

The Life of John Bunyan

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Well, if I say the name John Bunyan, what is your first thought? Pilgrim's Progress. Do you remember what you were doing in the year? I know Dave does.

Do you remember what you were doing in the year 1984? He's good at dates. Those of you who were in our Sunday school class will remember, or maybe not, that we spent the better part of that year studying Pilgrim's Progress.

That's been a while, and I dare say that review would be in order for us who were in that class, and there are many of you here that weren't a part of that.

So it's our intention to do some studies in Pilgrim's Progress. Not sure how long we'll go before we break away and take up another study and then perhaps return to it.

But I thought before we even got started on Pilgrim's Progress itself, it would do us good to study the life of the author, John Bunyan. So a few lessons then on the life of John Bunyan.

[1:03] It will be helpful to us to understand the man behind the book. Psalms 111 and verse 2 says, Great are the works of the Lord.

They are pondered by all who delight in them. The works of the Lord are such that they cause the child of God who delights in God's works to ponder them.

And there are no works like God's works, His works of creation, His works of recreation. And that's what we see in the life of John Bunyan. He was a man who was recreated by God.

And it's that work that we want to highlight as we study His life and ponder it together. It will be helpful to see how God worked in this noble instrument.

An instrument for noble purposes, as Paul writes to Timothy. He had noble things to accomplish through this man. Well, how did He convert him?

[2:05] How did He save him? What kinds of things happened in his life? And it will lead us to the study of experiential religion, where God's grace is seen in a life, where truth is incarnated in flesh.

And we get to see Bible verses in the life of one of God's servants. Now, most of what I'll be drawing upon this morning comes from a book that he wrote later in his life about his own conversion experience.

It's his testimony, in essence. And it's entitled, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. The title itself suggests to us something of what John Bunyan thinks about his conversion.

It was all of grace. It was God's grace. And it was to not just a sinner, but to the chief of sinners. It shows his humble view of himself.

Well, he wasn't born that way, believe me. He was born a sinner, but he wasn't born with that humble view of himself, as we'll see this morning. But that's the testimony that he wrote, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.

[3:22] And in it, then, we get to hear his own thoughts, what he was thinking when this was happening in his life, and he gives us a firsthand account. So we'll dive right in this morning.

John Bunyan was born in Elstow, England in 1628. I won't ask you what you were doing that year, but do you know what was happening in the world that decade?

Just eight years earlier, 102 pilgrims, dissenters, separatists, boarded the Mayflower and set sail for North America from Plymouth, England.

So just eight years before his birth, the Mayflower set sail for what would be called New England. So these were days of religious persecution for those who were not in lockstep with the religion of the most.

And we'll see more of that in the weeks to come. Bunyan's father was of the lowest class in the land. He was a tinker by trade.

[4:35] Anyone know what a tinker was? Not somebody that made tinker toys. What was a tinker? Shoes?

That was William Carey, I believe. Worked with tin, metals, pewter, copper. And so he would go around from town to town and collect all the broken pots and pans.

He would take them back to Elstow and to his forge. He would fix them and then return them. That was his father's trade. Education in those days was not public and neither was it free.

So though his parents were poor, they managed to send him to grammar school where he learned to read and write. That would be the extent of his formal training.

Quite remarkable when you think that he would be used by God to write to the blessing of countless millions. He says about his grammar school experience where he learned to read and write, quote, So he returned home to learn the trade of tinker from his father.

[5:56] He says his early youth was, quote, Indeed, according to the course of this world and the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, Ephesians 2.

It was my delight to be taken captive by the devil to do his will, 2 Timothy 2.26. From a child I had but few equals for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.

These things became second nature to me. Now, he did not have Christian parents to rebuke him and to correct him in his vices.

At age 9 and 10, he had terrifying dreams and was scared of judgment, scared of hell.

He says, I wish there were no hell because he knew he was going there. It so bothered him that in the midst of his childhood games as a 10-year-old boy, he was often cast down in the presence of his friends.

[7:02] And yet for all this, he could not and would not let go of his sins. The pleasures of sin caused him to forget his fears. So he threw himself into sin with great gusto and delight.

So that until I was married, he says, which was in his 19th year, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company in all manner of vice and ungodliness.

