

THE ORIGINAL EXPERIENCE OF THE LATE MR. JAMES WELLS

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"I long to share the happiness of that triumphant throng,
Who swim in seas of boundless bliss eternity along.
I long to join the saints above, who, crowned with glorious rays,
Through radiant tiles of angels move, and rival them in praise."

SUCH were the desires of our departed friend, for a long time before his death, when faith in Jesus was in exercise; when the Spirit of the living God enabled him to take the shield; to stand against the wiles of the devil, and to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

As James Wells was brought into the Gospel-kingdom, even so, in a similar manner, was he taken from the Gospel-kingdom into the Glory-kingdom. This is a statement none will deny who, with spiritual discernment, can carefully read what we may term the Lord's first, and the Lord's final, work of grace upon his soul.

We desire to prove the perfect correctness of this statement, for three reasons: first, to show what a true work of grace upon a sinner's heart really is. Secondly, to show how that true work of grace is severely tried. Thirdly, to confirm that great truth:

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy never forsakes."

"The knowledge of the glory of God," as it shines in and through the face of Jesus Christ," is called "a treasure." "This treasure," said Paul, "we have in earthen vessels: that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." It is of one of these "earthen vessels," wherein many found much gospel treasure, we have a detailed history to give.

Leaving, for the present, all reference to his unconverted state, we come to that testimony which Mr. James Wells gave us out of his own heart, nearly forty years since; wherein he clearly traces out every part of

HIS SOUL-TRAVAIL UNDER THE LAW,

and then of his soul's triumph in the light and power of the gospel; and we ask all who are honestly concerned to know their state as before God, first, to read that great new-birth text which Elihu gave in Job 33, 14 to 30; then, secondly, read Mr. Wells's honest testimony; and, thirdly, if possible, let them read their own hearts; and if Elihu's text, James Wells's testimony, and our

soul's experience are all in harmony, we shall find our house is built upon a rock; and, although, as in our brother's case, "the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat hard upon his spiritual house; yet it fell not, because it was **"FOUNDED UPON A ROCK, AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST."**

For nearly fifty years, God's first work upon his soul remained ever fresh and new, and often, like Jeremiah, did he say, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." Let us, then, read his own words.

He says:

"In the month of December, 1824, the Lord was pleased to lay me on a bed of affliction, which affliction continued three months. After being ill about seven weeks, I was brought, to all human appearance, to the gates of death, when the innumerable multitude of my sins set themselves in array against me, and the terrors of the Almighty made me afraid. The weakness of my body, the anguish of my mind, the fear of death, the dread of condemnation, and the seeming assurance of endless woe; these things sunk me into a pit of such ghastly apprehensions, that I exclaimed, 'I am lost; I am lost;' which horrible, pit the psalmist knew something of when he said, 'Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.' I well remember that one evening the terrors of my mind were so great, that my tormented imagination almost persuaded me that the old fiend of the bottomless pit was then in the room waiting to receive my soul into the vengeance of eternal fire, and that an angel would come directly and summon me to the judgment-seat of God, and that God with his almighty arm and intolerable frown would send me down to the lowest hell, while I was convinced that if there was one place more awful than another, I deserved that place. I wanted to go to sleep, that I might forget my misery, yet I was afraid lest he should suddenly cut me off. However, I did sleep a little, but I was tormented in my sleep with such dreadful apprehensions that, of the two, it was worse to be asleep than it was to abide awake. Job appears in this path when he speaks thus: 'When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions.' When the morning light appeared, and I found that I was still spared, the terror of my mind seemed a little abated; in a word, the Lord let me alone a few hours, and suffered me to take a little comfort. I then begged of my wife to teach me the Lord's prayer, which I had been taught when a child, but had now forgotten; but this I soon found was quite useless, for I felt that my guilt was too weighty, my sins too mighty, the law too holy, justice too inflexible, and the devil too daring for anything to be done by my repeating a form of words. I felt that I was indeed tied and bound with the chain of my sins, that the powers which held me in fearful suspense were not mere nominal powers, but real powers. 'What,' said I to myself, 'can I do? Not one evil that I have done can I undo. Here are my sins present with me; I am possessing fresh in my memory sins which I had forgotten, which I had looked at as trifles, but which are now like burning mountains around me, and ready to roll in upon me and seal my awful doom.' Ten thousand worlds could I have given if I had never sinned against the Lord, or if I could have seen anything like hope of mercy; but all was dark, even darkness that might be felt. I was at this time totally ignorant of the great atonement of Christ, not having been among Christians, either nominal or real. I had learnt nothing about religion, even in the letter of it. While I continued to get worse in body, and death seemed drawing near, what my feelings were I cannot fully describe. The holiness, majesty, and power of God were dreadful to think of. 'Yes,' said I, 'my soul is immortal, and must live to all eternity; the Lord will never forgive me, for I have done nothing but sin. I

