

VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

by John Bunyan

John Bunyan was a 17th century English preacher who spent twelve years in prison for his Christian faith and wrote over 40 books. His best known writing is Pilgrim's Progress, one of the most famous and popular books in all of world history.

John Bunyan wrote an account when he was a young man, of how an angel was sent by the Lord to take him to see heaven and hell. In a previous issue we printed the first part of this vision about heaven, while this second part records his account of hell. It is a true story, not an allegory or fictional book. While all visions must be judged by the Bible, these seem very scriptural and were used by the Lord to help transform young John into a mighty man of God. May this simplified account of his visions also help to transform you! - The Editor

CHAPTER 6 CONDUCTED TO HELL

Then the bright messenger who had brought me to heaven returned. "I have," said the angel, "a commission to return you to the earth from where I took you, after first visiting the regions of the prince of darkness. There you will see the reward of sin, and what Justice has prepared as the judgment of those who would exalt themselves above the throne of the Most High."

To leave heaven for earth was extremely disappointing. But to leave heaven for hell turned my very heart within me! However, when I knew that it was God's good pleasure, I was a little comforted. So I said to my bright conductor, "That which God has ordered I shall always be willing to obey. Even in hell I will not be afraid if I may have His presence with me there."

To this my shining guardian replied, "Wherever the blessed God grants His presence, there is heaven, and while we are in hell He will be with us."

Then bowing low before the Almighty's throne, swifter than thought my guardian angel carried me on a speedy journey down through the heavens. When I saw the stars I told my conductor that I had heard on earth that each one of these stars had their own

worlds. "But I would ask you to tell me the truth of this matter."

To this my shining guardian answered, "To Him Who is Almighty there is nothing impossible. But from knowing that it is in His power to do this, to argue that it is His will, is no good logic in the school of heaven. We know what He pleases to reveal to us, and what He has not revealed are secrets locked up in His own eternal counsel. For anyone to inquire into these secrets would be but bold and presumptuous curiosity. There is no doubt that He can make as many worlds as He wants, but He has not yet revealed it to us, and it is not our duty to inquire."

By this time we had come down to the lowest regions of the air. There I saw multitudes of horrible forms and dismal dark appearances which fled from the shining presence of my bright conductor.

I said, "These surely are some of the vanguard of hell, so black and so frightening are their forms."

My conductor replied, "Now we are upon the borders of hell, and these are some of the apostate spirits that wander around like roaring lions."

Soon we were surrounded with a darkness much more black than night, and with a stink far more suffocating than that of burning sulfur. My ears were likewise filled with the horrible yelling of the damned spirits, which in comparison with, would make the most discordant notes on earth sound like beautiful music.

"Now," said my guardian angel, "you are on the edge of hell, but do not fear the power of the destroyer. My commission from the Imperial Throne secures you from all danger. Here you may hear from devils and damned souls the cursed causes of their endless ruin. What you ask them about, they will answer. The devils cannot hurt you, though they would want to, for they are bound by Him that has commissioned me."

We then came within hell's territories, placed in the caverns of the infernal deep in the center of the earth. There, in a sulfurous lake of liquid fire, sat Lucifer upon a burning throne. His horrid eyes sparkled with hellish fury, as full of rage as his strong anger could make him. I saw that the demons that had fled from us as we approached from heaven had given notice of our coming. This had put all hell in an uproar, and made Lucifer release horrid blasphemies against the blessed God with an air of arrogance and pride.

"What would the Thunderer have?" said he. "He has my heaven already, whose radiant scepter this bold hand should bear. Instead of those never fading fields of light, He confines me here in this dark house of death, sorrow, and woe! What, would He take hell away from me too, that He insults me here? Ah! Could I but obtain another day to try it, I would make heaven shake and His bright throne to totter. Nor would I fear the utmost of His power, though He had fiercer flames than these to throw me in. Although I lost the battle that day, the fault was not mine! No winged spirit in heaven strove better for the victory than I did. But, ah!" he continued with a changed voice, "that day is lost, and I am forever doomed to these dark territories! But it is still at least some comfort to me that mankind's sorrow waits upon me. And since I cannot fight against the Thunderer, I will make the utmost of my anger to fall on them."

