

I was brought to a settled point in one thing at Trowle Common, that God was determined I should live by the Gospel; and I saw, as clear as the sun at noon day, that I must have all manner of speeches thrown out against me by those that received not spiritual things from my preaching, and that it was my business to take no notice of it, but go to the Lord with all my needs and necessities. And, blessed be my dear Lord, He has ever overruled for my soul's good and profit all the hard speeches that were sometimes thrown out, though many times it was a sore trial to flesh and blood to hear of them. God, however, helped me to come to Him for Him to search me and try me, for God knows my heart, that I wished to do nothing but what had His approbation; and I have ever found that the dear Lord has caused all that I have ever had to pass through to work together for my good and the glory of His Name. O what a blessed thing it is when the Lord helps us to come to Him with all our troubles!

This is a great deal better than going to an arm of flesh. I was never yet left to put trust in an arm of flesh but it failed me, for I think there never was such a fool for looking on the right hand and on the left, trying every fleshly refuge till they all failed.

Then called I upon the Name of the Lord, and the Lord ever proved my present help in time of trouble, near at hand, and not afar off; and if ever any poor soul needed present help I did, burdened and weighted down as I was with a large family and sometimes fearing I should never be able to pay my heavy debts, whilst numbers around me were anxiously waiting and hoping that something would turn up to remove me from Trowbridge; and myself sometimes so shut up in darkness and confusion that I verily believed I never could preach again, and wondered at myself however I could have the presumption to attempt it. But, blessed be the dear Lord, He overruled this for my good, for I was brought again and again to wrestle hard with cries and tears, that He would make it manifest in my heart that He had called me to the work of the ministry. I have had it made manifest scores of times; but when the devil has robbed and spoiled me, and has me hid in the prison-house, I can neither look backward nor forward, but all is complete darkness as to any comfort. I have light enough to discern what a wretch I am, what a fool I am, what a beast I am, what a hell-deserving rebel I am, but that affords me no comfort.

I want no one to tell me, when I am in these places that God is of one mind and none can turn Him; nor do I want anyone to tell me that His purposes of grace will ever stand firm to His own, whether people or ministers; but what comfort does such a faith as this afford to my soul when I am fearing I am not one of them? I must have the same Spirit bearing witness with my spirit as in days and in months

that are past, to produce the same humble confidence that He is my Lord and Master, and that I am His unworthy servant, in order to satisfy my soul.

Nothing short of this can bring comfort and peace to my soul in the work of the ministry; and O how many times has God given my soul a precious lift from the words in 1 Co 1:26-29, when I have sunk into dismal doubts and fears that He had never sent me, since I had the testimonies I wrote of in the First Part of my experience: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." O, when God the Holy Ghost has whispered these precious words in my poor soul when I have been wrestling with Him by the hour to make it known whether it would be possible that such an ignorant worm, such a base worm, such a foolish worm, such a nothing was His servant, how seasonable have these words been when they have been seasoned with salt.

O the blessed heavenly anointing unction of God the Holy Ghost, dropping with the word into the soul! what humility it produces, what strong confidence it brings with it, what love, praise, adoration, and zeal for the honour and glory of God it produces in my soul; and sometimes when I have lain under these words, just like a little child, I have said, "Do with me, Lord, as it seemeth good in Thy sight; here I am, a poor foolish thing; glorify Thy wisdom through such a foolish thing; here I am, a base thing, glorify the riches of Thy mercy and grace through me and by me; here I am, the poorest and weakest thing in the whole world, glorify Thy mighty power in me; here I am, a poor nothing, and less than nothing, glorify Thy mighty Self in bringing out of nothing the things that are not, to confound the things that are, that no flesh may glory before Thee, but that he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

And how sweetly has the dear Comforter whispered into my soul, "Have ye never read that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God hath ordained praise?" And how precious have these words followed upon the back of the others: "And Jesus, perceiving the thoughts of their hearts, took a child and set him by Him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in My Name receiveth Me, and whosoever receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me; for he that is least amongst you all, the same shall be great." When God the Holy Ghost brings such blessed testimonies as these to my soul in answer to prayer, I can then stand as bold as a

lion; I fear no frowns, nor court any man's smiles. I can then bless and thank my God in my very heart that He has counted me worthy to suffer persecution for His Name's sake, and can say, with humility and blessed confidence, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle of the Gentiles; for the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

I do not wonder at so many ministers pouring contempt upon a feeling religion, for how is it possible for those that never were plunged into these depths of feeling, the misery of their own foolishness, their own baseness, their own nothingness, and believing it was horrid presumption for such wretches to open their mouths in the name of a holy God, and who never knew what it was to have those pangs, sighs and groans that cannot be uttered; how, I say, is it possible for these to tell anything about feeling either the one side or the other, when they are utter strangers to it? They cannot enter into it till it enters into them; but my poor soul has proved both sides; so that I am obliged, with the ability God gives, to come before the people again and again with what I have handled, tasted and felt; so that necessity is laid upon me to vindicate a feeling religion. O bless the Lord, my soul, that ever He has taught thee the sweetness of proving His truth to drop as the rain, and His speech to distil as the dew.

The soul that knows this is a living witness that it is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts; and that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. And here I have been hobbling on at Trowbridge better than twenty-two years, many times in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling, and I am confident my speech and my preaching has not been with enticing words of man's wisdom, but, bless God, it has been the power of God to salvation to many precious souls.

I soon found the time coming on for more money to be paid; and though my creditors were very quiet and took no notice of my debts, I was more concerned than they, for I knew that my salary at that time was not sufficient to pay my outgoings in rent, taxes, fire, clothes, children's schooling, provisions, and other things that occurred in the family. The time was come again for me to go to London to supply for a month, and a heavy burden I took with me, all my debts standing right before me, and unbelief testifying that I should never be able to discharge them, and though the Lord has so many times appeared for me, that He never would again, for I had abused His mercies in such a way that I had quite wearied Him out.

O how I sank into despair, and feared it would soon be all over, for I was sure and confident that if God had given me up, it was all over. O the tremblings I had when I got to London, for fear the Lord would stop my mouth, and that I should not have one word to say; for I had been shut up publicly in the pulpit twice, and obliged to sit down before all the people, which is no small mortification to the flesh; at least, I found it so. And I was by this taught that if God shuts, there is none can open; and if He opens, there is none can shut. O the blessing that those shutting up times have been to my soul! God has overruled them hundreds of times to my good, to keep me a little child at His dear feet, to supplicate His dear Majesty that He would not leave me alone; and here I have been obliged to weep, cry, and pray by the hour that the Lord would open my eyes to see, my heart to feel, and my mouth to speak; and that He would accompany the truth home to the hearts of the people, that He might be glorified.

When Lord's day morning came I went feelingly sensible that if the Lord was not there, it would be nothing but an empty sound and reach no farther than the ears. But, bless His dear Name, He gave me the door of utterance to bring out the things I had tasted, handled, and felt of the good word of life; and I believe the Lord gave testimony to the word of His grace, that quite revived and comforted my drooping spirit; and my poor soul was encouraged to cast all its burden upon Him that had promised to sustain me, with a sweet confidence that He would yet provide and bring me through every difficulty, to the honour of His Name. But when I came to look over my debts, with my large family, and every appearance that I should sink deeper and deeper, O I sank fathoms in a moment, especially when I began to think what numbers of tongues were uttering, east, west, north and south of Trowbridge, what a character I must be to take three pounds a week and live like a gentleman, while many of the poor members could hardly get bread; and some were wondering however I could have the face to speak against covetousness whilst I was taking three pounds a week.

Sometimes, when I was sunk in darkness and unbelief, I felt such speeches very hard; but O the blessing that these poor creatures have been to me in the overruling hand of a covenant God; and O the times that God has made them the means of bringing my poor soul to the Searcher of all hearts. Often in my feelings have I fallen upon my knees and opened my very soul, and begged Him to search me and try me, and show me if I was guilty of these charges, for I knew that He was a God of knowledge, and that by Him actions were weighed; and I knew that I had a wretched, deceitful heart, that had deceived me many times; so my very soul has cried out with David, "O Lord, search me and try me; my heart is naked and open before Thee; am I robbing Thy poor children of their temporal bread? am I a

covetous man? am I deceiving others, and deceived myself? O Lord, make it known to my heart."

And what a sweet and blessed answer did I receive from these words: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved," -(O how that word rejoiced my very soul!)- "beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." {1Jo 3:20,22} O what peace, love and joy did I feel to the God of all my mercies; and from my very heart I could pray for my enemies that were watching for my halting, that God would in tender mercy, if it were His blessed will, open their eyes and hearts to see and feel the love, mercy and grace of a covenant God. Poor dear things! they have been the means of sending me many times to the Lord with many sighs, groans and tears; and my dear Lord has received me in lovingkindness, and given me "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" so that in the end I have had no cause to complain or be angry at them for their hard speeches for I am confident it has all worked together for my good. O how my soul could plead with Him, as a man pleadeth with his friend, that He would be with me in my visit to London, that His dear children might reap spiritual things, and that God would put it in their hearts to communicate carnal things, that I might return home with those temporal mercies that I needed; and such sweet liberty of access had I to God in pleading for them that I was quite lost in wonder, love and praise; and promise upon promise flowed into my soul with such power and sweetness that I could not doubt that God would supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

O what a mercy it is that the dear, tempest-tossed, afflicted children of God have a God to go to, that has heaven, earth and hell, angels, men and devils at His beck! What must my poor soul have done had not this been the case? I know not. The devil tried hard again and again to bring me to look over my debts and how impossible it was that I should have gifts that would be needful for me to move on at Trowbridge; but the Lord strengthened me by His Spirit in my inner man, so that I was enabled to trust in the Lord, and leave it in His hands, and I found and proved my God to be as good as His promise. For the Lord did indeed cause His doctrine to drop as the rain, and His speech to distil as the dew, for the hearts of the people were opened, and their pockets, too.

I have ever found that the way into the pocket is through the heart; and, when all other refuges have failed me, my eyes have ever been in my calamities to look unto Him that can make the way through the heart, for He saith, "The cattle upon a

thousand hills are His," and the gold and silver are His. Then, if my soul prevails with Him to move the hearts of those to whom He has lent plenty, to communicate to my necessities, what is that to anybody? When I came to finish up my visit to London, it was truly heart-breaking to my soul to see the liberality of the people; nay, the last night I took my leave of the people they loaded me with presents.