possess nothing but sin, and I deserve nothing but curses and condemnation for sin, How little, how trivial, what toys, what vanities the treasures, and pleasures, and honors of this world appeared, but how great, how important, how solemn, how weighty appeared the things of eternity! I felt as though I had done with this world, and had there been given to me by the Lord a hope of mercy, I believe I should have been perfectly willing to depart; for such was my state of mind, that it was not for the sake of continuing in this world that I had any desire to recover, but I desired to recover that I might live a good life, get my past sins forgiven, and in this way get to heaven at last; so ignorant was I, as said one of old, ‘so foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.’

THE YOUNG WESLEYAN PREACHER.

While in this state, a young man (a Wesleyan) came and talked to me. He told me that Jesus Christ died for every one of the sons and daughters of Adam, that God was merciful, and that if I would believe in Jesus Christ, and do my part, the mercy of God was so great that he would save me. My part, he said, was to repent and believe. He also knelt down by the side of my bed, and made a very great noise, which extorted from me a great many tears. However, his preaching and his praying, like my own prayer-saying, left me where they found me, or if there was any difference, sunk me lower, for I soon learnt that faith and repentance were out of my reach. Believe that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that God was merciful, I really did; but the question with me was, whether he would be merciful to me; this was what I could not believe. Repent I could, if repentance consisted in being sorry that I was such a great sinner, for the apprehension of everlasting destruction made me heartily sorry for the things I had done. I seemed to believe with a devil’s faith, for I believed and trembled. My repentance seemed to be the repentance of Judas; but my mind was not yet, even in the most distant manner, made acquainted with the great plan of salvation. I still thought that the matter lay, in a great measure, with myself, yet I felt that I could not help myself. But, thought I, if I should be restored to health I shall be able to do many things. I can then read and pray, keep the Sabbath, tell no lies, say no bad words, and shall be better able to drive evil thoughts away; in a word, that I shall be all religion, inside and out, week days and Sundays, at home and abroad, among friends and foes, in adversity and prosperity. But then the thought would come that I should not be restored to health: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world: I shall go to the gates of the grave. Wearisome nights were indeed appointed me, and I was full of tossing’s to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My life, in my apprehension, hung in doubt. I feared night and day, and had no assurance of my life.

MR. WELLS IN THE HOSPITAL.

“I go on to observe, that a few days after the young man’s visit, I was put into a hackney coach, and taken to St. George’s Hospital, Knightsbridge, where my health began to improve, so that I was soon able to go to the chapel there, and very glad I was to go, hoping that as the Lord had not cut me off, he would yet show mercy; that is, if I did my part. I cannot expect it without, said I to myself. When I came to the chapel, the service consisting in Church of England formalities, I became full of confusion. I knew not when to sit down nor when to stand up: so, I was guided by the people in this little piece of Popish business. I well remember when the following words were made use of, ‘Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,’ my heart really went with the language, for I deeply felt my misery and need of mercy. The text was, ‘Make your calling and

election sure,' which text came to my heart like a messenger of death, and struck quite dead what little comfort I seemed to have; for what making my calling and election sure could mean, I could not make out; and if the minister gave the meaning, it was in a way that put it out of my reach; but that was not doing much, seeing that I was so confused and distracted that I hardly knew where I was. However, the text continued to follow me, and increasingly alarmed and terrified me, for I thought it contained a secret I knew nothing about; and so, it certainly did. In the first place, what the term election meant I knew not; and in the next place, how this election, whatever it was, could be made sure, I could not find out: and as I saw no one inclined to be serious in the ward where I was, except those who were really dying, I could not prevail on myself to ask any one, thinking I should get no other answer than a laugh at my ignorance: and if I had, it would have been one fool laughing at another.

HIS FIRST THOUGHTS OF RELIGION.

