

on a rack for whole days together." "But, to be brief, one morning as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation to sell and part with Christ—the wicked suggestion still running in my mind. Sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him, as fast as a man could speak, against which I also, as at other times, answered, No, no; not for thousands, thousands, thousands, at least twenty times together. But at last, after much striving, even until I was almost out of breath, I felt this thought pass through my heart, let him go, if he will, and I thought also that I felt my heart freely consent thereto. Oh, the diligence of Satan! Oh, the desperateness of man's heart! Now was the battle won, and down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt and fearful despair. Thus getting out of my bed, I went moping into the field, but God knows, with as heavy a heart as mortal man, I think, could bear. Where, for the space of two hours, I was like a man bereft of life, and as now past all recovery, and bound over to eternal punishment. And withal, that scripture did seize upon my soul, 'O profane person, as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birth-right; for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' These words were to my soul like fetters of brass, in the continual sound of which I went for several months together."

The anxious casuistry in which he sought relief, and the alternation of wistful hope and blank despair, in which for many a dismal day he was tossed to and fro, none but himself can properly describe. They are deeply affecting, and so to many prove instructive.

"Then began I, with sad and careful heart, to consider of the nature and largeness of my sin, and to search into the word of God, if in any place I could espy a word of promise, or any encouraging sentence by which I might take relief. Wherefore I began to consider that of Mark iii. 'All manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, whosoever they shall blaspheme.' which place, methought, at a blush, did contain a large and glorious promise for the pardon of high offences. But considering the place more fully, I thought it was rather to be understood as relating more chiefly to those who had, while in a natural state, committed such things as there are mentioned, but not to me, who had not only received light and mercy, but that had, both after and also contrary to that, so slighted Christ as I had done. I feared, therefore, that this wicked sin of mine might be that sin unpardonable, of which he there thus speaketh, 'But he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.'

"And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself; nor did I ever so know as now what it was to be weary of my life and yet afraid to die. O how gladly would I have been anybody but myself! anything but a man! and in any condition but my own! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind, than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from wrath to come."

He set himself to compare his sin with that of David and Peter, but saw that there were specialities in his guilt which made it far greater. The only case which he could compare to his own was that of Judas.

"About this time I did light on the dreadful story of the miserable mortal, Francis Spira. Every sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his dolours, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twisting, and languishing, and pining away, under the mighty hand of God that was upon him, was as knives, and daggers to my soul; especially that sentence of his was frightful to me, 'Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?' Then would the former sentence, as the conclusion of all, fall like a thunderbolt again upon my conscience, 'For you know how, that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Then should I be struck into a very great trembling, inasmuch that at sometimes I could, for whole days together, feel my very body, as well as my mind, to shake and totter under the sense of this dreadful judgment of God.

"Now if I should find my mind to flee from God as from the face of a dreadful judge; yet this was my torment, I could not escape his hand.—'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.' But blessed be his grace, that scripture in these flying fits would call as running after me,—'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me for I have redeemed thee.' This, I say, would come in upon my mind when I was fleeing from the face of God, for I did flee from his face, that is, my mind and spirit fled before him by reason of his highness I could not endure. Then would that text cry, Return unto me; it would cry aloud, with a very great voice, Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Indeed this would make me make a little stop, and, as it were, look over my shoulder behind me, to see if I could discern that the God of grace did follow me with a pardon in his hand.

"Once as I was walking to and fro in a good man's shop, bemoaning of myself in my sad and doleful state, afflicting myself with self-abhorrence for this wicked and ungodly thought; lamenting also this hard hap of mine, for that I should commit so great a sin, greatly fearing I should not be pardoned; praying also in my heart, that if this sin of mine did differ from that against the Holy Ghost, the Lord would shew it me; and being now ready to sink with fear, suddenly there was as if there had rushed in at the window the noise of wind upon me, but very pleasant, and as if I heard a voice speaking,—'Didst ever refuse to be justified by the blood of Christ?' And withal my whole life of profession past was in

