

MEMOIRS (AUTOBIOGRAPHY)

by Abner Jones

Jones's spiritual autobiography describing his religious awakening at age ten, sudden conversion during a Baptist meeting, the peace and joy he found in faith, and his subsequent struggle with the duty of baptism. A vivid account of early American frontier religious experience.

16 Chapters

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Abner Jones - 01-Birth and Early Life

Birth and Early Life

MEMOIRS OF

ABNER JONES In giving the reader an account of my birth and parentage, I shall not (like the celebrated Franklin and others,) strive to prove that I arose from a family of eminence; believing that all men are born equal, and that every man shall die for his own iniquity.

I was born in the town of Royalton, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, about 80 miles from Boston, the metropolis of the State. My father was born in Sutton in the same State. when he was but a lad his father removed into the town of Charlton. In this town, therefore my father was brought up at farming. As I have often heard him relate, here it pleased the Lord to shew him his undone situation; and also, to bestow upon him his pardoning mercy, in his youth. At this period he made a profession of religion, in the Calvinist Baptist way. My mother originated from the town of Gloucester in the State of Rhodeisland; her name was Dorcase Wade, daughter of Nathan Wade, and was of the same profession with my father. When my father was first settled in life, it was in the town where he had been brought up, on a small farm adjoining his father. Here my eldest brother and sister were born. After this, my father having a desire to enlarge his borders as to the things of this world, purchased a piece of land in the town of Royalton, the place before mentioned; and soon removed thither and there continued to live for a number of years. After my father's removal to Royalton, he had another son and daughter born, before my birth. On the 28th of April, A. D. 1772, I was born into this world of sin and sorrow, and so wicked have I been, that I have often wished that the day to me had been darkness, wherein it was said, a man child was born. In this place I continued to live with my father until in my eighth year; and O thou great Creator what fills the first page of the book of my remembrance thou knowest.

During this early part of my life, among the many thoughts that forced themselves on my mind, were those of my future existence which were often brought on my mind, by my father's prayers and admonitions, but more particularly by the latter. I can remember before I was eight years old of having seasons when alone, in which I felt much concerned about my soul. When I was in my eighth year, my father removed into a town called Bridgwater, in the State of Vermont, in the Country of Windsor. My father was the first family that moved into the town; it was therefore entirely a wilderness, excepting a small house-spot, where the trees were cleared away, together with a few other trees such as were suitable for erecting a sort of shelter, which was called a log house. It was in the month of March when my father and family arrived at our new habitation. Our house (though to the popular part of mankind may seem strange) was erected without either plank, joint, boards, shingles, stone, brick, nails or glass; but was built wholly of logs, bark, boughs and wooden pegs in the room of nails. The snow then was about four feet deep, and the weather extremely cold; and many trees within reach of the house, and two miles from neighbors. We were favoured however with warm clothing, and solid provision, and enough of it; although our house and furniture was not quite so delicate to some. The great plenty of wood which was so nigh was

easily collected into a large heap before one end of the house, (the greater part of which was open) and set on fire; thus it was kept day and night, until the weather grew warm. What little household furniture we then had in our new habitation, was drawn two miles on hand-sleds, drawn by men, on snow-shoes; which made a path sufficiently hard for my mother, and such of the children as were not able to assist in drawing the hand-sleds, to follow after. This may seem incredible to some, but there are numbers now living who were assistants in this singular removal. The object which stimulated my father to move at this period was, that he might make sugar on his own land; which was done by extracting sap from maple trees, and boiling it into sugar; this must be done in the months of March and April. But to return to the situation of my mind.....I know not a better similitude than the wilderness in which I then dwelt; uncultivated, and inhabited by the wild beasts of prey; dreary and melancholy. I must here notice one remarkable event which took place in that wilderness country that first summer of our living in it. About the middle of summer, a party of Indians came to Barnard, the town adjoining us on the north, and took four men captive and carried them to Canada. I must here notice several singular events that took place the second year. The Indians came to Royalton the latter part of summer or fall, about 18 or 20 miles distant, plundered and burned the town, killed some and took many captive. The same year in the month of June there was a very solemn instance of mortality in Woodstock, the town adjoining us on the east. The circumstances which give rise to this solemn event were as follows, viz. Two men in the middle stage of life, each had a family, and were great and particular friends, and delighted greatly in gunning. Those two men, Mr. Nathan Tinkham, and Mr. Moses Sampson, had seated themselves by the side of a little swamp, in order to watch for deer on the opposite part from which they expected their game to come. But not as they expected, the deer made his appearance in such a position as brought Sampson, exactly in a range with the deer from Tinkham, and as Sampson sat on lower ground than Tinkham, Tinkham supposed that with all safety he might fire over Sampson's head and kill the deer; but terrible to relate that moment in which Tinkham fired off his gun, his friend Sampson attempted to arise; the charge from the gun met his head and tore it to pieces. Thus by what we call accident one friend shot the other. This solemn event, God was pleased to make use of to the awakening of the stupid inhabitants of that town; and a glorious work of the Lord ensued. This work was general in the town; and it seemed as though every person that had come to years of understanding, was struck with a sense of their miserable situation, out of Christ; and many were brought out of darkness, into God's marvellous light; although more than twenty years have rolled away since that glorious event, yet a goodly number of Christians, are now living in Woodstock, who were sharers in that reformation; but some have fallen.

Another remarkable event which took place that summer, was the army of worms, which the Lord sent, to destroy the hope of the laborer. These worms were small, of dark grey or black colour. They all seemed to be marching one way; and in many places, in the roads and elsewhere, covered the ground in such a manner, as that one could not set down his foot without treading on a number of them. It became necessary at particular seasons; when those reptiles were on their march, for people to watch their doors continually, to prevent their floors from being covered with them. The grass in mowing ground, was almost entirely spoiled. The stalks were striped of all their leaves, and when they had eaten all the tender part of the grass, multitudes of them hung fast on the tops thereof, which bowed the stalk towards the ground, and in this situation, after they had spoiled the grass, died themselves...."All flesh is grass."

