise; "God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The promise goes

first, to supply and enable; and the precept comes after, to direct, to correct, rebuke, and reprove. But the period is fast coming when that as faith and hope will be lost in sight, so the precept will be lost in the glory of the promise; for we shall be *unrebukable, unproveable, and unblameable in his sight*. This arises from completeness in Christ, and conformity to Christ. He always was and always will be unrebukable, unproveable, and unblameable, and “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

So completely am I assured of my own no-thingness, and of salvation being entirely of grace, that I confess I do not like anything that stands opposed to, makes light of, or in any way treats these great truths with indifference. The Lord Jesus Christ cannot be scripturally preached, nor savingly received, contrary to these doctrines; and to make light of the great doctrines of grace is to make light of Christ. Whatever love men may profess to have to him, if they hate or make light of his truth, they will be reckoned among his enemies, though they may have preached and prophesied in his name. The name of those who profess to love him, yet hate his truth, is Legion, for they are many. Those who love the truth are few, a remnant according to the election of grace. The ministers of God minister these things according to the gifts and abilities which are bestowed upon them. If one dwell much more upon experience than another, it does not follow that he thinks less of the doctrines than another, who dwells more upon doctrine; nor does it follow that he who dwells most upon doctrines makes light of true experience, or that he is not as much exercised as the brother who dwells more upon experience. The one shows the necessity and nature of the work of God in the soul, the other shows the necessity and nature of that salvation which Christ hath wrought for the soul. While the one does not leave out the doctrines, although he does not dwell so much upon them, the other does not leave out experience, although he does not dwell so much upon experience. There is this difference, and always was, and always will be, in the gifts and abilities of the ministers of God. Some dwell a good deal among the caves and dens of the earth, finding out the Lord's hidden ones; others dwell more among the provisions of the old store, to bring forth bread and wine to the hungry and the faint, who are some lying and some knocking at the door of mercy; and after all, the whole matter lies with the Lord, the excellency of the power is of God. If I hear a man who dwells chiefly upon experience, and I enjoy the presence of the Lord, the word being attended with power, I then feel humbled before, and thankful to the Lord that he has not left me to rest in the mere theory of religion, but that the knowledge he has given me is vital, and will abide when heart and flesh shall fail. If I hear a man who dwells chiefly upon the great doctrines of grace, and I in that sermon enjoy fellowship with God, I go away rejoicing that my name is written in heaven. The truth is, those who are to feed under that ministry which dwells more upon experience than doctrine, and those who are to feed under that ministry which dwells more upon doctrine than experience, must do so; they must feed each one in his place. The Holy Spirit giveth to every one severally as he will; not that true experience can be separated from doctrine, nor doctrine from experience; for where the Holy Spirit is the teacher, the truths of the gospel are interwoven with the mind. God is a God of truth, Christ is the truth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and the Lord's people are brought into the truth, are made free by the truth, and therefore they love the truth.

Now although in some few instances I have had life and power by sermons upon doctrines, and by sermons upon experience, yet the ministry (when I could meet with it) which has upon the whole suited me best, is that which unites the two sides of the matter; that ministry which expatiates upon the ancient provisions of mercy, the person and mediatorial work of Christ, the saving operations

of the Holy Spirit, together with the glories yet to be revealed. The first shows us the source of salvation; the second shows the nature and greatness of that salvation; the third describes the evidence of interest in that salvation; the fourth shows a little of the bliss yet to be possessed. These truths are “fat pastures, and good, and the land is wide, and quiet, and peaceable,” (I Chronicles 4:40) and the more we are in these fields the more fellowship we have with God; and there is no company like his.

What we want is power; the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel, and the reason is, because it is the power of God unto salvation, there are many powers which are deceptive; there is the power of superstition, holding its thousands in the performance of dead works, and persuading them that all will be well with them at last. There is the power of argument exercised by the wise of this world, and keeping up in the minds of men the delusive notion that they have some little power of their own in things pertaining to an eternal world. Then there is the power of human eloquence, touching the sympathies of men, and leaving them to think they have felt the power of God. Then there is the power of custom; I was brought up to such a religion, therefore it is the right. All these powers, with their deceptiveness, are noticed in the word of God, and distinguished from that power which accompanies salvation. But who can judge in this matter? for “the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned; but he which is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man”

And now let us see how these powers stand in the estimation of those who are taught of God. The power of argument, or carnal wisdom, is turned into foolishness in the minds of those who are wise to salvation. Hence saith the apostle, “Where is the wise? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” This he brings about in the minds of his people, by making them feel, and know, that no man can know the Father, but he to whom the Son will reveal him; that no man can know the Son, but he to whom the Father will reveal him; that no man can *feelingly* say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; that no man can receive anything except it be given him from above; that none but the Lord can give a saving knowledge of the truth. Arguments, reasonings, and education are of no use here; they all fall to the ground. In this way the wisdom of this world, in the minds of the children of God, is turned into foolishness. Christ, and Christ alone, is their wisdom, by which the Holy Spirit makes them wise unto salvation; for they cannot know salvation until they know Christ Jesus the Lord, and God the Father in him. In this way the Lord confounds the wisdom of this world, when that wisdom gets out of its place, and attempts to meddle with the truth of God.

Then comes the power of human eloquence, which attracts such numbers, and brings together such great assemblies. This drapery, this show-off, that is, where it is used contrary to truth, is to the soul born of God as empty, disgusting, and useless as the presentation of fine pictures to a dying man. The sick man wants medicinal power; he wants to obtain something worth having, namely, good sound health. They that be whole may be satisfied with fine oratory, but they that be sick want the good Physician.

