JOHN WINTHROP’S "EXPERIENCIA"

Experiencia: 2 February: 1606

Worldly cares though not in any gross manner outwardly, yet secretly, together with a secret desire after pleasures and itching after liberty and unlawful delights, had brought me to wax weary of good duties and so to forsake my first love, whence came much trouble and danger.

Then in that time, having not perfect peace with God, but through the persuasion of the enemy, distrustfulness began to arise, when as the Lord sent but a small trial, my wife being taken with a fit of an ague, myself being not prepared with a peaceable conscience, it did much harm me, whereupon I promised to be prepared better.

Being in this trouble I was wholly unable to raise up myself, neither could I pray a great while, yet at length I desired the Lord and he heard me, so as upon the confession of my sins, which I did with much comfort, I found mercy and grace to amend.

In that week that my wife was delivered, by reason of the present occasion and of an ague which I had taken, I gave myself to negligence and idleness which I could not shake off a good while after: it also brought with it many other sins as caring for this world etc., and one morning a great fit of impatience, for matter betwixt my wife and my mother, which I pray God forgive me.

Where there is not a reverent trembling at the committing of small sins, and those but in thought or word, there is no fear of God, and where there is no fear there is no faith; therefore mark this.

It is wonderful how the omission of the least duty, or commission of evil, will quench grace and estrange us from the love of God.

February 8. I found that on Saturday in the afternoon deferring reading and prayer till 3 of the clock, for the performing of a needless work, my heart was very much unsettled.

On Sunday being the 9 of March: being at sermon at Groton, I let in but a thought of my journey into Essex, but straight it delighted me, and being not very careful of my heart, I was suddenly, I know not how, so possessed with the world, as I was led into one sin after another, and could hardly recover myself, till taking myself to prayer before I was too far gone, I found mercy.

The 20 of April, 1606, I made a new Covenant with the Lord which was this:

Of my part, that I would reform these sins by his grace: pride, covetousness, love of this world, vanity of mind, unthankfulness, sloth, both in his service and in my calling, not preparing myself with reverence and uprightness to come to his word. Of the Lords part that he would give me a new heart, joy in his spirit, that he would dwell with me, that he would strengthen me against the world, the flesh, and the Devil, that he would forgive my sins and increase my faith. God give me grace to perform my promise and I doubt not but he will. God make it fruitful. Amen.

December 12. It must be only God that must work in the heart, as by this experience; - when I used the best means I was able to persuade my wife etc., and that when I had the best spirit, yet I could not prevail not so much as to make her to answer me or to talk with me about any goodness; but yet one time when I did but only ask a question, by the way as it were, and that when there were many things which justly made me fear a repulse, yet it pleased God even then to so open her heart as that she became very ready and willing to lay open her heart to me in a very comfortable measure; whereby I see that Prayer must do it, if ever any good be done, for I had prayed often to God in that manner: and she proved after a right godly woman.

In these following Experiences there be diverse vows, promises to God, or Resolutions and purposes of my heart, occasioned through the oft experience of my weaknesses in such things, and my great desire of keeping peace and holding communion with God, many of which I have in time observed that I have great need to repent (in some of them) my unadvisedness in making them, considering that they have proved snares to my conscience, and (in others of them) my wretchedness and sin in not carefully observing them. Mr. Cartwright in his Answer to the Rheims Testament: Acts 5. 4. giveth some directions on this point.
1610 [1611] January: After I had much displeased my God by followings idle and vain pastimes, as sitting late up at ---, with my unkind omitting my family exercise, I was much unsettled, as there was cause, yet God (when I thought his anger was even hot against me) drew me to repentance and showed me sweet mercy.

12. But a little after being out of order again through the force of a new temptation, and mine own rebellious wicked heart yielding itself to the slavery of sin, had brought me into the Lords hands again, yet my God, the true natural father of the prodigal, seeing me but have a mind to return, met me in his fatherly love and brought me into his favor notwithstanding all my unkindness.

17. Then by little and little by want of diligent care and observation of my heart and ways, I lost the former freshness of my affections, and so began to fall to idleness, taking pleasure in vanity again, but God crossed me in my delights, and when I perceived God was angry with me I had no heart to any duty, till reading the 33 of Job: v. 29: the Lord moved me to come to him again, so I returned and found favor, yet not such affections as before.

1611. The 22 of August it pleased God to send me a sore sickness wherein besides the work of God's Spirit upon my conscience, I did most evidently perceive his great mercy and care in supporting me, easing the pain, giving me patience, and much cheerfulness, and willingness to abide his good will, and before the sickness was come to the height, God in mercy cut it off by sending me without any means a great relief.

One thing which I observed in this sickness was that God visited upon me many of my bold runnings out against conscience, which I then when I committed them passed over with slight repentance, and now had surely smarted well for them if I had not now stopped them by serious and speedy turning to God, whereupon I resolved not to be so bold to sin against my conscience in time to come.

Another thing which I resolved upon good ground was to leave all my working and inventions of all sorts, especially the doing of such things as required any labor or time, and to content my self with such things as were left by our forefathers, and that for divers reasons as First

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I had prayed oft and earnestly for the mortifying of divers corruptions, and I have certainly found that God hath heard me for some of them, weakening the force of them by means that I never thought of.

Dec: 15. I acknowledge a special providence of God that my wife taking up a mess of porridge, before the children or anybody had eaten of it, she spied therein a great spider.

Finding by much examination that ordinary shootings in a gun, etc: could not stand with a good conscience in my self, as first, for that it is simply prohibited by the law of the land, upon this ground amongst others, that it spoils more of the creatures than it gets; 2 it procures offence unto many; 3 it wastes great store of time; 4 it tolls a mans body overmuch; 5 it endangers a mans life, etc; 6 it brings no profit all things considered; 7 it hazards more of a mans estate by the penalty of it, then a man would willingly parte with; 8 it brings a man of worth and godliness into some contempt; lastly for mine own parte I have ever been crossed in using it, for when I have gone about it not without some wounds of conscience, and have taken much pains and hazardred my health, I have gotten sometimes a very little, but most commonly nothing at all towards my cost and labor: Therefore I have resolved and covenanted with the Lord to give over altogether shootings at the creek; - and for killing of birds, etc: either to leave that altogether or else to use it, both very seldom and very secretly. God (if he please) can give me fowl by some other means, but if he will not, yet, in that it is [his] will who loves me, it is sufficient to uphold my resolution.

That which I promise for my self, I likewise promise for my servants, as far as the former reasons agree to them.

Being further resolved that penal Statutes do bind the person to obedience in these indifferent things, I have proposed not to break the intention of this Law, etc: this further I hold for this matter, that though law cannot bind from the use of the creatures, yet it may limit the manner of taking them.

1611 [1612] Jan: 1. Being admonished by a Christian friend that some good men were offended to hear of some gaming which was used in my house by my servants, etc: I resolved that as for my self not to use any carding etc, so for others to repress it as much as I could, during the continuance of my present state, and if God bring me once to be wholly by my self, then to banish all together.

28. In my sleep I dreamed that I was with Christ upon earth, and that being very instant with him in many tears, for the assurance of the pardon of my sins etc: I was so ravished with his love towards me, far exceeding the affection of the kindest husband that being awaked it had made so deep impression in my heart, as I was forced to unmeasurable weeping for a great while, and had a more lively feeling of the love of Christ than ever before. This followed the same night after I had been visiting Jesus Christ in his faithful servant, old Hudson, to whom as by my presence and help I afforded much comfort so God recompensed me with comfort again. And herein I see great cause to complain of the weakness of my faith that cannot see Christs help as near, now he is in heaven, as it appeared when he was on earth.

I see that I cannot ever feel the same measure of the love of Christ here, but this is my comfort that I shall have the full fruition of it in heaven.

Feb. Getting my self to take too much delight in a vain things which I went about without the warrant of faith, I was by it by degrees drawn to make shipwreck of a good conscience and the love of my father, so as my heart began to grow hardened and inclining to a reprobate mind; prayer and other duties began to grow irksome, my confidence failed me, my Comfort left me, yet I longed after reconciliation, but could not obtain it; I earnestly sought to repent but could not get an heart unto it. I grew weary of myself, unprofitable to others, and God knows whither ever I shall recover that estate which I lost; - O that this might be a warning to me to take good heed how I grieve the good spirit of my God and wound my conscience, and that as the penning of this is in many tears, so the reading of it when occasion shall be may be a strong motive unto sobriety.

I find that often sinning brings difficulty in repenting and especially the bold running out against knowledge and conscience.

After the committing of such sins as have promised most contentment and commodities, I would ever gladly have wanted the benefit, that I might have been rid of the sin. Whereupon I conclude that the profit of sin can never countervail the damage of it, for there is no sin so sweet in the committing, but it proves more bitter in the repenting for it.

I do certainly find that when I set myself seriously to prayer etc: though I be very unfit when I begin yet God doth assist me and bows his ear to me, especially when I ask as one that would obtain.

I have trembled more at the committing of some new sin, although but small in comparison, then at the doing of some evil that I have been accustomed to, though much greater; therefore I see it is good to beware of Custom in sin, for often sinning will make sin light.
I saw my great folly in that I placed so much felicity in present outward things and in the hope of things to come, when as I am sure that I shall have them but for a short time, if at all. The danger and hurt of these earthly joys I find to be greater in that they diminish the joy of my salvation: wherefore I have resolved by the grace of God, to hold my affections in a narrower compass and not to suffer my heart to delight more in any thing than in the comfort of my salvation.

September 8. 1612. Finding that the variety of meats draws me on to eat more than standeth with my health, I have resolved not to eat of more then 2 dishes at any one meal. Whether fish, flesh, fowl or fruit or white meats etc: whether at home or abroad; the lord give me care and ability to perform it. I found that the pride of my heart, viz: these great thoughts of mine own gifts, credit, greatness, goodness etc. were like a canker in my profession, eating out the comfort of all duties, depriving God of a principal part of his right in my heart, which I daily perceived, when it pleased God to let me see my meanness in his exceeding greatness: whereupon I resolved to make it one of my chief petitions to have that grace to be poor in spirit: I will ever walk humbly before my God, and meekly, mildly, and gently towards all men, so shall I have peace.

