

# **Accounts of Testimony and Conversion from Church History**

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## ***Martin Luther's "Tower Experience" (1545)***

***Introduction from Project Wittenberg:*** In 1545, Martin Luther penned the following autobiographical introduction for a collection of his writings. It describes his revelation that Christian salvation rests on faith alone (*sola fide*), that it comes not from human works, but rather from God's grace (*sola gratia*), as promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New (*sola scriptura*). Although the accuracy of the specific details of Luther's account has been debated, it is important as Luther's own summary of his career. Of particular importance is his description of his famous "tower experience," his discovery of justification by faith alone (for which this document is the only direct evidence).

Dear Reader,

I have steadfastly resisted those who wanted my books published, or perhaps I had better call them the confused products of my nighttime study. First, I did not want the labors of the ancient authors to be buried under my new works and the reader to be hindered from reading them. Second, there now exists, thanks to the grace of God, a good number of systematically arranged books, especially the "Loci communes" of Philip [Philip Melancthon, scholar of Greek and associate of Luther at Wittenberg], from which a theologian or bishop can get a thorough foundation [cf. Titus 1:9], so that he might be strong in preaching the doctrine of virtue. Third, and most importantly, the Bible itself is now available in almost every language. The disordered train of events, however, has seen to it that my works resemble a wild, disorganized chaos, which now even I cannot easily put into order.

For these reasons I wanted all my books to be buried in perpetual oblivion, that thus there might be room for better books. But other people, by their bold and unrelenting arguments, badgered me into publishing mine. They maintained that, if I did not permit them to be published while I was alive, people would publish them after I was dead anyway, people ignorant of the sequence of events and of the causes behind them. Thus instead of one confusion, there would be many. I also had to take into account the wish and command of our most illustrious Prince Elector Johann Frederick, who ordered or rather forced the printers not only to print this edition but also to get it done quickly.

Above all I beg the reader, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to read these works with discernment, or perhaps I should say with compassion. The reader should know that I was once a monk, the most rabid of papists, when I took up this whole affair. I was so drunk, so submerged in the pope's doctrines, that I was ready, if I could, to kill or help kill those who would have advocated by so much as a single syllable withdrawing obedience to the pope. That's how much of a Saul I was [i.e., St. Paul, who, before his conversion, was called Saul and who was zealous in his persecution of Christians], as many still are. I wasn't so icy cold in defending the papacy as was Eck and those like him, who seemed to me to defend the pope more for the sake of their bellies than through serious

commitment. To this day they seem to me to be laughing at the pope like Epicureans. I took the matter seriously because I had a horrible fear of the Last Day, yet still wished from the depths of my heart to be saved.

Consequently you will find that, in my earlier writings, I most humbly conceded many important things to the pope, things which I later detested and now detest as being the greatest blasphemy and abomination. Therefore, dear reader, kindly ascribe this error or, as my calumniators call it, this contradiction to the time and to my inexperience. At first I was alone and surely much too inept and unlearned to be dealing with such matters. For, as God is my witness, it was by accident and not by my own will or desire that I got involved in all this turmoil.

When in 1517 indulgences were sold (I wanted to say promulgated) in these regions for disgraceful profit, I was a preacher, a young Doctor of Theology, as they say. I began to dissuade the people from lending an ear to the shouts of the indulgence-sellers. I told them that they had better things to do and that I was sure that in these matters I had the pope on my side. I was relying greatly on his trustworthiness, since in his decrees he had very clearly condemned the excesses of the quaestors [name of a treasury official in ancient Rome] as he called the indulgence preachers.

Shortly thereafter I wrote two letters, one to Albert, the archbishop of Mainz, who was getting half the money from the indulgences (the other half was going to the pope, a fact of which I was at the time ignorant), the other to the ordinary of the place, Jerome, bishop of Brandenburg. I begged them to put a stop to the shameless blasphemy of the quaestors, but they despised this poor little brother. Therefore, finding myself despised, I published a list of theses and, at the same time, a sermon in German on indulgences. A little later I published the "Explanations," in which, in deference to the pope, I maintained that indulgences should not be condemned but that the works of charity should be preferred to them.

What I did toppled heaven and consumed earth by fire. I am denounced to the pope, commanded to go to Rome, and the entire papacy rises up against me alone. These things happened in 1518 when Maximilian was holding the Diet at Augsburg, at which Cardinal Cajetan was the legate of the pope. The most illustrious Duke Frederick of Saxony, Prince Elector, took up my cause with the Cardinal and asked that I not be forced to go to Rome but that he, Cajetan, should summon me to a hearing and take care of the matter. Shortly thereafter the Diet was adjourned.

Meanwhile the Germans were getting tired of putting up with the plunderings, the buying and selling, and the endless frauds of the Roman rascals. They were waiting with bated breath for the outcome of so important a matter, which neither bishop nor theologian had ever before dared to touch. This mood of the populace encouraged me, because those crafty "Romanations" with which they had filled and fatigued the whole world were now hateful to everyone.

Poor and on foot I came to Augsburg, my expenses paid by Prince Frederick. I had from him letters commending me to the senate and to certain good men. I was there for three days before I approached the Cardinal, because those good men strongly advised me not to go to the Cardinal until I had a safe conduct pass from the Emperor. The Cardinal had been summoning me every day through a certain spokesman. This latter pestered me greatly, saying that if I'd only recant, then everything would be all right. But long the injury, long the detour back.

Finally, on the third day, the spokesman came and demanded to know why I hadn't yet approached the Cardinal, who was waiting to receive me most kindly. I answered that I was complying with the advice of good men to whom I had been commended by Prince Frederick and that they had advised me not to go to see the Cardinal unless I had a safe conduct pass from the Emperor. I said that they were requesting one from the imperial senate and that I would come as soon as it had been obtained. He got very angry and said: "Do you think Prince Frederick is going to take up arms for your sake?" I said, "I don't want him to." He asked, "Where will you stay?" I replied, "Under heaven." He then asked, "If you had the pope and the cardinals in your power, what would you do?" I said, "I'd show them every reverence and honor." Then he moved his finger in an Italian gesture and said, "Hem." Then he went away and never came back.

The same day the imperial senate informed the Cardinal that I had been given a safe conduct; they warned him that he should not plan to have anything too severe in store for me. It is said that he answered, "Fine, but I shall act according to my duty." These events were the beginning of this whole commotion; the rest can be learned from what follows.

That same year, 1518, Prince Frederick had called Philip Melanchthon here to Wittenberg to teach Greek, doubtless so that I might have a colleague in my labors of teaching theology. His works testify to what the Lord has accomplished through Melanchthon, his instrument, not only in literature but also in theology, despite the fact that Satan and all his brood are infuriated.

The following year, in February of 1519, Emperor Maximilian died, and by the law of the Empire Duke Frederick became vicar. Then the fury of the tempest abated a little, and gradually excommunication, the papal thunderbolt, came to be held in contempt. Eck and Caraccioli brought from Rome a bull [a papal decree] condemning me. The former conveyed it to Wittenberg, the latter to Duke Frederick, who was at the time in Cologne, where he and the other princes were to receive Charles, the newly elected Emperor. Duke Frederick got very indignant at that papal rascal and courageously told him off in no uncertain terms because in his absence he and Eck had disturbed his dominions and those of his brother. He gave them such a magnificent tongue lashing that they went away from him shamed and disgraced. The prince, endowed as he was with unbelievable natural ability, knew all about the crafty ways of the Roman curia [the

administrative apparatus of the Roman Church]; he knew exactly how to treat them. He was a man with a good clear nose, and he could smell more and farther than the Romanists could either hope or fear.

Thereafter they stopped testing Frederick. Furthermore, he paid no honor to the rose that they call “golden” [a special mark of papal esteem] which Leo X sent him that same year; on the contrary, he ridiculed it. Thus the Romanists were forced to give up any hope of duping such a prince. The Gospel advanced successfully under the protection of this prince and was propagated far and wide. His authority influenced many; since he was a most wise and keen-sighted prince, he could incur no suspicion, except among the hateful, that he was out to encourage and support heresy. This did the papacy great harm.

In the same year, 1519, there was held at Leipzig the debate to which Eck had challenged Karlstadt and me. But by no letter of mine could I secure a safe conduct from Duke George, and so I entered Leipzig not as a debater but as a spectator under the safe conduct which had been given to Karlstadt. I don’t know who was blocking my way, since I was sure that, up to that time, Duke George had not been hostile to me.

In Leipzig Eck came to me in my lodgings. He said he had learned that I had refused to debate. I answered, “How can I debate if I can’t secure a safe conduct from Duke George?” He answered, “I came here to debate with you, and if I can’t, then I don’t want to debate with Karlstadt either. What if I get a safe conduct for you? Will you debate with me then?” I said, “Get it and I will.” He left, and shortly thereafter I too got a safe conduct and so had the opportunity of debating.

Eck did this because he thought he would cover himself with glory in debating my proposition in which I denied that the pope was the head of the church by divine right. In this proposition Eck had a golden opportunity of flattering the pope and of meriting his thanks and of overwhelming me with hatred and ill-will. That is exactly what he did throughout the whole debate, but he neither proved his position nor refuted mine. Even Duke George said to Eck and me at breakfast, “Whether it’s by divine right or by human right, still he’s the pope.” If he hadn’t been influenced by the arguments, he would never have said such a thing but would have approved of Eck alone.

From my case you can see how hard it is to struggle free from errors which become fixed by universal standard and changed by time-honored custom into nature. How true the proverb is: “It’s hard to abandon customs” and “Custom is a second nature.” How right Augustine was when he said, “Custom, if it is not resisted, becomes necessity.” I had been reading and teaching the Sacred Scriptures diligently in private and in public for seven years, so that I knew almost all of them by heart. Then too, I had imbibed the beginnings of the knowledge of Christ and of faith in him, i.e., that it is faith in Christ and not works that justifies and saves us. Finally, I was now defending publicly that proposition of which I’m

speaking, namely, that the pope was not the head of the church by divine right. But I still didn't see the necessary conclusion, i.e., that the pope must be from the devil, for what is not from God must be from the devil.

I was so absorbed, as I have said, by the example and title of the Holy Church as well as by my own customary way of thinking, that I conceded that the pope was head of the church by human right. However, if that right is not supported by divine authority, then it is a lie and comes from the devil. After all, we obey our parents and the civil authorities, not because they themselves command it, but because God wants us to (cf. 1 Peter). That is why I can, with a little less hatred, put up with those who cling so tenaciously to the papacy, especially those who haven't read the sacred Scriptures or even the secular writings, since I myself had read the sacred Scriptures diligently for so many years and still clung tenaciously to the papacy.

In 1519, as I've already said, Leo X sent the Golden Rose through Karl von Miltitz; with many arguments he urged me to be reconciled to the pope. Miltitz had seventy apostolic briefs, and if Prince Frederick would hand me over, as the pope was asking by sending the Rose, he would post one of the briefs in each town and so conduct me safely to Rome. But Miltitz betrayed to me what was really in his heart when he said, "Martin, I thought you were some aged theologian who used to sit next to the stove and debate with himself, but now I see that you're still a strong young man. If I had twenty-five thousand armed men, I don't think I could convey you to Rome. I've been sounding out the opinions of people along the way to see what they thought of you. For every one for the pope there are three for you against the pope." That's ridiculous!

He had asked the women and serving girls in the inns what they thought of the Roman See [the Latin *sedes* = "seat"]. They didn't know what the word meant and, thinking of a household chair, they answered, "How are we supposed to know what kind of chairs you have at Rome? We don't know whether they're made out of wood or stone."

Miltitz begged me, therefore, to do everything I could to make peace, and he would do his best to see that the pope did the same. I promised that I would most promptly do anything that I could in good conscience do. I said that I too wanted peace and that I had been drawn by force into these squabbles and had been forced by circumstances to do everything I did; I was not to blame. Miltitz had summoned the Dominican friar, Johann Tetzel, the originator of this tragedy. With threatening words from the pope he so broke the man, who up to that time had been the terror of all and a fearless crier of indulgences, that he wasted away and was finally consumed by a mental illness. When I found this out, I wrote him, before he died, a kindly letter in which I comforted him and told him to take heart and not to fear my memory. But perhaps his conscience and the wrath of the pope sent him to the grave.

People thought Miltitz and his line of action were useless, but it seems to me that if the man at Mainz [i.e., Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz] had followed Miltitz's course from the beginning when I had reprimanded him, and if the pope had followed it before he condemned me without a hearing and raged with his bulls, and if they had suppressed Tetzels' fury, the affair wouldn't have resulted in such an uproar. It's all the fault of the man at Mainz, who was tricked by his own cleverness with which he wanted to suppress my doctrine and to save his money which he'd sought through indulgences. Now they seek counsel in vain; now they make efforts in vain. The Lord has awakened and stands to judge the peoples [cf. Ps. 76:9 and Dan. 9:14]. Even if they were able to kill us, they still wouldn't have what they want; in fact, they'd have even less than they have now while we are alive and well. Some among them, whose nose is not completely inactive, can smell this well enough.

