

# THE COLONEL'S CONVERSION.

A CHIEF OF SINNERS MADE A CHIEF OF SAINTS.

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If there is any knowledge which ought to fill the heart of man with joyful emotions, it is the knowledge of Jesus Christ as He is set before us in the gospel. It is like sunshine to the dreary waste of a Lapland winter. Without it, all is cold, dark, and desert. The earth is bound with adamantine chains. Vegetation is at an end. The fresh verdure of the fields—the foliage of the trees—and the varied beauties of the landscape, are all lost in one dull and cheerless monotony. Like the poor Laplander, man escapes from his misery only by burying himself in his darkened hut, and by drowning all thought in an endless round of varied occupation. Yes, such is the condition of every human heart until the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as exhibited in the face of Jesus Christ, shines within him. All around is dark and dreary. All nature reflects, even amidst its beauty, the angry frown of a holy and offended God, against whom man has sinned, and whose “anger burneth unto the lowest hell.” The whole animated “creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.” Man, everywhere and in all circumstances, is “subject to vanity.” He “walks in a vain show.” “The fashion of the world passeth away,” and all the joy and pleasure of

earth are like sparks of fire, which appear but for a moment and then vanish away. But dark as is man's present, still darker is his future. Death stares him in the face—the grave yawns before him at every step—and “hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming.”

How worthy, then, of the acceptance of every man is the “faithful” and infallible “saying”—the glorious “gospel of the blessed God”—the “good tidings of great joy”—that “Christ Jesus,” the eternal Son of God, though “in the beginning with God and equal with God,” nevertheless came down into this sinful world that “He might save” from present danger and everlasting ruin, miserable sinners. Oh, how worthy to be heard, regarded, and obeyed! How worthy to be welcomed, not only into the understanding, but even into the inmost heart, is this merciful message of our most gracious God—this “unspeakable gift”—this adorable Redeemer, “in knowledge of whom standeth eternal life.

Oh, what a new and wondrous song,  
That name affords the human tongue!  
Of joy it prompts the sweetest strain,  
It wings the heavy hours of pain.  
When life draws near its dread eclipse,  
'T is the last sound upon our lips;  
When heaven unfolds, 't will be the first  
That from our raptured hearts shall burst.

Such, undoubtedly, is the joyful experience of every man who is led by the spirit of God, to the true knowledge of his disease and danger—of his guilt and the way of deliverance and escape.

Behold the Apostle Paul. Once he was the most proud, haughty, and confident of men. He regarded himself as superior in morality, and even in religion, to

most of those who stood highest in the community and the church. He could even challenge the scrutiny and claim the approbation of God, as in all things "touching the righteousness which is by the law blameless." But his religion was no more than a proud and self-righteous observance of ordinances, rites, and ceremonies, and his morality offered no rebuke to hatred and revenge, intolerance and persecution. Enlightened, however, by the teaching of God's Word and Spirit, Paul saw that his religion was hypocrisy, and his morality selfish pride, and that he possessed neither love to God nor love to man. He saw that he had been employing God and his religion for the mere purpose of self-exaltation, and of securing the honor and applause of men—that a due regard to the character and claims of God "was not in all his thoughts"—and that he was "steeped to the very lips" in ungodliness, unbelief, and sin. His views of God, of God's law, and of the nature, extent, and malignity of sin, were entirely changed, so that, instead of regarding himself as the greatest of saints, he felt himself to be "the chief of sinners." It was no longer a question with him, how he might secure the greatest favor and friendship on the part of God, and the highest honor from his fellow-men. But filled with self-loathing and contempt, and conscious of having insulted and provoked God to the very uttermost, his wonder and amazement were, that God had borne with him in such long enduring patience, and was still willing and waiting to be gracious. That God, whom he had so foully dishonored and blasphemed, should be even yet willing to be reconciled—that Jesus, whom he had persecuted, nay, even "crucified afresh and put to an open shame," should magnify in his conversion and apostleship the riches, and omnipotence of his grace—

and that he who had been the greatest enemy of the gospel, should now be noted as its chiefest apostle—this was to Paul a mystery and a miracle of mercy.