May 23, 1613. When my condition was much straightened, partly through my long sickness, partly through want of freedom, partly through lack of outward things, I prayed often to the Lord for deliverance, referring the means to himself, and with all I often promised to put forth myself to much fruit when the Lord should enlarge me. Now that he hath set me at great liberty, giving me a good end to my tedious quartan, freedom from a superior will and liberal maintenance by the death of my wife's father (who finished his days in peace the 15 of May, 1613). I do resolve first to give myself, my life, my wit, my health, my wealth to the service of my God and Savior, who by giving himself for me, and to me, deserves whatsoever I am or can be, to be at his Commandment, and for his glory:

1. I will live where he appoints me.
2. I will faithfully endeavor to discharge that calling which he shall appoint me unto.
3. I will carefully avoid vain and needless expenses that I may be the more liberal to good uses.
4. My property, and bounty, must go forth abroad, yet I must ever be careful that it begin at home.
5. I will so dispose of my family affairs as my morning prayers and evening exercises be not omitted.
6. I will have a special care of the good education of my children.
7. I will banish profanes from my family.
8. I will diligently observe the Lords Sabbath both for the avoiding and preventing worldly business, and also for the religious spending of such times as are free from public exercises, viz. the morning, noon, and evening.
9. I will endeavor to show it more, etc; She also desired me oft that so long as she lived I would not cease praying for her, neither would be absent from her,
10. I will endeavor to show it more, etc; She also desired me oft that so long as she lived I would not cease praying for her, neither would be absent from her, but when I feared to be stripped of such a blessings: She replied, God never bestows any blessings so great on his children but still he hath a greater in store, and that I should be as comfortably resolved whether to live or die.

On Wednesday morning those which were about her, and herself also, began to fear that which followed, whereupon we sent for my Cousin Duke which when she understood she told me that she hoped when he came he would deal plainly with me, and not feed me with vain hopes; whereupon I breaking forth into tears, she was moved at it, and desired me to be contented, for you break mine heart (said she) with your grieving. I answered that I could do no less when I feared to be stripped of such a blessings: She replied, God never bestows any blessings so great on his children but still he hath a greater in store, and that I should not be troubled at it, for I might see how God had dealt with Mr. Rogers before me in the like case. And always when she perceived me to mourn for her, she would entreat and persuade me to be contented, telling me that she did love me well, and if God would let her live with me, she would endeavor to show it more, etc; She also desired me oft that so long as she lived I would not cease praying for her, neither would be absent from her, but when I had necessary occasions.

On Thursday at noon my Cousin Duke came to her, and took notice of her dangerous estate, yet expecting a farther issue that night he departed, saying that before Saturday we should see a great change. After his departure she asked me what he said of her, which when I told her, she was no whit moved at it but was as comfortably resolved whether to live or die.
On Thursday in the night she was taken with death, and about midnight or somewhat after called for me, and for the rest of her friends. When I came to her she seemed to be fully assured that her time was come, and to be glad of it, and desired me to pray which I did and she took comfort therein, and desired that we would send for Mr. Sandes, which we did. In the mean time, she desired that the bell might ring for her, and diverse of the neighbors came into her, which when she perceived she desired me that they might come to her one by one, and so she would speak to them all, which she did, as they came, quietly and comfortably. When the bell began to ring, some said it was the 4 o'clock bell, but she conceiving that they sought to conceal it from her, that it did ring for her, she said it needed not, for it did not trouble her. Then came in Mr. Nicolson whom she desired to pray, which he did.

When Mr. Sandes was come she reached him her hand, being glad of his coming (for she had asked often for him). He spoke to her of divers comfortable points, whereunto she answered so wisely and comfortably, as he and Mr. Nicolson did both marvel to hear her. Mr. Sandes saying to me that he did not look for so sound judgement in her: He said he had taken her always for a harmless young woman, and well affected, but did not think she had been so well grounded. Mr. Nicolson seeing her humbleness of mind and great comfort in God, said that her life had been so innocent and harmless as the Devil could find nothing to lay to her charge. Then she desired Mr. Sandes to pray but not pray for life for her; he answered then he would pray for grace. After prayer she desired me that I would not let Mr. Sandes go away, but when he showed her the occasion he had, she was content upon promise that he would come again. This was about 5 of the clock on Friday morning.

Friday morning about 6 of the clock my Cousin Duke came to us again, and when he had seen how things fell out that night, he told us that that was the dismal night, wherein she had received her death's wound, yet she might languish a day or 2: yet after he had felt her pulse, he said that if the next night were a good night with her, there was some hope left.

Friday morning she began somewhat to cheer, and so continued all that day, and had a very good night that night following, and began herself to entertain some thought of life, and so did most of us that were about her. But on Saturday morning she began to complain of cold, and a little after awakening out of a slumber, she prayed me to set my heart at rest, for now (said she) I am but a dead woman, for this hand (meaning her left hand) is dead already, and when we would have persuaded her that it was but numb with being under her, she still constantly affirmed that it was dead, and that she had no feeling in it, and desired me to pull off her gloves that she might see it, which I did; then when they would have wrapped some clothes about it, she disliked it, telling them that it was in vain, and why should they cover a dead hand: when I prayed her to suffer it, she answered that if I would have it so she would, and so I pulled her gloves, and they pinned cloths about her hands, when they had done she said O what a wretch was I for laying my leg out of the bed this night, for when I should pull it in again it was as if it had come through the coverlet, (yet it seemed to be but her imagination or dream, for the women could not perceive it).

The fever grew very strong upon her, so as when all the time of her sickness before she was wont to say she thanked God she felt no pain, now she began to complain of her breast, and troubles in her head, and after she had slumbered a while, and was awakened, she began to be tempted, and when I came to her she seemed to be affrighted, used some speeches of Satans assaulting her, and complained of the loss of her first love. etc: then we prayed with her, as she desired, after prayer she disliked that we prayed for life for her, since we might see it was not God's will that she should live.

Her fever increased very violently upon her, which the Devil made advantage of to molest her comfort but she declaring unto us with what temptations the Devil did assault her, bent herself against them, praying with great vehemence for God's help, and that he would not take away his loving kindness from her, defying Satan, and spitting at him, as so as we might see by her setting of her teeth, and fixing her eyes, shaking her head and whole body, that she had a very great conflict with the adversary.

After she a little paused, and that they went about to cover her hands which lay open with her former striving, she began to lift up her self, desiring that she might be covered with the curtains kept closed, now she desired light, and would have the curtain towards the window set open, and so to her end was much grieved when she had not either the day light or candlelight, but the fire light she could not endure to look upon, saying that it was of too many colors like the rainbow.)

Then she called for her sisters, and first for her sister Mary, and when she came she said, Sister Mary, thou hast many good things in thee, so as I have cause to hope well of thee, and that we shall meet in heaven, etc.

Then she called for her sister Margery, whom she exhorted to serve God, and to bring up her children well, not in pride and vanity, but in the fear of God.

To her mother she said that she was the first child that she should bury, but prayed her that she would not be discomforted at it; when her mother answered that she had no cause to be discomforted for her, for she should go to a better place, and she should go to her father, she replied that she should go to a better father than her earthly father.

Then came my father and mother, whom she thanked for all their kindness and love towards her.

Then she called for my children and blessed them severally, and would needs have Mary brought that she might kiss her, which she did.

Then she called for my sister Luce, and exhorted her to take heed of pride and to serve God.

Then she called for her servants: to Robert she said, you have many good things in you, I have nothing to accuse you of, be faithful and diligent in your service.

To Anne Pold she said that she was a stubborn wench, etc: and exhorted her to be obedient to her mother.

To Elizabeth Crouff she said, take heed of pride and I shall now release you, but take heed what service you go into.

To Anne Addams she said, thou hast been in bad serving long in an Alehouse etc: thou makest no conscience of the Sabbath; when I would have had thee gone to Church thou wouldest not, etc:

Then came Mercy Smith to her, to whom she said thou art a good woman, bring up thy children well, you poor folks commonly spoiled your children, in suffering (them) to break God's Sabbaths, etc:
To another she said you have many children, bring them up well, not in lying, etc:

To another she said God forgive your sins whatsoever they be.

To goodwife Cole she said, you are a good woman, I thank you for all your pains towards me, God reward you.

To Henry Pease she said, be diligent and faithful in your work, or else when death come, it will be laid before you; I pray God send your wife good deliverance, she may do well, though I die; bring up my goddaughter well, let her not want correction.

To her keeper she said, be not discouraged, although I die, thou hast kept many that have done well, thou hast but one child, bring it up well.

Her pain increased very much in her breast, which swelled so as they were forced to cut the ties of her waistcoat to give her ease: whilst she lay in this estate she ceased not (albeit she was very hoarse, and spoke with great pain) one while to exhort, another while to pray. Her usual prayer was Come Lord Jesus; When Lord Jesus, etc: her exhortation was to stir up all that saw her, to prepare for death, telling them that they did not know how sharp and bitter the pangs of death were, with many like speeches.

In this time she prayed for the Church, etc: and for the ministry, that God would bless good ministers, and convert such ill ones as did belong to him, and weed out the rest. After this we might perceive that God had given her victory, by the comfort which she had in the meditation of her happiness, in the favor of God in Christ Jesus. Towards afternoon her great pains remitted, and she lay very still, and said she saw her time was not yet come, she should live 24 hours longer; then when any asked her how she did, she would answer prettily well, but in her former fit to that question she would answer that she was going the way of all flesh. Then she prayed me to read by her, when I asked her where, she answered, In some of the holy gospels, so I began in John the 14, and read on to the end of the 17th Chapter. And when I paused, at the end of any sweet sentence, she would say this is comfortable: If I stayed at the end of any Chapter for her to take rest, she would call earnestly to read on, then she desired to take a little rest.

She often prayed God to forgive the sins of her youth, etc: and desired me oft to pray for her, that God would strengthen her with his holy spirit. After, she desired me again to read to her the 8th to the Romans, and the 11th to the Hebrews, whereby she received great comfort, still calling to read on, then I read the 116 Psalm this is a sweet Psalm (said she) then I read the 84 Psalm: the 32, 36, 37, and other places.

In the evening Mr. Sandes came again, and prayed, and soon after she took him by the hand and told him she would bid him farewell, for she knew it was a busy night with him. After, we went to prayer, and when we had done, "O what a wretch am I (said she) to lose the end of this prayer, for I was asleep."

After we had continued in reading etc, until late in the night, she asked who should watch with her, and when we told her, she was satisfied, and disposed herself to rest.

