

A
Voice from the Prison
OR,
MEDITATIONS
ON
Revelations III. XI.
TENDING
To the ESTABLISHMENT
OF
Gods Little Flock,
IN
An Hour of Temptation

By *Hercules Collins*, Prisoner in *Newgate*.

It is a good thing that the Heart be Established with Grace, Heb. 13.9.

Gratia Necessaria est, sive cum Convertuntur; five cum Praliantur, five cum Coronantur. August.
Through much Tribulation we must Enter into the Kingdom of God, Acts 14.22.

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To the Church of God, formerly Meeting in *Old Gravel-Lane Wrapping*, and all who were Strangers and Forreigners, but now Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Houshold of God.

Revel. 3.11.

Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, let no man take thy Crown.

Dearly Beloved,

Forasmuch as I am at present depriv'd by my Bonds, of the Liberty of Preaching; I bless God I have the Advantage of Printing, being ready to serve the Interest of Christ in all Conditions to my poor Ability; and doubt not, but God and his Interest are Served by my Confinement, as by Liberty: and am not without hopes that I shall preach as loudly, and as effectually by Imprisonment for Christ, as ever I did at Liberty; that all those who observe Gods Providential Dealings, will be able to say with me hereafter, as Holy *Paul* once said in his Bonds at *Rome*; What hath befallen me, hath tended to the furtherance of the Gospel¹: for as Actions are more Influential then words, and more Demonstrative of the Truth and Reality of a Person or Cause; as a man shall be better believed for his good works, then good words; so if we would Manifest our Integrity under a Profession, nothing will do it better then your Suffering, rather then Sin, if by God called unto it; for, as a Tree is known by his Fruit², so is a Christian by a Patient Wearing Christs Cross, this will and hath Convinced an Adversary, when a bare Profession will not, and though a Man should make a great Profession, or preach with great Demonstration of Truth, yet an Unfruitable Living, or a Sinful Declining Sufferings, may greatly hinder the Belief of the Truth. This Church of *Philadelphia*, had not only Profess'd Christ in times of Peace, but had held fast his word, and not denyed his Name in a Trying Day, by which She declar'd a little Strength Obtain'd by Grace; and for her Faithfulness had an after Promise from Christ, to be kept in an Hour of great Temptation, for keeping the word of his Patience, which may be so Named for it's Declaration of the Patience of God towards God-Provoking Sinners, or because great Patience is Required of all such as do the will of God Contain'd in his Word, or for that it teacheth Patience far beyond that which any Philosopher ever had, which Consisted only in a strict Improvement of Natural Principles; for by this Grace, this Church had weather'd the Storm, and though she had kept Christs word, and not lost one of his Precepts, yet the Exhortation is continued, Hold fast what thou hast; as thou hast born a Faithful Testimony to my Name, and Truth, do it still, my Motives are greatly Obliging, there is a Crown at last³, and it shall be but a little while, and you shall be crowned with this Crown, for behold I come quickly. The Churches Winter is signified by time quickly spent; in one place, God saith, their Tribulation shall last but ten days; elsewhere, Our light Affictions shall be but for a moment; and for the Churches Incouragement, saith, if there be any moments less then other, then it shall be but for a little moment I will hide my Face from thee⁴, but with Everlasting Kindness will I gather thee. Our Lord speaking of his own Sufferings, saith, These things shall have an End⁵, so shall yours; for, behold I come quickly; in a little time you will all rest from your Labors⁶, and your works will follow you; *For behold I come quickly and my Reward is with me to give every man according as his Work shall be*⁷; a little time more may end your Travels in a waste howling Wilderness: who knows but in a few years more, it may be a few Months, a few Weeks, a few Hours, and thou mayest safely Arrive at the Celestial Land⁸; and if thou shouldst meet with the Swellings of *Jordan* ere thou get there, to try thy Faith, Love and Patience, the same Grace which enabled *David* to Conquer the Bear, the Lyon, the Uncircumcised *Philistine*, and helped thee to Run with Foot-men, and contend with Horses, will help thee in these Swellings, which may be the last, and yet the greatest; when thou art just Entring

1 Phil. 1. 12, 14

2 Mat. 7. 16.

3 Rev. 2. 10. 2 Cor. 3. 17.

4 Isaiah 54. 7.

5 Luke 22. 37.

6 Revel. 14. 13

7 Chap. 22. 12.

8 Jer. 12. 15.

the good Land. But without enduring to the End, all your Profession, your many years Prayers, all your Tears will be lost: but if thou dost Ride out this Storm, thou mayst never see another, but look back with Comfort upon it, and be as a cordial to thy Soul as long as thou livest; but if on the contrary you faint in the day of Adversity⁹, and backslide from God, it may be Wormwood and Gall to thy Conscience all thy time, and take away the Comfort of all thy Enjoyments, and Sting thy Conscience upon a Deathbed, as if thou hadst a Hell within thee before death. *Hold fast what thou hast*; shouldst thou now turn aside to Crooked Paths, God may set a Mark upon thee, good Churches, and good men also: Moreover, thou mayst never more be called to be a witness for Christ, this Honour God may never offer to thee as long as thou dost live again; and this Honour have not all the Saints, to be called to bear a Publick Testimony for Christ, some have thought God hath not Lov'd them, because he hath not Exercised them this way, therefore if God do call any forth to be the Lords witnesses, carry it so ye may have the same Character this Church had and so have a right to the same Promise made to her, That because she had kept the words of Gods Patience, he would keep her in the hour of Temptation: therefore, *Hold fast what thou hast*, when Satan would pull thy Souls good from thee; when Relations, Husband, Wife, Children call upon you, and perswade you because of danger to cease from the work of the Lord, then hold fast; when you are Persecuted for my Names sake¹⁰, and flesh and blood argues strongly, as *Peter* once to Christ, save thy self, then hold fast; if thy wife and children were pulling from thee, how fast wouldst thou hold them? but how much more fast hold should we take when truth is pulled at¹¹, a good Conscience, Peace in the inward man pulled at, in such a day we had need have our bow abide in Strength, and the Arms of our hands made strong by the hands of the mighty God of *Jacob*¹², until the Judge which standeth before the Door¹³, Enter to Condemn the Oppressor, and Relieve the Oppressed; be Patient therefore unto the coming of the Lord, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry¹⁴, that so you may not lose the things ye have wrought¹⁵; for 'tis not that Soul which is barely Tempted, shall have the Crown of Life, but he that endureth Temptation¹⁶, which endureth the Storm, and keeps from the Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience, by the Anchor of Hope¹⁷; Blessed is this enduring Soul, whatever Vicissitudes and changes come, this Soul changeth not in his Profession, he is the same still in his Judgment, in his Zeal, in his Love and Affection, not like some unconstant ones which like the Weather-cock turns with every Wind of Temptation; but the Established Soul stands fast, when the Rain falls, the Wind blows, the Waves beat, yet he stands, being founded upon the Rock of Ages¹⁸; this is the Soul Christ will own in the great day before his Father and the Holy Angels; and say, These are they which have continued with me in my Temptation; therefore I appoint unto you a Kingdom¹⁹; therefore, because you owned me in an Evil Day.

These are the Men, Women, People, which spoke of my Testimonies before Kings, and was not ashamed²⁰ when many Cried, Crucify him and his Cause; these are the Souls which came forth and declared they were on the Lords Side²¹: These are they, Father, whose Love to me many Waters nor Floods could not quench nor drown; these are they that chose me on my own termes²², with the Cross as well as the Crown; these have made Choice of me with Reproaches, Imprisonments, with Fines, Confiscation of Goods, Banishment, loss of Limbs, Life, and all, they have born all, indured

9 Prov. 24.10.

10 Mat. 5.10.

11 Prov. 23.23.

12 Gen. 49.14.

13 James 5.9.

14 Heb. 10.37.

15 2 Epist. John.