Indian corn, and English grain, were considerably damaged also. There was only one expedient found, by which people could prevent them from destroying their crops, which was done by digging a trench entirely around their fields. At such a time as this, every thing seemed to preach to the inhabitants; saying repent ye. I remember of having my attention more than usually called up to the concern of my soul, in the above mentioned reformation; by hearing Mr. Benjamin Burch speak about, thinking on death, judgment and eternity. Although I was only 8 or 9 years old, the pride of my heart was so great that I was ashamed to let any one know that I felt concerned about my soul; neither could I bear to have any one see me crying; and so quenched the spirit of the Lord I now felt the need of religion more than ever I had before, I was fully convinced that I must be born again or be damned. I used to frequent secret prayer. The place which I choose for this purpose, was at the foot of a rock, where it seemed there was a place carved out on purpose for me to kneel down at. When I took my late journey into Vermont, I visited the old rock in company with a friend. The rock may be seen about 4 or 5 rods southwesterly from the door of Mr. Walker, who now lives on the same place where my father once lived.

Abner Jones - 02-Meetings, Believing, and Refusal to be Baptized

Meetings, Believing, and Refusal to be Baptized

I shall not trouble the reader with any thing more, until I arrived at ten years of age; at which time the impressions of my mind became much greater than ever. I felt myself miserable without an interest in Christ. At this time there were several others, who appeared to be impressed as well as I.

I remember to have heard of a wonderful meeting just in the edge of Woodstock, under the preaching of Elder Baldwin who then lived in Canaan, in New-Hampshire; but now in Boston. I remember Elder Jedidiah Hibbard preached a sermon in Bridgewater, about this time, at which time, Sylvanus White, and others, appeared to be deeply impressed in their minds. I heard of several about this time of whom it was said that they were converted; but this did not satisfy my mind, all was darkness and gloominess.

About this time there came a man by the name of Snow into these parts, who was a Baptist preacher, or rather an exhorter. He had a meeting appointed one evening about a quarter of a mile from my father's, and I attended the meeting. As I was going to the meeting, I remember of trying to pray that God would have mercy on me. I felt particularly desirous that I might get some good that evening. I do not remember ever to have had such a desire before in all my life. When I sat down in this meeting every thing seemed overspread with gloominess and darkness, and every thing of a religious nature appeared melancholly; and I do not remember that the thought ever passed my mind that religion yielded any joy, or peace; all the advantage I thought of, was that it would save the soul from eternal misery; and on that account I felt desirous to obtain it; feeling fully satisfied of my lost undone situation. As I sat pensive and covered with gloominess, (though I can not say that I saw myself hanging immediately over hell as some have discovered themselves;) it appeared to me as though for a moment I was lost, and then every thing appeared new. I really thought that the preacher, had entirely altered his subject from something that was melancholy and gloomy, to something joyful and happy. The following thoughts passed through my mind in swift succession. What is this? It is something entirely new, and it is in exact opposition to nature, it makes me completely happy; I wish to enjoy it forever. After the speaker had done, my father arose and gave a word of exhortation, as I had often heard him before, which always until that time, seemed to strike my mind with gloominess, but I really thought my father had spoken as he never had before, for it appeared to be glorious. I did not at that time think that the alteration was in me, but through it was in my father. The unspeakable joy and peace which I then felt, I cannot describe. I really thought that I was completely happy, and wished for nothing more. After meeting was over, I recollect of hearing people speaking concerning the things of the world, which to me appeared very disagreeable, and I could not bear to hear the conversation; it made me feel unhappy, in some degree, and the complete happiness which I thought I before enjoyed, was in some degree abated. But the fear of being miserable, was entirely gone from my mind; and the dreary gloom that before rested on my mind, was vanished away. I thought the cause of my

happiness abating was, the worldly conversation that I had heard; so I concluded I would go home, and retire to bed, and there I should be undisturbed and of consequence should enjoy the same complete happiness which I enjoyed before, for it appeared to me, that one moment's enjoyment of what I had experienced, was preferable to all that ever I had enjoyed in all my life. After I came home and had retired to bed, I found myself disappointed, I could get that complete enjoyment that I enjoyed in the meeting; although I felt calm and delivered from all distressing fears. It was now I tried, with all my might, to get that complete happiness again, but could not. All this time I had no idea what it was, that caused this operation in my mind. From whence it came, and whether it went, I could not tell. I had no thought that I was converted. My mind remained in this situation, for a number of days, not knowing what these things meant. At length one day, as I was passing from the house to the barn, these words came with force. "For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found, Luke 15:24." This was the first passage of scripture that ever was set home to my heart. It seemed to open, and explain to my understanding, how I had been dead in sin, and made alive in Christ; and also, how I had been lost; but was now found of Christ as a Saviour. From that moment, a hope sprang up in my soul for eternal life; but the multitude of time, that I have doubted it since, is indescribable.

O! my wanderings, how often have they pained me to the very heart.

I then drew up a conclusion, that I would never reveal it to any one on the earth while I lived on it. In this situation, I passed on for a number of months, enjoying calmness and peace, the greater part of the time. In those days the gospel to me was truly a joyful sound, and I thought I knew it, and felt the blessings of it. "Blessed is the people, that know the joyful sound, Psalms 89:15." The joy that I felt in my soul under the sound of the gospel, may be judged of by those who have felt the same. The circumstances which opened the way for divulging the exercise of my mind, I shall here mention; though perhaps to some they may seem childish. Remember, I was then a child in every sense of the word. Paul says, "when I was a child I spake as a child, &c." In one part of my father's house lived a family, by the name of Palmer, and our family and theirs, were in habits of intimacy. One afternoon, my mother and one of my sisters, and Mrs. Palmer, were conversing on the subject of the singular manner of the divulging some things, which was intended to have been kept as secrets. At that moment, I unwarily observed that I knew of something that I never had revealed to any one. (Having an illusion to the operation of my mind.) I had no sooner thus spoken, than my mother, sister and Mrs. Palmer began to persuade me to reveal the secret; but I utterly refused, telling them, that I never had told any one and that I was determined that I never would. After much persuasion, and to no effect, they gave over. My mother observing that I was struck with great solemnity, and some what agitated, was greatly troubled about me, for fear that I had committed some heinous crime, and so was determined to conceal it. In this situation, my mother and sister withdrew, and left me and Mrs. Palmer alone in the room. Mrs. Palmer then began to entreat me a second time to reveal the secret, but I still refused. After much entreaty, she asked me if I would tell her if she would guess what it was. I told her I would; for I was not afraid of her guessing right. After endeavouring to find out in this was, to no purpose, she asked me if it was of a spiritual or a temporal nature. This question struck me with silence. After being asked a number of times, I told her that it was of a spiritual nature. She then insisted that I should tell her and after some entreaty, I engaged that I would tell her, if she would make a solemn promise, not to reveal it to any other one; to this, she therefore agreed. I then related to her what is above