Meanwhile in that same year, 1519, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e., that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been

born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

I exalted this sweetest word of mine, “the justice of God,” with as much love as before I had hated it with hate. This phrase of Paul was for me the very gate of paradise. Afterward I read Augustine’s “On the Spirit and the Letter,” in which I found what I had not dared hope for. I discovered that he too interpreted “the justice of God” in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified.

Better armed now with these thoughts, I began for the second time to interpret the Psalms. The work would have grown into a large commentary, but I was summoned the following year to Worms for the Diet convened by Emperor Charles V and so had once again to leave the work I had begun.

I am telling you all this, dear reader, so that, if you are going to read my little works, you should remember that I am one of those, as I said above, who, as Augustine writes of himself, makes progress by writing and teaching. I am not one of those who out of nothing suddenly become perfect (although in fact they are nothing), who don’t work, who aren’t tempted, who have no experience, but who, with one look into the Scriptures, exhaust their whole spirit.

Up to that point, 1520-21, the indulgence affair was still going on. There followed the affairs dealing with the sacraments and with the Anabaptists, about which I will write prefaces in other volumes, if I live to do so.

Good-bye in the Lord, dear reader, and pray that the word may increase against Satan, because he is powerful and evil. And now he has become extremely vicious and savage because he knows that he has only a short time and that the kingdom of his pope is endangered. May God strengthen in us what he has accomplished. May he prosper his work which he has begun in us for his glory [cf. Phil. 1:6 and Ps. 68:29]. Amen.

Source: Project Wittenberg,

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/preflat-eng.txt>

(accessed 4/20/17).

## *On the Conversion of John Calvin*

Unlike Martin Luther, John Calvin wrote little about himself. The only explicit description of his conversion is the brief autobiographical passage below from the preface to his commentary on the Psalms where he describes his “sudden conversion.”

However, one may find further insight into Calvin’s view of conversion—and perhaps even his own personal experience—in a section of his *Letter to Cardinal Sadoletto*. In this exchange with an Italian Catholic cardinal, Calvin debated the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation. Some writers have suggested that in this letter not only does Calvin describe conversion in general but also that he likely shares details of his own conversion experience. (See e.g., Williston Walker, *John Calvin: The Organiser of Reformed Protestantism 1509-1564* [New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1906], 73-75.)

*From Calvin’s Preface to his Commentary on Psalms*

[*Calvin is comparing his situation to that of King David.*] My condition, no doubt, is much inferior to his, and it is unnecessary for me to stay to show this. But as he was taken from the sheepfold, and elevated to the rank of supreme authority; so God having taken me from my originally obscure and humble condition, has reckoned me worthy of being invested with the honorable office of a preacher and minister of the gospel. When I was as yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law. To this pursuit I endeavored faithfully to apply myself in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. And first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life.

Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardor. I was quite surprised to find that before a year had elapsed, all who had any desire after purer doctrine were continually coming to me to learn, although I myself was as yet but a mere novice and tyro. Being of a disposition somewhat unpolished and bashful, which led me always to love the shade and retirement, I then began to seek some secluded corner where I might be withdrawn from the public view; but so far from being able to accomplish the object of my desire, all my retreats were like public schools. In short, whilst my one great object was to live in seclusion without being known, God so led me about through different turnings and changes, that he never permitted me to rest in any place, until, in spite of my natural disposition, he brought me forth to

public notice. Leaving my native country, France, I in fact retired into Germany, expressly for the purpose of being able there to enjoy in some obscure corner the repose which I had always desired, and which had been so long denied me.

Source: <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08/calcom08.vi.html> (accessed 5/27/2024)

*From Calvin's Letter to Cardinal Sadoletto*

[*Calvin writes about conversion in general.*] First, We bid a man begin by examining himself, and this not in a superficial and perfunctory manner, but to sift his conscience before the tribunal of God, and when sufficiently convinced of his iniquity, to reflect on the strictness of the sentence pronounced upon all sinners. Thus confounded and amazed at his misery, he is prostrated and humbled before God; and, casting away all self-confidence, groans as if given up to final perdition. Then we show that the only haven of safety is in the mercy of God, as manifested in Christ, in whom every part of our salvation is complete. As all mankind are, in the sight of God, lost sinners, we hold that Christ is their only righteousness, since, by his obedience, he has wiped off our transgressions; by his sacrifice, appeased the divine anger; by his blood, washed away our stains; by his cross, borne our curse; and by his death, made satisfaction for us. We maintain that in this way man is reconciled in Christ to God the Father, by no merit of his own, by no value of works, but by gratuitous mercy. When we embrace Christ by faith, and come, as it were, into communion with him, this we term, after the manner of Scripture, the righteousness of faith....

[*Later, in response to Sadoletto's previous letter, Calvin portrays a hypothetical minister and a layman standing at the judgment seat of Christ and testifying to what they experienced on earth.*]

[Minister]: "O Lord, I have, indeed, experienced how difficult and grievous it was to bear the invidious accusations with which I was harassed on the earth; but with the same confidence with which I then appealed to thy tribunal, I now appear before thee, because I know that in thy judgment truth always reigns—that truth by whose assurance supported I first ventured to attempt—with whose assistance provided I was able to accomplish whatever I have achieved in thy Church.

"They charged me with two of the worst of crimes—heresy and schism. And the heresy was, that I dared to protest against dogmas which they received. But what could I have done? I heard from thy mouth that there was no other light of truth which could direct our souls into the way of life, than that which was kindled by thy Word. I heard that whatever human minds of themselves conceive concerning thy Majesty, the worship of thy Deity, and the mysteries of thy religion, was vanity. I heard that their introducing into the Church instead of thy Word, doctrines sprung from the human brain, was sacrilegious presumption.

“But when I turned my eyes towards men, I saw very different principles prevailing. Those who were regarded as the leaders of faith neither understood thy Word, nor greatly cared for it. They only drove unhappy people to and fro with strange doctrines, and deluded them with I know not what follies. Among the people themselves, the highest veneration paid to thy Word was to revere it at a distance, as a thing inaccessible, and abstain from all investigation of it. Owing to this supine state of the pastors, and this stupidity of the people, every place was filled with pernicious errors, falsehoods, and superstition. They, indeed, called thee the only God, but it was while transferring to others the glory which thou hast claimed for thy Majesty. They figured and had for themselves as many gods as they had saints, whom they chose to worship. Thy Christ was indeed worshipped as God, and retained the name of Saviour; but where he ought to have been honored, he was left almost without honor. For, spoiled of his own virtue, he passed unnoticed among the crowd of saints, like one of the meanest of them. There was none who duly considered that one sacrifice which he offered on the cross, and by which he reconciled us to thyself—none who ever dreamed of thinking of his eternal priesthood, and the intercession depending upon it—none who trusted in his righteousness only. That confident hope of salvation which is both enjoined by thy Word, and founded upon it, had almost vanished. Nay, it was received as a kind of oracle, that it was foolish arrogance, and, as they termed it, presumption for any one trusting to thy goodness, and the righteousness of thy Son, to entertain a sure and unfaltering hope of salvation.

“Not a few profane opinions plucked up by the roots, the first principles of that doctrine which thou but delivered to us in thy Word. The true meaning of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, also, were corrupted by numerous falsehoods. And then, when all, with no small insult to thy mercy, put confidence in good works, when by good works they strove to merit thy favor, to procure justification, to expiate their sins, and make satisfaction to thee (each of these things obliterating and making void the virtue of Christ's cross), they were yet altogether ignorant wherein good works consisted. For, just as if they were not at all instructed in righteousness by thy law, they had fabricated for themselves many useless frivolities, as a means of procuring thy favor, and on these they so plumed themselves, that, in comparison of them, they almost contemned the standard of true righteousness which thy law recommended—to such a degree had human desires, after usurping the ascendancy, derogated, if not from the belief, at least from the authority, of thy precepts therein contained.

“That I might perceive these things, thou, O Lord, didst shine upon me with the brightness of thy Spirit; that I might comprehend how impious and noxious they were, thou didst bear before me the torch of thy Word; that I might abominate them as they deserved, thou didst stimulate my soul. But in rendering an account of my doctrine, thou seest (what my own conscience declares) that it was not my intention to stray beyond those limits which I saw had been fixed by all thy servants. Whatever I felt

assured that I had learned from thy mouth, I desired to dispense faithfully to the Church. Assuredly, the thing at which I chiefly aimed, and for which I most diligently labored, was, that the glory of thy goodness and justice, after dispersing the mists by which it was formerly obscured, might shine forth conspicuous, that the virtue and blessings of thy Christ (all glosses being wiped away) might be fully displayed. For I thought it impious to leave in obscurity things which we were born to ponder and meditate. Nor did I think that truths, whose magnitude no language can express, were to be maliciously or falsely declared. I hesitated not to dwell at greater length on topics on which the salvation of my hearers depended. For the oracle could never deceive which declares, (John xvii. 3,) ‘This is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.’ ...

[Layman]: “I, O Lord, as I had been educated from a boy, always professed the Christian faith. But at first I had no other reason for my faith than that which then everywhere prevailed. Thy word, which ought to have shone on all thy people like a lamp, was taken away, or at least suppressed as to us. And lest any one should long for greater light, an idea had been instilled into the minds of all, that the investigation of that hidden celestial philosophy was better delegated to a few, whom the others might consult as oracles—that the highest knowledge befitting plebeian minds was to subdue themselves into obedience to the Church.

“Then, the rudiments in which I had been instructed were of a kind which could neither properly train me to the legitimate worship of thy Deity, nor pave the way for me to a sure hope of salvation, nor train me aright for the duties of the Christian life. I had learned, indeed, to worship thee only as my God, but as the true method of worshipping was altogether unknown to me, I stumbled at the very threshold. I believed, as I had been taught, that I was redeemed by the death of thy Son from liability to eternal death, but the redemption I thought of was one whose virtue could never reach me. I anticipated a future resurrection, but hated to think of it, as being an event most dreadful. And this feeling not only had dominion over me in private, but was derived from the doctrine which was then uniformly delivered to the people by their Christian teachers. They, indeed, preached of thy clemency towards men, but confined it to those who should show themselves deserving of it. They, moreover, placed this desert in the righteousness of works, so that he only was received into thy favor who reconciled himself to thee by works. Nor, meanwhile, did they disguise the fact, that we are miserable sinners, that we often fall through infirmity of the flesh, and that to all, therefore, thy mercy behooved to be the common haven of salvation; but the method of obtaining it, which they pointed out, was by making satisfaction to thee for offences. Then, the satisfaction enjoined was, first, after confessing all our sins to a priest, suppliantly to ask pardon and absolution; and, secondly, by good to efface from thy remembrance our bad actions. Lastly, in order to supply what was still wanting, we were to add sacrifices and solemn

expiations. Then, because thou wert a stern judge and strict avenger of iniquity, they showed how dreadful thy presence must be. Hence they bade us flee first to the saints, that by their intercession thou mightest be rendered exorable and propitious to us.”

“When, however, I had performed all these things, though I had some intervals of quiet, I was still far off from true peace of conscience; for, whenever I descended into myself, or raised my mind to thee, extreme terror seized me—terror which no expiations nor satisfactions could cure. And the more closely I examined myself, the sharper the stings with which my conscience was pricked, so that the only solace which remained to me was to delude myself by obliviousness. Still, as nothing better offered, I continued the course which I had begun, when, lo, a very different form of doctrine started up, not one which led us away from the Christian profession, but one which brought it back to its fountain head, and, as it were, clearing away the dross, restored it to its original purity.

“Offended by the novelty, I lent an unwilling ear, and at first, I confess, strenuously and passionately resisted; for (such is the firmness or effrontery with which it is natural to men to persist in the course which they have once undertaken) it was with the greatest difficulty I was induced to confess that I had all my life long been in ignorance and error....

“My mind being now prepared for serious attention, I at length perceived, as if light had broken in upon me, in what a sty of error I had wallowed, and how much pollution and impurity I had thereby contracted. Being exceedingly alarmed at the misery into which I had fallen, and much more at that which threatened me in the view of eternal death, I, as in duty bound, made it my first business to betake myself to thy way, condemning my past life, not without groans and tears. And now, O Lord, what remains to a wretch like me, but, instead of defense, earnestly to supplicate thee not to judge according to its deserts that fearful abandonment of thy word, from which, in thy wondrous goodness, thou hast at last delivered me.”

Source: John Calvin’s *Letter to Cardinal Sadoletto* (1539)

<https://www.monergism.com/john-calvins-letter-cardinal-sadoletto-1539>

(accessed 5/26/2024)

## *From George Whitefield's Journals*

Evangelist George Whitefield was converted while a student at the University of Oxford (1732-36). He paid his way as a "servitor" waiting on the needs of more prosperous students. There he came under the influence of the "Methodists," a group of devout students under the guidance of John Wesley, known for their "methodical" dedication to Christian piety. In his *Journals* Whitefield recounts the details of his conversion.