16 James 1.12.

17 Heb. 6. 18.19.

18 Mat. 7.24.

19 Luke 22.29.

20 Psal. 119.46.

21 Exod. 32.26.

22 Cant. p. 7.

all for my sake²³, in the greatest affliction, they kept from wavering, and the more they endured and lost for my sake, the more they loved me; as some Creatures, the more you beat them, the more they will love you; so a Sincere Soul, while God is afflicting him he loves him, and with *Job*, blesses God when he suffers the *Sabeans* and *Caldeans* to take his Substance, as well as when he gave it to him²⁴; he is not like some, who will tell you, they are so afflicted they cannot Pray, nor hear the Word of God, nor fit for any Duty; the best Saint under some violent Temptation may be so for a little time, but this Frame seldom holds long with a True Believer, but rather under Afflictions prays better Ever²⁵, with more Sensibleness, Humility, Brokenness, Affection then ever; and loves the Lord when taking, when stripping, and cleaves closer and closer to God, as some Trees take the faster Root by the shaking of the Wind; such a Soul is Resolved to take Christs Council, to hold fast what they have, and will not lose their Crown, the word **στεφανος** which here is Rendred Crown, and some other places, as *Tim.* 4. and *Jam.* 12 is not the same word in the Greek which the word Crown is sometimes translated from, as in *Rev.* 12.3 chap. 19.12. the word is there **διαδεμα** translated Crown, and signifieth properly some wreathed beautifying Attire about the head, which as some write, was worn by Ancient Kings instead of the Crown, conceiving the Crown only belonged to their Gods, but **στεφανον** Crown here, doth signify a Reward, a word borrowed from those times wherein a Crown was given some as a Token of Victory, Conquest, Valour and Strength; so the Crown here is the Reward God will give to all Overcomers; and to none else; for albeit many Run, but one Receiveth the Crown; so Run that you may obtain²⁶; Overcome and Obtain Fight, the good Fight of faith²⁷, so lay hold on Eternal Life²⁸; for it is he that Overcometh shall eat of the Tree in the midst of the Paradiſe of God, he shall not be hurt of the Second Death, he shall have the hidden Manna, the white Stone, and a New Name, which is known to none but the Receivers; he that overcometh and keepeth Christs Works unto the end, shall have power over the Nations, and rule them with a Rod of Iron, and the same shall be cloathed in white Rayment, his name shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life, but made a Pillar in the Temple of God, and he shall go out no more²⁹; finally, he shall sit with Christ on his Throne, as he overcame and sat down with the Father on his Throne; this Crown is no ordinary Crown, it's a Crown not of Gold, but Glory, not Fading but Eternal³⁰, called a Crown of Righteousness³¹ in respect of Christs purchasing it of the Father for his, and also in respect of Gods Promise to them, not that boast in the putting on the Armour³², but those that put it off with a conquest which we shall never have, except we hold fast what we have; the import of which Exhortation is, that this Church had made choice of good Objects, or good Principles, or both; had they chosen the contrary, espous'd the contrary, Christ would have said, Cast away from you all your Abominations: come out from among them, and be ye Separate; Partake not of her Sins, least ye partake of her Plagues also.

But, they had made choice of the best Objects³³; thou hast chosen me, *Philadelphia*; I know thou hast; hold me fast, and let me not go. Art United by Faith to me? hast sweet Communion with my Father and Spirit? hold fast, these are the best Objects, leave not your first Love³⁴, let thy Heart be fixed trusting in me, Cleaving closer and closer, with full Purpose of Heart unto me³⁵, for I am the same as ever in my Wisdom to contrive for you, in my Power to help you; I am God Alsufficient³⁶, I am the same in my Pity and Compassion as ever, I know your Frame, and remember you are but

23 Mat. 19.27.

24 Job. 1.21.

25 Isaiah 26.1

26 1 Cor. 9.24.

27 2 Tim. 4.7.

28 1 Tim. 6.19.

29 Rev. chap. 2. and chap. 3.

30 1 Pet. 1.4.

31 2 Tim. 4.8.

32 1 Kings 20.11.

33 Psal. 108.1.

34 Rev. 2.4.

35 Acts 11.23.

36 Gen. 17.1.

Dust; the same in Faithfulness, I will not lay more on you then I will enable you to bear³⁷; if you have but little strength, you shall have but little trouble; if I call you to great things and tryals, I will give unto you suitable Supports³⁸: I will not be more unreasonable then a Natural Father, who hath so much Pity as not to lay great weights upon a weakly Child, therefore hold fast; I will cause them which love me to inherit Substance³⁹; all other Enjoyments without this Substance, the Unsearchable Riches of Christ, are but Shadows, and wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not? It is the Christ-finding Soul which is the Life-finding Soul; hold Christ, and thou holdest all good in him. *Esau* said to *Jacob* he had enough⁴⁰, but *Jacob* said to *Esau*, he had all, for *Esau's* word is רב *multum* much, from רבב he was much, or he was multiplied: but *Jacob's* word is כל *Omina*, all, which is Translated *enough*, Gen. 33.11,24. I have all, saith *Jacob*, I have the whole, I have that which is perfect, he had all in God; so that it is said, Christ is all, and in all; he is all, because all good is Comprehended in him, he is all in all⁴¹; all in in the Fulness of all, for if we have all Earthly Enjoyments, and have not him, we have nothing comparatively, nothing with a Blessing, for the Curse of the Lord is in the House of the Wicked⁴². For one to say, I have these Goods, these Houses, these Ships, this Gold and Silver, these Dainties, this rich Attire, this Earthly Honour: But, I cannot say, I have Christ, Grace, Holiness, this may damp all; for Riches deliver not from Death nor Wrath⁴³; for to have our Portion in this Life, is a poor Portion: but a Holy Soul can say, Thou art my Portion, O Lord, and though I have but little Earthly Good, having Christ, I have all Equivalently and comprehensively; I have all, saith *Jacob*, that was more then *Esau* could say, for *Jacob* had God: if we have but poor clothing, a poor house, poor Furniture, poor Fare, poor Friends; yet if we can say this I have, and Christ, Grace, and Content with this condition, Peace in my conscience; I lye down upon my Bed in sweet Peace, and communion with God, and so I rise, this sweetens all, for all is yours, who are Christs, whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*⁴⁴; all Gods Ministers are Gifted and Grac'd for your sake, to serve your Souls, the World is yours, all the good things in it you have the most right to it, and so much you shall have as is blessedly needful for you. Yea, Life and Death is yours; *If you live, it is to God; or dyest is to God*⁴⁵; you shall be happy living, and happy dying⁴⁶. *When the Wicked shall be driven away in his Wickedness, then the Righteous shall have Hope in his Death*⁴⁷. *If such a one Live, it is to Christ, for the Glory of Christ; and if he dye, it is for his Gain*, the Believers Gain; things present and things to come, all is yours, *For Godliness hath the Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is to come*⁴⁸, all things in this Life, all Losses and crosses shall work for their Good in this Life⁴⁹, in Order to a fitting them for Life Eternal; hold fast this Christ, which hath so much good joy'n'd with him, hold him fast with the Spouse⁵⁰, and as *Jacob* held fast the Angel, and would not let him go until he blest him⁵¹, so part not thou with this blessed Object, until he bless thee with the Blessings of Heaven, and the Everlasting Hills⁵²; part with all before ye part with him, count all but as dung and Dogs Meat, as the Word *σχυβαλον* in *Phil.* 3.8. imports; the Mariner in a Storm will cast all over-board to Lighten his Ship and save his Life; Oh this World will sink you *in an Hour of Temptation*, if it lyeth too near your Hearts; cast away all, shake off all, rather then lose a Christ, and an immortal Soul, which once lost is irrecoverable⁵³. And as this Word *hold fast*, imports the Churches choice of the best of Objects, so

37 1 Cor. 10.13.

38 2 Cor. 12.9.

39 Prov. 8.18,19, 20. 21.

40 Gen. 33.9.

41 Col. 3.11.

42 Prov. 3.33.

43 Prov. 11.4.

44 1 Cor. 3.21,22,23.

45 Rom. 14.7.

46 Philip. 1.21.

47 Prov. 14.32.

48 1 Tim. 4.8.