written, as to the exercise of my mind. While I was relating the dealings of the Lord with me, unto Mrs. Palmer, I felt the divine rekindling in my soul; and I believe Mrs. Palmer enjoyed the same, whose mind had been exercised much in the same way. At this time, I believe I experienced what Paul has written, Romans 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This was the first time that ever I confessed Christ before man, in any degree; and a great blessing I found to my soul. I think my joy was made full at that time, and I felt the love which I enjoyed at the first. After I had related to Mrs. Palmer, I perfectly well remember of her making the following observations, "I thought before that you looked like a minister, and I do not know now but what you will be one. Mrs. Palmer, however, through the solicitations of my mother, soon broke her promise, and divulged the whole matter; and so it was then known to the family, and I was glad of it; for I was willing all the world should know it, for my soul was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. After this I remained in a very happy frame of mind for a few days, at which time, I felt it on my mind to be baptized, and the duty appeared plain; the cross, also appeared great, and I shrunk at it. This threw me into an awful state of darkness, in so much, that many times, I was almost entirely in despair. This was darkness that might be felt. In this situation, I wandered for many months, excepting now and then when I had some refreshing seasons. While I remained in this state of mind, I thought I felt really glad that my station was no always to be in this world of tribulation, although I did not feel myself ready or willing to die at the present time. One Lord's day, when I was retired by myself, and prostrate on my face, contemplating on the matter; I felt the heavenly dew begin to water my soul, and my love to the Saviour, to be in lively exercise. It appeared as though the following question was asked me. Are you willing to die now? At that moment my soul was so completely filled with love, that I answered in the affirmative. I saw no fear in death, it was entirely taken away, and I could say, come Lord Jesus, come quickly. I thought I was entirely willing to resign my body, into the arms of death, and my soul into the arms of my Saviour, that very moment. Another query, seemed to present itself to view, viz. Am I willing to live here on this earth? The answer was ready, yes, I am as willing to stay on this earth, as I should be, to be taken this moment into heaven: yea, it seemed to me that if my station was to fixed on this earthly globe for eternity, and not another creature of God's creation with me; I should be as well pleased, as I should if I were stationed among the shining ranks in heaven. At that time I would not have lifted my finger to have altered anything concerning my self, or any other thing in all the works of God. I thought that I then knew what heaven was, and in order to enjoy it, I need not ascend or descend; but I found it nigh me, even in my heart and in my mouth, and sweeter than honey, yea, than the honeycomb.

After this season was passed, my mind seemed to be much in the same situation, it was before; full of doubts and fears. From the time that I first shrunk at the cross, concerning being baptized; when ever I saw any one baptized, it came before me as a duty also; but I found myself in such a miserable situation, that I dare not obey. Thus, I wandered in darkness for the greater part of the time.

Abner Jones - 03- I am Going Right to Hell

"I am Going Right to Hell" In giving the reader a just account of my exercises, I cannot omit giving an account of the severest trial of my mind that I ever experienced. Whether this trial came upon me the summer following my first finding peace, or a year from that summer, I cannot certainly tell. I perfectly well remember, that I had been in a very gloomy state of mind for a long time; and some times almost in despair; yet I do not remember to have mentioned it to any person. On a certain day, (I think it was in the month of June) in the forenoon, a travelling preacher, had a meeting appointed in Woodstock, about three miles from my father's. I attended the meeting, but found no relief to my mind. I returned home as usual, and ate dinner, after which I went into the field in order to hoe some corn. While I was contemplating on my deplorable case, as sudden as the lightning, it appeared to me that my soul was eternally undone. It came upon me with such force, that I firmly believed it, and now for the first time, I was entirely deprived of HOPE. I really thought that I had begun my eternal, endless, despairing misery. I dropped my hoe as suddenly (it appears to me) as though I had been shot. I never expected to lift my hand again, to perform any part on the stage of life. I knew that I yet had a mortal body to drop into dust; yet, this appeared nothing. It does appear to me, if God's awful voice had pronounced the sentence, depart ye cursed, I could not have felt the weight of it, more than I then did. The thoughts of mercy were not in all my thoughts. It did not so much as come into my mind, to ask for mercy; neither do I remember as I had any inclination to ask for it. I viewed myself in the distressing jaws of eternal despair.

It is not possible for me to give the reader a just idea of the anguish of my soul; it was unspeakably terrible. I had not the least idea, of any injustice in my condemnation, nor did I feel any enmity in my heart against God. In this distressing situation, I repaired to the house in order to tell my mother what had befallen me. When I came to the door, I heard a man conversing, who was I thought, no friend to religion. I therefore turned my course up stairs, and threw myself on the bed; for about the space of half an hour, as near as I can judge, although to me it seemed more like two hours than half of one. While I thus lay on the bed, I endeavored to think of some bodily pain or torture, to compare my distress unto, but these all vanished as the morning fair when the sun appears.

After this man had gone, I came down stairs and met my mother with these words in my mouth. I am going right to hell. My mother made me the following answer. I hope, not my son, remember this. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found. These blessed words revived my spirits a little, insomuch, that I thought it was possible that God might yet have mercy on my poor soul. The immense difference that I felt in my mind, is not possible for me to describe.

After this for many weeks, my mind was in a deeper gloom than ever; a hope however remained, that it was possible that God might have mercy on my soul, and that was all that kept me from distressing despair. As time passed away, this gloom seemed to wear off, and in the course of a number of weeks, I few more careless, although I still had a greater regard for religion, than any other thing on earth. At certain season, I still felt the presence of the Lord, and some times I found the word precious to my soul; I also, still retained final hope. In this situation, I remained for the

most part of the time, until I arrived to the age of about fourteen, at which time, I found my mind growing more careless, and my heart seemed greatly hardened.