Indeed, it would be grace abounding to the chief of sinners. Well, during these years, he could not stand the thought of God in religion. He says, I said to God, depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

Job 1, 21, 14 and 15. But to his own amazement, he says, God did not utterly forsake me, but followed me still, not with convictions, but with judgments mixed with mercy.

The judgments were near brushes with death. He talks about two times falling into the river and nearly drowning. Another time, he says, being in the field with one of my companions, an adder, which is Britain's only poisonous snake, an adder passed over the road.

[8:29] So I, having a stick in my hand, struck her over the back, and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick and plucked her tongue out with my fingers.

By which act, had not God been merciful to me, I might have brought myself to my end. So he's thinking back of his foolish boyhood, and he's seeing all these times that he was a hairbreadth away from death.

And he says, oh, the mercy of God. Had he not spared me, I'd be in hell forever. But even in my unconverted state, God was showing mercy to me. They were judgments mixed with mercy.

His 16th year would prove to be an eventful year. That year his mother died. A month later, his sister died. And a month later, his father remarried.

And he was drafted into the army. Not his father, but John, the 16-year-old boy himself. Drafted into the army to fight an England civil war.

[9:34] And so he went away from home for three years and found himself in the company of even more wicked men. When I was a soldier, I with others were drawn out to a particular place and commanded to besiege it.

When I was ready to go, one of the men in my company asked to go in my stead. I consented. He took my place and went to the siege. As he stood his post as sentinel, he was shot in the head with a musket ball and died.

Here was judgment and mercy. But neither of these things awakened my soul to righteousness.

And I continued in sin and grew worse and more rebellious against God and more careless about my own salvation.

I want to just take a time out and make some observations upon his life up to this point. And the first is just the obvious, that it takes more than brushes with death to loosen the cords of sin and to save

a man.

We might think when we see lost people coming close to death's door, surely this time, surely now they'll return to God. They'll turn to him and repent.

[10:51] And they somehow find strength in themselves to go on. Isaiah talks about that. You would not say it's hopeless, but you found strength and you went on. And so the sinner finds ways to deal with death.

Somehow thinking it just won't happen to me. And on they go after their brushes of death, even growing worse rather than better because of them.

No, it takes the grace of God to change the heart, to make the heart new and to give it desires for God. We see as well the grace of God, even in his unconverted state, to keep him from certain hell. When had he died without Christ, that would have been his end. God's grace doesn't start with conversion. There is a grace that comes to people even before their conversion.

And that's what's highlighted as well in Bunyan's life. There's a common grace. All men today are partaking of the grace of God's mercies in this land of plenty and sunshine and rain and food.

[12:02] And so Bunyan, in recounting his testimony, doesn't want us to miss the grace of God that came to him, even as an unconverted, blaspheming sinner.

And then I was thinking, you know, we wouldn't choose this guy as a choice instrument that God would use to affect millions and millions of people.

If we looked at this life up to 19 years of age, we would see nothing promising here, would we?

We'd pass over and we'd say, God's got somebody else, somewhere else he's going to use.

Surely not this man. This looks like a wasted life going fast from bad to worse. But again, we see God's grace surprising us by taking the things that are despised and lowly and weak and making them his instruments for noble purposes.

Well, when he was released from the army at age 19, he returned home and got married. He married Mary. And both were so poor that they didn't have a dish or a spoon between them, he says.

[13:16] But yet this marriage he viewed later in life was a great mercy of God, for Mary's godly father had left her two books when he died. They were the plain man's pathway to heaven and the practice of piety or of holiness.

And so she would read to him. And then he, having lost all his grammar education, re-learned to read and then later read to himself from these books as well.

And it led him to take up religion. He went to church twice on Sunday. He said the liturgy and sang as well as others did. And yet he continued in his wicked life.

He says, He didn't have a thought of Christ and his need for Jesus and didn't even know that there was such a Savior.

He says, He relates being convicted of sin once by a sermon that he heard. And he says it was the first time that he could remember feeling guilty for his sin.

[14:45] But he says, It did not last more than an hour or so. Indeed, it was gone by lunch. He shook the sermon out of his mind and returned with delight to his sinning.

But oh, how glad was I that this trouble was gone from me and that the fire was put out that I might sin again without control. Again, just an observation along the way.

A man may feel guilty. A man may be convicted of sin and yet not be converted. Bunyan is in no way a convert to Christ yet.

