

The Lord raised me up to bodily health, and also brought me to see and feel that it was all needful, and all in loving-kindness and tender mercy. I could enter from my very soul into David's feelings and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" for, "before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept Thy word." {[Ps 119:67,71](#)} O the blessing of a covenant God in thus emptying and filling, bringing down and raising up, wounding and healing, stripping and clothing, frowning and smiling! I have indeed proved the truths of that precious text, "Now no chastening for the present appeareth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." {[Heb 12:2](#)} My soul has indeed proved that "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." {[Isa 38:16](#)} But what can poor empty professors of religion know of these precious things? It is the "third part that God brings through the fire, and purifies as silver is purified, and tries as gold is tried. They shall call on His Name, and He will hear them; He will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." {[Zec 13:9](#)} Thus saith the Lord, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." {[Isa 43:21](#)}

The next thing, I shall notice is my call to the ministry, which was a wonder to many in my own country, but most of all to myself. I believe that the first moving of God in my soul for the work of the ministry was when I was baptized by that dear man of God, William Gadsby, of Manchester. I had for several years been convinced of baptism, but had tried all in my power to satisfy my mind without attending to it; for I felt such a reluctance to leave the Independent church, the members of which had proved themselves such kind friends to me.

I thought it would seem like base ingratitude to leave them after all their kindness; and as I did not, at that time, know any Baptist church with which to unite myself, I thought it my duty to abide where I was. Some time after this, Mr. Gadsby (See [MERCIES Topic 11](#)) came to Manchester to supply the Baptist chapel of which he is now the pastor, and I went to hear him. I think I shall never forget the first time I heard him. When I got into the chapel I thought to myself, what a poor, gloomy, miserable place this is! And as the people came in, I felt such a hatred rise up in my heart against them as I never felt against any people before. Nay, so much so, that I was just ready to take Up my hat and walk out, when Mr. Gadsby got into the pulpit I was struck with surprise to see so poor and mean-looking a fellow (as I thought him) attempt to preach I despised him in my very soul, and thought he looked like an ignorant fool that had not common sense. He arose and gave out a hymn, but it was in so drawling a way that I verily believed he could not read. O how the devil rose up in my heart! I ever~ wished that some one or other would

raise a disturbance in the chapel, for I thought I could kick him out of it with all the pleasure in the world. My prejudice was so strong that, when he went to prayer, I do believe that I actually hated the sound of his voice.

He appeared to me to stutter and stammer as though he could hardly get a word out of his mouth. My soul boiled with rage, and I called myself a thousand fools for coming to hear such a fool. When he had finished his prayer, which was very short, I thought to myself, Poor creature! thou canst never preach, I'm sure; and I felt a secret pleasure in the hope that when he had read his text he would be obliged to tell the people that he could not preach. The words of his text were, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things;" and he was so long in reading them, that I dropped my head down and thought I would try to go to sleep. He then made a little pause, and I looked up to see what he was about, and he was looking all around the chapel, and rolling his eyes in such a way that I really thought him crazy. The first words he spoke were, "Perhaps you will be ready to say that, according to our sentiments, we cannot find a good man upon earth. But by the help of God we will, or we will ransack the Bible from Genesis to Revelation." O how my prejudice was knocked down at a blow!

My soul melted like wax before the sun, and I exclaimed, "God bless thee! The Lord help thee to find the good man!" He first showed that by nature no man was good, and O the depths he entered into in showing man's lost and ruined condition. But when he came to describe the good man as he stood in Christ, and the good things which were then brought forth out of his heart, my soul was so overcome that I cried out in my feelings, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die." {[Ru 1:16](#)} My very soul was knit to him, as closely as Jonathan's to David, and my ears were nailed to the doorpost. I had never heard my ins and outs, my ups and downs, my days and nights, my sorrows and joys, so opened up before. Had he been in my very soul, he could not have opened it up more plainly. From that day I attended the Baptist Chapel, and O the heavenly times I had when Mr. Gadsby was supplying, for he was not at that time their settled pastor.

The next time, if I recollect right, that he came to supply I was baptized, being the only candidate. O the sight I had of the Lord Jesus Christ when I went down into the water. By precious faith I saw Him sunk in deep waters where there was no standing, and all the waves and billows of Divine wrath overwhelming Him for my poor soul. I can never describe the solemnity, humility, holy wonder, adoration,

self-abasement and godly contrition that I felt whilst I stood in the water. Dear Mr. Gadsby, whilst standing in the water, before he baptized me, offered up a short petition to God; and before he concluded, placing his hand upon my shoulder, he begged the Lord to bless me, defend me, stand by me, uphold me, and protect me; and what was amazingly astonishing to me, he finished by begging God to raise me up as an instrument in His hands for His own glory, and the cause of truth.

I believed and felt in my very soul, whilst in the water, that God heard and answered every word that flowed out of his mouth; and my soul was so swallowed up in glory, that for a time I did not know whether I was in the body or out of the body. O the difficulty' I had, when I came up out of the water, to refrain from telling the whole congregation what I had seen and felt of the preciousness of my dear Lord and Saviour! After this I was not like the same man. I had no rest nor peace but in reading, searching and praying over the Word of God at every opportunity which my employment would admit of, morning noon and night.

O what a spirit of prayer I felt that God would open my understanding to understand the Scriptures; and how many times did those blessed words of David come into my soul with power, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." {[Ps 119:18](#)} I felt such wrestlings at times with God, that He would show me the meaning of His blessed Word, that both body and soul have been quite weak and feeble; and sometimes such light and life would shine and flow into my heart from, a text of Scripture, that it set my very soul all on a flame of love to God and His people; and I have cried out, "O Lord, here I am; send me with a message of grace and peace to Thy dear children, who are kept in bondage under legal preachers." For at this time Mr. Gadsby was not settled at Manchester, though he was so a little while after. But, alas! when I looked at my situation in providence, with hardly a shoe to my foot, with a large family of little children, over head and ears in debt, many times with not half a bellyful of victuals, without any human learning except just enough to read some parts of the Bible, and hardly able to write my own name properly. "Good Lord," cried I, "what can I be at? Surely I must be mad to think of preaching, such a fool as I" Then I determined to trouble my head no more about it, and did all I could to put it out of my thoughts. But it was just like trying to empty a spring, for it flowed into my mind as fast as ever I tried to put it out.

One day, when I was wrestling with the Lord to show me what it could all mean, and how it was I could not put it out of my heart, and keep it out, and telling Him how unfit I was for the office of minister, as being such an ignorant fool that I could not speak properly, those blessed words which God spake to Moses came

with such power, that I was quite struck with amazement: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." {[Ex 4:11-12](#)} O how my soul was melted and crumbled down at His blessed feet; and like a poor simple child, I cried, "What! I, Lord? What! Wilt Thou open my mouth? What! Wilt Thou teach me what to say? Can it, Lord, be possible? Is it, dear Lord, from Thyself? Be not angry with Thy child O Lord! It is such a solemn and great work to go and speak in Thy great Name I am afraid Lord lest I should run before I am sent. Do not suffer me to be deceived or to deceive others. I am afraid it cannot be real. Is it really from Thee, Lord? Do tell me; do make it known to my soul."

Whilst my poor soul was pleading with Him like a child, these precious words came with such power and sweetness, that brought me firmly to believe for a time that it was of God: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; yea, I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." {[Isa 41:10](#)} O the blessed sweetness and Divine confidence which these words brought into my heart! O the Divine light and life that shone into my soul! Thy God to supply; thy God to teach; thy God to deliver; thy God to uphold. Nay, my very soul was satisfied that there was everything in my God which I could stand in need of, both for the ministry and for the family, for the body and for the soul, for time and for eternity. Here I was wonderfully favoured for some time with sweet communion and fellowship with my God and Saviour.

The Word of God was truly "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." {[Ps 119:105](#)} I was enabled to commit it into His blessed hands, for Him to work His own way, and if it were His good will and pleasure, that He would open the way in His own time. But if it were nothing but flesh and blood, pride and the devil, I prayed from my heart that He would overthrow and stop it. I felt so much the greatness and importance of the work, and the awfulness of running before I was sent, that it was my earnest cry, night and day, that I might not be deceived, or attempt it without His blessed approbation and smiles. Then again, I was sorely harassed for fear it should be nothing but flesh and blood; for when I began to think what a poor ignorant, illiterate fool I was, how could I think of being the mouth of God?

And what could I do in opening the Scriptures of truth to feed the children of God with wisdom and understanding, that had no understanding myself, but was a complete ignorant fool? Surely, thinks I, it must be a delusion of the devil, and I

must be altogether deceived. This brought me down upon my knees to God again, and I could appeal to Him, who knew my very soul and before whom my heart was open and naked, and I could cry with unfeigned lips, "Search my heart, O Lord, and show me if I have any evil end in view." I begged from my very heart that if it were not of Him, He would deliver me from the thought of it, and pardon me for ever having thought about it. As I was going to the prayer meeting under these workings of mind, my soul was so led out to God that, if it were His blessed will, if He had indeed chosen such a foolish thing, such a weak thing, such a base thing to preach the gospel, He would be with me that night in a peculiar way, and bless me with liberty in prayer, and such power attending it that the souls of the people might be blessed; and I told Him it should be a token whether it was of God or of myself. To my wonder and astonishment, my soul was so led out in prayer, and I had such a sight of the mercy, goodness, kindness and love of God to such unbelieving wretches, that I hardly knew how to conclude. Words flowed so freely, so sweetly, and so feelingly, that I was quite at home in the Lord.

After the meeting was over I stopped for some time, and my mouth was opened in conversation about the goodness, mercy and lovingkindness of my covenant God in delivering, helping, and upholding such a worthless wretch to the present moment. O what sweetness and liberty I felt in telling what God had done for my soul! One or two of the people were quite revived, and spoke of the goodness of God, who had been with us that evening. I went home full of joy, comfort and peace, believing that the Lord was with me, and had proved Himself to be my prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God; for prayer did not satisfy me, if there were no answers.

I have ever proved that "a man hath joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" {[Pr 15:23](#)} Promise upon promise flowed into my soul, one upon the back of the other, that He would never leave me nor forsake me; that He would go before me and bring up the rearward; that no weapon formed against me should prosper. My soul was so full that I told the Lord I wanted no more; I could now believe Him, trust Him, and die for His honour and glory, if it were His blessed mind and will. For several days I was very happy and comfortable in leaving all in His blessed hands. But after I had left off communing with my God and Father I returned to my old place, and the devil began his old work. "How can you think of entering into the work of the ministry? Look at the importance of the work; look at your ignorance; look at your poverty; look at your debts, which you have not a farthing to pay with; and you have hardly a rag to your back or a shoe to your foot, except what is given to you by someone or other."