Just before I left the vestry after preaching, a person came in and shook hands with me, and asked me if I should be sending to Mr. Gadsby when I got home. I told him that I intended to write to him. "Well," he says, "I owe him five pounds for books; can you send him the money for me?" I told him, yes, if he wished it. He then said, "Here is a ten pound note, and tell him that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ hath sent the five pounds which he owed him for the books that he had of him; and (added he) accept the other five pounds for yourself." O what a blaze of glory shone in my soul of a prayer-hearing, wonder-working, promise-keeping God! And what a night I had of blessing, thanking and praising His dear Name. When I got into my bedroom I counted up all my money, and found that I had sufficient to help the old wagon out of the ditch again. O, I fell upon my knees with the money before me, and I blessed, praised and thanked my God while I had any power either of body or soul. David and the congregation of Israel could have had no more joy when he exclaimed, 1 Ch 29:10-15 "Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious Name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

O how my soul rejoiced! I wanted no one to tell me that it was my duty to love, praise and obey God; for I felt it in my heart that to love, praise, adore, obey, serve and please God was my meat and my drink; and to be negligent, careless, and indifferent was my grief and sorrow. I am a living witness that the goodness of God leadeth men to repentance, whatever some professors of religion may say. O how I longed for the time to come when I could tell my dear wife what the Lord had done for us! Had I wings like a dove, I should soon have been there. When I arrived home, what a sweet time we had in seeing the good hand of God that had gone before me, and had provided so richly the things we so much stood in need

of. Truly it was a melting time indeed; it was better felt than expressed. I was not long before I divided the spoil to those it belonged to; and it was just in time, for I thought some of my creditors began to feel a little impatient, and it just answered the end, so that I could get on again wonderfully straight for me. O how my soul could pray for the best of blessings to rest upon those dear souls in London who had received spiritual things from such a poor worm as I, and had so liberally communicated carnal things.

The very remembrance of them was dear to my soul, for they were the very means, in the hands of a covenant God, of keeping me at Trowbridge. Whatever some people might either think or speak about my great salary, God knows that I tell the truth. O what a mercy I have found it hundreds of times to have a God to go to that knew secrets, and would judge righteously! How many times have I wondered how it was that there were some ministers that had a larger salary than I had, and not half the family, who were never so spoken against; but I saw that it was not the salary, but the truth that I preached in its own native simplicity, without wisdom of words of man's devising to soften it down to the palate of proud, empty professors, to whom it was the ministration of death unto death. This enraged them sore, and as they could not overthrow the truth of God which He helped me to preach, they would have a smack at the large salary. But, blessed be the Lord, He knew what I had better than they; and He knew all my needs and necessities; and, thanks be to His dear Name, I never had a need yet for one thing but in His own time He has supplied me with it, whether it has been for body or soul; and I believe He will to the end.

The next particular trial that comes to my mind was the sore one of having a separation in the church, which was a keen trial indeed; but, bless the Lord, the end was better than the beginning, for it all ended well, and we have blessed God for it innumerable times since. How true is the word of God, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We had a great deal of patching and mending for many years, but it never answered any other end than only to make the rent worse; for I perceived soon after I came to Trowbridge that there were a few in the church that were not long together satisfied or quiet about one thing or another, though they professed to receive me as a minister of God, and many of them thanked the Lord in public that ever He sent me to Trowbridge. But I believe in my heart that some of them, if it had been the will of God to have sent me out of Trowbridge, could have thanked Him with more freedom; for the word of God will ever stand true, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Some of them soon began to perceive there was a very great deficiency in my ministry for want of variety, that when they heard me a few times, they had heard all I had to say, and they were confident that my preaching would never keep up a congregation to maintain my expensive family. I believed they hoped and anxiously desired that this might be the case; but whatever imagination may be in the hearts of men, nevertheless the purpose of God, that shall stand; for it was His fixed purpose to bring me to Trowbridge, quite opposite to all my fleshly feelings, and it has proved to be His fixed purpose to keep me there, which is now in the twenty-fourth year, notwithstanding all the wretched unbelief of my heart and the craft of many that have been watching for my moving out of the town.

I did not wonder so much that these few could see such a deficiency in my preaching for my greatest wonder was that all could not see it for I could see it myself, and feel it, and lament it; and I am confident no one ever did nor can see me as ignorant as I can see myself. O the numbers of times that I have gone to the chapel, the devil roaring all the way, "You fool, the people will all see through you; you are going again with the same substance of things that you were preaching last Lord's day." And this was what some of these people said, "He comes with a fresh text, but we have the substance of the same things over and over again;" which was all perfectly true, for let the text be whatever it might, I was sure to be on the old spot, or not far from it, attempting to show the lost, ruined state and utter helplessness of man, whether saint or sinner, and exalting free, sovereign, electing, discriminating grace in the Holy Trinity, in the salvation of the elect, made manifest in the heart by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, and bearing fruits in a conduct and life that adorned the doctrines of God our Saviour, and giving testimony to all around that the grace of God teacheth the denying of ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. This has been the substance of my preaching ever since my mouth was opened, and most likely will be while my mouth continues to be opened.

I could not help smiling one morning, when one of our members came into our house and, after a little conversation, told me that he was come to open his mind to me, and meant to be honest and discharge his conscience; for he had been in a very confused, dark state for a long time, and the more he came to the chapel, the harder and darker he was; for it appeared to him and many more that my preaching was nothing but one thing over and over again and again, till he was quite sick and tired of it. I told him. I had been sick and tired of it many times myself, but what could I do? I told him that I would get into fresh things if I could; and I added that if he could put me in the way how to get into the meaning of some dark passages of Scripture, I should be very glad if he would, for I was greatly deficient in



knowledge. He got quite out of temper, and told me I ought to get into the parables and come to the people with some fresh things, and not be constantly, from one end of the year to the other, upon one tone; and he was confident that it would never stand long, for there were many of the church quite tired out, and he was sure they would not bear it much longer.

O how the devil set upon me when he left the house! He represented to me that my time was short at Trowbridge, that the people were nearly wearied out, that my preaching was nothing at all; "for ministers of God," says he, "feed the people with knowledge and understanding, but your preaching fills them with nothing but darkness and confusion. Look at your family and the situation you are in, and what will the end be but disgrace?" I tried to get into the parables and was determined I would pray, read, and meditate, till I could bring something fresh and new to the people and feed them with knowledge and understanding; and on I went reading and praying, and trying to meditate, but I could neither see nor feel anything to meditate on, except plenty of devilishness within; but as for the Bible, the more I prayed over it, and the more I read it, the darker it appeared till the whole Bible seemed to be nothing but a complete parable from beginning to end; and to my feelings and views, I had no more knowledge nor understanding in the Scriptures of truth than a beast. O how my poor soul cried out, "Lord, I am a beast before Thee!

Can it be possible that Thou wilt own and bless such a dragon, such an owl, such a complete fool, such a babe in knowledge, and such an old wretch in sin? O what shall I do Lord's day morning coming and no text, no knowledge? O can it be possible that I can face the people? how can I go, such a poor, ugly, blind bat that has tired the people so long, and now Saturday night and worse than ever? What can I do? where can I flee?" O the groans and bitter sighs that did heave up from the very bottom of my heart! O how it sounded in my very soul, "The people will meet with expectations that you will come with something new and fresh that will feed them with knowledge and understanding; but, instead of that, you have nothing at all; the Bible is all a sealed book; God has left you, and it is no use for you ever to attempt to open your mouth again to preach."

But late on the Saturday night, when my poor sinking soul, to my feelings, was sinking into black despair without one gleam of hope, these words came from the King of kings and Lord of lords that reigns over angels, men and devils (I know they did by the power that attended them, for "where the voice of a king is there is power"); and O the fitness, the sweetness, the courage, the confidence, the humility, that they produced in my soul: "I will bring the blind by a way they know

not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." O I cried out from my very soul, "Lord, it is enough, it is enough. If Thou wilt lead such a blind bat, if Thou wilt make darkness light before me, if Thou wilt make crooked things straight, and never forsake me, what can I want more, what can I desire more, what can I have more? Thou art my portion, my life, my light, and my All in all." Bless His dear and precious Name! when He comes and reveals His precious Person, His love, His blood, His righteousness, and power, and glory, as the God of our salvation, what can discourage us! Here the righteous is as bold as a lion; it matters not who frowns if God smiles; it matters not what tongue may rise up against us; if the dear Saviour whispers peace, who can give trouble! and so I have found it.

I went to the chapel the following morning with my very soul hanging upon the Lord like a child, and depending upon Him that He would make darkness light before me, for I came upon the housetop and He opened my mouth to declare what He had said unto me in secret; and, bless the Lord, I was helped to find out many poor, helpless, despairing, blind wretches that were just in the very spot where I had been, who came out of their holes like worms and showed themselves men. O how that precious text was opened to my soul, and what glory, sweetness and peace flowed into my heart from it: "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." {2Co 1:6-7} O how I did in my heart pray to God for my friend who had come to me, and told me that I ought to get into the parables; for though he did not come in a friendly way, yet the dear Lord overruled it for my good, for it was the means that the Lord used to show me that the whole Bible was a complete parable to flesh and blood, and that no one could spiritually understand one text but as the Spirit revealed it: For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no one but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. {1Co 2:11-14} Bless our God! He is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain. I have blessed the dear man scores of times since for coming and telling me that I ought to get into the parables, for I

have been brought hundreds of times like the dear disciples, "Lord, declare unto us this parable;" and I believe the dear disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to this present day come with the same prayer: "Lord, declare unto us this parable;" for I believe in my very soul they are all experimentally taught of God that they are complete fools, especially God's sent servants, whom He owns and blesses in the work of the ministry.

These are kept feelingly sensible from year to year that they have neither wisdom, nor light, nor life, nor love, nor faith, nor prayer, nor zeal, nor humility, nor usefulness, no, nor one good thing, but as God gives it and communicates it to their hearts; and they know well by soul experience that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (yea, my soul knows it is from above), "and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither a shadow of turning." Yes, the dear sent servants of God know well that all the mercies of a covenant God and Father are free gifts, and come from above when He pleaseth, how He pleaseth, and where He pleaseth; and they know well what it is to "lack wisdom," and to "ask of God" with many groans, cries and tears, accompanied with many desperate, fiery darts of the devil, which make them reel to and fro like a drunken man. They are many times at their wits end, and know not what to do, but they are obliged to cry out with David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help; my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth." It is no use for them to run to Doctor Gill, nor Doctor Doddridge, nor Doctor Goodwin, nor Doctor Hawker, nor Doctor Huntington; they must come to the never-failing Doctor, Jesus, for He it is that carries the keys of knowledge and understanding, that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens; He it is that cleanses the guilty conscience, silences in a moment all the cursed accusations that the devil brings to sink the soul, turns the night into day, groans into songs, a stinking dungeon into a palace, emptiness into fulness, curses into blessings, weakness into strength, sickness into health, death into life, and damnation into salvation.

O precious Jesus! precious Jesus! to whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou, and Thou alone, hast the words of eternal life. The Lord knows my heart, I am not pouring contempt upon the writings and works of men of God that are in glory, and upon others that are still on their way to glory, who are vindicating the truth of God with their pens, for I believe God has blessed them, does bless them, and will bless them to His dear church to the end of time; and it is my soul's cry that God will raise up many more able men to vindicate His truth in this day of empty profession-men that can distinguish between form and power, between letter and spirit, between the old man and the new, between death and life, between an empty

profession and real possession, between the real language of Zion and the prating of hypocrites. O that the Lord might send more such men! but for my own part, I must testify what I have proved to be the fact in my own soul, and I believe I can say it with truth, that I never could, nor ever did, get anything out of other men's works that was any use to me in the pulpit, for however I approved of them, loved them, and however some of their writings have been made good to my soul in private, it was of no more use to me for pulpit work than if I had never read one word.

