The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul

Part I: Chapters 1 through 10 (of 30)

By Philip Doddridge (1745)
Modern Paraphrase by Bill Tetreault © 2014

Paraphraser’s Note: This book* was instrumental in bringing William Wilberforce to faith in Christ in 1785 as he travelled across France with his friend, Isaac Milner. As you follow the author’s logical instructions in the Gospel, you will discover why Wilberforce’s faith in Christ was so active and why his life bore so much lasting fruit, including his role in abolishing the British slave trade in the early 1800’s. Readers are encouraged to read from the original work, which can readily be found online, including at books.google.com.

*It is important for readers to know that when the American Tract Society began its Evangelical Family Library series in the 1850s, they considered The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul as essential reading, publishing it as the #1 book in the series (the #2 book in the ‘Family Library’ series was William Wilberforce’s Practical View of Christianity). Additionally, Philip Doddridge is at the top of the list of author’s whose works were developed into tracts to be distributed to the American public through the amazing efforts of the ATS to influence the U.S. for Christ.
The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul  
by Philip Doddridge  
Chapter 1. The Introduction to the Work with Some General Account of its Design

1. WHEN we look at the people around us, it is amazing to consider that religion is so neglected, seeing that human beings are the only creatures on earth with the capacity for it.

2. Overall, religion is the sense of God in the soul, and the conviction of our obligation to and dependence upon him that results in prioritizing our actions in a way that we believe is pleasing to him. It is not necessary for us to search in distant lands for those who are strangers to religion. When we observe the conduct of those here in our own society, where our obligations to God should be overwhelming, does anyone have the audacity to say that religion is our highest priority and that it prevails in every life and reigns in every heart? On the contrary; profaning of the Lord’s name and ways, pride, selfishness, injustice, lying, addictions, greed, lack of interest in eternal things and so much more stare us in the face at every turn. It almost seems as if the majority of the population considers the neglect of religion to be a glory rather than a reproach! And where is the neighborhood or the happy family at which we can look closely and say “religion fills even this little circle”? And even though we may not see horrible crimes being committed and we may even see people attending church, the lives of those around us are still devoid of genuine spiritual and divine life; no appearance of love to God, reverence for his presence, desire to see his will accomplished, belief in the Gospel of salvation, desire to escape the penalty of sin or strong desire to receive the gift of eternal life which Christ promises to all who will receive him. Sadly, in spite of what the love of a friend or parent can accomplish and no matter how optimistic one may be to hope for the best, we must arrive at the unwilling conclusion that as much as there may be that is likeable about this person or favorite child, “religion dwells not in his or her heart”.

3. To someone who firmly believes the Gospel and views persons and things in the light of eternity, this is one of the saddest things in the world. In fact, all the other evils of human nature seem small when compared with this absence of real religion! Let this problem be cured
and the evils that prevail will be replaced by good. But if such a state of disbelief continues, it “brings forth fruit unto death” (Rom. 7:5) and those who are experiencing God’s mercies today must be swept away in the future to utter destruction and plunged beyond redemption into everlasting burnings.

4. There are many who are publicly and privately lamenting this sad state of things and who are appealing to God to revive the lagging cause of vital Christianity and piety and that is what motivates me to attempt this treatise in the midst of so many other cares and labors. For this I am willing to lay aside my efforts in the field of science that might earn a reputation in the academic world. For this I am willing to put aside complex words and make every effort to reach the hearts of readers of even the lowest reading level. For this I am willing to enter your home day to day (so to speak) and plainly share with freedom and seriousness those great things that make for your everlasting happiness so that you may be awakened to consider religion and be instructed in its nature and importance (or to make further progress in it if you have already been awakened through Divine grace). And it will not bother me if someone flippantly calls me a “fanatic”.

5. But since this is a serious business we are entering on, I ask that you would give me an active and serious hearing, that you take your time reading and thinking through the chapters and that you do both of us the favor of believing that what I share with you is motivated by sincerity and love and from a heart that would not give one moment’s unnecessary pain to the lowest of creatures, let alone to any human. I will share difficult concepts because this work will fall into the hands of some who have been devastated by the neglect of religion who will need to hear these basic truths.

6. The person who can look on the sorrows of his or her fellow humans without feeling compassion and at least wanting to try and help them doesn’t deserve to be called a human being. And a person would feel fulfilled in purpose if they were able to go around the world scattering happiness wherever they went or if they were able to help heal physical infirmities. We know that the early servants of Christ sympathized with those around them and were the instruments of healing to many, even to the extent of healing the deaf and the blind. But more importantly is the fact that those persons over the years who have
received the Gospel are now living forever in the joy of their Lord’s presence and so I consider it an honor to be able to share these things with you.

7. Now I want to give you an overview of the work: I will first try to awaken those who have been thoughtlessly unconcerned about the importance of religion (chapter 2) and to impart an immediate concern for it (chapter 3). I will labor to try to bring a conviction of guilt to his or her conscience (chapter 4) and to strip him or her of their vain excuses and flattering hopes (chapter 5). I will next show him or her the dreadful sentence that a righteous God pronounces against sinners (chapter 6) and endeavor to show how helpless and unable people are to deliver themselves from this sentence (chapter 7). And not wanting to leave them in that terrible situation, I will joyfully proclaim the glad tidings of pardon and salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord (chapter 8). Then I will explain how salvation is obtained (chapter 9), and as affectionately as I can, urge the sinner to accept it (chapter 10). [NOTE: At the time of this printing the modern paraphrase of chapters 11 – 30 is not complete. The reader is urged to use an online version of the original book. A brief overview of chapters 11 – 30 follows.]

8. I will then address those who feel that they are wasting their time by reading further and challenge them to stop reading (chapter 11) and turn my attention to the person who is overwhelmed by the sense of being such a great sinner that they feel they have no hope (chapter 12) and shall try to guide that person to understand what sincere repentance and faith are (chapter 13). This will be further illustrated by looking closer at what it means to develop a character based on Christ’s example (chapter 14) and which will naturally lead to showing the need of having the blessed Spirit assist us to become the kind of people the Lord would have us to be (chapter 15). We will then look closer at what it means to live the Christian life, including a look at the role of the conscience.

9. I will then point out difficulties and discouragements that will come against a young believer (chapter 16) and so that the person may lead a more fruitful life, urging a solemn dedication to God (chapter 17) to be confirmed by entering into the communion of the church (chapter 18). We will then look at how a daily course of personal growth can be embarked upon (chapter 19) and because this will be such a challenge, I will encourage the reader to heartily attempt to be consistent (chap. 20)
and shall caution him or her about various temptations and distractions that can result in the stunting of spiritual growth (chap. 21).

10. It would be a happy thing for the reader if they could avoid sinning, but because the weakness of human nature will sometimes prevail, we will look at how it is possible to quietly slip into a spiritual apathy (chap. 22) which can result in returning to deliberate sin (chap. 23). And we will look at the sad situation that may result if God seems to hide his face or withdraw his presence (chap. 24). We will then look at the great and heavy afflictions of life (chap. 25) which are a condition that the best of persons can expect, especially when they backslide from God and yield to their spiritual enemies.

11. While instances of this kind may be frequent, I trust there will be many others whose path, like the light of dawn, will “shine more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18) and therefore we will try to assist the Christian to learn to pass a true judgment on the growth of grace in his or her heart (chap. 26). And since nothing facilitates the advance of grace more than exercising a lively love to God and a holy joy in Him, we will remind the Christian of those mercies which tend to excite that love and joy (chap. 27) and work towards invigorating him or her in substantial efforts to be useful in this life (chap. 28). Supposing that they act accordingly, we will then try to illustrate the delight with which he or she may look forward to the solemn realities of death and judgment (chap. 29) and our final chapter will focus on accompanying (as it were) the believer through the narrow confines of that dark valley through which he or she will pass to glory and give them directions on how to honor God in their dying behavior (chap. 30). I therefore hope that through the Divine blessing and grace, I may be successful in leaving some readers with the triumphant views of death and eternity towards what it means to glorify God by a truly Christian life and death.