I was amazed to hear his ungodly speech, and felt compelled to say to my conductor, "How justly are his blasphemies rewarded!"

"What you have heard from this apostate spirit is both his sin and punishment; for every blasphemy he belches against heaven, makes hell the hotter to him."

We then passed on to see more sorrowful scenes. I saw two wretched souls being tormented by a demon. He was continually plunging them in liquid fire and burning brimstone, while at the same time they accused and cursed each other. One of them said to his tormented fellow sufferer, "O cursed be

your face, that ever I set eyes upon you! My misery is due to you; I may thank you for this, for it was your persuasions that brought me here. You enticed me, it was you who ensnared me into this. It was your covetousness, cheating, and oppression of the poor that brought me here. If you had been as good an example as you had been a bad one, I might now be in heaven. O what a fool I was! When I followed your steps you ruined me forever. O that I never had seen your face, or that you had never been born!"

The other wretch replied, "And may I not as well blame you? Don't you remember how at such a time and place you enticed me to go along with you? I was minding my own business when you called me away, so you are as guilty as I. Though I was covetous, you were proud. Though you learned how to cheat from me, yet you taught me to lust, to lie, to get drunk and to scoff at goodness. So although I stumbled you in some things, you stumbled me as much in others. Therefore if you blame me, I can blame you as much. I wish you never had come here, the very sight of you wounds my soul, by bringing sin afresh into my mind. It was with you, with you that I sinned. O grief to my soul! Since I could not avoid your companionship on earth, O that I could be without it here!"

From this sad conversation I learned that those who are companions in sin upon earth shall also be punished together in hell. I believe that this was the true reason why the rich man seemed so charitable to his brethren (Lk.16:27-28). The reason he did not want them to join him in hell was because they would have increased his torments.

CHAPTER 7

THE TORTURES OF HELL

There were yet more tragic scenes of sorrow that we saw as we left these two cursed wretches accusing each other. One woman had flaming sulfur continually forced down her throat by a tormenting spirit. He did this with such horrible cruelty and insolence that I said to him, "Why should you so delight in tormenting that cursed wretch, and be pouring that flaming, infernal liquid down her throat?"

"This is a more than just reward," replied the demon. "This woman in her life time was such a greedy wretch that though she had plenty of gold, she could never be satisfied. Therefore I now pour it

down her throat. She cared not who she ruined as long as she could get their gold. And when she had gathered together a greater treasure than she could ever spend, her love of money would not let her spend enough of it to supply herself with her basic living needs. She often went with an empty stomach, though her money bags were full. She kept no house because she would not be taxed, and would not keep her treasure in her hands for fear she should be robbed. She would not put her money in bonds and mortgages for fear of being cheated; although she always cheated everyone that she could. She was so great a cheat that she cheated her own body of its food, and her own soul of mercy. Since gold was her god on earth, is it not a just reward that she should have her belly full of it in hell?"

When her tormentor had done speaking, I asked her whether this was all true. To this she answered me, "No; to my grief it is not."

"Why is this not true," I said, "and why are you grieved that it is not true?"

"Because if what my tormentor told you is true," she said, "I would be satisfied. He tells you that he pours gold down my throat; but he is a lying devil and speaks falsely. If it was gold I would never complain. But he mocks me, and instead of gold he only gives me this horrid, stinking sulfur. If I had my gold I would be happy still, for I value it so much that if I had it, I would not part with it even if an entrance to heaven could be bought."

I told my angelic conductor that I was amazed to hear a wretch in hell itself so greedy for riches while forever being tormented.

"This," he said, "may convince you that it is sin which is the greatest of all evils. Whenever the love of sin controls a soul, it is the greatest of all punishments for them to be abandoned to that evil love. The love of gold which this cursed soul is consumed by, is a more fatal punishment than what the demons can inflict upon her here."

"O!" said I, "if only wicked men on earth could for one moment hear the horrid shrieks of those damned souls, they could not be in love with sin again."