49 Rom. 8.28.

50 Cant. 3.4.

51 Gen. 32.26.

52 Chap. 49.26.

53 Mat. 16.26.

the best of Principles, and pure Spiritual Worship of the Gospel, and that she had abandoned all the Inventions and Traditions of men⁵⁴, which are by some accounted not only things of Indifferency, but necessary in the Worship of God, demonstrated by those coercive Proceedings against all such as cannot comply with such Innovations and Ceremonies. *Hold fast what thou hast*; Art united to the one Body, of Christ, the Church, Visible Believers, *with whom thou hast one Spirit, one true Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one true Baptism?*⁵⁵ As you have Received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in him, Rooted and built up in him, and Stablished in the Faith; as ye have been taught, abounding therein with Thanks-giving*⁵⁶; *Let us hold fast the Publick Profession of our Faith, without wavering: (For he is Faithful who hath Promised,)*⁵⁷ *when we go through the Fire or Water he will be with us*⁵⁸; Let us not be like *Nicodemus*⁵⁹, to own Christ only in the dark; which is not a sign of that noble Heroic Spirit he hath given to some of his Followers: Neither be like *Peter*⁶⁰, to deny Christ Publickly in the Pallace, nor in the Porch, nor as some, in the Court; where will your Testimony for Christ be then? You may not presume upon Peters Repentance and Acceptation with Christ afterward: Christ may not give thee such a Heart-breaking look as he gave *Peter*⁶¹; God may leave thee in despair, as he did *Spira*, living and dying.

Oh! Hold fast what you have; for either, you had good Reason for your Separation at first, or none; if none, But only pin'd your Faith upon other Mens Sleeves; then you discover a zeale without knowledge, and Affection without Judgment, and much Folly in making a Separation without good Scripture ground: But if you had good Reason for Separation, and it was done from a well informed Judgment, then that Reason is good still, and so Remaines a duty Zealously to maintain what you have Espous'd, and *let them Return unto you, and not you unto them*⁶²; Who compel none of the best of Men to the best of Ordinances, and Curse and Excommunicate some of the most serious and best of Men; not for Sin⁶³, but for *Nonconforming* to that, which if they should do it against the light of Conscience, might Render them fit for Gods Excommunicating them out of Heaven. Moreover to have Counsel to hold fast, implies a danger of losing the Crown, either Totally, or the Comfort of a True and lively Hope of it by a Faithful Perseverance⁶⁴, the least is too bad. What King would not tugg hard to preserve an Earthly Crown? how much more should *we endeavour to preserve an Eternal one, by a Constant obeying the Truth, and striving to Enter in at the straight Gate? For it is the will of your Father to lead you to a City of Habitation, through the Wilderness in a Solitary way*; as of Old, *Psal. 107.4 and 7. He led them through Wilderness in a Solitary way*: Yet verse the 7th saith, *It was a Right way; though the way to Heaven be a straight, narrow and difficult way*; yet it is the Right way. But by Reason of the difficulty of the way, *many thousands of Old fell in the Wilderness through unbelief*⁶⁵; *Let us take heed, least a Promise being left us of Entering into his Rest*⁶⁶; *any of us should seem to come short in a departing from God, through an Evil Heart of unbelief*⁶⁷. *You have many Enemies seeking the Ruine of your Souls*; For we War not only against Flesh and Blood and in-dwelling Sin and Corruption, which are some of the worst of Enemies, but against Principalities and Powers, and Spiritual wickedness, or wicked Spirits⁶⁸; but if we would Triumph over them, as Christ our Head did, *then let us put on the whole Armour of God, by which we shall be more then Conquerors; and so shall quit our selves like Men*⁶⁹; and when the adversaries

54 Mat. 15.9.

55 Eph. 4. 1,2,3,4,5,6.

56 Col. 2.6.

57 Heb. 10.23.

58 Isay. 43.2.

59 John. 7.50.

60 Mat. 26. 69 to 75

61 Luke 22. 71. (should be Luke 22:61, Ed.)

62 Jer. 15.19.

63 James 1.17.

64 Gal. 5.7.

65 Heb. 3.17.

66 Chap. 4.1.

67 Heb. 3.12.

68 Eph. 6 from 10. (to) 19.

69 1 Cor. 16.13.

have done all, we shall stand, if we take unto our selves the Shield of Faith, and so bring God and his Attributes near to help us. By Faith in the Blood of the Lamb⁷⁰, the Saints of old over-came their Opposers. This Shield, with the Helmet of Salvation⁷¹, which is a well grounded Hope, such as purifieth the Heart⁷², with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, dwelling Richly in us, that we may be fitted with sutable Promises; and Precepts to Oppose and over come every Suggestion or Temptation; these with the feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, will carry us through thick and thin; what cannot that Soul go through, which hath Gospel-Peace in his Soul? *He whose Peace is made with God, if he Justifies, who can Condemn?*⁷³ *if God be for us who can be against us? If he speaks Peace, who can make Trouble?*⁷⁴ Add unto those Prayer, Praying with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit; lifting up Holy hands without Wrath and Doubting⁷⁵: then shall we over-come as *Israel* did, when *Moses* lift up his hands, they prevailed against *Amalek*⁷⁶; *It is the Praying Soul is the Conquering Soul; the Poor Man Cryed, and the Lord delivered him out of all his Troubles*⁷⁷; when thou art ready to sink under Troubles, keep Praying, and say, Lord wilt thou leave a Poor broken Reed? If thou doest forsake me, I am resolved I will not leave thee! If I Perish and sink under Temptations, it shall be Praying and Trusting in thee!⁷⁸ It was never known that any which went to God in the sence of his own Poverty, Impotency, Holy relying on his Word of Promise; that ever was forsaken of him; therefore thou mayest Plead with God. Thou didst never Read that a Praying Soul, a depending Soul, was ever left Desolate. Lord shall I be the first forsaken in the way of Duty? Lord I know thou wilt not forsake me; for thou never said'st unto the seed of *Jacob*, Seek ye my Face in Vain⁷⁹: But when the Poor and needy seek Water, and there is none, and their Tongue faileth for Thirst, the Lord will hear them, I the God of *Jacob* will not forsake them⁸⁰.

I will open Rivers in high places, and Fountains in the midst of the Valleys: I will make the Wildnerness a Pool of Water, and the Dry-Land, Springs of Water.

*I will pour Water upon him that is Thirsty, and floods upon the dry Ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my Blessing upon thine off-Spring*⁸¹.

These are the Advantages of, and Promises made to a Praying Soul; Joyn to all these the breast-plate of Righteousness, the Righteousness of Christ imputed, and Righteousness inherent, wrought by the Holy Spirit; for *he that doth Righteousness, is Righteous, as God is Righteous*⁸², in kind, in Quality, though not degree; let all these be bound together with the Girdle of Truth and Sincerity; and thou wilt be able to tread thine Enemies under thy Feet; If this Armour be but Wisely and Courageously used; for Holy Courage is a blessed qualification, in a Day of Trouble. Be not like the faint Hearted Spies of Old, who Confest the Land was an Exceeding good Land; But discouraged the People from going forward, by telling them *Canaans* Walls was as high as Heaven, and the Men of *Anak* are there, mighty Men, Giants, Men of great Stature, and we are Grashoppers to them; and thus they brought up an Evil Report upon the good Land; not, but that it was Truth what they said; in a good degree: But that time was not a fit time to speak at this Rate, nor were they fitted for such a sad Report⁸³; for the whole Congregation was discouraged, and they fell a weeping, and Murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and sought to Stone them.

70 Rev. 12.19. (should be Rev. 12:11, Ed.)

71 1 Thess. 5.8.

72 1 John. 3.3.

73 Rom. 8.32.33.

74 Job 34.29.

75 1 Tim. 2.8.

76 Exod. 17.11.

77 Psal. 34.6.

78 Job 15.13. (should be Job 13:15. Ed.)

79 Isa 45.9 (should be Isa. 45:19), Ed.)

80 Isay. 41.17.

81 Chap. 44.3.

82 1 John 3.7.