“When I came out of the hospital, I went as soon as possible to a place of worship, comforting myself with the thought that I was yet out of hell; and as I went on regularly attending a place of formal worship, I soon began to conclude, that to make my calling and election sure, was to keep the ten commandments, believe in Jesus Christ, love God, and deal honestly with my fellow creatures; and that, by being thus faithful, I was going on to do my part. There I was, laboring to be accepted in my own filthy rags, trying to enter the kingdom by the law of the bond children, working hard to make my old Adam nature holy enough for heaven, and all this time thought that I was certainly going the right way to work; yet, some how or another, I could not succeed. I used in the evening to try to reckon up how many bad thoughts I had had through the day, but I thought I had so many bad ones, that I began to question whether I had one good one. I felt that I was not half nor a quarter so religious as I ought to be, and as I must be if I ever went to heaven. I could not think how it was, hard as I tried, that I could not be as good as I wished, and worked hard to be. I was more and more dissatisfied with myself, and sometimes a Scripture would come, and make me tremble, especially the following, ‘Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.’ These words, day after day, pierced me through and through, I felt, and saw, of all tribunals, there was none so dreadful as the bar of God. Said I to myself, ‘What shall I do? Where shall I appear? How shall I lift up my head having not one thing in my favor that I could be good; that I could get rid of all evil thoughts and feelings; that I could love God with all my mind; that I could be holy even as he is holy.’

MR. WELLS JOINS A WESLEYAN SOCIETY.

“While in this state, I joined the Arminian camp, and as I heard a great noise, I thought it was the noise of war with the world, the flesh, and the devil; but in the course of a very few months, I found that this noise was the voice of free-will, boasting of the golden calf of creature sovereignty; for when Moses came with his fiery law, and burnt the calf, ground it to powder, and cast it into my cup, and made me drink it, I was very much dissatisfied with my situation. Bitter experience taught me the nothingness, helplessness, and vileness of the creature.

“I went to a Sunday morning prayer meeting, and the people who came to this meeting seemed very happy, very holy, very zealous, and very noisy. They very kindly asked me what I had done for the Lord, and said, they hoped I was not a stranger to these things. I told them that I really was,

and feared I always should be. They then asked me what I had experienced. So, I began, in my feeble way, to relate some of the soul-troubles, trials, hopes, and fears with which I had been exercised, and that my nature was so wicked, that I seemed nothing but sin. They then told me that there needed a deeper work of grace to be done in me; which, said they, you may have if you will but believe and pray: yes, they told me also, that the Lord would so sanctify me, and make me so holy, that I should not have one evil thought, or have occasion to say with Paul, 'O wretched man that I am!' for he said this when he was first under conviction; he went on to perfection, (perfection in himself they meant.) So, I received these lies, and knew not but they were God's truth. I one day told one of the perfect ones that I thought I was getting more heavenly. 'Aye,' said he, 'that's right, you will be perfect if you go on.' Aye, said I to myself, that I will. But this conceit lasted only a few hours, for the following reflections soon stripped me of my flattering notions. I thought to myself thus: What am I to do with my past sins? are they forgiven? I have no reason to believe they are forgiven, and tremble with fear that they never will be. Again: Has the Lord given me true repentance? Am I really born again? Have I ever been one moment free from sin? Do I not feel the workings of pride, ingratitude, hypocrisy, worldly-mindedness, peevishness, yea, evils of all sorts? Have I not promised that I would drive all those enemies out? and have I driven one out? Do I not seem more, instead of less, under their power? Do not these evils hinder me from setting my affections on things above? Do I not feel as vile as sin can make me? and, what one good thing have I done? Not one. And what have I towards being righteous before God? Not one thread. And where shall I look for comeliness? am I not deformity itself? Can there be a more helpless worm under the sun? Am I not beset, morning, noon, and night, with thoughts and feelings which I should be ashamed to utter! And, 'He that offendeth in one point, is guilty of the whole.' Where is that perfection, or any signs of that perfection, of which I was just now dreaming? Thus, in me, sin revived, and thus far killed my false hope.

"THE UNPAEDONABLE SIN."

"One of the most pious and most perfect, one day, told me, that those who had committed the unpardonable sin could not repent. This made me tremble, for I thought this was just my state; and, although I did not know in what the unpardonable sin consisted, yet I felt such hardness of heart, darkness, deadness, vileness, evil workings, and confusion, that, 'surely,' said I, 'I have committed this sin.' Yet, strange to say, at times I seemed careless, light, trifling, vain, and worldly-minded; but still there was an uneasiness at the bottom, and I felt that these things were of the flesh, and tended to betray me into inconsistency of conduct. From this, however, I was, upon the whole, mercifully preserved; but the ten thousand abominations working within made me truly miserable. 'Yes,' said I, 'if inability to repent be an evidence that I have committed the unpardonable sin, then I certainly am lost, for I cannot repent, nor love God, nor cleanse my heart; and what is to be done?'

