

which there was no forgiveness, thought so too. "Thus was I always sinking, whatever I did think or do. So one day I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep panic about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and after long musing, I lifted up my head; but methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light; and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me: methought that they all combined together to banish me out of the world; I was abhorred of them, and unfit to dwell among them, or be partaker of their benefits, because I had sinned against the Saviour. Then breaking out in the bitterness of my soul, I said to my soul, with a grievous sigh, 'How can God comfort such a wretch as I am?' I had no sooner said it, but this returned upon me, as an echo doth answer a voice, 'This sin is not unto death.' At which I was as if raised out of the grave, and cried out again, 'Lord, how couldst thou find out such a word as this?' for I was filled with admiration at the fitness and at the unexpectedness of the sentence. The fitness of the word; the rightness of the timing of it; the power and sweetness and light and glory that came with it also, were marvellous to me to find. I was now for the time out of doubt as to that about which I was so much in doubt before. I seemed now to stand upon the same ground with other sinners, and to have as good right to the word and prayer as any of them."

In coming to this conclusion, he had made a great step in advance.—His misery had hitherto been occasioned by a device of the devil, which keeps many anxious souls from comfort. He regarded his own case as a special exception to which a gospel, otherwise general, did not apply; but this snare was now broken, and though with halting pace, he was on the way to settled rest and joy. Frequently he would feel that his transgressions had cut him off from Christ, and left him "neither foot-hold nor hand-hold among all the props and stays in the precious word of life;" but presently he would find some gracious assurance—he knew not how—sustaining him. At one time he would appear to himself like a child fallen into a mill-pond, "who thought it could make some shift to sprawl and scramble in the water," yet, as it could find nothing to which to cling, must sink at last; but by and by he would perceive that an unseen power was buoying him up, and encouraging him to cry from the depths. At another time he would be so discouraged and daunted, that he scarcely dared to pray, and yet in a sort of desperation beginning, he found it true that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." On one occasion, whilst endeavouring to draw near the throne of grace, the tempter suggested "that neither the mercy of God, nor yet the blood of Christ, at all concerned him, nor could they help him by reason of his sin; therefore it was in vain to pray." Yet he thought with himself, "I will pray." "But," said the tempter, "your sin is unpardonable." "Well," said he, "I will pray." "It is no boot," said the adversary. And still he answered, "I will pray." And so he began his prayer.—"Lord, Satan tells me that neither thy mercy, nor Christ's blood, is sufficient to save my soul. Lord, shall I honour thee most by believing thou wilt and canst? or him, by believing thou neither wilt nor canst? Lord, I would fain honour thee by believing thou canst and thou wiltest." And whilst he was thus speaking, "as if some one had clapped him on the back," that scripture fastened on his mind, "O man great is thy faith."

Relief came slowly but steadily, and was the more abiding, because he had learned by experience to distrust any comfort which did not come from the word of God. Such passages as these, "My grace is for thee," and "Him that cometh unto me derived still stronger encouragement from considering that the Gospel, with its benignity, is much more expressive of the mind and disposition of God than the law with its severity.—"Mercy rejoiceth over judgment. How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." Or, as the same truth presented itself to his mind in an aspect more arresting to a mind like his, "And Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say, for he was sore afraid. And there was a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him." "Then I saw that Moses and Elias must both vanish, and leave Christ and his saints alone."

We have now arrived at the happy time when these doubts and distractions were exchanged for songs of deliverance. We relate it in the words of Bunyan's own narrative:—"One day as I was passing into the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven;' and methought whilst, I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, 'He wants my righteousness;' for that was just before him.—I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed; I was loosed from my afflictions and my irons; my temptations also fled away; so that from that time those dreadful scriptures of God left off to trouble me. Now went I also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God; so when I came home I looked to see if I could find that sentence,

