The first edition of this work, entitled “The Excellency of the Gospel above the Law,” was first published in 1639, four years after Richard Sibbes died. Sibbes examines the fullness of the gospel, and its effect upon those who behold it (by the Holy Spirit). The vitality of the “new covenant” brings about spiritual liberty and a spiritual likeness to Christ. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty… we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17-18); i.e., the ministry of the gospel changes the believer from one degree of glory (or grace) to another. We are predestined to be “conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom 8:29) – it is the Holy Spirit who does the work in us. Everything in us is flesh by nature – whatever is spiritual and divine comes from the Holy Spirit. The soul without the Spirit is spiritual darkness and spiritual chaos.

Scripture teaches where the Spirit of Christ is, there is “liberty” – we are in “bondage” before we have the Spirit. Every man is a “slave” until he becomes a believer – it is the sin disposition of man’s nature without grace. As Augustine said in his book “The City of God” – “The unbeliever is a slave though he rule” – he has as many lords as he has lusts. Christ frees us by His Holy Spirit, working such graces in us as to make us see the loathsomeness of that bondage. The Holy Spirit works to soften the heart and make it malleable.

Unless the Spirit of God witnessed to my spirit that I am reconciled to God in Christ, and that Christ’s rightousness is mine, I could never have been persuaded of it. For the soul thinks, God is holiness itself, and I am a mass of sin – what reason have I to think that God would be favorably disposed to such a wretch as me? God was pleased to make me His child through the cross of His Son, and the Spirit assures my conscience. Unless the Spirit tells me that the cross of Christ satisfied the Father, I should never believe it – “to those who are perishing, the gospel is foolishness, but to those of us who are being saved it is the power of God [unto salvation]” (1 Cor 1:18).

To whom God gives forgiveness, He gives His Spirit to sanctify. The same Spirit that assures me of my pardon for sin, sanctifies my nature and breaks the ruling power of sin in me. Before then the whole life is nothing but continual sinning and offending God – but now there is a gracious liberty of disposition. Because there are remainders of bondage within the believer, due to the double principle of nature and grace, there will be a conflict in every holy duty. The believer is to resist; there is still liberty to “do good.” In a wicked man there is nothing but flesh, as such, there is no resistance. We must understand the nature of this “spiritual liberty” in sanctification. It is not a liberty freeing us altogether from conflict and deadness; it is not a liberty freeing us from combat; rather, it is a liberty that enables us to fight the battles of the Lord against our own corruption.

Therefore, Christians must not be discouraged with the stubbornness and unwillingness of the “flesh” to do good duties. If we have a “principle in us” to fight against our corruptions, and to get good duties out of ourselves in spite of them, it is an argument for a “new nature.” God will perfect His own beginnings and subdue the flesh more and more by the power of His Spirit. “Oh,” said Jesus, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt 26:41). Indeed, there is a double hindrance in God’s people when they are about holy duties. Christ made an excuse for His disciples – it was not so much corruption
[though that was an ingredient] as it was nature itself. Christ saw a great deal of “gold” in the ore, so we see how He excused them. Therefore when we are dull, let us strive – Christ is ready to make excuse for us, if our hearts are right. While we live here there is “sin” in us, but it does not reign; when man has the Spirit of Christ in him, the Holy Spirit maintains a perpetual combat and conflict against the principle of sin within us. God could subdue sin all at once if He saw fit to; but He chooses to humble us while we live here and exercise us with “spiritual conflicts.” (vii-39)