"While under this state of mind, I became so peevish, that I could hardly give anyone a civil word. I hated my own existence, and thought that the Lord made me see and feel my wretchedness that I might have a hell here as well as hereafter. Yet, now and then, a little secret hope would spring up; and then, again, I thought it was nothing but delusion for me to indulge in anything like hope; for, thought I, what have I to recommend me to God, to give me any hope that he will receive me? Nothing at all: and it is wonderful that he has spared me as he has, for I do nothing but break my promises which I make to God. I have promised to guard against bad thoughts, to be humble, not

to think about this world, not to speak one idle word, not to forget God. 'Now,' said conscience, 'you have broken these vows again and again, therefore, you are a downright hypocrite. You appear serious before men, while in your heart you are full of rottenness, and everything which is abominable in the sight of God. You are a very monster. 'Well,' said I, 'this is certainly all true, and my best way will be to forget heaven, to forget hell, to forget God and I my own soul, and everything pertaining to religion, for there is no hope.' But the more I tried to carry this resolution into effect, the further I was from it. The words, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' came rolling in upon my mind like a mighty tempest, driving all before it; so that I could not trifle with the name, the ways, or the word of the living God. I felt that I was a sinner; I felt that there was a God; I felt that he was holy, that he was a consuming fire, that he was a sin-avenging God.

JAMES WELLS AND THE LOVE-FEAST.

"There was once given to me a ticket to be admitted to a love-feast, on which ticket were written these words, 'James Wells, admitted on trial' The last two words were quite enough for me. On trial! on trial! thought I; on trial! they certainly begin to see that I am just such a poor creature as I feel myself to be. Well then, of what use will this love-feast be to me? I have no love, nor life, nor light, nor anything else that accompanies salvation. In this way I reasoned myself out of the love-feast, so that I did not go. Yet I began to be convinced that there was something somewhere that I knew nothing about.

BEGINS TO RUN ABOUT, AND TO READ THE BIBLE.

"I now began to run about to different chapels to see if I could hear a Bible experience described, and also to find if the doctrine of election were really a doctrine of the Bible; for I began to have some inclination to think that absolute election was a doctrine of the Bible, although I could not as yet receive it. I ran about on Sundays and week evenings from chapel to church, and from church to chapel. I found one preaching up human duties; another, shareable societies; another, universal offers and invitations; another saying election was a doctrine of the Bible, but we had little or nothing to do with it; but as to entering into and opening up eternal election, divine predestination, the infinitely glorious atonement of Christ, the acceptance of the church in Christ, her oneness with him, her certain salvation by him, her coming through grace to him, her willingness to suffer for him, her resting upon him, her longing after him, the saving operations of the Holy Spirit, real soul trouble, distressing temptations, long and deep searching of heart; these rising billows, these storms, these earthquakes, this rending of the veil from top to bottom, leaving the sinner no shelter; these things, together with manifested mercy, are things with which the ministers I at that time heard were evidently unacquainted. Yet their sermons are often so feasible that, being themselves deceived, they would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect; but the Lord's elect are taught of God, and who teaches like him?

"As I now had, from reading the Bible, some faint and distant views of the doctrines, I became (in addition to my concern and longing for mercy) anxious to know whether the high doctrines or the low doctrines were the doctrines of the Bible. I had tried the low doctrines, and no poor creature could be more earnest than I had been and still was. I had found that, if the low doctrines were true, for me there was no hope; for I was, in my misery, beyond the reach of Wesleyanism, and

low Calvinism. I was, in my apprehensions, beyond the reach of mercy. Yet, as I went on reading the Bible, and hearing dead letter-men, I became increasingly inclined to believe that election was a doctrine of the Bible.

HIS FIRST VIEW OF THE "NEW COVENANT."