Abner Jones - 04-Universalism and Seeking After Vanity

Universalism and Seeking After Vanity In the month of October, 1786, it pleased the Lord, to take away my father by death; he died of a quick consumption. This circumstance, seemed rather to harden my heart, than soften it. A few weeks after my father's death, my eldest brother came home from the state of Rhode Island, who had been gone about three years. I always had a peculiar regard for him, more than any brother, or sister I had. His mind being entirely bent on sport and merriment, proved a great snare to me, and led me still farther from all serious impressions. He was also, a great disputant about religion; and also, a great despiser of experimental religion. He argued in favour of fatality, and of consequence, in favour of universalism. I endeavoured to embrace his system, and for about six years, I strove with all my might to believe it, and as well as I could to vindicate it. The above ideas, I made (?) of, in order to make my mind if possible, to feel a little more easy. In November, the same year, (I think the later part of it) Thanksgiving came on, and a number of the young craft of my age was contriving to have a little dance on Thanksgiving evening, and I was invited to join with them. This invitation threw me into a great quandary, whether to except of it, or not; for I knew such things were wrong, and especially for me. I saw that I must be decided, on one side or the other. After several days agitation on the subject, I came to this awful consideration, that I would go, and that I would for a season, while I remained young, have nothing to do with religion, but would banish every serious impression from my mind, as much as possible. The moment I came to this determination, my heart was hardened in such a manner, as I never felt it before, and so remained for about two years. This passage of Scripture in Hosea, came into my mind, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." After I came to this conclusion, I began to think what I should say to such people, as knew of my former impressions, when they might chance to ask after the situation of my mind: and I came to this determination, that I would give them no answer at all. I now bent all my mind on vanity and folly; and in what the world calls pleasure, I gave full scope to my mind; but alas, it was still vacant. I now dreaded the fight, and hated the appearance of a Christian, lest I should have some reproof from him, for I knew they were more righteous than I. In this situation I then, and do now, consider myself as one of the unhappiest of mankind. It may be asked why, I persisted in a way which made me unhappy? I answer, because the pride of my heart was so great, that I could not bear to be despised.

After about two years, I was made sensible that the Lord had not entirely given me over, for I felt the strivings of his spirit loudly saying, "return unto the Lord, from whom you have so deeply revolted." Often times in the midst of my folly, I felt the reprovings of God's spirit. I remember of having the following reflections in my mind, at a certain Ball, while I stood up and was preparing for the dance. What a fool am I? I have taken more satisfaction in one quarter of an hours enjoyment in religion, than I could in these scene of vanity, if I could enjoy it to eternity. This struck me so that I could scarce perform my part, but to get rid of it, I carried on the higher: and thus grieved the blessed spirit.

I remember a certain time of great impression on my mind, when I was labouring in the field. I felt such awful remorse in my soul, for my ingratitude unto God, I scarce could endure the thought; and for a few minutes, I fully determined that I would return unto the Lord. But when I came to consider how I should be despised and laughed at by my mates, I shrunk back, and so quenched the Spirit, and went on. My ideas at this time were greatly enlarged concerning this world. I began to think of riches, and was determined if I lived, that I would be rich. I did not say, if thee will, I will do thus or so. Among the rest of my desires, I found a great thirst for literature, and information, and the means being small for gaining of them, it often caused me to murmur; as I was obliged to labour every day, yet I improved all my leisure hours (excepting when in company) in either reading or writing, in this way, I made some small progress.

Abner Jones - 05-God's Judgments Against Me

God's Judgments Against Me When I was seventeen years old, I made a bargain with Col. Oliver Williams, of Woodstock, to live with him until I should come of age: for which, I was to receive one hundred acres of land, in Bridgewater, with giving him eleven pounds. Which land I supposed at the period it would become mine, would be worth about one hundred pounds. I now began to think that if I could earn such a sum while I was a minor; that if I could once be free I would get money by handful, and so soon become rich and respectable. But how little did I think that God would blast all my expectations in the bud. Not long after this bargain, the Lord began to visit me with judgments and disappointments, some of which I shall name. I made this agreement, with Col. Williams, in the fall, or fore part of winter. In the spring following, I was sick with the measles, and it appeared to me, that God was visiting me in judgment; for my rebellion against him. However, after getting well, I went on until the fall of the same year. In the month of October, or the latter part of September, I was taken sick with what the doctors called, the remitting bilious fever. I was carried home to my mother's and there I remained until I recovered. After I had been sick a few days, I heard my mother in the other room talking as though she thought I should not get well. I did not like the talk at all; for I was determined that I should not die. One day a Baptist minister came to enquire after me; I heard my mother ask him if he would walk into the other room and see me, he observed that perhaps I was asleep, and that it would disturb me; my mother said she would go and see. At this moment I closed my eyes, pretending that I was sleeping. This I did to prevent the Minister from talking to me, and praying with me. This sickness, I viewed as a judgment from God, for my transgressions. I was as perceptibly impressed on my mind, as though it had been spoken by an audible voice. "If you will not return to the Lord, this shall suffice; if not, I will send a greater punishment upon you." I felt in my heart to say, I cannot return unto the Lord, if I do receive a greater judgment; and I really expected that God would send a sorer judgment than he had yet sent. I was as much convinced of the goodness of religion, and of the necessity of it, as ever I was in my life. But rather than be called a despised Christian; I chose to go on in my awful state of rebellion. After this fit of sickness, nothing worthy of notice happened, until January following. On the sixth day of January, 1791, I was chopping wood in the woods, (about forty rods from Mr. Josiah Dunham's, in Woodstock) by mistake, I struck my axe into my foot, which gave me a bad wound; the effects of which I feel unto this day, by times. I was taken onto a sled, and carried to the house. My wound bled extremely fast; insomuch, that a streak of blood was seen on the snow all the way from the woods to the house. When I got off my stocking and shoe, the blood run a smart stream, and it was with much difficulty that the blood was stopped. The axe went into the joint that connects the great toe to the foot; which sealed off a piece of bone from the toe; which afterwards worked out. When I saw the wound, I concluded the joint was entirely ruined; I therefore took and set my toe in towards the other, telling the people that I would have it so that I could wear a peaked toed shoe. After the blood was stopped, I found myself much exhausted by the loss of it. I now began to reflect on my situation; and I felt the same impression as when I was sick the fall before, only the impression was much stronger. It really seemed as though the Lord said unto me, If you will now return to the Lord, this shall suffice; if not, I will send a greater