Soon after my admission to Pembroke College, I found my having been used to a public-house was now of service to me. For many of the servitors being sick at my first coming up, by my diligent and ready attendance I ingratiated myself into the gentlemen's favour so far, that many, who had it in their power, chose me to be their servitor.

This much lessened my expense; and, indeed, God was so gracious, that, with the profits of my place, and some little presents made me by my kind tutor, for almost the first three years I did not put all my relations together to above £24 expense. And it has often grieved my soul to see so many young students spending their substance in extravagant living, and hereby entirely unfitting themselves for the prosecution of their proper studies. I had not been long at the University before I found the benefit of the foundation I had laid in the country for a holy life. I was quickly solicited to join in their excess of riot with several who lay in the same room. God, in answer to prayers before put up, gave me grace to withstand them; and once, in particular, it being cold, my limbs were so benumbed by sitting alone in my study, because I would not go amongst them, that I could scarce sleep all night. But I soon found the benefit of not yielding; for when they perceived they could not prevail, they let me alone as a singular, odd fellow.

All this while I was not fully satisfied of the sin of playing at cards and reading plays, till God, upon a fast-day, was pleased to convince me. For, taking a play to read a passage out of it to a friend, God struck my heart with such power, that I was obliged to lay it down again; and—blessed be His name!—I have not read any such book since.

Before I went to the University, I met with Mr. Law's "Serious Call to a Devout Life," but had not then money to purchase it. Soon after my coming up to the University, seeing a small edition of it in a friend's hand, I soon procured it. God worked powerfully upon my soul, as He has since upon many others, by that and his other excellent treatise upon "Christian Perfection."

I now began to pray and sing psalms thrice every day, besides morning and evening, and to fast every Friday, and to receive the sacrament at a parish church near our college, and at the castle, where the despised Methodists used to receive once a month.

The young men so called were then much talked of at Oxford. I had heard of, and loved them before I came to the University; and so

strenuously defended them when I heard them reviled by the students, that they began to think that I also in time should be one of them.

For above a twelvemonth my soul longed to be acquainted with some of them, and I was strongly pressed to follow their good example, when I saw them go through a ridiculing crowd to receive the holy Eucharist at St. Mary's. At length, God was pleased to open a door. It happened that a poor woman in one of the workhouses had attempted to cut her throat, but was happily prevented. Upon hearing of this, and knowing that both the Mr. Wesleys were ready to every good work, I sent a poor aged apple-woman of our college to inform Mr. Charles Wesley of it, charging her not to discover who sent her. She went; but, contrary to my orders, told my name. He having heard of my coming to the castle and a parish church sacrament, and having met me frequently walking by myself, followed the woman when she was gone away, and sent an invitation to me by her, to come to breakfast with him the next morning.

I thankfully embraced the opportunity; and, blessed be God! it was one of the most profitable visits I ever made in my life. My soul, at that time, was athirst for some spiritual friends to lift up my hands when they hung down, and to strengthen my feeble knees. He soon discovered it, and, like a wise winner of souls, made all his discourses tend that way. And, when he had put into my hand Professor Frank's treatise against the "Fear of Man," and a book entitled "The Country Parson's Advice to his Parishioners," the last of which was wonderfully blessed to my soul, I took my leave.

In a short time, he let me have another book entitled, "The Life of God in the Soul of Man"; and, though I had fasted, watched, and prayed, and received the sacrament so long, yet I never knew what true religion was, till God sent me that excellent treatise by the hands of my never-to-be-forgotten friend.

At my first reading it, I wondered what the author meant by saying, "That some falsely placed religion in going to church, doing hurt to no one, being constant in the duties of the closet, and now and then reaching out their hands to give alms to their poor neighbours." "Alas!" thought I, "if this be not religion, what is?" God soon showed me; for in reading a few lines further, that "true religion was a union of the soul with God, and Christ formed within us," a ray of Divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and, from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature.

Upon this, like the woman of Samaria when Christ revealed Himself to her at the well, I had no rest in my soul till I wrote letters to my relations, telling them there was such a thing as the new birth. I imagined they would have gladly received it. But, alas! my words seemed to them as idle tales. They thought that I was going beside myself, and, by their letters, confirmed me in the resolutions I had taken not to go down into the

country, but continue where I was, lest that, by any means, the good work which God had begun in my soul might be made of none effect.

From time to time Mr. Wesley permitted me to come unto him, and instructed me as I was able to bear it. By degrees, he introduced me to the rest of his Christian brethren. They built me up daily in the knowledge and fear of God, and taught me to endure hardness like a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I now began, like them, to live by rule, and to pick up the very fragments of my time, that not a moment of it might be lost. Whether I ate or drank, or whatsoever I did, I endeavoured to do all to the glory of God. Like them, having no weekly sacrament, although the rubric required it, at our own college, I received every Sunday at Christ Church. I joined with them in keeping the stations by fasting Wednesdays and Fridays and left no means unused, which I thought would lead me nearer to Jesus Christ.

Regular retirement, morning and evening, at first I found some difficulty in submitting to; but it soon grew profitable and delightful. As I grew ripe for such exercises, I was, from time to time engaged to visit the sick and the prisoners, and to read to poor people, till I made it a custom, as most of us did, to spend an hour every day in doing acts of charity.

The course of my studies I soon entirely changed. Whereas, before I was busied in studying the dry sciences, and books that went no farther than the surface, I now resolved to read only such as entered into the heart of religion, and which led me directly into an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. The lively oracles of God were my soul's delight. The book of the Divine laws was seldom out of my hands: I meditated therein day and night; and, ever since that, God has made my way signally prosperous, and given me abundant success.

God enabled me to do much good to many, as well as to receive much from the despised Methodists, and made me instrumental in converting one who is lately come out into the Church, and, I trust, will prove a burning and shining light.

Several short fits of illness was God pleased to visit and to try me with, after my first acquaintance with Mr. Wesley. My new convert was a helpmeet for me in those and in all other circumstances; and, in company with him and several other Christian friends, did I spend many sweet and delightful hours. Never did persons, I believe, strive more earnestly to enter in at the strait gate. They kept their bodies under even to an extreme. They were dead to the world, and willing to be accounted as the dung and offscouring of all things, so that they might win Christ. Their hearts glowed with the love of God, and they never prospered so much in the inward man, as when they had all manner of evil spoken against them falsely without.

Many came amongst them for a while, who, in time of temptation, fell away. The displeasure of a tutor or head of a college, the changing of a

gown from a lower to a higher degree—above all, a thirst for the praise of men, more than that which cometh from God, and a servile fear of contempt—caused numbers, that had set their hands to the plough, shamefully to look back. The world, and not themselves, gave them the title of Methodists, I suppose, from their custom of regulating their time, and planning the business of the day every morning. Mr. John and Charles Wesley were two of the first that thus openly dared to confess Christ; and they, under God, were the spiritual fathers of most of them. They had the pleasure of seeing the work of the Lord prosper in their hands before they went to Georgia. Since their return, the small grain of mustard-seed has sprung up apace. It has taken deep root. It is growing into a great tree. Ere long, I trust, it will fill the land, and numbers of souls will come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and lodge under the branches of it.

But to return. While I was thus comforted on every side by daily conversing with so many Christian friends, God was pleased to permit Satan to sift me like wheat. A general account of which I shall, by the Divine assistance, give in the following section.

At my first setting out, in compassion to my weakness, I grew in favour both with God and man, and used to be much lifted up with sensible devotion, especially at the blessed sacrament. But when religion began to take root in my heart, and I was fully convinced my soul must totally be renewed ere it could see God, I was visited with outward and inward trials.

The first thing I was called to give up for God was what the world calls my fair reputation. I had no sooner received the sacrament publicly on a weekday at St. Mary's, but I was set up as a mark for all the polite students that knew me to shoot at. By this they knew that I was commenced Methodist; for though there is a sacrament at the beginning of every term, at which all, especially the seniors, are by statute obliged to be present, yet so dreadfully has that once faithful city played the harlot, that very few masters, and no undergraduates but the Methodists, attended upon it.

Mr. Charles Wesley, whom I must always mention with the greatest deference and respect, walked with me, in order to confirm me, from the church even to the college. I confess, to my shame, I would gladly have excused him; and the next day, going to his room, one of our Fellows passing by, I was ashamed to be seen to knock at his door. But, blessed be God! this fear of man gradually wore off. As I had imitated Nicodemus in his cowardice, so, by the Divine assistance, I followed him in his courage. I confessed the Methodists more and more publicly every day. I walked openly with them, and chose rather to bear contempt with those people of God, than to enjoy the applause of almost-Christians for a season.

Soon after this, I incurred the displeasure of the master of the college, who frequently chided, and once threatened to expel me, if I ever

visited the poor again. Being surprised by this treatment, I spake unadvisedly with my lips, and said, if it displeased him, I would not. My conscience soon pricked me for this sinful compliance. I immediately repented, and visited the poor the first opportunity, and told my companions, if ever I was called to a stake for Christ's sake, I would serve my tongue as Archbishop Cranmer served his hand, namely, make that burn first.

My tutor, being a worthy man, did not oppose me much, but thought, I believe, that I went a little too far. He lent me books, gave me money, visited me, and furnished me with a physician when sick. In short, he behaved in all respects like a father; and I trust God will remember him for good, in answer to the many prayers I have put up in his behalf.

My relations were quickly alarmed at the alteration of my behaviour, conceived strong prejudices against me, and for some time counted my life madness. I daily underwent some contempt at college. Some have thrown dirt at me; others by degrees took away their pay from me; and two friends that were dear unto me grew shy of and forsook me, when they saw me resolved to deny myself, take up my cross daily, and follow Jesus Christ. But our Lord, by His Spirit, soon convinced me that I must know no one after the flesh; and I soon found that promise literally fulfilled, "That no one hath left father or mother, brethren or sisters, houses or lands, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold in this life, with persecution, as well as eternal life in the world to come."

These, though little, were useful trials. They inured me to contempt, lessened self-love, and taught me to die daily. My inward sufferings were of a more uncommon nature. Satan seemed to have desired me in particular to sift me as wheat. God permitted him for wise reasons, I have seen already, namely, that His future blessings might not prove my ruin.

From my first awakenings to the divine life, I felt a particular hungering and thirsting after the humility of Jesus Christ. Night and day I prayed to be a partaker of that grace, imagining that the habit of humility would be instantaneously infused into my soul. But as Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns, so God, if I am yet in any measure blessed with true poverty of spirit, taught it me by the exercise of strong temptations.

I observed before how I used to be favoured with sensible devotion; those comforts were soon withdrawn, and a horrible fearfulness and dread permitted to overwhelm my soul. One morning in particular, rising from my bed, I felt an unusual impression and weight upon my breast, attended with inward darkness. I applied to my friend, Mr. Charles Wesley. He advised me to keep upon my watch, and referred me to a chapter in Kempis. In a short time I perceived this load gradually increase, till it almost weighed me down, and fully convinced me that Satan had as real a

possession of, and power given over, my body, as he had once over Job's. All power of meditating, or even thinking, was taken from me. My memory quite failed me. My whole soul was barren and dry, and I could fancy myself to be like nothing so much as a man locked up in iron armour. Whenever I kneeled down, I felt great heavings in my body, and have often prayed under the weight of them till the sweat came through me. At this time, Satan used to terrify me much, and threatened to punish me if I discovered his wiles. It being my duty, as servitor, in my turn to knock at the gentlemen's rooms by ten at night, to see who were in their rooms, I thought the devil would appear to me every stair I went up. And he so troubled me when I lay down to rest, that for some weeks I scarce slept above three hours at a time.

God only knows how many nights I have lain upon my bed groaning under the weight I felt, and bidding Satan depart from me in the name of Jesus. Whole days and weeks have I spent in lying prostrate on the ground, and begging for freedom from those proud hellish thoughts that used to crowd in upon and distract my soul. But God made Satan drive out Satan; for these thoughts and suggestions created such a self-aborrence within me, that I never ceased wrestling with God till He blessed me with a victory over them. Self-love, self-will, pride, and envy so buffeted me in their turns, that I was resolved either to die or conquer. I wanted to see sin as it was, but feared, at the same time, lest the sight of it should terrify me to death.

Whilst my inward man was thus exercised, my outward man was not unemployed. I soon found what a slave I had been to my sensual appetite, and now resolved to get the mastery over it by the help of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, by degrees, I began to leave off eating fruits and such like, and gave the money I usually spent in that way to the poor. Afterward, I always chose the worst sort of food, though my place furnished me with variety. I fasted twice a week. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and though I was then convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meats and drinks, yet I resolutely persisted in these voluntary acts of self-denial, because I found them great promoters of the spiritual life.

For many months, I went on in this state, faint, yet pursuing, and travelling along in the dark, in hope that the star I had before once seen would hereafter appear again. During this season I was very active; but finding pride creeping in at the end of almost every thought, word, and action, and meeting with Castaniza's "Spiritual Combat," in which he says "that he that is employed in mortifying his will was as well employed as though he was converting Indians," or words to that effect, Satan so imposed upon my understanding, that he persuaded me to shut myself up in my study till I could do good with a single eye, lest, in endeavouring to

save others as I did now, I should at last, by pride and self-complacence, lose myself.