"Eternal Truth has told us otherwise, for those who will not fear His ministers, nor have regard to what His Word contains, will not be warned though one should come from hell."

We had not gone much farther before we saw a wretched soul lying on a bed of burning steel, almost choked with brimstone. He cried out with such

dreadful anguish and desperation, that I asked my conductor to wait. I heard him speak as follows:

"Ah, miserable wretch! Undone forever, forever! Oh, this killing word, 'forever!' Will not a million years be long enough to bear that pain, which if I could avoid it, I would not endure for even one moment for the sake of being offered one million worlds? No, no my misery never will have an end; after millions of years it will still be for ever. Oh, what a helpless and hopeless condition I am in! It is this 'forever' that is the hell of hell! O cursed wretch! Cursed to all eternity! How willfully have I undone myself! Oh, what stupendous folly am I guilty of, to choose sin's short and momentary pleasure at the dear price of everlasting pain! How often I was told it would be so! How often I was encouraged to leave those paths of sin that brought me to the chambers of eternal death! But I, like a dumb animal, would not listen to those pleadings. Now it is too late to change it, for my eternal state is fixed for ever. Why was I made a person, that I would choose this fate? Why was I made with an immortal soul, and yet should take so little care of it? Oh how my own neglect stings me to death, and yet I know I cannot die! I live a dying life, worse than ten thousand deaths; and yet I once could have changed all this, but did not! Oh, that is the gnawing worm that never dies! I might once have been happy, salvation was offered to me and I refused it. Had salvation been offered to me only once, it would have been an unforgivable folly to refuse it. But salvation was offered me a thousand times, and yet (wretch that I was) I still as often refused it. O cursed sin, that with deluding pleasures leads mankind to eternal ruin! God often called, but I as often refused; He stretched His hand out, but I would not mind it. How often have I ignored His counsel! How often have I refused His reproof! But now the scene is changed, the case is altered. Now He laughs at my calamity, and mocks at the destruction which is come upon me. He would have helped me once, but I would not accept His help. Therefore those eternal miseries I am condemned to undergo are but the just reward of my own doing."

I could not hear this sorrowful lamentation without thinking about the wonderful grace that God had shown to me, eternal praises to His holy name! For my heart told me that I had deserved eternal judgment as much as that sad wretch, but that God's grace alone had made us different. O how unsearchable are His counsels! Who can fathom His divine decree?

After these thoughts I spoke to the sorrowful complainer, and told him I had heard his woeful complaints. I saw that his misery was great, and his loss irreparable, and told him I would willingly hear more about it if this might possibly help lessen his sufferings."

"No, not at all; my pains cannot be relieved even for one small moment. But by your question I understand that you are a stranger here; and may you ever be a stranger! Ah, had I but the least hope still remaining, how I would kneel and cry and pray for ever to be redeemed from this hell! But it is all in vain, I am lost forever. But so that you will be warned about ending up here, I will tell you what the damned suffer."

CHAPTER 8

A LOST SOUL SPEAKS

"Our miseries in this infernal dungeon are of two kinds: what we have lost, and what we suffer. I will first speak about what we have lost.

"1. In this sad dark place of misery and sorrow, we have lost the presence of the ever blessed God. This is what makes this dungeon hell. Though we had lost a thousand worlds, it would not be as important as this one greatest loss. Could we but see the least glimpse of His favor here, we might be happy; but have lost it to our everlasting woe.

"2. Here we have also lost the company of saints and angels, and instead have nothing but tormenting devils.

"3. Here we have lost heaven, too, the center of blessedness. There is a deep gulf between us and heaven, so that we are shut out from it forever. Those everlasting gates that let the redeemed into heaven are now for ever shut against us.

"4. To make our wretchedness far worse, we have lost the hope of ever obtaining a better condition. This makes us truly hopeless. Well may our hearts now break, since we are both without hope and help. This is what we have lost; and if we think of these things, it is enough to tear and gnaw upon our miserable souls forever. Yet, oh, that this were all that our torments were! But we are also tormented by suffering and pain, as I will try to explain to you now.