"While thus staggering between high and low doctrines, a Wesleyan told me that the eighteenth of Ezekiel completely overturned all the high doctrines, for there it is written, 'When a man turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive;' 'But when a man turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, his righteousness shall not be mentioned.' Now, said the Wesleyan, can you get over this? Well, I said, I certainly could not, but that, perhaps, there was a meaning in it, that neither of us could see. I was at this time grown very cautious. This eighteenth of Ezekiel tormented me considerably, until I came to these words, which began to open up the secret and make the matter clear; 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not according to the covenant I made with them when I took them by the hand and brought them out of Egypt; but this is the covenant that I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their hearts, and write them on their minds, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.' Well, said I, this new covenant is high doctrine all through. The laws of truth are to be written in the hearts of the people, their sins are to be forgiven and remembered no more for ever; the laws of truth are to be thus written and the sins or the people forgiven by the Lord himself, and that according to the council of his own will, for there is no if, but the promises are yea and amen. Moses set before the people life and death, good and evil, and they were to choose which they would, but Christ has destroyed death. While Moses, in old covenant language, tells the people to choose which they will, Paul, in new covenant language, tells the saints that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world. The old covenant came with, 'If thou obey the voice of the Lord Thy God, thou shalt be blest in the city and in the field, in thy basket and in thy store.' The new covenant comes with, 'I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shalt not depart from me; I will be their God and they shall be my people.' The old covenant comes with, 'This people do err in their hearts, for they have not known my ways.' But the new covenant comes with, 'And they shall all know me from the least to the greatest.' The old covenant priesthood was after the law of a carnal commandment; the new covenant priesthood is after the power of an endless life. The deliverance from Egypt was after the order of the old covenant, and was temporal; but the salvation of the new covenant is eternal. The Lord took the old covenant people by the hand; he takes the new covenant people by the heart. The food, the raiment, and the victories of the old covenant people were after the flesh, and temporary; but the food, the raiment, the victories of the new covenant people of God are after the Spirit, and are eternal. The genealogy of the old covenant people was after the flesh: they were reckoned after the flesh; but the new covenant people are reckoned according to the Lamb's book of life; all their sins were laid on him; they are reckoned not as children of men, but as children of God; 'Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;' Reckoned not after the image of the earthy, but after the image of the heavenly; in which relation, likeness, and position, they are spotless, unblameable, without fault, and eternally safe. The throne of the old covenant is at an end; but of the throne of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, it is written, 'Thy throne, O God. is for ever and ever.' The kingdom of David is no more; but of the kingdom of Christ there is no end. The royalty of the old covenant was tarnished; the royalty of the new covenant remains in perfection

of beauty. The vineyard mentioned in the fifth of Isaiah was after the order of the old covenant, therefore destructible; the vineyard mentioned in the twenty-seventh of Isaiah is after the order of the new covenant, and therefore indestructible. The parable of the prodigal son, as far as it concerns the prodigal, is the language of the new covenant; therefore, the prodigal, notwithstanding the enormity of his sins, was joyfully received, abundantly forgiven and supplied, entertained and made welcome to all that a father's heart could devise or his hand provide; but the parable of the talents is after the order of the old covenant, and therefore the approbation of the Lord depended not upon the obedience of one for them. They could not be approved in another, but must each perform the conditions, in order to enjoy the reward. Mere creature obedience can receive, as a reward, nothing more than creature things; but the obedience of Christ is called the righteousness of God. Therefore, it is that those who are chosen in Christ and made partakers of the Spirit of God, are brought to live in the life of God, are upheld by the power of God, are guided by the counsel of God, are made acquainted with the mind of God, rest upon the immutability of God, glory in the salvation of God, are supplied from the fulness of God, and forever shall they dwell in the presence of God.

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH DAWNING ON HIS MIND.

“I used to sit up frequently until two o'clock in the morning searching the Scriptures. ‘Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress’ was the only book, besides the Bible, that I had in the house, and that being allegorical, I could not understand much of it, and felt very little interest in it. My whole interest was in the Bible, which I searched with great eagerness. Sometimes the thought would come that there was no mercy for me, and what mattered it to me who were right or who were wrong. But then, again, a little encouragement would come. I was favored with a little help, by which means I continued for several weeks to sit up every night, after a hard day's work, searching the Scriptures, in order to find out whether the high doctrines or the low doctrines were the right, for I knew, from bitter experience, that if the low doctrines were true, I must lie down in eternal despair, but at the same time there were a thought and feeling sprung up in my mind, that if the high doctrines were true it was possible there was mercy for me. When I began to have only distant views of the high doctrines, I saw they set forth richer grace, greater mercy, a better Savior, more abundant pardon, and more suitable promises than did the low doctrines. The high doctrines,’ said I, ‘if true, set open a door of hope just suited to such a lost, ruined, vile, and helpless creature as I daily feel myself to be.’

THE DAY OF SPIRITUAL POWER.

We have often solemnly declared that we could no more help receiving and believing what professing men call “high doctrines” than we could help believing we were ruined sinners in the fall. Mr. James Wells, we think, very clearly shows the total impossibility of any broken-hearted and spirit-anointed sinner believing in any other way of salvation than through the purpose, purchase, and power of a Triune God. Hence, he says:

“Who in his senses can, under these circumstances, blame me for becoming high in doctrine? Spiritual sickness, spiritual poverty, misery, guilt, vileness, fear, distress, and dread of eternity drove me to seek that which the world could not produce, which no creature could bestow, which no human works could bring, and which low doctrines could not furnish. What then was I to do?