Henceforward, he transformed himself into an angel of light, and worked so artfully, that I imagined the good, and not the evil, spirit suggested to me everything I did.

His main drift was to lead me into a state of quietism (he generally ploughed with God's heifer); and when the Holy Spirit put into my heart good thoughts or convictions, he always drove them to extremes. For instance, having out of pride put down in my diary what I gave away, Satan tempted me to lay my diary quite aside. When Castaniza advised to talk but little, Satan said I must not talk at all. So that I, who used to be the most forward in exhorting my companions, have sat whole nights almost without speaking at all. Again, when Castaniza advised to endeavour after a silent recollection and waiting upon God, Satan told me I must leave off all forms, and not use my voice in prayer at all. The time would fail me to recount all the instances of this kind in which he had deceived me. But when matters came to an extreme, God always showed me my error, and by His Spirit pointed out a way for me to escape.

The devil also sadly imposed upon me in the matter of my college exercises. Whenever I endeavoured to compose my theme, I had no power to write a word, nor so much as to tell my Christian friends of my inability to do it. Saturday being come, which is the day the students give up their compositions, it was suggested to me that I must go down into the hall, and confess I could not make a theme, and so publicly suffer, as if it were, for my Master's sake. When the bell rung to call us, I went to open the door to go down stairs, but feeling something give me a violent inward check, I entered my study, and continued instant in prayer, waiting the event. For this my tutor fined me half a crown. The next week Satan served me in like manner again; but now having got more strength, and perceiving no inward check, I went into the hall. My name being called, I stood up and told my tutor I could not make a theme. I think he fined me a second time; but, imagining that I would not willingly neglect my exercise, he afterward called me into the common room, and kindly enquired whether any misfortune had befallen me, or what was the reason I could not make a theme. I burst into tears, and assured him that it was not out of contempt of authority, but that I could not act otherwise. Then, at length, he said he believed I could not; and, when he left me, told a friend, as he very well might, that he took me to be really mad. This friend, hearing from my tutor what had happened, came to me, urging the command of Scripture, to be subject to the higher powers. I answered, "Yes; but I had a new revelation." Lord, what is man?

As I daily got strength, by continued, though almost silent, prayer in my study, my temptations grew stronger also, particularly for two or three days before deliverance came.

Near five or six weeks I had now spent in my study, except when I was obliged to go out. During this time I was fighting with my corruptions, and did little else besides kneeling down by my bedside, feeling, as it were, a heavy pressure upon my body, as well as an unspeakable oppression of mind, yet offering up my soul to God to do with me as it pleased Him. It was now suggested to me that Jesus Christ was among the wild beasts when He was tempted, and that I ought to follow His example; and being willing, as I thought, to imitate Jesus Christ, after supper I went into Christ Church walk, near our college, and continued in silent prayer under one of the trees for near two hours, sometimes lying flat on my face, sometimes kneeling upon my knees, all the while filled with fear and concern lest some of my brethren should be overwhelmed with pride. The night being stormy, it gave me awful thoughts of the day of judgment. I continued, I think, till the great bell rung for retirement to the college, not without finding some reluctance in the natural man against staying so long in the cold.

The next night I repeated the same exercise at the same place. But the hour of extremity being now come, God was pleased to make an open show of those diabolical devices by which I had been deceived.

By this time, I had left off keeping my diary, using my forms, or scarce my voice in prayer, visiting prisoners, etc. Nothing remained for me to leave, unless I forsook public worship, but my religious friends. Now it was suggested that I must leave them also for Christ's sake. This was a sore trial; but rather than not be, as I fancied, Christ's disciple, I resolved to renounce them, though as dear to me as my own soul. Accordingly, the next day being Wednesday, whereon we kept one of our weekly fasts, instead of meeting with my brethren as usual, I went out into the fields, and prayed silently by myself. Our evening meeting I neglected also, and went not to breakfast, according to appointment, with Mr. Charles Wesley the day following. This, with many other concurring circumstances, made my honoured friend, Mr. Charles Wesley, suspect something more than ordinary was the matter. He came to my room, soon found out my case, apprised me of my danger if I would not take advice, and recommended me to his brother John, Fellow of Lincoln College, as more experienced in the spiritual life. God gave me—blessed be His holy name—a teachable temper, and I waited upon his brother, with whom from that time I had the honour of growing intimate. He advised me to resume all my externals, though not to depend on them in the least. From time to time he gave me directions as my various and pitiable state required; and, at length, by his excellent advice and management of me, under God, I was delivered from those wiles of Satan. "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name!"

During this and all other seasons of temptation my soul was inwardly supported with great courage and resolution from above. Every day God made me willing to renew the combat, and though my soul, when

quite empty of God, was very prone to seek satisfaction in the creature, and sometimes I fell into sensuality, yet I was generally enabled to wait in silence for the salvation of God, or to persist in prayer till some beams of spiritual light and comfort were vouchsafed me from on high. Thomas à Kempis, since translated and published by Mr. John Wesley; Castaniza's Combat; and the Greek Testament, every reading of which I endeavoured to turn into a prayer, were of great help and furtherance to me. On receiving the holy sacrament, especially before trials, I have found grace in a very affecting manner, and in abundant measure, sometimes imparted to my soul,—an irrefragable proof to me of the miserable delusion of the author of that work called, "The Plain Account of the Sacrament," which sinks that holy ordinance into a bare memorial, who, if he obstinately refuse the instruction of the Most High, will doubtless, without repentance, bear his punishment, whosoever he be.

To proceed—I had now taken up my externals again; and though Satan for some weeks had been biting my heel, God was pleased to show me that I should soon bruise his head. A few days after, as I was walking along, I met with a poor woman whose husband was then in Bocardo, or Oxford Town-Gaol, which I constantly visited. Seeing her much discomposed, I enquired the cause. She told me, not being able to bear the crying of her children, ready to perish for hunger, and having nothing to relieve them, she had been to drown herself, but was mercifully prevented, and said she was coming to my room to inform me of it. I gave her some immediate relief, and desired her to meet me at the prison with her husband in the afternoon. She came, and there God visited them both by His free grace. She was powerfully quickened from above; and when I had done reading, he also came to me like the trembling gaoler, and, grasping my hand, cried out, "I am upon the brink of hell!" From this time forward, both of them grew in grace. God, by His providence, soon delivered him from his confinement. Though notorious offenders against God and one another before, yet now they became helpmeets for each other in the great work of their salvation. They are both now living, and, I trust, will be my joy and crown of rejoicing in the great day of our Lord Jesus.

Soon after this, the holy season of Lent came on, which our friends kept very strictly, eating no flesh during the six weeks, except on Saturdays and Sundays. I abstained frequently on Saturdays also, and ate nothing on the other days, except on Sunday, but sage-tea without sugar, and coarse bread. I constantly walked out in the cold mornings till part of one of my hands was quite black. This, with my continued abstinence and inward conflicts, at length so emaciated my body, that, at Passion-week, finding I could scarce creep upstairs, I was obliged to inform my kind tutor of my condition, who immediately sent for a physician to me.

This caused no small triumph amongst the collegians, who began to cry out, 'What is his fasting come to now?' But I rejoiced in this

reproach, knowing that, though I had been imprudent, and lost much of my flesh, yet, I had nevertheless increased in the spirit.

This fit of sickness continued upon me for seven weeks, and a glorious visitation it was. The blessed Spirit was all this time purifying my soul. All my former gross and notorious, and even my heart sins also, were now set home upon me, of which I wrote down some remembrance immediately, and confessed them before God morning and evening. Though weak, I often spent two hours in my evening retirements, and prayed over my Greek Testament and Bishop Hall's most excellent 'Contemplations' every hour that my health would permit. About the end of the seven weeks, and after I had been groaning under an unspeakable pressure both of body and mind for above a twelvemonth, God was pleased to set me free in the following manner. One day, perceiving an uncommon drought and a disagreeable clamminess in my mouth, and using things to allay my thirst, but in vain, it was suggested to me that when Jesus Christ cried out, "I thirst," His sufferings were near at an end. Upon which I cast myself down on the bed, crying out, "I thirst! I thirst!" Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour, and, for some time, could not avoid singing psalms wherever I was; but my joy gradually became more settled, and, blessed be God, has abode and increased in my soul, saving a few casual intermissions, ever since.

Thus were the days of my mourning ended. After a long night of desertion and temptation, the star, which I had seen at a distance before, began to appear again, and the day star arose in my heart. Now did the Spirit of God take possession of my soul, and, as I humbly hope, seal me unto the day of redemption."

From Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield*, vol. 1 found at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/44280/pg44280-images.html> (accessed 5/27/2024)

## ***“Personal Narrative” by Jonathan Edwards***

**Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) was the major theological leader in the Great Awakening in the North American colonies of Great Britain. Around 1740 he composed this “Personal Narrative” as a spiritual autobiography of his life.**

I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood; but had two more remarkable seasons of awakening, before I met with that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had. The first time was when I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father’s congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about the things of religion, and my soul’s salvation; and was abundant in duties. I used to pray five times a day in secret, and to spend much time in religious talk with other boys; and used to meet with them to pray together. I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion. My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure; and it was my delight to abound in religious duties. I with some of my schoolmates joined together, and built a booth in a swamp, in a very retired spot, for a place of prayer. And besides, I had particular secret places of my own in the woods, where I used to retire by myself; and was from time to time much affected. My affections seemed to be lively and easily moved, and I seemed to be in my element when engaged in religious duties. And I am ready to think, many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace.

But in process of time, my convictions and affections wore off; and I entirely lost all those affections and delights and left off secret prayer, at least as to any constant performance of it; and returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in the ways of sin. Indeed I was at times very uneasy, especially towards the latter part of my time at college; when it pleased God, to seize me with a pleurisy; in which he brought me nigh to the grave, and shook me over the pit of hell. And yet, it was not long after my recovery, before I fell again into my old ways of sin. But God would not suffer me to go on with any quietness; I had great and violent inward struggles, till, after many conflicts with wicked inclinations, repeated resolutions, and bonds that I laid myself under by a kind of vows to God,

I was brought wholly to break off all former wicked ways, and all ways of known outward sin; and to apply myself to seek salvation, and practice many religious duties; but without that kind of affection and delight which I had formerly experienced. My concern now wrought more by inward struggles and conflicts, and self-reflections. But yet, it seems to me, I sought after a miserable manner; which has made me sometimes since to question, whether ever it issued in that which was saving; being ready to doubt, whether such miserable seeking ever succeeded. I was indeed brought to seek salvation in a manner that I never was before; I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world, for an interest in Christ. My

concern continued and prevailed, with many exercising thoughts and inwards struggles; but yet it never seemed to be proper to express that concern by the name of terror.

From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus convinced, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, in respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God's strewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and hardening whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a delightful conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so.

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, I Tim. i:17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen. As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever! I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was any thing spiritual, or of a saving nature in this.

From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ. and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of

salvation by him. An inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. And my mind was greatly engaged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ, on the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation by free grace in him. I found no books so delightful to me, as those that treated of these subjects. Those words Cant. ii. 1, used to be abundantly with me, I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the valleys. The words seemed to me, sweetly to represent the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ. The whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it, about that time; and found, from time to time, an inward sweetness, that would carry me away, in my contemplations. This I know not how to express otherwise, than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and sometimes a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul, that I know not how to express.

Not long after I first began to experience these things, I gave an account to my father of some things that had passed in my mind. I was pretty much affected by the discourse we had together; and when the discourse was ended, I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.

After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time, singing forth, with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. And scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunder storm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunder storm; and used to

take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself in order to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. While thus engaged, it always seemed natural to me to sing, or chant for my mediations; or, to speak my thoughts in soliloquies with a singing voice.

I felt then great satisfaction, as to my good state; but that did not content me. I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more holiness, wherewith my heart seemed to be full, and ready to break; which often brought to my mind the words of the Psalmist, Psal. cxix.28. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath. I often felt a mourning and lamenting in my heart, that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. My mind was greatly fixed on divine things; almost perpetually in the contemplation of them. I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year; often walking alone in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer, and converse with God; and it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent. The delights which I now felt in the things of religion, were of an exceeding different kind from those before mentioned, that I had when a boy; and what I then had no more notion of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God; or any taste of the soul satisfying and life-giving good there is in them

My sense of divine things seemed gradually to increase, until I went to preach at New York, which was about a year and a half after they began; and while I was there, I felt them, very sensibly, in a much higher degree than I had done before. My longings after God and holiness, were much increased. Pure and humble, holy and heavenly Christianity, appeared exceeding amiable to me. I felt a burning desire to be in every thing a complete Christian; and conformed to the blessed image of Christ; and that I might live, in all things, according to the pure, sweet and blessed rules of the gospel. I had an eager thirsting after progress in these things; which put me upon pursuing and pressing after them. It was my continual strife day and night, and constant inquiry, how I should be more holy, and live more holily, and more becoming a child of God, and a disciple of Christ. I now sought an increase of grace and holiness, and a holy life, with much more earnestness, than ever I sought grace before I had it. I used to be continually examining myself, and studying and contriving for likely ways and means, how I should live holily, with far greater diligence and earnestness, than ever I pursued any thing in my life; but yet with too great a dependence on my own strength; which afterwards proved a great damage to me. My experience had not then taught me, as it has done since,

my extreme feebleness and impotence, every manner of way; and the bottomless depths of secret corruption and deceit there was in my heart. However, I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness, and conformity to Christ.

