



Be still.

*“May we give up our
will to Thine, and
feel as if a burden
were lifted off us and
laid on Thee.”*

“IT IS ENOUGH FOR
THE DISCIPLE THAT HE
BE AS HIS MASTER.”
MATTHEW 10:25

THE RICHES OF JOHN BUNYAN



WS. JOHN BUNYAN

TRIALS & ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE AWAKENED

Let me tell you, soul, to comfort you, that if you are following Christ, panting and sighing as if your heart would break, you would never have gotten even this far, if He had not first, through His blood and intercession, sent into your heart a deep desire for Christ. Let me tell you also that it is His business to intercede for you, not only that you can come into heaven, but that you will be kept safe until you get there.

I have seen some people setting out to be pilgrims whom I would never have thought would get very far—and they have proved to be very good pilgrims.

THE DIFFICULTY OF CONVERSION

Conversion to God is not such an easy, smooth thing, as some people would like us to believe. If it were, why would the human heart be compared to fallow ground and God's Word to a plow, if the heart did not need to be broken before it can receive of the seed of God's eternal life? Why is the soul's conversion compared to the grafting of a tree? After all, you can't do that without cutting the branches.

A broken heart is God's handiwork, a sacrifice He prepares from material He has created. By breaking the heart, He opens it, making it a container for His Spirit's grace, like a safe that must be unlocked, so that God can put the gospel's jewels inside. That is where He puts His reverence: “I will put my fear in their heart”; there He puts His Spirit: “I will put my Spirit within you.” God wants the human heart for His safe. There He will hide His treasure; there He will keep His justice, mercy, and every other grace.

In our natural, selfish state, we have nothing to offer God except open war, acts of hostility, and rebellion. What delight can God take in that? Therefore, God will bend the selfish spirit until it breaks. He shoots an arrow at the lost soul, a barbed arrow that cannot be plucked out of the wound—an arrow that will stick fast, and cause that selfish person to fall on God's foot as though he were dead. Then the sinner will surrender his arms, offering himself up into God's hand, begging for the Lord's pardon. Only then will his pleas be truly sincere.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

God's presence is renewing, transforming, enlivening, sanctifying, commanding, sweetening, and cheering to the soul. Nothing is like it in all the world: His presence supplies all need, heals all sickness, saves from all danger; it is life in death, heaven in hell, all in all.

THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word has two edges; it can cut backward and forward: if it does you no good, it will hurt you. It tastes of life and that leads to yet more life to those that receive it, but to them that refuse it, it tastes of death that leads only to more death.

Read the Bible, and read it again, and do not give up on understanding something of the will and mind of God, though you think they are locked up tight from you. And don't trouble your heads if you don't have commentaries and expositions; pray and read, and read and pray, for a little from God is better than a great deal from human writers. Besides, human ideas are uncertain, and are often tossed around, but what is from God is as securely placed as a nail in a hard board. Nothing remains with us so well as what we receive from God; the reason why Christians today are so lacking when it comes to some things, is because they are content with what comes from human mouths, without searching and kneeling before God to ask Him the truth about things. Things that we receive from God's hand come to us in mint condition; though old in themselves, yet they are fresh to us. Old truths are always

new to us, if they come to us with the smell of heaven on them.

VALUE OF THE SOUL

Although the soul is the most valuable thing in the world, most people pay the least attention to it, allowing it to lie fallow while they farm the rest of their lives.

Soul-concerns are of the highest nature, and they spring from the deepest and most weighty thoughts. Those who have never yet had great and deep thoughts are strangers to soul-concerns.

The soul is capable of interacting with invisible reality, with angels, good or bad, even with the highest and supreme Being, the holy God of heaven. I told you before that God sought the soul to have it for His companion, and now I tell you that the soul is capable of communion with Him, once the darkness that sin has spread over its face is removed. The soul is an intelligent power, and it can be made to know and understand depths and heights and lengths and breadths, those high, sublime, and spiritual mysteries that only God can reveal and teach. In fact, it is capable of diving into them far deeper than words can express. This delights God, the God of glory—that He has made for Himself a creature that is capable, when opened and revealed to God’s mind, of hearing, knowing, and understanding Him.

The soul’s greatness is demonstrated by the great price that Christ paid for it with His precious blood, making it an heir of glory. We are used to valuing things according to the price that we paid for them. Now the soul was purchased and this was its price: the Son. How precious then the soul is!