Rest I could not; be put off with the mere form of godliness I could not, for I found every means fail, and the low doctrines of no use. I was too deeply sunk in the miry clay of soul-trouble for moderation systems to reach me. I felt that I was not a moderate sinner, therefore, I needed something more than a moderate salvation. I needed an atonement, having in it infinite power to redeem, to cleanse, to pardon, to swallow up death, and to overcome all adverse powers. Such is the great atonement of our incarnate God; an atonement which has met, does meet, and shall meet and defy sin, death, hell, and the grave: an atonement which overcomes the enmity of the carnal mind, together with all the darkness, bondage, temptations, falls, fears, tribulations, and enemies of the children of God; an atonement by which God, the Father, appears in the sweet harmony of all the perfections of his nature, honoring the great atonement of his dear Son, by sending those for whom this atonement was made out of the pit wherein is no water, drawing them to the Savior, manifesting forgiving mercy and endearing love, lifting upon them the light of his countenance, thus showing that he is well pleased with us in Christ, and in this, his good pleasure, there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He thus, by the atonement of Christ, shows to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, and that, in his love, mercy, and grace there is no scarcity, no littleness, no weakness, no mutation, no hesitation, no termination. Christ went to the end of the law, but there is no getting to the end of the gospel. To sin, tribulation, death, and the grave, there will be an end: but salvation is everlasting, consolation is everlasting, life is everlasting, glory is everlasting, God our Father's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. This mercy comes by, and is according to, the atonement of Christ; it is sovereign, free, full, and eternal. Of this great mercy, by this great atonement, I was brought to feel my need. I knew that the possession of a thousand worlds, without this great atonement, would leave me miserably poor; for what could it profit me to gain all these, and lose my own soul? and no remedy within my reach had I left untried, while refuge continued to fail me. There I was, after all my doings, still sick and in prison; still hungry and thirsty, and a stranger to God. I saw him afar off: I beheld him in his great acts of mercy towards his people; I saw that God was good unto Israel, too such as are of a clean heart; but, as for me, I knew not what a clean heart meant, for all the day long had I been plagued, and chastened every morning; therefore, moderation systems were to me worse than nothing. These systems became vinegar to my teeth, smoke to my eyes, gall to my taste, a mockery to my ears, thorns to my hands, and a miry clay to my feet. I knew sin was not a moderate evil; I knew not only my need of the obedient life, atoning death, and suretyship responsibility of Christ, together with the ancient provisions and settlements of mercy; but I knew also my need of a *divine* application of these things; for a human application I had found to be of no avail. Professors said it was my own fault, that I might have these things if I applied for them, that I ought to pray more, that I ought to give the Lord no rest, that I ought not to allow mine eyes to sleep until I was satisfied that matters were right between God and my own soul. All this seemed very true in theory, but the practical department was quite another thing. The practical part substantiated this one truth, that I was shut up, and could not come forth. So true it is, that when he shuts up none can open, and when he hides his face, who then can behold him? This experience stripped me of my fondness for low doctrines, moderate systems, and rounds of dead works. To me, moderate power, moderate mercy, and a moderate gospel were of no use. It mattered not what un-humbled, talkative, prating, and formal professors said, for I felt they could not persuade me that I had experienced what I knew I had not experienced, nor could I be kept under the delusion that prayer was at my command. I learned, from feeling, that prayer, real spiritual prayer, is as much the gift of God as is salvation itself: and, if it were not, why is the Holy Spirit called the Spirit of grace and supplication? Of this Almighty Testifier of Jesus, I felt my need. I felt that the flesh profited nothing, and that in my

flesh dwelt no good thing. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform that which was good, I found not. I knew the Holy Spirit would do nothing without Christ; I knew Christ came into the world to save sinners; I knew I needed the Lord Jesus to be my everything, my all in all: for I possessed nothing, could do nothing, and could deserve nothing but cursing, bitterness, and woe Previously to my deliverance I was miserable to the last degree. But the day of salvation was not far off. I had before been told by men that ‘now is the day’ of salvation.’ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘it is, no doubt, the day of salvation with some; it was the day of salvation with those to whom the apostle said, ‘Now is the day of salvation;’ but with me it was the day, not of salvation, but of condemnation. It is true that conviction of sin and living desire after God are evidences that the good work is begun, but there must be the experience of forgiving mercy before any real resting in the Lord can be enjoyed. Under a feeling sense of my need of these things I continued until the day of salvation arrived, which was but a comparatively little while, for it was not more than twelve months from the time I began to be abidingly concerned about eternal things.’”

THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE OF HIS SOUL.