Doesn't even know of Christ. Just knows of religion. And yet he's convicted of his sin. He feels guilty. Can you remember anybody else in the scriptures that, not that Bunyan was in the scriptures, can you think of someone in the scriptures that was guilty and unconverted?

Felt guilty. Felt their guilt. Were convicted of sin. Paul? Who? Judas.

[15:52] I betrayed innocent blood, he said. As he threw the money back at the temple floor.

Good. What did he say, Mark?

Okay. I think it was Felix. But... It could be both, Mark.

I think it was both. You're probably right. It's probably Agrippa that you're referring to. I'm thinking of Felix in Acts 24, where... Where... Let me just read Acts 24, in verse 25, when Felix was hearing Paul, and he sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.

And as Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, That's enough for now.

You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you. Well, we read of no such convenient time, do we, in the scriptures. He was convicted. He was scared.

[17:07] He trembled, the scriptures say. And he says, That's enough. No more now. I've had enough. So, Saul, when David...

One of those times that David spared King Saul, you were more righteous than I. He acknowledged his sin. He was convicted. But all these men were unconverted in that state of conviction.

So, conviction is a part of true salvation. No one is saved that's not convicted of sin. But you can be convicted of sin without being saved.

That's the point that we need to learn here with Bunyan. It's not conviction of sin that saves you.

What is conviction of sin meant to do? To lead you to repent.

To chase you to the Savior. And it's He who saves you. So, if we come short of Christ, the conviction is more of the devil than it is of the Holy Spirit.

[18:11] just to convict and to leave us without coming to Christ. Conviction is meant to chase us to the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. That was not happening in Bunyan's life.

He was just convicted. And we'll see a little bit later how he dealt with his convictions. Here, he just pushed them aside, shook the sermon out of his mind. He had other ways.

Human nature is ingenious in its ways of dealing with guilt. Reminds me too of Jesus' parable of the sower. The sower went out to sow and he scattered his seed everywhere.

What was the seed that landed on the path? What's the meaning of that? And the birds came and snatched it up so it never bore fruit. So when the word of God is sown on the heart and the devil comes and snatches it away.

So, here's Bunyan sitting in church and he hears a sermon on sin and it's his sin and he's convicted. The seed is there but before noon the devil had already snatched it away.

[19:17] It's a sobering thing to a preacher to think that these seeds are going to have devils snatching up the seed as they walk out that door. And they're gone. And though people are convicted in here, it's soon gone.

Shaken loose. And they're back to their usual self. That happened even under the Lord Jesus preaching. That's his point in that parable.

He's the great sower, the great farmer going out to seed and that's what happened as he preached. Well, soon Bunyan came to believe that he was too great a sinner to be forgiven.

Isn't it something? The ends to which the devil goes in taking a man into sin. Now he thinks, well, I'm too great a sinner to be forgiven. He reasoned, if I'm going to be damned, I might as well be damned for many sins as be damned for few.

So I found within me great desire to take my fill of sin, still studying what sin was yet to be committed that I might taste the sweetness of it before I died.

[20:23] He's forgetting something. What's he forgetting? If I'm going to be damned, I might as well be damned for many sins as for few. What's he forgetting in that statement?

Is that true? Excellent. There's a degree of punishment. Remember John, well, let me just show you the text.

Luke 12, 47 and 48, Jesus talks about those who will be beaten with many blows and those who will be beaten with fewer blows.

Mark 12 and verse 40, he speaks of those who will receive the greater condemnation. So, just as there are degrees of reward in heaven, the Bible teaches that there are degrees of punishment in hell.

And John Gershner in his series on theology, his tapes on theology, I'll never forget him saying that the damned in hell would give the world to have sinned one last time.

[21:33] No, John Bunyan, it's not right. It's another lie from the devil that if you're going to be damned, you might as well be damned for many sins as for few. He says, I was standing at a neighbor's shop window.

They're cursing and swearing and playing the madman after my usual manner. There sat within the woman of the house who heard me. Now, this woman was very loose and ungodly and had quite a reputation in the town, but she protested that I swore and cursed at such a rate that she was made to tremble to hear me.

She told me in addition that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that she had ever heard in all her life and that I, by swearing in this manner, was able to spoil all the youth in the whole town if

they came anywhere in my company.

Bunyan was so stunned by her rebuke that he never swore again. He was shocked. He says, I wish that my mom and dad would have stopped me in my sin much earlier.