What a difference there is between many of the parsons of the present day in their preaching and my poor hobbling way of preaching! I cannot carry another man's line of things into the pulpit, for they are of no use to me there; but I believe there are hundreds of ministers in the present day who profess to be ministers of God, that would cut a miserable figure if it were not for other men's work made ready to their hands; and I do fear that it costs them more quires of paper in writing out their discourses, in making out their heads and tails, divisions, subdivisions, and applications, than ever it cost them in groans and tears to God in secret that He would reward them openly. I think there is one text that many of these gentlemen of the cloth might quote at the end of every sentence of their discourses, whether it is upon doctrines, experience, or practice: "

Alas, Master, it was borrowed;" and God knows I have not a stone to throw at one of them, for if God had opened a way in His providence that I could have purchased Dr. Gill's Commentary on the Bible about twenty-five years ago, I should have bought it, but I was so poor I could not get it. O the desires I had for it! I recollect what a seasonable stroke I got from a particular friend about that time, that was a complete knockdown blow from that itching after dead men's brains. I told him that I had a favour to ask of him. "What is that?" says he. I told him that I had felt a great desire for some time to get Dr. Gill's Commentary on the Bible, and if he would be so kind as to communicate a little towards it I should thank him, not doubting at all that he would be very liberal. But his answer was, "No, I shall not give you one farthing for any such thing. If I wanted Dr. Gill I should buy it for myself, not for you to take up into the pulpit. Go to your Lord and Master; He can instruct you better than all the doctors in the world." O what a seasonable reproof was this to my soul! I thanked him for it from my heart, and I withdrew into my closet and shut the door, and prayed to my heavenly Father that He would be my Instructor and Teacher, and that He would be pleased to deliver me from that anxious desire after other men's works, which I saw arose from nothing but the pride of my heart, thinking I could get such information and knowledge out of others, that I should shine brighter in the ministry in the eyes of

men, not in the eyes of God. I wept before the Lord, and confessed my foolishness, my pride, and my baseness, and begged of Him that He would keep me as a child at His feet, willing to be anything or nothing; so that I have not a stone to throw at one man upon earth, no, nor at a devil in hell; by the grace of God I am what I am.

But to return. I still found that the old leaven kept working and fermenting amongst a few in the church, who received nothing from the ministry themselves and were trying with all the craft they could to prejudice the minds of those that did; for if they happened to meet with some poor soul that had been set at liberty, whose tongue was unloosed to speak the praises of redeeming love and blood, that dear soul would speak well of the instrument, but their business was to lessen the instrument; and their answer would sometimes be to such simple souls that told them all their heart, thinking they were my particular friends, "Yes, the parson is a good man, and preaches the truth; but he has many things about him that grieve his best friends." "What can you think," said they, "of a man taking three pounds a week for preaching, and some of the church and congregation can hardly get bread to eat?" Poor things, this three pounds a week stuck so fast in their throats that they could neither get it down nor up. If they happened to meet with some of the dear souls that were walking in darkness, shut up in bondage, who came and went to the house of God like a door upon its hinges: "Well, how do you get on?" "O I am miserable; I can hear nothing at all for myself; the Lord has hid His face, and I am afraid He will never come again." "Yes," was their answer, "my dear friend, things are very gloomy amongst us as a church; there are many of the members who are in a very dead, barren state; many of them fear that we shall not be able to carry on the cause; and how is it likely we should, with the heavy debt upon the chapel and raising the parson three pounds a week to keep him like a gentleman?" Thus it kept working on from year to year, till the time came that it was quite ripe for a separation, which I had firmly believed for many a year would come to pass. We had always been in the habit of baptizing out of doors up to this time; but it came to pass that the person, who had power and authority over the place where the other Baptists baptized in the river that runs through the town, objected to my having the use of the place, because I was a man of such a bad spirit, chopping and cutting off everybody but a few poor, narrow-souled creatures like myself, and he was determined I should not baptize there any more.

One of our deacons went round the town to see if he could find a convenient place to baptize in, but could not; and he wished me to call the church together and propose to make a baptistery in the chapel, which was quite agreeable to my feelings; and the majority in the church settled it to have a baptistery in the chapel. This made the minority rage and rave very furiously, and it appeared they were

determined not to submit to the majority. But I took no notice of that, for I felt satisfied that we were doing that which was right in the sight of God; and therefore we turned neither to the right hand nor to the left, but went straight forward, and paid regard to neither smiles nor frowns. We soon got the baptistery made and I baptized in it. Some called me a pope, some a tyrant, others wondered how I could sleep in my bed; and letter after letter came, all without any name, pronouncing the heaviest judgments upon me, and wondering what sort of a conscience I could have in turning out so many godly souls because they could not submit to my papist decrees. All this, however, had no effect upon me, for I went straight forward according to their own rule, which they had in the church book before I settled amongst them, that " if there ever arose any debate, or difference of opinion, it was to be settled and decided by the majority, and the minority was to submit." This being the case, I stood fast by their own rule that was entered into the church book before I became their pastor. Thus contention upon contention followed; for by and by the leaders of the opposite party agreed to give up as to the baptistery, but they would not answer to their names being called over after the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which for some time had been made a rule by the unanimous voice of the church, that we might ascertain who were there and who were missing.

But a large majority of the church agreed and settled that those members of the church that would not sign and agree to the rules that had been entered in the church book before, should be set aside for six months, and at the end of that time, that those who still opposed and would not submit to the majority, should be separated from us as a church. At the end of six months, if I remember right, there were about thirty who were so separated for not complying with the majority of the church. Soon after this they went off by themselves, and took a place for worship, which they met in; and a strange smash it made in the chapel when they and their connections gave up their seats. We had, if I recollect right, at that time, between seven and eight hundred pounds of debt on the chapel, and trade was then but in a middling way, plenty of empty seats, and nothing but gloominess all around. At times, when God left me to unbelief and carnal reason, I sank very low, and was sometimes afraid it would be utterly impossible for us to keep on. O what wrestlings I had with God that He would appear for us; and, blessed be His dear Name, He sent me many precious promises that supported my soul under all, and many a sweet testimony that He would bring me through it all to His honour and glory, and for the good and peace of us as a church. I was as firmly persuaded this would be the case as ever I was of my own existence; and even those that have been our greatest opponents have been obliged to say, " The Lord has done great things for them."

I think it was about six months after these had left us when our deacons called a meeting of a few of the members, with myself, to enquire what was to be done, for they said the cause was sinking very much, and how it could be kept on they could not tell; and they asked me what steps could be taken to pay back the money that they had run behind, besides the £700 on interest. I told them there were only two things that could be done to any good purpose, which were these: one was "for you to have a cheaper parson; and the other, if you object to that, for parson and people to unite together in a weekly subscription to make up the deficiency." They all rejected the cheaper parson; and I then said that I considered myself one with them, and I was willing to communicate weekly with those that did the most, and I felt that I would sink or swim with them. But I added, to let them know that I did not shrink from bearing a part of the burden, though I was over head and ears in debt, whatever any one of them agreed to do weekly, I would double the sum.

They all agreed that this was very fair and upright, and they were very well satisfied, and I think there were four of them agreed to subscribe two shillings a week. Then I said I would give four shillings a week. We then stated it to the church and congregation, and they followed us very cheerfully and liberally as far as lay in their power, and we carried on this subscription for two years, and this cleared off all the back arrears, except what we had upon interest. But what sinkings we had when left to flesh and blood, how it could be possible that we could hold on; for when unbelief and carnal reason were uppermost, everything appeared against us. But God helped us, as the heart of one man, to cry mightily unto Him who is King and Lord over angels, men and devils, that He would appear for us; and, bless His dear Name, He never did nor ever will despise the prayer of the destitute, but will regard their prayer. O the many sweet testimonies that God gave me in the midst of all the fire and water we were passing through that we should come into a wealthy place; that no man should set on me to hurt me; that He would go before me and bring up the rearward; that no weapon formed against me should prosper, and that every tongue that rose up in judgment against me I should condemn.

He assured me that the poor worm should thresh the mountains, and beat them small as chaff and the wind should carry them away; that He would bring the blind by a way they knew not, and lead them in paths they had not known; that He would make darkness light before them and crooked things straight; and that these things He would do for them, and not forsake them. O blessed, precious promises! how sweet and good they are when given to us in these sinking moments, and the soul by faith eats them as its choicest food! My soul could exclaim in truth, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my

heart." Such was the sweet confidence of my soul under the precious dew that dropped into my heart from the blessed promises, that I praised, thanked and adored Him for His lovingkindness and tender mercies in all that had befallen me to the present time; and my very soul could thank Him for the keen trials and afflictions we had had as a church; for I could see the needs-be for it all, and I was satisfied it was all working together for good, for the future peace and prosperity of us as a church, and to the glory of our wonder-working God and Saviour.

O how sweetly could my soul lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisy, and envies, and all evil speakings, and, as a new-born babe, could desire the sincere milk of the Word, that I might grow thereby, "having tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom I came, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." O sweet tasting, precious coming, when pride, anger, wrath and malice are laid aside! O what a blessing is the peace of God! It is the blessing that passeth all understanding and keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus; for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that, in these things, serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace; and when God gives peace, who can give trouble? and so I have found it to be the truth in my very soul by heartfelt experience. The dear Lord was with me in public, and gave me the door of utterance in proclaiming upon the housetop what my poor soul had so sweetly received in secret, so that we soon had an increase both in church and congregation; and many of the poor dear sheep that had run away from the fold came creeping back, poor things, half-starved to death and heartily glad to pick up a few crumbs! They did not need any of my whipping and flogging, for I believe they had it in their own consciences. Therefore I had no occasion to give reproof, for they had received plenty of that. The dear Lord went on giving testimony to the Word of His grace, Lord's day after Lord's day, till we had more people both in church and congregation, and, what was the greatest blessing, peace in the church, which we had known very little of for a long time. Now it was what brethren ought to be, "dwelling together in unity;" not contending which should be greatest, but everyone appearing to be the least, and our souls could enter into a little what David expressed in Ps 133 "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." And what was my greatest blessing, I was favoured with much sweet



fellowship and communion with my covenant God and Father, and there can be nothing out of place when matters are right and straight between God and the soul. It is true there was plenty of clamour without, both by professors and profane, calling me all sorts of names; but that is but trifling when there is peace and quietness indoors.