The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness; to be with God, and to spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ. My mind was very much taken up with contemplations on heaven, and the enjoyments there; and living there in perfect holiness, humility and love: And it used at that time to appear a great part of the happiness of heaven, that there the saints could express their love to Christ. It appeared to me a great clog and burden, that what I felt within, I could not express as I desired. The inward ardor of my soul, seemed to be hindered and pent up, and could not freely flame out as it would. I used often to think, how in heaven this principle should freely and fully vent and express itself. Heaven appeared exceedingly delightful, as a world of love; and that all happiness consisted in living in pure, humble, heavenly, divine love.

I remember the thoughts I used then to have of holiness; and said sometimes to myself, "I do certainly know that I love holiness, such as the gospel prescribes." It appeared to me that there was nothing in it but what was ravishingly lovely; and highest beauty and amiableness ... a divine beauty; far purer than any thing here upon earth; and that every thing else was like mire and defilement, in comparison of it.

Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and ravishment to the soul. In other words, that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers; all pleasant, delightful, and undisturbed: enjoying a sweet calm. and the gently vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the years; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing as it were in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrancy;; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun. There was no part of creature holiness, that I had so great a sense of its loveliness, as humility, brokenness of heart and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this, to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be all, that I might become as a little child.

While at New York, I was sometimes much affected with reflections of my past life, considering how late it was before I began to be truly religious; and how wickedly I had lived till then; and once so as to weep abundantly, and for a considerable time together.

On January 12, 1723. I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down; giving up myself, and all that I had to God; to be for the future, in no respect, my own; to act as one that had no right to himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed, to take God for my whole portion and felicity; looking on nothing else, as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were; and his law for the constant rule of my obedience: engaging to fight, with all my might, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life. But I have reason to be infinitely humbled, when I consider, how much I have failed, of answering my obligation.

I had, then, abundance of sweet, religious conversation, in the family where I lived, with Mr. John Smith, and his pious mother. My heart was knit in affection, to those, in whom were appearances of true piety; and I could bear the thoughts of no other companions, but such as were holy, and the disciples of the blessed Jesus. I had great longings, for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; and my secret prayer used to be, in great part, taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint, of any thing that happened, in any part of the world, that appeared, in some respect or other, to have a favourable aspect, on the interests of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it; and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be eager to read public news-letters, mainly for that end; to see if I could not find some news, favourable to the interest of religion in the world.

I very frequently used to retire into a solitary place, on the banks of Hudson's River, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things and secret converse with God: and had many sweet hours there. Sometimes Mr. Smith and I walked there together, to converse on the things of God; and our conversation used to turn much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days. I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart, and those sweet and powerful words. I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.

I came away from New York in the month of April, 1723, and had a most bitter parting with Madam Smith and her son. My heart seemed to sink within me, at leaving the family and city, where I had enjoyed so many sweet and pleasant days. I went from New York to Wethersfield, by water; and as I sailed away, I kept sight of the city as long as I could. However, that night after this sorrowful parting, I was greatly comforted in God at Westchester, where we went ashore to lodge: and had a pleasant time of it all the voyage to Saybrook. It was sweet to me to think of meeting dear Christians in heaven, where we should never part more. At Saybrook we

went ashore to lodge on Saturday, and there kept the Sabbath; where I had a sweet and refreshing season, walking alone in the fields.

After I came home to Windsor, I remained much in a like frame of mind, as when at New York; only sometimes I felt my heart ready to sink, with the thoughts of my friends at New York. My support was in contemplations on the heavenly state; as I find in my Diary of May 1, 1723. It was a comfort to think of that state, where there is fulness of joy; where reigns heavenly, calm, and delightful love, without alloy; where there are continually the dearest expressions of this love; where is the enjoyment of the persons loved, without ever parting; where those persons who appear so lovely in this world, will really be inexpressibly more lovely, and full of love to us. And how sweetly will the mutual lovers join together, to sing the praises of God and the Lamb! How will it fill us with joy to think, that this enjoyment, these sweet exercises, will never cease, but will last to all eternity . . . I continued much in the same frame, in the general, as when at New York, till I went to New Haven, as Tutor of the College: particularly, once at Bolton, on a journey from Boston, while walking out alone in the fields. After I went to New Haven, I sunk in religion; my mind being diverted from my eager pursuits after holiness, by some affairs, that greatly perplexed and distracted my thoughts.

In September, 1725, I was taken ill at New Haven, and while endeavouring to go home to Windsor, was so ill at the North Village, that I could go no farther, where I lay sick, for about a quarter of a year. In this sickness, God was pleased to visit me again, with the sweet influences of his Spirit. My mind was greatly engaged there, on divine and pleasant contemplations, and longings of soul. I observed, that those who watched with me, would often be looking out wishfully for the morning; which brought to my mind those words of the Psalmist, and which my soul with delight made its own language, My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning; and when the light of day came in at the window, it refreshed my soul, from one morning to another. It seemed to be some image of the light of God's glory.

I remember, about that time, I used greatly to long for the conversion of some, that I was concerned with; I could gladly honour them, and with delight be a servant to them, and lie at their feet, if they were but truly holy. But some time after this, I was again greatly diverted with some temporal concerns, that exceedingly took up my thoughts, greatly to the wounding of my soul; and went on, through various exercises, that it would be tedious to relate, which gave me much more experience of my own heart, than I ever had before....

Since I came to this town [i.e. Northampton], I have often had sweet complacency in God, in views of his glorious perfections and the excellency of Jesus Christ. God has appeared to me a glorious and lovely Being, chiefly on account of his holiness. The holiness of God has always

appeared to me the most lovely of all his attributes. The doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty, and free grace, in strewing mercy to whom he would shew mercy; and man's absolute dependence on the operations of God's Holy Spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been much my delight. God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me, great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore him as a sovereign God, and ask sovereign mercy of him.

I have loved the doctrines of the gospel; they have been to my soul like green pastures. The gospel has seemed to me the richest treasure; the treasure that I have most desired, and longed that it might dwell richly in me. The way of salvation by Christ has appeared, in a general way, glorious and excellent, most pleasant and most beautiful. It has often seemed to me, that it would in a great measure spoil heaven, to receive it in any other way. That text has often been affecting and delightful to me, Isa. xxxii. 2. A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, & c.

It has often appeared to me delightful, to be united to Christ; to have him for my head, and to be a member of his body; also to have Christ for my teacher and prophet. I very often think with sweetness, and longings, and partings of soul, of being a little child, taking hold of Christ, to be led by him through the wilderness of this world. That text, Matt. xviii.3, has often been sweet to me, except ye be converted and become as little children, & c. I love to think of coming to Christ, to receive salvation of him, poor in spirit, and quite empty of self, humbly exalting him alone; cut off entirely from my own root, in order to grow into, and out of Christ; to have God in Christ to be all in all; and to live by faith in the Son of God, a life of humble, unfeigned confidence in him. That scripture has often been sweet to me, Psal. cxv.1. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. And those words of Christ, Luke x.21, In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. That sovereignty of God which Christ rejoiced in, seemed to me worthy of such joy; and that rejoicing seemed to shew the excellency of Christ. and of what spirit he was.

Sometimes, only mentioning a single word caused my heart to burn within me; or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God. And God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced, have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate; but in a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy this sweetness, it seems to carry me above the

thoughts of my own estate; it seems at such times a loss that I cannot bear, to take off my eye from the glorious, pleasant object I behold without me, to turn my eye in upon myself, and my own good estate.

My heart has been much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. The histories of the past advancement of Christ's kingdom have been sweet to me. When I have read histories of past ages, the pleasantest thing in all my reading has been, to read of the kingdom of Christ being promoted. And when I have expected, in my reading, to come to any such thing, I have rejoiced in the prospect, all the way as I read. And my mind has been much entertained and delighted with the scripture promises and prophecies, which relate to the future glorious advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth.

I have sometimes had a sense of the excellent fulness of Christ, and his meekness and suitableness as a Saviour; whereby he has appeared to me, far above all, the chief of ten thousands. His blood and atonement have appeared sweet, and his righteousness sweet; which was always accompanied with ardency of spirit; and inward strugglings and breathings, and groanings that cannot be uttered, to be emptied of myself, and swallowed up in Christ.

Once, as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception ... which continued as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have, several other times, had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the same effects.

I have many times had a sense of the glory of the third person in the Trinity, in his office of Sanctifier; in his holy operations, communicating divine light and life to the soul. God, in the communications of his Holy Spirit, has appeared as an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness; being full, and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul; pouring forth itself in sweet communications; like the sun in its glory, sweetly and pleasantly diffusing light and life. And I have sometimes had an affecting sense of the excellency of the word of God, as a word of life; as the light of life; a sweet, excellent life-giving word;

accompanied with a thirsting after that word, that it might dwell richly in my heart.

Often, since I lived in this town, I have had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness; very frequently to such a degree as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together; so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness, and the badness of my heart, than ever I had before my conversion. It has often appeared to me, that if God should mark iniquity against me, I should appear the very worst of all mankind; of all that have been, since the beginning of the world to this time; and that I should have by far the lowest place in hell. When others, that have come to talk with me about their soul concerns, have expressed the sense they have had of their own wickedness, by saying that it seemed to them, that they were as bad as the devil himself; I thought their expressions seemed exceeding faint and feeble, to represent my wickedness.

My wickedness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination; like an infinite deluge, or mountain over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. Very often, for these many years, these expressions are in my mind, and in my mouth, "Infinite upon infinite ... Infinite upon infinite!" When I look into my heart, and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell. And it appears to me, that were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fulness and glory of the great Jehovah, and the arm of his power and grace stretched forth in all the majesty of his power, and in all the glory of his sovereignty, I should appear sunk down in my sins below hell itself; far beyond the sight of every thing, but the eye of sovereign grace, that can pierce even down to such a depth. And yet it seems to me, that my conviction of sin is exceeding small, and faint; it is enough to amaze me, that I have no more sense of my sin. I know certainly, that I have very little sense of my sinfulness. When I have had turns of weeping and crying for my sins I thought I knew at the time, that my repentance was nothing to my sin.

I have greatly longed of late, for a broken heart, and to lie low before God; and, when I ask for humility, I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self-exaltation in me, not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind. Others speak of their longing to be "humbled to the dust;" that may be a proper expression for them, but I always think of myself, that I ought, and it is an expression that has long been natural for me to use in prayer, "to lie infinitely low before God." And it is affecting to think, how ignorant I was, when a young Christian, of the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy and deceit, left in my heart.

I have a much greater sense of my universal, exceeding dependence on God's grace and strength, and mere good pleasure, of late, than I used formerly to have; and have experienced more of an abhorrence of my own righteousness. The very thought of any joy arising in me, on any consideration of my own amiableness, performances, or experiences, or any goodness of heart or life, is nauseous and detestable to me. And yet I am greatly afflicted with a proud and self-righteous spirit, much more sensibly than I used to be formerly. I see that serpent rising and putting forth its head continually, every where, all around me.

Though it seems to me, that, in some respects, I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my first conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure; yet, of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ, as a Mediator revealed in the gospel. On one Saturday night, in particular, I had such a discovery of the excellency of the gospel above all other doctrines, that I could not but say to myself, "This is my chosen light, my chosen doctrine;" and of Christ, "This is my chosen Prophet." It appeared sweet, beyond all expression, to follow Christ, and to be taught, and enlightened, and instructed by him; to learn of him, and live to him. Another Saturday night, (January 1739) I had such a sense, how sweet and blessed a thing it was to walk in the way of duty; to do that which was right and meet to be done, and agreeable to the holy mind of God; that it caused me to break forth into a kind of loud weeping, which held me some time, so that I was forced to shut myself up, and fasten the doors. I could not but, as it were, cry out, "How happy are they which do that which is right in the sight of God! They are blessed indeed, they are the happy ones!" I had, at the same time, a very affecting sense, how meet and suitable it was that God should govern the world, and order all things according to his own pleasure; and I rejoiced in it, that God reigned, and that his will was done.

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<http://eada.lib.umd.edu/text-entries/personal-narrative/> (accessed 4/20/17)

## *From Charles Spurgeon's Autobiography*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a leading English Baptist and perhaps the greatest English-speaking preacher of the nineteenth century. The following is Chapter 11 "The Great Change—Conversion" from Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, vol. 1. It recounts the story he often related, that of his conversion as a fifteen-year-old boy.