O how my knees began to tremble, and my hair to move on my very head, and my blood to run cold, and I trembled from head to foot. Oh! cried I, in the greatest confusion amid distress, what have I been doing? Am I wrong after all? O how did my soul beg of God that He would pardon me if I had attempted of my own accord to think about the ministry? Here I was for a long time. Sometimes a little hope would break into my heart to prop me up for a few moments, and then again I sank fathoms, and cried out, "Think about preaching! O that I could but get rid of the thought about it!" Then again the Lord would send some precious part of His Word home to my soul with such power that I was willing to be anything or nothing that God might be glorified. Then I began to think it was my duty to tell some of the Lord's people how I was exercised in my mind, and hear what they thought of it.

Perhaps I should feel more satisfied after hearing their mind upon it. But this I never could do, for I believed in my soul, if it were of God He would impress it upon their minds as well as upon mine, and that they would ask me about it. O what a spirit of prayer I then felt, day after day, that God would make it known to me that it was from Him, by sending someone to ask me if I were not exercised about preaching; for I was sure that if God had designed me for the work, He would open the way without my opening it myself, Here I was kept for a long time, praying and watching the good hand of God. But one Saturday morning, such a cloud of darkness overshadowed me-darkness that might be felt-every promise sealed up, no access to God, with nothing but wants in the family, and not one penny to supply them with, and the devil telling me what a fool I must be to think of preaching, and praying that God would send somebody to ask me to preach. O my very knees smote together, and how ashamed I was of my very prayers! Surely, thought I, it can be nothing but pride and presumption! Had it been from God, He would have sent someone before now.

Just in these workings of my mind, believing it could not be of God, one of the deacons of the church, whose name, if I recollect rightly, was Francis, called at our house, and wished me to walk out with him. When we got by ourselves, he said that he had a question to ask me, to which he hoped I would give him a faithful answer. "Have you not, John," said he, "had some exercises of mind about preaching?" I was so struck with astonishment at the question, that I was some time speechless. He soon saw how it was, and then told me that it had been impressed upon his mind and that of others, ever since I gave in my experience at the church meeting, that God had designed me for the work of the ministry, and that they had been watching the hand of God towards me ever since. "The more we make it a matter of prayer to God," said he, "the more liberty and freedom we find, and we verily believe that He has designed you for the work of the ministry."

By little and little he drew it all out of me, and I told him all the workings of mind I had had from the time I was baptized. He told me that a few of the friends had agreed to have a private meeting at his house once a week, and that each, in his turn, should speak from a text of Scripture, as the Lord should enable him. He would take no denial, but I must promise that I would go in my turn. So I agreed to go, and the time fixed was, I think, that evening fortnight. O the exercises of mind I had in that time God only knows! But I was brought to this conclusion-to give it up into the hands of God, that as I had not opened the way myself, but that it had come in a way of providence, I believe that He designed either to put a final stop to it, or else to make it evident it was from Him. And I am confident that it was my soul's desire that, if it were not of God, He would shut my mouth; and that, if it were "of Him, He would open it, and give me a word to say, which He would own and bless to the souls of the people who might be there. At the time appointed I went, begging of God that He would decide the matter. If He opened my mouth, and the people were satisfied, and encouraged me in the work, I should believe it was from Him; but that if He shut my mouth, and the people were cool upon me, I should be satisfied to give it all up and leave it. O the tremblings I had before I read the text! I felt as if it were impossible for me to speak. But after I had read the text, the fear of man was taken away and the Lord broke into my soul; my mouth was opened, and I did indeed feel it to be a time of refreshing from His presence to my own soul. Matter and words flowed so fast that I quite wondered to feel my soul so melted and so humbled before the Lord.

After it was over the people encouraged me very much, and would take no denial but that I must come again (if I remember aright) in a fortnight. O what a happy fortnight I had! I now believed that all was right and straight, and could not see it possible for the devil to harass me again about my call to the ministry, nor how I could doubt it any more, seeing that the Lord had answered my prayers in so many previous times of need, and had delivered me so blessedly, and so evidently by His own doing O how my soul was swallowed up in the honour and glory of God! O what heavenly delight I had in searching the Word of God, and what sweet satisfaction and blessed confidence in seeing that it was of God, and that the Lord Himself had opened the way.

My soul was as confident that the Lord would be with me as that I was born; and I longed for the fortnight to pass away, that I might go again and speak in the Name of the Lord. It was my soul's request to spend and be spent in the cause of God and truth, for it was dearer to me than life itself. When I went the second time the room was quite full, and the Lord was with me very sweetly and preciousy, and the people seemed all alive. As soon as I had finished my message pride began to boil

up in my heart: "They think you will be a very great preacher. See how the people are pleased, and how cheerfully they sing." And I thought so myself too. After concluding, I overheard some of the people whispering how well I had preached, and they had no doubt I should be a very great preacher; and one of them whispered to another that he was sure I should be a second Gadsby.

O how sweet was this to my old man! How it gratified him to the very heart! Poor fool! I was carried away with pride to such a degree that I blush to write a thousandth part of it. All the way home I was so carried away with my greatness and what I was likely to be, that at times I hardly knew whether I was upon my feet or my head. Sometimes I wondered in what place I should be settled. Surely, thought I, it must be in some great town or other; it will be in London. If I am to be so great a man, and to have so great a work to do, it must be in London; for all the great, thought I, go there, and that, thinks I, will be my place in the end.

I must add one thing more about this accursed pride, how far it carried a poor blind fool. I had thought to have kept it out of sight, for I do confess it is too base to name; but it must come out, base as it is. Before I went again the third time, I actually went to Manchester to see Mr. Mouncey, the acting deacon, with a pretence to tell him that I could not come and preach any more, on purpose to draw it out of him whether he thought I was likely to be a great man.

When I arrived at his warehouse, there was another deacon, a Mr. Holt, with him. They were both very glad to see me, and asked how I was getting on. I told them that I was come to inform them that I could not attempt to speak any more, for that I was such a blind fool that it would be madness in me to attempt it; and that I therefore hoped they would not expect me to come again. And I tried to put on as miserable a dejected countenance as I could while relating my lying cant, and tried with all my might to squeeze out some tears. The two deacons, believing I was an honest lad, and that the devil was tempting me to give up the work, encouraged me to go on, and spoke very freely how well they were satisfied, and how confident they were that God had a work for me to do, and there was no more fear of my going on than of Paul's going on; for they believed that Paul's God was my God, and that He would bring me through. O, thinks I, what! am I likely to be a second Paul, then? But I told them that I was certain they would never speak to me in that way if they knew my unfitness; and sure I am that, if they had known my abominable hypocrisy, they would have kicked me out of the warehouse, and served me right, too. But God knew how to manage me better than they.

One of them said he did not wish to lift me up with pride, but to encourage me. He would say that he had no doubt God had: a great work for me to do. O that word, "a great work to do!" I was blown up by it like a bladder. He said, further, that he durst not but insist on my coming at the time appointed. Many things more they said to me, which suited my old man very well. So, having got such a bundle of food for the old wretch, off I went home and began to think what text I should preach from; for, thinks I, as they have such views of my becoming a great man, they will expect that I shall come with some grand mysterious text. I was safe enough, however, from meddling with any part of God's Word but what I had myself experienced. I tried with all my might to get into some dark text, but in vain. Well, then, thinks I, I will try an old text, one that my soul has been in hundreds of times. I am sure to get on with it, and shall have plenty to say. This was the text: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." {[Ac 19:22](#)} O, thinks I, that is the text!

O how pleased I was in thinking how I could divide it! Such wonderful light and such grand things were brought to my mind, day after day, that I was quite astonished. "O," thinks I, "whatever will they think when I come to preach of these things? They will be quite astonished." And, indeed, it proved so, for they were astonished, but not at my greatness, but at my littleness. The time came and off I went, hoping there would be many people present. The most I could ask God for was that He would incline many to come and hear what I could do, and this but my third time of preaching. When I got there I found the house quite full of people. I gave out a hymn with wonderful zeal and boldness, and then went to prayer, in which I had great liberty. O, thinks I, this will do!

But when I had read my text, such darkness and confusion overwhelmed my soul that I could hardly read the words a second time. I trembled till my knees smote together. For about five or ten minutes I tried to say something, but what I said the Lord knows; I cannot tell a word of it. All my pride and presumption, my hypocrisy and lies, stared me in the face, and stopped my mouth completely. I was forced to confess before all the people that God had stopped my mouth and that I could not speak another word. I dropped on the seat, and verily thought that God would have struck me dead and sent me to hell, as I so richly deserved. There was a profound silence for some time. The people were all astonished, and wondered what it could all mean. Dear Mr. Mouncey, as soon as his feelings would suffer him to speak, said, "The Lord opens, and none can shut; He shuts, and none can open. I have often read it, but never have been an eyewitness of it in such a public manner until now."

He begged of me to try again. "Perhaps," said he, "the Lord may open your mouth to speak, for it is all in His hands." But I assured him that I durst not attempt it, for the Lord had stopped my mouth, and I was determined never to try any more. The dear man concluded with prayer, and I believe it was a time of prayer with him and the people; for I believe there was not a dry cheek in the place. But as for me, I was distracted nearly beyond my senses.

After he had concluded and dismissed the people, I got my hat, being determined to put an end to my existence that very night. I had something else to do now than to wonder where so great a man as I was to be settled. O the miserable journey I had home that night! What with the sight of my most abominable conduct in going to the deacon's house with such lies and devilish hypocrisy, and the dreadful accusations of the devil, I felt confident that I could be nothing but a hardened wretch, whom God had given up to a reprobate mind, and who would soon be proved to be a complete apostate. I was determined to go that very night and try to get on board a man-of-war, and leave wife and children and all. Just before I got home I turned out of the road to go to Liverpool, wringing my hands, sobbing, crying and groaning, till my very soul was in an agony. When I had gone on the Liverpool road about two stone throws these words sounded as loud as if someone had spoken them aloud behind the hedge:-

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

William Cowper (See MERCIES Topic 10)

I stood astonished, and got over the hedge to see if any person was there. Finding no creature there, a hope sprang up. "Who can tell," thought I, "but the Lord will make this plain?" So I concluded to turn back and go home. But before I reached it all my pride, hypocrisy, and lies came afresh to my mind, and such guilt and horror seized my poor soul, that how I staggered into the house I cannot tell. My poor wife, who had been waiting up for me till her patience was worn out, was quite in a rage with me for stopping so long, and asked me what I thought of myself. But this was a question I durst not answer.