12. Because there is so much to cover, I will try to be concise; not discussing things as a preacher would in a sermon, but freely as if I were sitting with a friend I had the greatest love and respect for; someone whose character and circumstances are similar to those described in the next chapter. And when we have spoken for a while (seldom more than half an hour), I will step aside and leave him or her to mediate on what they have heard. Meanwhile, I here take the liberty to pray over my reader and this work and commend them to the Divine blessing.
Chapter 2. The Careless Sinner Awakened

1. As terribly as religion is neglected in the world, it still has some sincere disciples by whom “it is justified” (Matt. 9:18) even in this corrupted age. By Divine grace these have been brought to the knowledge of God in Christ, have faithfully devoted their hearts to him and are devoting their lives to His service. If I knew that they were the only people who would read these words, my work would be much shorter and easier.

2. Since it is probable that some of my readers may be among the many that neglect religion, my heart and my subject motivate me to speak to them and to you my reader (whoever you are) very plainly.

3. I ask you to not be angry at the name ‘sinner’. If doctors of souls do not speak plainly, they may murder those who they are supposed to cure and I will say no more than is absolutely necessary to convince you that you are one. I do not imagine that you are a wild person or that you never attend church or that you are a bad neighbor or that you are addicted to alcohol or to other things.

4. On the contrary, I will suppose that you believe that God exists and that Christianity is a revelation from him. In fact if you do not believe these two things, these writings are not intended for you. I will therefore suppose that you are a nominal Christian and not an atheist or an agnostic, that your reputation in the eyes of others is blameless, that you are friendly and that those who know you well agree that you are fair minded, kind, compassionate and generous. Yet with all this you may yet “lack that one thing” (Mark 10:21) on which your eternal happiness depends.

5. I ask you dear reader, to look seriously into your own heart and ask yourself “Am I truly religious? Is the love of God the governing principle of my life? Do I walk in His presence? Do I speak with Him daily through prayer and praise? And am I making His service my business and delight, knowing that He is my master and my father?”

6. My intent in these messages is to address only the person who answers “no” to the above questions. For as the Scripture soberly puts it, you “live without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12) and while in words and traditions you “own God, you deny him in your actions” (Titus 1:16), and generally behave as if you believed that God does not exist. You live in an unhappy state, since even your own heart condemns you.
Words cannot express the delight with which his children speak with him alone but you do not pray to him or praise him when you are by yourself. You spend time and energy doing plenty of other things for yourself, but if there was a space that you had to go to commune with Him, it would be empty most of the time! And so you go on from day to day, forgetting about God and acting like religion were nothing more than a dream. When you become sick or are in extreme danger, you may cry out to God for help, but you do not seek forgiveness of sin and the other blessings of the Gospel, even though you profess to believe in them. Your time and energy are divided between your responsibilities and your amusements and you may be motivated differently for a few days or hours when you read a serious book or hear a serious sermon, but then return again to being the same careless person you were before. You seem to be involved in an experiment to prove that there are no consequences to neglecting religion. Sometimes the words of those who encourage you to seek God come to mind, but you have found a way to be like one of those who the prophet Isaiah referred to when he said, “…your heart is waxed gross, your eyes are closed, and your ears heavy." (Isa. 6:10) You entertain every thought that will lead you away from something as ‘disagreeable’ as religion and the last time you were at a worship service, you were probably there for the wrong reason and didn’t really care what He thought!

7. Is it come to this then; that even though you say you believe in God, religion is not worth a thought or an hour’s serious consideration? What are you doing with your thoughts then? Or maybe I should be asking what it is that you are allowing to blind your mind?

8. The importance of the things I am speaking about are so clear that even a child should be able to understand them. And yet they are neglected by adults, many of whom would be offended if they were not considered to be among the ‘higher’ classes of society.

9. Your neglect of religion cannot diminish its importance. Please allow me (as one who has been awakened) to come to you and ask the question that the mariners asked Jonah: "What are you doing, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God." (Jonah 1:6) Maybe you don’t think it is important? Please answer me from your own conscience as one who must before long give an account to God and since you open your eyes each day and see the proofs of God’s reality all around you.
10. You know that he has created every nerve and vein in you and that he is the only one who could have formed you. You know that he is near you day and night and common sense tells you it is not you or anyone else that causes your heart to beat, your blood to circulate and your lungs to take in oxygen while you are both awake and asleep. Can you tell me any other source of life than the One who created the amazing functions of your body?

11. Just think how his care extends to all of life including heat and light, the atmosphere around the earth, the abundant resources and foods available for humans and animals and everything else that nourishes and delights us. Does not all of it declare that our Almighty Maker is actively nearby and is providing for and protecting us by his goodness and power?

12. It should then be clear that your Creator and Provider is with you at this very moment and that he is watching you: "He that formed the eye, shall not he see? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that teaches man knowledge," that gives him his rational faculties, and pours into his open mind all the light it receives, "shall he not know?" (Psa. 94:9,10) And can he not judge correctly if he has he given us the ability to know good and evil as well as right and wrong? So please don’t mute your conscience when it tells you that he is the Judge and that he passes judgments of infinite importance to all his creatures.

13. Does it make any sense at all that this great giver of life should be neglected by the very thinking beings he created and who were made both to seek, know and worship him? Does it make any sense that he should be forgotten and neglected by you? And do you think he has forgotten you? To think so would be absurd. You don’t need to go back to your helpless days of infancy and childhood or to remember the ‘close calls’ to know that he has been protecting and providing for you. You only have to remember the sleep you experienced last night, the health you have received this day and the mercies you are receiving this moment. Would you be so ungrateful to any human being who had done so much for you? Would you insult a kind parent or friend who had been generous to you for just a few months by not taking notice of him or her while you were in their presence or by not thanking or acknowledging his or her goodness in some way? A dog would put you to shame! If you feed and shelter it, it will love to be near you and follow you around
from place to place and if you return home after being absent, it will tell you by a thousand fond motions how much it rejoices to see you again. Even animals not as smart as dogs have a sense of the kindness of their owners and express gratitude in some way: "The" dull "ox knows its owner, and the" stupid "ass its master's crib." (Isa. 1: 3). How sad it is that those who consider themselves as God’s highest form of creation do not know how much they owe to him!

14. In reviewing these matters, I believe you will be ashamed and grieved if you have any sense of fairness. But in case you do not, let us look at it in a different light. Can you really be safe while you are acting this way? Do you not believe that there will be a future judgment and that there is an eternal and invisible world? As professed Christians, we all believe this. And believing this, do you not see that while you are wandering from God, “destruction and misery are in your way?” (Rom. 3:16) Will this pride and negligence benefit you? Will it excuse you from judgment or guard you from death? You may as well believe that shutting your eyes will protect you from an attacking lion or that turning your head will protect you from a sword or bullet about to hit you. Sooner or later you will have to think about these things (whether you want to or not), so thinking seriously about them now (with God’s help) is the only way to prevent your ruin.

15. Since I know that your conscience is already convicted I will not continue on this subject, although your pride may not be willing to admit it. To prove it I will ask you one more question; Would you for any price decide to dismiss all further thought of religion from this moment forward and be willing to accept the consequences of that neglect? I doubt that any person living would be bold enough to do so and most would tremble at the thought of it!

Chapter 3. The Awakened Sinner Urged to Immediate Consideration and Cautioned Against Delay

1. I hope my last thoughts helped awaken your convictions to determine to consider religion. But when will you do it? "Go your way and when it is convenient I will call for you," (Acts 24:25) was the language and ruin of unhappy Felix when he began to be convicted by the Apostle Paul’s reasonings. The devil did not urge him to give up all thoughts of repentance and reformation, only that he should put it off
until another time because he was so busy. The trick succeeded and Felix never had another chance.

2. Will you put me off in the same way, reader? For your sake and for the sake of your perishing and immortal soul, I will not accept the excuse that you will take up the subject in a year or a week or even tomorrow. As an eager friend would do, I am asking you to consider the subject right now. But if you say “I will think about these things tomorrow,” I will have little hope for you and will conclude that all that you have read until now has been in vain.

3. If it seems strange that I am asking you to consider the subject immediately, I do so because the subject is so noble, excellent, rational and wise that it seems you should jump at the opportunity of such a great offer and be upset with yourself for not responding something like this much sooner: "May I lift up my eyes and my soul to God. May I devote myself to him. May I right now begin a friendship with him—an everlasting friendship based on a security, delight, and glory that will be mine.”