83 Numb. 15.26 to 33. (should be Num. 13:26 – 33, Ed.)

Unbelief over-came them, they wish'd they had Died in the Wilderness, and resolved to make a Captain and Return to *Egypt*⁸⁴: Now *Joshua* who with *Caleb* Resolved to follow God fully, came forth and stilled the People, and encouraged the People, and saith unto them, The Land is an exceeding good Land, let us go up and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it⁸⁵; the People they are Bread for us, their defence is departed from them; and the Lord is with us; fear them not. O! What a Blessed Couragious Leader was here, had he been like the Congregation of *Israel* and the Spies, what sad work would here have been.

Hold fast what thou hast; be of good Courage, and God will Strengthen your Hearts more and more, all ye which hope in the Lord⁸⁶: What is your Resolution, Soul? Put the Question to your Souls, *Will you in Gods Strength with full Purpose of Heart cleave unto the Lord*⁸⁷, *and not halt between two Opinions, us if it were difficult to Determine whether to be for GOD or Baal?*⁸⁸ To Depart from God in a Trying Day, Reflects upon his Being and Attributes; *What Iniquity, said God to his People of old, have your Fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?*⁸⁹ *Am I not the same as ever? Are not my Promises the same? Have I fail'd in any one thing?*⁹⁰ *Testify against me; is not Heaven and Happiness the same as ever? Why do you leave the Fountain of Living Water, and hew out to your Selves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, which will hold no Water?* Our Lord seems to speak Mournfully in the Sixth of *John*⁹¹, after many of his Disciples had gone back, *Will you also go away, and walk no more with me, as the Rest have done*, Simon Peter. answered and said, *Lord whether shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life*; we are Lord for a Crown, we are for Eternal Life, and we know there is no Life but in the Son⁹². So *Luther* answered, when he had great Offers made him to Return to the Church of *Rome*, Can you give me *Christ*, said he, and Eternal Life? As it was their great care not to lose the Crown, so it shou'd be ours, which if thou wouldest keep, take this Advice, beg of God for a well-informed Judgment, a good Understanding, a Spiritual inlightened mind, that thou mayest be found in Gods Statutes; Cry with Holy *David*, *Lord open mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law*⁹³.

Whence is it, some call good *Evil*, and *Evil* good, Darkness Light, and Light Darkness?⁹⁴ But from Darkness in the Understanding; as the *Jews* Persecution and Crucifixion of *Christ*, was imputed to their Ignorance of him⁹⁵, so the forsaking a good way in Troublesom times, argues great Ignorance in the Understanding, or else they would never prefer Temporal before Spiritual things; and present Pleasure before future Glory; there must be Divine Light in the Understanding, before there can be True Obedience, and True Grace in the Will; for he that doth not know God as Revealed, can never well-groundedly love him, nor Obey him⁹⁶.

*This is Eternal Life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*⁹⁷. So 2 Tim. 1.9. *Who hath Saved us*; Salvation is begun; Eternal Life is begun in all that have a sound knowledg of God; What is that True Peace in Believers, but the beginnings of that Peace we shall enjoy for ever more perfectly? So what is that True Spiritual Joy a Believer hath in Christ, but the beginnings of what shall hereafter be compleated? So a Believers Spiritual Life, and Light, and Love, are but the Real beginnings and foretasts of what he shall perfectly and Eternally feel; so

84 Chap. 14. 2.3.4.5.

85 Chap. 14.26. (should be Num. 13:30, Ed.)

86 Psal. 31.24.

87 Acts. 11.23.

88 1 King. 18.21.

89 Jer. 25.13. (should be Jer. 2:5, Ed.)

90 Josh. 23.14.

91 John 6. 60 to 69.

92 1 John 4.9.

93 Psal. 119.18.

94 Isai. 5.20.21.

95 1 Cor. 2.8.

96 James 5.17.

97 John 17.3.

what is that Holiness and Image of God in the Saints? now by the Holy Spirit wrought in him, but a beginning of that Glory which hereafter shall be completed?⁹⁸ Those Spiritual Sights and *tastes that the Lord is Gracious*⁹⁹, carryeth on the Soul, cheerefully in his Duty in Troublous times, and hence the Soul longs more and more after Christ¹⁰⁰, and with Holy *David* his Soul follows hard after him¹⁰¹, knowing him to be the *chiefest of ten thousands*.¹⁰²

Oh! when a Soul cometh to know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; the knowledge of a Carnal Heart, or a Believer in the perfection of it in this Life: But a little Sight of this Love, this Grace, Pardoning Grace, Justifying, Sanctifying Grace, Adopting Grace, causeth a Soul to cry out with *David, O Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all within me, bless his Holy Name*¹⁰³; *Who pardoneth all my iniquities: and healeth all my diseases*. This is the soul which cryeth more and more, Lord lift thou up the light of thy Countenance¹⁰⁴, let me see more of thy Beauty and Glory; this is the *one thing I desire*, as I have seen thee in the *Sanctuary*¹⁰⁵, such a sight as this will help us indure the Wrath of great Men; as *Moses* did¹⁰⁶, when *by Faith* he saw *him which is invisible, and from hence accounted the Reproach of Christ greater Riches then the Treasures of Egypt, and chose rather to Suffer affliction with the People of God, then to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season*: For his Faith was the substance of things Hoped for, and the Evidence and Demonstration to him of Eternal things¹⁰⁷, not seen with an Eye of sence, but Faith; for their walk, *Moses* and Holy *Pauls*, was *by Faith not by Sight*¹⁰⁸; and the Sights those have *by Faith* are affecting and Soul-strengthening, they see the *Towers and Bul-works about Mount Zion are innumerable*¹⁰⁹: *and that God is known in her Pallaces for a Refuge*: These see *Horses of fire, and Chariots of fire round about Gods Interest*¹¹⁰; a Sight of which *Fortifications* about the Church, hath made the Kings of the Earth to tremble when they have passed by together: *Zion dwells in the Munition of Rocks*¹¹¹, all *Gods* Attributes incompass her about, and this *God is our God for ever, and ever*, and will be our guide to Death, (*saith the Church*) upon this Sight of Faith, by which also they see the Land that is very far of; Faith brings Blessedness near, Glory near, Christ in his intercession near, as *Stephen saw him at the right hand of God*¹¹²; from hence the worthys of Old despised a sinful deliverance, and chose rather to be tortured, having an Eye to a better Resurrection then the World should have, or their Enemies could give; could we have deliverance in Gods way, we ought to account it a Mercy: But if we cannot have it without wronging, stretching, wounding our Conscience; we with those Champions of Old¹¹³, should rather chuse the fire and Torments. Heb. 11.55. *And others were tortured; τυμπανιζομαι* it signifieth, a special kind of torturing, and hath its *Denomination* from a Word, which usually signifieth a Drum.

Hence some have *Parral*el'd this torture, with that among the *Romans*, the Persons tortured, were racked, distended, and their Limbs stretched in manner of a Drum-Head, when brac'd and stretch'd: but it signifieth also a Drum-stick, and so they might also be beaten, and have their strokes Multiplied upon their Poor Bodies, as the strokes are multiplied upon the Head of a Drum; as *Paul* the Holy Apostle, he had stripes above measure¹¹⁴; of the *Jews* he received five times forty stripes but one, which was two hundred lack but five; thrice he was beaten with Rods; this was a Practice

98 2 Cor. 3.18.

99 1 Pet. 2.3.

100 Psal. 42.1, Ps. 63. 1 to 8

101 Psa. 63. 1 to 8.

102 Cant. 5.10.

103 Psal. 103.1.

104 Psal. 4.6.

105 Psal. 27.4

106 Heb. 11.24.25.26.27.

107 Chap. 11.1.

108 2 Cor. 5.7.

109 Psal. 48. 11.12.13.14.

110 1 King 6.17. (should be 2 King 6:17, Ed.)