After a time we found it was absolutely needful for me to go out begging, for we had seven hundred pounds to pay five per cent for, which we found to lie upon us very heavily; and as I had a promise for several years to have a begging case amongst the Gower Street people (London). I found that the next time I went to supply, I must embrace the opportunity. But when I arrived there I found that the managers of Gower Street objected to it at that time, for they were thinking to have a collection for their own chapel, and they told me I must put it off till a future period. O how my feelings sank to hear they could not sanction my begging ease at that time, knowing that one of our deacons wanted about three hundred pounds of his money, and, if I recollect right, we had at that time four hundred pounds of his on interest.

I went from the vestry much cast down, not knowing what to do, but I believe my very soul was led to the Lord for direction; and there I was helped to pour out my very soul, that He would show me what to do, for our church fully expected that I should beg, and hoped the Lord would go before me. The managers of Gower Street Chapel fully expected that I would not at that time attempt it. Here I cried out before the Lord, "O Lord, what shall I do? I am in Thy hands. Do be pleased to direct me. Speak, Lord, for Thy worm heareth." Whilst my poor soul was wrestling and pleading for His Name's sake that He would answer my poor petition, and show me what to do, O how blessedly did these words drop into my poor soul like rain, and the speech thereof like dew, and settled the matter in my very soul in a few minutes, that tomorrow morning to begging I would go; the words were these, Re 3:8: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name." O the power that attended these words! what humility my soul felt! how my soul wondered at His lovingkindness and tender mercies in regarding the prayer of such a poor destitute worm! I saw that the cattle upon a thousand hills were His, and all the gold and silver were at His disposal.

O what a sweet night I had in viewing the wonderful mercy, power and goodness of my kind God and Father. My very soul exclaimed again and again, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" I cried out again, "Hast Thou in very deed set before me an open door, which no man can shut?" O how sweetly did the words sound again:

"Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." O how my soul longed for the morning to come, that I might see and know whether the Lord had indeed opened the door.

In the morning, as soon as I had breakfasted. I went to one of the congregation of Gower Street Chapel who was a very particular friend of mine, and told him that I was come to him with my begging case, and hoped he would begin it, and set down a pretty good figure at the top of the paper. "Well," says he, "what do you call a good figure? for I have fixed in my mind what I will do, and I shall do no more." "Well," says I, "I should like you to put down a figure of five." "That is just" replied he, "what I had fixed to do;" so he took my book and put down five pounds for his father-in-law and five pounds for himself, and gave me the book back, and wished me success in the Name of the Lord. Off I set to another friend, and told him that I had called to see him with my begging case for our chapel at Trowbridge. "Well," says he, "I am glad to see you and from my heart I can give you my mite." So he put his hand in his pocket and gave me five pounds. So off I went to another and told him the same tale, and showed him my begging book. "Well," says he, "I suppose I must do as the others have done;" so he gave me five pounds. Away I went to another, and showed him my book, but he thought that he could not do so much; but his wife interfered, and said surely he would not be behind the others; so he gave me five pounds. After a little conversation, he told me there was a particular friend of mine across the street that had always heard me with a great deal of pleasure when I came to London, and he had no doubt that he would be very liberal to the case.

So I went, and he happened to be within and received me with very great pleasure, and after some conversation I told him what I had called for, and without a single word he went and fetched me five pounds; and some sweet godly conversation we had that did my soul good, for we were one heart and one soul in the things of God and truth. He then told me that he wished me to call upon an old gentleman who had heard me with much comfort and profit for many years in my visit to London, and he had no doubt that he would contribute to my case. I think his name was Mr. May.

So off I went and found the place, and knocked at the door, which the old gentleman opened himself, and before I had time to speak he put out his hand and blessed me in the Name of the Lord, and said he was heartily glad that I had called to see him, and began to tell me the many precious seasons he had felt under my ministry in my visits to London for many years. "I have," exclaimed the old man,

with tears running down his cheeks, "proved the truth of God drop from your mouth like rain, and His speech to distil as the dew; I have had my very soul watered many, very many times under your ministry." I then told him the reason of my calling to see him at the present time; that we were considerably in debt with our chapel at Trowbridge, and I was under the necessity of turning beggar to try the lovers of truth if they felt a heart to help us in our trying situation; that I had made a beginning today, and had called upon a few friends.

I then offered him my begging book that, if he chose, he could see the few names that I had called upon; but the dear old man refused to look at what his neighbours had done, and said, "I am heartily glad you have called to see me, and that I have an opportunity to put my mite along with them for the cause of God and truth; but I am never guided in what I shall give by other people; what God puts into my heart to give I give, and if my neighbours give five pounds, and I feel to give five shillings, that I do; for I have to die for myself, and hope the Lord will ever help me to do that which meets with His approbation."

So off the old gentleman went and fetched his mite, which I expected would be five shillings; but when he came back he put me down five pounds, saying, "That is to go towards the debt on your chapel," and then he put me down another five pound note; and "this," he said, "is for the use of your family." I could not hold from bursting into a flood of tears. "O," cried I, "what do you mean to break my heart with kindness?" I was so overpowered that I could hardly utter a word, and the old gentleman was quite overcome to bless the Lord, and he exclaimed, "He has given me plenty, and I have received from your mouth spiritual things and it is my delight and pleasure to communicate carnal things; yea, I can bless and thank my God that He has sent you, and honoured me with the opportunity of communicating my mite." We parted with many tears and blessings on both sides.

I then finished up the first day, and O how I travelled through the streets to my lodgings as full of the blessings of the Lord as ever my very soul could hold. O how blessedly did the words come again, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." O what a precious night I had in blessing, praising, thanking and adoring my covenant God for His lovingkindness and tender mercies in so wonderfully going before me. Here was the first day thirty-five pounds for the begging case, with nothing but blessings and smiles from the givers. O how good it is to see the goodness of the Lord passing before us in the way in answer to prayer! It appears that Solomon had proved the sweetness of it: "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in season how good is it." And how sweet it was to David: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my

supplications; because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." But O the ignorance of thousands of poor empty professors of religion respecting God's answer to prayer. Their joy is in their fine prayers, but the joy of the child of God is in proving God as his prayer-hearing and prayer-answering Jehovah.

It is poor comfort to a child of God when he has to cry and shout, but the heavens appear as brass, and he exclaims, "God has shut out my prayer." It is miserable work for him to try to take comfort from family prayers and public prayers, whereby thousands of professors are wrapped up in comfort and peace, such as it is, because they are so diligent, and do their duty, in being constant in family prayer; and I think many of them never get any further than family prayer, and they obtain what they want and what they love and admire; that is, to be seen of men and have the approbation of men, and thus have their reward. But the poor child of God, though he cannot neglect calling his family together to prayer without guilt upon his conscience, yet his joy and comfort are not in the form. O what miserable work it is sometimes, when his heart is as hard as the nether millstone, and he hardly knows how to bring out one word. O the times that he is condemned in his Conscience with the dreadful feelings that he has.

How many times has that text cut through my very soul when I have arisen from my knees: "This people draweth near Me with their mouths, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." O I have many times trembled from head to foot for fear lest I should prove at last to be one that was deceived myself, and who had been deceiving others; but the Lord knows how to bring His children to pray from the heart for the mercies and blessings which He has promised. He brings them to see and feel their need of them, and strips them from all other refuges, so that there is neither eye to pity them nor human arm to help them. "Fools, because of their iniquities and their transgressions, are afflicted; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death; then they cry unto the Lord" (yes, poor dear souls, they do from their heart; and, bless the Lord, in His own time He hears and answers them), "and He saveth them out of their distresses;" yea, "He bringeth them through fire and through water," and He says, "They shall call upon My Name, and I will answer them. I will say, It is My people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." It is this that brings joy, peace and confidence that the Lord is ours, and that we are His. O what a sweet night I had in viewing the goodness of God in all the way He had led me thus far in the wilderness, and I felt firmly satisfied that the Lord was with me, and that it was His good pleasure that I was to beg, and that every shilling that I was to have was all fixed and settled by His eternal purpose.

O how sweet it is to be content with God's will! I found it blessed work, day after day, to see how the Lord went before me and opened the door into the heart; and I have ever found that that has been the way into the pocket. He told His dear disciples that if any man said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? they were to tell him that the Master had need of him. O how sweet and precious were these words to my soul in a particular strait that we were in, as a family, some time before I began to preach. We were quite fast at the shop where we dealt for provisions, and we could have no more without carrying them a pound. I begged my wife to go to the master that I worked for and ask him if he would be so kind as to lend us one pound, but her answer was, "You know he has given it out to all his workmen that he will not lend them any more money." I told her that he was in the hands of God; that the Lord could touch his heart; and that he could not deny her if it were of God that he should do it. So at last she went, for every other way seemed blocked up, and I retired to my bedroom to wrestle with God; and a wrestling time I had indeed.

O what freedom I had with the Lord in pleading His precious promises, and entreating Him to go before her; and while on my poor knees, supplicating His blessed Majesty, He spoke these words: "If any man say unto you, Why loose ye the colt? tell him the Master hath need of him." O I saw in a moment that the Lord was his Master, and that he must do as God commanded him; and O how my soul went out before God: "Do, Lord, put it into his heart; suffer him not to deny her; let him not speak one word against it;" and the Lord answered me with such sweetness, "It is done as thou hast requested," that my soul was as satisfied as if I had the pound note in my hand. Yea, and I thanked and blessed Him for it before I received it into my hands, for I was confident that she would have it; and so it was. By and by my wife returned, and brought the money, and she was quite surprised to see how pleasant the master was, for he had never opened his mouth with one unpleasant word. "Ah, the Master hath need of it."

How sweet it is to sit still and see the salvation of our God! "The angel of the Lord did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on;" and blessed looking on it is when we can see the Lord passing on before us in the way. And so I found it when I was in London with my begging case, for door after door was opened that quite astonished me, and what was wonderful to me, not one cross word nor black look did I meet with from any one person that I went to in London. It was evident to my soul that the Lord went before me and opened the door; and there is always plenty of room when the Lord is there. I kept on travelling and preaching till my body was quite worn down with fatigue, so that I was obliged to give it up and go home; and I believe I just got the money that was needful, which amounted to £182 7s. 3d.

Thus I proved His word truth: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

I arrived home very poorly and weak in body, but strong and happy in my soul, in beholding the kindness and tender mercies of a covenant God so blessedly going before me; and there was joy and gladness amongst the brethren when they heard how the Lord had opened up the way before me. Poor things! they had been wrestling hard at the throne of grace that the dear Lord would open the door for me; and what joy it was to them to hear that the Lord had answered their cry. Bless His dear Name, He never will give the spirit of prayer and then deny the blessing. It is sure to come in His own time and way. " Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." " They shall call upon Me, and I will hear them; I will say, It is My people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Very few professors know God in this way; for how can they enter into these things when these things have never entered into them? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man; for who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? but we have the mind of Christ."