([Introduction] I have heard men tell the story of their conversion, and of their spiritual life, in such a way that my heart hath loathed *them* and their story, too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime, and they have mentioned the love of God, not with a tear of gratitude, not with the simple thanksgiving of the really humble heart, but as if they as much exalted themselves as they exalted God. Oh! when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with great sorrow, remembering what we used to be, and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things. I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation, and I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story, and a dull, dull tale it was to me; but, on a sudden, the thought crossed my mind, "Why, you are a poor, lost, ruined sinner yourself; tell it, tell it as you received it; begin to tell of the grace of God as you trust you feel it yourself." Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears; those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up, and they listened, because they were hearing something which the speaker himself felt, and which they recognized as being true to him if it was not true to them.

Can you not remember, dearly-beloved, that day of days, that best and brightest of hours, when first you saw the Lord, lost your burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on your way in peace? My soul can never forget that day. Dying, all but dead, diseased, pained, chained, scourged, bound in fetters of iron, in darkness and the shadow of death, Jesus appeared unto me. My eyes looked to Him; the disease was healed, the pains removed, chains were snapped, prison doors were opened, darkness gave place to light. What delight filled my soul!—what mirth, what ecstasy, what sound of music and dancing, what soarings towards Heaven, what heights and depths of ineffable delight! Scarcely ever since then have I known joys which surpassed the rapture of that first hour.—C. H. S.)

LET our lips crowd sonnets within the compass of a word; let our voice distill hours of melody into a single syllable; let our tongue utter in one letter the essence of the harmony of ages; for we write of an hour which as far excelleth all other days of our life as gold exceedeth dross. As the night of Israel's passover was a night to be remembered, a theme for bards, and an incessant fountain of grateful song, even so is the time of which we now tell, the never-to-be-forgotten hour of our emancipation from guilt, and our justification in Jesus. Other days have mingled with their fellows till, like coins worn in circulation, their image and superscription are entirely obliterated; but this day remaineth new, fresh,

bright, as distinct in all its parts as if it were but yesterday struck from the mint of time. Memory shall drop from the palsied hand full many a memento which now she cherishes, but she shall never, even when she tottereth to the grave, unbind from her heart the token of the thrice-happy hour of the redemption of our spirit. The emancipated galley-slave may forget the day which heard his broken fetters rattle on the ground; the pardoned traitor may fail to remember the moment when the ax of the headsman was averted by a pardon; and the long-despairing mariner may not recollect the moment when a friendly hand snatched him from the hungry deep; but O hour of forgiven sin, moment of perfect pardon, our soul shall never forget thee while within her life and being find an immortality! Each day of our life hath had its attendant angel; but on this day, like Jacob at Mahanaim, hosts of angels met us. The sun hath risen every morning, but on that eventful morn he had the light of seven days. As the days of Heaven upon earth, as the years of immortality, as the ages of glory, as the bliss of Heaven, so were the hours of that thrice-happy day. Rapture divine, and ecstasy inexpressible, filled our soul. Fear, distress, and grief, with all their train of woes, fled hastily away; and in their place joys came without number.

When I was in the hand of the Holy Spirit, under conviction of sin, I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden. It was not so much that I feared hell, as that I feared sin; and all the while, I had upon my mind a deep concern for the honor of God's name, and the integrity of His moral government. I felt that it would not satisfy my conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly. But then there came the question—"How could God be just, and yet justify me who had been so guilty?" I was worried and wearied with this question; neither could I see any answer to it. Certainly, I could never have invented an answer which would have satisfied my conscience. The doctrine of the atonement is to my mind one of the surest proofs of the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. Who would or could have thought of the just Ruler dying for the unjust rebel? This is no teaching of human mythology, or dream of poetical imagination. This method of expiation is only known among men because it is a fact: fiction could not have devised it. God Himself ordained it; it is not a matter which could have been imagined.

I had heard of the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus from my youth up; but I did not know anymore about it in my innermost soul than if I had been born and bred a Hottentot. The light was there, but I was blind: it was of necessity that the Lord Himself should make the matter plain to me. It came to me as a new revelation, as fresh as if I had never read in Scripture that Jesus was declared to be the propitiation for sins that God might be just. I believe it will have to come as a revelation to every newborn child of God whenever he sees it; I mean that glorious doctrine of the substitution of the Lord Jesus. I came to understand that salvation was possible through vicarious sacrifice; and that provision had been made

in the first constitution and arrangement of things for such a substitution. I was made to see that He who is the Son of God, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father, had of old been made the covenant Head of a chosen people, that He might in that capacity suffer for them and save them. Inasmuch as our fall was not at the first a personal one, for we fell in our federal representative, the first Adam, it became possible for us to be recovered by a second Representative, even by Him who has undertaken to be the covenant Head of His people, so as to be their second Adam. I saw that, ere I actually sinned, I had fallen by my first father's sin; and I rejoiced that, therefore, it became possible in point of law for me to rise by a second Head and Representative. The fall by Adam left a loophole of escape; another Adam could undo the ruin wrought by the first.

When I was anxious about the possibility of a just God pardoning me, I understood and saw by faith that He who is the Son of God became man, and in His own blessed person bore my sin in His own body on the tree. I saw that the chastisement of my peace was laid on Him, and that with His stripes I was healed. It was because the Son of God, supremely glorious in His matchless person, undertook to vindicate the law by bearing the sentence due to me, that therefore God was able to pass by my sin. My sole hope for Heaven lies in the full atonement made upon Calvary's cross for the ungodly. On that I firmly rely. I have not the shadow of a hope anywhere else. Personally, I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed. My evil propensities were too many for me, till, in the belief that Christ died for me, I cast my guilty soul on Him, and then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self. The doctrine of the cross can be used to slay sin, even as the old warriors used their huge two-handed swords, and mowed down their foes at every stroke. There is nothing like faith in the sinners' Friend: it overcomes all evil. If Christ has died for me, ungodly as I am, without strength as I am, then I cannot live in sin any longer, but must arouse myself to love and serve Him who hath redeemed me. I cannot trifle with the evil which slew my best Friend. I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot forever engraven upon my memory, for there I saw this Friend, my best, my only Friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright, and looked at Him. I saw that His hands had been pierced with rough iron nails, and His feet had been rent in the same way. There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, His back was red with bloody scourges, and His brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this Friend full well. He never had a fault; He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured Him? For He never injured any man: all His life long He "went about doing good;" He had healed the sick, He had fed the hungry, He had raised the dead: for which of these works did they kill

Him? He had never breathed out anything else but love; and as I looked into the poor sorrowful face, so full of agony, and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like His. I said within myself, "Where can these traitors live? Who are these that could have smitten such an One as this?"

Had they murdered an Oppressor, we might have forgiven them; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his desert; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse: justice has at last given him his due." But when Thou wast slain, my best, my only-beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh! what jealousy; what revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers, what would I not do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse, I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that, somehow or other, wherever I put out my hand, I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have thee now," said I; for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harboring the murderer; and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over His corpse, and sang that plaintive hymn—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were;  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear."

Amid the rabble rout which hounded the Redeemer to His doom, there were some gracious souls whose bitter anguish sought vent in wailing and lamentations—fit music to accompany that march of woe. When my soul can, in imagination, see the Savior bearing His cross to Calvary, she joins the godly women, and weeps with them; for, indeed, there is true cause for grief—cause lying deeper than those mourning women thought. They bewailed innocence maltreated, goodness persecuted, love bleeding, meekness about to die; but my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn. My sins were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned with thorns those bleeding brows: my sins cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders. His being led forth to die is sorrow enough for one eternity; but my having been His murderer, is more, infinitely more grief than one poor fountain of tears can express.

Why those women loved and wept, it were not hard to guess; but they could not have had greater reasons for love and grief than my heart has. Nain's widow saw her son restored; but I myself have been raised to

newness of life. Peter's wife's mother was cured of the fever; but I of the greater plague of sin. Out of Magdalene seven devils were cast; but a whole legion out of me. Mary and Martha were favored with visits from Him; but He dwells with me. His mother bare His body; but He is formed in me, "the hope of glory." In nothing behind the holy women in debt, let me not be behind them in gratitude or sorrow.

"Love and grief my heart dividing,  
With my tears His feet I'll lave;  
Constant still in heart abiding,  
Weep for Him who died to save."

William Huntingdon says, in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt, after he had been quickened by Divine grace, was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very striking one; although I might prefer to say that I have sympathy with God, and grief that He should be treated so ill. Ah, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows; but there never was a man who was so despised as the everlasting God has been! Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never was one treated as our God has been. I, too, once despised Him. He knocked at the door of my heart, and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; He checked me in my conscience, and spoke to me by His Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. Oh, I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him! But what a loving reception did I have when I went to Him! I thought He would smite me, but His hand was not clenched in anger, but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that His eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me; but, instead thereof, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck, and kissed me; He took off my rags, and did clothe me with His righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy; while in the house of my heart, and in the house of His Church, there was music and dancing, because His son that He had lost was found, and he that had been dead was made alive again.

There is a power in God's gospel beyond all description. Once I, like Mazeppa, lashed to the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty hand which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty. Is there power in the gospel? Ay, there is, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins, and rested in my own works. There came a trumpeter to the door, and bade me open it. I with anger chid him from the porch, and said he ne'er should enter. Then there came a

goodly Personage, with loving countenance; His hands were marked with scars where nails had been driven, and His feet had nail-prints, too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer; at the first blow, the gate of my prejudice shook; at the second, it trembled more; at the third, down it fell, and in He came; and He said, “Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” The gospel a thing of power! Ah! that it is. It always wears the dew of its youth; it glitters with morning’s freshness, its strength and its glory abide forever. I have felt its power in my own heart; I have the witness of the Spirit within my spirit, and I know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me, and bowed me down.

“His free grace alone, from the first to the last,  
Hath won my affections, and bound my soul fast.”

In my conversion, the very point lay in making the discovery that I had nothing to do but to look to Christ, and I should be saved. I believe that I had been a very good, attentive hearer; my own impression about myself was that nobody ever listened much better than I did. For years, as a child, I tried to learn the way of salvation; and either I did not hear it set forth, which I think cannot quite have been the case, or else I was spiritually blind and deaf, and could not see it and could not hear it; but the good news that I was, as a sinner, to look away from myself to Christ, as much startled me, and came as fresh to me, as any news I ever heard in my life. Had I never read my Bible? Yes, and read it earnestly. Had I never been taught by Christian people? Yes, I had, by mother, and father, and others. Had I not heard the gospel? Yes, I think I had; and yet, somehow, it was like a new revelation to me that I was to “believe and live.” I confess to have been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs concerning Jesus; but after having heard the gospel continually, with line upon line, precept upon precept, here much and there much, yet, when the Word of the Lord came to me with power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of Central Africa, and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing fountain filled with blood, drawn from the Savior’s veins.

When, for the first time, I received the gospel to my soul’s salvation, I thought that I had never really heard it before, and I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the gospel fully preached many hundreds of times before, and that this was the difference—that I then heard it as though I heard it not; and when I did hear it, the message may not have been anymore clear in itself than it had been at former times, but the power of the Holy Spirit was present to open my ear, and to guide the message to my heart. I have no doubt that I heard, scores of times, such texts as these—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;” “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not

perish, but have everlasting life;” yet I had no intelligent idea of what faith meant. When I first discovered what faith really was, and exercised it—for with me these two things came together, I believed as soon as ever I knew what believing meant—then I thought I had never before heard that truth preached. But, now, I am persuaded that the light often shone on my eyes, but I was blind, and therefore I thought that the light had never come there. The light was shining all the while, but there was no power to receive it; the eyeball of the soul was not sensitive to the Divine beams.

I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalogue was made out, it appeared to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved me, and not the world, I should have wondered indeed; but if He had saved all the world except me, that would have seemed to me to be but right. And now, being saved by grace, I cannot help saying, “I am indeed a brand plucked out of the fire!” I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found Him, love Him better perhaps than we should have done if we had received Him directly; and we can preach better to others, we can speak more of His lovingkindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. I love that picture of dear old Christian. I know, when I first read *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and saw in it the woodcut of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested in the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when, after he had carried his heavy load so long, he at last got rid of it; and that was how I felt when the burden of guilt, which I had borne so long, was forever rolled away from my shoulders and my heart.