A part of God’s plan in bringing us to heaven, is that each of us experiences “combat within;” God enables us by the Holy Spirit to fight His battles against the flesh. How does this work? “The law of the Spirit of life [i.e., the commanding power of the Spirit of Christ] which commands as a law in the hearts of God’s people, sets us free from [the commanding power of] the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). The dominion and tyranny of sin is broken by the Spirit of Christ – we are set at a “gracious liberty.” In some respects sin does not have complete dominion over us because of grace, as the apostle says. By the Spirit of Christ we are made kings to rule over our own lusts to some degree – we are not kings to be freed altogether from them, but kings to strive against them; we have the liberty to fight, and in fighting to ultimately overcome: this is sanctification. When the Israelites had a promise that God would give their enemies into their hands, the meaning was not that He would do this without their fighting a blow – they would have to fight, but in fighting they would overcome. In like manner, this liberty of sanctification is not a liberty that ends combat with our corruptions, but a “gracious liberty” to keep them under control, till by subduing them little by little, we have a perfect victory. Paul says we are called to complete the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10; Col 1:24). What greater encouragement can a man have to fight against his enemy, then to know “victory is certain” before he fights?

So, the Spirit brings us out of that cursed kingdom of Satan and sin, and brings liberty into the soul. The Spirit not only frees us “from sin,” it frees us from the fear of damnation and the terrors of an evil conscience (1 Pet 1:2). Conversely, the Spirit frees us to “do good,” and to make the Word of God our counselor – what was a “severe schoolmaster” when we were not saved, is now in the believer a “wise tutor” to guide and counsel us. In a sense, the Law actually scared us to Christ. Note the contrast – where the Spirit of God is, there is “liberty of will” in the inward man; where the Spirit of God is not, there is no liberty, “no free will.” Whereas we were “free to do evil” as unbelievers, we are now “free to do good” as believers – we have the ability and the strength to do what is good. The Spirit of God puts a “new life” into the soul of a person – it takes away the “stony heart” and replaces it with a “heart of flesh” (Ezek 11:19).

Though God’s Spirit works upon the will, it does so by “enlightening the understanding,” so that a man does what he does being fully advised by “reason.” The creature that is without reason is always confined to one manner of working, because it lacks understanding to work in any other way. Unregenerate man cannot “discern” that which is spiritual, because he does not have the Holy Spirit in him (1 Cor 2:14). Birds make their nests and bees make their hives always the same way; they have no choice because of their narrow abilities.

Why do we pray “Thy will be done”? (Mt 6:10). Or “take me out of my own will more and more, and conform my will to Thine in all things.” The more we “align our will with God’s will,” the more liberty we have in serving God. Men are mistaken to think the greatest liberty is to have power to do good or evil – such power is the imperfection of the creature – man “fell” because he was free to choose either good or evil – and he chose evil. The soul under the supervision of the “new nature,” is “free not to sin” and “free to do good.” The understanding is so enlightened, and the will so confirmed and strengthened, that the soul is not constrained by temptation – the essence of which is “glorious liberty.” Grace is the beginning
of glory – it frees the soul from terror and subjection to sin; therefore, the life of glory is begun in grace by the Holy Spirit. (39-51)

**The more we know the “gospel,” the more we have of the “Spirit”…** and the more Spirit we have, the more “liberty” we enjoy – as such, we should prize the “charter” of our spiritual liberty, *God’s Word*. What a blessed condition it is to have this “spiritual liberty” – for if a man has the Spirit of God to set him at liberty, he has the Spirit of God to free him from temptation. . . or if temptation catches hold of him so that he sins, he has the Spirit of God to fly to, to confess his sins and lay hold on the blood of Christ, and experience the pardoning of sin. A child does not need “other motives” to please his father other than the knowledge that he is the child of a “loving father” – it is natural. There is a “new nature” in those who have the Spirit of God to stir them up to duty. When a man is in temptation from within or without, he can go boldly to God and pour out his soul to God freely as to a father – this comes from the Spirit of liberty, whereby he is able to cry out to God, “Abba, Father.” When a “broken soul” goes to God in Christ with boldness (Heb 4:16), this opening of the soul to God is a sign of liberty, the liberty of a child to his father.