After a few months at home I went down into Sussex, to Brighton and Lewes, and a few other places, with my begging case; and there I saw the tender mercies of God going before me, and opening the door as freely and as pleasantly as in London. O how my soul was melted down with gratitude to God again and again to see the lovers of truth in those parts cheerfully communicate to our necessities so freely and so liberally and to one so worthless and undeserving of the least of all mercies. If I recollect aright, I was a month or five weeks amongst them, and the sum I collected at Brighton, Lewes and a few other places round, amounted to £150 14s. O what gratitude did I feel to God, as the great Fountain of every blessing, and to the people, as instruments in communicating! It was most cheerfully and freely given; and if I recollect aright, there was but one person amongst all that I called on with my begging case, either at Brighton or Lewes, that denied me.

O how precious did the blessed text come again into my soul: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name." My very soul was humbled at His feet, and could not find words to exalt Him high enough. O how my soul went out to the Lord for His blessing to be poured out upon the people that had so liberally communicated! My poor soul begged that a hundredfold of blessings

might be poured into their hearts; and I hope I never can forget their kindness, which has been very great to poor worthless me for many years; and to this day they are near and dear to my soul, though the grand adversary, the devil, that is constantly going about seeking whom he may devour, has been suffered to work up prejudice in the hearts of some of God's dear children, that they cannot go to see each other as brethren!

How grievous it is when the devil gets in amongst brethren! He is sure to represent them to each other as nothing but hypocrites; and the very man that we have received into our hearts, and who has been testified again and again to us, that he is in our heart to live and die with, when the devil is suffered to work in our hearts, how he can paint him out as nothing but a whitewashed hypocrite. O what a mercy it is to be preserved in love and the fear of the Lord! for "love worketh no evil to his neighbour," much more to "a brother or sister." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," and can never produce "anger, wrath, or malice." But I have many times blessed and thanked the Lord that He has so enabled me that I have been helped to act with a good conscience in the sight of God and man. Whatever frowns or hard speeches I have had to endure, I thank my God I have been enabled not to return them back again, for I know by sorrowful experience that if left to the devil and my own nature, I should plunge into everything that is hateful; so that I have no stone to throw at either men or devils. But my soul has them still in sweet remembrance, and I am not destitute of times when I can pray for the best of blessings to rest upon them; and my soul begs that, whatever may take place, I may never be suffered to act in anything that will bring guilt upon my conscience, or dishonour His holy Name. It is my heart's desire that I may have grace communicated to my poor soul, that I may glorify Him in body, soul and spirit; for this I am confident of, from day to day, that without Him I can do nothing; and, bless His dear Name, I have times when I can triumphantly say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

When I returned home and told the brethren of the good hand of our God that had gone before and opened the door, it was truly a time of thanksgiving and joy. Our hearts were melted down together to see the goodness of our God to such worthless wretches, and I believe in my very heart that neither minister nor people wanted to rob God of His glory. We could unite with one heart and soul. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy truth and Thy mercy's sake." We had truly a reviving time indeed, to see how the Lord had gone before us in the way, and brought our debt down to about three hundred pounds and the dear Lord continued to give testimony to the Word of His grace, which quite astonished my

poor soul, knowing what a poor, helpless, ignorant, foolish, worthless, base, despised thing I am. Hundreds of times has the poet fitted my soul well:

He calls the fool and makes him know  
The mysteries of His grace,  
To bring aspiring wisdom low,  
And all its pride abase.  
Isaac Watts (See MERCIES Topic 26)

And how many times have these words melted my very soul: "And He took a child and set him by Him." O my dear Lord, my very soul has cried again and again, "Take the little child, and set him by Thyself; don't leave me one moment to myself, for two are better than one; for if I fall, if Thou art not there, I have no other to help me up."

I went on for some time very comfortably, but by and by the Lord began to try me sorely in withdrawing the light of His countenance from me. O the dreadful state of darkness, confusion, misery, and wretchedness that I was in for six or seven weeks! I verily thought the Lord was about to make it manifest that I was nothing but a hypocrite; and would be proved, after all my profession, to be an apostate. O how I trembled when I went into the pulpit, and sometimes feared some awful judgment would befall me for my horrid presumption in attempting to open my mouth in the Name of the Lord. I could not believe that I could be blessed to one soul; and here I was, week after week, with not one grain of religion, but what made me miserable; and I found afterwards that this was more than thousands of empty professors ever had.

I felt fully persuaded that the people were sick and tired of hearing such an ignorant fool, and surely would leave, one after another; for I could not see how it could be possible that they could bear with me long; for Sunday after Sunday I could bring nothing but gloomy tidings, setting forth what devilish wretches we were and the long forbearance of God towards us. But instead of the congregation dwindling away, it appeared to increase, which astonished me and I wondered again and again how it could be that they could bear with such a confused fool. O the days and nights that I passed through of misery and wretchedness! I cried, I groaned, I wept, and sighed, but could not believe that either my sighs or groans were regarded of God; and my very soul felt a little of what the prophet Jeremiah exclaims: "Surely against me He is turned; He turneth His hand against me all the day; my flesh and my skin hath He made old; He hath broken my bones, He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark



places, as they that be dead of old; He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; He hath made my chain heavy; also, when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer; He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone; He hath made my paths crooked." {La 3:3-8} And I am as confident of it as I was of my own existence that nothing short of Himself made known in my soul again as my God could make these crooked things straight. I know, and am a living witness, that what Job saith is truth, Job 11:10 "If He cut off, or shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder Him?"

And David, the man after God's own heart, proved the same when he cried, "I am shut up, and cannot come forth." No! there is no coming forth till God's time. "Ye shall not go out with haste, nor by flight; for I the Lord will go before you, and bring up the rearward." Bless the Lord, such seasons as these, though they are so cutting to flesh and blood, are valuable lessons, not designed to destroy us, but to purify us, and to strip us from all our idols, to bring down the cursed pride of our nature, and let us see that the Lord can do as well without us as with us. O how sick I was of myself! how I hated myself! nay, my very shadow was a stench to my feelings. At last I entirely gave it all up, and felt determined I would never attempt to preach again, for I could neither read, nor pray, nor believe, nor hope, nor love; nay, I verily believed I must be twice dead, and plucked up by the roots. O what a devil I was in my own eyes!

A large congregation was no comfort to me; it afforded me no encouragement to hear the dear children of God tell me that the Lord was blessing the Word. I was afraid that I was preaching to others, and should be myself a castaway at last. I wanted God the Holy Ghost to bear witness with my spirit once again that I was Christ's and that He was mine. O how my poor soul whispered again and again, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." "O remember me with the favour which Thou bearest unto Thy people; O visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance." "O bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy Name."

This was my cry night and day, and, bless His dear Name, the sighing of the poor prisoner came up before Him and, in His own time, He manifested it to the joy of my poor soul. O how sweetly, powerfully and gloriously did He enter into my poor, cast down soul with these words: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." O what a lift was this to my soul! It lifted me from off the dunghill, and set me amongst princes; and my very soul could shout, "Rejoice not

against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Yea, I could sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple; and now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

O what a blessed time of peace and joy I had in viewing the sovereignty, the power, the wisdom, the mercy, the goodness, the majesty, and glory of a covenant God in stripping me and clothing me, in emptying me and filling me, in wounding me and healing me, in shutting me up and bringing me forth. Bless the Lord! it is in these things that my soul lives; and in these things is the life of my spirit. It is "in and out" where the sweet pastures of electing love, mercy and grace are sweet and relishing to the souls of the poor sheep of Christ. O how my poor soul blessed, praised and thanked Him for the trial I had passed through! I saw there was a needs-be for it; and how sweet was the apostle's language: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." {Heb 12:11} O the preciousness of proving the dear truth of our God by heartfelt experience! Surely we can say with confidence, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." And we are confident David spoke truth when he said, "How sweet are Thy words to my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth: the law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

But our God has fixed it, and it can never be overturned, that night and day, sorrow and joy, prosperity and adversity, are inseparably linked together. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And so I have ever found it; but, bless God! victory is sure and certain, let the devil and unbelief say what they will; and to this day I have proved that not one good thing has failed of all that ever He has promised. They have all come to pass in the right way, by the right means, and at the right time. Truly He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

I shall now relate another sore trial that I passed through, which was one of the keenest I ever had in all my life, so much so that at times I felt as if my very

heartstrings were breaking. It was respecting my youngest son, who is the youngest of ten children now living. I agreed with a person in Trowbridge, who was a tailor, to teach him the business, to whom he went for a few years. I expected he would learn his business and do well. But one day, on a Tuesday, which was the preaching night at chapel, he did not come home to dinner as usual; when I began to fear something was the matter; and though our people said that no doubt he was at his sister's, I felt such fears that all was not right, that I sent to enquire if he had been at his work. The answer returned was, No; that he had not been there.

O what a shaking and trembling immediately came upon me! I sent messengers up and down the town, but could get no tidings of him, neither could we hear of one soul in all the town that had seen him. How I got through the preaching the Lord knows, for I don't. I cannot recollect that ever he had up to that time slept a night from home in his life. If I recollect right, he was in the sixteenth year of his age, and being the youngest, I was over careful of him. We stopped up until one or two o'clock in the morning, but there were no tidings nor appearance of the lad; and indeed we might as well have stopped up all night for what sleep we got. The day after we searched and enquired in every place that we could think of, but we could not hear of anybody that had seen or that knew anything about him. Here we were till Friday, about eleven o'clock, when a person came to our house to tell me that he had been seen in Salisbury either on Wednesday or Thursday. The moment I heard this intelligence, I sent for my son-in-law, hired a horse and gig, and borrowed ten pounds; and after dinner off we set for Salisbury, and I felt that I could have followed him if it had been across the seas.

My very soul was wrapped up in the lad, that I felt determined I would never return more till I could find him. I set off from Trowbridge with a weighted down soul indeed. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop." O how my soul went out to the Lord as we journeyed on, that He would direct me, and that we might go the right way; and whilst my poor soul was secretly begging that He would direct us right, how sweet and precious did these blessed words break into my heart - "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee." {Ge 28:15} Oh how my poor soul was revived! it was the first promise that had come to my soul since the lad ran off. O what confidence I had that I was doing right in going after the lad, and I felt firmly persuaded that God would direct us right, and that we should find the lad, and bring him back in peace. So on we went till we got to the Half-way House, where we stopped to feed the horse; and just as we were getting up in the gig to start off again, a man stepped out of the house, and calling out to me,

asked me how I did, and then said, "I saw your son John yesterday going on his road to Winchester."

I stood astonished, and thought the man must be mistaken, but he told me he was not, for he knew him as well as he knew me, as he was a Trowbridge man that had been over to Winchester to work. So on we went again, with my soul resting on the sweet promise: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in the way thou goest, and will bring thee back in peace." We arrived safe in Salisbury, where we stopped all night, and early on Saturday morning we set off for Winchester, where we arrived, I think, about eleven o'clock, and enquired after him at what they term the house of call for tailors. We found that he had slept there on Thursday night, but the man told us he could get no work, and had therefore left for Southampton on Friday.