'Thy righteousness is in heaven,' but could not find such a saying;—wherefore my heart began to sink again, only that was brought in my remembrance, 'He is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, by this word I saw the other sentence true.—For, by this scripture, I saw that the man Christ Jesus, as he is distinct from us as touching his bodily presence, so he is our righteousness and sanctification before God. Here, therefore, I lived for some time very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. Oh! methought, Christ, Christ! There was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes. I was not now looking upon this and the other benefits of Christ apart, as of his blood, burial, or resurrection, but considering him as a whole Christ, as he is when all these, and all other virtues, relations, offices, and operations met together, and that he sat on the right hand of God in heaven. 'Twas glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of all his benefits; and that because now I could look from myself to him, and would reckon that all those graces of God that now were green on me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home: Oh! I saw my gold was in my trunk at home! in Christ my Lord and Saviour. Now Christ was all; all my righteousness, all my sanctification, and all my redemption."

"Further, the Lord did also lead me into the mystery of union with the Son of God; that I was joined to him, that I was 'flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone' (Eph. v. 30); and now was that word of St. Paul sweet to me. By this also was my faith in him as my righteousness the more confirmed in me; for if he and I were one, then his righteousness was mine, his merits mine, his victory also mine. Now could I see myself in heaven and earth at once: in heaven by my Christ, by my head, by my righteousness and life; though on earth by any body or person.—Now I saw Christ Jesus was looked upon of God, and should also be looked upon by us, as that common or public person, in whom all the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned; that we fulfilled the law by him, rose from the dead by him, got the victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell by him; when he died, we died; and so of his resurrection. 'Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise,' saith he; and again, 'After two days he will revive us, and the third day we shall live in his sight' which is now fulfilled by the sitting down of the Son of Man on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, according to that to the Ephesians, 'He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Ah! these blessed considerations and scriptures, with many others of like nature, were in those days made to sparkle in mine eye, so that I have cause to say, 'Praise ye the Lord God in his sanctuary; praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness.'"

Extricated from the Slough of Despond, Bunyan went on his way rejoicing; and though sometimes interrupted by disquieting thoughts and strong temptations, his subsequent career was a path of growing comfort and prevailing peace. At the age of twenty-six he was admitted a member of that Baptist Church of which Mr. Gifford was the faithful pastor,—a rare man, who, in angry times, and in a small communion, preserved his catholicity. Holding that "union with Christ," and not agreement concerning any ordinances or things external, is the foundation of Christian fellowship, with his dying hand he addressed a letter to his beloved people, in which the following sentence occurs, the utterance of a heart enlarged by Christian magnanimity, and bent on those objects which alone look important when the believer is waiting on the top of Pisgah:—"Concerning separation from the Church about baptism, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, psalms, or any other externals, I charge every one of you respectively, as you will give an account of it to our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge both quick and dead at his coming, that none of you be found guilty of this great evil, which some have committed, and that through a zeal for God yet not according to knowledge. They have erred from the law of the love of Christ, and have made a rent in the true Church, which is but one." If our Baptist brethren are justly proud that the burning and shining light of Bunyan was set upon their candlestick, they have equal right to boast of the torch at which his bland and diffusive light was kindled. John Bunyan doubtless owed to John Gifford the peculiar type of his Christianity, its comprehensiveness, and its sect forgetting zeal for the things of Jesus Christ.

He had not long been a member of the church when he was called to exercise its actual ministry. Gifford was gone to his everlasting rest; and as a substitute for his labours, it was put upon a few of the brethren to speak the word of exhortation to the rest. Of these Bunyan was one. At first he did not venture farther than to address his friends in their more private meetings, or to follow up, with a brief application, the sermons delivered by others in their village-preaching. But these exercises having afforded the utmost satisfaction to his judicious though warm-hearted hearers, he was urged forward to more public services. These he was too humble to covet, and too earnest to refuse. Though his education was sufficiently rude, God had given him from the first a strong athletic mind and glowing heart, that downright logic and teeming fancy, whose bold strokes and burning images heat the Saxon tempter to the welding point, and make the popular orator of our English multitude. Then his low original and rough wild history, however much they might have subjected him to scorn had he exchanged the leathern apron for a silken one, or scrambled from the hedge-side into the high places of the church, entailed no suspicion, and awakened much surprise, when the Bedford townsmen saw their blaspheming neighbour a new man, and in a way so