In the night she prayed one of the women that watched with her to read unto her whilst I was gone to bed; she asked often for me, and about 2 of the clock in the morning I came to her. Now it was the Sabbath day, and she had now and then a brunt of temptation, bewailing that she could not then be assured of her salvation, as she had been. She said that the devil went about to persuade her to cast of her subjection to her husband, etc:

That Sabbath noon, when most of the company were gone down to dinner, when I discoursed unto her of the sweet love of Christ unto her, and of the glory that she was going unto, and what an holy everlasting Sabbath she should keep, and how she should sup with Christ in Paradise that night, etc: she showed by her speeches and gestures the great joy and steadfast assurance that she had of those things. When I told her that her Redeemer lived, and that she should see him with those poor dim eyes, which should be bright and glorified, she answered cheerfully, she should. When I told her that she should leave the society of friends which were full of infirmities, and should have communion with Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, all the prophets and apostles and saints of God, and those holy martyrs (whose stories when I asked her if she remembered she answered yea) she would lift up her hands and eyes, and say, yea she should. Such comfort had she against death that she steadfastly professed that if life were set before her she would not take it.

When I told her that the day before was 12 months she was married to me, and now this day she should be married to Christ Jesus, who would embrace thee as I love Christ.

Her hearing still continued, and her understandings very perfect, her sight was dimmed, yet she knew everybody to the last. If I went from her she would call for me again, and once asked me if I were angry with her that I would not stay with her.

While I spoke to her of anything that were comfortable, as the promises of the Gospel, and the happy estate she was entering into, she would lay still and fix her eyes steadfastly upon me, and if I ceased awhile (when her speech was gone) she would turn her head towards me, and stir her hands as well as she could, till I spoke, and then would be still again.

About 5 of the clock, Mr. Nicolson came to her and prayed with her, and about the end of his prayer, she fetched 2 or 3 sighs, and fell asleep in the Lord.

The Wednesday following being the ii of Dec. she was buried in Groton Chancel by my other wife, and her child was taken up, and laid with her.

She was a woman wise, modest, loving, and patient of injuries; but her innocent and harmless life was of most observation. She was truly religious, and industrious therein: plain-hearted, and free from guile, and very humble minded; never so addicted to any outward things (to my judgment) but that she could bring her affections to stoop to God’s will in them. She was sparing in outward show of zeal, etc. but her constant love to good Christians, and the best things, with her reverent and careful attendance of God’s ordinances, both public and private, with her care for avoiding of evil herself, and reproving it in others, did plainly show that truth, and the love of God, did lye at the heart. Her loving and tender regard of my children was such as might well become a natural mother: For her carriage towards myself, it was so amiable and observant as I am not able to express; it had this only inconvenience, that it made me delight too much in her to enjoy her long.
I find by often experience that the most usual things that break off my comfort in God, and delight in heavenly things, is the entertaining the love of earthly things; - for having so often given myself unto the Lord, by particular solemn Covenants, as upon my recovery out of my quartan, the death of my former wife, deliverance from special sicknesses, etc., and now again upon the renewing of my repentance in this last affliction by the death of my other wife, the Lord will not endure it that I should steal my affection from him, to set it again upon the world; so as I perceive that, let me do what duties I will, yet if my heart be roaming after pleasure, glory, profit, etc: he abhors both me and my service; so as I see that if he may not have my heart, he will have nothing; - Hereupon it hath fallen out often that I have bestowed a great deal of time in prayer, and other duties, and have found no other answer but a wounded and discontented mind, and all because I have brought an heart halting between God and the world, desirous of his favor, and yet not resolved upon the denial of this world and myself; not weighing that sentence of Christ "He that will be my disciple, must deny himself," etc: Again on the other side sometimes upon a short meditation, or prayer, a secret groan, or desire sent up into heaven, etc., I have found unspeakable peace and comfort for then my heart would repose itself in God, and yield to him saying with Paul, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Whereupon I conclude that I cannot serve 2 masters: if I love the world, the love of the father can have no abiding in me. This benumbs the hand of faith, casts a mist before the eyes of it, cools the zeal of prayer, quenches the spirit, and all spiritual affections, and lays the heart open to the force of all temptations.

Now to repel all such lusts, pleasures, profits or whatsoever, that would steal away my heart from my God, I will meditate upon these and such other scriptures:

If then you be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above etc:

Love not the world, neither the things of the world etc:

My son give me thy heart:

They are not of the world, as I am not of the world:

Demas hath forsaken me and embraced this present world:

- The world is crucified to me and I to the world:

2 Peter. I. 4. Flee the corruptions which are in the world through lust:

1 Peter. 2. 11. As strangers and Pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts that fight against the soul.

Although the loss of my wife were to me a grievous things, yet God, in his more than fatherly mercy, drew my mind from being too intent upon it, by giving me cause to look into myself, and when he had showed me mine own nakedness and unworthiness, and thereby set me on work to follow him unwearably in prayer, (not only in set and solemn manner upon my knees, but by oft and earnest listings up of my heart, as I was walking, and sitting, having good encouragement, by his presence and assistance, to provoke me thereunto,) wherein I could not tell whether were greater my sorrow, joy, desire or fear, often times; and giving me to find much sweeteness and more than ordinary relish in the reading of his holy word, and in meditation, etc: I found in one fortnight, such an abundant recompense of my loss, as I might say with the prophet, O Lord thou hast caused my joy to surmount my grief an hundred fold. O my soul, praise the Lord, and all that is within me praise his holy name; which forgives thee all thy sins, and heals all thy Infirmities: My soul, what wilt thou return unto the Lord for all his benefits? take the cup of salvation (which he holdeth forth unto thee) and thank him with all thy might; Love him with all thy soul, and with all thy strengths; and for his love's sake let all thy delight be in the saints that are on the earth. Wrong not his truth so much, as to distrust him either for thy resurrection to glory, or thy perseverance in grace. He hath given thee his Son, who is as able to sanctify thee as he is to save thee; thou art now no more thine own; he hath sealed thee for himself, by that spirit of adoption, that spirit of truth and Comfort, which the world nor all the devils in hell cannot take from thee. O Heavenly father strengthen the weak faith of thy most unworthy servant; and establish the work thou hast wrought in me unto the end. Amen, Amen.

It is a very hard thing to love Christ as well in contempt as in glory, and to acknowledge and confess him in his base estate, as being exalted. It was an easy thing to think gloriously of the martyrdom of such as were glorious in worldly respects, as learning, honor, eminence of place, or great birth, etc: and on the other side no easy thing to read the histories of such as were vile, and base, and had no other ornament but naked truth, without some contemptible thoughts abating the worth and estimation of their cause and sufferings. These things did somewhat trouble me, until I considered that Christ's Kingdom was not of this world, and that a Christian as he must bear the Cross, so he must deny himself, which is the hard thing. O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake strengthen me hereunto. Romans 7: 18: In me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good things. I am carnal, sold under sin; Dead in sins etc.

Before I believed these things, as coming from the mouth of God who sees what is in man's heart, and therefore sees that all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually, my heart would ever be ready to attribute somewhat to its own worth and power, in the well doing of any duty, notwithstanding that I have found the contrary by much experience; for sometimes when my heart hath been but weakly prepared to prayer so as I have expected little comfort, etc: yet, God hath filled me with such power of faith, sense of his love, etc: as hath made my heart melt with joy, etc: Again at another time, when I have settled my heart unto prayer, of purpose to quickly up my drowsy affections, and to strengthen my faith, etc: yet I could not, with all my labor, although continuing longer, and in greater fervency then ordinary, get my faith strengthened, or my heart humbled and broke, or the feeling of the love of God shed abroad in my heart, but the rather more doubtfulings and discouragements, etc: yet when I have been forced with weariness to give over, even in the very parting Christ hath shown himself unto me, and answered all my desires. And hereby he hath taught me to trust to his free love, and not to the power of self-worth of my best prayers, and yet to let me see that true prayer, humble prayer, shall never be unregarded.

When I was a boy I was at a house, where I spied 2 small books lying cast aside, so I stole them, and brought them away with me; and since when they often times; and giving me to find much sweetness and more than ordinary relish in the reading of his holy word, and in meditation, etc: I found in one fortnight, such an abundant recompense of my loss, as I might say with the prophet, O Lord thou hast caused my joy to surmount my grief an hundred fold. O my soul, praise the Lord, and all that is within me praise his holy name; which forgives thee all thy sins, and heals all thy Infirmities: My soul, what wilt thou return unto the Lord for all his benefits? take the cup of salvation (which he holdeth forth unto thee) and thank him with all thy might; Love him with all thy soul, and with all thy strengths; and for his love's sake let all thy delight be in the saints that are on the earth. Wrong not his truth so much, as to distrust him either for thy resurrection to glory, or thy perseverance in grace. He hath given thee his Son, who is as able to sanctify thee as he is to save thee; thou art now no more thine own; he hath sealed thee for himself, by that spirit of adoption, that spirit of truth and Comfort, which the world nor all the devils in hell cannot take from thee. O Heavenly father strengthen the weak faith of thy most unworthy servant; and establish the work thou hast wrought in me unto the end. Amen, Amen.

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When I was a boy I was at a house, where I spied 2 small books lying cast aside, so I stole them, and brought them away with me; and since when they have to come to my mind I have grieved at it, and would gladly have made restitution, but that shame still let me; and when I had thought I had stilled my conscience, by considering the smallness of the value, my willingness to restore, etc: yet would not my conscience be quiet, but in every affliction, especially in this last, in the death of my wife, it met with me at every turn, neither could I be rid of the checks of it until I did (through God's direction) find a means to make satisfaction; which done, I had peace, and was in much better liberty of heart than before, God's holy name be praised.

It is a better and more safe estate to be prepared to die than to desire death, for this commonly hath more self love with it, than pure love of God: And it is a sign of more strength of faith, and Christian courage, to resolve to fight it out, than to wish for the victory.