She asked me if I called that religion to leave a wife and family and come home at midnight. "And you pretend, too, to be a preacher!" said she. "What can you think of yourself? But you will bring me and the children to the workhouse." For she could see nothing else but that we should all be starved to death, and her fear was

that my end would be in a mad-house. I verily feared and believed that every word she spoke should come to pass. I was completely dumb, and could not answer a word. So she asked me if I had lost my tongue. O the dreadful feelings that overwhelmed me, that I had brought nothing but misery upon my family; that I had distressed the church of God, by running before I was sent; that the uncircumcised would hear of it and say, "Ah! so would we have it!" that I had robbed God of His glory, and that I should be treated as a thief.

O how the conduct of Uzzah, in putting forth his hands to support the ark of God, made me quake and tremble! "Surely," cried I, "I am the man, and God will strike me dead for my presumption in attempting to speak in His Name." O how Achan's case shook me, till my very knees were ready to smite together! He stole the wedge of gold, and brought a curse upon Israel; and to him Joshua said, "Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones." {[Jos 7:25](#)} O how my poor body and soul staggered to and fro! "O," cried I, "the wrath of God is coming down upon me."

No tongue can tell what I underwent night and day for four weeks. Here I was, day after day, sometimes expecting that the judgment of God would fall upon me and my family. Then Balaam and Judas came to my mind. I saw that Judas had a part in the ministry, and went out to preach; yet he had a devil, and was made manifest to be a deceiver; and his end was, that he murdered himself, and went to his own place. Balaam, too, I saw, had his eyes open, and spoke many precious things, and desired to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end might be like his; yet he loved the wages of unrighteousness. "O," cried I, "this is my very character! What shall I do? Whither shall I flee?"

Yet, notwithstanding all these things cut me up in such a manner, the thoughts would rise up about preaching, and this made it ten times worse. And one night (O dreadful night!) I was so distracted with feeling the thoughts of preaching rising up again in my heart, and the guilt of my wretched conduct in acting so hypocritically, and my cursed pride, and all that it had brought upon me, that the devil set upon me, and tempted me to take an oath that I would never more attempt to preach again, and told me that if I would swear never more to attempt to preach again I should never more be troubled with any thoughts about it. O how I trembled, staggered and reeled to and fro, like a drunken man, and was at my wits end. And truly I felt as if my senses were entirely gone; and at last, through the dreadful feelings of my mind, and the fears that if ever I should attempt to preach again the Lord would consume me in a moment, and thinking if I swore an oath it would set it all at rest. I lifted up my hand and said that I never would preach again.

As soon as I had done this, O the horror that fell upon my poor soul and the dreadful roaring of the devil in my heart! "Now it is all over! Now it is all over! You have committed the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost, that can never be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come." O how I sobbed and cried for anguish of soul, and cursed the day wherein I was born! Such awful curses and blasphemies against God boiled up in my heart that made my very hair to move on my head, and my flesh to grow cold, and my lips to quiver. Surely, thought I it is now all over; I am given up to awful apostasy. And I verily feared that I should die blaspheming God, or else go raving mad. And upon the back of this these words thundered into my soul as if they would have sunk me to hell in a moment: "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace! For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." {[Heb 10:26,31](#)}

I saw no more hope of escaping damnation than the devils do. Another text came on the back of that, which finished it all up, and sealed my destruction, in my own view, as if I were there already: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame ... That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Thus my poor soul was tossed from day to day, and from night to night. Sometimes I feared lest the earth should open her mouth and swallow me up. At others I feared that the very houses I went into would fall down and crush me to atoms, and sink me to hell in a moment. I was sometimes sorely tried to put an end to my wretched life, and try the worst of it; and sure I am that nothing but the power of God can keep a poor soul from self-murder under such distressing things as these. But, blessed be the Lord, He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; for instead of suffering me to plunge myself into self-murder, He gave me a heart to cry mightily unto Him, with groans, cries and tears that He would in tender mercy

once more remember the vilest of the vile. O how my poor soul wrestled with my God for another manifestation that He was mine! And how gloriously did He appear, and how blessedly did He deliver my poor soul from hell with these blessed words, which came with such light, life, power and unction, as broke every fetter, and every devil fled at the majesty and power of His voice: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." O blessed voice! powerful voice! Here again I proved that "where the word of a king is there is power."

For no sooner were the words heard and felt than all my misery, guilt and torment fled away like a cloud, and the Lord opened to my wondering eyes the glories of His covenant love and mercy that had been fixed upon me from everlasting; and that all my cares, miseries, foolishness, pride and cursed abominations had been laid upon my dear Elder Brother, Jesus; and that He had borne all my griefs, and carried all my sorrows, that the chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and that by His stripes I was healed. O what joy and peace did I feel! and what love I had to my dear Redeemer, who had rescued my poor soul from the lion's mouth!

I was just like a bird let loose from the fowler's snare. "The snare was broken and I escaped." O how I hated myself for my abominable conduct! But God knows how to bring down the pride of the heart, as well as to exalt the lowly. O the blessing that trial has proved to me hundreds of times since! It has been a really useful lesson, which has never been forgotten. My soul was now walking at large in free access to God, and in sweet communion and fellowship with Him. His people, His cause, and His honour lay near my heart, and my very soul lay passive in His hands, and I was willing to be anything or nothing that He might be glorified. O how I dreaded the thought of being left to myself, worse than a burnt child dreads the fire. I durst not stir a step without a "Thus saith the Lord." I began to fear that I had never had a real testimony from God that He had called me to the work of the ministry; and. I durst not think of attempting it again, except He would be so kind as to give me a manifestation that He had called me to the work. And, bless His dear Name, text upon text came home to my soul with such light, life, liberty, and power, that I believed in my very heart that if I were to hold my peace the very stones would cry out. Here I was led to God in prayer, that if I was sent of Him, He would open a way for me, that what I had received in secret I might declare upon the house-tops; for my soul cried all the day long, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." {[Ps 66:16](#)} O how wonderfully the dear Lord answered my poor cries!

A few days after this some friends at Bury, in Lancashire, with whom I had been in sweet union for a few years, agreed to take a room for prayer, and came to invite

me to meet with them. I did so; and on the first Lord's day that we assembled together we carried on the meeting with singing and prayer. But on the second Lord's day they invited me to give them a few words of exhortation, and would take no denial, which I therefore did. But I got up with such fear and trembling lest the Lord should stop my mouth, that my knees were so weak that I thought I must have dropped down.

The Lord, however, opened my mouth, and favoured me with liberty in speaking; and such life and sweetness flowed into my soul that I was astonished, and the few who were there expressed themselves to be refreshed. If I remember rightly, we were about seven or eight in number, and all exclaimed that the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. Here my soul was kept for a time in real humility, meekness and quiet, as a child at His feet, begging of Him from my very heart that He would never more suffer the devil and my own evil nature to bloat me up with cursed pride, so as to attempt ever again to rob Him of His glory. But the devil started a fresh thing to my mind, which was a sore trial indeed, that I had never had a real evidence "that I had the power of the Spirit upon me to anoint me to preach the Gospel.

Here, then, I began to search, and to try to find if ever I had received any Scripture testimony that I had the Spirit; for I was confident that unless the Spirit had set me apart for the work it would all come to nothing, and that it would be proved after all that I had run before I was sent, and I knew that if that were the case all would end in the flesh. O how my poor soul went out to God in cries and tears! O, dear Spirit, art Thou with me? O Holy Comforter, hast Thou anointed me to preach the Gospel? Dear Interpreter, do show me! Here I was for between three and four weeks, searching, groaning, crying and longing that God would satisfy me that He had set me apart for the ministry. The few persons to whom I had spoken in the room had all testified that God had sent me to the work; but that did not satisfy me. I wanted it from God's own mouth, and therefore my cry was unto Him; but there was no answer, neither night nor day for several weeks.

This brought me to fear that God had never sent me. And how to go and preach until I was satisfied I could not tell; for I trembled lest I should run before I was sent; and the fear that God would stop my mouth again made me to shake like a leaf. I told the few people again and again that I must give it up, for I was afraid that I had never been sent, and that the Lord would stop my mouth. But they insisted upon it that come I must, and declared that if I did not come I should be fighting against God. This put me to a stand again, and what to do I could not tell. Sometimes I thought that the people's voice was perhaps the will of God, and that I

ought to obey it. Then again I thought, "Poor dear things, they are quite deceived in me, for they do not know but that I have the Spirit;" and I felt determined I would not go until I was satisfied I had the Spirit.

When the Lord's day morning came, O what workings of mind I had! O the dreadful darkness that overwhelmed me that I could neither see nor feel that I was either called to the ministry or even to be a Christian.

I began to fear whether the work of grace was really begun in my heart or not. O the confusion and misery I had from three o'clock in the morning until the time came for me to go. Such was my confusion, that I went out without my hat, and my wife came running after me and called out to know where I was going. I told her to Bury. "You had better," said she, "put on your hat." How far I should have gone without it I know not, for I was in such confusion that I feared my senses were going. No text; the Bible a sealed book; no answer to prayer; and the devil roaring, "Pursue him, take him, for God has left him. Today you will be made manifest what you are, both to the people of God and to the world." And what added to my misery, he brought up all my former hypocritical sways and cursed pride, and told me that the time was now come when God would make me a spectacle to men and devils. "O," cried I, wringing my hands in the fields on my way, "would to God that I had never been born! O that I had never attempted to preach! What shall I do? whither shall I go?"

Sometimes I stood still and thought of turning back. Then on again I went, begging and crying to the Lord that He would find me a text. But all was dark as darkness itself. Then, cried I, "how is it possible that God has sent me, or will be with me, when He has entirely left me and forsaken me?" Then I stood still. "Surely," thinks I, "I must turn back, and determine to give it up; for if I go, and have nothing to say, the people will call me a thousand fools for coming without a message from God, and wonder that I should be guilty of such horrid presumption." So I turned back, wringing my hands, sobbing and crying, "O that I had never been born!" I had not gone back more than three hundred yards, when this text met me like a sword, and sounded in my soul like a trumpet, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." O it fetched me down to the earth, both body and soul, in a moment! "O Lord," cried I, trembling, "it is hard that I must go neither backward nor forward.

O that it would please Thee to show me what I must do. Thou knowest that my heart's desire is to do Thy will. Lord, what is it that Thou wouldst have me to do? O Lord, do show me; do lead me." But nothing could I get but, "No man looking

back is fit for the kingdom of God." Then I felt a resignation to fall into the hands of God, and went forward, telling the Lord to do with me as seemed good in His sight; and, if He had not sent me, to keep me shut up that the people might be satisfied that the Lord had not sent me. When I arrived there, the time being up, I began the service, but had no text. And O what a trembling time I had in prayer! But near the close of it I felt a submission to fall into the hands of God; and whilst they were singing before the sermon, O how my very soul went out to God to find me a text and open my mouth, and then I should know of a truth that He had sent me, and believed if He would answer me, I should never doubt again.