punishment upon you. My answer was as before, Lord I cannot return unto thee, I must risk it. My reflection on this subject was terrible, I must acknowledge. The judgments of God, which seemed to follow in such swift succession made me tremble, that a sorer one was yet to come, was terrible to think of. My shameful, unreasonable, ingratitude appeared so horrible, that I could not endure the thought, and so endeavoured to banish it from my mind. When I think on these things, how loud God called, and how stubborn I was, how much light I sinned against; I wonder at the mercy and long sufferings of a gracious God. In the spring following, I got so much better as to go to work again, and my poor soul as stupid as ever. This I continued until July following, at which time by a violent exertion, I burst myself; which entirely disabled me, so that I could not labour. I applied for help to a certain Surgeon, who engaged to heal me of my disorder; but that was in vain, it was all of no use. I now found a sorer judgment indeed. I considered myself as having a complaint that would follow me to my grave; and that it would disable me in such a manner, as that I never should be able to go to work at farming, and so of necessity I must think of some other employment. The first that struck my mind was the study of physic. But after deliberating on the subject, I saw no way by which I could put my wishes in practice for want of money, so I resigned the idea. It now became a matter of deep consideration, what I should do for a living in the world. After many perplexing thoughts on the subject for several weeks, I knew not what to do. I communed with myself in the following manner. I am now nineteen years old, I am not able to work for a living, I have only twenty dollars worth of property in the world; my learning nothing more than common. All my high raised expectations that I formerly had, are eternally blown into the air. What shall I do? I can do nothing at all, but be a miserable creature. What does the Lord send all this upon me for? It was then, I could see plainly that it was for my revolting from the Lord, yet I had no inclination to return unto him. At this period I felt like the wild bull in the net. I felt an awful murmuring against God, because he had placed me in such a state of poverty, and at the same time, had given me a soaring mind after greatness. At this time also, I was made sensible that God called upon me to return, the language seemed as before. If you will return to the Lord this shall suffice, if not, a greater judgment shall come upon thee.

I now returned home to my mother's, greatly mortified, and in great perplexity. I continued to stay at my Mother's until winter. I then went to Woodstock in order to go to school through the winter. Feeling not quite so uneasy in my mind, I determined to try to get some learning in hopes that would stay by me. I do not think I ever saw the people in Woodstock so much bent on vanity and pleasure as they appeared to be that winter, both young and old.

While I was going to school in Woodstock I received a request from Capt. Johnson of Granville, State of New York, who was a clothier by trade, to come and live with him and learn the trade, saying, that the greater part of the business was light; and that my health would admit of working at the business. He made me such proposals as I thought would do, and I determined to go. On the first day of March I took my Journey for Granville, which was about fifty miles. I now felt pretty well pleased, hoping that I had an offer, that in time, I should make a respectable living. When I left home for Granville, I determined to behave myself as well as possible, and from that time to begin to establish my character as a man of good behaviour in the world. When I arrived at Granville, I found every thing as agreeable as I could expect. Capt. Johnson was a father and a friend indeed unto me. After I had been with Capt. Johnson about two Months, he observed that his business would be very light until the fall of the year, and that the people in the district wanted a school, and

if I wished, he would use his influence to introduce me into the school. Capt. Johnson purposed the matter in school-meeting, the matter succeeded, so he engaged the school for me, and in a few days I began my school, and was enabled to give good satisfaction. I now viewed the prospect before me promising. I found that I could give my mind to studying literature, and gain some further knowledge which I greatly thirsted after. There was now a prospect before me of learning a good trade in the seasons of autumn, winter and spring, and of keeping school in summer; which would enable me still to increase my learning and help me to a little money to supply my necessary wants. I now thought myself one of the happiest of men, and concluded that I should yet become learned, rich, and respectable.

I closed my school about the first of September, and returned to Capt. Johnson's and went to work at my business. The second day, I was taken sick with the lake fever. This was on Saturday, I felt very unwell indeed, and in the night I was taken in such distress that the people sent for a doctor, who gave me a little relief. However he could not prevent the fever's having its course. The fever had a smart run, but short. My spirits in this fit of sickness seemed to remain strong and high, hoping that I should soon get better and be able to work again. After I gained strength enough to walk about, I supposed that in a few days I should be able to work as usual. I said surely the bitterness of death is past. But after remaining several weeks, much in the same situation, I grew discouraged and began to fear. I should not be able to attend to business that winter. Capt. Johnson informed me that it was not common for people to recover from that kind of fever, so as to attend to business short of six or eight Months, and that it was not probably that I should be able to do any thing the winter entering. He also proceeded to state to me that he was in immediate need of some one to help him, and as it was not probable that I should be able to work with him, we had better give up our bargain. This proposal was very disagreeable to me; but I could do no other than fall in with it. I found myself again frustrated in all my fair prospects. I now began to reflect back on past time. I now thought of the judgment that God had threatened me with, and it appeared plain to me that God was determined to follow me with his righteous judgment as long as I lived in rebellion against him. I found that I could not get away from the presence of the Lord. I found that my blessings were cursed already. I was made fully sensible that God had determined that I should not satisfy the ambitious desires of my proud heart. I was now cut off from all my flattering prospects and completely disappointed. I knew not what to do now which way to turn; there was nothing but darkness both in this world and that which is to come. I had met with so many disappointments, that I felt entirely discouraged, and determined to spend my life in the most solitary, gloomy manner possible. I felt no wish ever to mingle with society again, and determined that I never would. I never saw the world look more empty than it did then. I should have been glad to meet with death, if there had not been that terrible thought, what will be beyond death. This exercise, I conceive to be, entirely the fruit of disappointment; for I felt no more desire to seek the Lord, or return unto him, than I did before. I now gave myself entirely up for loss, as it respects the things of this world.

After I got so I could ride, I settled all my matters; hired a Horse to ride home to my mother's and a boy to take it back again.

I now viewed myself in a miserable situation. I had not bought much clothing, since I came from Bridgewater, and my clothes began to wax old, and I had no way to get any new ones, and no way to earn any thing. I had no father's house to go to, my mother was married again, and I did not

know as my father in law would feel free to have me come there to a bill of cost to him; yet I had no other place to go unto.