Now shall I draw back and say, “Nevertheless, let me not begin this friendship too soon: let me live at least a few weeks or a few days longer without God in the world?” It would make much more sense to say; “O my soul, what garbage have I been feeding on while my heavenly Father has been forgotten about! Should I prolong my days of misery and poverty?” Thoughts like these will surely lead you to choose an immediate return to God and not prolong starving and harming your own soul. But who are you that you should plan on living a long time? "What is your life? Is it not even as a vapor that appears for a short time, and then vanishes?” (Jam. 4:14) And what security do you have that you can count on any length of life, so that you would gamble your soul on it? I suppose you might say that you are in the blossom of your youth and that you see many around you who are more than twice your age and they are still alive and don’t see the need to attend to religion.

4. You speak that way because you are looking at people who are alive! Let your mind return to the graves in which you have left some of your friends. Not so long ago you saw them alive with their hopes and dreams. Some of them would have thought that a friend was crazy for having interrupted their fun to talk with them about death and eternity, yet they were only a step away from both of these realities. Since then
you have seen their corpses (or at least their coffins) and probably carry about the memory of their funerals, while their once active, perhaps beautiful bodies are now decaying in the dust as helpless and worm-eaten as if they had died at 80 years old. And what is more important, whether their souls were ready for it or not, they have made their appearance before God and are now permanently in either Heaven or Hell. Let me ask you if it would be a miracle or strange thing if you died suddenly? How do you know that you will not soon (or even today) die in an accident? Can you guarantee that you will be able to think and read and reason in the future if you do not pay attention to what you are reading in these lines? It will be a terrible thing if you find yourself torn away from a world that has consumed all your desires and affections and find yourself in a state that you could never be persuaded to think about or even to spend one hour preparing for; surprised in the presence of a God that you have forgotten! The thought of such a scene should fill you with horror and anxiety. It is amazing that under such circumstances you are not fully occupied with the shortness of this life and your own fear of death. To take God lightly after this discussion would be an additional insult to him which might (on top of all your other insults) prove fatal. And you should not expect that God will do anything less than cut you off immediately and you will end up serving as an example of thoughtlessness to other thoughtless persons who are still alive.

5. Will you run this desperate risk and if so, why? Do you think religion will become less necessary just because you delay? You know that it will not and that whatever God demands now he will demand in 30 (or more) years. God has already fixed the method by which he will pardon sinners through the Gospel and he will not change it. And if he will not change it, how can people change it? You may not like to think about repenting or humbling yourself before God to receive righteousness and true life from his free grace in Christ and you may not like the idea of returning to God as an obedient child, but will the Author of Salvation change these things and create a new Gospel that promises eternal life and salvation to those who trust in their own selves, yet call themselves Christians and participate in a few rituals?

6. Or if God’s demands remain the same (as they surely will), do you think that it will be easier to change your mind later? In fact your mind and your conscience will both become more hardened. If you were about
to die, would you say “let me just get a little worse and then I will call the ambulance”? Of course not: it is only when it comes to matters of the soul that men think so foolishly!

7. It will only be by the work of the Holy Spirit that you will be able to come to your senses after thoughts like these. Yet after you have so shamefully abused His reaching out to you, He amazingly continues to speak to your heart even now and if you feel any regrets about your past while you are reading this, it is a sign that He has not abandoned you. But you do not know how many more opportunities your hard heart will have, since this could be the day that He calls you to immediate judgment. And could there be anything more terrible? It actually could be worse if God were to say: “let the one who has despised me live in the midst of prosperity and continue under the powerful preaching of the Gospel so that he or she may harden their heart and be seven times guiltier than they were before. I will not give them the grace to think seriously about their ways and they will go from bad to worse until death and destruction seize them in an unexpected hour”.

8. If you think the above is an unusual case, I am afraid it is far too common and that there are too few congregations where the word of God is faithfully preached. On the contrary the word of God is actually despised in some congregations, even by those whom it once touched and awakened.

9. I cannot say how he will deal with you, my reader; whether he will cut you off immediately, whether he will allow your heart to become harder or whether his grace will allow you to consider your ways and return to him. Nothing is too hard for his Almighty grace; not even to transform a block of stone into a saint. But I am confident when I say that if you delay any longer, the time will come when you will be bitterly sorry for that delay and you will either grieve your foolishness here or curse your foolishness in hell. Then you will wish that you had gone there sooner because you ignored so many mercies all around you which will only make your punishment seem so much the greater.

10. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the blood of your immortal and perishing soul, I urge you not to delay even an hour longer. Instead of “sleeping” (Prov. 6:4) and neglecting this critical concern, “turn unto the Lord” before you leave the place you are in now, fall on your knees in his sacred presence and pour out your heart to him…
Chapter 4. The Sinner Arraigned and Convicted

1. As I attempt to lead you to true religion and not a shallow form of it, I know that the only way I can be successful is by taking you through the path of deep humiliation. So, believing that the Lord has helped you to take into consideration what you have read so far, I will now attempt to help you feel the weight of your guilt before God, because unless you are deeply convinced of your guilt, you will neglect the benefits of the Gospel and your soul will be destroyed. I know that many die in sin, without feeling or wanting to admit in their hearts that they are sinners. So I will deal faithfully with you and although it may seem painful, I will not stop leading you on this journey.

2. Please allow me to consider myself as a lawyer for God for a few moments; as one employed by Him to cross examine you and to charge you with nothing less than being a rebel and traitor against the ruler of Heaven and earth. Even if you occupied the most influential position in the world, you would still need to be told plainly that you have broken the laws of the King of Kings; that you are guilty and that you deserve immediate punishment.

3. Your conscience tells you that you were born into the arena of God’s creation and His unchangeable rules for living life to the fullest. And because you are able to think, to reason and to know God’s laws, you have no excuses for not following them. And you know how true it is that you have not continually and carefully followed his laws.

4. Will you deny this and try to claim that you are innocent? Remember too, that it must be a complete innocence and a perfect righteousness or it will do you no good except to prove that you may not be quite as bad as someone else and that you will not have quite as hot a place in hell as they will have. Will you be able to plead anything else but “guilty”? Solomon said that in his days "there was not a just man upon earth, who did good and sinned not;" (Eccl. 7:20) and the apostle Paul that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And do you think the world has gotten any better since the days of Solomon and Paul?

5. Let’s suppose that you are not guilty of those gross acts of immorality which are usually against human law as well as God’s law. I am quite sure that your own heart will convict you of pride, sensuality, complaining, wasting a good deal of your time, misusing the talents God
has given you, pretending to worship Him while your mind is filled with other things and much more. Even if you fell short in one area, it is as if you had sinned in all of them and it is as if you had committed 10,000 wrongs. But in reality you have done wrong more than 10,000 times. When you stop and consider your sins of omission (the things that you should have done that you did not do or when you “failed to do good when it was in the power of your hand to do it” Prov. 3:27) and all the times you neglected worshipping and praying to God when you could have and all the times when you could have brought honor to God but did not and all the times you have disregarded the needs and bondages of your fellow humans, then the number of your sins will grow to a number beyond being counted and you will be forced to cry out "My sins are more than the hairs of my head." (Psalm 40:12)

6. And is it a small thing that you have disregarded the authority of the God of heaven, violated His law and then claimed that you were just being careless? How much more terrible will your guilt be when in so many instances you have knowingly and willfully sinned? I seriously ask you to ask your own soul “Against Who have you tried to make yourself the one in charge and against whom have you lifted up your rebellious hand and against whose law have you been so bold as to trample on? Whose friendship have you rejected? That of a human being like yourself or one who can only “kill the body, and then can do no more?” Luke 12:4

No, you would not have dared to treat an earthly prince as you have treated the “King Eternal, Immortal and Invisible” (1 Tim. 1:17). No one could have paid you enough money to be as disrespectful to an earthly ruler as you have been towards the King before whom the angels bow continually. When His will is made known to them, they never complain or murmer! So who do you think you are to oppose or stand against Him; the one who by a simple act of His will can strip you of all your possessions, cut you off from every hope and end your existence in this world? And what is much worse, he could forever assign you to the worst agonies imaginable. Well, this is the God whose face you have spit in and in whose very presence you have broken the laws that he has given you for your own benefit. And this is the God who you stand before as a convicted criminal; convicted not of one or two offenses, but of tens of thousands of them and of a lifestyle of rebellion towards Him
that you have been carrying on pretty much since you were born. Will you deny these charges?