I can recollect when, like the poor dove sent out by Noah from his hand, I flew over the wide expanse of waters, and hoped to find some place where I might rest my wearied wing. Up towards the North I flew; and my eye looked keenly through the mist and darkness, if perhaps it might find some floating substance on which my soul might rest its foot, but it found nothing. Again it turned its wing, and flapped it, but not so rapidly as before, across that deep water that knew no shore; but still there was no rest. The raven had found its resting-place upon a floating body, and was feeding itself upon the carrion of some drowned man’s carcass; but my poor soul found no rest. I flew on; I fancied I saw a ship sailing out at sea; it was the ship of the law; and I thought I would put my feet on its canvas, or rest myself on its cordage for a time, and find some refuge. But, ah! it was an airy phantom, on which I could not rest; for my foot had no right to rest on the law; I had not kept it, and the soul that keepeth it not, must die. At last I saw the bark Christ Jesus—that happy ark; and I thought I would fly thither; but my poor wing was weary, I could fly no further, and down I sank; but, as providence would have it, when my wings were flagging, and I was falling into the flood to be drowned, just below me was the roof of the ark, and I saw a hand put out from it, and

One took hold of me, and said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore I have not delivered the soul of My turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked; come in, come in!" Then I found that I had in my mouth an olive leaf of peace with God, and peace with man, plucked off by Jesus' mighty power.

Once, God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As I looked across the fields, there was nothing but barrenness—bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever I gazed. On a sudden, God spake, and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at the time that I was seeking the Savior, and not long before I found Him; and I remember well that sermon which I saw before me in the snow: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Personally, I have to bless God for many good books; I thank Him for Dr. Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*; for Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*; for Alleine's *Alarm to Sinners*; and for James's *Anxious Enquirer*; but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the preached Word—and that too addressed to me by a poor, uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt of a humble kind, during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The books were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me; but it was the preached Word that saved me; and I must ever attach peculiar value to the *hearing of the truth*, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights.

While under concern of soul, I resolved that I would attend all the places of worship in the town where I lived, in order that I might find out the way of salvation. I was willing to do anything, and be anything, if God would only forgive my sin. I set off, determined to go round to all the chapels, and I did go to every place of worship; but for a long time I went in vain. I do not, however, blame the ministers. One man preached Divine Sovereignty; I could hear him with pleasure, but what was that sublime truth to a poor sinner who wished to know what he must do to be saved? There was another admirable man who always preached about the law; but what was the use of plowing up ground that needed to be sown? Another was a practical preacher. I heard him, but it was very much like a commanding officer teaching the maneuvers of war to a set of men without feet. What could I do? All his exhortations were lost on me. I knew it was said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but I did not know what it was to believe on Christ. These good men all preached truths suited to many in their congregations who were

spiritually-minded people; but what I wanted to know was—“How can I get my sins forgiven?”—and they never told me that. I desired to hear how a poor sinner, under a sense of sin, might find peace with God; and when I went, I heard a sermon on, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked,” which cut me up still worse; but did not bring me into rest. I went again, another day, and the text was something about the glories of the righteous; nothing for poor me! I was like a dog under the table, not allowed to eat of the children’s food. I went time after time, and I can honestly say that I do not know that I ever went without prayer to God, and I am sure there was not a more attentive hearer than myself in all the place, for I panted and longed to understand how I might be saved.

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people’s heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was—

“*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*” He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus:—“My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.’ Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pains. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look.’ Well, a man needn’t go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, ‘Look unto *Me*.’ Ay!” said he, in broad Essex, “many on ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it’s no use lookin’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, ‘Look unto *Me*.’ Some on ye say, ‘We must wait for the Spirit’s workin’.’ You have no business with that just now. Look to *Christ*. The text says, ‘Look unto *Me*.’”

Then the good man followed up his text in this way:—“Look unto Me; I am sweatin’ great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin’ on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin’ at the Father’s right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! look unto Me!”

When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, “and you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.” Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.” I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, “Look!” what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, “Trust Christ, and you shall be saved.” Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”

I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ; when I was yet a child, I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now; I will even add, more weariness, more care, more heartache than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it, and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace; but before that, all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. That happy day, when I found the Savior, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the Word of God; and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those

Methodist brethren who were present, "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!" My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces, I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of Heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock, and my goings established. I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan meant, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about his conversion. He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell somebody.

It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance; but, as Richard Knill said, "At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in Heaven, for Richard Knill was born again," it was e'en so with me. The clock of mercy struck in Heaven the hour and moment of my emancipation, for the time had come. Between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life. Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you;" and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found the Savior, and knew himself to be forgiven—bliss compared with which all earth's joys are less than nothing and vanity.

Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Savior. Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it; and as, the moment before, there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous. It took no longer time than does the lightning-flash; it was done, and never has it been undone. I looked, and lived, and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld my sin punished upon the great Substitute, and put away forever. I looked unto Him, as He bled upon that tree; His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, I was saved. Looking unto Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed, the gaping wounds were cured, the broken bones rejoiced, the rags that had covered me were all removed, my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off North; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through Him that did hang upon the tree. My Master, I cannot understand how Thou couldst stoop Thine awful head to such a death as the death of the cross—how Thou couldst take from Thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how Thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird Thy temples, astonishes me far more. That Thou shouldst cast away the mantle of Thy glory, the azure of Thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend; but how Thou shouldst have become veiled in the ignominious purple for awhile, and then be mocked by impious men, who bowed to Thee as a pretended king; and how Thou shouldst be

stripped naked to Thy shame, without a single covering, and die a felon's death—this is still more incomprehensible. But the marvel is that Thou shouldst have suffered all this for me! Truly, Thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women! Was ever grief like Thine? Was ever love like Thine, that could open the flood-gates of such grief? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down?

There was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that thorn-crowned head. Home, friends, health, wealth, comforts—all lost their luster that day when He appeared, just as stars are hidden by the light of the sun. He was the only Lord and Giver of life's best bliss, the one well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. As I saw Jesus on His cross before me, and as I mused upon His sufferings and death, methought I saw Him cast a look of love upon me; and then I looked at Him, and cried—

“Jesu, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly.”

He said, “Come,” and I flew to Him, and clasped Him; and when He let me go again, I wondered where my burden was. It was gone! There, in the sepulcher, it lay, and I felt light as air; like a winged sylph, I could fly over mountains of trouble and despair; and oh! what liberty and joy I had! I could leap with ecstasy, for I had much forgiven, and I was freed from sin. With the spouse in the Canticles, I could say, “*I found Him*”; I, a lad, found the Lord of glory; I, a slave to sin, found the great Deliverer; I, the child of darkness, found the Light of life; I, the uttermost of the lost, found my Savior and my God; I, widowed and desolate, found my Friend, my Beloved, my Husband. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I marveled that He should be able to pardon such sins as mine, such crimes, so numerous and so black; and that, after such an accusing conscience, He should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. It mattered not to me whether the day itself was gloomy or bright, I had found Christ; that was enough for me. He was my Savior, He was my all; and I can heartily say, that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction. I have to bless God for every terror that ever scared me by night, and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since; for now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my soul, I thank God it is not such a burden as that which bowed me to the very earth, and made me creep upon the ground, like a beast, by reason of heavy distress and affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered; I never can, except I be sent to hell, know more of agony than I have known; and now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that “no condemnation” which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the

recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief. Blessed be Thou, O God, forever, who by those black days, like a dreary winter, hast made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow, and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away; my spirit is no more guilty; it is pure, it is holy. The frown of God no longer resteth upon me; but my Father smiles, I see His eyes—they are glancing love; I hear His voice—it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven!

When I look back upon it, I can see one reason why the Word was blessed to me as I heard it preached in that Primitive Methodist Chapel at Colchester; I had been up betimes crying to God for the blessing. As a lad, when I was seeking the Savior, I used to rise with the sun, that I might get time to read gracious books, and to seek the Lord. I can recall the kind of pleas I used when I took my arguments, and came before the throne of grace: “Lord, save me; it will glorify Thy grace to save such a sinner as I am! Lord, save me, else I am lost to all eternity; do not let me perish, Lord! Save me, O Lord, for Jesus died! By His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, save me!” I often proved that the early morning was the best part of the day; I liked those prayers of which the psalmist said, “In the morning shall my prayer prevent Thee.”

The Holy Spirit, who enabled me to believe, gave me peace through believing. I felt as sure that I was forgiven as before I felt sure of condemnation. I had been certain of my condemnation because the Word of God declared it, and my conscience bore witness to it; but when the Lord justified me, I was made equally certain by the same witnesses. The Word of the Lord in the Scripture saith, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned,” and my conscience bore witness that I believed, and that God in pardoning me was just. Thus I had the witness of the Holy Spirit and also of my own conscience, and these two agreed in one. That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned—that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps, if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more, and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly, he was no very reliable judge of theology, anymore than he was of porcelain, which he once attempted to make, and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is of very little value.

How can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; is it irrational to believe that I am saved? “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” saith Christ, in John’s Gospel. I believe on Christ; am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life? I find the apostle Paul speaking by the Holy Ghost, and saying, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” If I know that my trust

is fixed on Jesus only, and that I have faith in Him, were it not ten thousand times more absurd for me not to be at peace, than for me to be filled with joy unspeakable? It is but taking God at His Word, when the soul knows, as a necessary consequence of its faith, that it is saved.

I took Jesus as my Savior, and I was saved; and I can tell the reason why I took Him for my Savior. To my own humiliation, I must confess that I did it because I could not help it; I was shut up to it. That stern law-work had hammered me into such a condition that, if there had been fifty other saviors, I could not have thought of them—I was driven to this One. I wanted a Divine Savior, I wanted One who was made a curse for me, to expiate my guilt. I wanted One who had died, for I deserved to die. I wanted One who had risen again, who was able by His life to make me live. I wanted the exact Savior that stood before me in the Word, revealed to my heart; and I could not help having Him. I could realize then the language of Rutherford when, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen, he said, “O my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and Thee, if I could not get at Thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice, but I would go through it all, if I might but embrace Thee, and call Thee mine!” Oh, how I loved Him! Passing all loves except His own, was that love which I felt for Him then. If, beside the door of the place in which I met with Him, there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains, glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to Him. Had He asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all, and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for His name’s sake. Had He commanded me then to preach in the midst of all His foes, I could have said—

“There’s not a lamb in all Thy flock  
I would disdain to feed,  
There’s not a foe, before whose face  
I’d fear Thy cause to plead.”

Has Jesus saved me? I dare not speak with any hesitation here; I know He has. His Word is true, therefore I am saved. My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, then He came to save me, and I am saved; I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact, and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith. It is a very surprising thing—a thing to be marveled at most of all by those who enjoy it. I know that it is to me even to this day the greatest wonder that I ever heard of, that God should ever justify me. I feel myself to be a lump of unworthiness, a mass of corruption, and a heap of sin, apart from His almighty love; yet I know, by a full assurance, that I am justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and treated as if I had been perfectly just, and made an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ; though by nature I must

take my place among the most sinful. I, who am altogether undeserving, am treated as if I had been deserving. I am loved with as much love as if I had always been godly, whereas aforesaid I was ungodly.

I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word *Substitution*—Christ standing in the stead of man. If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost forever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin everyday; but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, “There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner’s stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you.” I find it very convenient everyday to come to Christ as a sinner, as I came at the first. “You are no saint,” says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Sink or swim, I go to Him; other hope I have none. By looking to Him, I received all the faith which inspired me with confidence in His grace; and the word that first drew my soul—“Look unto Me”—still rings its clarion note in my ears. There I once found conversion, and there I shall ever find refreshing and renewal.

Let me bear my personal testimony of what I have seen, what my own ears have heard, and my own heart has tasted. First, Christ is the only-begotten of the Father. He is Divine to me, if He be human to all the world besides. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has subdued my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass, and snapped the bars of iron. He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; He hath led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must ever be the only-begotten of the Father: blessed be His holy name!

“Oh, that I could now adore Him,  
Like the Heavenly host above,  
Who for ever bow before Him,  
And unceasing sing His love!  
Happy songsters!  
When shall I your chorus join?”

Again, I bear my testimony that He is full of grace. Ah, had He not been, I should never have beheld His glory. I was full of sin to overflowing. I was condemned already, because I believed not upon Him. He drew me when I wanted not to come, and though I struggled hard, He continued still to draw; and when at last I came to His mercy-seat, all trembling like a condemned culprit, He said, “Thy sins, which are many,

are all forgiven thee: be of good cheer.” Let others despise Him; but I bear witness that He is full of grace.

Finally, I bear my witness that He is full of truth. True have His promises been; not one has failed. I have often doubted Him, for that I blush; He has never failed me, in this I must rejoice. His promises have been yea and amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have; never brother had such a Kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse had such a Husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Savior; never soldier a better Captain; never mourner a better Comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life, He is my life; and in death, He shall be the death of death; in poverty, Christ is my riches; in sickness, He makes my bed; in darkness, He is my Star; and in brightness, He is my Sun. By faith I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with His own heart’s blood; and by sweet experience I know that He raised me up from the pit of dark despair, and set my feet on the rock. He died for me. This is the root of every satisfaction I have. He put all my transgressions away. He cleansed me with His precious blood; He covered me with His perfect righteousness; He wrapped me up in His own virtues. He has promised to keep me, while I abide in this world, from its temptations and snares; and when I depart from this world, He has already prepared for me a mansion in the Heaven of unfading bliss, and a crown of everlasting joy that shall never, never fade away. To me, then, the days or years of my mortal sojourn on this earth are of little moment. Nor is the manner of my decease of much consequence. Should foemen sentence me to martyrdom, or physicians declare that I must soon depart this life, it is all alike—

“A few more rolling suns at most  
Shall land me on fair Canaan’s coast.”