The flesh is eagerly inclined to pride, and wantonness, by which it plays the tyrant over the poor soul, making it a very slave; the works of our callings being diligently followed, are a special means to tame it, and so is temperance in diet, for idleness (under which are all such works as are done to fulfill the will of the flesh rather then of the spirit;) and gluttony are the 2 main pillars of the flesh her kingdom. See Ecclesiastes: 1: 13.
After I had somewhat shook off my affliction, and had held in to a temperate course, and had been prettily weaned from the world, and had brought under my rebellious flesh, and prettily tamed it by moderate and spare diet, and holding it somewhat close to its task, by prayer, reading, meditation and the works of my calling, not suffering it to be idle nor yet to be busied in such things as it did desire, etc: after a month or five weeks continuance thus, this wily flesh began to faint, and seemed as though it could not long hold out, grew aguish and lumpish, etc: so as if Christ had not here helped me. I had through too little prayer and reading, and foolish pity, lighted liberty to mine own overwork; but God being merciful to me, forced me (even against my will) to lay more load upon it, and to set it a greater task, for he let in such discomforts, of anguish, fear, unquietness, etc, upon my soul, as made me forget the groans of the flesh and take care to help my poor soul, and so was the flesh forced to be more strong and lively, when it was put to greater labor; yet as soon as the soul was at quiet again, the flesh fell to his former course, and grew exceeding discontented, when it remembered the flesh pots of Egypt, the former pleasure, ease, recreations, mirth, etc: which it had wont to enjoy. And even like a horse in his travail will be eager to run into such an Inn, as he hath been used to bait at, so this wanton brutish flesh at such times of the day, as it was wont to have most liberty to those former lusts and follies, at such times would it be most discontent with its imprisonment, and most mad after his wonted baits of pleasure, etc: And in these temptations I was sometimes very hard put to, yet hath Christ (whose I am wholly) hitherto strengthened me, that the flesh hath lost ground in all these assaults. And these things do turn to my great benefit, through the free and never failing mercy of my heavenly father, so as I am resolved, by his grace (O Lord let not thy grace fail me, I fear indeed greatly mine own frailty, but I neither hope nor desire, O Lord thou knows, to stand by mine own strength, wisdom, etc.: but only by faith in Christ Jesus,) I am resolved, I say, to stand to the Covenant of my baptism, renewed so often since; and forsomuch as Christ hath freed me from the fearful and woeful slavery of the world and the flesh, I will not back to prison again, though I die for it. (Yet O my poor soul, thou knows, that if thou were even now left to thy self, thou shouldst even in this instant be made a slave again, but O my heavenly father, for Jesus Christ his sake keep me - If thou wilt, correct, humble, or try me, let me fall into thy hands, for thou art merciful, but give me not up into the impure hands of these barbarous enemies, the world and the flesh; let not the habitation of thy holy spirit be polluted by them, nor let thy temple become a den for thieves.) Through Christ Jesus the world is crucified unto me, and to the world; I owe nothing to it, nor to the flesh, but have bidden defiance to them with my whole heart, and I am resolved (Lord strengthen me, O strengthen me my God and father) that come life, come death; come health, come sickness; come good report or evil report; come joy, come sorrow; come wealth, come poverty; come what may, I will never yield me a prisoner to these enemies, I will never be reconciled unto them, I will never seek their wealth nor prosperity all the days of my life: for I know that if I enter friendship with them, they will cause me to eat of their sacrifices, and so withdraw my heart from my God to run roaming after them and to commit idolatry with them.

January 20. Our Sessions were, against which (fearing greatly mine own frailty) I did prepare myself by earnest prayer etc: and my time, as I rode, I spent as well as I could in good meditations, and kept my course of prayer etc: as well as conveniently I could while I was there, reining my mouth, eyes, and cares from vanity, as well as I could, and so it pleased God that I brought home my peace and good conscience with me, yet my love of goodness somewhat abated, which I perceived not till a day or 2 after, when I began to be somewhat loathe to prayer and good communication; the flesh beginnings to favor itself, but it pleased God by prayer to quicken me again. When I was at Sessions I kept a continual watch (as near as I could), but yet when I saw and heard the great account and estimation that the wisdom, glory, wealth, pleasure and such like worldly felicity was in with all, methought I heard all men telling me I was a fool, to set so light my honor, credit, wealth, jollity etc: which I saw so many wise men so much affect and joy in, and to tie my comfort to a conversation in heaven, which was no where to be seen, no way regarded, which would bring my self and all my gifts into contempt, etc: These and the like baits did Satan lay for me, and with these enemies he did oft times sore shake my faith; but Christ was in me, and upheld my resolution, and he will uphold it (I trust and pray) that my faith shall never fail. O Lord keep me that I be not discouraged, neither think the more meanly of the portion which I have chosen, even walk to waits, and to keep thy Commandments, because the wise ones of this world do not regard but condemn these things. Thou assures my heart that I am in a right course, even the narrow way that leads to heaven: Thou tell me, and all experience tells me, that in this way there is least company and that those which do walk openly in this way shall be despised, pointed at, hated of the world, made a byword, reviled, slandered, rebuked, made a gazeing stock, called puritans, nize fools, hypocrites, hair branded fellows, rash, indiscreet, vain-glorious, and all that naught is; yet this is nothing to that which many of thine excellent servants have been tried with, neither shall they lessen the glory thou hast prepared for us. Teach me, O Lord to put my trust in thee, then shall I be like mount Sion that cannot be removed. Amen.

February 3. I went towards London, and returned soon, the ii. I went forth sickly, but returned (I praise God) safe, and healthy. Whereas I was wont to lose all my time in my journeys, my eyes running upon every object, and my thoughts varying with every occasion, it pleased God that I now made great use of my time, both in praying, singing, and meditating with good intention and much comfort. Amongst other things, I had a very sweet meditation of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the faithful, how he reveals the love of God in our hearts, and causteth us to love God again; how he unites all the faithful in deed and in affection: how he opens our understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, and makes us to believe and obey: and of the sweet consent between the word and the spirit, the spirit leading and directing us in all things according to the word: I am not able to express the understanding which God gave me in this heavenly matter, neither the joy that I had in the apprehension thereof. Other meditations I had of my sins and my weaknes, and of the sweet way of God being merciful unto me, hereby to revive me, at length I fell to prayer and fasting, whereof the flesh was as unwilling as the bear to the stake, yet it pleased God that hereby I recovered life and comfort and then I found plainly that not keeping a strict watch and heard the great account and estimation that the wisdom, glory, wealth, pleasure and such like worldly felicity was in with all, methought I heard all men telling me I was a fool, to set so light my honor, credit, wealth, jollity etc: which I saw so many wise men so much affect and joy in, and to tie my comfort to a conversation in heaven, which was no where to be seen, no way regarded, which would bring my self and all my gifts into contempt, etc: These and the like baits did Satan lay for me, and with these enemies he did oft times sore shake my faith; but Christ was in me, and upheld my resolution, and he will uphold it (I trust and pray) that my faith shall never fail. O Lord keep me that I be not discouraged, neither think the more meanly of the portion which I have chosen, even walk to waits, and to keep thy Commandments, because the wise ones of this world do not regard but condemn these things. Thou assures my heart that I am in a right course, even the narrow way that leads to heaven: Thou tell me, and all experience tells me, that in this way there is least company and that those which do walk openly in this way shall be despised, pointed at, hated of the world, made a byword, reviled, slandered, rebuked, made a gazeing stock, called puritans, nize fools, hypocrites, hair branded fellows, rash, indiscreet, vain-glorious, and all that naught is; yet this is nothing to that which many of thine excellent servants have been tried with, neither shall they lessen the glory thou hast prepared for us. Teach me, O Lord to put my trust in thee, then shall I be like mount Sion that cannot be removed. Amen.

After my return I found within 4 or 5 days when I should begin to settle to my ordinary tasks, etc: that the flesh had gotten head and heart again, and began to linger after the world; the society of the saints seemed a contemptible thing, meditations were few, prayer was tedious, and fain would the flesh have been at an end before I began: I grew drowsy and dull in every good duty; it made me marvel at my self when I remembered my former alacrity; I prayed and I wept, yet still I grew more discouraged, God being merciful unto me, hereby to revive me, at length I fell to prayer and fasting, whereof the flesh was as unwilling as the bear to the stake, yet it pleased God that hereby I recovered life and comfort and then I found plainly that not keeping a strict watch over my appetite, but feeding more liberally than was meet, or then before of late I was wont, the flesh waxed wanton, and would no longer wear the yoke, but began to grow jolly & slothful, as it had wont to do, and to mind earthly things. O the deep deceitfulness of my heart: If God had left me, I had even now forsaken him, and embraced my former folly and worldly delights. But blessed be the Lord that remembered me in the day of peril, and saved me. O my God do not forsake me in the time of need.

I find by oft and evident experience, that when I hold under the flesh by temperate diet, and not suffering the mind or outward senses to have every thing that they desire, and wean it from the love of the world, I ever then pray without weariness, or ordinary wandering of heart, and am far more fit and cheerful to the duties of my calling and other duties, performing them with more alacrity and comfort then at other times.

Not long after falling into a light ague, I took occasion thereby to favor myself more then I needed, and Satan made use of this opportunity by reason of the weakness of my head to fill my heart, first with wandering thoughts, so drawing me from good meditations, and then enticing me to delight in worldly thoughts, which at last my heart did embrace so eagerly, as I could not for my life get my mind from them, but they interrupted my prayers, brake my sleep, abated the wonted relish of heavenly things, took away my appetite from the word, made the duties of my calling tedious, and filled me with much discomforts, so as I thought upon that saying, All is vanity, and vexation of spirit.

I see therefore I must keep a better watch over my heart, and keep my thoughts close to good things, and not suffer a vain or worldly thought to enter, etc: least it draw the heart to delight in it. And therefore I propose (so far as God shall give me grace) to stint myself to my times in this sort, except necessary occasion makes me to alter:
First, for the forenoon to spend it wholly in the service of God and duties of my calling. After dinner I will allow an hour to my worldly affairs, and if need shall so require somewhat more, otherwise (when it will stand with my health and other conveniences) in visiting some neighbor or etc., and then to my study again. And when my Calling will give me liberty, to some other profitable study as occasion shall serve. (As soon as I had written this, Satan began to tempt me, with his wonted baits of worldly pleasure, in a thing wherein I have much busied my thoughts to find out the lawfulness, and convenience, etc.; and when I would have put it out of my mind, Satan suggests to me, that I should of reverence think in my heart whither I would do it or not, (and by this sleight he had oft circumvented me) but it pleased God to put into my mouth to answer him thus, Avoid Satan, this is not the time for to think or resolve upon these things, they have their time set out for them, and when that time comes I will resolve and do as God shall guide me: thus by this meditation it pleased the Lord to strengthen me at that time, blessed be his holy name, Amen.)

Mr. Sandes: In indifferent things my persuasion must be my guide.