7. On top of this, your burden of guilt becomes greater still if you were born into and lived in a culture where you heard about the things of God and then discarded them as if they were nothing. You did not do or practice those things that you heard from an early age and so are also guilty of those sins of omission. “Have you not known? Have you not heard?” (Isaiah 30.28) And on top of all this, knowing that there were consequences for your own disobedience, you may have also encouraged others to pridefully disregard God’s ways.

8. Again, if you keep in mind the way you failed to recognize God’s perfect mercy and love towards you, your guilt becomes even greater. Who do you think allowed you to arrive safely in this world out of your mother’s womb? Who protected you in a way that no parent could while you were an infant? Who gave you your brain and your mind to be able to think and speak and express yourself? Who has met your physical needs (including healing your wounds and protecting you from horrible diseases) in a way that is totally amazing (if you stop and think about it)? And as you look around at all ‘your’ possessions, is there anything you have that He did not give you or allow you to have? In light of all of the above, if you have ever failed to give God credit or have credited any other source than the goodness and kindness of God for any of the above blessings, you are guilty of the worst form of rebellion and ingratitude.

9. Hasn’t even your own conscience told you repeatedly that you are falling short in so many ways of the life that God wants you to live? I know a man who was considered by many to be one of the happiest people alive. In the middle of all the shallowness of ‘partying’, he saw a dog come into the room and actually said to himself, “I wish that I could be that dog!” Haven’t you ever felt a bit like that? Has your conscience been so “burned with a hot iron” (1 Tim 4:2) that it has never been able to cry out in pain for all the wrongs you have done? Hasn’t your conscience warned you repeatedly of the fatal consequences of not listening to it? These warnings are in fact the voice of God speaking to you through his representative (conscience) that he has put within you. And when the eternal sentence of death is executed upon you, you will hear that voice speak to you more loudly and clearly than you ever have
and the sound of it will ring in your ears through all eternity because you did not listen to it while you were still alive.

10. In addition to all of this, if God has been speaking to your heart directly (apart from your conscience) and you have not listened, your guilt is even greater. While under the Law of Moses, the Holy Spirit spoke to the Jewish people, or else Stephen would not have been able to say that “they had always resisted him.” (Acts 7:51) And haven’t you yourself experienced some unseen influence on your mind urging you to think about and try religion and warning you that there would be consequences if you neglected that unseen voice? Then why didn’t you spread out the sail of your soul and allow it to catch God’s heavenly breeze? But instead you carelessly allowed that voice to be neglected and drowned out! God would have been perfectly justified to have said of you; “My Spirit will no more strive.” (Gen. 6:3) And in fact if you feel no regret or sorrow about your neglect of God in the past while reading these challenging words, this may already be the case.

11. Have you ever cried out to God in some difficult situation and promised him that if He got you out of it that you would stop sinning and live for Him? Well, he heard and helped you, but what about your promise to Him? Did you actually stop sinning and live for Him? If not, then this guilt is added to all that has been mentioned before.

12. Think deeply about how you will defend yourself from all these charges. Prepare your excuses and line up your witnesses. No matter what you do, your excuses will be so weak that even a fellow sinner will be able to see through them. But your conscience already knows that you will be convicted of the worst offense; “You have not humbled your heart, but have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven.” (Daniel 5:22, 23). You have violated His laws, been ungrateful for his innumerable mercies, disregarded his speaking to you through your conscience, resisted and grieved his Spirit and done evil as well as not done good when you had the opportunity. Your guilt is greater than many people who are already in hell and it is most astonishing that God has allowed you to live to read and think about these matters. I urge you not to waste any of the little time you may have left, but to humbly, immediately and attentively consider these things.
Chapter 5. The Sinner Stripped of His Vain Pleas

1. My last words left the sinner in alarming and pitiful circumstances; a criminal convicted before God and condemned by a holy law that cannot allow even the smallest excuse. If this holy law pronounces death and a curse against every single act of disobedience, how much more does it pronounce death and a curse against your accumulated acts of rebellion! I hope some of my readers will see that they are guilty and not try making excuses, because admitting one’s guilt before God is the most decent and sensible thing that anyone can do. At the same time, knowing the treachery of a sinful and corrupted heart, I know it makes excuses and turns in other directions to try to persuade itself and others that “if I am guilty in some things, I am not really as bad as the law is making me out to be and that there are good things about my heart that will balance out the bad”. Such a vague and hidden attitude can break the force of conviction and prevent one from humbling him or herself before God (the happy sign of approaching deliverance). So we will look closer and I will ask you what plea or excuse you have to offer and why you should be exempted from falling into the hands of God’s justice?

2. How you will answer me is not important because in a short while I will also be subjected to the same process of judgment, but how will you answer the Judge? If you were at this moment before Him, would you multiply vain words and spout cheap excuses that would only increase your guilt? Surely just the thought of being in His presence must outweigh a thousand pitiful excuses that lead astray those who “trust in words that cannot profit” (Jer. 7:8) and lean upon broken reeds (Isaiah 36:6).

3. You will not be able to plead that you are “descended from pious parents”. If that was your condition, it is really a shame that you have abused it and “forsaken the God of your fathers” (2Chron. 7:22). Ishmael was descended from Abraham and Esau was the son of Isaac, yet they were both cut off from the blessing to which they thought they had a claim because they were “children”. The Lord himself clearly declares that many of the children of the kingdom shall be shut out and that those who are shut out and will be recognizable by their loud weeping and furious “gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8: 11, 12) while others from distant parts will enter in.
4. Nor will you be able to plead that you had “thought about religion” since this will only increase your condemnation! Since you have broken God’s law, to have looked into it and to have considered it makes you guiltier than ever. Did you think that religion was only something to be thought about? If it made sense to you, then why didn’t you practice it? And if you knew how important it was, why didn’t you go deeper into it? You would have been better off if you could plead total ignorance. But if by your own confession, you have "known your Master's will, and have not done it," you bear witness against yourself, that you deserve to be "beaten with many stripes." (Luke, 12:47)

5. Nor will you be able to say “that you held the right doctrines of religion”. Understanding something and doing it are two different things in God’s eyes. In "believing there is one God," you have done well; but the "devils also believe and tremble." (Jam. 2:19) In believing Christ to be the Son of God and the Holy One, you have done well too; but the unclean spirits made this confession; (Luke 4:34, 41) and yet they are "reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude, ver. 6) And will you place any confidence in what might be pleaded by the infernal spirits as well as by you?

6. But perhaps you may think of pleading that "you have actually done something in religion." You joined those societies where such articles of faith were professed, and such forms of worship were practiced: and you showed yourself loyal by your good attendance, your zeal for the cause, and by your sincerity. I am afraid that your loyalty to these groups will increase your guilt rather than decrease it. The One that searches your heart knows what your motives were. Perhaps He sees that it was hypocritical for you to fly the flag of religion while you actually counted His name and His glory as next to nothing. If that is the case you are doubly guilty because you also pretended that He did not see your heart. Or maybe the motivation with which you have been "contending for the faith and worship which was once delivered to the saints," (Jude, ver. 3) is misplaced and may be rooted in pride or bitterness of spirit so that your enthusiasm might come from a desire to argue with others or from a secret desire to condemn. You may even be guilty of driving people away from the very Lord to which you are supposed to be leading them. And do you think this will help you when you are judged? It will prove quite the opposite.
7. But even if your enthusiasm for religious appearance has been successful, what help will that provide when so many instances of disobedience and of your neglecting of God are recorded against you in His journal? And while you focused on relatively unimportant things, why did you forget and neglect the great and practical doctrines of the Gospel? And while you have judged others for their unfaithfulness and disobedience to the Lord, are you not just as guilty and will you not be “condemned by your own mouth”?