"1. First, we undergo a variety of torments. We are tormented here a thousand, no, ten thousand different ways. Those that suffer upon the earth

seldom have more than one affliction at a time. But if they had ulcers, gallstones, headaches, and fever all at the same time, would they not think they were very miserable? Yet all those together are but like the biting of a flea compared to those intolerable, sharp pains that we endure. Here we have all the sufferings of hell. Here is an unquenchable fire which burns us; a lake of burning brimstone that ever chokes us; and eternal chains that bind us. Here there is utter darkness to frighten us, and a worm of conscience that gnaws upon us everlasting. Any one of these is worse to bear than all the torments that mankind ever felt on earth!

"2. But our torments here are not only various, but are also complete. They afflict every part of the body, and torment all the powers of the soul. This makes what we suffer the worst of tortures. In those sicknesses which men have on earth, though some members of their bodies will suffer, yet other parts will have no pain. Here it is different; every member of the soul and body suffers at the same time.

"Our eyes are tormented here with the sight of devils who appear in all the horrible shapes and black appearances that sin can give them. Our ears are continually tormented with the loud continual yelling of the damned. Our nostrils are smothered with sulfurous flames; our tongues with burning blisters; and the whole body is rolled in flames of liquid fire. All the powers and faculties of our souls are also tormented here. The imagination suffers with the thoughts of our present pain and the memory of the heaven we have lost. Our minds are tormented as we remember how foolishly we spent our precious time on earth. Our understanding is tormented with the thoughts of our past pleasures, present pains, and future sorrows, which are to last forever. And our consciences are tormented with a continual gnawing worm.

"3. Another thing that makes our misery so awful is the sharpness of our torments. The fire that burns us is so violent that all the water in the sea can never quench it. The pains we suffer here are so extreme that it is impossible for anyone to know them except the damned.

"4. Another part of our misery is the ceaselessness of our torments. As various, as complete, and as extremely violent as they are, they are also continual. We have no rest from them. If there were any relaxation, it might be some relief. But there is no easing of our torments, and what we suffer now we must suffer forever.

“5. The society or company we have here is another part of our misery. Tormenting devils and tormented souls are all our company. Dreadful shrieks, howlings, and fearful cursing are our continual conversation because of the fierceness of our pain.

“6. The place we are in also increases our sufferings. It is the completion of all misery, a prison, a dungeon, a bottomless pit, a lake of brimstone, a furnace of fire that burns to eternity, the blackness of darkness for ever; and lastly, hell itself. Such a wretched place as this can only increase our wretchedness.

“7. The cruelty of our tormentors is another thing that adds to our sufferings. Our tormentors are devils in whom there is no pity. While they are tormented themselves, they still take pleasure in tormenting us.

“8. All those sufferings that I have recounted are very grievous. But that which makes them the most grievous is that they shall always be forever. All of our intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity! ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,’ is what continually sounds in my ears. Oh, that I could reverse that fatal sentence! Oh, if there was but a bare possibility of salvation! This is the miserable situation we are in, and shall be in forever.”

CHAPTER 9

FURTHER CONVERSATIONS

This wretched soul had scarcely finished what he was saying when he was tormented again by a hellish demon, who told him to stop complaining. The demon said, “don’t you know you have deserved it all? How often were you told of this before, but would not believe it? You laughed at those who warned you about hell. You were even so presumptuous as to dare Almighty justice to destroy you! How often you called on God to damn you. Do you complain that you are answered according to your wishes? What an unreasonable thing! You know that you had salvation offered you, and you refused it. How can you now complain of being damned? I have more reason to complain, for you had a long time in which repentance was offered you; but I was cast into hell as soon as I had sinned. If I had been offered salvation, I would never have rejected it as you did. Who do you think should pity you now, with all that heaven had offered to you?”

This made the wretch cry out, “Oh, do not continue to torment me; I know that I chose destruction. Oh, that I could forget it! These thoughts are my greatest torture. I chose to be damned, and therefore justly am so.”