a moment opened to me, wherein I was made to see that designedly I had not; so my heart answered graciously, No: Then fell with power that word of God upon me; See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.—This made a strange seizure upon my spirit. It brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart of all those tumultuous thoughts that before did rise, like masterless hell hounds, to roar and bellow, and make a hideous noise within me. It shewed me also that Jesus Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me; that he had not, as I feared, quite forsaken and cast off my soul. Yea, this was a kind of check for my proneness to desperation, a kind of threatening of me if I did not, notwithstanding my sins and the heinousness of them, venture my salvation upon the Son of God. But as to my determining about this strange depensation, what it was, I know not. I have not yet in twenty years' time been able to make a judgment of it. I thought then what here I should be loath to speak. But verily, that sudden rushing wind was as if an angel had come upon me; but both it and the salvation, I will leave until the day of judgment. Only this I say, it commanded a great calm in my soul. It persuaded me there might be hope; it shewed me, as I thought, what the sin unpardonable was, and that my soul had yet the blessed privilege to flee to Jesus Christ for mercy. But I say concerning this depensation, I know not what yet to say unto it. I leave it to be thought on by men of sound judgment. I lay not the stress of my salvation thereupon, but upon the Lord Jesus in the promise; yet seeing I am here unfolding of my secret things, I thought it might not be altogether inexpedient to let this also shew itself, though I cannot now relate the manner as then I did experience it. This lasted in the savour thereof about three or four days, and then I began to mistrust and despair again."

No solid peace can enter the soul except that which is brought by the Comforter. It is not the word read and heard, but the word revealed by the Spirit, which is saving and assuring. There is undoubtedly a divine operation on the mind wherever any impression is procured by the truths of God; and whether that impression should be made with audible and visible manifestations accompanying it—as on the day of Pentecost—or should be so vivid as to convert a mental perception into a bodily sensation, as we are disposed to think was the case with some of the remarkable sight and heavenly voices which good men have recorded, is really of little moment. In Bunyan's case, so warm was his imagination, that every clear perception was sure to be instantaneously sounded in his ear, or standing out a bright vision before his admiring eyes. This feature of his mental conformation has been noticed already; but this may be the proper place to allude to it again.

(To be continued.)

DEAL GENTLY, OR THEY WILL LEAVE THE CHURCH.

"You must not be too rigid or severe in insisting upon the claims of duty and benevolence, or you will drive some of the members away from the Church." Such is the kind advice which a cautious church member sometimes volunteers to his minister.

In this day, faithfulness is often called severity, and telling the truth plainly, reconding. I hate scolding in the pulpit, both in its terms and in its tones. But I utterly loathe time-serving, or the policy that conceals or palliates truth, from dread of giving offence. I would bear the truth spoken in love. The idea of glossing truth for the sake of keeping in their pews a body of indifferent, worthless members, who feel no interest, and will bear no responsibility in promoting the welfare and usefulness of the Church, is abhorrent to good policy, true piety, and sincere integrity.

"But you will hurt their feelings," says one.

"They ought to be hurt. I would see truth poured scorching hot upon their consciences until they burnt out their indifference. They are immeasurably hurting the Church by their worldliness, and why should we scruple in wounding them. Ulcers must be sometimes painfully probed or they will never heal.

But some very good people say, deal gently with such, or they will leave the Church. Well, what good do they do in it? What would the Church lose if they were all gone? Is their association with it so very desirable and beneficial, that we should tenderly implore their stay? What of strength or efficiency would thousands such add to the Church?

Leave the Church! What right have they in it? If they have no sympathy with it, no interest in it, no affinity with the spirit of Jesus Christ, they are none of His, and what right have they in His Church? If the Church is destined to be a living body, why desire to retain a hanging mass of diseased or dead members? Trim off the dead limbs and the vine will only be the more flourishing.

Leave the Church! What a blessing that would be. If it is impossible to draw from them any manifestations of spiritual life, any expression of devotion and zeal, if they obstinately repudiate in their lives all that is positive and practical in Christianity, then their leaving will be a speedy relief.

Leave the Church! Let them go to the world to which they belong, or to some worldly church where their consciences may be lulled by the form of godliness without the power. The Bible recognises no such Christianity as theirs. It knows no piety that does not bear good fruits. If they bring forth only thorns and thistles then they are only thorns and thistles.

There ought to be no tenderness wasted upon such professors of religion; none felt, except such as we feel, for all the ungodly in common with them. As unregenerate sinners should they be exhorted to repent