After we had got a little refreshment, we set off for Southampton, where we arrived, I think, about three o'clock, and found out the house of call, where I went in and enquired of the landlady, as I took her to be, if a young man had been there last night asking after work. But before I had time to say more, she answered, "Yes, and I see he is your son; he comes from Trowbridge, in Wilts." My bowels were so overcome that I could not contain my feelings, and I wept aloud. "O my dear child, my dear child," I cried, "had he anything to eat?" She told me that he had had something to eat, and had stopped there last night; and I asked him, she said, "if he had not run away from a good home, for you appear to me not to be a common tramp;" to which he said that he had, and wished he was at home again, and what to do he could not tell; but his father had a friend in Portsmouth, and he would start for that place in the morning, and if he could reach there he knew he could get something to eat. "I fully intended," added she, "to have given him a good breakfast this morning, but when I got downstairs he was gone."

I went straight to the inn where we had put up the horse, and found that in a few minutes they expected the Bath coach to come in, which was going to Portsmouth, and which came up directly. So we left the horse and gig and took coach for Portsmouth and being quite tired and, to my feelings, nearly worn out, I got inside; and there being no other inside passenger, I had it all to myself. Sometimes it came to my mind, "Perhaps he is dead in some ditch, and has dropped into hell, where there is no hope to a never-ending eternity." O how I did cry to God in that coach that He would remember His promise that He had caused my soul to hope in, and that He would not suffer the enemy to swallow me up; and what a blessed sweet pouring out of my soul I had from Southampton to Portsmouth, which, if I recollect right is about twenty-one miles.

I shall never forget that text coming into my soul when we got about half-way from Southampton to Portsmouth: "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." "O," cried out my soul, "what are my feelings to my poor child? why, nothing but love, tenderness and affection." And such was my love to my child, that it covered all his vileness and ungodliness. O what an overpowering sight I had of the electing love of God the Father fixed upon my poor soul from eternity to eternity! "O," exclaimed my poor soul, "I love Thee because Thou hast loved me." O the killing sight I had of the love, care and pity of God the Son in taking all my sins upon Himself, and carrying them to the cross and enduring all that curse and damnation that my soul had richly merited at the hands of a just God! He showed me His hands, and His feet, and His side; and a humbling sight it was. "O," cried I, "my Lord and my God! O wretch that I am, to crucify the Lord of life and glory!" O what a sight I had of the love, pity and kindness of God the Holy Ghost in calling me, supplying me, upholding me, defending me, delivering me to the present moment out of all my miseries and troubles that ever I had been in! "Goodness and mercy." I cried, "have followed me all my life long to this present day."

O what a sight I had of my ungodly ways towards such a kind Father! I wept again and again, and exclaimed, "My dear Father, my child has never done anything against me as I have abused Thy goodness; and how canst Thou love such a wretch that has been such an out-of-the-way wretch?" But how sweetly did He smile, and whisper in my heart with His still small voice, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. I will be with thee in six troubles, and in the seventh not leave thee; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." My soul melted like wax before the sun, for every word He seemed to speak came with such power and sweetness as all ended with thee: "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

The coach stopped in a few minutes, and I began to wonder where we were, and stepping out, I asked the coachman how far we were from Portsmouth, and he told me between two or three miles. I asked him if he knew a person of the name of Doudney, a tallow chandler, that lived at Mile End, Portsea, and he replied that he knew him very well; so I told him to set me down there. But when I got into the coach again, my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and on my fears came again with double force: "What will you do if the lad is not at your friend Doudney's?" I began to shake and tremble from head to foot, and I felt as if it would be my death if I found him not there. Some professors wonder how it is that a man of God can

be as strong as a giant one hour, and the next hour as weak and helpless as a worm, and shaken to and fro like a reed. But David knew something of it: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled." {Ps 30:6-7} Good old Hart knew the same, or else he never could have so exactly described it:

But ah! when these short visits end,  
Though not quite left alone,  
I miss the presence of my Friend,  
Like one whose comfort's gone.

I to my own sad place return,  
My wretched state to feel;  
I tire, and faint, and mope, and mourn,  
And am but barren still.

More frequent let Thy visits be.  
Or let them longer last;  
I can do nothing without Thee;  
Make haste, O God, make haste.  
Joseph Hart (See MERCIES Topic 15)

And my soul knows it too. O how my soul and body trembled when the coach stopped at my friend Doudney's door, for fear the dear lad was not there! In I went, without any ceremony whatever, and cried out, "Have you seen my child? Is my child here?" They did not answer my question, but seemed quite surprised at seeing me, and asked me to sit down. But I cried out, "Is my child here? If he is not here, I must be off again; for I cannot rest till I can find him." They smiled, and told me to look behind me in the corner. I turned round to look, and there sat my beloved child. O I thought my very soul would have burst through my body! I cannot tell a thousandth part of my feelings, but I believe there was not one dry cheek in the room. O I had hard work to keep from taking him up in my arms, and I could not help blessing and praising my God that had led me the right way. I suppose we had travelled betwixt eighty and ninety miles, and I do not know that we had gone a hundred yards from the way the lad had trod with his feet, save about ten of the last miles to Portsmouth.

O what a night did I pass through of wonder, praise and adoration to my God! I got to bed, and how precious did the sweet promise come again to my soul that

propped it up in hope soon after we left Trowbridge: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee." And how sweet did these words follow upon the back of it: "Has any good thing failed of all the Lord hath said?" My soul exclaimed, "Not one thing has failed; it has all come to pass." Sleep appeared to be entirely taken away with the goodness and glory of God. For four last nights I had had no rest for sorrow of heart, and now I could not sleep for joy of heart. I got, however, a little sleep towards morning, and when I awoke I could not for some time think what day it was. I seemed all confusion for a time, as if I could not tell either where I was or yet what day it was.

It then came into my mind that I was at Portsmouth, and that it was Lord's day morning. "O," cried I, "what will they do at Trowbridge? for they have no one to go before them in the Name of the Lord; and, poor things, they don't know where I am," for I had had no time nor even thought about home; my thoughts were all swallowed up about the lad. But how powerfully did these words drop into my mind, "And He must needs go through Samaria." "Lord," cried I, "I left the few sheep in the wilderness, and have been after the lost one, and have found it; hast Thou a poor lost sheep to find? Hast Thou sent me here to pick up some poor sheep of Thine?" He blessedly answered, "He must needs go through Samaria." So my friend Doudney got a chapel for me to preach in in the evening, and the words, if I recollect right, that struck me to preach from were these. Ps 147:2 "He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel;" and a good time I think it was to some of the poor outcasts that were there. If I recollect right, on the Monday morning there came a person to my friend Doudney's, and told me he had brought me some good news, for his wife had been in great distress for some time, in so much so that she was driven to her wits end, and had entirely given it all up for lost, when, some time ago, she had had a dream, which was a very remarkable one.

As near as I can recollect, this was her dream: She was standing on the sea shore in the midst of the most terrible storm that she ever witnessed, expecting the sea to burst its bounds every moment and swallow her up. Never did she see such a terrible sea. By and by she saw a man walking on the waves of the sea, who came right to her and said, "The Lord will soon come and deliver you;" and such was the powerful impression of the dream that she declared, "If ever I see that man I shall know him if it is among a hundred people." "Before you came in the chapel," said the man, "we were got into our seat, and when you ascended the pulpit stairs, she whispered to me, 'That is the man whom I saw in my dream;' and truly the Lord did deliver her; and she has been blessing and praising Him ever since."

I was quite struck at hearing the circumstance, and could not help being astonished at the wonder-working hand of God, for I had indeed, in my mind, come to Portsmouth upon a tumultuous sea at times in my feelings. I had to preach on Monday evening at another chapel, and I believe the Lord was there, for I felt it a good time to my own soul; and I think some of the people did too, for they seemed to be all alive; and as I was coming down the aisle into the vestry, some said one thing and some another; but one person called out loud enough for me to hear, "If your son runs away again, tell him to come to Portsmouth." It was indeed a very sweet night.

In the morning the lad and I took the coach and arrived safe at home in the evening, with joy and gladness in the family and friends. But some thought I was very foolish to throw away all that money in rambling around the country after such a worthless boy; but, however, my feelings were quite different, for I had not the least guilt for what I had done, but joy and peace in seeing the good hand of God in going before me, and in bringing me back in peace.

I think, if I recollect right, I had either two or three shillings out of the ten pounds I had borrowed, and I thanked the Lord in my heart that I had had enough. The week after, which was the spring of 1832, I had to go to Abingdon, in Berkshire, to preach at the opening of the new chapel which my much esteemed brother and friend, Mr. Tiptaft, (See MERCIES Topic 24) had built. I recollect well I borrowed two pounds to go with, and went pretty comfortably, for I had not entirely lost all the savour of the lovingkindness of God in His goodness towards me in my journey after the lad. I preached in the chapel in the morning, and was to preach again in the evening, so that I did not go out to the afternoon service; and before we retired to bed, Mr. Tiptaft told me that they had had a collection for me in the afternoon, which quite struck me up, for I had never heard a hint of such a thing, and, as near as I can recollect, he said they had got ten pounds. "O," says I with astonishment, "why, it pays the ten pounds that I borrowed in all my ramblings after the lad, and a few shillings to spare." O what a sweet hour I had in my bed to see the tender mercies of God. It was too great for such a worthless worm to look upon.

In the morning, before I left, dear Mr. Tiptaft put five pounds into my hand. I would gladly not have received it, but he insisted upon my taking it, and said that he gave it cheerfully, and he hoped that the blessing of God would rest upon me. I came home as full of the blessings of the Lord as ever my soul could hold. I had money to pay the twelve pounds I had borrowed, and three pounds to spare. O what a God is our God! Truly the cattle upon a thousand hills are His; the hearts of



all men are in His hands; and all the gold and silver are His and at His disposal. My soul has seen and felt this hundreds of times.

I quite expected that my boy had felt enough to cure him from ever running away again, and I was constantly striving to impress upon his mind the awfulness of disobedience to parents, and the awful end it might bring him to. I was satisfied that he was not destitute of natural convictions, and I did hope my advice would have the desired effect; but alas! alas! I found there must be a mightier voice than mine to be heard and felt that could be of any real use to him; for after this he ran away four times, from a good situation, to tramp the country. The sorrows and griefs to myself and family were unspeakable; but the fifth time, I think, exceeded all. At times I never expected but that it would be my end, and yet sometimes I had blessed testimonies that it would end well to my comfort and his eternal salvation; for I had for years a strong impression upon my mind that he was a vessel of mercy before prepared unto glory; and I have lived to see that those impressions were from God.