Then comes the power of custom; but when God takes a man in hand he brings him out of his old traditional customs; he ceases to pay deference to the traditions of men, in things pertaining to God; he comes forth out of them all, and worships him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth. This may seem to have some exceptions, in the circumstance of some good men remaining among the

superstitions of the Church of England; but then, though these men continued among the inventions of men, they were not so led by them as to be enemies to the truth. However, the powers of which I am speaking have had and still have a partial dominion even over good men, still they are not upon the whole led by these powers, but are led by the truth.

Then there are the powers of worldly interest and fleshly sanctity. It is almost incredible the power which a pretension to superior sanctity has had over the minds of men. There is indeed an invaluable dignity in true holiness, which the saints have in Christ, and is wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, but the fleshly sanctity pretended to by the popes of Rome, men made Bishops and ministers, free-will leaders and free-will followers, low-Calvinist priests and low-Calvinist people; the fleshly sanctity to which these pretend is nothing but hypocrisy and deception. Nothing can be holy but that which is made holy by the Lord, and the Lord makes no one holy out of, apart from, or contrary to the great atonement of Christ. This is the only holiness that can beautify a man in the sight of God, and this the children of God are brought to know, to feel, and to abide by. They see through the deception which has imposed and does impose upon so many thousands; and thus the powers of human wisdom, human eloquence, human customs, and human, fleshly sanctity are, in the minds of the children of God, brought to nothing, these strong holds of Satan are pulled down, these vain imaginations are cast out, and every high thing that exalts itself against Christ.

Now in those who have the form of godliness, but who are destitute of the power, we find the absence of the following things: first, real, experimental conviction of sin. They do not feel their own utter destitution of any one thing that is good, so as to loathe themselves in their own sight. They do not feel the emptiness of everything short of the infinite fulness of Christ. They do not come under the character of the poor and needy, the outcast, the prisoner, the bruised, the paralyzed, and the solitary. These are things which they do not really feel, yet these things are well known to those who have had a little teaching in the school of Bible experience. Those who are learning in this school find that they are truly poor and needy, that they are by the law of God cast out of all hope of helping themselves, that they are shut up as prisoners charged before God with crimes innumerable, and they know the charges to be true, and their mouths are stopped; they feel that sin has bruised and paralyzed their souls, as well as having brought death into the body; they feel that they are solitary, for they cannot get at communion with God, they cannot see themselves one with Christ; nor is the world any longer the company they love or seek. These are the persons to whom the promises of the gospel are made; but those who have the form but not the real power of godliness, are strangers to the experience these things, consequently, they do not long or seek to know their election of God. Election with them is a matter either of antipathy or of minor consideration, yet the Bible makes election a matter of the highest importance, and the Lord brings his people to feel it, for none can enter the heavenly city but those whose names are in the book of life; none are blessed with all spiritual blessings but those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; none can gain the possession of the kingdom but those for whom it is prepared. Well might the psalmist, in looking to the Lord, long to see the *good of his chosen*, and well might the apostle exhort the little ones to make their calling and election sure, that is seek a knowledge, an assurance of their election, in order that they may rejoice that their names were written in heaven. This is that which dead professors seek not, therefore they do not contend for the faith of God's elect; they neglect God's salvation, and attend to one of their own devising; they mingle the old covenant with the new; they do not rightly divide the word of truth, but wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. By thus mingling the old and new covenant, they can bring plenty of

scriptures to build themselves up in their delusion, and by substituting the mere moral, natural workings of the conscience for true conviction of sin, natural faith, natural love, and natural repentance for the fruits of the Spirit, they pass for true Christians in their own eyes and in the eyes of a *discerning* world. But then there are a few high-doctrine people, in whose estimation these men made Christians pass for what they really are, namely, mere nominal Christians; for such do not feel what and where they really are as sinners; they do not seek to know their election of God; they are not valiant for truth; and thus it naturally follows that they have no real union of soul to the real children of God; and how can they have? Their religion is natural, and not of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, although they go in his name. To go in the name of the first Adam would discover the deception; thus, while old Adam eats his own bread, and wears his own apparel, yet he must be called by another name, to take away his reproach. In this way does the old man with his pious deeds shelter himself under the Savior's name, there lying in wait to deceive.

Thus, then, in dead professors we find the absence of these four things: first, real conviction of sin; second, true thirst for God; third, decision for his truth; fourth, union to his people. Yet the absence of these things in such is not always apparent, for we have instances in the word of God where they seemed to possess these things, but that which they seemed to have was taken from them. (Luke 8:18) They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Again, in the 6th chapter of John, we read of a people that followed the Savior who were seemingly his disciples; they would have made him king, and no doubt they congratulated the disciples; but when the Savior brought near to them that truth which separates the precious from the vile, shows up the sovereignty of God and helplessness of the creature, they went back, and walked no more with him. And how few professors, though they profess to obey the gospel, to be followers of God, and disciples of Christ; how few can endure sound doctrine. The truth brings to light their ignorance of spiritual things, their enmity against God, turns their love into hate, their piety into passion, and shows that they are still in their first-born state. But to those who are born of God, and led into the truth, eternal election, divine predestination, complete redemption, entire justification and sanctification, together with fellowship with God and glory to come; to those who are taught of God, these truths in God, and God in these truths, are dearer than life and all things under the sun that can be desired.

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