Just before they concluded singing, these words came with such light, life, power and sweetness, as overpowered my soul with joy and comfort. I got up and read them as my text; "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." {[Isa 41:17](#)} The dear Lord opened my heart and my mouth too. I felt a springing up of matter in my heart, and my tongue unloosed to speak it with such sweetness and liberty, that I was quite astonished to feel it flow so freely into my soul and out of my mouth. The few souls who were there and who knew the truth, about nine or ten in number, sat under it with great delight, and its fruit was sweet to their taste. Their very souls were alive, and their mouths spoke forth His praise, particularly one old traveler, poor old John Crompton, who had known the truth for about forty years, and had come that morning about nine miles. Poor dear old soul!

When I had concluded, he took hold of my hand, with the tears falling down his poor old cheeks, and his countenance shining with the holy anointing, and said, "May the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless thee! God has thrust thee out into His vineyard, and has sent thee to preach His everlasting gospel. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Thou art young, and hast many fiery trials to pass through; but God has not sent thee a warfare at thine own charges. Fear not, for He will be with thee, and I am confident He will bring thee through them all." O what strength and encouragement did this communicate to my heart!

My soul was wonderfully strengthened in the Lord my God, and I believed in my heart that He was with me. I went home at night much refreshed, and could praise and bless His dear Name for His mercy and goodness in going before me in the way. But the next day in comes the devil again with his old plea-that I had not the Spirit. "And what," says he, "is all the testimony of men if you have not the Spirit?" I began to feel a little sinking of mind, and to fear that I should be deceived, and rest satisfied without having the Spirit. So I had an errand again to

God; and truly it was a wrestling time indeed, as night and day I was crying out in my heart, "O dear Spirit! hast Thou anointed me to preach the Gospel? Hast Thou come upon me for this very work? Is it Thy dear pleasure that I should preach? and wilt Thou be with me, and wilt Thou accompany Thy Word with power?"

Here my soul was kept wrestling for a day and a night. The second day I was so overcome with earnestness in prayer, that I was obliged to leave my work, and go into my bedroom, and take my Bible, and kneeling down before my God, with it shut, wrestled with Him till body and soul were in an agony, that He would be pleased to grant that I might open the Bible, and that the first words I met with might decide the matter, whether or not. So at last I opened the Bible, and the first words I saw were, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." {[Lu 11:13](#)}

O the power, the glory, the majesty, the sweetness and goodness of God the Holy Ghost that shined in me and overwhelmed me, was such that I can never find words to express; for it beggars all language to describe. I had just power to crawl on the bed, and there I lay for a time, and had neither power to move or speak for the blaze of glory that shined in me and upon me. O how my poor soul was liberated! The old lying devil fled away. and left the dear Comforter and my soul together. The whole Bible appeared as if it were opened up to my soul. What beauties I saw in the covenant of grace! What wonders I beheld in the glorious doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three distinct Persons in one God! How clearly did I see God the Father in His stripping, emptying, and condemning me as a sinner by His righteous law! How I was astonished at the great condescension of God the Son in taking my nature into union with His Divine Person, humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that such a wretch as I might be saved with an everlasting salvation. O the wonderful glory I saw in God the Holy Ghost as my dear Comforter, whose prerogative it is to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to the soul! I was a living witness that none could call Christ Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

Here my soul was kept for some time with sweetness, humility, softness and meekness; and the precious Bible was so dear to my soul that I found it to be indeed a "light to my path and a lamp to my feet." O the glory and beauty which my soul beheld in the church being chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost! How my heart burned with zeal to God and His cause! Truly I was willing to be anything or nothing that God might be glorified.

For a time things went on comfortably, and I fully believed that all was right and straight respecting my call to the ministry, and that the devil was so completely silenced that it was out of his power to bring anything more to upset me. But, alas! alas! this was not the case; for after I had had a few weeks rest he comes with a fresh thing, and tells me that opening the Bible as I did, and fixing my eyes upon the first text was all chance work, and that I might as well have chanced to fix my eyes upon some other words as those; so that could be nothing to depend upon that it was from God. "For," said he, "you never had a text that came with power to your mind, just suited to your case, that you had never read, heard, seen, or opened upon. Now, if God has indeed called you to the work, why did He not send some text into your soul that you never heard of, nor knew to be in the Bible?"

Surely the Lord is able to do so; and, if you were one that He has thrust out into His vineyard, you would have had it before now." Well, thinks I, perhaps it might have been chance, and I may have been deceived; it might have happened to another who had opened the Bible in the same way; surely the Lord is able to send me a text that I never saw or read in the Bible. My soul had now a fresh errand to the Throne of grace, that God would send me a text with power, that I never knew was in the Bible, just pointed to my case. So on I went, crying from day to day, "Lord, make it manifest in my soul that Thou hast sent me to preach the gospel, by sending into my heart with power some precious text that I never knew was in the Bible, and then I shall be satisfied that Thou hast sent me, and art my God." God, however, appeared to take no notice of me, and here I went on from day to day constantly crying for it, and God denying me it; till at last I began to fear that I must be deceived, and that God had never sent me to the work. Then all my old fears came upon me again, like an army, that I had run before I had been sent, and that God would make it manifest after all what I was.

One night, after the family had gone to bed, such a wrestling spirit of prayer came upon me, that I could not rest, and I told the Lord that I could neither go to bed nor hold my peace until He had satisfied me whether He had sent me to preach or not. And truly it was the case, for such a spirit of prayer came upon me, and text upon text so flowed into my soul to encourage me to "ask, and it shall be given," that I went down upon my knees, and there I had such a wrestling with cries and tears, that some of my clothes were quite wet with the tears that flowed from my poor eyes. At last I looked up unto the Lord, just like a child, and said in the simplicity of my heart, "Lord, am I Thy child? Art Thou my Father?"

Wilt Thou not be angry with me for asking Thee to grant me my petition? If it displease Thee, I will not ask it any more? for my will is Thy will." The answer

was, with a smile, "Ask, and it shall be given thee." "Well," cried I, like a child, "blessed be Thy precious Name, that Thou art not angry with such a poor worm, that am but dust and ashes. If it please Thy blessed Majesty to condescend to hearken to my poor petition, and to grant me my request, my petition and request is, that Thou wilt send me a precious text of Scripture, which I have never heard, nor read, nor know to be in the Bible, with such power and holy anointing into my poor cast-down soul, as to raise me up to the blessed confidence that Thou hast sent me to preach, and bring with it a blessed testimony that Thou art with me."

While I was thus in simplicity opening my very heart and soul to the Lord, these words sounded both in my ears and in my heart, in such a manner as if the whole earth heard them as well as myself: "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thine horn iron, and thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." O, what I felt under it I can never describe! I was confident that the words were in the Bible, from the power I felt from them and the glory that followed them; for such light and glory came with them, and such humility, meekness and confidence were produced by them, and such a complete sweeping away of the devil, with all his "buts," "ifs," and "hows," that I was confident that none but God could do it.

The words, I was confident, I had never heard or seen before, and every word came with such power as if it had been printed in my heart by the finger of God. I appealed to the devil, and asked him if I had ever heard or known these words before; but, poor wretch, he was silent enough. And my poor soul was so full of love and wonder at the amazing goodness, condescension and grace of my covenant God, that for days together I hardly knew what I was about; but at every opportunity, I could get, I was searching the Scriptures to see if I could find out the words. At this time I had only a very small Concordance, so that I could not find them by it.

At last I came to the prophecy of Micah, and was wonderfully delighted in reading the fourth chapter, till I came to the last words, and there I lighted upon the very words that had come to my mind, word for word. I felt as if my soul would have split my body asunder with the feeling I had of love, praise, adoration and thanksgiving to the dear Name of my dear Lord. O how precious did the words sound again in my soul, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion!" O the delight and joy I found for some time in the blessed word of the Lord! It was my meat and drink to read it and pray over it. I felt confident that the Lord was with me, and that all was right; though at the same time I could not tell from day to day how we were

to get through the difficulties we had to grapple with. But I was confident that the Lord would be with me, and bring me through to the honour of His Name.

But the devil started another thing which tried me sore-that I had never had any real proof that any one soul had been brought out of bondage into happy liberty through me; and how could I ever prove that God had sent me into the vineyard! "For," said he, "whomsoever God sends with a message of salvation He blesses that message to the deliverance of poor captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, and the declaring of the acceptable year of the Lord."

Well, thought I, this is truth; for, if God has truly sent me, He will bless me, as His mouth, in the deliverance of poor souls from the bondage and curse of the law. But the devil could not sink me down so low as he had done before, for these precious words came again, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion!" and they so encouraged me that I was enabled to look to and hope in the Lord for the fulfilling of them in God's own time; and I firmly believed that the Lord would make it manifest in His own season. And here I was kept, praying, watching and hoping for a long time.

By and by I was invited to supply at a little chapel in Liverpool-in Matthew Street, if I recollect right. Upon one particular time when I was there, I was led out in a very sweet manner in meditation upon these words, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." {[Ro 8:38-39](#)} O, thinks I, what a time I shall have! I hope there will be the chapel full. But when the time came, and I read my text, I was so shut up and such darkness and confusion overwhelmed me, that I could not tell what to do. All the sweet things that had so pleased me were fled away. I had hard stammering to keep on speaking that God had always loved His own, and that neither sin nor the devil could ever separate them from His love. I kept repeating it for about twenty-five minutes, and then gave it up all at once, and said, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." As soon as ever I could get down out of the pulpit I took my hat, and through the chapel I went as hard as ever I was able, and was determined to take the first coach in the morning and go home, for I verily believed that if ever I were to show my face again there the people would cry open shame upon me.

As soon as I got out of the chapel I went with all the haste I could to my lodging, afraid to look at anybody, or that anybody should look at me; calling myself a thousand fools for ever coming to the place, and wishing that I had never opened

my mouth, for I thought it was now plain and evident that the Lord had left me. Thus I went on, out of one street into another; but I observed that a woman kept close after me for some time, which I could not make out. I tried to evade her, but could not. At last she stepped up to me and said, "Pray, sir, are not you the minister that has been preaching in Matthew Street Chapel tonight?"

I verily thought the woman had followed me when she spoke of my preaching, to reprove me for my presumption in attempting to preach. I told her, but so crossly that I could hardly bear myself, that I was the man who had been in the pulpit, and attempted it, but that there had been no preaching. On this the poor woman fell into a flood of tears, and hoped that I would pardon her for taking the liberty to speak to me, for she was not worthy; but she could not help following me to tell me that she had reason to bless God that she had been there, for it had been preaching to her, and such preaching, too, as she had never heard before. At this my soul was melted within me, and I asked her what it was she had heard that was so sweet to her.

