

THE GROANING CAPTIVE'S DELIVERANCE AND RESOLUTION

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"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Romans 7:24, 25

What a mercy it is for the Church of God that the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Ghost to leave upon record his own experience! And not merely to leave of it a scanty fragment, but to draw it out in that complete manner which we find in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. What a relief it has been to thousands of God's suffering and sorrowing family! What a light it has cast upon the perplexities and intricacies of their path! What a breast of consolation has it been in all ages to God's tried and tempted people, and doubtless will be to the end of time!

The verses that I have read are, as it were, a summing up of the experience traced out in the chapter, and we may notice three points as connected with them:

I. *The cry* that sin and guilt pressed out of the Apostle's bosom: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

II. *The deliverance* that he obtained: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

III. *The resolution* that he came to in his own conscience: "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but

with the flesh the law of sin."

The experience of the Apostle here is so pointed and so decisive that those who are ignorant of it in their own souls, have made every attempt possible to subvert it. Some, for instance, have said that Paul did not mean "himself," though he uses the pronoun "I" again and again. Others have said "that it was the conflict in the Apostle's bosom between nature and conscience, before the Lord called him by His grace;" and yet he speaks all the way through in the present tense, thus shewing that it was a present conflict he was describing. Others have said "that it was a conflict under the law, before he had received a gospel deliverance." And yet, in the very teeth of this, he says: "O wretched man that I am!" not that "I was." "I find then a law," not "I found"; evidently shewing a conflict going on within at the very time he penned this epistle. The real source of all these perversions of the Apostle's meaning is ignorance of a work of grace in the soul. Being conscious that they have themselves no such experience, and that if these things be true they are wrong altogether, they use every means to subvert it utterly.

I. But what made the Apostle *cry* out so feelingly, so piteously: "O wretched man that I am!"; There were three things that forced this cry out of his bosom.

1. *A knowledge of the breadth and spirituality of God's law.* This, we find, he declares in vers. 9, 10: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died: and the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The entrance of God's law in its breadth and spirituality cursed and condemned him. Seeing and feeling his condemnation thereby, guilt forced this piteous cry out of his bosom. Before

he was spiritually and experimentally acquainted with the condemnation of the law in his conscience, he was "alive"; that is, he was pleased with his own righteousness, his own duties, his own performances. He did not see that God required truth in the inward parts; he did not know the purity and holiness of the divine character; he did not feel that the law curses for every transgression in thought, as well as in word and deed. The chambers of imagery, with all the hideous monsters lurking there, were not uncovered; the veil was not taken off his heart; light had not shone into his soul; life had not come into his conscience; and the Spirit of God had not begun His convincing operations within. For want, therefore, of this inward work in his soul, he was alive, because he had never been killed. Now the spirituality and breadth of the law must be felt in every quickened sinner's conscience, more or less. How long he shall be under it, or how deep he shall wade in trouble on account of it, God has not defined, and we cannot. But the effect of the law must be known in every saved sinner's conscience, and that is guilt; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." If I have never felt the guilt of sin in my conscience; if I have never felt trouble of soul on account of sin; if convictions have never pierced my heart; what can I know, what can I desire to know of a bleeding Immanuel? What is His pardoning love, what His atoning blood, what His rich mercy, what His superabounding grace to unwounded sinners? Thus, just in proportion as guilt works in the conscience, do we at first long after, and then know, prize and enjoy the mystery of atoning blood and dying love.

2. But there was another cause that produced this piteous cry out of the Apostle's soul, and that was the *revival of sin*. There was not merely the feeling of guilt on account of sin past, but there was also the revival and the rankling of sin present. Sin, before the law entered with power into his