111 Isaiah 33.16.

112 Acts 7.55.

113 Dan. 3.17.28.

114 2 Cor. 12. 23.24.25 (should be 2 Cor. 11:23-25, Ed.)

among the *Jews*, on those they held Malefactors, as you may see in Deut. 25.3. By Faith those worthys were carried through all these Sufferings, they knew *the Suffering of this present time, was not worthy to be compared to the Glory which shall be revealed in us*¹¹⁵.

And that if we Suffer with him¹¹⁶, we shall be Glorified together, and if we deny him, he will also deny us; it is the Ignorant Soul which understands *not the things of the Spirit, nor knows them, because Spiritually discerned*¹¹⁷; it is this Man will comply with his and Gods Enemies on any termes, to preserve that wherein he placeth his greatest Happiness; all Men vulture and esteem things according to their Judgment of them, one Man placeth his Happiness in one Object, another in a different Object¹¹⁸, and makes that their Chief Supream good and Happiness, which their Judgments and Apprehensions esteems such.

The Covetous mans chief good is his white and yellow Clay with which he lades himself withal, because his pur-blind Eye seeth nothing in his Judgment better, and there he placeth his Happiness; so Honour and Applause is the Proud and Ambitious mans chief good and Happiness, Pleasure and Delights the Carnal mans chief good; give each of them their desires, they will Conclude there is no happier men in the world then they.

But on the contrary, a Believer who hath the Eyes of his Understanding Enlightned, his Judgment and Apprehension is, God is the Chief good, and Supream Happiness, an Intrest in God, a Conformity to God, the Injoyment of God here and hereafter¹¹⁹. According to mens Apprehensions of things, so are their Endeavours and Pursuits after them; and as a Covetous and Ambitious man, and a man given to Carnal Pleasure, will go through much Difficulty to have their Respective Desires fulfilled; so will a Believing Soul suffer the Loss of all, so he may win Christ; none but Christ, saith an illuminated Believer: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, or in the Earth I desire in Comparison of thee?*¹²⁰

There are many good Objects in Heaven and Earth besides thee, there are Angels in Heaven, and Saints on Earth: But, what are these to thee? Heaven with out thy Presence, would be no Heaven to me; a Pallace without thee, a Crown without thee, cannot satisfie me; but with thee I can be content, though in a poor Cottage with thee I am at Liberty in Bonds; Peace and Trouble; if I have thy Smiles, I can bear the worlds frowns; if I have Spiritual Liberty in my Soul, that I can ascend to thee by Faith, and have Communion with thee, thou shalt chuse my Portion for me in this World; *For in the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts Delight my Soul.*

This is the Esteem a Believing Soul hath of Divine Objects, *Christ is Precious to him*¹²¹, *because he seeth him, and believeth in him*, but the ignorant Soul will make Excuses when invited to the best of Blessings, as those who were invited to the Supper, *Luk. 14. One had Married a Wife, Another bought a Yoke of Oxen, another had his Farm, and they could not come*; had they but known the worth of this Supper, and what choice Dainties there was, they would never have made such pitiful Excuses; had they but known the Reconciling Grace there, and seen the want of it, the Pardoning Justifying Grace there, and seen the want of it, had they but known that Sanctifying Adopting Grace, and seen the want of it, they would have left their Farm, their Oxen, their Wife, Children, and all. The Soul which was once Blind, and now seeth, saith of Christ and his Benefits, as once the Queen of *Sheba* of *Solomons* Wisdom and Grandure¹²², Half was not told me by the Minister of that

115 Rom. 8.18.

116 1 Tim. 2.12. (should be 2 Tim. 2:12, Ed.)

117 1 Cor. 2.14.

118 Luke 12.20.

119 Psal. 17.15.

120 Psal. 73.25.

121 1 Pet. 2.7.

122 1 Kings 10.7.

Glory, Beauty, Excellency, Grace, Goodness, that I now see in him; now, I believe not by Report, as the men of *Samaria* said, but we have seen him our selves, *and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the World*¹²³: Now, we know what is the hope of the calling of God, and what the Riches of the Glory of the Inheritance is of the Saints in Light¹²⁴; such a Soul he enjoyerh Temporal things, as if he enjoyed them not, he may have Gold, Silver, Wife, Children, Possessions; but his Affections, the best of his Affections God hath; he hath those things, but is not Defiled with them¹²⁵, he useth those things as the Traveller doth his Inn to help him to his Journeys End, but as for the World, he hath all the things of it under his Feet, as the Woman had the Moon in the *12th* of the *Revelations*, which Woman Represented the Church of the Living God, as Conquering the world and all therein. Would you know farther the Mischiefs and Detriments which come in at the Door of Backsliding and Apostacy? it Reflects Dishonour upon the Author of all good, God himself; what is the Voice and Language of such a one, but this, Either that there is no God, no such Being as will call me to an Account for such an Action; or if there be a God, he is one not worth Suffering for: it Reflects upon his Divine Properties¹²⁶, as if he could be out-done in his Wisdom, or were weak in his Power, or at least were Unfaithful to his poor Troubled People, and would forsake them in time of Distress, as if he were altogether without Pity and Compassion to the work of his hands. What cause hath any thus to Reproach the Living God, by Revolting from him? Such preach aloud, That for Promises they are vain and empty Complements, and for the Threatnings they are nothing but Scare-Crows, and for the Precepts they are Rendred the most unreasonable Laws in the world: Hence some have said, It is a weariness to serve him; and have asked the Question, What Profit is it to keep his Ordinances?¹²⁷ The Question strongly implies they thought there was none, like the slothful one of Old, who said, God was an hard Master, an austere man¹²⁸; such Render the Worship of GOD to be a harder Task then *Pharoah* laid upon the *Jews* of old, who was to make the same Tale of Bricks, though they must gather straw themselves, which before was brought unto them¹²⁹: By such Actions men say to God, *Depart from us*¹³⁰, *for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*; and to the Church, *What is thy Beloved more then anothers, that thou dost so charge us and Reprove us?*¹³¹ how dumb and silent will such be one day, when *God* shall charge this upon them, as the Doctrines such Revoltings did Preach!

Moreover, this grieves the hearts of all the Sincere, stumbles the poor seeking Soul, and hardens Gods Enemies, and makes them bold in sin; how uncomfortable is it to such who desire to stablish and strengthen the hands of *Gods* People at Liberty, by their sufferings, to have such News brought to us, in our Bonds, Such a tall Cedar is fallen, such a *Star* is fallen from Heaven, he that hath been many years a Separate, is become as Zealous a Church-man as any; how unlike are such to holy *David*, who though he was sore broken in the place of Dragons, and covered with the shadow of Death, yet his Heart was not turned back, nor his Feet declined *Gods* way, he had neither forgotten him, nor dealt falsely in his Covenant; if he had, he knew *God* would soon search it out¹³². Such Revoltings sadden the Hearts of the Lords Sufferers. There are three things every Faithful Sufferer hath in his Eye.

First, the glory of his Lord and Master, who suffered for him, and so hath laid his under great Obligations to suffer for him in the Flesh¹³³, though when we have done all we can do, we are unprofitable servants¹³⁴.

123 Jon 4.41,42.

124 Eph. 1.18.

125 1 Cor. 7.29,30,31.

126 Isaiah 43.2.

127 Malachi 3.14.

128 Mat 25.24

129 Exod. 5.10.

130 Job. 22.17.

131 Cant. 5.9.

132 Psal. 44. from 11 to 22.

133 1 Pet. 4.1.

134 Luke 17.10.

Secondly, We Eye the good & safety of our own Souls, knowing those which draw back *draw back* to Perdition¹³⁵, being no way fit for the Kingdom of God¹³⁶, but shall be led forth with the Workers of Iniquity, because they turned aside to Crooked Paths, but Peace shall be on *Israel*¹³⁷.

Again, a third thing in our Eye, is, the good and Establishment of the People of God, which *Paul* Experienced in the Church of *Phillippi*; many of the Brethren waxed the more bold by his Bonds, this the Apostle had in his Eye all along.