To that mercy, and to it alone, he refers all his hope and all his salvation. The grace of our Lord "was exceeding abundant," and as high above all merit or expectation as are the heavens above the earth. It had pardoned all his sins—his blasphemies—his persecutions—his evil and malignant example—his murderous connivance and co-operation in the destruction of Christ's faithful followers—and the whole spirit and temper of his ungodly heart. That mercy had renewed his soul, and sanctified his motives and principles of conduct. An entire change was effected in his sentiments, feelings, and character. All the faculties of his mind received a new impulse and direction. New views of Christ, of religion, of life and death, of time and eternity, took possession of his mind. "Old things passed away, and behold all things became new." The mercy of Christ brought both regeneration and pardon to his guilty and depraved spirit. And having made him "a new creature in Christ Jesus," the grace which had begun, continued to carry on, the work of salvation in his soul, to influence his affections, and to mature his Christian character. This grace filled him with a love to Christ, whose mercy he had obtained, which triumphed over every other feeling of his heart; led him infinitely to prefer his Master to every other being in the universe; and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. That mercy made his spirit yearn with tender and earnest compassion over all who still rejected the salvation he had found. It consecrated him with an absorbing and untiring devotion to the service of Christ

and the spiritual welfare of his fellow-men. It inspired him with unequalled fortitude and magnanimity in the endurance of shame, obloquy, and disgrace; of hunger, nakedness, and peril; so that he "took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." And when at last death itself appeared in its most frightful form of martyrdom, he was "ready to be offered up," since "to him to live was Christ, and to die was gain." But, above all, while "not a whit behind the very chiefest of apostles," with what unparalleled humility did this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill the Apostle's soul! In his own estimation, he was "the chief of sinners," not worthy to be called an Apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God; and the life that he now lived, he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who was to him "all and in all."

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord," says the Apostle, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

How touching were the circumstances under which the Apostle makes this overpowering appeal to his own example, as a motive and an encouragement to every needy sinner! Thirty years had elapsed since he had

found this mercy. He was now "such an one as Paul the aged." The spring and summer of his life had departed. Winter had crowned his head with the snows of age, and bowed his body beneath the weight of many infirmities. He had endured also every conceivable trial, because of his adherence to the cause of Christ. In every city, bonds and imprisonment awaited him; and at all times his life and liberty were exposed to the greatest jeopardy. But none of these things moved him. He was at this very time a prisoner, and nothing but apostacy could secure him against the sudden execution of anticipated death. Instead, however, of being either ashamed or afraid, he was exceeding joyful in all his tribulations. As his outward man perished and decayed, his inward man was strong in the Lord, and renewed day by day; and thanking Christ Jesus his Lord for the mercy manifested toward him, he was now ready to be offered up, assured that he should receive a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge should give him, and not him only, but to them also who should love his appearing.

As Paul, the chief of sinners, was thus made an illustrious example, a pattern of the sovereign, free, and efficacious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so it has pleased God from time to time to find those who seek him not, and to magnify in their conversion, and subsequent holy life, the riches of his grace and the security and perseverance of believers, as a pattern and encouragement for all those who believe on him to eternal life.

Such was Augustine in ancient times. Such were Bunyan, Newton, and Colonel Gardiner, in modern times. Such, more recently, was the remarkable conversion of Dr. Capadose, a Jewish physician of Amsterdam; and such, also, to a very remarkable extent, was the late Colonel W—— Y——

Colonel Y was born in the City of Charleston, S. C., August 12, 1777. He had a very pious mother, of whose care—in consequence of the death of his father, and his removal from her—he was deprived, when he was only seven years old. He was thus left an orphan, and brought up without the advantages of that religious education, and of that “nurture and admonition of the Lord,” which it would have been the first great object of that pious mother to bestow. Her character, example, and prayers were still, however, for some time left him, together with the mercy of a covenant-keeping God, who is the Judge of the widow and the Father of the fatherless, and who, when it pleases him that father and mother should forsake us, takes up those for whom the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous parent have availed much.