The following account of God’s mercy and Christ’s pardon, as applied to him by the Holy Ghost, is most decisive. He says:

“On returning home from my work one evening, much cast down, melancholy, and miserable, weary in body, and worn out in mind with soul-trouble, I went and laid down on the bed, and thought of the awful state I was in, as being without hope and without God in the world, and that my portion at last would be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; that I was reserved in the chain of my sins unto the judgment of the last day; that I should then sink to endless woe, to rise no more. After reflecting a while in these gloomy regions of almost black despair, I rose from the bed, and went to the Bible, with no more thought of finding mercy than of being king of England. However, I opened it, and began to read the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, until I came to the eighth verse, which reads as follows, “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” These words, as I read them, came with such power, that they filled me with astonishment, overwhelmed me with wonder, and caused me to exclaim, ‘What means this?’ I found my guilt depart, darkness passed away, fears were removed, my heart enlarged, my mind released, my feelings changed, my soul delivered, and all my powers absorbed in the treasures of the text. I sat, and wept, and wondered, and said there was mercy for me after all; that Jesus was certainly my Redeemer; that he shed his blood for me; that he wrought out and brought in everlasting righteousness for me. I read the text again and again, and still it remained mighty to my soul, put the enemy under my feet, put my trouble far away, and with its precious contents filled my soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Again, I looked, and wept, and wondered, and could hardly believe such a treasure could be mine; and then again, the text would come, ‘With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.’ This again would make me say, ‘It certainly is mine, even mine.’ ‘Then,’ said I to myself, ‘I shall never leave off rejoicing; no, never; now I am happy for ever.’ I was thus brought into a new world; old things were passed away, and all things were become new. The truths which I had seen afar off were now brought nigh, and made unto me spirit and life. The God at whose name I had trembled was now all my delight, all my salvation, and all my desire; he was now near and dear to me. I now felt that he was on my side, and I loved him sincerely in all the settlements and purposes of his love. I looked at election, and could rejoice

that my name was written in heaven. I looked at predestination, and could give thanks unto the Lord that he had not appointed me unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. I looked at my sins, and saw that they were all laid upon his dear Son. I looked at the law, and saw it fulfilled, its curse removed, and my soul delivered from going down to the pit. I could look at the great work of Christ, and see that I was complete in him, and forever perfected thereby. I knew the Holy Spirit had begun the good work, and that he would carry it on. I knew that this God was my God for ever and ever; that he would be my Guide, even unto death.”

We joyfully sympathize with our departed brother in this rich portion of his experience. In our measure, we realized the same on that bright, holy, happy, pure, and glorious Lord’s-day morning, when the beloved Christ of God filled our soul with such ineffable and soul-transporting light and love, that, as Peter wrote, “We rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” There was no room for one thought of sin, nor for one unbelieving fear:

“The wings of faith and arms of love
Did lift our soul on high.”

How we do wish the stiff, uncircumcised, and the bitter bondsmen, who have for years secretly reviled both us and our departed brother, might be favored with such a baptism of love divine: then, and not till then, will they cease to do as Ishmael did. When Isaac was weaned, Abraham made a great feast; then poor Sarah saw Ishmael mocking. That Ishmaelish mocking, and Saul’s awful enmity against David, are the most deadly external foes we have. But such things our Jesus said would sure to follow. Would to God we had ever sought more sincerely to set the crown upon our great Redeemer’s head. But, now, let us read our departed brother’s account of

THE TRIAL OF HIS FAITH AFTER HIS DELIVERANCE.

Referring to the day of his spiritual freedom, he says:

“The next morning, as I went to my work, everything appeared new; the heavens and the earth, the trees, the winds, all seemed to remind me of the voice of that salvation which I now so abundantly enjoyed. I now went to my daily labor with joy, and ate my bread with gladness and singleness of heart. In this enjoyment of pardoning mercy, in this liberty wherewith Christ had made me free, in this fellowship with the father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, in this large and wealthy place, in this mount of transfiguration, in this assurance of interest in God, in this dominion over enemies internal and external, I walked for several weeks; and although my sins, discouragements, castings down, doubts, fears, and perplexities, have since been numerous, yet I have never been sunk into such a state as I was in previous to this deliverance: this mount Hermon, this hill Mizar, this coming into the banqueting house, I hope never to forget. I say, I hope never to forget; but alas’ when the Lord hides his face, and the enemy comes in like a flood, my old nature siding with the enemy, the Bible a sealed book, no power in prayer, the earth under me as iron, the heavens over my head as brass, arid seemingly destitute of thought or feeling, or even inclination to anything spiritual, full of self, the devil, and the world; when thus dead and stupid, when thus shut up, when thus carnally minded, I seem as though I knew nothing of the Lord, and as though I never did know anything. There seems to be no going out after God, no communication from God, no reproof from the precept, no transforming power from the promise, no pleasure in the service of the Lord;