The last time he ran off he was with his uncle in the North of England, and doing very well; but as it had been for many years, so it was here, a good situation was no use to him, for he was fully bent upon nothing but rambling about the country with scarcely anything either on his back or in his belly. When his last fling happened I was from home, but tidings reached me that John had left his uncle's and passed through Trowbridge, and told his sister that he was determined he never would see Trowbridge again, but was fixed and settled in his mind that he would cross the seas, and never see one of them again. O what a thunder clap was this news to my poor soul! O how my poor soul did cry to the Lord: "O Lord, hold Thou me up, strengthen me by Thy Spirit's might in my inner man. O Lord, keep me in my senses." And, bless the dear Lord, He did give me strength just equal to the day, but none to spare. His promises can never fail: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." And so I found it. When I arrived home it was all nothing but gloominess and sorrow, for I found the lad was gone off, fully bent upon nothing but destruction; and O how clearly I saw that none but God could ever stop him; and if I were to follow him again and find him, I could not change his heart; and that that was entirely the work of God, and not mine. And O what power and strength did I feel from that text, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee, for He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

O what a lift was this to my poor burdened soul! how easily I could cast the lad into the hands of God, that has angels, men and devils at His beck, that has fixed

hitherto, but no farther. O what an easement I found in my mind! for I never could freely leave him before this in the hands of God. I had read the passage again and again, and tried with all my might to cast this burden upon the Lord; but I found it a very different thing when the dear Comforter spoke it into my soul; it dropped then like rain, and distilled as the dew. How my very soul has been disgusted at hearing poor, blind, hardened, presumptuous, empty professors of religion exhort the poor, cast-down, burdened child of God: "Why don't you take the promises? why don't you cast your burden upon the Lord? Don't dishonour a kind God by disbelieving Him." Poor blind bats! they know nothing of what it is for the promises to take them, and are utter strangers in experience to what Paul saith: "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And so I have ever found by soul experience, for when the Lord has gone before me, I could follow; and when He has held me up, I could stand; when He has given me faith, I could believe; when He bears witness with my spirit that I am His, I can say, Abba, Father; when His presence causeth mine enemies to flee, I can shout victory; yea, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me; but without Him I am at a point, and neither men nor devils can overthrow me in it, I can do nothing. It matters not what liberty, joys, peace or confidence I have enjoyed, when God leaves me to the devil and myself, I find I am nothing but earthly, sensual and devilish. I am a living witness that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing, and I am confident of it that everyone that is taught of God is a living witness of its truth.

O what sweetness I felt in throwing the lad into the hands of Him who carries the keys of death and of hell; and how sweetly did these words drop into my soul, "Hitherto, but no farther." O I saw that neither the devil nor sin could break the bounds of God's eternal decrees, either in providence or grace; and I saw it as clear as the day that the lad could go no farther than what God had fixed. And O the blessedness of two verses of Kent's hymns (10) that flowed like honey out of the rock into my soul, and ratified in my heart that the dear lad, notwithstanding all, was one of God's elect:

There is a period known to God  
When all His sheep, redeem'd by blood,  
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,  
Turn to the fold, and enter in.

At peace with hell, with God at war,  
In sin's dark maze they wander far,  
Indulge their lust, and still go on

As far from God as sheep can run  
John Kent (See MERCIES Topic 15)

My very soul felt confident that he was one of the purchased flock which Christ had purchased with His own blood, and from this moment my soul was led to cry from day to day: "O Lord, turn the devil out of the lad's heart from reigning, and enter in Thyself, and take possession of his soul as Thy palace." Here I was from day to day: "Turn him out, Lord; turn him out, Lord." The old devil roared sadly at this, and if the Lord left me a single moment, he vowed vengeance against me if I did not shut my mouth; but I kept crying on, "Turn him out, Lord; turn him out, Lord." But it pleased the Lord to hide His face from me; and on the devil came, and painted it out to me that the Lord had given the lad up to him, and he had taken possession of him, and that he would go on headlong in sin till he dropped into hell. But this was fresh matter for prayer, and how my soul did wrestle till sometimes both body and soul were in an agony; and how these words cut through my soul like a sword: "Pray not for this people."

I thought I must have sunk never to rise up; and so I must had not God brought a little encouragement just at the moment respecting the poor woman that came to Christ for her daughter. O what encouragement did it bring! "Have mercy upon me. O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." O how my soul cried out again and again, "O Lord, Thou heardest and answeredst the cry of the poor woman for her dear child that had a devil; and wilt Thou deny me my request for my poor lad that the devil is dragging about out of one sin into another? My dear Lord, I confess I am but a dog before Thee, but do let me pick up a few crumbs under the table." And the dear Lord, bless His dear Name, let a few crumbs drop from the table that did my very soul good, for He whispered into my heart these words: "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

O how my soul adored and thanked Him that He did not disdain such a poor dog! In my feelings I washed His blessed feet with my tears, and wiped them with the hair of my head. And how precious did these words flow into my heart: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; wait upon the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." And I felt it good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of God. "For the vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come; it will not tarry;" and I felt as confident that the lad would be brought to a knowledge of the truth as I was of my own existence. How precious did that sweet hymn of Kent's come again into my soul, especially the last two verses, and I sang it with heart and voice.

My head and heart and hands bowed down before His blessed Majesty, and said, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen and amen;" so it is, and so it shall be. This was a precious lift. Here I had been about three weeks, up and down, in and out, before I could hear any real tidings about him, where he was, or what he was doing; and the first real account that I heard was that he had passed through Taunton on his way for Exeter and stopped at a friend's house one night in Taunton. They had done all they could do to persuade him to return home; but no, he was fully bent never to come home again. As soon as these tidings came I had another dreadful shake, and the devil came on again ten times more violently, if possible, than ever. "Now," says he, "where are your prayers? where is all your confidence that he is a vessel of mercy? See how he is still going on, filling up his cup; and when it is full, he will be cut down, and hell will be his portion." And O how that text shook me to pieces: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

Here I shook like a leaf; my belly trembled within, and my lips quivered, and I staggered and reeled to and fro like a drunken man, and I was at my wits end. Upon the back of this came these awful words, which I thought had completely finished me: "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Whether I was in my senses or out of my senses for a short time I know not, but I was up in my little shady arbour in the garden, and I thought I could not have crawled into the house. I did at last get into my room, but I shook like a leaf from trembling from head to foot.

"O," cried I, "if I am deceived in what I believed were answers to prayer respecting the lad, I must be deceived in my own salvation;" and I felt myself utterly sinking into despair. I took the Bible up with trembling, and did from my heart feel a real groan and sigh: "O Lord, if it can be consistent with Thy sovereign good pleasure, let me pick up one crumb. O Lord if it is but one crumb my soul shall bless Thee for it."

And at last I ventured to open the book, and the place where I opened it was Isa 11. O what glory and grandeur shone in reading the first three verses! My very soul was so overpowered with the glories of Christ for a few minutes that I quite forgot the lad and everything else under the sun. I was quite swallowed up in the glories of Christ. When I came to the fourth verse, O how my soul did go forth with blessings and thanksgivings unto His dear Name, and what a melting of heart in reading it! "But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His

mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." O how my very soul shouted, "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" but when I came to the sixth and seventh verses, O I felt as if my very soul must have burst through my body: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." O how my soul did dance and shout, "Five of God's shall, that are firm as the everlasting hills, and never were forfeited yet."

O how my soul thanked Him and adored Him, and how sweet did these words flow into my soul, "Thy prayers are heard, and come up before me; I will bring the leopard home, and he shall be heartily glad to lie down with the kids, and a little child shall lead him;" and I felt as confident that God would bring the lad home, clothed and in his right mind, begging for mercy, as I was confident there was a God. O how I kissed the dear feet of my Lord! I washed them with my tears, and wiped them in my feelings with the hairs of my head. I blessed, praised, adored and thanked Him till my very body was so faint that I hardly knew for a few minutes whether I was in the body or out of it. O how my poor soul shouted out, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me." Poor lying devil! he had taken his flight, and his hellish troop within had all scampered into their dens; and not one of them durst show his head whilst their master was there.

Truly I had no mercy on the lying devil, but set my foot upon his neck and cried, "Would to God I could kill thee outright." Here my soul was kept for about a fortnight, with my mind stayed upon God, waiting to see the good hand of my God, when the postman brought a letter from the lad to say that he was a soldier in Plymouth Barracks, that he was in the very bands of hell night and day, and that hell from beneath was moved to meet him at his coming. O how my very soul melted, and my tongue exclaimed, "He is brought to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard is willing to lie down with the kid." I wrote the dear soul a letter with my heart full of love, and told him that if the Lord had made him sick of his ways in very deed, and he had a desire to come home, I would purchase his discharge.

By the same post I wrote a letter to Mr. Triggs, (See MERCIES Topic 25) though he was a perfect stranger personally to me, but I had heard frequently that he was a minister of God, and preached the truth; and I told him the circumstances of my writing to him, and begged of him the favour to go to the barracks and see the lad,

and then let me know what he thought of him, and whether he believed he was really brought to see and feel the error of his ways, and to be heartily sick of them; and this is a copy of the letter from Mr. Triggs in answer to mine. O the sweetness it was to my soul:

Dear Brother and Companion in tribulation in the kingdom and patience of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, grace be unto thee, and peace and love be multiplied from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in truth and love,-

I received yours on Monday evening, and the contents of it filled my heart with sorrow, having children of my own over which my bowels yearned, and I was constrained to weep before the Lord on thy account; and I do find, as well as you, that it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God; and as we have passed through much already, and the Lord has helped us hitherto, surely it does give us confidence in Him, the faithful God, that what He hath promised He will fulfil: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I find that the Old Testament saints trod this path that you have been in, and I am not out of the same, namely, great and sore troubles on account of their children.

See the good old Jacob, the great and heavy troubles he met with! he thought death to be sure to him as the result, when his daughter played the whore and his sons committed murder; but the Lord his God was with him, and soon met him again at Bethel; and it is written, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Witness David with his ungodly Absalom, and the grief he caused him; yet his mercy was (and ours stands the same) "that the Lord had made an everlasting covenant with him, ordered in all things, and sure; this was all his salvation, and all his desire." We are poor, short-sighted creatures, and in the paths of tribulation we are very apt to say that all these things are against us; while we find afterwards that in the hands of the Lord the very trouble is one of the all things that work together for good; and I fully expect that my poor tribulated and sorrowing brother will find it so in this case relative to his prodigal son.

According to your request, I went to the citadel yesterday (Tuesday) morning, and enquired for your son, and I found he was at drill. I waited until it was over, and then I saw him and made myself known unto him, and said I had a letter from his father, and I wished to have some conversation with him. He told me that he had no time then, as he must get ready for parade; so I gave him my name and where I lived, and desired him to call on me, which accordingly he did last evening about

six o'clock, and, from what I could gather from his conversation, there is certainly a great change taken place for the better.

I asked him whether he was going on now in his old ways of sin and rebellion; to which he said, No, he could not, for a few weeks ago all his past life and actions were brought before him, with the shortness of time, and the awful circumstances of eternity; and that he had tried to stifle these things by getting into company, but that it was always uppermost; he was completely miserable, and he thought there was no mercy for him. His companions are all on him, and their filthy conversation, cursing and swearing, made the barrack room a complete hell to him, and he was just the same within. He wanders about by himself, and can get no comfort. I told him to make free at my house, as I loved him for his father's sake, and would do anything for him that I could to give him comfort. Who can tell?