8. If you had completely obeyed the law, that plea might have been valid, but as we have proved above and as your own conscience testifies, you have continually broken the law. And if the works of mercy you claim had proceeded from a sincere love to God and a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you would not have thought of pleading them in any other way except as evidence of the profound work of the Redeemer who gave his lifeblood for you. Such a claim would have been accompanied by such deep humility and considerations of the Divine holiness and glory, that instead of pleading any works of your own before God, you would have asked His pardon for the mixture of sinful shortcomings accompanying the very best of them. And as a stranger to this humbling principle, it is absolutely necessary that you should be told that neither honesty, nor soberness nor being a good neighbor nor anything else will excuse you before God when he looks closely and perfectly at all the actions and thoughts that have ever been yours. You have not been a drunkard, an adulterer or a robber so you are off to a good start. You stand before a righteous God who will not condemn you for drunkenness, adultery or robbery. But you have forgotten Him who is your Parent and Benefactor; you have not respected Him and have neglected His speaking to you as well as you speaking to him through prayer. Even more, you have trampled upon the blood of His Son and all the eternal blessings that he purchased for you with His death and it is for these that you are judged and condemned. And as for anything that looked like “good” in your own life and actions, the doing of it has been its own reward. The goodness, kindness and generosity of God towards you are a thousand times greater than any “good” you could have ever imagined doing for another human. So you stand guilty as charged for a thousand offenses against God for which you have no excuse and the good works in which you have been so ready to trust will no more clear
you of those charges than a person who pleads they were helpful to their neighbors when they stand convicted of high treason against a king.

9. You may be saying, “I did not expect all this or expect that the consequences of neglecting religion would be so fatal.” And I would ask you why you did not take it more seriously and why did you allow the vanity of your heart to minimize this critical reality of life in the face of such powerful declarations in the Word of God? If you would have considered his character as the supreme Governor of the world, you would have seen how necessary and right this Day of Judgment would be. If you had really believed the authority of the Scriptures, every page would have taught you to expect it. What were you thinking when you ‘forgot’ to think about religion? What were you doing that kept you so busy that you could not think about the most important thing in life? Your own conscience tells you that there have been times when life has been difficult, but you treated religion like an enemy, refused to think about it and even set up barriers to it, as if it were an enemy trying to invade your personal territory. Knowing that you were on the defensive and were not thinking, God sent you “line upon line, precept upon precept” (Isaiah 28:10) in such plain language that you didn’t even need to study to understand it. He sent you both afflictions and mercies to wake you out of your sleep and when finally you awakened you laid on your bed of ‘rest’ again. And now, as pleasing as your dreams may be, “you must lie down in sorrow” (Isaiah 50:11) and the thinking process that should have been your friend has now overtaken you as a tormentor since you would not allow it to be your friend!

10. You might be saying to yourself: “Here is an excuse I can use: I was compelled to do the things I did because the circumstances I was in were overwhelming and I could not resist the temptations.” This excuse will get you nowhere. In fact if you just stop and think about it you are saying that you are guilty of wrong doing and deserving of punishment. And that is just the thing God is required to do by His own standards. But if you cannot admit this and you imagine that it is unjust to punish you for something that was unavoidable, I would agree with you. But in the scenario we just described, you had choices in how to respond and your mind is filled with confusion if you think that difficulties make sinning unavoidable. You would never imagine that someone who robbed you and then set your house on fire could get away with saying
that he or she could not stop themselves from doing those things and I am convinced that you will have more integrity than to try to offer such a ridiculous excuse to God when you are judged before Him. Let’s take it a step further. Imagine watching a condemned criminal dying with these words on his lips: "O God! It is true that I robbed and murdered my fellow creatures; but you know that I had to do it; my mind was irresistibly programmed to do so and I may as well have tried to shake the foundations of the earth as to have resisted the impulses and temptations of robbery and murder". You are probably disgusted by such a pitiful excuse that stands opposite to the most basic logic!

11. I hope you can see the uselessness of all your excuses. If the best of them can be silenced by another human, how much more by Him who searches all minds perfectly? So what can you do when you stand convicted in the presence of God? The best thing you can do is to keep quiet under an inward sense of your inexcusable guilt and prepare yourself to hear the sentence which His law pronounces against you. And if you do not allow the Gospel to deliver you from the terrible sentence of the law, you must be prepared to experience the penalty for your sins and feel the terror of impending judgment before you will seek that Gospel for deliverance.

**Chapter 6. The Sinner Sentenced**

1. I will speak once more in the name of God your Almighty Judge and if the message is not getting through I will try to speak more clearly, although it might seem terrifying as well.

2. You have been convicted and your pleas have been silenced or overruled. In the sight of God and your own conscience, you have nothing more to say before your judgment is pronounced. Gather as much courage as you can to hear your sentence. I will now show you how He speaks from Scripture and how he will speak to you, reminding you that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not even the smallest part of my word shall ever pass away." (Matt. 5:18)

3. God’s law speaks to everyone equally as well as to you. It is perfectly consistent when it comes to both the smallest and the greatest sins and this is its language: "Cursed is everyone that does not continue to do all things that are written in the book of the law." (Gal. 3:10) This statement applies exactly to you and your conscience knows it. Besides
knowing that you are far from “doing all” that you should have done, the things that you did do fill your memory and thoughts. You know that you are condemned by the law and that you are “cursed with a curse” (Malachi 3:9). Even more, "all the curses which are written in the book of the law" are pointed at you. (Deut. 29:20) God may execute any of them on you at any moment and though you don’t feel any of them now, if infinite mercy does not intervene, in a short while they will “come into your bowels like water” till you burst and they will penetrate “like oil to your bones”. (Psalm 109.18)

4. The Lord says, “The soul that sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18.4). You have sinned and therefore you are under the sentence of death. What will your end be? The agonies of death will overtake you so that your soul will be torn away from your dying body and your body will "return to the dust from where you came." (Psa. 104:29) But this is just the beginning of the sentence; kind of like the chains or shackles being taken off a prisoner when he or she is about to be led out to be executed.

5. The Lord says "The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God." (Psalm 9:17) Their multitudes and their power shall be no defense to them. They shall be driven into hell together--into that flaming prison which divine vengeance has prepared for them and for others. "He has made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone will kindle it;" (Isa. 30:33) and the flaming torrent shall flow within it so fast, that it shall be turned into a sea of liquid fire; or, as the Scripture also expresses it, "a lake burning with fire and brimstone" forever. (Rev. 21:8) "This is the second death," and the death to which you are doomed according to the word of God.

6. Does God speak this in vain? Does it need to be clearer? Although it seems like it may be delayed, God will execute judgment. You know very well that "he has appointed a day in which he will judge the “whole world in righteousness by that Man who he has ordained.” (Acts 17:31) When God judges the world, he will judge both you and me. And "knowing the terror of the Lord," (2 Cor. 5:11) that I may “deliver my own soul,” (Ezek. 33:9) I will put these efforts into delivering yours as well.

7. I repeat this solemn warning: You will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Co. 5.10). You will see His wonderful appearance and
the trumpet of the archangel will shake your very soul; and if nothing else can wake you up, the flames of a dissolving world will.

8. Do you really think that Christ’s final appearance will only be to recover his people from the grave and to raise them to glory and happiness? Well, if you believe there will be a “resurrection of the just”, you also have to believe there will be a “resurrection of the unjust” (Acts 24:15) and that he will separate all the dead that are risen “one from another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats”. (Matt. 25:32) And do you imagine that he will make an example of only a few of the ‘worst’ sinners or that his final and perfect verdict is of no importance? It is just the opposite; the Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy and compassion has given us a preview of what will happen on that day with words that are worthy of being written on every heart: “The King,…shall say to those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt 25:34) These words have a power that should inspire every humble Christian and fill him or her “with joy unspeakable and full of glory”. (1 Pet. 1:8) To be called “blessed of the Lord” and to the immediate inheritance of a kingdom that is so glorious and complete, created by and filled with God’s eternal love! This is the lively and glorious hope to which we are “begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead”. (1 Peter 1:3) But it is a hope from which you are excluded and I think that you may be grieved enough to say to yourself, “These blessed words that Christ will speak are not to me and for me there is no beautiful kingdom prepared”. But it is more than that; in fact you will receive the terrible opposite if you continue in the path you are on. He will say to you and to all the rebels of the earth (both great and small) “Depart from me you who are cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41) Stop and meditate on the importance of these words!