yet I cannot give up the truth, cannot be at home in the world, cannot approve of, nor receive doctrines that oppose the free-grace honors of the dear Lamb of God. My harp is hung upon the willows, and I sit down by the rivers of Babylon, the rivers of confusion, the confusing and confused system of false doctrines. I sit down by the side of these rivers; they roll along, carrying their thousands, and I should go with them to, but mercy follows, and holds me. Nor can I mingle my songs with theirs, for if I cannot sing of free grace, and free grace alone, I must remain in silence. Thus, though the feelings of my mind change, yet the sentiments of my heart remain the same; for I am no more willing to give up the truth when I am dark and dead in my feelings, than I am when I am on the mount of enjoyment. I thus walk by faith; but when darkness of mind prevails, there is unbelief in exercise, and a very great many doubts, fears, and reasonings opposing faith; and herein is the conflict, which can be settled to my satisfaction only by the presence of the Lord. 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.' Not all the duties, all the prayers, nor all the sermons in the world can enable me to call the Lord mine. Nothing can do this but his presence, the light of his countenance, the anointing of his Holy Spirit, the diffusing through the soul the savory-ness of Jesus' name, the shedding abroad a Father's love. Without this authority I feel no right to call the Redeemer mine. Nothing like having for our conclusions good authority; for if I conclude that I am a real Christian, then the question is, who or what has brought me to this conclusion? One poor lunatic concludes that he is a great scholar, and another that he is a mighty warrior, and another that he is a celebrated emperor; but when it is the lot of these poor things to come to their senses, they soon find that their conclusions were wrong; and are not unregenerate men as much deceived in matters pertaining to eternity? Thousands of thousands are concluding that they are Christians, while they have not one iota of divine authority so to conclude. A man who lives and dies ignorant of, and an enemy to, the great truths of the Gospel, dying in all the enmity which is nursed and fostered by free will and low Calvinism, dying in a state of aversion to the rightful sovereignty of the Most High, dying in the delusive charm of so-called Christian charity, dying without having been experimentally humbled, stripped, and emptied; what must be the portion of such an one? It is one thing to say in the light of the letter of the word that Christ is the only savior, and only hope, and another thing to have been cut down and raised up, wounded and healed, and torn to pieces and put together by the Spirit of the living God. Dying in any state short of this regenerating work of God, is to die in our sins.

"All I have felt, experienced, passed through, and seen in the profane and in the professing world, among Christians, nominal and real, in prosperity or adversity; all I have felt, seen, and known since I have tasted that the Lord is gracious, confirms me in the truth that salvation is entirely of grace. God the Father is called the God of all grace, and grace and truth came by the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace; thus is the Lord a God of grace for his people, to his people, in his people, and with, his people, such has been, and such is my experience of my own nothingness, vileness, helplessness, and loathsomeness, that were not election to eternal life an election of grace, were not predestination according to the riches of his grace; were not justification freely by his grace; were not redemption and forgiveness of sin entirely of grace; did not the Holy Spirit carry on his work as a Spirit of grace; were not salvation thus, from first to last, all of grace, I know by experience, and from the Word of God, that I should have no more hope than those who are now in perdition.

"True faith purifies the heart from enmity against the truth, overcomes the world, and endears the savior, and the love of Christ constrains us to every good word and work. The precepts are

followers of the promise, and not the promises followers of the precepts. The Jewish Sabbath followed the six days of the week, but our sabbath goes first, and the six days follow after. Now our rest, our repose, our Sabbath speaks in this way, 'God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' The promise goes first, to supply and enable; and the precept comes after, to direct, to correct, rebuke, and reprove. But the period is fast coming when that as faith and hope will be lost in sight, so the precept will be lost in the glory of the promise; for we shall be unrebukable, un-reprovable, and unblameable in his sight. This arises from completeness in Christ, and conformity to Christ. He always was and always will be unrebukable, unreproveable, and unblameable; and 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'"

Thus, we have given, from Mr. James Wells's own heart, his clear testimony concerning the manner in which the Lord first killed him to himself, to all hope from himself; to all the false systems of men; and then revealed in his soul, by the Spirit, and the Word, the fulness, the freeness, the certainty, and the completeness of salvation in, through, by, and with the Lord Jehovah Jesus, our Righteousness and our Redeemer!

We ask our readers to consider that, from this time, that is from the year 1825, to the day of his death, March 10, 1872, a period of nearly forty-seven years, James Wells continued, by grace divine, a most un-wavering defender of, and witness to, the truth as it is in Jesus. From an unlettered country laborer he became one of the most talented, devoted, earnest, and useful ministers of this century; how far the Lord honored his testimony will never be known until the day when the Lord shall make up his jewels: then, before our God, we believe this blessed soul will realize Daniel's words, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."