It was delivered me by Mr. Sandes as upon his best judgment and experience, that a Christian is bound to make use of his Sabbath business all the week after, and that so to do would keep away much uncomfortable discontent from a Christian mind, as thus: A man should set apart some time of the day through the week, to go over the things which he hath learned in the Sabbath, either in his prayer or meditation; and a man doing this of conscience, as God's ordinance, God would bless it. And as of our hearing so of our prayers, reading, meditating etc, look what special affections are stirred up in us by any of these on the Sabbath, we should work upon them in the week days; for certainly the Sabbath is the market of our souls.

When a man leads a life secluded from the common delights of the world, and gives himself to walk wholly with God, he shall hear many saying, He will shorten his days, he will pine himself, he will be overrun with melancholy etc: But surely a man so living, shall do more honor to God, and service to his Church in a very short life, then another (although a true Christian, also) living at more liberty shall do in a much longer time: for the more differing that a mans conversation is from the common course of the world, the more occasion and matter there is of the observation of God's work in him: And since there are so many that in an overmuch respect to their own outward felicity take more liberty in these outward things then standeth with God's will, who shall forbidd others (there being so few such) to tender God more fruits of their love and thankfulness, by abridging themselves in the number and measure of such outward comforts as they might lawfully enjoy. But yet I see no ground for such opinions, for besides that God hath numbered our days etc, there are many places in scripture which may make us look that holiness should lengthen our life, and sweeten it, but none to make us fear that it should discomfort or shorten it. O Lord, enable me to live righteous and holy, and I shall not be much careful of living long or happily.

I had been overtaken, and turned out of my course by entertaining the love of pleasures, and worldly cares into my heart, which brought me out of peace with my God, and took away my delight in prayer and other duties, and made me utterly unfit for study in my Calling. In this estate my heart could not be at rest, I could not live so; I humbled myself and sought pardon and peace again, and I oftentimes was well comforted and persuaded of it but it was soon gone again, and I returned back to my former unsettled and voluptuous course, yet restlesserin. The Sabbath came, I arose betimes, and read over the covenant of certain Christians set down in Mr. Rogers' book, and therewith my heart began to break, and my worldly delights which had healed my heart in such slavery before, began to be distasteful and of mean account with me; I concluded with prayer in tears; and so to my family exercise, and then to Church, my heart being still somewhat humbled under God's hand, yet could not get at liberty from my vain pleasures: After dinner and our family exercise, I read Mr. Perkins treatise of the estate of a Christian, etc, thereby as my heart grew more humbled, so my affections were more reclaimed. I went to Box [ford ] Church in the afternoon where I heard with some affection and found sometimes a comfortable consent in prayer; being returned I went into my chamber to prayer, but being hot and weary with going I was forced to leave. I lay me down upon the bed almost overcome with discontent arising partly of my weariness etc. I could not bring my mind to think seriously of any good things, but it began to wander and be idle, so I arose, and knelt down to pray again, but could not; then I endeavored to pray standing, and so striving with the Lord for help against my weakness. At last he enabled me to my full content, and then my heart gave in, and I renounced my beloved pleasures, and was willing to deny myself; then was my mind and conscience at sweet rest, and I desired nothing so much as Christ Jesus and the fellowship of his holy Spirit; then my soul despised and abhorred my former beloved vanities; then was I content to be at God's allowance, that I might enjoy the love and the light of his countenance, although it were with bread and water. Then I saw plainly that the usual cause of the heaviness and uncomfortable life of many Christians is not their religion, or the want of outward comforts (for God's presence in favor brings all sufficiency with it, as Psalm: [16:7] In thy presence there is fullness of Joy etc.) but because their consciences enforce them to leave some beloved unlawful liberty before their hearts are resolved willingly to forsake it: whereas if we could deny our own desires and be content to live by faith in our God, the Christian life would be the only merry and sweet life of all. O Heavenly Father I beseech thee give me grace to live and be sober, and let thy favor and my peace in it be ever of more account with me then all the world besides it. Amen.

After this, settling myself to walk uprightly with my God, and diligently in my calling, and having an heart willing to deny myself, I found the Godly life to be the only sweet life of all, and my peace with my God to be a true heaven upon earth. I found God ever present with me, in prayer and meditation, in the duties of my calling, etc: I could truly loath my former folly in preferring the love of earthly pleasures before the love of my heavenly father. I did wonder what madness was in me, that I should leave the fellowship of my Savior, to keep fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness; I was then troubled with the common cares and desires that I was wont to be taken up with, as of food, apparel, credit, pleasure, etc: but was well contented with what God sent: what can I say? I find a change in my heart and whole man, as apparent as from darkness to light. God of his mercy continue and increase it. I find withal that I can say? I find a change in my heart and whole man, as apparent as from darkness to light. God of his mercy continue and increase it. I find withal that I was ready upon every object or occasion, to embrace the delight in earthly things again, which I see plainly will soon get within me again, if I slack my watchfulness never so little, so as I resolve by God's grace to keep my heart with all diligence, and to set a watch over my mouth, eyes, ears, etc, when I am alone, in company, at home, abroad, in every business, service of God, etc. O Lord my God, for Jesus Christ his sake enable me hereunto, and strengthen the poor weak faith of thy unworthy servant.

Before the week was gone about I began to lose my former affections; I upheld the outward duties, but the power and life of them was in a manner gone; I prayed as I was wont, but I could not find that comfort and feeling which I had; I did the duties of my Calling, but not so cheerfully and fruitfully: and still the more I prayed and meditated, etc: the worse I grew, the more dull, unbelieving, vain in heart, etc: so I waxed exceeding discontent and impatient, being sometimes ready to fret and storm against God because I found not that blessing upon my prayers and other means that I did expect; but O Lord forgive me: Searching my heart at last, I found the world had stolen away my love from my God, and that I was grown from depending upon him to trust to my calling, etc: I could truly loath my former folly in preferring the love of earthly pleasures before the love of my heavenly father. I did wonder what can I do? I find a change in my heart and whole man, as apparent as from darkness to light. God of his mercy continue and increase it. I find withal that I was ready upon every object or occasion, to embrace the delight in earthly things again, which I see plainly will soon get within me again, if I slack my watchfulness never so little, so as I resolve by God's grace to keep my heart with all diligence, and to set a watch over my mouth, eyes, ears, etc, when I am alone, in company, at home, abroad, in every business, service of God, etc. O Lord my God, for Jesus Christ his sake enable me hereunto, and strengthen the poor weak faith of thy unworthy servant.

When I had some time abstained from such worldly delights as my heart most desired, I grew very melancholic and uncomfortable, for I had been more careful to refrain from an outward conversation in the world, then to keep the love of the world out of my heart, or to uphold my conversation in heaven; which caused that my comfort in God failing, and I not daring to meddle with any earthly delights, I grew into a great dullness and discontent: which being more I prayed and meditated, etc: the worse I grew, the more dull, unbelieving, etc: so as I waxed exceeding discontent and impatient, being sometimes ready to fret and storm against God because I found not that blessing upon my prayers and other means that I did expect; but O Lord forgive me: Searching my heart at last, I found the world had stolen away my love from my God, and that I was grown from depending upon him to trust to my prayers and outward duties, and so not diligently observing my heart, as I should have done, the devil had gotten within me, and had deceived me. Then I acknowledged my unfaithfulness and pride of heart, and turned again to my God, and humbled my soul before him, and he returned, and accepted me, and so I renewed my Covenant of walking with my God, and watching my heart and ways. O my God, forsake me not.

When I had some time abstained from such worldly delights as my heart most desired, I grew very melancholic and uncomfortable, for I had been more careful to refrain from an outward conversation in the world, then to keep the love of the world out of my heart, or to uphold my conversation in heaven; which caused that my comfort in God failing, and I not daring to meddle with any earthly delights, I grew into a great dullness and discontent: which being at last perceived, I examined my heart, and finding it needful to recreate my mind with some outward recreation, I yielded unto it, and by a moderate exercise herein was much refreshed; but here grew the mischiefs: I perceiving that God and mine own conscience did allow me so to do in my need, I afterwards took occasion, from the benefit of Christian liberties to pretend need of recreation when there was none, and so by degrees I ensnared my heart so far in worldly delights, as I cooled the graces of the spirit by them: Whereby I perceive that in all outward comforts, although God allow us the use of the things themselves, yet it must be in sobriety, and our hearts must be kept free, for he is jealous of our love, and will not endure any pretenses in it.
Looking over some letters of kindness that had passed between my first wife and me, and being thereby affected with the remembrance of that entire and sweet love that had been sometimes between us, God brought me by that occasion to such a heavenly meditation of the love between Christ and me, as ravished my heart with unspeakable joy; methought my soul had as familiar and sensible society with him, as my wife could have with the kindest husband; I desired no other happiness but to be embraced of him; I held nothing so dear that I was not willing to part with for him: I forgot to look after my supper, and some vain things that my heart lingered after before; then came such a calm of comfort over my heart, as revived my spirits, set my mind and conscience at sweet liberty and peace: I thought upon that speech of the Church, Cant. 5. 2. - It is the voice of my well beloved that knocketh, etc: 0, there's my husband (says the loving wife) - then she runs, then she joys, out of the arms goes the child, away goes every impediment, she hath enough that she hears his voice, whom her soul loves: O my Lord how did my soul melt with joy when thou speakest to the heart of thy poorly unworthy handmaid? - Further when I considered of such letters as my wife had written to me, and observed the scribbling hand, the mean congruity, the false orthography; and broken sentences, etc: and yet found my heart not only accepting of them but delighting in them, and esteeming them above far more curious workmanship in an other, and all from hence, that I loved her; It made me think thus with myself: Can I do thus through that drop of affection that is in me, etc: and will not my Lord and husband Christ Jesus (whose love surpasses knowledge, and is larger than the ocean) accept in good part the poorest testimonies of my love and duty towards him? O if I had faith to believe this, how abundant comfort would it afford me in my weakest services, since they are sent up to him that looks not at the forme or phrase, etc: but finding them to come from one in whom he delights, he accepts with all favor the sincere simplicity of the heart, and covers all imperfections with the skirt of his love. O my God increase my weak faith I humbly pray thee.