He's thinking back and to his own great surprise, he never swore again when it had been his practice to mix a swear word, every other word, just to give authority and punch to what he was saying.

[22 : 53] Well, he met up with a poor, but as you know, a man who does not swear doesn't get into heaven for his not swearing. He met up with a man who talked about religion and the Bible and talking with him, he took up an interest in the Bible, began to read it and even took great delight in doing so.

He says that he began to go through some outward reformation of life. He cleaned up his life, not just his swearing, but other things dropped off out of his life.

He says, I set the commandments before me for my way to heaven, which I did strive to keep and as I thought did keep them pretty well sometimes. And so, he set the ten commandments.

He set them up as a ladder to heaven and thought he did pretty well. Yet now and then I would break one and my conscience would accuse me. But then I would say I was sorry for it and promised God to do better next time.

This would make me feel better. For then I thought I pleased God as well as any man in England.

Well, these outward changes continued for a whole year and the people of Elstow noticed it and he soon got the reputation of being a very godly man.

[24 : 13] He loves to hear the people comment about this change in his life. His heart swelled with pride. He says, I was proud of my godliness and indeed I did all I did either to be seen of or be well spoken of by men and thinking God could not help but be pleased with me.

But poor wretch as I was, I was all this while ignorant of Jesus Christ and going about to establish my own righteousness. Turn to Romans chapter 10.

This was the great burden on the heart of the Apostle Paul. Brothers, Romans 10 verse 1, My heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God but their zeal is not based on knowledge since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own. They did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

[25 : 31] Bunyan's salvation was a salvation by self-reformation. salvation. And that's the natural religion of man the world over. The natural reflex of a man when he feels guilty of his sins, he's convicted, is to try to do better.

If it's my sin that makes me guilty before God, then I need to sin less. I need to stop sinning. And they just try to pull themselves up or as Paul says here, trying to establish their own righteousness, their own standing before God based on their own performance of obedience.

But in so doing, they're not submitting to God's way of righteousness through Jesus Christ. So their very efforts are rebellion. They're not submitting. Isn't that what not submitting is?

Whether it's a citizen to their government, a wife to her husband, any authority structure, a worker to the employer, to not submit is rebellion. And Bunyan was rebelling against God.

How? By trying to work out his own righteousness before God. I said earlier that the human heart has ingenious ways to deal with guilt.

[26 : 47] Did you see what Bunyan's way of dealing with guilt was? What did he do when he sinned and he felt guilty? He said two things. I'm sorry and I'll try to do better.

What's wrong with that? Isn't that good? I mean, isn't that what you want out of your kids when they do something wrong? You want to hear them say I'm sorry, I'll try to do better? Shouldn't we be happy?

Shouldn't God be happy with that when Bunyan sins and he looks down and he sees there he is and he says he's sorry and he says I'll try to do better next time? What's missing? Jesus is nowhere in the picture.

The Savior of sin is nowhere to be found in this and yet nothing is more common for people to say I'm sorry, I'll try to do better. It's not a second chance we need, a third chance, a fourth chance. It's Jesus that we need and he did not have any dealings with Christ in this present state of his religion. The only true way to quiet an accusing conscience and to find true peace with God is

through the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin.

[28 : 06] So the outward life may be reformed without a new heart within. It's basically a trade-off of sins, isn't it? Instead of swearing, he's now proud and self-righteous.

Is he better off? No, he's just more deceived in his sin. Even great pleasure in the Bible is no certain sign of life.

Bunyan had pleasure in reading the Bible. What might give a sinner pleasure in reading the Bible? There's no sign of conversion. Or how could that be?

It is a mark of the Christian that he finds pleasure in the Word of God. But again, it's not a sure sign that the person is a Christian. Why not? How could a person have delight in the Bible that's something short of a saving experience of Christ?

It's interesting, isn't it? Where do you read stories like you find in the Bible? Yes. I feel better when I've read the Bible.

[29 : 13] I feel like I've done something that God's pleased with. Chuck? Hmm. Sure. There's picking and choosing verses that speak comfort to the heart.

And even though those promises don't belong to him as a sinner outside of Christ, those are promises for people who are in Christ, who are trusting in Jesus, and yet he reads them and he takes the comfort to his breast and says, ah, that makes me feel good.

Many reasons why a person might find great delight in the Word of God and not yet be converted. That was Bunyan and it's a lesson I think our day needs to hear.