**The moment a man is “in Christ” and has Christ’s Spirit,** he has “another law” in his soul to rule him contrary to that which was there before – prior to that he was ruled by the “law of his lusts.” But now that he is in Christ he has a new Master and a new law, which rules him according to the “government of the Spirit.” “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set him free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). When we find any corruption stirring in our soul, we should go to the Lord in the words of Augustine and say: “Lord, free me from my necessities; I am not able to serve Thee as I should or would like to; I am enslaved to sin, but I want to do better. I cannot do as well as I want to; Lord, free me from my necessities.” Let us complain of our corruption to God –

> I cannot by my own strength set myself at liberty from this corruption.  
> Lord, give me Thy Spirit to do it. Set me more and more at liberty from my former bondage and from this wickedness that has enslaved me.  
> Lord, Thy office is to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8).

**It is the office of the Holy Spirit to “free us”** – Let this be a comfort to all poor struggling and striving Christians who are not yet set at perfect liberty from their lusts and corruptions. It is the office of the Spirit of Christ as the king of the Church, by His Spirit, to purge the Church perfectly, to make it a glorious spouse – and at last, He will fulfill His own office, and then we shall be freed from all oppositions without, and from all conflict and corruption within. It is called “the liberty of the sons of God” (Rom 8:21). (52-67)

**As the sun rises by degrees till it comes to shine in glory, so it was with the “Sun of righteousness.”** He revealed Himself in the Church little by little – the latter times now are more glorious than the former. Conversely, the apostle Paul compares the administration of the “covenant of grace” under the gospel with that of the “covenant of law” – by comparison, he shows the administration under the gospel to be more excellent. “We now behold with open face” (2 Cor 3:18) – that is, with freedom and boldness, which was not true in the time of the law. They were “afraid” to look upon Moses when he came down from the mount, because his countenance was so majestic and terrifying. But “we all with open face” freely, boldly, and joyfully look upon the glory of God in the gospel. The light of the gospel is attracting and comforting; whereas the light of the law was frightening and terrifying. We are changed from “glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18) – the law did not have the power to convert, or change people into its own likeness. But now the gospel, which is the ministry of the Spirit, has the power to transform and change people
into the likeness of Christ – it is a gradual change, not all at once, but from glory to glory, from one degree of grace to another; grace is here called glory. We are changed from the heart, inwardly and thoroughly, and the cause of it all is “the Spirit of the Lord.” The happiness of man consists in communion with God and conformity to Him.

When the time of temptation and conflict with conscience comes… and the hour of death… Satan will focus completely upon our “sin,” especially in the time of despair. Therefore we must be as cunning and focus upon the grace and glorious mercy of Christ. What a comfort this is to sinful man, that in casting himself upon Christ and upon God’s mercy in Christ, he yields glory to God. The last end of man is the glory of God – He made us for His glory – we hinder God’s glory if we do not believe His mercy in Christ to us; therefore, let us yield to Him the glory of His mercy, and let us think that when we do sin we cannot glorify Him more than to have recourse to His mercy. When Satan tempts us to “run from God” and discourages us, keep this in mind – God has set Himself to be “glorious in mercy” above all other attributes! God will account Himself “honored” if we have recourse to Him; let this thought be as a “city of refuge” to you. “Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!” (Rom 5:20). Never let Satan discourage you from going to Christ! “Oh!” you say, “but I have offended Him often and grievously!” What does Scripture say? “My thoughts are not as your thoughts… as high as the heavens are above the earth” (Is 55:8-9). With men, offences often cause permanent alienation, but with God this is not so! As often as we go to God for mercy and spread our sins before Him with broken and humble hearts, we will be pardoned! It is “God’s glorious mercy” that satisfies a distressed conscience. If you find your conscience wounded with sin, do not hold back from God any longer – He has glorious mercy for you! We are never in the condition in which we ought to be, unless “grace is glory to us” – and grace is glory to the sinner when he says in his heart, “Oh, that I might have a drop of mercy!” It pleases God to condescend and stoop to us poor sinners, to reveal His glory – the glory of His mercy. Jesus said, “Let all who thirst, come to Me and be satisfied” (Jn 7:37). (69-91)