Hence saith he, Whether we be afflicted, it is for your Consolation and Salvation; these are great words to this purpose, *Col. 1.24. Who now rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my Flesh, for his bodies sake, which is the Church.* I Rejoice in my Sufferings, *πάθημα* This word is sometimes translated for the passions of the mind, and motions of Sin, *Rom. 7.5.* Evil Affections and Lusts, *Gal 5.24.* These are none of the least of Sufferings, the war the Flesh maketh against the *Spirit*, but the word here translated sufferings, respecteth those outward troubles in the Body, and Flesh, and so the word is frequently taken, as *1 Pet. 4:13. Rom. 8.18.* Now what this poor man did suffer in the Flesh you may see, *2 Cor. 11.23.* to 30. In labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in Prisons frequent, in Deaths oft, of the Jews received I five times forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with Rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwrack, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in Journyings often, in Perils of Water, in Perils of Robbers, in Perils by my own Countrymen, in Perils by the Heathen, in perils in the City, in Perils in the Wilderness, in Perils in the *Sea*, in Perils among False Brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in cold and Nakedness, besides the care of all the Churches. O poor Apostle! the very Non-such for sufferings, except Christ, in the New Testament; what an affectionate word is that of *Paul* in *Phil. 2.* vers. 17. *And if I be offered upon the Service and Sacrifice of your Faith, I Joy and Rejoice with you all;* O what love to *Souls* is here! so he might strengthen their Faith, he was willing to be made a sacrifice: from the same Love, he saith of himself and other Ministers, We live, if ye stand fast. Doctor *Taylor*, Martyr, had been Preacher in *Hadley* many years with great success, and when carried there to be burnt in the *Marian* Days, spoke to the Inhabitants of the Town to this purpose: *Here I have Preached the Gospel, and now I am come to Seal it with my Blood.* As the steadfastness of the Church was to *Pauls* Joy, so the contrary made him weep that some were Enemies to the Cross of Christ¹³⁸; and by such mens ill Conversation, the Sincere are Reproached, and the Enemies of God, though illogically, say they are all such a company of Hypocrites; this and this is their Religion, they are all a company of false hearted Hypocrites.

See how our Churches fill, come let us go on, we have good success, we shall bring them all home at last. I am perswaded through somes Revolting from the Truth, the Enemies of God and his people have been so Hardened as to think if they should kill us they did God good Service¹³⁹; from hence they say, they will trust a *Turk*, a *Pagan*, before such; as a King once said of one who left his old Principles, and took up the Principles of the King, to ingratiate himself into the Kings Favour, upon which the King spoke in great dislike of that Act, He that will not be true to his God, will never be true to his King, and as the story saith, He was either ordered to be put to Death for it, or under some lesser punishment; as for such Revolters none will nor can give them a good word: The Lord saith, his *Soul shall have no pleasure in them*¹⁴⁰, that is, he hates them; and for good men they are

135 Heb. 10.39.

136 Luke 9.62.

137 Psal. 125.5.

138 Phil. 3.18.

139 John 16.2.

140 Heb. 10.38.

ready to say with *Paul of Demas*, He hath forsaken us, having loved this present world¹⁴¹, which while some have Coveted after, they have Erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows¹⁴²; *but they went out from us, for they were not of us, for if they had been of us, no doubt but they would have Continued with us*¹⁴³; and as for bad men, you have heard what they say of such; these are like the Devils of Hell, who are Reserved in Chains, for that they did not keep their First Estate¹⁴⁴; let all such remember *Spira*, should God leave thee to the Dartings and Gripings of Conscience as he did him; thou wouldst with him cry out, O that I were above God, for my Sin is greater then his Mercy; P. 78. 28. The Spirit and Conscience will plead against such one day; the *Spirit* for that it was Resisted in its good motions, and Conscience for that it was curb'd at sometimes, and forc'd at others, Tenter'd and strecht, as one some Months since Confest he went to Church with a disquieted mind which had not been there for many years before, hoping to preserve what he had thereby, and in a few hours after, God swept away all by a dreadful Fire, which he took as a Judgment from God for that act of Revolting, and so that Scripture made good, *He that will save his Life shall loset it*¹⁴⁵; *Spira* did what he did to save his Estate, having a Wife and many Children, but lost his peace, in opposing the Spirits striving, which he Confest with Anguish afterwards when Exhorted to believe, I cannot said he, I have sinned against the Spirit, for when I was about to sign my Recantation, the Spirit said don't write, *Spira*, don't seal *Spira*, and yet I did it; there is no mercy for me. Is it not great folly, for a man to save his Glove, and lose his Hand, save his Hat and lose his Head, save his Goods and lose his Children, but a greater folly for a man to seek the world with the loss of his Soul, as the Fool in the Gospel said, *Soul take thine Ease, eat drink and be merry*; but saith God unto him, *Thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul shall be Required of thee, and then whose shall all this be which thou hast prepared?*¹⁴⁶ What a case such a Soul will be in, if God should take away his Soul that very day he backslides, and give him no time of Repentance.

Moreover God can and hath taken away mens lives and substance altogether, the only way to preserve what we have here blest and increased, is to keep faithful, if the Word of God be true, and there is no man that hath forsaken *House, or Brethren, or Sisters or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my sake and the Gospel, but he shall Receive an hundred fold now in this time, Houses, Brethren, Sisters, and Mothers, and Children, and Lands with Persecution, and in the World to come Everlasting Life*¹⁴⁷: you shall have the same in kind you lose for my sake, or that which is equivalent to it, or far better, Grace and Peace, Content and Satisfaction in your condition, otherwise God may curse thee in all thy enjoyments, in all thy Relations, and the labour of thy hands, *for the Curse of the Lord is in the house of the Wicked*; Remember the sad lamentation of *Origine*, after he had bowed to an Idol: Tread on me, I am unsavoury Salt, I am worse then *Cain*, then *Judas*, was his Cry, when his Conscience Condemned him upon Reading *Psal. 50.16, 17.* after his Fall, *But unto the Wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldst take my Covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest Instruction, and casts my words behind thee*; you see the Backslider in act, as well as the Backslider in heart, shall be filled with his own ways¹⁴⁸. By way of advice to those which have Backsliden in heart or act; *Return to the Lord, and he will heal your Backslidings, and love thee Freely*; now make the same answer as the Church of old: *Lo we come unto thee, For thou art the Lord our God; Return, O Backsliding Israel, for though a man shall not be obliged that hath put away his Wife, if she do become another mans, to take her again; Yet though thou hast played the Harlot with many Lovers, yet Return again, saith the Lord*¹⁴⁹: O! What a gracious merciful God is this that calleth and invieth such to come to to him which have

141 2 Tim. 4.10.

142 1 Tim. 6.10

143 1 John 2.19.

144 Jude 6.

145 Mat. 10.39.

146 Luk. 12.19,20.

147 Mark 10.29,30.

148 Prov. 14.14.

149 Jer. 3.1.

committed Spiritual Adultery! that if they will but put away their Whoredoms out of their sight, and their Adulteries from between their Breasts¹⁵⁰, and Return to their First Husband, and acknowledge their Iniquity, that they have transgressed against the Lord their God, and scattered their ways to the Strangers under every green tree, and not obeyed the Voice of the Lord their God.