THE GLORY OF GOD

God is the only good worth wanting; **nothing without Him is worthy of our hearts.** Sound thinking about God grips our emotions, and those people who possess a share of God are happier, for God alone can, all by Himself, put the soul into a more blessed, comfortable, and happy state than can the whole world. The life, the glory, the blessedness, the soul-satisfying goodness that is in God, are beyond all expression. God is so joyfully complete that if He did not hide Himself and His glory, the entire world would be overwhelmed by Him. He has reasons why He hides Himself from the world and appears only to a few people.

The reason why people are so careless and indifferent about coming to God is because they are blind and cannot perceive His glory. What is heaven without God? But many people cannot accept God; they do not want to go to heaven, because God is there. God’s nature crosses out human selfishness. A

holy God, a glorious holy God, an infinitely holy God; this robs our selfishness. But to the soul that is awake and sees things as they are, God is what He intrinsically is: the blessed, the highest, the only eternal good; without Him, every experience sounds empty to the soul’s ears.

When I consider the glory of creation and that all this glory is the workmanship of God, “O Lord,” I say, “what is God Himself?”

THE MAJESTY OF GOD

What is God’s majesty to a sinful person, but a consuming fire? And what is a sinful person before God, but dry stubble?

The trembling, the tears, the breaking and shakings of heart that are in store for the people of God when they can no longer avoid the sound of His voice pronouncing the forgiveness of their sins, what can these mean but that the awe of God’s majesty has become integrated into their view of reality? God must appear like Himself, speak to the soul like Himself—and the sinner, when influenced by these glorious revelations of our Lord and Saviour, *can no longer protect the mental eye from the beams of His majesty.*

Unfortunately, there are some insubstantial and frothy people who claim to be in God’s presence, yet they act more like buffoons than thoughtful and rational followers of Christ who live in the presence of God. They would not behave like that in the presence of a king they were hoping to impress. They behave this way even in their most significant moments, as if the sense and sight of God (and His blessed grace to their souls through Christ) had a tendency to make people undisciplined. Instead it is the most humbling and heart rending sight in the world; it is fearful. I would have you (and indeed you shall when God tells you that your sins are truly pardoned) “rejoice with trembling” (Psalm 2:11), for then you will have solid, divine joy: a joyful heart and wet eyes go well together. For if God really comes to you, a Guest who brings to you the forgiveness of sins, that visit removes your guilt, but it increases the sense of your own dirty evil. This understanding, that God has forgiven a filthy sinner, will make you both rejoice and tremble. **What a holy confusion of emotions will cover your face,** while you, even you, a selfish wretch, shall stand before God to receive from Him your pardon, the firstfruits of your eternal salvation.

“You will remember your sins and cover your mouth in silence and shame when I forgive you of all that you have done, says the sovereign Lord” (Ezekiel 16:63). *

“And in His law doth he meditate day and night.”

from Hudson Taylor’s

MEDITATIONS ON THE FIRST PSALM

The unregenerate cannot delight in the Law of the Lord. They may be very religious, and may read the Bible as one of their religious duties. They may admire much that is in the Bible, and be loud in its praise — for as a mere book it is the most wonderful in the world. Nay, they may go much further than this; and may imagine, as did Saul the persecutor, that their life is ordered by its teachings, while still they are far from God. But when such become converted, they discover that they have been blind; among the “all things” that become new, they find that they have got a new Bible; and as new-born babes they desire the unadulterated milk of the Word that they may grow thereby. Well is it when young Christians are properly fed from the Word of God, and have not their taste corrupted, and their spiritual constitution destroyed, by feeding on the imaginations of men rather than on the verities of God.

It is not difficult to discover what a man delights in. “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*” The mother delights to speak of her babe, the politician loves to talk of politics, the scientific man of his favourite science, and the athlete of his sport. In the same way the earnest, happy Christian manifests his delight in the Word of God; it is his food and comfort; it is his study and his guide; and as the Holy Spirit throws fresh light on its precious truths he finds in it a joy and pleasure beyond compare.

Naturally and spontaneously he will often speak of that which is so precious to his heart.

By regeneration the believer, having become the child of God, finds new interest and instruction in all the works of God. His Father designed and created them, upholds and uses them, and for His glory they exist. But this is peculiarly true of the Word of God. Possessing the mind of Christ, instructed by the Spirit of Christ, he finds in every part of God’s Word testimony to the person and work of his adorable Master and Friend. The Bible in a thousand ways endears itself to him, while unfolding the mind and ways of God, His past dealings with His people, and His wonderful revelations of the future.

While thus studying God’s Word the believer becomes conscious of a new source of delight; not only is that which is revealed precious, but the beauty and perfection of the revelation itself grows upon him. He has now no need of external evidence to prove its inspiration; it everywhere bears the impress of Divinity. And as the microscope which reveals the coarseness and blemishes of the works of man only shows more fully the perfectness of God’s works, and brings to light new and unimagined beauties, so it is with the Word of God when closely scanned.