How shall we make the eye of our souls fit to behold the “glory of God”? We must fix our meditation upon the glory of God and the excellency of Christ. We must labor to have both the inward and outward hindrances removed. We must labor that the soul be cleansed from all carnal and base passions and desires – only a spiritual soul can ever behold spiritual things. As the soul must be fixed upon these meditations, so the Spirit of God must sanctify and purge the soul. The best place to behold Christ is in His Word, with a spirit of faith. Christ tells us to ask pardon for our trespasses “every day” (Mt 6:12). Daily, therefore, reflect upon the “everlasting mercy and goodness” of God – though sin produces grief and shame in us, God’s glorious mercy recovers and strengthens our faith again; and God’s children, after breaches, emerge stronger than they ever were before. Therefore go boldly to the Father, with love and reverence and “with open face,” crying, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). Never forget this privilege! (92-100)

We are changed into the image of Christ from “glory to glory” until the soul is filled “with all the fullness of God” (2 Cor 3:18; Eph 3:19). God’s mercy in Christ is a powerful object that influences and transforms the soul – the state of man after this change is a “glorious condition.” First, we are in a state contrary to grace and to God – we are dead in our sin (Eph 2:1); the corrupt nature of man cannot enter into heaven (1 Cor 15:50). We must be “born again” – the whole frame and bent of the soul must be new; we must have new judgments, new desires, new affections. There is no Christian that does not desire the grace of sanctification to change him – every believer looks upon his corruption and sin as the vilest thing in the world – remember, you have been “born again!” God has “written His law in your heart!” (Jer 31:33).
The change is especially in “the will” – grace works upon the will most of all. For the bent and desires of the will carry the whole man with it. All grace first comes in through the understanding being enlightened, and then it goes into the “will” – thus the grace of the gospel is not mere persuasion and entreaty, but a powerful work of the Spirit entering into the soul and “changing it,” and altering the inclination of the will heavenward; whereas corruption of nature turns the soul toward earthly things. Grace alters everything – “old things are passed away… all things become new” (2 Cor 5:17). The pattern to which we are changed is “the image of Christ” – He is the pattern of all our sanctification. God’s children sometimes deface that image by sin – but as a coin that is somewhat defaced, yet still retains the old stamp and is acknowledged as a good coin, so a Christian in the worst condition, still bears the stamp – when once we are God’s coin, we never become reprobate silver. Grace is firmly set in our nature in Christ – it is so certain, all the devils of hell cannot obliterate it. Remember, we are predestined to be “conformed to Christ” (Rom 8:29; Phil 1:6); He is making us a “glorious spouse” (Eph 5:25-27). Every man by nature carries the image of the devil on him; but Christ came to “destroy the works of the devil,” to erase his image and set His own stamp and image upon the soul. Unless Christ changes us into His image, He would not achieve the end for which He came (Rom 8:29-30; Phil 1:6).

Since God’s goal is to transform us into the “image of Christ,” let us labor every day more and more to study Christ, so that by beholding Him we may be transformed into His likeness – “the sight of Christ is a transforming sight!” Notice how sweet Jesus was to sinners when they repented; how ready He was to forgive and pardon. Cross reference the woman of Samaria (Jn 4:6-26)… the apostle Peter; Jesus never scolded him for his apostasy, or upbraided him for it; He never even so much as “reminded him of it!” He only looked upon him and said, “Do you love Me?” (Jn 21:15) – He would not “quench the smoldering wick, or break the bruised reed” (Mt 12:20); that is how gentle and sweet our Savior is. Jesus was sweet to those who were good in the least degree, where there was only a hint of goodness. Jesus was always patient when wronged; even toward those who despised Him! He even shed tears for those who shed His blood (Mt 23:37) – “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). The Father’s response regarding His Son: “This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17).