The Lord hath proclaimed he will not let his Anger fall upon you¹⁵¹, *Because he is merciful, and will not keep Anger for ever*; therefore, Return, Return O *Shumanite*, that we may look upon thee¹⁵² with Joy and Delight, as the Angels in Heaven do rejoyce at the Returning of a Soul to God; *O Return to thy First Husband, for then was it better with thee then now¹⁵³*: Return to thy God from whom thou hast revolted, who stands with open Arms to receive you; return to the Church again, whom thou hast made sad by thy departing from the Truth, and humble thy self to God and them, and they will cheerfully receive thee into their fellowship, and let thy Return be as publickly as may be with Convenience, even to the knowledge, and before the faces of those which Tempted thee to enter into Bonds, or to make sinful Promises, or to do unwarrantable actions; repent as publickly as thou hast offended, as good Mr. *Cranmer*, Martyr, when carried to the Stake, took vengeance on that hand first which subscribed his Recantation in the very face of his Enemies, his putting it first into the Flames; it is a mercy God will accept of thy Return, thy Repentance; it would not be accepted of *Adam*, who broke but one positive Law, he must dye, Repentance must not be pleaded, there was no room for that; a poor man gathering a few Sticks on the Sabbath-day, dye he must, no Repenrance accepted of a presumptuous Sinner; what a favour then is this of God to thee, Soul, that upon thy first sincere Returning to him, he will move towards thee; when the *Prodigal* came to himself¹⁵⁴, and took words, and returned to his Father, and said, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee: while he was a great way off, the Father saw him, and ran, and fell on his Neck and kissed him*, and calls for the best Robe; Christs Righteousness, to make him Comely in Gods Eye, a Ring is to be put on his hand, in token of great love, and most probable to be a signification of the Holy Spirit¹⁵⁵, sealing the Soul up to the day of Redemption in the Spirit, bearing witness with thine, *Thou art a Child of God*; Shoes must be brought also to be put on his feet, which we have mentioned already, those Gospel-shoes is Peace in the Conscience, which will inable Souls to go through thick and thin.

Now, let this Troubled Conscience have Peace which passeth all Understanding; no sooner shall a Soul Return sincerely, and say, Lord, Take away Iniquity, and Receive me Graciously; But, God quickly layeth the Soul under Obligations to Render him the Calves of his Lips; *Bring forth the Fatted Calf, that there may be Signs of Joy for the Return of him that was lost, and the Life of him which was Dead*. These things are grounds of Incouragement, and therefore despair not.

Suppose, it be granted thou didst Sin against Light, so did *David* and *Peter*, to the last, against many Protestations, and yet both upon Repentance accepted: O Return quickly, get into the Refuge City before the Pursuer overtake thee, Death is Pursuing you, Judgment also: O get into the Love and Favour of the best Refuge before that day come, and call thy self to an Account where, and when it was thou hadst the first approved thought of leaving God and his good way of Peace, and from that time and place let thy Repentance begin, as the Lord said to *Ephraim*, Jer. 31.21. *Set thee up Way-marks, make thee high Heaps: Set thine Heart toward the High-way, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O Virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy Cities*. I beseech you Return before this day of Trouble be over, for that is one thing will satisfie most men of the Reality of thy Repentance; should you delay till the Storm be over, and then Profess thy Repentance, there will be

150 Hosea 2.2.

151 Jer. 3.12,13,14.

152 Cant. 6.13.

153 Hosea 2.7.

154 Luk. 15 from 17. to 24.

155 Eph. 4.30. Rom 8.15.

great ground of fear thou art not sincere; for it is a hard thing to account such upright which for many years maintained a Separation, and in troublous times Reprove themselves by building up what before this would not gather a Stone for; the Reason is, because many of those which Revolt, did make as great a show of Sanctity before their Backsliding, as is possible for them to make if they should return; from hence we see the Advantage an Established Soul hath, such may look back upon their Faithfulness to God, in times of Temptation, and admire grace, and so take Comfort to themselves; what an Honourable thing it is for to be in many Storms and Temptations, and yet the same man of whom God will say, as once of *Job*, when accused to God, *And still he Holdeth fast his Integrity*¹⁵⁶. But, by way of Advice to all such as have not fallen in the Storm, who have kept their garments from Defiling¹⁵⁷, let God have the glory; thou standest by Faith, which God is Author of, be not High-minded but fear; glory not secretly, Rejoice not in thy Brothers fall: *But ye which are Spiritual, Restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness*¹⁵⁸; καταρτιζω Restore ye; the Phrase is borrowed from Chirurgeons, who being to deal with a broken joint, handles the same very Tenderly. The Original word signifieth, to set a Bone broken or out of joint, into its right place, that it may be perfectly whole and strong as before; so we should deal by one overtaken in a Fault, seek to bring him into his right place, and if true Repentance appear¹⁵⁹, to Comfort him by the Application of suitable Promises, as was the Advice of holy *Paul* to the Church of *Corinth*, about the incestuous Person, as it is suppos'd, *2 Cor. 2.* least he be Swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow; and let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed least he fall; for if *Adam* who was Created in Righteousness and Holiness, after Gods own Image¹⁶⁰, had pure Inclinations as he came out of the hand of God, if he fell when God left him to the Improvement of the gifts and grace of Nature upon the first Temptation, do we think to stand, who have now so many Passions in the Soul, and a Nature more prone to Vice then Vertue, when assaulted by Temptation¹⁶¹; no, no, it cannot be, *Because we are kept by the mighty power of God through Faith*¹⁶²; which Grace we can as little act without the Grace of God, as make a World; what would many give under trouble of Sin and Guilt, if they could believing lay hold of one Gospel-Promise¹⁶³, and how hard a thing hath some experienced this to be, yea impossible, till God hath helped them by his good Spirit! the same may be said of Repentance when the Soul hath sinned, how much do gracious Souls desire Repentance unto Life, but experience teacheth us all how hard it is to get a Broken Heart, a Melted Heart; oh how often are we ready to Cry out of the hardness of heart; from hence there is ground of Humility, and lying at the Throne of grace continually, for of our selves, as of our selves, we cannot think a good thought, how can we then think that of our selves without Divine Aid¹⁶⁴, we can stand in the swellings of *Jordan*; and as ever we would go through a storm of outward affliction, let us first keep down and under indwelling lusts, indwelling Sin; let not that Man think to wear the Cross of Persecution, that doth not first wear the Cross of Mortification; and let not that Soul doubt of wearing the Cross of Tribulation, that daily wears the Cross of *Self-Denyal* and Mortification; for he that hath Power over his own Spirit, is more then he which taketh a City.

We should inure our selves to wear the Pubilck Cross, by wearing it first more privately in our Houses, in our Families, in our Shops and Trades: For let not that Person think he will ever be able to part with his Houses, Lands, Liberties, for the Lord Jesus Christ, that cannot first part with a secret lust: But if we have Grace enough, to wear daily the Cross of Mortification of the old Man; you need not fear but he that giveth Grace to do the greater, will give Grace to do the lesser; for I look upon the subduing of Corruption, a greater thing then enduring Persecution; though neither can

156 Job. 2.3.

157 Rev. 3.4.

158 Gal. 6.1.

159 Rom. 11.20.

160 Gen. 1.27.

161 Rom. 7.18.

162 1 Pet. 1.5.

163 Heb. 12.2.

164 2 Cor. 3.5.

be done as it ought, without help from Heaven. Finally, and I have done, let us get in this Trying day upon the Wing of Faith, and fly up above the threats of Men.

It is a Promise¹⁶⁵ *that he which walketh uprightly shall dwell on High; his place of Defence shall be the Munition of Rocks; his Bread shall be given him; his Water shall be sure*: This is the blessed Portion of such as behold the King in his Glory, by an Eye of Faith that, dwells on High with him; his Bread shall be given him, and Waters sure: Bread of Life, and Water of Life, such shall have, which the World, nor the formal Professors know nothing of, and albeit they cannot have the ordinary means, nor their under-Shepherds: Yet the great Shepherd of the Sheep, can and will feed them in their private Retirements, in their Closets secretly, Effectually and Savingly.

But it is only them, which drive on the secret Trade of Prayer. O! that we had but the Divine art of Living more with *God*, and in *God*: There is such a Life attainable as to get above Men, above the Creatures, above Fears, above Frowns. *He which hearkeneth to Christ, shall be delivered from the fear of Evil*¹⁶⁶; it may be not from Evil, but the fear of it.