She spoke with such sweetness, humility and confidence, that she had received the pardon of all her sins. "For," continued she, "I have been for months nearly in black despair, and was going this very night to the water to drown myself, being determined to try the worst of it, for I believed I could never be in a worse hell.

As I was going by the chapel they were singing, and it struck my mind to turn in. When the service was concluded I thought it would be dark, and then I could go to the water unperceived. So I went in, and, blessed be the Lord, the text and all that you said came into my heart, and God told me He had loved me with an everlasting love, and that my sins, though many, were all forgiven; and many more precious things which quite overcame me with wonder and adoration to the God of all my mercies."

My heart was too full to talk much with the poor woman, for I felt my very soul so melted down at the dear feet of a precious Jesus for giving testimony to the word of His grace through such a worthless pipe, that I was not for going home now, but was willing to be anything or nothing that God might be glorified. And O how sweetly the old text came, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion!" What a sweet night I had in meditating upon the Word of God. Promise upon promise flowed in so fast that it appeared to me the whole Bible was full of them. O how sweet and precious were these words of Paul: "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." {[1Co 1:21](#)} "Well," cried I, "and why should it displease me?" Then O what blessed confidence I had that God had sent me to the work; and now I had a full testimony, and I really believed it was out of the

power of the devil ever to shake my confidence again. My soul was for a time kept in sweet confidence that God was with me, and would ever go before me, though in such trials in temporal things that I did not know how to get bread from day to day.

But when God gives peace, who or what can give trouble? The Lord went on to give testimony to the word of His grace from my poor mouth, and made it manifest that He was with me by signs following. This was establishing and comforting to my soul, for I verily believe that if God had not owned my poor labours in delivering souls from bondage into liberty, I must have given it all up. But the Lord saith, "A true witness delivereth souls." {[Pr 14:25](#)}

I shall now proceed to relate a few providential trials and deliverances which have happened to me since I was called to the work of the ministry, which have driven me to such despair at times that I have often said, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." {[Job 7:15](#)} But when deliverance has come, it has been a fresh song of praise to God, and I have seen it all right, and would not have been without them for all that the world calls good or great. The Lord knows how to secure the glory to Himself.

Bury was the first place where I began to preach in the regular way; and, after a few months, the people increased, if I recollect rightly, to about thirty. We then agreed to take a larger room in a street called, I think, King Street. There we met for some time, still continuing to increase a little. And then they engaged to give me four shillings per week for twelve months. We had at that time six children under twelve years of age, and being nothing but a weaver, I was sometimes driven into such straits and trials that I verily believed my end would be the poor-house; indeed, I could not see how it could be possible for us to escape it. When I had not the sweet presence of God shining in my soul, I was sunk into fears that I should never be able to hold on my sway without bringing a reproach upon the cause of God. For several weeks I seemed to be going into a decline, for what with preaching, hard work and faring so hard that sometimes for days together I had not half enough to satisfy sinking nature, I was brought so low that I could scarce crawl about; but I was forced to attend to the work as well as I could.

One morning, I well recollect, I had been up very early, trying to get my work finished as soon as I could, for there was not one morsel to have until I had carried it home. Between eleven and twelve o'clock I had to send a girl to fetch me some yarn from the master's to finish with. My wife, having a child at the breast, burst out into tears, and said, "O dear, I am so faint and weak that I cannot live, for you

cannot get the piece in before dinner, and it will be nearly night before we can have anything!" I tried to cheer her up all that I could, and told her we could not tell but that the Lord might send us a good dinner by some means or other; but she said she knew there would be no such thing. The girl comes by and by with the yarn to finish my work, and brings a bag in her hand, saying, " I found this bag in the middle of the road; I thought it belonged to a man who was driving a cart, and I called out to him, and told him that he had lost a bag; but he said he had not.

I said it was not mine, for I had found it in the road; and I would have given it him, but he said I must take it home, for he should not have it." So I opened the bag, and the first thing I brought out was a large piece of bread and of meat, next a large piece of cheese, and a very good pudding. O how I stood wondering and adoring, blessing and praising the kind hand of my covenant God for supplying my needs in such a way! O how sweet were those words, "The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine; the earth is Mine; and all the gold and silver are Mine!" And, upon the back of it, how sweet did that promise flow into my soul, "Thy bread shall be given thee; thy water shall be sure." {[Isa 33:16](#)} Here I saw that the Lord had all in His hands, both in heaven and on earth-angels, men and devils; and my soul kept hanging upon Him from week to week.

A little time after this I was invited to preach one Lord's day at a little place in Cheshire, of which I forget the name, but which was about twelve or thirteen miles from home. I left home on the Saturday in a most miserable state of mind, for not one penny of money or one six-pennyworth of provisions did I leave in the house. There was nothing but gloominess, poverty and darkness, both within and without. My wife declared that she believed I should go on preaching until they were all starved to death. But go I must; and off I set with an aching heart indeed; and a most trying, miserable journey I had, for the devil set on me hard without mercy, and brought all my debts and miseries and set them before me, and the impossibility of my ever being able to get through them with honesty. And such unbelief and darkness, confusion and misery, laid fast hold of me, and such weakness of body for want of something to eat, that I feared I should never reach the end of my journey. But the dear Lord broke into my soul with such sweetness, that I could have died for Him.

He assured me that He would be with me, and would surely go before me and bring up the rearward. "Fear not," said He, "for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." O this was enough! for I knew that it would be all right if He were with me. O how easy and pleasant it was to feel His kind hand sustaining me, for I felt in my very soul that He cared for me. With what ease and pleasure could I

leave my family in His hands, and I felt a sweet confidence that He would incline the hearts of His people to communicate to my necessities, which I proved to be the case in a wonderful manner.

I arrived safe at my journey's end, and a sweet night I had upon my bed in wondering, praising and blessing my God for His lovingkindness in bringing me, a poor worm, thus far. I could indeed say from my heart feelingly, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." {[Ac 26:22](#)} I awoke in the morning (being Lord's day) in a very sweet frame, and at the time went to the place of meeting, which was a house that a few people met in for public worship. There were but few there, and they but very poor people in general, but the Lord was there with His blessing, which "maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it."

A comfortable day it was, and I do think the best wine was saved to the last, for the poor souls seemed to be all alive, and having so freely received of spiritual things, they thought it a light thing to communicate carnal things. Some gave me sixpence, some a shilling, some one thing and some another, until I was quite astonished. In the morning (Monday) a young woman at the house where I slept, gave me half-a-guinea, and said that she had made up her mind to do so, and that I must have it. And I was to call at two or three places on my way home, and there the poor things had collected their shillings and sixpences together, and a handkerchief full of cakes to carry home to the children. I declared that I would go home, for I had robbed them enough.

When I got on my way, I stopped to count up the money which the Lord had provided, and, as nearly as I can recollect, I had thirty-four shillings in all, and a bundle of cakes. So on I went home full of joy, thanksgiving and praise to the God of all my supplies, who had given such testimony to the word of His grace, and had so wonderfully supplied my wants and necessities for the body. All was right both at home and abroad. "Surely," exclaimed my soul, "I can never forget His tender mercies and loving-kindness to one so vile and unworthy of the least of all His mercies."

But I soon found again that the day of adversity was set over against the day of prosperity, and that there is sure to be night after the day. For I soon had fresh exercises. One Saturday I was all confusion, for I could not get a text, and I had to supply on the Lord's day for Mr. Gadsby. O, thinks I, what shall I do, and where can I go? And such abominations were working in my heart all day that I began to fear whether I was a partaker of grace or not.

To finish up my misery, late on Saturday night I received a note from a man to whom I had owed for some time two pounds ten shillings, that if I did not come and pay it on the Monday following, he would not wait any longer, and that it would be in vain for me to come and beg for any longer time. O how my poor soul and body shook and trembled! Now, thinks I, God is bringing me to a complete end; now will the mouths of the uncircumcised be opened: "Ah so would we have it." And how these words came into my soul like a thunderbolt, "The thing that I greatly feared is come upon me."

O what a tremendous night I had to pass through, sometimes almost in despair! But before morning the Lord gave me a hope that He would appear, and how sweet were these words: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." {[Ps 50:15](#)} Indeed, I had nowhere else to look but unto Him who had the hearts of all in His hands. I left home on the Lord's day morning for Manchester, which was about five miles; and I believe if ever I did pray in all my life, I prayed those five miles that God would appear for me that day, both as a God of providence and of grace. When I began to preach the two pounds ten shillings were all taken away, and I do believe that the Lord was with me.

But when I had done preaching the devil came again with all his accusations that I should bring a reproach upon the cause of God. "And did not I know," said he, "what I had to pay tomorrow, and that I had nothing towards it?" I could not answer him a word, but shook like a leaf, and wished I had never come. O how I sighed and groaned in my very soul! As I was going out of the chapel, an old lady put out her hand to shake hands and left half-a-guinea in my hand. O what a surprise was this to me! O, thinks I, who can tell but God may put it into the hearts of whom He will to give me the rest. O how my poor soul poured itself out to Him that He would go before me and provide what He knew I was in need of, that I might have another testimony that He was with me, that He was my God, and that I, a poor worm, was His servant. I had such an opening up to Him, and such a prevailing with Him in prayer, that I believed He heard and would answer my cry.

The time arrived for me to preach in the afternoon, and I felt it good to speak of what I had handled and felt of the good Word of life. But when I had done my old fears came again, How could the two pounds ten shillings be made up? Into the vestry I went trembling, and found the old lady who had given me the half-guinea in the morning. She shook hands with me and said, "Sir, when I got, home my heart smote me, as David's heart smote him."

At this I trembled greatly. Surely, thinks I, she is come for the half-guinea back again. What shall I do? But instead of this the old lady said, "My heart smote me because I did not give you more; but now I have brought my pocketbook with me, and I will give you two pounds more." At which I burst out into a flood of tears, for I could not help it. At this the poor old lady was much surprised, and asked me what was the matter. I told her that I had a note sent me on Saturday night from a person to whom I owed two pounds ten shillings, and if I did not come and pay him on Monday, he would put me to trouble. "And now, to see that the Lord has put it into your heart to give me the money and sixpence over, it breaks my soul in love to God as the giver, and to you as the instrument."

At this the old lady burst into tears too, and we both wept together for joy. "O," said she, "it is better to give than to receive." But I could not think it was, for I was so full of the goodness, mercy, kindness, faithfulness and glory of God to such a poor worthless worm, that I was quite full and abounded. There was no room for any one thing more. I think I shall never forget the poor old lady's feelings when she emptied all her money out of her pocketbook (which appeared to be about ten or twelve pound notes) upon the table, and with such earnestness, and tears running down her cheeks declared, "It is all yours; you shall have it all." "O no," cried I, "God forbid that I should do this thing. He has put it into your heart to give me the debt, and sixpence over, and I dare not take one penny more, and will not. It is not mine. What God moved you to give me is mine, but the rest is yours." She blessed me and I blessed her, so that there was nothing but blessing between us. She blessed God that He had ever put it into her heart to relieve a servant of His in distress, and I blessed God in my soul that I had received.