So it was with Colonel Y. For a long time he seemed utterly abandoned to his own evil and ungodly heart, and like every child left to himself, to go astray like a lost sheep, departing from the living God, and running into every excess of evil.

In early youth, he was accustomed to go to church, but like some children, who are fatally and permanently injured, he was allowed to sit away from observation and restraint, in the singing loft, where he associated with wicked and ungodly boys, more evil than himself, so that instead of being profited, he was made more hardened by his church-going associations. This training in evil, in connection with the want of all religious training at home, made him, while young in years, a veteran in pride, passion, and ungodliness. At a very early age, he made the desperate determination never to go to church again. Thus did Satan blind his conscience by a plea of false honor, and lead him, as he does so many,

captive at his will, protected against all the assaults of truth, and exposed to every temptation and to every device of the great adversary, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

From that early period of his boyish thoughtlessness until his fiftieth year, Colonel Y never read the Bible and never offered up a prayer. Nor did he ever go to church, except on funeral and public occasions, until about his sixtieth year, when he was led there under deep conviction of sin by the invisible hand of the Divine Spirit.

During these many years, he lived in pleasure, and was dead while he lived, loving and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all and blessed for ever. He studied and became a lawyer. He entered into public life, where he always held some honorable office in connection with the state. He married and became the father of several children. He was all heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, in military and political affairs, devoting himself with intense enthusiasm to whatever seemed to bear upon the honor and glory of his native state. But during all this time of God's long-suffering mercy, he thought not of—he feared not—he honored not—and he cared not for—that God who was yet to bring him into judgment, and who was able to cast, at any moment, both soul and body into hell for ever.

It is truly astonishing how desperately wicked, and how deplorably ignorant and hardened a man may be, in the very midst of Christian influences. Colonel Y lived during this lengthened period utterly destitute, as he affirmed, of any religious opinions whatever. He believed in God, but did not know who or what Christ was. He did not even realize or sensibly feel that he



had a soul, and, therefore, he never thought of death or of hell. He encountered, in this condition of fatalistic thoughtlessness, the most imminent and frequent danger. The Bible, or any other religious book, he never once read, and the presentation of the truth made no impression upon him whatever.

His manner of life during these years of his ignorance and impenitence needs not to be rehearsed. To use his own expressive language, he was "living in the greatest wickedness, and enjoying life very much." But he was yet to be a pattern of the power and efficacy, of the sovereignty and freeness, of divine grace. God had not cast him off, and a mother's prayers were yet to be answered. To this end God sent him a truly faithful, pious, and devoted wife, who, though she mourned in bitterness, and died without the sight of his salvation, believed against hope, that he would yet be converted, and agonized for him in prayer to God that he might be saved. Dying, she left him her children, her prayers, her Bible, and her pious books, among which was Baxter's *Saint's Rest*.

Another step by which redeeming grace first led his roving feet to seek the heavenly road, was by bringing him into retirement. He was located in the Citadel as Arsenal Keeper in the year 1832. Here he was necessarily much alone, and thus led to consider his ways. The mercy of God had provided a shelter for him, and the Spirit of God had wrought in him an inward sense of sin and misery. The actions of his past life, like ghosts of memory, crowded upon him, and while conscience accused, his own heart condemned him. The images of a departed mother and a sainted wife arose before his troubled spirit, even in the darkness of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men. He remem-

bered that mother's prayers, and that wife's interceding groans, and he now turned to her unopened Bible, and her well worn and tear-bedewed Saint's Everlasting Rest, and found in them that peace which the world had never given, and which, blessed be God, it could never afterward take away.

This transition from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was immediate in its character, and yet very gradual in its full development. He was, like Paul, at once determined to be a Christian, and yet, like him, it was necessary that he should be instructed in order to know what he should do. While, therefore, he was delighted with the Bible, he was minded to remain a year in private and hide his convictions in his own heart. When in this condition of mind, he was led to attend a night service, when the writer preached on the character and conduct of Nicodemus. The truth was a word in due season, an arrow which, though drawn at a venture, was guided by unerring wisdom. It reached his heart, and was made the power of God to the full conviction and complete establishment of his soul. He heard the same preacher again, and very soon after called upon him, and originated that acquaintance which afterward ripened into friendship and regard.