What more can I wish than that, while my brief term on earth shall last, I should be the servant of Him who became the Servant of servants for me? I can say, concerning Christ’s religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be a follower of Jesus, and walk in His footsteps. If there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister, to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ, yea, more joy in one glimpse of His face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot- world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what He has been till now, He will be to the end; and where He hath begun a good work, He will carry it on. In the religion of Jesus Christ, there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine;

there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarcely excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord. I have seen hundreds and thousands who have given their hearts to Jesus, but I never did see one who said he was disappointed with Him, I never met with one who said Jesus Christ was less than He was declared to be. When first my eyes beheld Him, when the burden slipped from off my heavy-laden shoulders, and I was free from condemnation, I thought that all the preachers I had ever heard had not half preached, they had not told half the beauty of my Lord and Master. So good! so generous! so gracious! so willing to forgive! It seemed to me as if they had almost slandered Him; they painted His likeness, doubtless, as well as they could, but it was a mere smudge compared with the matchless beauties of His face. All who have ever seen Him will say the same. I go back to my home, many a time, mourning that I cannot preach my Master even as I myself know Him, and what I know of Him is very little compared with the matchlessness of His grace. Would that I knew more of Him, and that I could tell it out better!

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## *The Personal Testimony of C. T. Studd*

**Charles Thomas Studd (1860-1931) was a leading cricket player at Cambridge University whose conversion as the result of the Moody-Sankey campaign in Britain led him to become a leading missionary in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.**

I was brought up in the Church of England and was pretty religious—so most people thought. I was taken to church and baptized the right day, and after a time I was confirmed and took communion. But I did not know anything about Jesus Christ personally. I knew a little about Him, as I may know a little about President Taft, but I did not know Him. There was not a moment in my life when I ever doubted that there was a God, or that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world; but I did not know Him as my personal Saviour. We boys were brought up to go to church regularly, but, although we had a kind of religion, it was not a religion that amounted to much. It was just like having a toothache. We were always sorry to have Sunday come, and glad when we came to Monday morning. The Sabbath was the dullest day of the whole week, and just because we got hold of the wrong end of religion. A man may get hold of the wrong end of a poker, and I got hold of the wrong end of religion and had to pay dearly for it. We had lots of ministers and lots of churches all around us, but we never saw such a thing as a real convert. We didn't believe much in converts in those days. We thought that the Chinese and Africans had to be converted; but the idea of an Englishman being converted was absurd, because it made him out a heathen before he was converted.

My father was just a man of the world, loving all sorts of worldly things. He had made a fortune in India and had come back to England to spend it. He was very fond of sports of all kinds. He would go into regular training that he might go fox hunting, but above all he was an enthusiast on horse racing. He was passionately fond of horses to begin with and when he saw fine horses he would buy them and train them, and then he would race them. He had a large place in the country, where he made a race course, and he won the biggest steeple-chase in London three times. At last he got hold of a horse better than anyone he had ever had, and so certain was he of winning the race that he wrote to a friend in London and said, "If you are a wise man you will come to the race tomorrow and put every penny you have on my horse."

Unknown to my father this man had been converted. Mr. Moody had come to England and had been preaching. Nobody believed very much at that time in a man getting up to preach the Gospel unless he had two things—the title of Reverend, and a white tie round his neck. The papers could not understand such a preacher as Mr. Moody, who had neither, and of course they printed column after column against him. But they could not help seeing that he could get more people to his meetings than half a dozen archbishops, and that more were converted than by twenty ordinary ministers. Of course they did not put the right construction on things. They said that Mr. Sankey had come over to sell organs,

and Mr. Moody to sell his hymn books. My father read the papers day after day and these things tickled him immensely. I remember one evening he threw the paper down and said, "Well, anyhow, when this man comes to London I am going to hear him. There must be some good about the man or he would never be abused so much by the papers."

Well, father went up to London the next day according to promise, and met his friend. This man had been over to Ireland when Mr. Moody was there, and as he was about to leave Dublin had missed his train. God was even in that, missing a train. It was Saturday night, and the man had to remain over Sunday. As he was looking about the streets that evening he saw the big bills advertising Moody and Sankey, and he thought, "I will just go and hear those Americans." He went and God met him; he went again and God converted him. He was a new man, and yet when my father wrote that letter he never said anything about it. When they met and drove along in a carriage father talked of nothing but horses, and told this man if he were a wise man he would put up every penny he had on that horse.

After father had finished his business he came back to this friend and said, "How much money have you put on my horse?" "Nothing." My father said, "You are the biggest fool I ever saw; didn't I tell you what a good horse he was? But though you are a fool, come along with me to dinner." After dinner my father said, "Now, where shall we go to amuse ourselves?" His friend said, "Anywhere." My father said, "Well, you are the guest; you shall choose where we shall go." "Well, we will go and hear Moody." My father said, "Oh, no, this isn't Sunday. We will go to the theater, or concert." But, the man said, "You promised to go wherever I chose." So my father had to go. They found the building was full and there were no seats in the hall except special ones. This man knew he would never get my father there again, so he worked himself into the crowd until he came across one of the committee. He said to him, "Look here; I have brought a wealthy sporting gentleman here, but I will never get him here again if we do not get a seat." The man took them in and put them right straight in front of Mr. Moody. My father never took his eyes off Mr. Moody until he finished his address. After the meeting my father said, "I will come and hear this man again. He just told me everything I had ever done." My father kept going until he was right soundly converted.

That afternoon my father had been full of a thing that takes possession of a man's heart and head more than anything else—that passion for horse racing; and in the evening he was a changed man. It was the same skin, but a new man altogether inside. When we boys came home from college we didn't understand what had come over him, but father kept continually telling us that he was born again. We thought he was just born upside down, because he was always asking us about our souls, and we didn't like it. Of course, he took us to hear Mr. Moody, and we were impressed a good deal, but were not converted.

When my father was converted of course he could not go on living the same life as before. He could not go to balls, card parties, and all that sort of thing. His conscience told him so, and he said to Mr. Moody: "I want to be straight with you. If I become a Christian will I have to give up racing, and shooting, and hunting, and theaters, and balls?" "Well," Mr. Moody said, "Mr. Studd, you have been straight with me; I will be straight with you. Racing means betting, and betting means gambling, and I don't see how a gambler is going to be a Christian. Do the other things as long as you like." My father asked again about the theater and cards, and Mr. Moody said, "Mr. Studd, you have children and people you love; and now you are a saved man yourself, and you want to get them saved. God will give you some souls and as soon as ever you have won a soul you won't care about any of the other things." Sure enough, we found to our astonishment that father didn't care for any of those things any longer; he only cared about one thing, and that was saving souls.

He took us to hear Mr. Moody and other men, and when Mr. Moody left England my father opened his country house, and held meetings there in the evenings. He asked ministers and business men from London to come down and speak to the people about their souls. The people would come for miles to attend the meetings, and many were converted. One of these gentlemen came down to preach one day and as I was going out to play cricket he caught me unawares and said, "Are you a Christian?" I said, "I am not what you call a Christian. I have believed on Jesus Christ since I was knee high. Of course I believe in the church, too." I thought by answering him pretty close I would get rid of him, but he stuck tight as wax and said, "Look here, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. You believe Jesus Christ died?" "Yes." "You believe He died for you?" "Yes." "Do you believe the other half of the verse—'shall have everlasting life?'" "No," I said, "I don't believe that." He said, "Don't you think you are a bit inconsistent, believing one half of the verse and not the other half?" "I suppose I am." "Well," he said, "are you always going to be inconsistent?" "No," I said, "I suppose not always." He said, "Will you be consistent now?" I saw that I was cornered and I began to think, "If I go out of this room inconsistent, I won't carry very much self-respect." I said, "Yes, I will be consistent." "Well, don't you see that eternal life is a gift? When somebody gives you a present at Christmas, what do you do?" "I take it and say, 'Thank you.'" He said, "Will you say 'Thank you' to God for this gift?" Then I got down on my knees and I did say "Thank you" to God. And right then and there joy and peace came into my soul. I knew then what it was to be born again, and the Bible, which had been so dry to me before, became everything.

One day when I was in London, a friend asked me to come to tea with him and his wife who were Christians. After tea, when we were talking about the Bible around the open fire, this friend said, "Have you

heard of the wonderful blessing Mrs. Watson has got lately?" I said, "Why, she has been a Christian a long time." He said, "Yes, but she is quite different now." I had heard people talking about getting other blessings besides conversion, but I would not believe it. Then my friend opened his Bible and showed plainly enough from the Scriptures that there were other blessings besides conversion. Then he said, "Have you these other blessings?" I said, "No, I have not." I was just angry because I wanted to know what I was going to do for God. We knelt down and asked God very simply that God would give us all He had for us. When I went back to my room I got hold of "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life." That night I just meant business, and it seemed to come so plain—old truths, it may be, but they seemed to grip me that time. I had known about Jesus Christ's dying for me, but I had never understood that if he had died for me, then I didn't belong to myself. Redemption means "buying back" so that if I belonged to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn't mine, or else I had to give up everything to God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn't seem hard to give up all to Him. It seemed just common, ordinary honesty. Then I read in the book: "When you have surrendered all to God, you have given him all the responsibility, as well as everything else. It is God who is responsible to look after you and all you have to do is to trust. Put your hand in His and the Lord will lead you. It seemed quite a different thing after that and in a very short time God had told me what to do and where to go. God doesn't tell a person first by his head; He tells him first by the heart. God put it in my heart and made me long to go to China.

There were lots of difficulties in the way. Possibly some of you have difficulties in your way. Don't you turn aside because of the difficulties. There was not one of all my relatives but thought that I had gone clean mad. My elder brother, who was a true Christian, said to me one evening, "Charlie, I think you are making a great mistake." I said, "There is no mistake about it." He said: "You are away every night at the meetings and you do not see mother. I see her, and this is just breaking her heart. I think you are wrong." I said, "Let us ask God. I do not want to be pig-headed and go out there of my own accord, I just want to do God's will." It was hard to have this brother, who had been such a help, think it was a mistake. We got down on our knees and put the whole matter in God's hands. That night I could not get to sleep, but it seemed as though I heard someone say this verse over and over, "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." I knew it was God's voice speaking to me. When I got to China I knew why He said that verse so often. Winning souls out there is the same thing as here, only more difficult. The devil comes to one and says, "Why don't you go home? You can save more souls there than here." But I had received marching orders to go to China and I had God to give them as plain to go back. Not only did God make it right with the

brother, but the night I was leaving home God made my mother willing that I should go to China.

My father made me become of age at twenty-five. I was twenty-three when I went to China; and for two or three years it seemed as if God kept me walking up and down that country. Finally I was sent to a station where there had been a riot. Every missionary's house had been knocked down, and they had been sent away; but the British consul was there, although he had been nearly killed. When a friend and myself got into that town we meant to hold the fort. When the consul saw us it was as though he had seen a couple of ghosts. He said, "However did you get here? There are guards in every gate of the city to prevent any foreign devil from coming in." We said that God had brought us in and told him what we had come for. He said, "No; you cannot stay here; I can give you a passport up or down the river, but no foreigners are allowed here except myself." After a little he said, "If you would like to stay in that hovel there you can; but there is not room for more than one." Then we began to discuss which should stay. My friend was going to be married and I was not, but he wanted to stay. Finally the consul asked us to dinner, and in the midst of dinner he turned to me and said, "Studd, will you stay with me?" That settled the matter. I didn't know why God had sent me to that place until some time afterwards.

One day when I was reading the harmony of the Gospels I came to where Christ talked with the rich young man. Then God seemed to bring all the vows I had made back to me. A few days later the post, which came only every half-month, brought letters from the solicitor and banker to show what I had become heir to. Then God made me just ordinarily honest and told me what to do. Then I learned why I had been sent to that particular place. I needed to draw up papers giving the "power of attorney," and for that I had to have the signature of one of Her Majesty's officers. I went to this consul and when he saw the paper he said, "I won't sign it. You don't know what you are doing." Finally, he said that he would give me two weeks to think it over and then if I wished he would sign it. I took it back at the end of two weeks and he signed it and off the stuff went.

God has promised to give a hundredfold for everything we give to him. An hundredfold is a wonderful percentage; it is ten thousand per cent. God began to give me back the hundredfold wonderfully quick. Not long after this I was sent down to Shanghai. My brother, who had been very ill, had gone right back into the world again. On account of his health the doctors sent him round the world in search of better. He thought he would just come and touch at Shanghai and see me. He said he was not going to stay very long for he was mighty afraid he would get too much religion. He took his berth for Japan about the next day after he arrived. But God soon gave him as much religion as he could hold and he cancelled that

passage to Japan and stayed with me six months. When I saw that brother right soundly converted I said, “This is ten thousand per cent and more.”

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