This affection continued still with me, and the love of Christ was ever in my heart, and drew me to be more enamored of him. Then I oft remembered that in Jeremiah: 2. 2. I remembered thee with the kindliness of thy youth, and the love of thy marriage, etc: which made me to recall to my view the love of my earthly marriages, which the more I thought upon, the more sensible I grew of the most sweet love of my heavenly husband, Christ Jesus; his spirit persuaded my heart, that if I could so entirely affect and delight in such as I had not labored for etc: only for this consideration that they were to become a part of myself: needs must his love towards me be exceeding measure, that had made me, died for me, sweat water and blood for me, etc, and married me to himself, so as I am become truly one with him; then I was persuaded that neither my sins nor infirmities could put me out of his favor, he having washed away the one with his own blood, and covering the other with his unchangeable love: This comfort that I had in his sweet love drew me to deal with him as I was wont to do with my earthly wellbeloved, who being ever in the eye of my affection, I greedily employed every opportunity to be a messenger of the manifestation of my love, by letters, etc: so did I now with my dear lord Christ: I delighted to meditate of him, to pray to him, and to the Father in him (for all was one with me), to remember his sweet promises, etc: for I was well assured that he took all that I did in good part. I considered that he was such an one as should ever be living, so as I might ever love him, and always present, so as there should be no grief at partings: O my Lord, my love, how wholly delectable thou art! let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is sweeter than wine: how lovely is thy countenance! how pleasant are thy embraces! my heart leaps within me for joy when I hear the voice of thee my Lord, my love, when thou sayest to my soul, thou art her salvation, O my God, my king, what am I but dust! a worm, a rebel, and thine enemy was I, wallowing in the blood and filth of my sins, when thou didst cast the light of thy Countenance upon me, when thou spread over me the lap of thy love, and saidst that I should live. Then didst thou wash me in the ever flowing fountains of thy blood, thou didst trim me as a bride prepared for her husband, my clothing was thy pure righteousness, thou speakest kindly to the heart of thy most unworthy servant, and my flesh grew like the flesh of a young child, etc: And now let me ever be with thee, O my Redeemer, for in thy presence is joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore. Shadow me, and guide me with thy love, as in the days of my marriage, that I may never swerve from thee to run after earthly vanities that are lying and will not profit. Wholly thine I am (my sweet Lord Jesus) unworthy (I acknowledge) so much honor as to wipe the dust off the feet of my Lord and his wellbeloved spouse, in the day of the gladness of their heart, yet wilt thou honor me with the society of thy marriage chamber. Behold, all you beloved of the Lord, know and embrace with joy this unspeakable love of his towards you. God is love, assuredly.

[I do find by experience of some good time, that a spare diet and abstinence from worldly delights, is a great means of keeping both body and mind fit and lively to holy duties: I was wont, when I supposed liberally, that I was sleepy and unwieldy in my family exercises, and now, when I eat but little (and that ordinarily but bread and beer), I am cheerful and unwearied in them.] The unspeakable comfort that I had in the former sweet communion with my Lord Jesus Christ filled me with such joy, peace, assurance, boldness, etc: and will not my Lord and husband Christ Jesus (whose love surpasses knowledge, and is larger than the ocean) accept in good part the poorest testimonies of my love and duty towards him? O if I had faith to believe this, how abundant comfort would it afford me in my weakest services, since they are sent up to him that looks not at the forme or phrase, etc: but finding them to come from one in whom he delights, he accepts with all favor the sincere simplicity of the heart, and covers all imperfections with the skirt of his love. O my God increase my weak faith I humbly pray thee.

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Remitting my care and watch, and giving liberty to the flesh, I was again unsettled, and then my conscience could swallow foul faults without any great remorse, when as sometimes it would have stuck at the least evil. I returned to myself again and renewed my repentance. I resolved to keep a better watch, and to hold under the flesh by temperate diet, and diligence in my calling, for I found that there was no peace in any other course. All pleasures are vanity in the use and vexation in the end, and the fruit of idleness is shame and guiltiness. It wounded my heart in the evening when I looked back and saw the day misspent in the service of the world, and in fulfilling the will of my flesh. Disuse in any good things causes the greatest unwillingness and unfitness; I saw it was safest for me ever to be well doing, and to be fully resolved of God's good allowance of all that passeth either mouth, heart or hand; faith would teach me to look to approve my self to God in every things, and so to go on, according to the occasion of every duty, and leave the success to God. But O my unbelief and my fearfulness! Lord strengthen my faith, and encourage thou me.

Upon this last resolution I settled my self to my study, and to such duties as I was necessarily occasioned unto, and so by God's assistance I kept my peace, etc., meetly well for all that week following; for I was ready upon every occasion to start aside, yet keeping a careful watch over my heart, I quickly perceived when it was straggling, and so the sooner brought it in again.

I plainly perceive that when I am not held under by some affliction, either outward or inward, then I must make my flesh do its full task in the duties of my calling, or such other service wherein it takes no pleasure. Otherwise it will wax wanton and idle, and then finding sweetness in earthly things it will grow so weary of God's yoke, as it will not be borne any longer, except the flesh by strong hand be brought under again.

Sometimes my faith hath been so deadhearted in the promises as no means could quicken me up to apprehend the mercies of God, although but in the ordinary sense of my sins. At another time again, God hath let in upon my heart such a flood of mercy as in the quickest sight of sin that ever I had I could not have brought to make question of pardon. And upon such an offer I have first laid hold of mercy and forgiveness, and after turned to the acknowledging and bewailing of my sins: for there is no confession so frank as that which comes from the sense of free pardon.

Order and observation makes many duties easy which otherwise will be very tedious and difficult.

A wild colt must be well tamed in the plough, and then a child may back him; so this wanton heart of ours till it be well tamed with afflictions, or such duties in our callings as are not pleasing nor easy to the flesh, there is no ruling it; it will neither be kept to prayer, nor hearing, nor meditation, etc; but it will fly out 20 ways, and be running against every wall, etc: but being thoroughly tempered and tamed, etc, it will go on quietly and soberly in any duty. It is great wisdom for a Christian to keep the flesh ever under by service that it may be sober, for, if it get liberty there is no ruling of it: An unruly horse will more weary himself in one miles travel then a sober horse in 10: so it is when we go about any duty where our hearts look for their liberty.

My disposition is ever fittest upon the first apprehension of any things: if it once hang of hand, and that I begin once to beat my head about it, and meet with any rub or discouragement, I cannot for my life proceed to make any dispatch, etc; as in writing of letters, etc, whilst I have some times been over careful and studious for the form, I have clean lost both my matter and invention, and on the other side when I have gone on with more readiness and less curiosities I have done far better in conclusion both for matter and form.

I have observed that in all my exercises of conscience, when I have been most frightened with guiltiness of sin, my carelessness in hearing God's word hath much more troubled me then my careless and cold prayer; and my omissions more then my commissions; and the omitting mercy and the duties of my calling of magistracy more then all things besides.

I find often times that coming out of good company, I am sometimes more disquieted, other times more unsettled then before: what the reason should be I know not, except that being taken up with too much regard of their persons, I neglect to watch well over my heart; or that God sends it as a punishment upon me, for not making that good use of such company as I ought; or whether their godliness doth stir up and check some secret evil within me that disquiets my mind.

I have observed that after a gleam of any special joy, whether in heavenly things or in earthly, there hath followed a storm of dishappiness and discomfort, that hath abolished the memory of the former joy; but especially when I have suffered my heart to take too much joy in any earthly things, I have been sure (for the most part) in the turning to meet with a fit of melancholic discontent, that hath been far more burdensome then the other was pleasing: so as I think it good wisdom for me to keep to a mean in my joys, especially in worldly things; moderate comforts being constant and sweeter, or safer, than such as being exceeding in measure fail as much in their continuance; for they being wasted by passion, are resolved into pain, even as the body is most sensible of cold, when it hath been most thoroughly warmed by the heat of the fire.

My heart getting loose one Sabbath day through want of due watchfulness and firm resolution, it got so deep into the world as I could not get it free, but it followed me to Church and home again; but not well prepared for such a task, for I found evidently, that this suffering my heart to take liberty to the profaning of the Sabbath, made it utterly unfit for duty all the week following, so as it cost me much strife and heart smart before I could bring it into order again; therefore I purpose, by God's grace, to keep a better watch over my heart upon the Sabbath.

The only means to keep our hearts from being taken up and cumbered with the thoughts and cares of worldly things is, to get our treasure in heaven, for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be. Luke: 12.

November: 1617. I went to London, not so well prepared for such a journey as had been meet, and it was a month before I returned, wherein God had much mercy upon me, preserving me and bringing me home in safety; yet my soul was waxed leaner, and my love and faith much decayed, as I did suspect while I was gone, yet could not so evidently perceive as when I came to settle to mine ordinary course at home. But above all I found my faith to be very much shaken, which was through want of careful nourishing of it in the meditation of the word of God. Oh I see, if we leave, or slightly exercise ourselves in the word, Faith will starve and die, and our hearts embrace any dotage of mans brain sooner then God's eternal truth, as I found by

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I found this experience while I was at London, that having there no matters to distract my mind, but being free from my ordinary cares and temptations which I was wont to meet with at home; as I had ease and leisure, and little or no occasion of sorrow through my faintings, etc, under temptation, which I was wont to meet with at home; so on the other side I found as slender comfort and few or no quickenings or stirrings of the Spirit in me, but was still and quiet, without any great sense either of guilt or peace; whence I gather that he which would have sure peace and joy in Christianity, must not aim at a condition retired from the world and free from temptations, but to know that the life which is most exercised with trials and temptations is the sweetest, and will prove the safest. For such trials as fall within compass of our callings, it is better to arm and withstand them then to avoid and shun them. I found as ready and familiar access to God in prayer, singing, etc, in my travall, as if I had been in my chamber, and it is an excellent means to season the heart, and to shorten the tediousness of the journey.
I was wont to be much disquieted with fear of reproach and of an ill name with the most where I lived; so as I have been drawn by such foolish respects to do or leave undone many things to the wounding of my conscience; especially to avoid a suspicion of ingratitude, baseness, unfruitfulness, etc. But the Lord opening my heart to consider of the vanity of all such things, as that they are trifles of no continuance, and of least benefit (as if we think of such as we knew that are now dead and gone, who whilst they lived were also either taken up with such vainlorious concels, whereof they neither had any true comfort whilst they lived, nor being dead have retained any fruit, or left any memory of them,) I see it is the best wisdom for a Christian to labor to approve himself to God in keeping faith and a good conscience, which will be a ready comfort to a man in his life, and will bide with him after death, and to set light by the unprofitable and sure-fading favor of the world, which a Christian man may as well be without, as a gentleman may spare a kennel of hounds, and with which, he that will have it, shall never want a disquiet mind. I will say with Paul, I pass not for mans judgment.