It was truly a delightful task to explain more perfectly the way of God to one so willing and eager to learn and to obey. His first act was an open and unreserved confession of all his past sinfulness, and his desire and determination to make all the reparation he could to man, and to acknowledge, bewail, and repent of it both before God and man. Of this he gave a remarkable illustration. Soon after he had connected himself with the congregation, and before it was prudent for him to

unite with the church, a communion season took place. I had entered the pulpit and was about to commence the service, when Colonel Y came up the pulpit stairs. He expressed a most ardent wish, if it was still possible, to unite with the church at that time; and as he knew it was too late to be practicable, according to the rules of the church, he was ready, if deemed sufficient, to come out before the congregation, and there acknowledge his past sins, make an open confession of his penitence, and submit to any examination I might think proper. But when the inexpediency of such a course was pointed out, he cheerfully acquiesced.

Of the Bible, he was necessarily very ignorant. Calling to see him at the Citadel, he exhibited the armory with its terrible array of bloody weapons. I hope, said I, the time is not far distant when "men shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Beautiful, he replied, but pray where is it from? On learning that it was from the Book of Isaiah, he said I must excuse him, as he really was not acquainted with the books or contents of the Bible, but that, with God's help, it should not be so long. Nor was it—for, having procured for him Scott's Commentary on the Scriptures, he had within a year studied every portion of it, and continued to read it regularly, with the text and observations, once a year, even to the end. He became to his family a patriarchal priest, as well as protector, holding with them constant religious services, not only morning and evening, but also on every sabbath, when prevented from attendance at the sanctuary. For years, also, and until health failed him, he was a diligent reader of various religious and devotional works, and became a

scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God, and thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.

Like Paul, Colonel Y carried all his natural boldness, affectionateness, and ingenuous candor, into his religion. He appeared to have no thought of the ridicule or of the reproach, or the jeers and opprobrious insinuations of the world around him. He gloried in the cross, and knew nothing among men but Jesus and him crucified. He began at once to speak to all around him, and his blessed Jesus and the joys of his salvation were the beginning and the end of all his conversation. Probably no one ever came into contact with him, upon such terms as gave him any opportunity of telling them what God had done for his soul, without being urged to "taste and see that the Lord is good" to all that call upon him in sincerity. There are many living, with whom he has repeatedly labored, beseeching them, even with tears, to be reconciled to God, and have peace with him through our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor did he confide in his words. He travailed for them in prayer, and wept over them in secret places. May those prayers still be answered, and those pleadings still be heard!

Nor was he less ready to speak a word in season to his fellow pilgrims, as he met them on the way. His heart was full and his tongue eloquent; and it was indeed edifying to hear him as he encouraged the timid, cheered the desponding, enlightened the doubting, and stimulated all to aspire to the loftiest heights of assured faith, and hope, and joy. These he had himself attained in an eminent degree, and to their attainment he thought every Christian privileged to reach. He lived in an unclouded sunshine. God was his sun and shield, and his exceeding great reward, in keeping whose commandments he found great and uninterrupted delight. It was a thrill-

ing scene when a distinguished scholar and Christian, on taking farewell of him, expressed to him the obligations under which he lay for his counsels, prayers, and example, in all his Christian course, and the earnest hope that they would be permitted to resume their intercourse and progressive advancement in a holier and happier world. Ah, yes! they who have turned many to righteousness, and comforted and edified one of Christ's least disciples here on earth, shall shine as stars in the firmament of heaven.