Among all the trials that I had met with for six years past, I had never mingled a tear with them, as I have any remembrance of, and I had drawn a determination, that I never would have the weakness to shed a tear again. When I come to take my leave of Capt. Johnson, I could not refrain from tears. I believe I cried as much as two miles, as I rode on my horse. In the course of two days I arrived at Bridgewater. My friends seemed glad to see me, but I still felt the discouraging gloom on my mind; for I knew not which way to turn.

Abner Jones - 06-A Reformation

A Reformation

After I had been at home a short time, my mother informed me that a wonderful reformation had taken place in Woodstock, among my companions. This caused a little different feeling in my mind, though I paid no attention to it.

After I had been at home a few days I engaged to keep school for the space of three months, at very low wages, yet it was a help to me in my present need. I concluded to make school keeping my constant business. I now began to rise from my present state of gloominess. I concluded that I would make one more attempt to get something in the world. I was now endeavouring to hang upon universalism, and for a few days I had pretty much drawn the determination to go on as usual. On the first day of the week, not long after I came home, I attended a meeting at Mr. Joseph Churchells, in Woodstock, where the reformation was. When I came up to the door-yard, I saw a number of little clusters of people conversing; I drew near enough to hear, and I found they were talking on the subject of religion, which I wished to hear nothing about. I strove to shun the company of the young converts, although intimately acquainted with them before. In the forenoon meeting I got into another room, from where the Christians were, among the opposers; for I was determined that I would have nothing to do with the reformation. At noon-time I had an opportunity of seeing a number of young people with whom I had been formerly acquainted; some of whom were under great distress for their souls, and others who were praising God on the banks of deliverance. This astonishing sight, struck my heart considerably, as hard as it was. The solemn countenances, that I beheld, it appears to me, must be imprinted on my mind as long as I have existence. In the afternoon, I thought if I sat among the opposers, they would certainly discover that I had something on my mind, so I concluded the better way would be, to get among the thickest of them; in hopes of not being discovered. The meeting was introduced in the following manner, by an old gentleman.

He arose from his seat, with lifting up his hands to God, and said, let us pray. This prayer seemed to me, to come right from heaven into my soul; and it seemed as though my eyes were tears indeed. Before the close of this meeting, I believe I had a just view of my awful situation; and came to a full determination that I should seek the Lord until I found pardon. I was then twenty years old.

I now looked back on my past life with awful remorse. I thought of what I had experienced when I was ten years old. I thought on my sinful life that I had lived for about six years past. I knew that I had sinned against the clearest light. I knew that I had rejected the loudest calls. When I considered all those circumstances, I really feared there was no pardon for me. I really thought that there were none of Adam's race that had sinned against such light as I had done. It appeared to me if I could find myself under conviction, I should think my self in a happy situation; I should then hope that I might be converted. Notwithstanding my horrid situation, I had no fear of hell as others told of. My trouble was mostly on account of my daring abuse of God's goodness. My heart appeared as I thought, entirely hardened. I could not open my mouth even in secret, to cry for

mercy.

I remained in this situation of mind for three or four months, before I found any deliverance at all. I cannot say that I ever found any sudden deliverance; but by the smallest degrees, light seemed to increase and darkness disperse. It seemed for a great many months after I found some deliverance, in my mind, that I never should have my soul filled with love, as I had experienced it when I was ten years old.

Abner Jones - 07-Beginning to Take up the Cross

Beginning to Take up the Cross

Before I found much, if any relief in my mind, I could not get rid of these thoughts, viz. I do not know but I shall have to preach, in some future period. These thoughts I treated as temptations, and drove them from my mind as much as possible; they however followed me almost continually. As I often attended conference meetings, I began first to feel impressions to pray, then to speak, &c. When I took up the cross, I found a small blessing. When I shunned the cross, I felt an awful condemnation.

I now began to feel impressed in mind to pray in my school, which cross I took up, and found a blessing in it. I now, began to feel the duty of baptism impress on my mind. This was the latter part of winter, or spring.

It was now I was haunted with the thoughts of preaching more and more, insomuch that I was really afraid I should have to preach; but I would not have mentioned it to any person for the world.

About this time my mother and I were conversing on religion; and she told me she had thoughts I should be a preacher. This surprised me indeed, to think that any other person should have such thoughts about me.

After I closed my school, for a number of weeks, I endeavored to work a little at farming, but my health would not admit of but very little of that kind of exercise. Finding my health so miserable, I determined to take a journey to the eastward, into the State of New-Hampshire, where there had been a great work of the Lord under the preaching of Joshua Smith. On the ninth of June, A.D. 1793, I was baptized by Elder Elisha Ransom, in Woodstock near the north meeting-house. I submitted to this ordinance as a command of the Lord, although I had but a very little feeling sense of it, for I felt the weight of this scripture, the rebellious shall dwell in a dry land. On Monday, the tenth of June, I took my journey on foot, with a budget of clothes on my back, notwithstanding my low state of health. The first day of my journey, I travelled seven miles; the second day I travelled fourteen miles; the third day, I travelled twenty-four miles, which brought me to Grafton, where I had an aunt living.

I tarried at Grafton four days, and on the fifth proceeded on to New Salisbury, twenty-two miles; here I found Elder Elias Smith preaching, with whom I had been formerly acquainted. Here I found a glorious work of reformation going on under Elder Smith's preaching. In this place I tarried one day. Elder Smith preached and baptized. Here I had opportunity of forming an agreeable acquaintance with a number of young converts. I now felt my soul more delivered from doubts and fears, and seemed as though I could rejoice with them that do rejoice. The impression about preaching continued to grow upon me daily. But I kept it concealed as much as possible. June twentieth, I left the pleasing company of Elder Smith, and the young converts at New Salisbury, proceeded through Boscawen, and New-Concord, to Esq. Bryant's, in Bow, twenty miles. Here I met with my old friend, Richard Ransom Smith, brother to Elder E. Smith at New Salisbury. Here,

also I met with Joshua Smith, whom I never had seen before.--In Esq. Bryant's family I found several young converts also. From Bow I proceeded on to Deerfield; here I found Elder Peak preaching, whom I had often heard in Vermont, but it appeared to me that he had lost much of his engagedness, and was conforming to the world. Here I tarried two days, after which I proceeded on to Brentwood, to Mrs. Judkins, eighteen miles, where I tarried until the next day. From Brentwood I proceeded to Exeter, to brother Josiah Perkins, twelve miles. In Exeter I tarried two days, and found a number of brethren. From Exeter I proceeded on to Northhill, to the sea shore. In this neighborhood I continued about ten days, living mainly on fish and salt water, and bathing in the same. This proved of great use to my health, I found that I was gaining strength daily, and for the greater part of the time since, I have enjoyed an increasing state of health.