Observation: A good name is to be sought after etc: Answer: Walk with God, and never fear but thou shalt be honored of the Godly.

I have observed, that after some true work of mercy, I have found special operation of God's spirit.

O what a difference there is between the reign of the flesh and of the spirit; that like the reign of Ahaz full of troubles, full of shifts, and helpless; but this like Solomon's, plentiful, peaceable, etc. When the flesh hath prevailed in me, I all hath been out of order, full of blindness, sloth, vanity of mind, captivity to sin, strangeness towards my God, a guilty heart inclining to rebellion, no comfort in prayer, no delight nor savor in the word, no joy in Christ, etc; sometimes secure in carnal joys, and on the sudden as uncomfortably dejected; disconsolate with everything; still taken up with earthly cares, fears, desires, etc, all for the belly, the glory, etc, (in a word) all unhappy; But the spirit renewing his strength brought a new face of all things with it, and was to the whole man and conversation, as the authority of Mordecai to the afflicted Jews, joy and gladness, peace with God, peace with heart, peace with all: my soul yielding itself to God in the acknowledgment of its own unworthiness, could yet comfortably repose itself in the merits of Christ; now could it abhor and tremble at the memory of its former vanities and ungodliness: now could it melt into tears and sighs to remember its unkindness and ingratitude; now could pray with confidence, and yet in fear and reverence; now Christ only was desired, as my only portion, my conversation was in heaven, and God was my refuge, whatsoever occasion was offered to affright me. O that I could ever walk in the spirit.

Ever against a Communion, the nearer it grew, the more would Satan labor to unfit me for it, seeking to diminish the reverent account and singular benefit of it, and so to steal from me all appetite unto it; and withal persuading me that I was sufficiently prepared unto it, when (upon better consideration which God in mercy hath brought me unto, in my order of preparing my family) I have found myself much wanting, and especially in desire and appetite unto it, for which particular I mean, to examine my heart better hereafter (by God's grace), Amen.

My heart being again overtaken, and forward in the things of the world, as pleasures, ease, eating and drinking etc, I lost my sweet peace with my God; the more the my heart delighted in and lingered after the former things, the more unquietness and anguish of mind grew upon me: fain would I have had my peace again, but could not get my heart to seek it earnestly; among other things I looked over some things which I had written here before, concerning the manifestation of Christs love unto me, my unspeakable joy therein, and the advised and cheerful Covenants that thereupon I had made, for walking with my God in faith and holiness, denial of the world and myself etc: when I considered withal how I had broken those covenants, how unkindly I had requited my good God, etc, it broke my heart, and forced me to an humble and serious submission, in abundance of tears; I truly and clearly saw my folly, in setting so much by this vain world, and esteeming to satisfy the inconstant desires of this wanton flesh; I renewed my former Covenants with my God, whom I beseech (for Christ's sake) to encourage and enable me to performance.

January 10, 1617. Afterwards finding myself snared by the world, I could not be at rest until by reading Mr. Bolton's discourse of true happiness, I was brought to a more thorough discovery of my sinful heart and ways, and thereupon to more sound repentance and resolution of reformation; when again upon sound deliberation being free from all passion, or oppression of melancholy, I did quietly, cheerfully and absolutely resign up myself again unto my God, covetingent to walk faithfully with him, and praying fervently yet without any distemper of affection, etc, that he would rather take me out of the world or cast me into any affliction, sickness, poverty, disgrace, or whatsoever, so himself would not fail me in them, then to give me up to the slavery of the world, to mine old profane, idle, voluptuous, and foolish heart; and so I beg still of him for the Lord Jesus' sake.

February. I kept on my course but yet up and down, for the flesh still gathered to itself, and sought its own ease, pleasure, glory, etc, and my heart grew towards the world again, so as the sweet relish and estimation of Christ and salvation was even gone, until God again opened mine eyes to see my carnal affections, my slothfulness, vanity of mind, pride, false heartedness, infidelity; no love to him in Christ, nor love to his saints; my too much account and estimation of the world, too busily employing my thoughts in caring for and delighting in earthly things: so as I am thoroughly persuaded that the love of the world even in a small measure, will cool, if not kill, the life of sincerity in Religion, and will abolish the very memory of heavenly affections: O Lord, crucify the world unto me, for surely the love of thee and the love of the world cannot stand together.

Upon search of my heart, and the sight of my secret sins and corruptions which still prevailed against me, I grew into much fear, discomfort and heaviness. I was without joy; in God I could find none, (I seemed so unworthy); In worldly things I durst take none (although the devil did make me continual and large upon it). I see it is the best wisdom for a Christian to labor to approve himself to God in keeping faith and a good conscience, which will be a ready comfort to a man in his life, and will bide with him after death, and to set light by the unprofitable and sure-fading favor of the world, which a Christian man may as well be without, as a gentleman may spare a kennel of hounds, and with which, he that will have it, shall never want a disquiet mind. I will say with Paul, I pass not for mans judgment.

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I purpose by God's grace to meditate more often upon the certainty and excellency of my everlasting happiness through Christ, and of the vanity and peril of all worldly felicity. This one things I observe withal, that whilst we seek to make our earthly habitations commodious for the case, quiet, and outward comfort of our lives, we do but provide for the increase of our sorrow, for by such means we do the more animate and arm the flesh against the spirit, so as otherwise love, use, or delight in any the most pleasant, profitable, etc, earthly comforts of this life, than I do the air which I continually draw in, or the earth which I ever tread upon, or the sky which I ever behold. O why should I dote with greater affection on other things which are of less use?

My heart being again overtaken, and forward in the things of the world, as pleasures, ease, eating and drinking etc, I lost my sweet peace with my God; the more the my heart delighted in and lingered after the former things, the more unquietness and anguish of mind grew upon me: fain would I have had my peace again, but could not get my heart to seek it earnestly; among other things I looked over some things which I had written here before, concerning the manifestation of Christs love unto me, my unspeakable joy therein, and the advised and cheerful Covenants that thereupon I had made, for walking with my God in faith and holiness, denial of the world and myself etc: when I considered withal how I had broken those covenants, how unkindly I had requited my good God, etc, it broke my heart, and forced me to an humble and serious submission, in abundance of tears; I truly and clearly saw my folly, in setting so much by this vain world, and esteeming to satisfy the inconstant desires of this wanton flesh; I renewed my former Covenants with my God, whom I beseech (for Christ's sake) to encourage and enable me to performance.
When I have enjoyed sweet peace with my God then I have been shy of the smallest occasions of offending him, and have readily and cheerfully denied mine own will, delight, content, and credit, etc; but afterwards when my peace was gone, and I had lost my liberty of heart and communion with Christ, then I fell to them again, and although I could remember that I had formerly shunned them, etc, yet I could not then find what it should be that should make me part with things of so great necessity and use as then I esteemed them: but again so soon as my peace returned upon any renewing of my repentance, and that the love of God was shed abroad in my heart, etc, then I could see cause enough to make me willingly to condemn greater matters: For surely there is no treasure like a good conscience, no pleasure like the fellowship with Christ Jesus, no joy on earth like the Communion of Saints: methought it was a happiness unmatchable, that I could quietly repose my heart in the bed of God's promises; which I never could do but when I had fully denied and given over myself unto him, and still as I sought myself God left me.

Having been long wearied with discontent for want of such employment as I could find comfort and peace in, I found at last that the consciencious and constant teachings of my family was a special business wherein I might please God, and greatly further their and mine own salvation, which might be as sufficient encouragement to my study and labor therein as if I were to teach a public Congregation; for as to the pleasing of God it was all one, and I perceived that my exercise therein did stir up in me many considerations and much life of affection, which otherwise I should not so often meet with; so as I purpose by God's assistance, to take it as a chief part of my calling, and to intend it accordingly.

God by his great mercy brought me to a sight of my sins, and so to repentance, never (I hope) to be repented of; true Repentance, sweet though sharp repentance; O most happy, and wholesome Repentance, more welcome to me then all earthly pleasures, - for want of it (it having been long absent) my poor soul was almost famished: when by it God opened before mine eyes the state of my soul, O what a polluted conscience found I; what impure affections, what unruely desires, what blindness of mind, what fearful hardness of heart, which although it were shaken and stirred to consideration and slight relentings, sometimes oft in a day by occasion of reading, or prayer, etc, yet it soon shook off all such motions, and grew more stiff against God, until it was almost at that pass that it could not repent: But when it pleased God to have mercy upon me, and to set my wickedness upon me, I thought then surely he would be done with me, for my former boldness in sinning and dalliance with the breach of his Commandments: but I found him more gracious then I durst conceive, or make use of for the present; my former rebellion, ingratitude, self love, sloth, carnality, time serving, etc, came so fresh before me, and shewed so foul and odious unto me: Oh that not only my eyes, but that my very heart could melt in tears, that I might mourn night and day for my sins against my good Father. O when shall I be rid of the burthen of this sinful flesh! Would any that had known the sweet mercies that I had received from him, ever have believed that I should have turned from him, to go roaming after worldly pleasures? Could I so soon forget the pleasures, etc, which his presence was wont to afford me, as I had learned out of Psalm: 16. and 36. and prov: 3.

Amongst other sins which I found in my self, I saw my great unbelief was one of the chieflest, for I had not nourished my faith in Christ and in his word, but had given way to doubting and distrust so far, as I had near lost the use of God's word, which although I continued to read daily, yet my faith was so weakened through difficulties and delays, as I had left off to live by faith in the word: and so for want of faith my prayers failed, my meditations, reading, and all grew tedious and unprofitable, I had no heart to any Christian duty, I thought all was in vain. Hereupon I prayed earnestly and morningly to have my faith strengthened, and God soon heard me and by occasion in my family exercises, I felt my faith begin to revive as a man out of a dream. I acknowledged the infallible truth and certainty of God's most pure and perfect word; my heart leaped within me when I considered it, I embraced it, I cast my self in to it: as fast as temptations came either to fear, doubt, of difficulty or danger, etc, the very first thought of God's word, God's truth, did easily dispel them; and whereas before all my care was to gather peace to my heart from the smallness of my infirmities etc, now my comfort was in bringing them (small or great) unto the blood of Christ, and by applying the promise I found how the crimson sins might be made white as well as the palest-colored. God's truth carried all before it: I found my heart, upon this meditation, willing to set upon any duty, whilst I beheld my warrant in God's book: and whereas sometimes many things did discourage me from duty, as the judgment of the greatest part, the unlikelihood of success, the evil acceptation of others, the fear of loss, disgrace, health, etc, now I remembered what Christ said, "Woe to the world because of offences, and blessed are they that shall not be offended in me": I perceived that these and such like rubs to our faith were the offences that Christ doth partly mean there, and I see that they that will take offence from the opinion of others, their own corrupt reason, common experience, etc, shall never enjoy the comfort of living by faith, for the Child of God must break through all these and say with Paul. Rom: [ 3. 4. ] Let God be true and every man a liar. O Lord I have sinned in that I have not believed thy word that I might sanctify thy name before thy people, but by thy grace I shall not fear hereafter once to doubt of thy holy and eternal truth: Let it be sufficient encouragement and warrant to me in anything, that it is thy Commandment, thy promise etc.