conscience, lay dormant in him; it was like a viper in the winter—it was there with all its venom, but it was torpid. A man dead in sin, or dead in a profession, is carried down the stream of sin smoothly and insensibly, and like a heavily laden vessel borne along by the tide, he floats so quietly with the stream that he scarcely knows where he is going. Thus, while we were dead in sin, the inward tide of nature's corruption floated us so along into everything evil, that the secret workings of sin were not discerned. Then we were altogether under its power and dominion. But when the law revives sin by putting life into it, quickens it out of its torpid state, awakens the rattle-snake, and it begins to hiss in a man's mind, then he grieves and groans on account of the workings of present sin more if possible than he did from the guilt of past sin. What is our heaviest trial? I have my trials; and so have you, if you are God's children. We all have our peculiar trials: trials in body, trials in circumstances, trials in the family, trials in the mind; various trials we have each to pass through. But are any of our trials equal to what we feel from indwelling sin? Is it not your daily experience (it is more or less mine) to go groaning and sighing before the Lord on account of the working of sin in our carnal mind? Is it not our heaviest burden to have sin so striving for the mastery; that such base lusts are seeking perpetually to captivate our affections; that such evil desires are ever struggling for the victory in our bosom; that such pride and infidelity, and other abounding corruptions, are perpetually struggling, like a volcano in our breast, to get full vent, and desolate our souls? I am well convinced from soul experience that when sin is felt in its rankling workings in a tender conscience it will bow a man's head; it will make him at times burdened in his soul and distressed in his mind. His daily experience will be, more or less, hanging his head before the Lord, sighing and groaning, and bowed down by the corruptions that work in him, and so powerfully strive for the mastery. And what

makes us feel this? The fear of God in a tender conscience. Some men can live, they say, above the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sin is no burden to them; their corruptions cause them no pain; their pride, their presumption, their covetousness, their lewdness, all the workings of depraved nature never draw a tear from their eye, nor force a sob from their heart. Why? Because they lack the fear of God in a tender conscience. Just in proportion to the depth of godly fear, and to the tenderness of conscience before God, will sin be inwardly perceived, inwardly felt, and inwardly mourned and groaned under.

3. But there was another cause that made the Apostle cry out so piteously, "O wretched man that I am!" and that was *the inward conflict*. He describes that conflict in the words, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." What a picture of that which passes in a godly man's bosom! that he has in him two distinct principles, two different natures: one holy, heavenly, spiritual, panting after the Lord, finding the things of God its element; and yet in the same bosom a principle totally corrupt, thoroughly and entirely depraved, perpetually striving against the holy principle within, continually lusting after evil, opposed to every leading of the Spirit of God in the soul, and seeking nothing so much as, at any cost and any price, to gratify its filthy desires! Now must there not be a feeling of misery in a man's bosom to have these two armies perpetually fighting; that when he desires to do good, evil is present with him; when he would be holy, heavenly-minded, tender-hearted, loving, and seeking God's glory, enjoying sweet communion with a Three-One Jehovah, there is a base, sensual, earthly heart perpetually at work, infusing its baneful poison into every thought, counteracting every desire, and dragging him from the heaven to which he would mount down to the very hell of carnality and filth? Why,

surely if there be a holy, heavenly principle in a man's bosom (and such there is in every quickened sinner's heart) that knows, fears, loves, and delights in God; and yet to find that in him which is altogether opposed to the mind of Christ, and lusts after that which he hates with a perfect hatred—must there not be sorrow and grief in that man's bosom to feel such a perpetual and unceasing conflict?

Now, these feelings which the Apostle groaned under are experienced by all the quickened family. Blessed then be the name of God Most High, that He inspired him to trace out and leave upon record his experience, that we might derive comfort and relief from it. What should we otherwise have thought? We should have reasoned thus: "Here is an Apostle perfectly holy, perpetually heavenly-minded, having nothing but the image of Christ in him, continually living to the Lord's glory, and unceasingly enjoying communion with Him!" We should have viewed him as a perfect saint, if he had not told us what he was; and then, having viewed him as a perfect saint, we should have turned our desponding eyes into our own bosom, and seen such an awful contrast, that we should despair of ever being saved at all! But seeing the soul conflict which the Apostle passed through, and feeling a measure of the same in our own bosom, it encourages, supports, and leads the soul on to believe that this is the way in which the saints are called to travel, however rough, rugged, and perplexing it may be to them.

Be assured, then, if you have never cried out from the depths of your soul, "O wretched man that I am!" you are dead in sin, or dead in a profession. If internal guilt, misery, and condemnation never forced that cry from your bosom, depend upon it, the life and power of God is not in your soul. But if there has been, and still continues, from time to time, this cry in your breast, forced out of it by the pressure of sin

and guilt, there is in it a testimony that the same Lord who taught Paul is teaching you.

What is your experience before the Lord in private? Never mind your Sunday religion; that can be put on and put off like a Sunday coat. But what is your private experience? What says your solitary chamber? what, your fire-side? what, your heart, in the quiet depths of it, in solemn moments? Is there ever a piteous cry forced by guilt, shame, and sorrow out of your bosom, "O wretched man that I am!"? It is something to be brought to feel this, that we are wretched. There is hope for such, there is help for such; there is a testimony that the Spirit of God is at work in such a conscience, that the Lord Himself is dealing with such souls.