9. He will say, “Depart” and you will be disgracefully driven from the presence of him who is the source of life and blessedness; you shall “depart” for you have broken God’s law and remain under its abiding curse and you will be accounted as the most detestable and miserable of all creation. You shall go “into the fire”; Consider that it is not a fire that will consume you in just a few moments with terrible pain, but this is the fire that burns forever and which is described with terms like “where the
worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.” Remember that it was not initially prepared for you, but for “the devil and his angels”, those terrible rebels who were immediately doomed to it upon their rebellion. And since you have joined in rebellion against your maker and have even despised the Savior (who was not offered to them) you must sink so much deeper into that flaming ruin and dwell forever with those rebels who will also be your horrible tormentors.

10. And do you think that He who pronounces this judgment will not follow through on it. He could not be a judge if he did otherwise! And he will execute it at the same time it is given: “the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment”; (Matt. 25:46) and you will be driven away with the wretched multitudes and plunged with them into eternal ruin. The gates of hell will be open to receive you and shall shut forever after you and will be kept, preventing all hope or possibility of escape forever.

11. And now “prepare to meet the Lord your God” (Amos 4:12). Summon all your courage to experience the execution of such a sentence for “he will not meet you as a man” (Isa. 47:36) or as one who changes his mind when he is about to do what he said he would do. He will meet you as a God whose purposes and plans are as immovable as his throne and I testify in his name this day that he will speak and act accordingly and that if you continue in your rebellion and unbelief you will be eternally undone.

Chapter 7. The Helpless State of the Sinner Under Condemnation

1. You have heard God’s sentence from his sacred and unchanging word. Now won’t you make an attempt to be delivered from the terrible scenario of eternal death? In this world, if a criminal has the least chance of escaping his punishment, he focuses all his attention on that possibility. If he thinks a friend can help him, he pleads with that friend. And when he is before the judge, he may keep pleading for mercy and have to be dragged away by court guards.

2. Will you not direct your thoughts this day to how you can be delivered? Take your time and consider this critical question carefully. If you have the ability to help yourself or some secret resource you can use, then do it. If you have any friends in the world that can deliver you, then call upon them to help you. But as you and I both know, their efforts will be hopeless.
3. God’s justice has been insulted and do you have any way to make it right? If you stood before the Lord, would you have appropriate questions like: “How shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings and young calves? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil…shall I give the blood of my firstborn for my sins, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:6,7) The answer is “No” since you have offended and sinned against a Being of infinite majesty. If your sins are to be forgiven and wiped clean, it must be by a different kind of blood than that which flows in the veins of an animal or person.

4. Will you try to figure out how to pay for your sins? How would you pay for them? By the difficulties you suffer in this brief life? Is God’s justice to be taken so lightly that a few difficult days in your life should satisfy his holy demands? Do you think you will be able to ‘work some kind of a deal’ when you are already dead and have crossed the borders into eternity? That will be totally impossible!

5. If you think that reforming yourself and becoming more responsible will be enough to secure deliverance from the sentence that is upon you, then your obedience to his laws and plans for your life must be perfect and spotless in every way; No inconsistency, forgetfulness or the tiniest hint of sin mixed in with your motivations or actions. And not just for one hour of one day, but for each second, minute, hour and day of the rest of your life. I really don’t think you would succeed for very long in such an experiment! But even if you could be successful (which of course you can’t) would your future perfect obedience be able to wipe away your past sins? Looking at it another way, if you promise not to borrow money from someone you already owe money to, would they cancel all your past debts just because you say you won’t borrow more money from them in the future? And would you presume to make such a ridiculous proposal to God?

6. But let’s move on to something else because time passes on and death and judgment are closer now than they were just a few minutes ago. So what can save you from these terrible scenes? Can the world save you? That elusive lifestyle to which you have been giving so much of your time and energy? The world will totally desert you when you need it most. And besides, you cannot bring one of its enjoyments into
eternity: not the smallest token to remember it by, if you even wanted to remember such a treacherous friend!

7. And when you are dead or dying, can your sinful companions save you? Even if one of them wanted to “give God a ransom for you” (Ps. 49.7) their sacrifice could not prevent you from dying and going to hell. And how could they actually help you when they are overwhelmed with their own condemnation?

8. You also know that the powers of darkness have no interest or ability to help you. They have been working and watching for your destruction and if you have been collaborating with them, the end of that affiliation will be the same as the judgment upon those rebellious spirits; the fire “prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt 25:41)

9. And can the angels save you? When then sentence has already gone out against you, for them to petition against the judgment of God on your behalf would be an act of rebellion, which would be disgusting as well as an impossibility for these holy and excellent creatures. And when the final judgment against you is made known, instead of interceding in vain for a wretched criminal, they would rather prepare to execute the wise and just judgment of the holy Lord of Lords and King of Kings. And as hard as it is to believe, the servants of Christ on this earth who now most tenderly love you and affectionately seek you salvation, will put their amen to it. Right now their innermost beings yearn over you, their eyes pour out tears on your account and they plead with God for you that by any means you may “be plucked as a firebrand out of the burning.” (Amos 4:11) But since you are not listening to their words and message, what should they pray for you except that you will hit rock bottom and realize that neither you nor any created being is able to save you and that you will yield yourself to God in humility and brokenness of heart so that he may have compassion on you and direct you to the only true means of rescue?

Chapter 8. News of Salvation by Christ Brought to the Convinced and Condemned Sinner

1. Dear Reader; the great design of the Gospel is to fill the heart with sentiments of love and to delight in the happiness of others and not in their pain. It is impossible for a person to be a Christian and take pleasure in the distress of others and I have taken no pleasure in sharing
the above chapters; having felt a tender regret and wishing that it had not been necessary to place things in such a severe and painful light. But now we are about to enter a part of the work that gives me the greatest pleasure. I have been showing you that if you live in a state of impenitence and sin, you are condemned by God’s righteous judgment and have no possibility of delivering yourself. But I will not leave you in this sad state.

2. Arise my dejected soul; you are prostrate in the dust before God and trembling under the terror of his righteous sentence; it is my role to tell you that “though you destroyed yourself, your help is in God” (Hosea 13:9) I bring you “tidings of great joy”, (Luke 2:10) which I hope will revive your heart; even the tidings of salvation by the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer; that God “is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not holding people’s sins against them.” (2 Cor. 5:19)

3. This is the best news that God ever sent to his creatures and even though you may have heard it a thousand times, I will share it with you again with simplicity and plainness as if you had never heard it. It will be like a new message to you if you actually feel the truth of it for the first time. And I will be careful to explain things so that no one will be able to plead before God that although they lived in a Christian country, they were never plainly taught the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life, by whom alone we come unto the Father.” (John 14:6)

4. I testify unto you this day that the God of heaven and earth, seeing in advance the demise of the human race, determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation with us rather than to condemn us to universal damnation. And he determined that everyone should hear about the life and glory he desires for people to experience through the amazing message of the Gospel; that he determined to send his own Son, “the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person” (Heb. 1:3) as a sacrifice for our sins.

5. And so the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in human flesh; and after he had experienced all the injuries, ingratitude and malice that people could inflict, he voluntarily “submitted himself to death, even the death of the cross”.(Phil. 2:8) and having been “delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification”. (Rom 4:25) After his resurrection he
continued long enough on the earth to give his followers the most convincing evidences of it, and then “ascended into heaven in their sight;” (Acts 1:9-11) and sent down his Spirit from there to enable those who believed in him “to preach the Gospel” in the most powerful way, that all who believe in it may be saved by the power and grace of its divine Author, who is “the same yesterday, today and forever”. (Heb. 13:8)

6. This is the Gospel I now proclaim to you with the sincere desire that “this very day will be salvation to your soul”. (Luke 19:9) And just as surely as you are reading these words, please know that the incarnate Son of God was “made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men”, (I Cor. 4:9) his back torn by the whip, his head with thorns, his limbs stretched out on a rack and nailed to the accursed tree. And in this miserable condition his cruel, blood thirsty enemies hung him who was the most perfect, innocent, useful life that ever existed on this planet. And not having the support of the Divine presence in the midst of his sufferings, in the distress of his spotless and holy soul he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46)