So the giver and the receiver blessed the Lord together, and He had all the glory. O how sweet was that text when I came out of the vestry: "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." O what a night of comfort and joy did I pass through in viewing the glories of my covenant God, both in providence and grace, to one so very unworthy. And how I hated myself for my wretched distrust of Him who had so often appeared in such wonderful ways for me, and had ever been my present help in all my times of trouble! O how I wanted the morning to come, that I might go and pay the man what I owed him, which was a greater pleasure for me to do than for him to receive it. The friends gave me a pound for supplying on the Lord's day, so that I went home with money to pay my debt and money for my family to live upon.

O the goodness and mercy of a covenant God in delivering His poor, tried children in such times of great distress, when there is no human eye to pity nor arm to help!

O how my poor soul entered into those blessed words, "I will bring the blind by a way that 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." How delightfully could I sing, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all my life long." "His mercies are new every morning; great is His faithfulness." "O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee." I went on pretty comfortably for a few weeks, enjoying the presence of God; and all is well when this is the case.

For it was a rare thing indeed for me to be out of temporal difficulties; for having a large family, and being nothing but a poor weaver, and getting but four shillings per week for my regular preaching at Bury, it was seldom anything else but debts, miseries, and trials of all sorts, except at those times when the presence of my God and Saviour shone into my heart and made bare His arm in delivering and providing in His wonderful providence. At those times and seasons I envied no man upon earth, and would not have one thing altered. I could see, at such times, that it was a right way to a city of habitation, and could sing with pleasure,

"My Jesus hath done all things well."

But I have ever found one text of Scripture to be truth: "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call upon My Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." One instance just strikes my mind.

One evening I had been out preaching about seven miles from home, and when I was returning, it being late before I reached home, O what a keen feeling of hunger came upon me before I got there. And what was my greatest distress, I knew there was nothing to eat when I got home. O the dreadful feelings and hard thoughts which rose up in my mind against God! I dare neither speak nor write them. O the dreadful rebellion I felt against His dealing so hardly with me, that when I was hungry I could not have even bread and water! "Ah," cried the old adversary, "where are your fine promises now that you have so often boasted of- "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure?"

Just as I entered the house these words struck my mind: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." O what a sight had I of the sufferings of my dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and what He endured in this vale of tears, from the cradle to the cross, for such a

wretch as I! And how it sounded in my heart, "And did my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?" How I blushed and was ashamed at my wretched feelings and rebellions! I did not know where to hide my guilty face. "O," cried I, "what are my sufferings of hunger compared with Thy bloody sweat in the garden for such a monster as I?"

How I looked upon Him, and what a godly mourning I had over my sins and over Him! And how I begged that He would forgive me; and the hatefulness I had against myself for my sins no tongue can tell! "O," cried I, "how could I be so base as to have such hard thoughts of Thee who has blessed me with so many mercies?" How sweet were these words, "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." What wonders did I see in all the goodness that God had caused to pass before me in my way up to that very moment! My little empty house was a palace now in my eyes, full of all sorts of riches. I suppose that it was rather late in the evening when I reached home, for my wife and children were all in bed and fast asleep, for which I was thankful, as I wanted to enjoy the sweet company of my dear Lord, for it was heaven upon earth to my soul to be with Jesus.

By and by I found my poor body very weak, and I took the candle and went to search if I could find an old crust of bread. After some little searching I found an old crust which had been laid aside a long time, until it was quite hard and not fit for food. I then got a cup of water, and if ever my soul went out to God in prayer it was then, that He would bless it to the satisfying of my hungry appetite. And how sweet it came into my mind that Jesus turned water into wine at the marriage feast. And I believed in my heart that He was the same yesterday, today, and for ever. I looked up to Him just like a child, and begged of Him that He would bless this morsel of bread and water, that I might prove that He was the Lord my God. O how precious were those words to my soul. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How I was overcome, and blessed, and praised, and thanked His dear Majesty that He had blessed the rich food that I was about to eat. O how my soul did thank Him for it. I took the dry crust, but it was so softened and enriched with the love and mercy of God that the manna never tasted more sweet to the Israelites than the old crust did to my taste. I blessed and thanked God, and took the water, and it was richer to my taste than the richest wine I have ever drunk since. I never felt my body more refreshed, nor my appetite more satisfied: I had everything needful and abounded. My soul again entered into that text, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

O the preciousness of having the presence of a covenant God enjoyed in our hearts by precious faith! Truly when God gives peace who can give trouble? But the good Shepherd saith, "The sheep shall go in and out, and find pasture;" and this I have ever found to be the case, for I had fresh trials coming on which I did not expect.

As we had been increasing in the second room that we met in at Bury, we were encouraged after a time to take a third room, still larger, if I remember rightly, in a place called Butcher Lane. Here we for a time increased still more. But a few of the church found much fault with me for leaving them so often on a Lord's day; and one of the deacons told me that I had never been anything but a burden to them, and that he wondered how I could have a good conscience in taking four shillings a week from such a few poor people. O how this cut up my poor soul! for at the same time I was over head and ears in debt, and sometimes when I left home I had not half enough for breakfast from week to week. When unbelief and carnal reason were ~uppermost I was almost at my wits' end to know what to do. I felt this a hard blow from a deacon, who professed by his office to be my right-hand man. The blow was so heavy that I could not stand it, and I told him that, as that was the case, I would not be a burden to them any longer. We had several meetings, but we could not be reconciled. So I gave it up, and the place was kept on for some time with supplies, but was soon given up.

I believe that I shall ever remember with a grateful heart dear Mr. Gadsby {4} and the dear church of which I composed an unworthy part, for their unbounded kindness towards me whenever they knew that I was set fast and could not move on. Their language was, with a smile, "John has got fast again: come, we must give him another lift." And cheerfully they communicated again and again. I never found them slack or tired; but have wondered at them hundreds of times how it was they were not tired of such a troublesome being as I was to them for years. They did indeed act like brethren in my distresses.

About this time I was invited to go and preach at Pool Moor, in Yorkshire, and I believe the Lord went with me, and blessed the word to many of them. My very soul fell in love with the people and the chapel, though it stood almost in the midst of a large common. Indeed, I was so taken up with the people and the place that I thought I must die if the Lord would not grant me the situation. I thought that it was just the very spot that God had designed for me, and believed it was the case, because my heart was so knit to it.

At that time the people were without a pastor, and many of them were very fond of me. "O," said I, "it will come to pass in the Lord's own time;" for I was sure that

there was nothing impossible with Him, seeing that He had so many times answered my prayers, and had never failed me in all my straits, but had ever been my prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. So I set to work with all my might to pray for the place. For, thinks I, the Lord says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name it shall be given;" and, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." I could bring in plenty of Scriptures if I could but persuade the Lord to perform it in the way that I wanted. And I thought there was no other way but to keep on crying for it night and day; for, thinks I, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

I went several times to supply at this chapel, and every time I went I was more and more in love with the situation. O, thinks I, it is just the very spot for my large family. So again I cried and prayed from week to week; and, to my views at that time, I had such assurances from the Word of God and my own feelings, that I believed at times I was as sure to have it as that there was a God. They had, if I recollect right, Mr. Webster, from Liverpool, to supply a few times, and most of the people were very much attached to him; and, as the time drew on, as I understood that the church intended to give him a call, and some of them expected that it would be done before I came again, they did not, therefore, expect that I should be needed any more after my next journey.

But I did not feel much sunk down at this, for I thought that they did not know how many cries and tears I had put up to God. The next Lord's day for my supply was, I think, three weeks from this time, and some of the people hoped it would be my last. And, O, what a three weeks cry I had! It was almost night and day. I shall never forget, at times, when the Saturday came for me to go, what a journey I had of about twenty-two miles. I verily believed, according to my feelings, if it were settled for Mr. Webster to be their pastor that it would kill me. I arrived in the evening at the house of one of the members, about a mile short of my lodging, and as soon as I got in: "Well, by this time," said I, "I suppose you are settled with a minister, so that I shall not need to toil over any more?" "Why," answers the man, "it was settled for Mr. Webster to come; some of us indeed did not wish it, but numbers overpowered us, and we must submit."

O, I thought I must have dropped down in the house! I got my hat, and told the man that I must go. He tried hard to keep me in the house to sit and talk with him; but O no! for if I had not gone out I must have roared out in the house. So out I went, and got into a little valley between two hills, where I believed no soul could hear me, and there I roared out like a raging bear bereaved of her whelps: nay, I had hard

work to keep from tearing the very hair from my head. I roared and wept while I had power to weep.

Then the devil set on with all his hellish spleen, and worked up such infidelity in my heart that I never can express a thousandth part of it. "Now," says he, "what do you think of the Bible? Do you think it is true? Have you not prayed for this place hundreds of times, and have not floods of tears flowed from your eyes for it? And does not this Bible say, "He that soweth in tears shall reap in joy?" but you have sowed in tears and reap in sorrow. And does not the Bible tell you that whatsoever you asked it should be given you? but you have asked, and you believed that you should have the place, and have been denied. There is no God, and the Bible is nothing but priestcraft, and all your preaching and religion is nothing but an empty farce." I roared out again, "O that I could but die! O that I could but sink out of existence!"

And such hatred and such awful blasphemies rose up in my heart against God that I felt that, if it were possible, I could have pulled Him from His throne and stamped Him under my feet. O how I struggled till the sweat ran down my wretched face to keep my mouth from uttering what boiled up in my heart! At last I got to my lodging, but could not sit down, for I was in such a state that I could hardly speak, and my face was foul with weeping. I desired the mistress to give me a candle, and said I would go to bed, for I was very bad. She tried to persuade me all she could that I would let her make something for me that would do me good, but I told her that I wanted nothing but rest; so I took the candle and into my bedroom I went. And the tossings to and fro! sometimes in bed and sometimes walking the room till about four or five o'clock in the morning, till I verily thought that my natural senses were going, and felt quite confident that a mad-house would be my place.

But as to pray, to hope, or ever think it possible for me to preach again, I could as soon blot out the sun with my hand as do any of them. But I shall never forget the sound of those words that dropped like rain, and did indeed distil like the dew: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." {[Joh 13:7](#)} O the softness these words produced in my heart in a moment! The beasts of the forest all gathered themselves into their dens, my soul sprang up like a bird that had broken out of the snare, and I cried out, "It is the voice of my Beloved." O how my poor soul was melted down at His blessed feet! I covered my shameful face, and could neither look nor speak for wonder and astonishment at what it could all mean.