I have just given you a brief sketch of circumstances. He told me that he had written to you by return of post. I hope that this will give my brother a little comfort above his sorrow, and it may be that the dear Lord will bring back his dear John to the bosom of his father, as manifested to be a vessel of mercy before prepared unto glory; and this will more than compensate for all the sorrow he hath given you. Cheer up, my brother; there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, so that you will receive him as your own bowels. I saw the adjutant and one of the sergeants, and they spoke in the highest terms of the good behaviour and sobriety of your dear John, and that he had conducted himself well since he had been in the regiment; that he had merited their esteem, and they said he was sure to do well and get on. I was very glad to hear the statement, and, no doubt, you will be; yet John says that he cannot live in such a hell. Now, dear brother, I am ready to act for you as you think fit; if you wish to buy his discharge, I will go to the commanding officer and make the inquiry for you relative to the sum required, and how it must be paid, where and when, for I do feel an anxiety to get him out of such a place, and shall feel an honour conferred upon me to be enabled to act on your account in these your troubles. Give my love to the parson's wife, and tell her to be of good cheer, and that she may rejoice yet that her last-born son is born of God. My love in the Lord to those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth among whom you minister. The good and gracious Lord bless and comfort you, and support you under all your troubles and sorrows, knowing it will soon be all over, and every trouble left behind, and earth exchanged for heaven. The promise is sure to all the seed, and our God changeth not.

Thine in the precious Lord Jesus,  
"A. TRIGGS."

Never can I forget the melting I had in reading this letter. I had to put it down three or four times before I could get through it. Never was my heart so broken in reading a letter in all my life; and my dear wife and two daughters that are at home, I do not know which of them wept the most. O the kindness, the love and feeling that my dear brother Triggs manifested to one so unworthy! It knit my soul to him in a moment; and we were one spirit. Scores of times has my soul begged the best of blessings to rest upon him and his. As soon as we could, we procured his discharge, and the poor prodigal returned home, and a hearty welcome he had; and I soon found the work was of God, and that the lion could lie down with the lamb, and a little child could lead him. Poor thing! he was sorely chastened out of God's law for weeks after he got home; but the Lord in tender mercy broke his bonds asunder in His own time, and brought him to hear and feel the joyful tidings of a free and full forgiveness of all his cursed abominations through the application of the precious blood of Christ to his soul; and he knew what it was to sing with delight and joy, " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." O how my soul did rejoice and thank and adore my God when I heard of the glad tidings that God had visited him with peace and pardon. He walked for a short time at large, and on April 29th I baptised him with some others; and truly I felt it an affecting time, and so did many others.

I believe amongst about nine hundred people there were few with a dry cheek; and to this day I am fully satisfied that the work is of God. O the wonder-working God for such a worm as I! Never, I think, had I a sorer trouble, heavier conflicts with the devil, nor was I ever deeper sunk at times in despair; and never had I more transporting joy, and clearer discovery how God had answered my poor prayers in all my life. O what a wonder-working God is our God! He can turn what we fear will be the greatest curse into the greatest blessing, the barren wilderness into a fruitful field, a dungeon into a palace, a miserable, sorrowful night into a glorious morning, frowns into smiles, starvation and famishing into feasting. Never can I at times, when the dear Comforter brings it to my remembrance forget the wonders and glories of God, who has caused it to work together for my soul's good and the eternal salvation of the lad. It is that that crowns the whole; and my poor soul has sung scores of times since the lad has come home, "Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all." O what sweetness it is when we can give Him glory. My poor soul could not help times and times breaking out and singing with the poet,



O for a heart prepared to sing  
To God, my Saviour and my King  
While with His saints I join to tell,  
My Jesus has done all things well.

How sovereign, wonderful, and free,  
Is all His love to sinful me!  
He pluck'd me as a brand from hell  
My Jesus has done all things well.

And since my soul has known His love,  
What mercies has He made me prove;  
Mercies which all my praise excel;  
My Jesus has done all things well.  
Samuel Medley (See MERCIES Topic 22)

Bless His dear Name, He cannot do wrong, let unbelief say what it will. Infinite wisdom cannot err; neither can boundless love and mercy be unkind. This I have proved for nearly twenty-four years at Trowbridge, and out of all my troubles, trials, miseries, griefs and sorrows, God has delivered me; not because I have been so faithful, watchful, humble and obedient; for, I speak it to my shame, never a more disobedient wretch the Lord has in His family. O the numbers of times I have believed that my cursed rebellion had so greatly provoked the dear Lord that He never could bear with me much longer, nor would ever help me more; but, bless His precious Name, though we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself; and so I have proved for twenty-four years that the precious words that nailed me at Trowbridge came from God: "Abide in this city, for I have much people here;" "The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine; the gold and silver are Mine; thy bread shall be given thee and thy water shall be sure." So that I can say to the honour of my God, that to this day He has fulfilled His promises to the very letter. Not one good thing has failed me of all that ever He hath said unto me: it is all come to pass, notwithstanding all the opposition I have met with from men and from devils. And here I am, a poor helpless worm, confident of this one thing, that it is by having obtained the help of God that I continue unto this day; and I have ever found to the present hour, when my soul has been helped to cast all its burden upon the Lord, He has sustained me; but whenever I have been leaning to an arm of flesh, I have been disappointed.

And I cannot help here mentioning one circumstance which strikes my mind, that happened before I began to preach. I had a very kind friend who had often helped

me in my distress, one who knew the Lord and had never denied me a favour in time of need; so that I considered him a sure place to take shelter in a time of particular need in providence. We were one day stuck fast till I had got my work out, and I set off to borrow seven shillings of him till I had finished my work, having no doubt that he would lend it to me, and that we should have a sweet conversation into the bargain of the precious things of God. But when I came to ask him the favour he was very cross and told me he could not keep on lending me money, and he was afraid I was leaning upon him; and he did not feel his mind at liberty to do it. O what a knock-down blow was this! I crept out of the house like a thief, with my poor soul broken to pieces, and into the fields I got, where I roared like a bear. "Now," says the devil, "it is all over; you have not one bit of bread in the house; God has left you, and the children of God have turned their backs upon you, for they see through you, that you are nothing but a mumping hypocrite, making a profession of religion for a crust of bread." I felt as if I must sink into despair. "O Lord," cried my soul, "I know not what to do." And O how sweet and glorious did these words sound in my heart: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

I dropped down on my knees, and cried out, "Dear Lord, what a fool, I am! I have been throwing the net on the wrong side. Why, dear Lord, I see Thou art the right side." And O how sweetly did He speak with a smile: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee; for He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." O what blessed satisfaction and peace did I feel in leaning and trusting to the Lord; and I could and did sing unto the Lord: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

If I recollect aright, the day after my friend came to acknowledge his fault, and he said he could not think how it was that he could be so unfeeling, and treat me so very ill, I told him the cause was in myself; that I had been casting the net on the left side of the ship, and mentioned to him the blessing the Lord had made it to my soul. O the times I have been in similar trials, when these words have been a blessing to my soul: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." I never found it fail yet; and when the dear Comforter brings to my remembrance the wondrous kindness He has done for us as a church and people at Trowbridge for these twenty-four years, I am constrained to cry out, "What hath God wrought!" for our chapel has cost us upwards of eighteen hundred pounds.

If I am not mistaken, I have begged out of our church and congregation about five hundred and forty-five pounds; and for two or three of these last years we have had

two hundred pounds debt remaining; but this year we have entered into a subscription amongst ourselves to clear off the two hundred pounds, and we have already got considerably above one hundred pounds, and have every prospect that the rest will be obtained before the end of the year. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It is astonishing what God can do by the most unlikely of means! I have had to endure all sorts of reports; and some have said that I have been trying to get the chapel out of debt that I might have it for my own private property; and I have been told there are some who believe this report to be true. Well, it is of little consequence what these poor creatures believe as respects poor unworthy me; but I have no more power over the chapel, as private property, than our pew-opener, nor half so much, for he is one of the trustees and I am not; neither have I ever wished it, nor ever desired it. The chapel belongs to the church for ever, as freehold property that can never be sold, nor even mortgaged. I am confident of it, that whilst I have any work to do at Trowbridge, there I must abide; but sometimes I do verily think my work is done at Trowbridge, and it appears to me that I have preached all the people as dead and as barren as myself, and I have really thought that they would be glad to get rid of me.

Sometimes I have tried to get out of them if this was not the case, but as yet they do not say it is; and here I am, after all the lovingkindness and tender mercies of a covenant God, as poor and helpless, as weak and worthless, as ever I was in my life, a poor pauper upon the tender mercy of God from day to day, a poor sinner saved by grace, who has nothing else to boast of save the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my life long to the present moment. O the times I have feared I should never see the day that I could pay my debts! But, blessed be my covenant God, I have lived to see it, and proved that not one good thing of all that ever He promised has failed, nor ever will fail. O the sweet moments I enjoy at times, when the dear Comforter is pleased to bring to my remembrance the tender mercies which He has caused to pass before me in the way! I can then say with confidence, "The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad." O the many precious times I have had in blessing and thanking my dear Lord for His providing, upholding, supplying, defending and delivering mercies to one so very feeble and helpless, surrounded with enemies on the right hand and on the left, who have been for years so anxiously watching and waiting for my halting.

But hitherto God has preserved me, to the no small mortification of some poor things, who have many, very many times been the means, in the hands of my God, to send me to a throne of grace that God would teach me, guide me, and preserve me in my goings out and comings in, so that I might have grace and strength given

me every moment, and be enabled so to act, walk and speak, that the uncircumcised might not have it to say, "Ah! ah! so would we have it." And, bless the Lord He has preserved me to the present day, though not from the noise of their tongues, for this they use very freely and not sparingly. But this I trouble myself nothing about; it is but an empty noise, and I have ever proved that "the curse causeless will not come."

A good conscience is a sweet and comfortable companion to go to bed with. O that my poor soul may ever be favoured with godly fear in sweet exercise, that my soul may live and serve God with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire and that I may ever be preserved from revenge; for the Lord saith, "Vengeance is Mine, and I will repay." O what a sweet companion is godly fear "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." "Pride, arrogance, and the evil way doth He hate." "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge." "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility." "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil." "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honour, and life." "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all day long; for surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." O my dear Lord, grant me much of this godly fear in exercise in my poor soul, that I may daily be afraid of offending Thee, and that my conscience may be kept very tender. O that I might honour Thee more, love Thee more, and live more to Thy glory! I blush before Thee, and hide my guilty head at my base ingratitude, cursed unbelief, wretched wanderings, hardness of heart, that I have been and still am the subject of, notwithstanding all the lovingkindness and tender mercies which Thou hast bestowed upon one so unworthy. O let Thy grace be sufficient for me, that I may war a good warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil; that I may endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; that the weapons of my warfare may not be carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.