Well, his conversion. He's in his early 20s now. Tinker work was slow in Elstow so he sought work in a nearby town of Bedford. And as he was passing through a street one day he came upon three or four poor cleaning ladies on break sitting out on the porch in the sun talking about the things of God.

Being such a brisk talker of religion myself, he says, I wanted to hear what they had to say. So he stood behind a hedge and drew near to hear what subject they were talking about that he might then come forth and display his superior wisdom on the subject.

[30 : 35] He says, I heard but I understood not. They were way over my head. They spoke of things I knew nothing of.

The new birth. The work of God in their hearts. The miserable state of their hearts by nature. And their unbelief.

They talked of abhorring their own righteousness as filthy and insufficient to do them any good.

They talked how God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus.

They spoke of the suggestions and temptations of Satan and what words and promises had refreshed, comforted, and strengthened them in temptation.

And they did it with such joy as those who have found a new world. Interesting that he would refer to finding a new world. That's what was going on in his day.

[31 : 32] But that was the joy with which these Christian ladies spoke. He walked away trembling for he saw himself at last as a poor painted hypocrite. Outward show of religion, inward bankruptcy.

The realities they spoke of so convincingly were foreign to him and had never entered his mind. He says, but though I walked away, their talk followed with me.

And he mulled it over and over again. So on future trips to Bedford, he regularly would listen in on them. He couldn't stay away. He found his heart drawn to them. And through this, his heart became tender to the scriptures that they had referred to in their conversation.

The Bible became a precious book to him for different reasons. He says, I was never out of the Bible either by reading or meditation, still crying out to God that I might know the truth and the way to heaven and glory.

No prophets, pleasures, persecutions could loose its grip on spiritual things. Now, Bunyan's conversion was a long, winding road.

[32 : 42] He takes some, at least, 40 pages from this point on in his account, in his testimony, to tell of two years, two to three years of struggle in coming to trust in Christ and finding peace with God.

He was convinced of his polluted heart. He thought there was none so vile as he and that he could not be saved. And then he'd get help from one scripture and hope would be birthed in his soul only to have the next scripture present difficulties and doubts.

He was afraid that he was not one of the elect, that Christ had not called him. He was afraid that he was guilty of the unpardonable sin. He was afraid that the day of grace may be passed for him and was mad at himself for having wasted so much time in sin all the while crying out to God to save him.

He would live in the darkness of doubt and depression for weeks and then the light would come and shine in on his soul with some gospel promise. One day on his way home from church, the love of God so overpowered his soul and thrilled him that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

He says, I could not contain myself. I thought I could have spoken of his love to me even to the very crows that sat upon the plowed lands before me. But within 40 days he began to question everything all over again, sinking him down into the darkness of doubt and fear.

[34 : 09] Oh, the diligence of Satan, he says. 40 to 50 times a day the devil would tell him to give up on Christ, forget him, go your own way. And over and over he resisted him.

He finally came out from behind the bushes and revealed himself to the four women and they said, you need to talk to our pastor, John Gifford of the Bedford Church.

He had been himself a godless wretch, a gambler, drunkard, and blasphemer saved by the grace of God. And Bunyan found great help from this man. He saw more then of his own inward pollution putting forth its evil desires such that he says, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than a toad and thought I was so in God's eyes too.

I saw that I lacked a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God and this righteousness was nowhere to be found but in the person of Jesus Christ.

I found that unless guilt of conscience was taken off the right way, that is, by the blood of Christ, a man grew, a man rather grew worse for a soothed conscience.

[35 : 17] So back and forth he went from comforts to doubts, light to darkness. He was often overcome with a flood of blasphemous thoughts against God, against Christ, that they didn't even exist, against the scriptures that they were simply a fable.

He was tempted to speak blasphemies. He was afraid of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And when such temptations were strong, he says, I thought of leaping with my head downward into some muck hole or other to keep my mouth from speaking.

These things did sink me into very deep despair for I concluded that such things could not possibly be found among them that loved God. God. So it was during these times that scriptures would only deepen his fears, that these blasphemous temptations continued for a year.

Often he found them to be worse when reading the scriptures, hearing it preached or praying. He envied toads and dogs and horses who had not sinned as he had.

His heart longed to believe the gospel promises were for him and he cried out after God but he speaks of many a tug of war with Satan over a gospel promise.