How sweetly did He draw me forth by His blessed words of peace, "Let me see Thy countenance, let me hear Thy voice; for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely." {[Song 2:14](#)} My soul was so drawn out and encouraged that I went down on my knees, and felt just like a child. "Lord, how is it, and why is it that my prayers are not answered? O, dear Lord, do show me how it is, and why it is! Thou knowest that I cannot tell how it is, nor why it is! Do, my dear Lord, show Thy poor ignorant, sinful and helpless child: do, my dear Jesus, show me." And O with what light, life, and power did He speak these words into my heart that settled the thing in a moment, and showed me the why and the how: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." {[Jas 4:3](#)}

O how clearly did I see it was all my own fleshly planning and contriving, and that it was to gratify my own fleshly pleasure. O how sweetly could I give it all up into the hands of my covenant God! Never did I go and preach a sermon in my life with more peace and love than my last in Pool Moor Chapel. How I could pray that if it were the Lord's will He would bless them in their choice of a minister. So that what I expected would have been to me nothing but death and destruction was turned into the greatest blessing that I ever had in all my life. O the use I have found it to me hundreds of times since! O the numbers of times I have blessed God for it! But my soul was knit to a few of them, and they were knit to me in love that was never dissolved, and never will be, neither in time or to all eternity. After a time a few of them separated and took a room, where I went occasionally to supply them for many years, and God owned my poor labours amongst them.

About this time I was invited to go and preach to a few people that had been separated from Mr. Littlewood's church at Rochdale for going to hear Mr. Gadsby, who then came once a month to preach at Rochdale on a week evening. They had taken a room to meet in, and after a few times I engaged to go regularly every Lord's day, for which, if I remember aright, they engaged to give me six shillings a time. I had nine miles to go, and I think I went regularly for about twelve months, when, as the place was increased, they gave me a call, which I accepted. This was either in the year 1809 or 1810. And here I met with many comforts and many sorrows, and some downright real friends, as well as some downright real enemies, the latter of whom appeared when I first went amongst them as though they would have pulled out their eyes and given them to me; but I found in the end their language was, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Truly it is "through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven." But notwithstanding all, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." The {[Job 17:2](#)} Lord hath said that "surely the wrath of man shall

praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain;" {[Ps 76:10](#)} and so have I many times found it, to the honour of His Name. O the miserable journeys I had sometimes for about two years from the place where I then lived to Rochdale. I have many times left home with neither money nor provisions in the house, over head and ears in debt, full of carnal reason and unbelief, and not able to see how ever I could escape bringing a reproach upon the cause of God and truth.

O how my poor soul has roared out like a bear, and mourned sore like a dove, when I have been passing through the lonely fields on my way on a Saturday night or sometimes on a Lord's day morning, many times without a text, all my debts staring me in the face, no appearance of getting through a single week, and all our clothes nearly worn out. O the many times I have roared out in the fields, "What a fool I must be to go on attempting to preach when everything is so completely against me!" How many times did I tell the people that I must give it all up, for I was confident I should never be able to get through with honour to the cause of God and truth. But they only laughed at me, and told me that if I knew nothing of these trials I should not do for them, and they were at a point that I was in the best school God could put me in for the pulpit. How often my soul exclaimed, "Miserable comforters are ye all." {[Job 16:2](#)}

I was confident that, if were the best school, it was a very hard one to flesh and blood. Nevertheless. I always found in the end that they told the truth; and I am as confident of it as I am of my own existence, that there has been a "needs be" for every trial which my dear God and Saviour has sent me, and that there has not been one too many. They have been all in their place in the hands of God, to empty me and strip me of all my human props, and bring me to God as "my All and in all." And I have ever found it, that when I have been set fast, and could not turn to the right or to the left, it was generally the case with me, fool-like, to fly to God as the last spot. When every other refuge failed, I was obliged to roll my burden upon Him. How many times have I wept, and thought that He never could have patience with me long, and that I should tire Him out; but, bless His precious Name, I have ever found Him both able and willing to sustain me. Let me be sunk into whatever difficulties I might, however trying they might be, I have always found that there were no impossibilities with Him, nor anything too hard for Him to manage. How often have I come home to an empty house, and brought with me just the very things we needed; so that we kept just getting through one trial after another, as it were, by the skin of our teeth.

One time we were completely set fast to make up the rent. We had somehow or other got it up save one guinea, and that we could not get from any source we

could tell of. But a thought struck my mind that I would try the next Lord's day to borrow it of one of my friends at Rochdale, who I expected would lend it me, as the following Monday was the day to pay my rent. O the journey I had to Rochdale of prayer to God that He would open the way! I told Him that I had nowhere else to go but unto Him, who had ever been my present help in all times of trouble. "O do, dear Lord, open the heart of someone to lend it me, and I will bless Thee as long as I live."

I felt sweet access to Him, and readily believed that He heard my prayers, and that I should bring the money home. But how my poor soul was disappointed! For after I had done preaching on the Lord's day, I mentioned the affair to one who, I thought, could do it, but he had it not at that time in his power. O how I sank down in my feelings, and set off home miserable enough, and verily believed it was now all over, and in such darkness and unbelief and carnal reasoning, until I was almost distracted. But when I came to a village called Heywood, through which I had to pass on my way home, it just struck my mind that I had to call to leave a message from Mr. Gadsby, at an old lady's who lived there, that he was coming over on such an evening. I rapped at the door, and told the servant my message, and the old lady being in the parlour heard me, and insisted that I should come in and have some refreshment. I wished to be excused, as I had a long way to go home and it was getting late. Besides, I was so miserable that I thought ladies would be no company for me. But she would have no denial, and said I must come in. So in I went and sat down. And how it was I cannot tell, but so it was, that the moment I sat down I forgot my rent and all my misery, as if it had taken wings and flown away; and there being a young lady there who was keeping her company, I began to talk of the things of God with such freedom that I was astonished at my feelings.

The young lady burst into tears, and said, "These are the very things I have been exercised with in my mind. Are these the feelings of Christians?" At which my very soul was melted down in a moment, and my mouth was so opened that I began to speak of the way in which the Lord had led me, with such sweetness and pleasure, that I quite forgot my rent and every other calamity with it, and, to my feelings, could have sat all night. But I found by the clock that it was time for me to be going, for I had about seven miles to go, in a dark night and by a miserable road. The old lady desired me to spend a few minutes in prayer, and truly I felt it a time of prayer, and of praise too, in thanking God for the interview we had had together, so that I did not know how to conclude. It was indeed a melting time to us all. When I arose from my knees, and was taking leave of them, the old lady left a guinea in my hand, at which I burst aloud into a flood of tears in the room, and could not help it.

They were both alarmed, and asked me what was the matter. As soon as ever my feelings would suffer me to speak, I told them that tomorrow was my rent day, and that I was a guinea short of making up my rent, and had tried all I could to get it, but could not; and to see the goodness and tender mercy of my covenant God in putting it into your heart to give it! O how the poor old lady wept for joy along with me, in seeing the goodness of God. I left them with ten thousand blessings from my heart, and on my road home I went with transports of joy, viewing the matchless wonders of my covenant God. O how my soul could sing with sweet melody in my heart:

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

O how my soul could shout out:  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He has made it plain.  
William Cowper.

How clearly did I see that it was all of God, who had opened up the way that I could go and pay my rent, and that the enemies could not say, "Ah! so would we have it." O how sweet was David's song: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters; He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

I now for a short time enjoyed the presence of the Lord; and O what pleasure and heavenly delight it is to see the good hand of God "leading the blind by a way they know not, and making crooked things straight!" Surely such displays of God's kindness, both as the God of providence and of grace, will confirm and establish a soul in the love, power, faithfulness, goodness, mercy, kindness and unchangeableness of a covenant God and Saviour, more than all the commentators in the world. For such tried and delivered souls as these are God's witnesses: "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God, and there is none else." My poor soul, in the enjoyment of Him, could now trust Him for all, thank Him for all, and

glorify Him for all. I could sing and say from my very heart, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake."

Some little time after this we began to build a new chapel at Rochdale, where I then laboured, and had done so for some time; and the Lord having blessed my labours, we were crowded in the room in which we then met, and therefore began a new chapel. It was truly wonderful and amazing to see how the Lord opened a way for us, for we were a very poor people. But O how many times did we prove that portion of God's Word, "The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine, and all the gold and silver is Mine." For He opened the hearts of the people far and near, to communicate towards the raising up of Hope Chapel, which we called it, for we said it was begun in hope, carried on in hope, and a hope, too, which will never make ashamed. So we called it Hope Chapel. Through many toils and difficulties, at length we got the chapel up, but with a considerable debt upon it, which was very heavy on our shoulders.

After preaching some time in the chapel, the friends wished me to come with my family to Rochdale; but I was stuck so fast with many little debts that I could not tell how I could possibly remove from the place I was in. It appeared to me to be utterly impossible; but I found, again, that what was impossible with me, was possible with God. And, blessed be His dear Name, He again made it manifest that He was able to deliver me from that Sodom, for I could call it nothing else for years. He opened the hearts of one and another who just helped us out, so that not one enemy of God and truth could say, "Ah! so would we have it." O how the devil had for years, at times, harassed my poor soul, that when I was moved from that place it would be to the poor-house! So that when my traps were put up in the cart, and not a dog was able to move his tongue, I felt as if my poor soul would have burst through the body with joy. O how sweetly did Hannah's song flow into my heart and out of my mouth unto God!

"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside Him; neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him are actions weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength." O how my poor soul adored Him, loved Him, and praised Him for opening such a way that not one enemy could bring a just charge against me to the dishonour of His Name and cause, which were dearer to my soul than life itself. But, is anything too hard

for the Lord? So off we went with six children, we having seven in all, but the eldest did not then live at home. We arrived safe at Rochdale, with my heart full of the blessing of the Lord. And O what a sweet time I had in my new habitation, in raising up an altar to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had fed me all my life long!

The Angel of His Presence, who had redeemed me from all evil, so ravished my heart with wonder and amazement, that I scarcely knew whether I was in the body or out of it. His boundless goodness, both in providence and grace, so shined into my poor soul, that it was truly delightful and pleasant to see His goodness pass before me in the way. Here I expected I should have a smoother path and things more comfortable. Ever since the Lord had opened my poor mouth in His dear Name, there was one request I had made, that He would open a place for me where I might have my family with me on the Lord's day. Truly I had many sweet promises that this would be the case in His own time and way; but little did I think God would favour me with a habitation adjoining the chapel. But so it was! And I verily believe, on the Lord's day when my wife and children entered the chapel, I should have fainted away in the pulpit had not the dear Lord supported me. O with what power did I feel those words of David, "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. I will go into Thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay Thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto Thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul. I cried unto Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me; but verily God hath heard me; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me." [{Ps 66:12-20}](#)

For several weeks I went on very comfortably, and was favoured very much with the sweet presence of the Lord in giving me a sight of the way He had led me, and I could say from my heart, "He hath done all things well." [{Mr 7:37}](#) "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things He hath promised." [{Jos 23:14}](#) But I soon found plenty of work for prayer, faith and patience. My salary was now twenty-five shillings per week. I had six children at home, and my wife was again in the family way, and provisions being dear, I soon got up to the neck in trouble. For the first thing we had to do as soon as we got into the town was to go on credit at the shop for everything we needed. When my wife drew near the time of her delivery,

I began to fear how it would be possible to get her the comforts she required at the time of her confinement.