But the Apostle, mark you, was not contented (who can be contented?) with a cry and a groan. Look at the sufferer in a hospital. Is he contented with groaning on his painful bed? Look at the martyr to raging fever. Is he satisfied with the fever that burns up his limbs, and the anxious tossings of his body from side to side? No. Does he not want health and cure? Does he not want something to be done for and in him? So spiritually. To be satisfied with merely saying, "O wretched man that I am!" looks more like the experience of a hypocrite than the godly experience of a quickened soul. We shall want to be brought out of it; we shall want the Lord to appear; we shall want some manifestation of His grace; we shall want some testimony of His favour in our hearts; we shall want some deliverance out of it by the Lord's own outstretched hand, and His bare right arm.

If, then, the Lord the Spirit has implanted that piteous cry in your soul, "O wretched man that I am!" this will follow as a necessary consequence: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What, then, was it that so pained this holy

Apostle? It was the body of death that he carried in him; that moving mass of corruption; that Behemoth raising up his ponderous flanks in his soul, and trampling down all that was good and gracious in his heart. I have read that the idea is taken from a practice of the Romans of tying a dead body to a living one. And O! what must have been the sickening sensation of ever feeling the cold corpse close to the warm flesh; to wake, say, in the night, and feel the dead body tied around the living one, and clasping it in its cold arms! What a sensation of horror and disgust must the living feel from such a punishment!

Now look at it spiritually. Your new man is warm toward God. There are holy affections springing up; there are panting desires flowing forth; there are tender sighs, and longings and languishings after the Son of God in His beauty. And then, linked to it, there is a carnal, torpid, sensual, dead, earthly heart, perpetually surrounding it with its cold, clammy embrace, communicating its deathly torpidity to the soul. Would we pray, would we pour the heart forth in warm desires? The cold paw of this body of sin and death quenches that rising desire! Would we believe, and go forth in the sweet actings of living faith toward a crucified Jesus? Would we in the secret chambers of our heart earnestly seek His face? The cold, clammy embrace of the body of sin and death chills it all, continually impeding every upward movement of the spirit, and clogging and fettering every desire of the heavenly nature.

Now, the inward conflict produced by these exercises and perplexities forces out this cry: "'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Where shall I look to for deliverance? From what quarter can it come? Shall I look to the law? Oh, no; that curses and condemns me, because I am continually breaking it. Can I look to friends? They may pity and

sympathise, but they cannot remove the body of sin and death; it is too fast linked on for them to remove. Shall I go to ministers of truth? I may hear what they say with approbation, but there is something more wanted to remove this chilling embrace of the body of sin and death. Shall I look to the Scriptures? They contain the remedy, but I want that remedy to be sweetly applied: 'Who then shall deliver me?' What refuge can I look to? Whither can I go, or whither shall I turn? From what quarter can help or deliverance come?" See the embarrassment! view the perplexity of an exercised soul! looking here, and looking there; turning to the right hand, and turning to the left. Yet from one quarter only can deliverance come. And thus, when the Apostle was brought here, when he was sunk down to a low spot and anxiously turning his eyes to every quarter to see whence deliverance could come, God blessed his soul with a view of His precious Son. God the Spirit wrought in his heart that living faith whereby he saw Jesus, and whereby there was a communication of the blood and love of the Lamb to his conscience. And that leads me to the second part of the subject.

II. *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Now what did he thank God for? Shall I be missing the Apostle's mind, think you, if I say that he had reason to thank God for his conflict? I do not mean to say that was altogether his mind here. He thanked God for his victory, I readily and cheerfully admit; but had he not reason also to thank God for the previous conflict? Is not previous conflict a subject for praise? Had he not learned lessons in that conflict which could not have been taught him in any other way? You have felt guilt. Was not that guilt a mercy? You have felt condemnation. Was not that sense of condemnation a mercy? You have been purged out of an empty profession. Was not that a mercy? You have had the chaff of self-righteousness and false faith

fanned away by the strong north wind of the Spirit. Was not that a mercy? You have sunk so low in your soul that none but God Himself could deliver you. Was not that a mercy? Surely it is. Whatever prepares the soul for mercy, must be mercy; whatever fits the soul for the reception of Jesus must be a mercy; whatever winnows away the dust and chaff of self must be mercy, for it prepares the soul for a blessed Immanuel. Then we have reason to thank God for every feeling of guilt we have passed through, for every temptation we have been perplexed with, for every tear of contrition that has trickled down our cheek, for every sob of sorrow that has heaved from our bosom. For every feeling of misery, guilt and wretchedness, we have reason to bless His name; for our choicest mercies spring out of them, and our richest blessings are only blessings just so far as these painful exercises have prepared the soul for the enjoyment of them.