O! Blessed state to be Delivered from the fear of Men, the fear of Evil, the fear of Prison, the fear of Poverty, the fear of Flames, as many have Experienced through *Grace*; and if they may be Believed, can speak Experimentally, which is more then to Read it, that *Christs Yoke* is Easy, and yet with a notwithstanding, all befalls the Saints; *his Burden is a light Burden, and his Ways are Pleasant, and his Paths are Peace*; many have had more Trouble in the fear they have been in, before *God* hath Exercised them; then in the very Exercise. Therefore for the future, do not compare future Tryals with present strength: But study thy Duty, and depend upon the Promise, which will bring in suitable strength in every Condition; if thou shelter thy self under the Wings of *Gods* attributes, and say with Holy *David*, *Be thou my strong Habitation, whereunto I may continually Resort*¹⁶⁷: But especially then, *when the Heart is like over-whelmed within*; then to Cry with Holy *David*, *Lead me to the Rock that is higher then I*¹⁶⁸, that is, to the Eternal Rock of Ages, *God* himself; there to Solace our selves in his Divine Perfections, and that our present Trials may no more, yet so much affect us, as they may terminate in *Gods* glory, and our Everlasting Comfort and Joy.

When thou canst get upon the Wing of Faith, thou wilt see and Experience, that he which Preserved the *Myrtl-Trees, in the bottom*¹⁶⁹; the Church in the seventy Years Captivity, will preserve thee, the same *Angel* of the Covenant, who preserved the *burning Bush*¹⁷⁰ then; though an Host incamp against us; we need not fear, for he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*¹⁷¹, and will shew *wherein the Enemy deales proudly, God will be above them*¹⁷²; wherein they deal subtilly, *God* be above them in his Wisdom; wherein they deal strongly, *God* will be above them in his Power, wherein they deal Unmercifully with his People, *God will be above them* in his Mercy toward them; therefore let the Saints rejoyce¹⁷³, because *God Reigneth*¹⁷⁴ *and sitteth upon the floods*¹⁷⁵, *King for ever*: and from the same Reason, because *God* Reigneth, let the Earth tremble, though *the floods have lifted up* themselves¹⁷⁶: Yet when the Lord shall make bare his Arm to save his Church, and appear in his Glory, to build up *Zion*¹⁷⁷, *they shall know they are but Men*¹⁷⁸; and that he whose name is **Jehovah**, is the Excellent in all the Earth.

165 Isai. 33.15.16.

166 Prov. 1.33.

167 Psal. 71.3.

168 Psal. 61.2.

169 Zach. 1.8

170 Exod. 3.2.

171 Heb. 13.5.

172 Exod. 18.11.

173 Psal. 95.1.

174 Psal. 97.1.

175 Psal. 29.10.

176 Psal. 93.3.

177 Psal 102.16.

178 Psal. 9.20.

Oh! Let us Pray hard that God would purge Mount *Zion* with *the Spirit of Judgment, & the Spirit of Burning*¹⁷⁹; and do *all his Work upon Mount Zion*, that he may deal with his Enemies¹⁸⁰. But Oh! There is much work; yet to be done upon Mount *Zion*. Have we not brought this *Judgment begun at the House of God*¹⁸¹, upon ourselves? may we not Read our Sin in our Punishment? do our Enemies deal unmercifully with us? is it not because we have dealt so, one with another? do they deal unjustly with us? is it not for dealing unjustly one with another? do they Persecute us? Alas! Have we not Persecuted each other, because of difference in Opinion, where yet the Image of *God* hath appear'd? for these things, God is Contending with us; Let us all Banish and Expel the *Achan*¹⁸² out of our Hearts, out of our Churches, and shew our selves Zealous against Sin, and exercise Judgment, as *Phineas*¹⁸³ of Old did, and it may be the Plague and Judgment may stop; if we cleanse our Hearts, our Families, our Churches, then God may give us our Prophets again, our Sabbaths again, our Ordinances again, our Ministers again: But without this, we may expect Judgments *seven times worse then ever*¹⁸⁴: But if we return to God, he will return unto us in Mercy.

O! Pray hard to be fitted for Christs Kingdom, and then that his Kingdom may come: Believe down thy Corruptions, watch down thy Sins, Pray down thy Iniquities, and the Lord will come with Deliverance, and get himself a glorious Name; do not you long to see Christ Exalted, and God Admired in the displaying of his Glorious Attributes, Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Justice; not so much for the sake of our Deliverance, as that God may get himself Glory? and we should be willing to be Footstools, so Christ thereby might get upon his Throne; and then his Church shall be Exalted *upon the tops of the Mountains*¹⁸⁵, which now lieth among the *Pots*¹⁸⁶.

And to Conclude, never cease Praying until *Jerusalem* be made the praise of the whole Earth¹⁸⁷, by a universal spreading the Gospel, and so a greater degree of Knowledge and Holiness will be in the World then ever. When thou art in the Mount with God by Faith, Pray for a poor distressed Persecuted Church: Lord for thy Names sake, save *Zion*¹⁸⁸ Thou hast done it, for thy Names sake do it now, it will be the more to the Honour of thy Grace; thou hast stiled thy self the Lord Gracious and *Merciful, Pardoning Iniquity, Transgression and Sin*¹⁸⁹. O! Save us *accordjng to the greatness of thy Mercy*¹⁹⁰; it will also glorifie thy Faithfulness, to Save thy People, with whom thou hast made an *Everlasting Covenant*. O! Lord Remember, break not thy *Covenant* with us¹⁹¹, *for the Dark places of the Earth are full of the Habitations of Cruelty*¹⁹²: as *Moses* pleaded, Gods *Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*¹⁹³, to save his Church then; we must Plead his Promise to *Christ*¹⁹⁴, to save us now; Plead the Churches Relation to God, as of old, we are thy People: O Lord! *thine own, thou never barest rule over the Heathen, they were not called by thy Name*. Lord remember we are thy People, we are called by thy Name, we are thine; and Lord what wilt thou do for thy great Name?¹⁹⁵ though *Abraham* be Ignorant of us, and *Israel* acknowledge us not; *be not wroth very sore, O Lord! neither remember Iniquity for ever: Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy People*¹⁹⁶; if thou savest us not, the Enemies will Blasphem, and say, God could not save them¹⁹⁷; or

179 Isai. 4.4.

180 Chap. 10.12.

181 1 Pet. 4.17.

182 Josh. 7. 23 to 27.

183 Psal. 106.30.

184 Levit. 26.21.

185 Micah. 4.1.

186 Psal. 68.13.

187 Isai 62. 1.6.

188 Ez. 36.21.22.

189 Exod. 34.7.

190 Psal. 51.1.

191 Jer. 14.21.

192 Psal. 74. 19.20.

193 Exod. 32.13.

194 Isay. 53. 10,11,12.

195 Josh. 7.4.

196 Isai. 64.8.9.

197 Isai. 36.18.19. Chap. 37.v.10,11,12,13.14.

he hath brought them in the Wilderness to slay them; and so thou wilt lose the Glory of thy Power and Faithfulness.

We have this to Plead also, Lord we are very low, *by whom shall Jacob arise*¹⁹⁸ if not by the God of *Jacob*? we have no might, but our Eyes are unto thee, untill thou arise and have Mercy upon us. Appear in thy strength, that the Kingdoms of the World may know that thou art God¹⁹⁹; and that there is none besides thee; and arise Lord for the help of thy People, *for Vain is the help of Man*²⁰⁰, and *let the sounding of thy Bowels*²⁰¹ appear in saving *Zion*, according to thy Faithful Promise, and in the mean time, let our Faith and Patience be lengthned out, to the coming of the Lord; till Time be swallowed up in Eternity; Finite, in Infinite; Hope, in Vision; and Faith in Fruition²⁰²; when God shall be the matter of our Happiness; when Fulness shall be the measure of our Happiness, and Eternity the Duration²⁰³.

FINIS

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Note: In the original text, the Scripture citation were marginal references. The position of these citations as footnotes in this text were assigned by the transcriber and any inaccuracy in their positioning is his alone.

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198 Amos 7.2.
199 2 Chron. 20.6.7. Psal. 83.18
200 Psal. 60.11.
201 Isai. 63.15.
202 Psal. 69.35.
203 Jude 24.