I soon found that I had to plunge out of one trouble into another, that is, borrow from one to pay another, so that I soon found I could not tell how to move on. When my wife was taken in labour there was but little in the house, and I was obliged of necessity to go to Manchester and leave her very poorly. O what a miserable journey I had to Manchester! All the former mercies of God were lost to my sight, and now the devil told me that it would be a thousand times worse in Rochdale than at the other place, which I had wanted so often to leave. "For here," said he, "the whole town is all upon the watch, hoping that something or other will come to stop the mouth of such a presumptuous Antinomian, and now," says he, "the time is come. Your wife will die; God will stop your mouth; and you and your children must go to the poor-house after all."

When I had concluded my business in Manchester, I met a friend just as I was going off home, who asked me how we all were, and how my wife was, and how we were getting along. I told him how things were, and said that I was afraid that the Lord, after all the mercies He had favoured me with, had left me. After a little conversation, he told me that the Lord had not left me, nor ever would leave me; and when we parted he gave me what was needful for our present wants, and off I came home. How powerfully and sweetly did those words come into my soul: "And the angel of the Lord did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on." It was a looking on indeed. I verily believed it was all well with my wife, and that the child was a boy, so I cried out in the way as I went, "His name is Manoah!" What a very different journey had I home! All the way to Manchester the devil roared, but all the way back the Lord smiled. When I arrived at home all was well; my dear wife was safely put to bed, and the child was a boy. How sweetly did I take the dear child up in my arms, and bless it in the Name of the Lord, and said, "His name is Manoah, and may the angel of the Lord do wondrously for him, and his poor soul look on," which God grant may be the case in His own time.

O the lovingkindness of the Lord, how good it is! Surely it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord! How sweet it was to pass on my way and see the cloud go before me! But it has ever been my lot to have changes, ins and outs, ups and downs. For after a while we got behind at the shop where we dealt for provisions. We owed, if I recollect rightly, about seven pounds, and had but two in the house, which we were keeping towards paying the debt; but there was no appearance of getting the rest. But all the rest came in God's own time and way, and it was truly wonderful and astonishing to my soul.

There was one of our deacons, my right-hand man, who professed such love when I first went into the town that apparently he would have plucked out his eyes and given them to me. After a little time, however, he began to manifest his hatred and enmity against me by trying all he could to harass, perplex and distress me. He goes to the person we traded with, and asked him if I owed him any money. The answer was that I did. So he told him with his soft tongue, that out of kindness he let him know that if he did not get it soon, he never would have it at all. This put my creditor into great fear, so that he sent me a very soft note that he should be glad if I would settle the account, as he was driven for money.

O how that made me shake from head to foot! "Now," said the enemy, "what will you do? Here is five pounds to make up before you can pay the seven. You have drawn over your quarter's money, and you cannot look there. But if you do not pay it immediately, it will be over the whole town, and it will be a matter of joy to the uncircumcised and sorrow and grief to your friends." O how all this sank me down! for though the Lord had done so much for me, I found that I had no faith at my command to trust Him one moment. This was on Saturday; no text, and Lord's day coming, and I could not get one to strike me all the day. Then I tried to strike one myself, and I struck out many, but they all slipped through my fingers, and off they flew. What a day and night did I pass through. But through the tender mercy of a covenant God I had a good day in the courts of our Lord. The dear Lord led me into the very things that some of His dear children were exercised with, and they went home at night rejoicing in the Lord, and putting no confidence in the flesh. The dear Lord favoured me with a sweet calm, and I felt a hope springing up that He would provide. And I felt a casting of my cares upon Him. "Bless the Lord," my soul whispered, "He has delivered, He does deliver," and I felt a sweet hope that He would deliver. Before we went to bed, my wife asked me how we were to get through the week. "I have only two shillings," said she, "and we are to have no more at the shop till the old score is paid off, and the two pounds we must not touch; and you know there is but little in the house. How do you think we are to get through the week?"

"Well," said I, "come, never mind it tonight. I am tired; let us go to bed and see what tomorrow will bring forth." I had a very comfortable night's rest, and, being tired, lay pretty long in the morning. Indeed, I was rather reluctant to go down, for fear of the subject of the two shillings coming up again. Whilst I was pondering about the two shillings, the postman came to the door with a letter, and called out, "One shilling and elevenpence, mistress." "What," cries out my wife, "what do you mean?" "One shilling and elevenpence, mistress." I could not help laughing in my room to hear my wife and the postman. Well, thinks I, we don't need much

consultation about laying out the two shillings. We have now a whole penny left. Neither I nor my wife understood the one and eleven-pence then. When the postman had shut the door, she comes stamping up the stairs as if she would have stamped them down.

Into the room she comes with the letter and the penny, and down she threw them both. "Now," says she, "as you have such a stock of faith, you have a whole penny to go to market with," and down she went, not in the best of tempers. I opened the letter, and there was a two pound note and a one pound note, making three pounds. I ran down stairs with astonishment, and showed my wife the three pounds. Poor thing! she was quite overcome with wonder, and she declared that she should never again be frightened at one and eleven-pence, and hoped one and eleven-pence would soon come again. Just as we were talking it over, my old friend, Thomas Nivin, a Scotchman, whom I had ever found a faithful friend from first to last, came in to know how we were. I showed him the letter and told him of our situation, and that I owed seven pounds at the shop, and that my creditor had sent for the money, and that we had only two pounds towards it until this letter came, and now we have five pounds.

The old man rejoiced, and said that he was glad in his heart to see the lovingkindness of a covenant God in such a wonderful and unexpected way. The dear old man said, "I have two pounds laid up at home that I have no present use for." So off he went and brought the two pounds. My old dame dressed herself up in her best gown, and off she goes with the seven pounds and discharges the debt with honour. Now, thinks I, I will go alone into the chapel, and there will I extol the mercy of my wonder-working God, who has wrought this wonderful deliverance for me, one so unworthy. But I am ashamed to write or speak what came into my mind as soon as ever I entered into the chapel. Instead of blessing and praising God for His wonderful deliverance, it darted into my mind that whoever sent it might have sent a five pound note instead of three, and then I should have had two pounds for other things, which would just have come in well.

O how I hated myself for these thoughts, and how did my soul struggle, cry and pray to tread these cursed feelings under my feet! I walked to and fro, begging and crying for a thankful heart; but could no more thank God feelingly for the deliverance than I could make a world. And I began to find my heart as hard as the nether millstone, so that I found that thankfulness was a gift that cometh down from above. And I am confident that thankfulness is as much the gift of God as ever deliverance is. But, blessed be His dear Name, He can give it when He will; for a few days after this, as I was walking down the street, the dear Lord broke into

my soul with such light and love, that He showed me His hand in sending me the deliverance, and with such sweetness, wonder and thanks, that my heart was quite overcome with gratitude. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," and those that are taught of God well know that "every good thing is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Soon after this I had trouble upon trouble at Rochdale, and began to see that I never could stay there long; and I was firmly persuaded that God never intended it, for every way kept closing up, till at last my old friend, the Scotchman, said he could not promise to communicate so much to the cause, and, indeed, I wondered he did what he had done for years. Then the deacons told me that it was plain the Lord meant me for some other place, and, if Providence opened a way, they considered I should do right in embracing it. O how my soul did sink down within me. I had eight children; I was over head and ears in debt, and nothing but clouds and darkness within and without.

A few days after this I received a letter from Maidstone, in Kent, saying that if I was at liberty, they wished me to come for four or six weeks upon trial. I looked upon this as a wonderful opening in providence, and sent them a letter, fixing the time at which I hoped to be there. I think it was the day after I had sent off my answer that I received another letter, from a few people who met in a room at Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, inviting me for a month upon trial, if I was at liberty. O how I wondered to know what all this could mean! I sent them an answer, saying that I would comply with their request as soon as I had fulfilled my engagement at Maidstone. At the time appointed I went to Maidstone, and stayed as long as I had agreed to do. The people gave me a call to be their pastor, and everything was as pleasant to flesh and blood as I could desire; and fully was I determined to accept the call, only I must go to Trowbridge to fulfil my engagement there. But I was as confident in my own mind that I should come and settle at Maidstone as I was in existence; so to Trowbridge I came to spend my month. The room was crowded with people, and God blessed the word abundantly. But I felt determined I would go to Maidstone. The people at Trowbridge gave me a call, and, my time being nearly out, it was necessary to give them an answer.

O the begging and crying I had that God would give me a command to go to Maidstone! for to pray to stay at Trowbridge I could not; for I could see nothing but difficulties, trials and miseries at Trowbridge for I plainly saw the toils of a new chapel, and these I dreaded, as knowing what sorrows and miseries Hope Chapel had caused me. O what a night I had the night before I was to settle the

business whether I was to go to Maidstone or stop at Trowbridge. I wrestled and prayed, and cried to God until about three in the morning, to let me go to Maidstone; and O how I sunk down when He spoke these words into my heart: "Abide in this city, for I have much people here." "O," cried I, "do, Lord, let me go to Maidstone; do, Lord. Do not be offended with my poor petition; do let me go to Maidstone." But the text sounded again and again, "Abide in this city, for I have much people here;" but still I wanted Him to let me go to Maidstone.

At last the dear Lord settled the matter at once by speaking these words to my soul: "If his children forsake My law and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes;" and I could see it as speaking all this to my soul: "You may go to Maidstone; but here is the rod, and you shall have nothing else if you go." I fell down and cried out, "Not my will, but Thine be done." "But," cried I, "How can I get on here? how can I live here, when I come with ten in family and my wife in the family way? How can I possibly live here and the people a poor people?" O how God condescended to settle the matter in my soul. "The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine. The earth is Mine, and all the gold and silver is Mine. Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure. Fear thou not - for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." I cried out, "It's enough, it's enough: Amen to it."

Maidstone from that moment was as completely taken away from my mind, and the feeling of any desire to go there to settle, as if I had never heard of such a place. And here I am at Trowbridge, a poor worm, and have proved the Word of the Lord to be truth nearly twenty-two years.

{4} See note at end.