But no doubt the mind of the Apostle was chiefly directed to thank God for the gift of His dear Son: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, if you have followed me in my attempt to unfold the cause of the Apostle's cry, you will see there were three things that produced it. There was: 1. *the condemnation of the law*; 2. *the revival of sin*; and 3. *the internal conflict between nature and grace*. Now, when he thanks God through Jesus Christ, he thanks Him for having provided a remedy for each and all in the Person, work and mediation of His only-begotten Son.

1. Look at the *guilt of sin*. How can we be delivered from the guilt of sin, the curse of the law, its holy condemnation, and its thundering vengeance? By no other way than by the blood of the Lamb, that precious blood which "cleanseth from all sin," that only propitiation, that wondrous sacrifice which the Son of God offered on Calvary's tree. There is no other way to obtain pardon; there is no other way to find peace; there

is no other mode of enjoying reconciliation with God; there is no other way by which the law's thunderings are to be silenced, the curse removed, and the condemnation blotted out. The peace-speaking blood of Immanuel in the conscience is the only remedy for the soul that knows painfully the curse of the law, and the condemnation produced by it.

2. And so with respect to the *revival of sin*. What does the revival of sin teach us? Does it not teach us this (as the Apostle says, Rom. 5:21): "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." How am I to know the superaboundings of grace—the lengths, breadths, depths and heights of dying love? Must I not know them by finding painfully and personally the aboundings of sin? Then, just in proportion as I am daily led into a knowledge of the depth of the Fall; as I feel the workings of sin in my carnal mind, and find how it abounds in me; just in that proportion only can I know, and value when I know, the superaboundings of grace. It is a mercy, therefore, to know the workings of sin in our hearts. Men may cast their contemptuous reflection on what they call "corruption." But I am sure of this, that in order to prize grace and value Jesus, to love Him as "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely," we must know personally and painfully the aboundings of sin and corruption in our carnal mind. The greater the sinner, the greater the saint; the deeper the fall, the higher the recovery; the more painful the sensations of guilt that the conscience experiences, the more is the balmy blood of Immanuel prized. So that not to know corruption in its painful workings, is not to know pardon, peace, or the superaboundings of sovereign grace.

3. So with respect to the *internal conflict*. The Apostle saw "there was no condemnation to them that were in Christ

Jesus"; that though they were tried and tempted, though they were harassed and exercised, though an unceasing conflict took place in their bosom, yet they were not to be condemned for it, for they were interested in the love and blood of the Lamb.

III. But this leads me to *the solemn resolution* that Paul came to. Just observe, he had experienced two things in his soul. He had experienced the curse of the law and the blessing of the gospel; the aboundings of sin and the superaboundings of grace; the knowledge of himself and the knowledge of Christ. Now, the knowledge of these two things brought him, in his conscience, to this solemn resolution: "So then, with my mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Does the Apostle mean by these words to justify sin? Does he intend to say that he was now settled at his ease? That he had a corrupt nature which loved sin, and therefore might sometimes gratify that; and had a divine and holy nature which loved holiness, and therefore might some times indulge that? That he was sitting at ease in his armchair, comfortably "established" (as it is called), and did not trouble himself about the workings of sin in his old man, but quietly attended to the workings of the Spirit in the new? I cannot think so; I do not believe that the words contain an expression of contentment. They are rather this: a feeling in his soul that there was no alteration to be obtained in this life with respect to the conflict he had to endure; that he never was to expect to rise beyond a warfare; that as long as he lived below there would be in him a body of sin and death—the law of sin working in his members and warring continually against the law of his mind. But it was not a settling down upon his lees; it was not a mere resting upon the doctrine of the old man and the new; it was not a throwing away of the arms of spiritual warfare. Not so; but it was a coming to this solemn conclusion in his mind: "I have

two warring principles within me." He did not know it clearly before. It was then opened up to him; light shone into his soul, and brought him to see that his old man never would be any better; and therefore that he with his flesh would serve the law of sin, though with his mind he would serve the law of God.