Then turning to the demon that tortured him he said, “But I also came here through your temptations, you cursed devil. You were the one that had tempted me to do all of my sins; and now you would reproach me? You say you never had a Savior offered to you; but you should also remember that you never had a tempter such as you have always been to me.”

To this the devil scornfully replied, “It was my business to lead you here! You had often been warned of this by your preacher. You were plainly told that we sought your ruin, and go about continually like roaring lions, seeking whom we could devour. I was often afraid you that would believe them, as several other souls did, to our great disappointment. But you were willing to do what we wanted; and since you have done our work it is but reasonable that we should pay you wages.” Then the fiend tormented him again and caused him to roar out so horribly that I could no longer stay to hear him, so I passed on.

“How dismal,” I then said to my conductor, “is the condition of these damned souls! They are the devils slaves while upon earth, and he reproaches and then torments them for it when they come to hell.”

“The devils hate all the race of Adam,” said my conductor. “And because many souls are ignorant of their devices, they easily succeed to bring them to eternal ruin. You will see more how the demons treat the damned here.”

Passing a little further we saw a multitude of damned souls together, gnashing their teeth with extreme rage and pain, while the tormenting fiends with hellish fury poured liquid fire and brimstone continually upon them. In the meantime, they were cursing God and those about them, and were blaspheming in a tremendous manner. I could not help but ask of one demon that so tormented them, who were these souls that he tormented so cruelly?

Said he, “These wretches well deserve their punishment. They tried to teach others the right road to heaven, while they were so in love with hell that they came here. These are those souls that have been our great helpers upon the earth, and therefore they deserve our special attention in hell. We use our full diligence to give every one their utmost share of

torments, for they not only have their own sins to answer for, but also all the sins of those whom they led astray both by their doctrine and example."

"Since they have been such great helpers for you, I would think that in gratitude you would treat them a little more kindly."

To this the impudent fiend answered me in a scoffing manner, "They that expect gratitude among devils will find themselves mistaken. Gratitude is a virtue, but we hate all virtue. Besides, we hate all mankind, and were it in our power not one of them should be happy. It is true we do not tell them so upon earth, because there it is our business to flatter and deceive them. But when we have them here where they cannot escape, we soon convince them of their foolishness in serving us."

From this I could only think about what infinite grace it is that any poor sinners are brought to heaven, considering how many traps are laid by the enemy to ensnare them by the way. Therefore it is a ministry well worthy of the blessed Son of God to save His people from their sins, and to deliver them from the wrath to come. But it is also folly and madness in men to refuse the offers of His grace, and to choose to side with the destroyer.

Going farther on, I heard a wretch complaining in a heartbreakin strain against those men that had betrayed him and brought him here.

"I was told," said he, 'by those that I depended on, and that I thought could inform me correctly, that if I said 'Lord, have mercy on me,' when I came to die, it would be enough to save me. But oh, now I find myself mistaken, to my eternal sorrow! Alas, I called for mercy on my deathbed, but found it was too late. Before that time, this cursed devil here told me that I was safe. Then on my deathbed, he told me it was too late. Hell must forever be my portion."

"You see, I did tell you the truth at last," said the devil, "and then you would not believe me. A very fitting end, don't you think? You spend your days enjoying sin, and wallow in your filthiness, and you want to go to heaven when you die! Would anyone but a madman think that would be just? No; he that sincerely wants to go to heaven when he dies, must walk in the ways of holiness and virtue while he is alive. You say some of your lewd companions told you that saying, 'Lord, have mercy on me' when you came to die would be enough. A very fine excuse! If you had read the Bible you would have known that 'Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.' Therefore, if you were willing to live in your sins as

long as you could, you did not finally leave them because you did not like them, but because you could follow them no longer. And this you know to be true. How could you be so stupid to think you could go to heaven with the love of sin in your heart? No, no, no. You were warned often enough that you should take heed of being deceived, for God is not mocked, but what you sow you reap. You have no reason to complain of anything but your own folly, which you now see too late."

"This lecture of the devil was a very cutting one to the poor tormented wretch," I said to my conductor, "and shows the true situation of many now on earth as well as those in hell. But oh, what a far different judgment do they make in this sad place from what they did on earth."