In what remarkable contrast does this Book stand to the works of men! The science of yesterday is worthless today; but history and the discoveries of

our own times only confirm the reliability of these ancient sacred records.

The stronger our faith in the plenary, verbal inspiration of God's Holy Word, the more fully we make it our guide, and the more implicitly we follow its teachings, the deeper will be our peace and the more fruitful our service. "*Great peace have they which love Thy law; and nothing shall offend them.*" Becoming more and more convinced of the divine wisdom of the directions and commands of Scripture, and of the reliability of the promises, the life of the believer will become increasingly one of obedience and trust; and thus he will prove for himself how good, acceptable, and perfect is the will of God, and the Bible which reveals it. The words, "the Law of the Lord," which we understand to mean the whole Word of God, are very suggestive. They indicate that the Bible is intended to teach us what God would have us to do; that we should not merely seek for the promises, and try to get all we can from God; but should much more earnestly desire to know what He wants us to be and to do for Him. It is recorded of Ezra, that he prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, in order that he might do it, and teach in Israel statutes and judgments. The result was that the hand of his God was upon him for good, the desires of his heart were largely granted, and he became the channel of blessing to his whole people. Every one who searches the Scriptures in the same spirit will receive and communicate the blessing of God; he will find in it the guidance he needs for his own service, and oft-times a word in season for those with whom he is associated.

But not only will the Bible become the Law of the Lord to him as teaching and illustrating what God would have him to be and to do, but still more as revealing **what God Himself is and does**. As the law of gravitation gives us to know how a power, on which we may ever depend, will act under given circumstances, so the Law of the Lord gives us to know Him, and the principles of His government, on which we may rely with implicit confidence.

The man of God will also delight to trace God in the Word as the great Worker, and rejoice in the privilege of being a fellow-worker with Him — a glad, voluntary agent in doing the will of God, yet rejoicing in the grace that has made him willing, and in the mighty, divine power that works through him. The Bible will also teach him to view himself as but an atom, as it were, in God's great universe; and to see God's great work as a magnificent whole, carried on by ten thousand agencies; carried on through all spheres, in all time, and without possibility of ultimate failure — a glorious manifestation of the perfections of the great Worker! He himself, and a thousand more of his fellow-servants, may pass away; but this thought will not paralyse his efforts, for he knows that whatever has been wrought in God will abide, and that whatever is incomplete when his work is done the great Worker will in His own time and way bring to completion.

He does not expect to understand all about the grand work in which he is privileged to take a blessed but infinitesimal part; he can afford to await its completion, and can already by faith rejoice in the certainty that the whole will be found in every respect worthy of the great Designer and Executor.

Well may his delight be in the Law of the Lord, and well may he meditate in it day and night. ■

Testament of Devotion

from "Spiritual Classics" edited by Richard Foster and Emilie Griffin

THOMAS R. KELLY (1893-1941) was born into a devout Quaker farm family living near Chillicothe, Ohio. His father died when he was quite small, and young Kelly grew up helping his mother, grandmother and sister with the farm operations. In 1903 the family moved to Wilmington, Ohio, which gave Kelly a chance to attend high school, and Wilmington College, a small Quaker school. From there Kelly earned a scholarship to Haverford College, where a significant pilgrimage began.

Originally attracted to the sciences, Kelly now found himself drawn to philosophy and religion. Under the teaching of Rufus Jones, Kelly encountered a different kind of Quakerism than he had known in the Midwest, one that focused on the mystical life. Soon he came to believe that this mystical Quaker life was closer to the original vision of George Fox. Yet the mystical experience eluded him.

Through many years of teaching and study, Kelly, who became a PhD candidate at Harvard working under the world-renowned British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, laboured for recognition. He was torn by differences in Quakerism, suffered ill health, and was pained by the repeated refusals of Harvard to allow him to complete the PhD.

Finally, out of this crucible of failure and pain, a new Thomas Kelly arose, one who genuinely floated in the grace of God with a simple and childlike obedience and trust. This renewed Thomas Kelly is the one whose teaching and example have gained wide attention. Yet all of Kelly's works represent a reaching for the same simple and pure devotional understanding.

In the following selection, which is taken from his masterwork, *A Testament of Devotion*, notice that he suggests some will be swept into holy obedience and some will have to wrestle for it. Also take note of the beautiful language he used to describe this spiritual gift.