Christ is alive in the world in no other way than in the hearts of Christians, who have received His grace and who carry the picture and resemblance (image) of Christ in them. The more we grow in love for one another, the more we conform to the original pattern that is Christ. Said the apostle Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The more I know and meditate on this principle, the more I am transformed into the likeness of Christ’s death and resurrection. When the soul considers that it is one with Christ, it has the same disposition that Christ has. When I consider how Christ died to purge sin in me, can I, being one with Him, have any attitude other than He had upon the cross? As He died for sin, so I die to sin. These and similar thoughts are stirred up in a Christian, which Paul aims at in Romans 6 and other passages.

That we may be changed into the “likeness of Christ,” let us fix our meditations on Him, and we shall find a change, though we do not know how it happens. As those who are in the sun working or playing, find themselves warmed, so let us set ourselves about holy meditations, and we shall find a secret imperceptible change – our souls will be altered, though we do not know how. There is a virtue that goes with “holy meditation,” a changing, transforming virtue. Can we think of His humility and not be humble? Shall we be fierce when our Savior was meek? Can a proud heart apprehend a meek Savior? No. The heart is suited to the thing apprehended.
To be changed into the “image of Christ,” let us look to what “remains” of our own corruptions. Look to our worldly-mindedness, to our passions, to our rebellions, to our darkness, and to our deadness of spirit... and then go to Christ. I am earthly-minded; He is heavenly… I am full of rebellions and lusts; all is at peace in Him. Therefore, I need Thy heavenly-mindedness, Thy meekness, Thy spiritual strength. I am weak and dark and dead – shine on me; Thou hast fullness for me. Christ, in love, became a man – He took upon Himself our nature, our base condition (Phil 2:8); He transfigured Himself to our lowliness – shall we not labor to be transformed to be like Him? Shall He be conformed to us, and we not be conformed to Him? If Christ gave Himself for us, shall we not give ourselves to Christ? We have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts by the merit of Christ, that we might be transformed into His likeness. Christ died for us, that we might live to Him! Beholding the glory of God in the gospel is a powerful beholding – says He, “we are changed, by beholding, to the image of Christ.” Shall not the glorious sight of God’s mercy and love in Christ work a change in our soul? The “eye of faith” apprehending God’s love and mercy in Christ, has a power to change – that is the transforming powerful nature of the gospel. Nothing can “change us” but the gospel – “even the lion shall one day lie down with the lamb” (Is 11:6).

Iron is dull and heavy; yet when hot it is bright and pliable. In the same way our dead, dull, inflexible and unyielding souls become malleable and flexible by the love of Christ shining upon them. His love transforms and kindles them. This is how the glory of God’s love in Christ transforms us – the discovery of the abundant mercy in God towards us kindles love to Him, and that love works likeness. Where there is “dependence upon Christ” there is a desire to like Him. When we see Christ as our husband, that breeds in us the affections of a spouse. No one sees the mercy of God in Christ by the “eye of faith” without being changed.

We are changed “from glory to glory” – by glory here is meant “grace.” When we are persuaded of it by the Spirit, who works grace in us, grace is followed by peace, joy, comfort, and many such things which the Scripture counts “glory.” We grow “from glory to glory” – from one degree of grace to another. Grace is victorious and conquering, prevailing over the corruptions that prevail over ordinary men. It makes a Christian glorious when he brings every thought and affection, and every corruption within him, to the subjection of the Spirit of glory. All the power in the world cannot interrupt God’s gracious progress. What is begun in grace will end in glory. Where the foundation is laid, God will be sure to put up the roof. He never repents of His beginnings (Phil 1:6). Solomon said that the righteous is “like the sun that grows brighter and brighter till it comes to its full strength” (Prv 4:18). The state of the wicked is completely contrary – it is in a constant state of decline – the sun goes down and down to twilight, and then to darkness, and then to utter darkness; they decline from the darkness of misery, to the eternal, black, dismal darkness of hell. The state of the godly is always in a growing state; it is a hopeful condition; it grows from one state of glory to another. We say of fire, the more it flames, the less it smokes. (101-145)