"The reason for this," replied my guardian angel, "is that they will not allow themselves to think what the effect of sin will be while on earth. Carelessness ruins many souls who do not think about what they are doing, nor where they are going, until it is too late to help it."

CHAPTER 10

AN ATHEIST IN HELL

We had not gone much farther before I saw a vast number of tormenting demons. They were continually lashing a large company of wretched souls with knotted whips of ever burning steel. The tormented were roaring out with such loud cries that I thought it might have melted even cruelty itself into some pity. This made me say to one of the tormentors, "Oh, stop your whipping, and do not use such cruelty on those who are your fellow creatures, and whom you probably helped lead to all this misery."

"No," answered the tormentor very smoothly. "Though we are bad enough, no devil was as bad as them, nor were we guilty of such crimes as they were. We all know there is a God, although we hate Him; but these souls would never admit (until they came here) that there was such a Being."

"Then these," I said, "were atheists. They are wretched men, and tried to ruin me had not eternal grace prevented it."

I had no sooner spoken, but one of the tormented wretches cried out mournfully, "Surely I know that voice. It must be John."

I was amazed to hear my name mentioned; and therefore I answered, "Yes, I am John; but who are you?"

To this he replied, "I once knew you well upon the earth, and had almost persuaded you to be of my opinion. I am the author of that celebrated book entitled 'Leviathan.'"

"What! The great Hobbs?" said I. "Are you come here?"

"Alas," replied he, "I am that unhappy man indeed. But I am so far from being great that I am one of the most wretched persons in all these dirty territories. For now I know there is a God. But oh! I wish there were not, for I am sure He will have no mercy on me. Nor is there any reason that He should. I do confess I was His foe on earth, and now He is mine in hell. It was that proud confidence I had in my own wisdom that has so betrayed me."

"Your case is miserable, and yet you admit that you suffer justly. For how industrious were you to persuade others and try to bring them to the same damnation. No one can know this better than I, as I was almost taken in your snare to perish forever."

"It is that," said he, "that stings me to the heart, to think how many will perish by my influence. I was afraid when I first heard your voice that you had also been cast into hell. Not that I wish any person happy, for it is my torment to think that anyone is happy while I am so miserable. But I did not want you to be cast into hell, because every soul that is brought here through my deceptions, increases my pains in hell."

"But tell me," I said, "for I want to know the truth. Did you indeed believe there was no God when you lived upon earth?"

"At first I believed there was a God," he answered, "but as I turned to sins which would lead me to His judgment, I hoped there was no God. For it is impossible to think there is a just God, and not also remember that He will punish those who disobey Him. But as I continued in my sins, and found that justice did not swiftly come, I then began to hope there was no God. From those hopes I began to frame ideas in my own mind that could justify what I hoped. My ideas framed a new system of the world's origin which excluded from it the existence of God. At last I found myself so fond of these new theories that I decided to believe them and convince others that they were true. But before this, I did find several checks in my own conscience. I felt that I could be wrong, but I ignored these warnings. Now I find that

those checking thoughts that might have helped me then, are here the things that most of all torment me. I must confess that the love of sin hardened my heart against my Maker, and made me hate Him first, and then deny His being. Sin, that I so proudly embraced, has been the cursed cause of all this woe; it is the serpent that has stung my soul to death. For now I find, in spite of my vain philosophy, there is a God. I have also found that God will not be mocked, although it was my daily practice in the world to mock at heaven and all that is sacred, for this was the means that I found very successful to spread abroad my cursed ideas. For anyone that I could get to ridicule the truths of God, I looked upon as becoming one of my disciples. But now these thoughts are more tormenting to me than the sufferings I endure from these whips of burning steel."

"Sad indeed," I said. "See what Almighty Power can inflict on those that violate His righteous law." I was making some further comments when the relentless fiend who had been tormenting them then interrupted me.

"Now you see what sort of men they were in the world. Do you not think they deserve their punishment now?"