Like Paul, Colonel Y was characterized by active, devoted, and self-sacrificing charity. He was, indeed, willing to distribute, and zealous in every good word and work. To his ability, yea, and beyond his ability, he was forward in every benevolent expenditure. At one of our first interviews he expressed his interest in the missionary enterprise, and as he was then nearly sixty years of age, he wished to give a dollar for every year of his life, as an offering of his first fruits to the Lord. This he did, and that, too, out of a very moderate income; and he continued to give to that and every other religious object to an extent very rarely equalled. Nothing pained him so much as his inability to give more. So sure and clear was his faith in Christ, that he committed unto him not only the treasures of the life to come, which, because they have never actually possessed them, men are ready enough to do, but also the treasures of the life that now is, as far as within his possession, which men are so reluctant to part with and so eager to obtain. He consecrated one-tenth of all his income to charity, in the proper sense, besides his general contributions to churches and other objects of public benefit, and his private acts of munificent bounty to the poor and needy. For years he had been a dying man, having been

brought down to the gates of death by various attacks of dangerous disease. Until thus enfeebled and incapable of going out at night, he was an invariable attendant upon every service, prayer meeting, and lecture—frequent at the sabbath school—and ready to serve on any committee on behalf of any interest of the church. He was then, also, a frequent visitor at the houses of the sick and poor, and by his prayers and alms comforted and relieved many.

Nor was Colonel Y less analogous to Paul, or less a pattern to them who believe, in his maturity of piety. Faith was his crowning grace, as it was that of the Apostle. From having been a grain of mustard seed, it became a great tree. It was to him literally the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. It removed mountains—filled up valleys—made crooked places straight, and rough places smooth. It never failed him. Faith and prayer were his panoply against all adversaries, his fortress in all dangers, his very present help in every time of need. In everything by supplication and prayer with thanksgiving, he sought the Lord. And as in all his ways he acknowledged God, and trusted in him, he found God verily faithful to his promises and better than his word. Of this, how very emphatic was the illustration, when his last hours were cheered by the intelligence that, through the kind agency of his nephew, his situation was secured to his son as a home for his family. He literally lived and labored and walked by faith for years, and found it his meat and his medicine. This nerved him for scenes of peculiar trial, and gave him boldness and an utterance which astonished and abashed his detractors. He prosecuted every work, performed every duty, encountered every hazard, and achieved herculean tasks, by the supernatural aid

derived from this principle. His faith was more like that of the Apostles and primitive believers than that of any man I ever knew, and would have appeared fanatical and wild, had it not been associated with such modesty, such mildness, and such constant and wonderful attestations in the providence of God. Twice this faith seemed to restore him when pronounced to be beyond possible recovery, and I have not known how, without it, he could have lived for years before his death. This, he said, was his chief and only support, and while it made him ready at any moment to die, and unwilling to pray for a moment's longer life, it left all that regarded his life, his health, his fortune, and his family, entirely to the disposal of his gracious God. His will was therefore swallowed up in the will of God, and while he was diligent in the use of all means for the improvement of his health and fortune, he had no anxiety about the future and no unhappiness about the past, but had learned in whatever state he was, to be therewith content. No man was more diligent and correct in business, and none more fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. His dying charge was, "tell my brethren of the happiness I am enjoying and the misery of those who are shut out from the blessed Saviour, and beseech them to be much in prayer and more in effort."

Colonel Y's piety was, therefore, cheerful and happy. Joy was his constant companion and guest. He rejoiced evermore. In sickness or health—when at home or abroad—when in difficulty or distress—when persecuted or defamed—he was at all times and alike happy—happy in the assurance of God's favor which is life, and that all things work together for good to them that love him. This joy increased as death drew near. It was his habitual spirit, days and weeks before any signs

of sickness appeared, and it soothed and comforted him in all time of his last days of suffering and prostration. His faith was like the shining light of the rising sun—shining more and more unto the perfect day. One of his last acts was an act of praise. Learning that he was approaching death, he requested his wife to have family worship, and as his hearing had become impaired, to let the children sing as loudly as they could that he might hear. And as they proceeded, he united in the song of praise, while the tear of joy rolled down his fading cheeks.