After this I returned to Ezeter and visited Stratham, where had been a glorious work of the Lord. In Stratham I tarried over Lord's day, and heard Elders Hooper and Crocket preach. After this I returned back through Exeter and Brentwood, to Raymond, here I found brother Uriah Smith, who was just beginning to preach, I travelled in company with him, and visited the people in Epping and Stratham.

After this, I returned on my way towards Vermont. I called at New Salisbury, and tarried several days in company with my old friend, Elder Smith and the young converts. Here I had opportunity of having several good meetings. From New Salisbury, I returned to Bridgewater on the second day of August. While I was gone this journey, I saw much of God's goodness and I hope felt something of it; but still I felt the impression of preaching with greater weight on my mind than ever.

Abner Jones - 08-The Death of My Brother

The Death of My Brother

After I had tarried at home a few days, I heard that my eldest brother was dead, who lived in Stillwater in the state of New-York, about an hundred miles from Bridgewater. This news struck me with an awful sense of the death of a sinner; for there was nothing in the news concerning the state of his mind, and I feared that he died as he lived; hating and despising religion. In a few days after this news I determined to go and see his family, and see if I could learn any thing of his situation. On the fourth of September I set off for Stillwater on horse back, and on the seventh, which was on Saturday; I arrived at Stillwater. When I came within about three miles of the place, I made some enquiry, and the people told me I might depend, that my brother was yet living, but that he was almost gone with the consumption, and when I came to the place I found it as it had been represented. This was a very affecting meeting indeed, even with a brother who was near by the ties of nature, and whom I really supposed had been dead for a number of weeks, but yet I saw him once more in the land of the living; although the very image of death seemed to set on his countenance. I shewed him my badge of mourning, and told him that I had once buried him, but that I yet saw him living. By the symptoms he appeared to be nigh his end, and yet he seemed entirely insensible of it, and thought he was getting better. He told me that he had been much lower than he was then. He told me he had been so low, that he had not the least thought of recovering, yea, he farther added and said, that he once thought that he was dying, and expected to be in the eternal world in a few moments more. I asked him if he had his senses at the time? he said he had perfectly so. I asked him if he at that time believed as he had done before, viz. in fatality and universalism? his answer was yes, pretty much the same. He added farther and said, that he viewed it a great thing to change worlds, but said he, I felt entirely resigned to the will of God. It was a common thing for him when he was well to say, that "he scorned the idea of not being prepared for death, I am prepared for it any moment." My brother continued in this situation until the second Lord's day after my arrival. He used to try his strength every day, by getting up in the bed, so that he could set on the side of it without help, once in each. On Lord's day morning he endeavoured to get up as usual, but found that he could not. He exerted himself to the utmost to get up, insomuch that he sweat like a man in the most violence exercise; but all to no purpose. When he fell back into the bed and gave up the point, he gave up the idea of getting well also, saying, I never shall get well. I asked him if he really believed he should die? he said he was confident that he should not get well. I perceived immediately a great alteration in him. Until this period he seemed to share almost the same sprightliness as when he enjoyed health; but now he seemed to be sunk into a gloom. On the latter part of the same day, when all were absent from his apartment but myself, I took occasion to ask him how he viewed his situation as to another world. He readily gave me the following answer, "I view my case to be deplorable; I have spent all my days in cursing and swearing, and chanting at the sound of the viol, and now I must die and be miserable. I then entered into conversation on the subject, and I think he was in as great distress concerning his soul, as any person that I ever saw, saying that his case was eternally fixed. I think

his lamentation for mispent life exceeded every thing of the kind that I ever heard, I shall therefore add some few of the many heart-rending sentences which this dying man uttered. Said he,

"I am like Balaam, I want to die the death of the righteous, but I dare not offer a few of my last hours to God, when I have rebelled against him all my days. I dare not so much as lift my eyes to heaven to cry for mercy, for there is no mercy for me."

Yet he desired that I would pray for him. I asked him if it was his desire that I should pray for him then? he said it was. I asked him if I should wait till his wife came in? he said, no, pray now. I kneeled down by his bedside and prayed with and for him. His wife who knew nothing of the alteration, came in while I was at prayer, and greatly surprised to see me on my knees, praying for her dying companion, and he also a taking on in bitter lamentation. After I had done praying, he called his wife to his bedside, and taking her by the hand he thus addressed her.

"Sally, prepare for death, before it is too late; there is mercy for you, but as for me there is no mercy for me;" and with many other such words he addressed her, which seemed like barbed arrows darted by the force of lightning, piercing her through and through while the most bitter flood of weeping and mourning, flowed freely like torrents of mighty waters. He then began his sad lamentation to his wife. "I am like Balaam, I want to die the death of the righteous, but I dare not so much as lift my eyes to heaven for mercy; I dare not offer a few of my last hours to his service, when I have spent all my days in sinning against him. There is no mercy for me. Oh! how I have mis-improved all my privileges of going to meeting, and have despised the best of men. Now I would give all the world, if I had it, for one opportunity of attending such a meeting as I have before despised. O my brother, if I only had what you have got, it would be enough, but there is no mercy for me. Here I am in distress, I have lain here until my skin is worn off my body in a number of places. A few more hours will eternally close all my happiness, and I shall awake in hell. Who can dwell with devouring fire? who can inhabit everlasting burnings?" He often repeated the following stanzas.

Behold a man threescore and ten

Upon a dying bed,

Has run his race and got no grace,

An awful sight indeed.

Poor man he lies in sore surprise

And thus he doth complain,

No grace I've got, and I cannot

Recall my time again. This is the truth, I've spend my youth,

In carnal joys and mirth;

Put far away the evil day,

And scarcely thought on death. In middle age I did engage

In the affairs of life,
Some wealth to gain for to sustain
My children and my wife. My sins are all both great and small
Before my fixed eye,
And I must go to endless woe
To burn eternally.