To which I answered, "Doubtless it is the just reward of sin which they suffer, and which you will suffer also. For you, as well as they, have sinned against the ever blessed God, and for your sin you shall suffer the just vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is it any excuse to say you never doubted the being of a God; for though you knew there was God, yet you rebelled against Him. Therefore you shall be justly punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

To this the fiend replied, "It is true we know we shall be punished, as you say. But if you say that mankind should have pity showed them, because they fell through the temptations of the devil, it is the same case with me and all the rest of the inferior spirits. For we were tempted by the Bright Sun of the Morning to rebel with him. And therefore, though this multiplies the crime of Lucifer, it should lessen that of the inferior spirits."

To this my bright conductor replied with an angry countenance. "O you apostate, wicked, lying spirit! Can you say those things and see me here? You know it was your proud heart that made you rebel with Lucifer against the blessed God who had created you with glory! But since you proudly exalted yourself above your blessed Creator, and

joined with Lucifer, you are justly cast down to hell. Your former beauty has changed to your present horrible form as the just punishment of your rebellious pride."

To this the apostate spirit replied, "Why do you invade our territories, and come here to torment us before our time?" And when he had said this, he slipped away as if he did not want to have an answer. After he was gone I said to my guardian angel that I had already heard about the fall of the apostate angels, but wanted to know more about what happened. To this my guide answered me, "When you have finished your earthly life and return to heaven, you shall learn many things that you are not yet ready to understand. In your present state do not desire to learn more than what is written in the Scriptures. It is enough to know the angels sinned, and for their sin were cast down to hell. But how pure spirits could have a thought arise in their hearts against the eternal Purity that first created them is what you are not yet capable of understanding."

"I have observed," said I, "that those in hell complain most about the torment from their own sense of guilt, which confirms the justice of their punishment. This gloomy prison is the best place to rightly understand sin; for were it not so evil, it would not be rewarded with such extreme punishment."

"What you say is very natural; but there is yet a better place to see the just reward due to sin. That place can be seen when you behold the blessed Son of God upon the cross. There we may see the terrible effects of sin. There we may see all of its true evil. For all the sufferings of the damned here are but the sufferings of created beings; but on the cross you see a suffering God."

"Surely," said I, "did justice and mercy triumph and kiss each other in that fatal hour. For justice was fully satisfied at the cross in the just punishment of sin; and mercy triumphed and was pleased there because salvation for poor sinners was completed. Oh, eternal praises to His holy name for ever, that His grace has made me willing to accept this salvation, and become an heir of glory! For I remember that some of those lost wretches here have lamented that when salvation had been offered to them, they had refused it. It was therefore grace alone that helped me to accept it."

At this point my shining guardian told me that he must bring me back to the earth again, and leave me there until it was time for me to enter my heavenly

reward. "Come," he said, "let us leave this place of sorrow and horror to the possession of their black inhabitants."

In a very little space of time I found myself on earth again. I was left at the very place where the angel had met me, when I had been thinking about committing suicide through the temptations of the devil who had tried to persuade me that there was no God. How I returned there, I do not know. But as soon as I was back there, the bright angel who had been my conductor said, "John, I must go now. I have another ministry to complete. Praise Him that sits upon the throne for ever, who has all power in heaven, earth, and hell. Praise Him for all the wonders of His love and grace that He has shown you in so short a time."

As I was going to reply, the shining angel disappeared and I was left alone. I spent some time considering the amazing things I had seen and heard, and then knelt down and prayed. When I rose up I began blessing and praising God for all His goodness.

When I returned back to my house, my family was very surprised to see how my face had so greatly changed. They looked at me as if they scarcely knew me. I asked them what they were staring at. They answered that it was the change in my face that caused it. I said, "How am I so greatly changed?"

They told me, "Yesterday you looked so depressed that you seemed the very image of despair. But now, your face appears radiantly beautiful, and seems full of perfect joy and satisfaction."

"If you had seen," I said, "what I have seen today, you would not be surprised at the change in me." Then I went into my room, took my pen and ink, and wrote down everything that I had heard and seen. And I hope that those who read this will be moved in their hearts just as I have been as I wrote everything down.