[36 : 31] There was the gospel promise, whoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out. And he was tugging on one side, he says, and the devil was pulling on the other. Oh, but that doesn't mean you.

Can't mean you. Not you and your sins. And he says, but it says whoever. And back and forth they went. My heart was at times exceedingly hard. I would have given, if I would have been given a thousand pounds for a tear, I could not shed one.

He says later on, looking back on that time, that period in his life, he says, many of my doubts and fears came from misunderstanding passages of scripture. Thinking that at one point, thinking that if he had faith, that he should be able to work miracles.

Do I have faith in Christ? Well, if I have it, then I should be able to work miracles. So he tried to dry up a mud puddle and he failed. And so he concluded that he didn't have faith. You see, he was untaught.

He needed Pastor Gifford to come alongside him. He needed these four ladies to share the scriptures with him because he would take a scripture and the devil would so muddle his mind to actually work the opposite from it and what it was intended to say.

[37 : 48] He learned that Satan would use any means to keep the soul from Christ, even scripture. Remember Jesus' temptation for 40 days and after the 40 days temptation, three peculiar temptations were given to him.

And in one, Satan says, it is written and he quotes scripture to the Son of God. It is not beneath Satan to quote scripture to us in our temptations.

Well, the preaching of Gifford helps stabilize his soul. It is hard to pinpoint the date of Bunyan's new birth, somewhere between ages 21 and 24, but he does speak of sweet peace coming to his soul one day as he was walking through the fields.

One day as I was passing into the field, this sentence fell upon my soul. Thy righteousness is in heaven. And methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There, I say, was my righteousness so that wherever I was and whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, He lacks my righteousness for that was just before Him.

[38 : 58] I also saw moreover that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse. For my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons. My temptations also fled away so that from that time those dreadful scriptures of God about the unforgivable sin and so on left off to trouble me.

Now went I also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God. Where is a soul to find peace and rest and joy?

It's in the righteousness of Jesus. Absolutely outside of Himself. Nothing that He did. It's all what Jesus did.

And He saw Christ as His righteousness. On His bad days, on His good days, that was enough to make Him right with God. And God gives that righteousness to every believing sinner who casts Himself as a helpless sinner upon Christ for righteousness.

[40 : 15] Well, quite a testimony of the path to which God brought this man to conversion. Our testimonies of conversion are all a little different. God does not bring everyone to faith in Christ in exactly the same way.

And we are not, therefore, to make anyone's conversion the model for anyone else in the matter of details. You see how bad it would be for us to say, oh, here's a true conversion.

And to judge our conversion based on whether it matches John Bunyan's. Oh, I didn't have two years of struggle like he did, so I must not be a Christian. No.

Somebody spoke once of a convention of blind men that Jesus healed. And this is how, and so one stands up and says, well, this is how all true healings take place.

And Jesus just spoke the word and I could see. And somebody else stands up and says, no, you're wrong. He touched my eyes and now I can see. And a third stood and says, you're both wrong.

[41 : 18] He spit on the ground and made some mud and put it on my eyes and told me to go wash and now I see. Well, it's the folly of all three to insist that their way was the only way of true healing.

All three were healed by the power of Christ. So don't be bothered if the details of your salvation experience are different from John Bunyan's. Don't think that you're not saved.

We hear many testimonies and all have their own distinctive differences. But then again, they do have all things, certain things in common, don't they? All are convicted of sin such that they look away from themselves to Christ and trust in Christ alone.

There are certain things that are the same in salvation. We may not know the precise date in which we were joined to Christ. I may not know at what time the sun rose this morning, but I can know right now that it's shining.

I don't know when the sun of righteousness rose with healing in his wings in my heart, but I know that he's there and he set me free from my sin and guilt and made me right with God.

[42 : 27] We learn as well from Bunyan that some may have long struggles with assurance of salvation even after they're saved. And there's two issues. There's being saved, that's one thing, and there's knowing that you're saved, that's another thing.

And the medicine for one is not exactly the same as for the other. And then, just a challenging word as we conclude, what effects do our conversation have upon those who hear us?

Aren't you glad for those four maids who on their break were talking about what the Lord had done for them? And God used that in the life and conversion of John Bunyan from a vile, vile path of sin.

Well, may our conversations, even today over lunch, be such that it would be edifying and helpful to all who hear us. Our time's gone.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us today. We're dismissed.