7. Look to the dreadful and yet delightful death of your dear Redeemer and ask your heart, “Do I believe that Jesus suffered and died like this?” and “Why did he die?” I will answer in God’s own words, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we are healed; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin; for the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. 53:5, 6, 10) And “Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 13:38) And Christ was made to be an offering to pay for our sins “though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21) “To you is the word of salvation sent” (Acts 13:26) and to you reader, the blessings of it are now offered and that offer is infinitely reliable. Remember that on the day of judgment it is not the fact that you broke the Law of that will cause the army of your sins to will rise up to condemn you, but the fact that you had an opportunity to receive the total forgiveness won for you by the death of Jesus Christ and rejected both the giver and the forgiveness. “He who believes on the son has everlasting life” (John 3:36) and “he shall never come into
condemnation” (John 5:24) “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:1) And although you have been a great sinner, you can rejoice in the assurance that “where sin abounds, grace much more abounds” and that “where the sin that results in death has reigned, righteousness resulting in eternal life will reign through Jesus Christ our Lord”. (Rom. 5:21) That righteousness (which you will receive when you believe on him) will not only break the chains of sin that are dragging you at a furious pace to eternal ruin, but it will clothe you with the robes of salvation and set you on a throne of eternal glory where you will live forever in complete joy among the royalty of Heaven’s citizens. And there will not be a single mark or stain on you by which anyone would ever know that you had been under wrath and a curse unless it be a song of praise that you sing “to the Lamb that was slain and has washed you from your sins with his own blood.” (Rev. 1:5)

8. Nor is it necessary for you to bring any good works to him in order to gain his acceptance and be released from your guilt (although good works will be produced as a product of your faith in him). On the authority of the word of God I tell you this day that if you sincerely believe in the name of the Son of God, you will be taken under his care and included among his sheep to whom he wonderfully declares, “he will give them eternal life and they will never perish.” (John 10:28) So you do not need to say, “Who will go to up to heaven or who will go down into the pit for me? For the word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart.” (Rom. 10:6,7,8) So I leave you with this joyful message and this faithful saying “worthy of all acceptation” (1 Tim. 1:15) and with the Gospel that is my life and which will also be yours if you accept it.

Chapter 9. A More Particular Account of the Way by Which Salvation is to be Obtained

1. I now imagine you coming to me dear reader with the question that the Jews once asked our Lord: “What do we need to do in order to do the works of God?” (John 4:28) Or in other words, “What do I need to do to take advantage of the salvation that I am told that Christ has secured?” I will answer this critical question as carefully as possible, knowing that I am accountable to God for the way I answer.
2. And to follow the best examples, I must preach salvation to you as “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). This is what the apostles preached and which no one can change unless they are willing to put their soul at risk.

3. Believing that by this time you are convinced of your guilt and of your inability to save yourself, I urge you to feel that conviction more deeply and to give up any and all dependence on yourself; which is constantly waiting at the door to lead you to attempt to rebuild what you have just destroyed.

4. You need to credit your salvation entirely to the free grace of God. In spite of the fact that you are guilty, you are accepted and given a crown, but you must humbly “lay down your crown before the throne.” (Rev. 4:10) "No flesh must glory in his presence; but he that glories must glory in the Lord; for of him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:29,30,31) You need to be aware that none of these things are naturally found in you and that without Christ you are “miserable, poor, blind and naked.” (Rev. 3:17)

5. If you understand what I am saying, you will be prepared to hear this prescription for your disease; You must come to Christ with a deep sorrow for your former sins and with a firm commitment (based on the strength of his grace) to forsake them and depend totally on him for your acceptance with God.

6. The first and most important advice that I can give you is that you look to and come to Christ. He “is not far from any of us” (Acts 17:27) and he could not have promised to be “wherever two or three are gathered together in his name” (Matt. 18:20) if he could not be divinely present through his Spirit everywhere at the same time. So if you want to be saved, then look to the Savior. If you want to be delivered, look to the great Deliverer; and although you may feel overwhelmed with guilt, shame and fear that you will not be able to speak to him, simply fall down in speechless confusion at his feet “and behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.” (John 1:29)

7. Doesn’t the sight of him melt your heart as you look at him? Don’t you feel how foolish you have been in spending your life pursuing such meaningless interests, while neglecting (and even killing) the Prince of Life? Observe the deep wounds he suffered for you, “Look on him who
you have pierced, and you will deeply mourn” (Zech. 12:10) unless your heart is as hard as rock. Which of your past sins can you think about and say, “It was worth my while to have injured and insulted my dying Savior.” And which potential future sin can you think about and say, “for the sake of this I will crucify my Lord again?” (Heb. 6:6) You must forsake every sin, but you must do it at the foot of the cross. You must sacrifice every lust, even the dearest, even though it should be a “right hand or a right eye.” (Matt 5: 29, 30) I have led you to that altar on which “Christ himself was sacrificed for you” (Eph. 5:2) and you must “yield yourself up to God as one alive from the dead.” (Rom. 6:15). I have showed you the price it cost him to pay for you, “for you were redeemed not with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God, the Lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19) And so I ask you before the Lord, “What does your heart say to these things”? Are you saddened by the way you have offended the Lord? Are you willing to forsake your sins? Are you willing to become the cheerful, thankful servant of him who purchased you with his own blood?

8. I hope such an intention is rising in your heart, but I cannot know how strong it is or how long it will last. But I know you will never need to change this intention since no matter how much you may change outwardly, the “Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8) and your need for repentance and faith will not change.

9. So while you are motivated to consider these matters, I remind you that there is more needed for your salvation. Beyond good intentions, you need to act; act as one convinced of the evil of sin and the necessity and excellence of holiness. In the first place and as the first great work of God (as our Lord calls it) you must “believe in him who God sent,” (John 6:29) confide in him and commit your soul into Christ’s hands to be saved by his “appointed method of salvation.” This is the great act of saving faith and I pray that you will experience it and be able to say with the apostle Paul, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day” (2 Tim 1:12); that great decisive day which Christians should always have in view. And I remind you that you must have a Mediator, since it is unacceptable to come to the Father any other way than through the Son.
The One who introduces sinners to the Father (Jesus himself) said, “No one comes to the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

10. Since this glorious Redeemer invites those who look on his wounds (on the bloody cross) to come to him, then go to him this very day just as you are and with all your sins. If you think you need to wait until you are righteous and holy, it will never happen. That would be like a sick person saying that he or she is not going to go to a doctor until they are better! Let me repeat it again, “Go to him just as you are and say (I pray from your heart), “Blessed Jesus, I am surely one of the most sinful creatures that ever came to you, but I come because I have heard that you once said, ‘Come unto me all you that are weary and are burdened, and I will give you rest.’ (Matt. 12:28) I come because I have heard that you said, ‘I will not cast out anyone who comes to me’. (John 6:35) Prince of Peace, King of Glory; I am a condemned sinner who has ruined my own soul and I will be condemned forever if you do not help me and save me. I have broken your Father’s law and yours since you are ‘one with him.’ (John 10:30) I am at this moment under a sentence of everlasting destruction that is made worse by the fact that I have treated you (who are the bleeding Lamb or God) with contempt. I have continually wronged you and have been ungrateful to you as both Savior and Lord. But I am now willing to submit to you and have brought my soul to place in your hands. I have nothing to give you in return for saving me except my poor trembling soul. If your compassionate heart can find pleasure in saving one of the most distressed creatures on the face of the earth, please find it here. Until now I have foolishly and vainly tried to be my own savior. But I am now stopping this foolishness and turning my life over to you to be my Savior, my anchor and the only foundation on which I build my eternal hope. I submit to your atonement, your teaching, your doctrines and your intercession. I want to become a willing and reverent subject of your Kingdom; one who honors and joyfully welcomes you as Savior to the throne of my heart, where I invite you to sit and reign forever. Please subdue my enemies O Lord, for they are your enemies as well. And make me a faithful, enthusiastic servant from this moment unto eternity.”