The secret of his extraordinary faith, and hope, and joy, was his extraordinary devotion, spirituality, study of the word of God, and prayer. His faith was no antinomian boast, or fanatical enthusiasm. It was the pure flame of heaven, fed by constant oil bought at the heavenly mart, and rising from a lamp daily trimmed and kept burning. He was continually in the spirit and frame of prayer, and he spent hours every day in family and private devotion. At sunrise, morning, noon, and evening, he was found using his favorite guide, Bishop Andrews' Devotions, which he interspersed with frequent and full ejaculations. And when all around him were curtained in sleep, he was in the constant practice of spending from one to two hours in midnight reading and devotion. In these nocturnal vigils he found so great delight and such increasing happiness, that while evidently dangerous to his health, he could not be induced to relax or abandon them.

It was in that spirit of prayer and in those constant communings with God in Christ, the strength of this Samson lay. It was from these he derived uninterrupted peace and joy. It was by these he was made victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and even while



here on earth, made meet, in no ordinary measure, for the inheritance among the saints in light.

To die, therefore, was to him an easy task; nay, it was rest from all his labors. His work was done. His course was finished, and he was ready to depart. He yielded himself at once to God's will. He lay upon his bed in peace, willing that his friends should do for him all they thought advisable, but conscious that his hour was come, and rejoicing with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Christ and his righteousness—and the exceeding great and precious promises of God—these were his own declared foundations of faith and hope. Blessed be God, while he is gone these are left; and though dead, he yet speaketh. For he obtained mercy, that in him, the chief of sinners, Christ might show all long suffering for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

He was a pattern to those who are still impenitent sinners, teaching them that their only hope of salvation is the mercy of God, as in Christ Jesus he is reconciling sinners unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. Pardon and eternal life are not to be obtained by human merit, nor by man's doings. They are the free gifts of God's great and gracious mercy. Not according to works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

But this pattern, like that of the Apostle Paul, teaches us also the willingness and ability of Christ to show this mercy to the greatest sinners, if they will repent and

believe the gospel. The pattern thus exhibited in the Apostle, and in Colonel Y., has been displayed in every period of the church.

What is the language of one? "The time was when I knew nothing of Jesus Christ. I was careless of my soul. I thought not of eternity. Sunk in ignorance and vice, I was wholly given up to sensual enjoyments. I had no pleasure but in gratifying my fleshly lusts. I wrought the will of the Gentiles, and lived without God in the world. But the Lord in mercy brought me to myself. By His Word and Spirit he quickened me, when dead in trespasses and in sins, and breathed into my soul a spiritual life. Trembling and astonished, I was led to seek that God and Saviour, for whom I had never cared. Blessed by the riches of divine mercy, I did not seek in vain. I found Him whom once I sought not. I found him faithful to his promise, and mighty to save. He has blotted out all my sins, and filled my soul with peace. He has delivered me from the bondage of corruption, and enabled me to walk in newness of life. I stand a monument of redeeming grace, to the praise and glory of His holy name." What is the confession of another? "Once I loved the world and the things of the world, with supreme delight. My affections were all set on earthly objects. My only aim was to grow rich and increase my substance. As for God, I had no knowledge of him; no fear of his wrath, no desire after his favor. If my worldly affairs prospered, my utmost wishes were gratified. But the Lord met me in my ruinous course. He mercifully opened my eyes, which the god of this world had blinded. He taught me to see the vanity of all earthly objects and pursuits. He taught me to aspire to the things which are not seen. He revealed to me the only valuable treasure, a

treasure in heaven. There my affections now are fixed. The Lord himself is my portion. I prize his favor above all things. There is none upon earth that I desire besides him. When he lifts up the light of his countenance upon me, I find far greater and more genuine pleasure than I ever felt at the increase of my corn, and cattle, and gold." Listen to the declaration of a third. "Great has been the Divine mercy to me. I was long led captive by Satan when I suspected it not. I was puffed up with a proud conceit of my own goodness. Because my conduct was free from gross sins, I presumptuously thought that I was righteous before God. At least, I supposed that my good actions would fully make amends for my evil deeds; and, consequently, that I had nothing to do with being saved by grace through faith. But it pleased the Lord to take away the veil from my eyes. By his Spirit he convinced me of sin. He showed me what I really was. He set before me the spiritual demands of his heart-searching law. He led me to see how far short my fancied goodness fell of this holy standard. Thus he humbled my pride. He taught me to cry for mercy; to renounce my own righteousness; to receive with thankfulness the gift of free salvation; and to live the life which I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God. He hath brought me by a way that I knew not. He hath led me in paths that I did not know. He hath made darkness light before me, and crooked things straight. These things hath he done unto me, and hath not forsaken me."