There is no stopping or standstill in religion – there must of necessity be a desire to grow better and better; glory will grow to even more glory; grace will never cease till it ends in the fullness of glory in heaven – where we are “fully glorified!” The Christian is in a state of perpetual growth; he will ultimately come to full maturity. In those who are young there is a great deal of the old nature joined with a little grace. But in more mature Christians, the knowledge they have is more pure and more settled, and their love and affection is more refined. There is less “self-love,” and the zeal they have is joined with more heavenly discretion; there is less “wild fire” with it. So grace grows in purity and perfection, though it is not altogether pure; something savoring of the worst principle in nature will stick to our best performances. Because we always carry flesh with us in this life, every behavior will savor of corruption; yet this
is less so in a grown Christian than it is in an immature Christian. We must labor that more grace may appear; and the more glorious we are, the more we will resemble Christ (His image). Conversely, the more we grow in grace, the more we shall prevail with God in prayer. It is a glorious thing when we resist strong temptations – grace is glorious when a Christian holds his own in the worst of times.

The sun is said to be “in glory” when it is high in the sky; there are many clouds in the morning, but when the sun is at its height at noonday, it scatters them all. So a Christian is in his glory when he can scatter doubts, fears and terrors that trouble weak beginning Christians. When we are troubled with various issues, we should labor to be delivered from them, so that grace may be glorious. Grace continues and increases – as the stream with which it is fed is an ever-living spring, so is grace – where Christ has opened a spring in the heart, He will feed that grace perpetually. Let no one in whom grace has begun be discouraged – God will continue the work of grace He has begun in you (Phil 1:6). Until grace has grown it is little distinguished from other things; just as there is little difference between weeds and herbs before they have grown. Grace is little at first, as a grain of mustard seed (Mt 13:31). Remember, Jerusalem wasn’t built in a day either. Some Christians of a weaker sort want to be in Canaan just as soon as they are out of Egypt! As soon as they have grace in them they want to advance immediately – but that is not how spiritual maturity develops – believers must be content to be led from one state of glory to another, from one degree of grace to another. Progress is gradual in the new creature. We don’t immediately arrive in Canaan – God leads us through the wilderness, and through temptations and crosses, before we enter into heaven.

Let those who are growing in their faith not be discouraged with their “little beginnings” – It is God’s way in this world to bring His children along “little by little,” through many stations. As they were led in the wilderness from place to place, so God brings His children by many places to heaven. It is one part of a Christian’s meekness to be subject to God’s wisdom in this respect, and not to complain that they are not as perfect as they would like to be or as they shall be. Let us labor to be meek and say, “Lord, since Thou hast ordained that I shall grow from glory to glory, from one degree of grace to another, let me have grace to magnify Thy mercy that Thou hast given me any goodness at all, rather than to complain that I don’t have more.”

Let us not be discouraged with seeming “interruptions” in our spiritual growth. God sometimes works by contraries – He makes men grow by their decreasing, and to stand by their falls. Sometimes when God will have a man grow He will allow him to fall, that by “his fall” he may grow in a deeper hatred of sin and in jealousy over his own heart, and in a nearer watchfulness over his own ways; that he may grow more in love with God for pardoning him, and stronger in his resolution; and that he may grow more in humility. No one grows so much as those who have their growth stopped for a time. Little interruptions are like “sicknesses” – it draws out the toxins that hinder growth. It is also important to remember that God looks on Christians not as they are in “their imperfections,” but as they shall be when they come to the “perfect stature of Christ.” Therefore, let us comfort ourselves in our imperfections – at this point we are lame Mephibosheths; a king’s son who was lame (2 Sam 4:4; 9:1-13) – we are spiritually lame and defective, though we are a king’s son. What a comfort is this in our imperfections, that as every day we live in this world cuts off a day of our life, so every day we live brings us nearer to heaven. Is this not a sweet comfort? Comfort yourself with these things.