Resist the Devil and he will flee from you: this have I found true by oft experience, for whereas upon the Sabbath and in hearing of the word etc, my heart was most pestered with worldly thoughts, etc, so as I should have strong desires to be thinking of some such things at those times, which at other times I should not regard; and from these snares I could not free myself, until it pleased the Lord, in prayer, to discover unto me that it was Satan that did thus follow me with his assaults; whereupon I set myself against him by applying such promises of scripture, as did best oppose his temptations: and thus doing, I have oft times had my heart set at liberty from such worldly thoughts and other his snares: The Lord be praised forever.

On Wednesday the 24th of March 1618 [-19], Margaret my wife was delivered of a son, whereof I desire to leave this testimony of my thankfulness unto God, that she being above 40 hours in sore travail, so as it began to be doubtful of her life, yet the Lord sent her a safe deliverance. Hereby I had occasion to find the great power and benefit of prayer: for Mr. Sandes first praying with her in her trouble, and after myself, it pleased God (although she was not delivered many hours after) yet to increase her strength and afterwards, I perceiving her danger, I humbled myself in fasting and mourning, I searched my heart for some sins, and made up my peace with my God, and so getting a more large and melting heart to go unto the Lord, I set myself to prayer, and gave not over until God had sent her deliverance.

The day after her deliverance she was taken with a burning fever, which healed her so, as that after the viiith day was passed my Cousin Duke made little reckoning of her life, but within one day after, being the 10th day of her sickness, diverse godly ministers meeting together did in their prayer remember her case in particular, and that very day and hour (as near as might be guessed) she found a sensible release of her disease. The Lord be blessed forevermore.

Aug. 22, 1619. I had been drawn from my steadfastness, and walked in an unsettled course, for the space of a year and more, before this time: I had made divers attempts to return again, but they still vanished, my zeal was cooled, my comfort in heavenly things was gone, I had no joy in prayer, nor in the Sabbath, nor in God's word, nor in the Communion of Saints, or if I had any, it was so soon gone, as it was not to be regarded; and now it pleased God to open mine eyes again upon a Sabbath day, and I found the cause of all to be, that I had again embraced this present world, eagerly pursuing the delights and pleasures of it, and I might easily observe that as the love of the world prevailed, so the love of God and all goodness decayed. Hereupon (by God's grace) I have again resolved to renounce this world, and to hold in my affections to the love and estimation of heavenly things; the Lord in mercy enable me hereunto.

It is a policy of Satan to discourage us from duty by setting before us great appearances of danger, difficulty, impossibilities etc, which when we come to examine or make trial of, are found indeed to be nothing so; but even as a fool being tied by a thread or a straw, thinks himself impossible to stir, and therefore stands still, so doth Satan make advantage of our foolish and fearful disposition. In these discouragements etc, it is sufficient oft times to set us at liberty, if we do but consider that it is the tempter, etc.
When I think it were good (in some particular pleasures, etc) for the peace of my Conscience, to leave such or such a thing undone, etc, it is a usual objection of my heart - But I shall gain nothing by leaving it etc: so as I see it is good for a man to apply to himself that promise of God to Abraham: I am thy exceeding great reward: and with Moses to have respect to the recompense of the Reward: Hebrews: 11 and therefor to have the eye of Faith always fixed upon life everlasting, for by nature we are all disposed to say as the wicked in Job: What profit shall we have, etc:

It appears by divers precepts of God to Israel, Deut. [ vi. 7 ], of talking with their children etc, about God, and by the practice of the faithful in the times of persecution, that we should have religion as in familiar practice as our eating and drinking, dealings about earthly affairs etc, and not to tie it only to the exercises of Divine worship, which makes that there is so little free speech of heavenly matters, and that men are ready to blush at the speaking or hearing thereof, as if it were some straining of modesty.

1620: April 7: being Friday. About one of the clock in the morning Adam my son was borne. I have cause for ever to remember the goodness of the Lord and the power of prayer, as he being in life and very long and very difficult travall I humbted myself in earnest prayer to God for her, and being in the next chamber, as I arose from prayer I heard the child cry. I desire of God, I may make more account of prayer, having so oft found the sweet success of it. I perceive the Lord will keep faithfully his promises with his Children.

I have found that a man may master and keep under many corrupt lusts by the mere force of reason and moral considerations (as the heathen did) but they will return again to their former strength: there is no way to mortify them but by faith in Christ, and his death: that as he, when sin etc, had him at the greatest advantage in the grave, yet then got the full victory of sin etc, by arising from under it; so a Christian being in him by faith, is made really partaker of his Conquest.

1620 [-21]. January 12. Riding through Buxford with Mr. Gurdon in his coach, my son Henry being with me and one of Mr. Gurdon's men, entering into the town the coachman was thrown off and the horses ran through the town over logs and high stumps until they came upon the causeway right against the Church, and there were snarled in the logs, etc; and the coach being broken in pieces, top, bottom and sides, yet by God's most merciful providence we were all safe: blessed be his holy name.

The water of Bethlehem that David offered unto God was not an offering that had any promise of acceptance, neither for the worth of it could challenge any: yet (no doubt) it was well pleasing unto God, because it was a denial of himself for God's sake in that particular lust of his; we many times have the less heart to beat down our particular lusts in things that are indifferent, or of so small consequence as we think that God will have no respect to us for it. But afterwards even in such things God is well pleased that we do deny ourselves, and the sacrificing of any longing affection to the Love of our God (though it be but either a little water, an apple, a trifling pleasure, etc.) is of greater account with him then some works of a far more glorious appearance.

Many things which fall out by the ordinary course of nature etc, are not easily discerned to be guided by any special providence of God, as the Eclipses of the Sun etc, thunders, tempests, etc, the effects whereof are oft very strange; but God who had from the beginning determined of such effects, did withal appoint that the course of natural causes should concur at the same time: so that hereby his glory is the greater, in effecting things extraordinary, and yet not changing the order of causes. Thus when God in justice hath appointed that a wicked man shall be cut off, he hath withal appointed that such a disease, such a battle etc, or age etc, shall concur at the same instant for effecting of it, so that though he die of mere age, yet he dies by the force of God's judgment. So when God says that the righteous men are taken away from the evil to come, and we see good men against such ill times die of pure age, yet it is truly fulfilled that they are taken away from evil to come; for he who had determined of the occasion of their taking away, had determined also, that they should be borne with age fit for that occasion.

Aug: 1628. It pleased God to preserve my son Adam in a very great danger, his brother Stephen and Benjamin Gostlin being near the danger also: for they standing together close to the stable door, their brother Forth shooting at a mark a great way from them, his arrow came full among the children, so as, to my thinking, it must needs strike into Adams side; but it pleased God, it missed him a very little, and struck into the wall by him.

Soon after, my son Deane fell backward from a high stool and pitched upon his head, so as we feared his neck had been broke; but, through God's mercy, he had no harm.

December: 1628. At London in the end of Michaelmas term, I fell into a dangerous hot malignant fever, wherein the Lord showed me exceeding much mercy. First he sanctified it unto me, by discovering many corruptions which had prevailed over me, giving me Repentance, and pardon for them, thereby subduing the flesh and giving more strength to the spirit: It pleased him to reveal his favor and goodness abundantly towards me, so as I never had more sweet Communion with him, then in that affliction; and when in myself and the judgment of others I was under the sentence of death, it pleased him to restore me to life, by providing me fit means, an honest and able physician, Doctor Wright, (whose care of me, and kindness in refusing any reward etc, I may not forget), and in blessing the means to their desired end. Among other benefits I reaped by it, this was one: deliverance from the bondage whereinto I was fallen by the immoderate use and love of Tobacco, so as I gave it clean over. Another was the experience of the love of his people towards me in all places where I was known, testified by their much inquiring after me, mourning for the fear which was conceived of my death, and earnest praying for my recovery: But the greatest of all was, the assurance he gave me of my salvation, and grace over some corruptions which had gotten mastery of me, which increased my experience of his truth and faithfulness in disposing the worst condition of his children to their best good. I did likewise observe the experience of his good providence, that my sickness fastened not upon me till I had finished my law business and he restored my health so as I was able by the beginnings of the next Term to follow it again: The Lord give me grace, never to forget this kindness but to cleave fast unto him, and to hold that resolution of obedience etc, which he wrought in me. Other favors I found accompanying the former, as preserving and prospering my wife and those who came up and returned with her, and especially so disposing as our maid servant, who came up with her, continued in health all the time of her stay, but in their return at Cheilmsford fell sick, and getting home was near unto death, but it pleased God to recover her: His holy name be praised for ever, for all his merities. AMEN.

July 28: 1629. My Brother Downing and myself riding into Lincolnshire by Ely, my horse fell under me in a bog in the fens, so as I was almost to the waist in water; but the Lord preserved me from further danger. Blessed be his name.

1636. October. Upon some differences in or Church about the way of the Spirit of God in the work of Justification, myself dissenting from the rest of the brethren, I had occasion to examine mine own estate, wherein the Lord wrought marvellously upon my heart, reviving my former peace & consolation with much increase & better assurance then formerly; & in the midst of it (for it continued many days) he did one time dart a beam of wrath into my soul, which struck me to the heart, but then the Lord Jesus shewed himself & stood between that wrath & my soul. Oh how sweet was Christ then to my soul. I thought I never prized him before, I am sure never more, nor ever felt more need of him. Then I kept him close to my heart & could not parte with him. Oh how my heart opened to let him in. Oh how was I ravished with his love! my prayers could breathe nothing but Christ & Love & mercy, which continued with melting & tears night & day.