Now let us look at these two things. The "mind" here means the new nature, that holy principle which God the Spirit implants in a man's heart. With this we serve the law of God. This new man is holy, heavenly, pure, and spiritual, delighting in God, panting and seeking after communion with Jesus. It bears injuries, submits to unkind treatment, puts its mouth in the dust, and possesses a measure of conformity to Christ's image. Thus the Apostle says, "I myself—I, Paul—viewed as a Christian, as a believer in Jesus—I, with my mind, with my new nature, with that holy, heavenly principle which God has implanted in my breast, serve the law of God. I acknowledge the Word of God to be my rule and guide. I desire to know His will, and to do it. I seek to obey Him in all things; I strive to please, to honour, and to glorify Him. His will is my will, His commands are my commands, and what He leads me into, that I gladly perform." Now, this is just the spirit and bent of a gracious man's "mind" of his new nature. Praise, prayer, spiritual-mindedness, love to God's saints, desire to walk in godly fear; this is the being, the element of the new man. With this mind, or new man, a believer serves the law of God. All feelings of holy reverence and godly fear; all the actings of faith, hope and love; all contrition and humility; all self-loathing and abhorrence; all desires to know God, to please Him, and to enjoy Him; everything spiritual, everything gracious, dwells in the new man. And thus we at times feel (do we not?) heavenly things our element, spiritual things our chief joy, the blood of the Lamb our greatest delight, and the Word of God the rule of our obedience. Thus

"with the mind we serve the law of God."

But as long as we live in the body we have another principle, quite distinct from it, which the Apostle here calls the "flesh"—our fallen corrupt nature, our depraved heart, which ever was and ever will be a sink of iniquity, a sewer, a charnel-house of corruption and incurable depravity. Now, "with our flesh"—with this corrupt nature—"we serve the law of sin;" not gladly, that is another matter. The Apostle does not say that he serves "sin," but that he serves "the law of sin." These are different things. To serve "sin," and to serve "the law of sin," are very different matters. The internal principle is one thing, external acts are another. The lustings of your heart unto evil, and putting into practice those lusts, are two very different things. Sin working in your heart, and sin acted in your body, are quite distinct. The Apostle does not say he serves sin. If we are the servants of sin, we are the children of wrath. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." But still we "serve the law of sin," though we do not serve sin itself. The "law of sin" is that internal principle of sin in the bosom (if I may use the expression), "the spirit of sin," that subtle principle that is perpetually at work, seeking to regain its ancient mastery. Every infidel thought, every blasphemous imagination, every vile idea, every lewd desire, every covetous wish, every rising of pride, every movement of inward hypocrisy, every going out of love to the world, every secret exaltation of self (and who does not painfully know these inward workings?), are a part of the "law of sin." This law works in the carnal mind, subtilly insinuating itself into every crevice, and is a law to our flesh, constraining it, as a law constrains obedience to its authority, working in our carnal mind in the same intricate way as the blessed Spirit works in the new man of grace.

And this we shall serve to our dying day. But is servitude a

pleasure? Does the slave hug his chain? The poor African torn from his native land, and transported across the Atlantic, is he pleased with the hold of the slave-ship? Is he not pining after light and liberty? So spiritually. Does the Apostle mean that it was his happiness, his pleasure, his delight, to serve the law of sin? Does he so mean to distinguish the two principles as to say, "I can be happy with God in a chapel to-day, and happy with the Devil in a pot-house to-morrow"? Does he mean to say, "I can live in an atmosphere of spirituality one moment, and plunge into a brothel the next"? No; there is no such spirit in it. When he says, "I serve the law of sin," he speaks of himself as one entangled contrary to his own wishes; torn, like a poor African, from hearth and home, taken captive by sin and Satan, and chained in the hold of the slave-ship, an unwilling captive, a groaning prisoner, who would fain get free, and yet finds the subtle spirit of internal sin and corruption perpetually seeking to regain the mastery over him.