Because some cannot see themselves as growing, they think they are “not growing” at all. That is only ignorance; we see that the sun moves, though we do not see it moving; we know things grow, though we do not see them growing. So, if we do not perceive our growth from grace to grace, it does not mean
we are not growing. God sees that we need to grow in the "root," so He abases us with some infirmity—just as a glorious spring comes after a hard winter, so after a setback, grace breaks out more gloriously. The best man living does not know himself till he comes to temptation and reveals himself to himself. Temptation uncovers corruption and makes it known, and then stirs up hatred for it. It is profitable for God’s children to fall sometimes; otherwise they would never be as good as they are. When they see they are foul, they go to wash—this is a mystery; God has it this way for good ends.

The chief thing in conversion is “the desire,” the turning of the stream of “the will”—So when some Christians find their “will” and their “desire” good, yet they continue to “fall short” of their purposes, they naturally conclude, “Surely I have no good in me, because I do not have what I want to have”—as if they should have heaven on earth. It is God’s mercy that He would work “the least degree” of grace in such rebellious hearts as we all have; that He would work “any goodness” or change at all in us. It is God’s way to bring His children to glory “little by little,” so that Christians may depend upon one another, the weaker on the stronger, so that they may be compassionate and tender toward one another. Therefore let no one be discouraged, especially considering that God, whom we desire to please, values us by the “little good” we have, and esteems us by that condition of perfection He ultimately will bring about in us. Let us be of good comfort in any measure of grace whatsoever—it is “good sickness” if it increases patience and humility; it is a “good loss” if it makes us grow less worldly-minded and more humble. (146-171)

Paul spoke to Lydia— but the “Holy Spirit” opened her heart (Acts 16:14). Only the Holy Spirit has the key to unlock and open men’s hearts. We speak to the outward man, but unless the inward man is unlocked and opened by the Spirit of God, it is to no purpose. All change, all comfort, all peace is from the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit never stops changing us until we are carried again to Christ—we are prepared, changed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit; He conveys grace to us “from glory to glory” by degrees. We have no goodness within us (in and of ourselves), no more than there is moisture in a stone or a rock; therefore, we must acknowledge that in and of ourselves (as Jesus says) “we can do nothing!” (Jn 15:5; Phil 2:13). We must look to God for His Holy Spirit to enlighten and sanctify us, and not despair. It was folly for Peter to presume of his own strength that “though everyone else might forsake Christ, yet he would not” (Mk 14:29-31). God left him to himself, and you see how he fell—so it is with us. We listen and do good works, but the activity and power and strength to make them “efficacious” must come from the Spirit of God.

Where the Spirit is—it changes us. The Holy Spirit not only illumines and enlightens, but sanctifies and changes. Wherein He dwells He sanctifies the house and makes it a temple. Where the Spirit is, it will work. If the condition is not altered from bad to good, and from good to better, you can pretty much assume the Spirit is not there. There will always be some discernible operation of the Spirit of God—as such, we grow from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, from faith to faith, till we come to that measure of perfection that God has appointed for each of us who are in Christ. The Spirit stirs us up to grow from one degree of grace to another—to this end the Holy Spirit dwells in us and guides us (Rom 8:26). He is our tutor, our counselor, our instructor, and our guide. Therefore, let us labor to know the mercies of God in Christ, and be transformed and molded more into His likeness every day. (172-187)
1. Once I was bound by sin's galling fetters, Chained like a slave I struggled in vain, But I received Thy glorious freedom, When Jesus broke my fetters in twain.

Chorus: Glorious freedom, wonderful freedom, No more in chains of sin I repine! Jesus the glorious, emancipator, Now and forever He shall be mine.

2. Freedom from all the carnal affections, Freedom from envy, hatred and strife; Freedom from vain and worldly ambitions, Freedom from all that saddened my life.

3. Freedom from pride and all sinful follies, Freedom from love and glitter of gold; Freedom from evil, temper, and anger, Glorious freedom, rapture untold.

[Refrain]