11. Your language like this to the Lord must be sincerely from your heart. It must also be the language of your life or your words could become a vain mockery. So with humility, love, dedication and
submission of soul you must often prostrate yourself in Christ’s presence, then go forth (keeping him in view) and live unto God through him, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts and living “soberly, righteously and godly in this vain, ensnaring world.” (Tit. 2:12) You must take care that you express your love through obedience and that the goal of your life is to be molded to become like Jesus so that you may be a living image of Christ to those who meet or know you. And you must follow him wherever he leads, with a cross on your shoulder when he commands you to “take it up” (Matt 16:24) and so be faithful even unto death, expecting “the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

12. So far as I have been able to learn from the Word of God, this is the only sure way to safety and glory. It is the path that every faithful minister of Christ has gone down and the way to which others must be directed. We cannot try to change that way for our own comfort or for the comfort of our dearest friends. And since it is the only way that God has given to save us, I beseech you to seriously consider it and let your conscience answer (as in the presence of God) how you will respond. But know that to reject it is eternal death, for “there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved” (Acts 4:12) and there is no other method but this one by which Jesus himself will save us.

Chapter 10. The Sinner Seriously Urged and Entreated to Accept of Salvation in this Way

1. I have often known people who have had convictions wear off through external temptations joined with an inwardly reluctant heart not humbled by the plan of redemption. “Through the deceitfulness of sin, they have been hardened” (Heb. 3:25) till they seem without hope. So I ask that while you consider accepting or rejecting this glorious Gospel, that you continue attentive while I plead with you, asking you “on Christ’s behalf that you be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20) and not reject this compassionate counsel.

2. You might imagine that as soon as perishing sinners learn that an offended God offers full forgiveness for their sins and is willing to adopt them immediately into his family, that they would quickly and joyfully embrace the invitation, falling at his feet in speechless astonishment, gratitude and joy! Yet on the contrary we see multitudes unmoved, and
only feeble or temporary responses from others. So that you may not be one of these, let me entreat you (for I have the honor of doing so) to be reconciled to God, accepting pardon and salvation in the way it is so freely offered to you.

3. I beseech you “by the majesty of the God in whose name I come,” whose voice fills all of heaven with reverence and obedience.

I beseech you “by the terrors of his wrath,” who could in a single act of his will cut off your frail life and send you to hell.

I beseech you by his mercies, by his tender mercies, by the bowels of his compassion which yearn over you as a parent over a dear, tender child who is in a state of ungrateful rebellion.

I beseech you “by all this parental goodness” that you do not (so to speak) cause him to lose the character of the gentle Parent and become the righteous Judge whose “fire shall be kindled in his anger” (Deut 32:19,22) in regard to those he has just called his sons and daughters.

4. I further beseech you “by the name and love of your dying Savior.”

I beseech you by all the condescension of his incarnation, by that poverty to which he voluntarily submitted “that you might be enriched” with eternal treasures (2 Cor. 8:9), by all the gracious invitations he gave (and still gives) warmly from his heart “sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb.” (Ps. 19:10)

I beseech you by the memory of the most benevolent person and generous friend.

I beseech you by the memory of what he suffered as well as what he did and said; by the agony which he endured in the garden when his body was covered “with a dew of blood.” (Luke 22:44)

I beseech you by all that tender distress that he felt when his dearest friends “forsook him and fled (Matt. 26.56) and his blood-thirsty enemies dragged him away like the lowest slave or the most violent criminal.

I beseech you by the blows and bruises, by the stripes and lashes this inured King endured while in their rebellious hands and by the shame of spitting from which he did not hide his face. (Isa. 50:6)

I beseech you by the purple robe and the crown of thorns which this King of Glory wore so that he might set us among the princes of Heaven. (Psa. 113:8)
I beseech you by the heavy burden of the cross, under which he panted, toiled and fainted in the painful way to Golgotha (John 19:17) that he might free us from the burden of our sins.

I beseech you by the remembrance of those rude nails that tore the veins and arteries, nerves and tendons of his sacred hands and feet; and by that invincible, triumphant goodness that caused him to cry out, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:24) even while the iron pierced his flesh.

I beseech you by the unutterable anguish that he bore when he was lifted up on the cross and extended there as on a rack for six painful hours, that you open up your heart to those attractive influences which have “drawn to him thousands and tens of thousands.” (John 12:32)

I beseech you by all the insult and derision that the “Lord of Glory bore there” (Matt. 27: 29-44), by that parching thirst which could hardly obtain the relief of “vinegar,” (John 19: 28,29) and by that agonizing cry of, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27: 46)

I beseech you by the grace that won over and forgave “the dying criminal,” (Luke 23: 42, 43) by his compassion for sinners, by his compassion for you, which he had in his heart when he died on the cross and which continues until this day.

I beseech you by the triumphs of that resurrection by “which he was declared to be the Son of God with power,” by the spirit of holiness which worked to accomplish it, (Rom 1:4) and by the tenderness with which he spoke to Mary in the garden, telling her to bring a message to those disciples that had so recently forsaken him. (John 20:17)

I beseech you by the way he spoke to Thomas, whose unbelief motivated Jesus to say, “Put your finger here and behold my hands and place your hand in my side and don’t be faithless, but believing.” (John 20:27)

I beseech you by the generous and faithful care he took of his people when he richly and miraculously sent down his Spirit at their request so that they could spread his saving word.

I beseech you by the voice of sympathy and power with which he spoke to Saul (who was persecuting his people) saying, “Saul, Saul; why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4) and by the generous goodness that spared this trembling enemy who lay on the ground before him and by
that goodness that raised Saul up to such a high dignity that he is considered one of the great apostles.

I beseech you by the memory of all that Christ has already done and by the expectation of what he will further do for his people.

I beseech you by the scepter of his grace and by the sword of his justice that you do not waste these precious moments, losing an opportunity on which your eternity depends and which may never return again.

5. I beseech you “by all the bowels of compassion you owe to the faithful ministers of Christ who are preaching, praying, studying and using their time and strength for the salvation of your soul and the souls of others.

I beseech you by the affection the Lord Jesus Christ has for you in longing to see you brought back to him.

I beseech you by the friendship of the living, by the memory of the dead, by the ruin of those who have wasted their days and perished in their sins and by the happiness of those who have embraced the Gospel and are saved by it.

I beseech you by the great expectation of the important “day when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven,” (2 Thess. 1:7) by “the terrors of a dissolving world,” (2 Pet. 3:10) by “the sound of the archangel’s trumpet,” (1 Thess. 4:16) and of those infinitely more important words; “Come, ye blessed,” or “Depart, ye cursed,” with which the Judgment will close. (Matt. 25: 34, 41)

6. Finally, I beseech you by your own precious and immortal soul; by the sure prospect of your death bed, or of a sudden, unexpected ending of your life.

I beseech you by your own personal appearance before the Judge (for it will be a personal appearance); by all the joy of the blessed and by all the agonies of the damned (for you will experience either one or the other).

I affectionately beseech you in the cumulative strength of all these considerations and as you will answer to me (who may be summoned to testify against you), to your conscience and to the eternal Judge on that day, that you dismiss not these thoughts until you have brought matters to a joyful conclusion by choosing Christ and his appointed way of
salvation and resolutely devoted yourself to him in an everlasting covenant.

7. Having done my best and not being able to use stronger arguments, I leave the matter between you and the Lord. You must choose whether you will give yourself to him who offers these generous terms of forgiveness and peace or whether you will reject him until he appears to judge you for your rebellion and crimes. I dare hope for the best that this labor of love will not be entirely unsuccessful and that at least one soul shall be brought to the feet of Christ in faith and humble submission.

p.s. If you are interested in downloading a copy of this paraphrase, please feel free to do so at www.roadmaptoheaven.net under the “Literature” tab.

http://roadmaptoheaven.net/web_documents/rise_and_progress_of_religion_in_the_soul_chapters_1-10_with_cover_page.pdf
Are you willing to be a world-changer?

Those who would change the world must first be changed themselves. William Wilberforce (born 1759) was still a careless young man at the age of 21 when he was elected to the British Parliament. During a trip across France at the age of 26, he read *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, the book that he credits with leading to his 'great change'. *Wilberforce’s faith in Jesus Christ changed him from a careless, wealthy young politician to a tireless, compassionate public servant. ...He persisted for decades in the tasks God had called him to, despite illness, physical threats, and enormous opposition*. In 1807 with the passage of Wilberforce’s final bill for the abolition of the slave trade throughout the British empire, Sir Samuel Romilly credited him with the "greatest act of national benefit which God ever put in the power of man to confer on his fellow creatures". In addition to this act, Wilberforce championed numerous other efforts to better society. The book that helped change Wilberforce into a world-changer may also change you to change your world.