The Shepherd in search of lost obedience

Out in front of us is the drama of men and of nations, seething, struggling, labouring, dying. Upon this tragic drama in these days our eyes are all set in anxious watchfulness and in prayer. **But within the silences of the souls of men an eternal drama is ever being enacted**, in these days as well as in others. And on the outcome of this inner drama rests, ultimately, the outer pageant of history. It is the drama of the lost sheep wandering in the wilderness, restless and lonely, feebly searching, while over the

hills comes the wiser Shepherd. For His is a shepherd's heart, and He is restless until He holds His sheep in His arms.

It is to one strand in this inner drama, one scene, where the Shepherd has found His sheep, that I would direct you. It is the life of absolute and complete and holy obedience to the voice of the Shepherd. But ever throughout the account the accent will be laid upon God, God the initiator, God the aggressor, God the seeker, God the stirrer into life, God the ground of our obedience, God the giver of the power to become children of God.

The tender persuading love at the centre

In considering one gateway into this life of holy obedience, let us dare to venture together into the inner sanctuary of the soul, *where God meets man in awful immediacy*...

It is an overwhelming experience to fall into the hands of the living God, to be invaded to the depths of one's being by His presence, to be, without warning, wholly uprooted from all earth-born securities and assurances, and to be blown by a tempest of unbelievable power which leaves one's old proud self utterly, utterly defenceless, until one cries, 'All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me' (Psalm 42:7). Then is the soul swept into a Loving Centre of ineffable sweetness, where calm and unspeakable peace and ravishing joy steal over one. And one knows now why Pascal wrote, in the centre of his greatest moment, the single word, 'Fire'. There stands the world of struggling, sinful, earth-blinded men and nations, of plants and animals and wheeling stars of heaven, all new, all lapped in the tender, persuading Love at the Centre. There stand the saints of the ages, their hearts open to view, and lo, their hearts are our heart and their hearts are the heart of the eternal One. In awful solemnity the Holy One is over all and in all, exquisitely loving, infinitely patient, tenderly smiling. Marks of glory are upon all things, and the marks are cruciform and blood-stained. And one sighs, like the convinced Thomas of old, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20:28). Dare one lift one's eyes and look? Nay, whither can one look and not see Him? For field and stream and teeming streets are full of Him. Yet as Moses knew, no man can look on God and live—live as his old self. Death come, blessed death, death of one's alienating will. And one knows what Paul meant when he wrote, '*The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God*' (Galatians 2:20).

Emerging into obedience

One emerges from such soul-shaking,

Love-invaded times into more normal states of consciousness. But one knows ever after that the Eternal Lover of the world, the Hound of Heaven, is utterly real, and that life must henceforth be forever determined by that Real. **Like Saint Augustine one asks not for greater certainty of God but only for more steadfastness in Him.** There, beyond, in Him is the true Centre, and we are reduced, as it were, to nothing, for He is all...

Self is emptied into God, and God in-fills it. In glad, amazed humility we cast on Him our little lives in trusting obedience, in erect, serene and smiling joy. And we say, with a writer of Psalms, 'Lo, I come: in the book of the law it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God' (40:7-8). For nothing else in all of heaven or earth counts so much as His will, His slightest wish, His faintest breathing. And holy obedience sets in, sensitive as a shadow, obedient as a shadow, selfless as a shadow... Gladly, urgently, promptly one leaps to do His bidding, ready to run and not be weary and to walk and not faint.

Passive or active?

Do not mistake me. Our interest just now is in the life of complete obedience to God, not in amazing revelations of His glory graciously granted only to some. Yet the amazing experiences of the mystics leave a permanent residue, a God-subdued, a God-possessed will. States of consciousness are fluctuating. The vision fades. **But holy and listening and alert obedience remains, as the core and kernel of a God-intoxicated life, as the abiding pattern of sober, workaday living.** And some are led into the state of complete obedience by this well-nigh passive route, wherein God alone seems to be the actor and we seem to be wholly acted upon. And our wills are melted and dissolved and made pliant, being firmly fixed in Him, and He wills in us.

But in contrast to this passive route to complete obedience most people must follow what Jean-Nicholas Grou calls the active way, wherein we must struggle and, like Jacob of old, wrestle with the angel until the morning dawns, the active way wherein the will must be subjected bit by bit, piecemeal and progressively, to the divine Will.

The flaming vision

But the first step to obedience is the flaming vision of the wonder of such a life, a vision which comes occasionally to us all, through biographies of the saints, through the journals of Fox and early Friends, through a life lived before our eyes, through a haunting verse of the Psalms—'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee' (Psalm 73:25)—through meditation upon the amazing life and death of

Jesus, through a flash of illumination or, in Fox's language, a great opening... There is an infinite fountain of lifting power, pressing within us, luring us by dazzling visions, and we can only say, The creative God comes into our souls. An Increment of infinity is about us. Holy is imagination, the gateway of Reality into our hearts. The Hound of Heaven is on our track, the God of Love is wooing us to His Holy life.