Be assured of this, if you can serve sin without sorrow, you have not the Spirit of Christ in you; you are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." If the gratification of your secret lusts cost you no pain; if the workings of your base nature never force a tear from your eye, or a groan from your bosom, depend upon it you are not where Paul was. Servitude is a galling fetter. The iron chain of slavery often enters into the soul, and we never can be happy until we are delivered from the galling yoke. So that the Apostle, in making this solemn resolution, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin," does not mean for a single moment to encourage licentiousness. He does not hold out that we may live in sin, and gratify our lusts, and yet be manifestly the children of God. Look at the sixth chapter of Romans, where the whole bent of this argument is against being under the power of sin. But what

he means is this: that as long as he is upon earth he will have a body of sin and death; as long as he is in the flesh he will know the painful workings of corruption; and he submits to it, looking forward to that happy day when the corrupt body shall drop into the dust, and the soul shall enter into unspeakable bliss, reserved for the family of God.

I would ask in all sincerity (and may God in mercy apply it to your consciences), what you and I know of this experience? Why is it in the Bible? Why has God left it upon record? Is it not that we may try ourselves by it, and thus be brought to the test? Let us look at the experience of the Apostle, and see if we know it. Look at the three points; God enable you to see whether you know them experimentally.

1. What do you know of being a poor, wretched, guilty, miserable sinner? This is the first thing to be learnt in Christ's school. You cannot overstep that. You may as well try to read without learning the alphabet, as think you can know Christ without knowing guilt and condemnation. Then what do you know of this step? "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You say you do know it. Blessed are you if God the Spirit has wrought this experience only in your soul! It will lead on to better things. It will end in brighter things. We must, in Christ's school, begin with the lowest form, and then be led on, step by step, and line by line, to learn the lessons which the Spirit of God teaches all the ransomed family.

2. But can you get a step further: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"? No sweet testimony? no precious deliverance? no gracious intimations? no marks of heavenly favour? no love to Jesus? Has His name never been precious to you? the savour of it never "like the ointment poured forth"? What! is the Son of God without form and comeliness

to you? When you see Him, is there no beauty in Him that you should desire Him? What! no pantings after His sweet presence? no longings after His manifested favour? no cries to feel the power of His atoning blood? no secret pantings in your soul after the discovery of His mercy and grace? Now, if you know something of this experience, you can say with the Apostle, in a measure: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is a door of escape open. There is a way of refuge from misery, guilt and condemnation. There is a way—the Lord of life and glory, the Mediator between God and man, the Great High Priest over the house of God, He who is able to save unto the uttermost, the ever-living Intercessor, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. What! no faith in Him? no desires after Him? Surely, surely, if God the Spirit is your teacher, there is this going on in the quiet depths of your conscience.

3. Then you will have to come to this resolution: "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." "I desire to know His will, and to do it, to submit, to His righteous dealings with me, to walk in the light of His countenance, and live under the shinings of His favour. And yet, in all, with all, and in the midst of all, I find and feel a contrary nature, a vile heart of unbelief; proud, hypocritical, presumptuous, covetous; a lustful eye, perpetually captivating my affections, ensnaring my soul, and inflicting cruel wounds in my heart and conscience." And yet you must bear the burden, endure the load, and look forward to the day of your deliverance. Nay, God in mercy overrules these painful exercises for the good of His people. Where would be your humility, where would be your self-loathing, where would be your contrition, brokenness, and godly fear? where would be your shame of face and abasement of soul before a holy God, if you did not carry within you these painful testimonies that you are the very chief of sinners, and less

than the least of all saints? Why, you would be throwing stones at everyone from your own little hill of holiness. Therefore, let men say what they will, and let presumptuous professors shoot out arrows of bitter scorn against it, we have reason to thank God for the knowledge of our corruption; we have reason to bless His name that He has humbled us by showing it; and we have reason to thank Him that He has shed that light into our souls, and given that life in our conscience, whereby sin is, in a measure, ever brought to light, mourned over, hated, and repented of. Thus we shall walk softly before God all our days "in the bitterness of our soul," and thus be neither swallowed up by despair on the one hand, nor inflated with presumption on the other. To walk so is to walk safely. We then come to this solemn resolution: "I with my mind serve the law of God—that is my element—yet with the flesh I have painfully to serve the law of sin—and that is my misery. To serve the law of God is my joy; to serve the law of sin is my sorrow. To serve the law of God in my soul is my heaven; to serve the law of sin in my members is a bitter relic of hell." Yet all is necessary to make the soul watchful and humble, and teach it the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin; to keep us little and low in our own esteem, and lay us prostrate at the foot of the cross, "being determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."