Are you, then, a trembling, broken-hearted, and despairing sinner, fearing that you have sinned beyond hope of mercy? Despair not. Look at the patterns of divine mercy set before you for your encouragement

and hope. Were they not brands plucked from the burning? And is that mercy which delivered them, shortened that it cannot save and deliver you? Oh, no, sinner, it is not. Christ is just as able, and just as willing, to save you as he was to save them. Yea, to save even *to the uttermost* all who come unto him. "Sir," said a gentleman to the celebrated John Newton, respecting a notoriously wicked man, "Sir, if that man becomes converted and saved, then I shall despair of no one." "Sir," replied Mr. Newton, "I never have despaired of any one since I obtained mercy myself." This is the doctrine taught us by these patterns. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

But again: the patterns here exhibited teach us that this mercy is sovereign, and given to whom Christ wills to give it. It is only to be found when, and where, and how he wills. And if, therefore, any sinner wilfully and knowingly neglects the great salvation, tramples under foot the Son of God, and crucifying him afresh, puts him to an open shame — he runs fearful hazard of being abandoned to final and hopeless impenitence. Paul did what he did ignorantly, through unbelief, thinking he did God service, and Colonel Y "thought if he had really known the truth, he would have accepted it." Seeing, therefore, that God's Spirit will not always strive with men, and that he who, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy, take heed, lest by provoking God to anger you find him a consuming fire, and now, in the day of his merciful visitation, lay hold on eternal life.

Finally, these patterns teach us that, through mercy, a sinner may become not only saved, but sanctified. Christ saves his people from their *sins*, as well as from their *guilt*. He is a purifier, as well as a pacifier; and imparts his Spirit, as well as his grace. He gives to all who believe, power to become the sons of God; and is able to do for them exceeding abundantly, above all that they can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in them. So it was in the case of Paul, and in the case also of Col. Y. So completely was he transformed in thought, word, and deed, in the subjugation of pride, passion, temper, and revenge—so humble was he, and gentle, and affectionate, and meek—so essentially was he a Christian in all places and in all cases—that I have never heard of any one who questioned the sincerity or the reality of his piety.

And so it will be always.

“For some months,” writes Captain S. of our army, “my kind and gracious Master has given me constant peace and joy in believing. How easy are his heavenly commandments, when the Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits that we are his children! Filial love and reverential fear can do all things. This I speak from experience. My heart is enlarged to go to the house of the Lord. Though my private devotions are answered with the smiles of my God, yet I have found greater tokens of his approbation and favor in the public means of grace. I can truly say that it is my meat and drink to do my heavenly Father’s will. I can pray for my enemies with delight. Oh, what happiness is this! The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. I find that I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. I cannot look back on former years without lamentation, when I consider

of how much happiness I have deprived myself by parleying with sin and the world so long. But mercy, infinite mercy, has found me out; and I am saved by grace. I find it necessary to be constantly on the watch-tower of faith, hope, and love; and constantly depending on my Saviour, I am enabled to begin, continue, and end all my prayers with, "Thy will be done." It is my earnest desire to be fully transformed into his lovely likeness, so that whether I eat or drink I may do all to his glory. I count all things dross for the knowledge of Christ my Saviour. Oh, may I be a living sacrifice to him who has redeemed my soul! All my happiness is bound up in his glory. Oh, the wonderful effects of grace! Humility has now superseded pride, which concealed itself in my heart in so many ways for several years. I now feel a pleasure in sitting at the lowest disciple's feet, to hear the wisdom of God, and to witness the triumphs of grace. The more eminent the piety of his saints, the more strongly and spontaneously is my love attracted toward them."

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PUBLISHED BY THE

## SOUTH CAROLINA TRACT SOCIETY.

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