Begin where you are

Once having the vision, the second step to holy obedience is this: Begin where you are. Obey now. Use what little obedience you are capable of, even if it be like a grain of mustard seed. Begin where you are. Live this present moment, this present hour as you now sit in your seats, in utter, utter submission and openness toward Him. Listen outwardly to these words, but within, behind the scenes, in the deeper levels of your lives where you are all alone with God the Loving Eternal One, keep up a silent prayer. 'Open Thou my life. Guide my thoughts where I dare not let them go. But Thou darest. Thy will be done.' Walk on the streets and chat with your friends, offering yourselves in continuous obedience. I find this internal continuous prayer life absolutely essential. It can be carried on day and night, in the thick of business, in home and school. Such prayer of submission can be so simple... Eventually, words will cease and one stands and walks and sits and lies in wordless attitudes of adoration and submission and rejoicing and exultation and glory.

Begin again and relax

And the third step in holy obedience, or a counsel, is this: if you slip and stumble and forget God for an hour, and assert your old proud self, and rely upon your own clever wisdom, don't spend too much time in anguished regrets and self-accusations but begin again, just where you are.

Yet a fourth consideration in holy obedience is this: Don't grit your teeth, and clench your fists and say, 'I will! I will!' Relax. Take hands off. Submit yourself to God. Learn to live in the passive voice—a hard saying for Americans—and let life be willed through you. For 'I will' spells not obedience.

Virtually all of Kelly's published writings, apart from his PhD dissertation, come from the last three years of his life. While his unpublished sermons and lectures from before this period are far above the average in insight and scholarship, they simply do not rise to the same level of breathtaking radiance as those last three years. Why is this? What happened in 1937/38 to cause the speeches and essays of

his final years to erupt with such fire and heart-searing passion? What made him so utterly 'blinded by the splendour of God'? What could cause him to write, 'The fires of the love of God, of our love toward God, and of His love toward us, are very hot'? Did God visit him in some kind of special epiphany of glory. Quite the contrary. The abrupt and glorious change in Kelly arose out of two powerful experiences: the one a crushing personal defeat, the other a fiery baptism into the suffering of humanity.

By 1924 Kelly had earned a PhD in philosophy from Hartford Theological Seminary and by 1936 he was teaching at the prestigious Haverford College. Even so, he longed for the scholarly recognition of a Harvard PhD, and so he pursued this second doctorate at great personal cost, both financially and physically. Finally, he completed all of his doctoral requirements except for the final oral exams. But in the fall of 1937 on the day Kelly went in for his orals he had one of his occasional and dreadful 'woozy spells', and his mind went completely blank. He failed his orals miserably and was rejected for the PhD with no opportunity of reconsideration. The rejection was catastrophic. Kelly sank into deep depression. And yet, out of the ashes of this dashed dream of academic acclaim arose the Phoenix of a new, captivating vision of 'the God-intoxicated life'. In April 1938 he wrote to Rufus Jones, 'The reality of Presence has been very great at times recently. One knows at first hand what the old inquiry meant, "Has Truth been advancing among you?"'

The second experience came in the summer of 1938 when Kelly went to Hitler's Germany, an experience in which his soul was immeasurably deepened by seeing and sharing in the suffering of the German people. 'I have never had such a soul-overturning period as this,' he wrote. 'It is not merely heroism, it is depth of consecration, simplicity of faith, beauty in the midst of poverty or suffering, that shames us. I have met some giant souls... one can't be the same again.' Upon returning to Haverford he kept repeating to Douglas Steere, 'It is wonderful. I have been literally melted down by the love of God.' Later, he told several close students of a particular experience in the great cathedral at Cologne where, on his knees, he seemed to feel God laying upon his heart the whole congealed suffering of humanity—a burden too terrible to be borne—and yet somehow bearable with God's help.

These two experiences help us understand the enormous power that flowed from Kelly's writing and speaking in the three remaining years of his earthly pilgrimage. ✱

Oh sir! Would you know the blessing of all blessings? It is this God of love dwelling in your soul and killing every root of bitterness which is the pain and torment of every earthly, selfish love. For all wants are satisfied, all disorders of nature are removed, no life is any longer a burden, every day is a day of peace, everything you meet becomes a help to you because everything you see or do is all done in the sweet, gentle element of love.

—WILLIAM LAW