Thus he continued to lament his awful case almost all the time. He warned everyone that came to see him, to prepare for death, and not do as he had done. His great distress of mind and body together, seemed to wear him away like the dew before the sun. This was truly an affecting scene, to see a dying man almost in despair, hastening with rapid strides to the grave, his dear wife almost in distraction to see her companion in such a deplorable situation, dissolving like smoke in the air. All my cry and desire was, that God would pardon his sins before he died, that he might leave some comfort behind to his surviving friends. My brother continued in this situation through the night and all the next day, with no alteration, excepting that he grew weaker very fast. He often observed to this purpose, that he viewed his condemnation entirely just, yet he could not be willing to suffer it. On Monday evening there was a religious friend came in to see him, and converse with him. My brother asked him to pray for him; he did, and I thought he wrestled with God for his soul like good old Jacob. While he was praying my brother lay entirely quiet and attentive, but as soon as he had done he began his usual lamentation, and continued it for a considerable time, but in the midst of it uttered these words, "but I think I can give up all," and his mind was calmed in a moment, when Christ said, peace be still. His language was also changed. Said he, "what is the matter, one minute ago I could not bear the thoughts of dying, now my fears of death and hell are all gone, and I am ready to die this moment. I never knew what happiness was before. I once thought I took pleasure in chanting at the sound of the viol, but one minute now produces more happiness than ever I enjoyed in all my life. Is this my house? continued he--yes, it must be, for I know I have not been moved, it appears entirely new. O my brother, I never loved you before, I thought I did. I never knew what happiness was before. Why do you not sing? I want you should sing." I took Dr. Watts' Psalms, and opened on the 39th. "Teach me the measure of my days," &c. I began to sing it, my brother struck in and sung the bass with me clear through, nearly as well as used to do when he was well. Heaven seemed to set on his countenance. His senses were strong and bright; his soul was as calm as a summer's morning, and thus he continued for the most part of the time until he died, which was about thirty eight hours. The tune in which we sung the above mentioned psalm in, he would frequently be breathing out between his teeth, so loud that one might plainly understand the tune. Thus he continued to do until about an hour and an half before his death. Thus on Wednesday morning, about nine o'clock, he expired in peace, with a smile on his countenance, Sept. 8, 1795. After his funeral was attended, I tarried several days, and then returned to Bridgewater.

Abner Jones - 09-Questioning the Baptists

Questioning the Baptists A few weeks after I returned to Bridgewater, I engaged to teach a school in Hartland, about twelve or thirteen miles from Bridgewater. Here I found myself very agreeably situated in an agreeable neighborhood; but what was still greater, I found a loving company of brethren, with whom my heart was freely united. Here I had opportunity of attending meeting with these brethren, who for the greater part of the time had no preaching, but used to carry on their meeting by improving such gifts as God had blessed them with. In this way we had many glorious and good meetings. Whenever I attended meeting, it was almost certain for me to have some impression either to speak or pray, or both. I was at that time as fully convinced that God had blessed me with a public gift to improve, as I was convinced that he had forgiven my sins; and I felt determined to improve it, yet I could not think it was to preach although it was continually impressed on my mind. I often had passages of scripture resting on my mind, and ideas flowing therefrom, both when I was in meeting, and when I was retired. In Hartland I lived one year and four months; in general, feeling engaged in religion, but not without trials; insomuch that some times it took away my appetite for my necessary food. The trial of preaching was continually on my mind with great weight. I felt my mind much tried about what my brethren called the great mysterious doctrines of the gospel, viz. Election, reprobation, decrees, &c. for I plainly discovered that they preached complete contradictions on the subject, and I read that no lie is of the truth and contradictions must be lies. Thus my mind was in great perplexity concerning these things; which caused me to review them, and compare them by the scriptures of truth, yea in short I took a review of all that I had professed to believe before, and I found I had embraced many things without proper examination. I then drew up a determination to believe and practice just what I found required in the Bible, and no more. There was a Baptist minister that occasionally preached with us in Hartland who often made use of the following expressions. I will have nothing but what I can bring thus saith the Lord, and thus it is written. This put me in search to compare what he preached and practised with the scriptures. The first thing I thought of was the name of our denomination, viz. BAPTIST. When I had searched the New Testament through, to my great astonishment, I could not find the denomination of Baptist mentioned in the whole of it. I only found John the Baptist, or baptiser; he is the only one called a Baptist in all the New Testament. Christ did not call his disciples Baptists, the Christian churches in the apostles' time were not called Baptists. Christ called his disciples brethren and friends. In the time of the apostles, the disciples were first called CHRISTIANS at Antioch. After this search, I denied the name of a Baptist, and so I have continued to do unto this day. I was then willing to own the names disciple, friend, and Christian, unto which I still hold. The second thing that I took into view was the manner in which Baptists built churches, which they boasted of as being apostolic. The manner of building Baptist churches, was then, and is now, as follows, viz.

1st. They must find a certain number of believers in Christ.

2d. They must be baptized, burying them in water in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Thus far they agree with the New Testament.

3d. There must be some articles of faith drawn up, or articles taken from some already drawn up. A church covenant must be added thereunto.

4th. There must be a counsel of ministers, deacons, &c. appointed, and a day fixed when they must be constituted a church. If they find them orthodox, (as they vainly term it) that is, believing their articles of faith, they are constituted a Baptist church. As to the articles of faith and church covenants, the counsel and constitution above mentioned, it is entirely anti-Christian. They are as popish and unscriptural as infant sprinkling; and I find by searching ecclesiastical history, that they were introduced when the church was in the wilderness of Babylon. I then rejected them as traditions of men, and so I do still. The 5th thing was the manner of receiving members into churches, which was as follows, viz. The person to be received into the church must first tell his experience, in order to know whether he or she was a believer; if the brethren received the person as a believer, he was baptized as above mentioned. Thus far it is according to Christ's rule, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." After the person or persons being baptized, the minister used to ask them if they wished to join the church, some wished to, and others did not. When one wished to join, the popish platform and covenant was brought forward and read, if they consented to them, they were received into the church by a hand vote. A fourth thing which presented itself to my view, was the practice of what is called giving the blessing or dismissing the people at the close of the meeting.

Thus far my mind was led to examine at that time. And as faith the Apostle, now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. The Baptists have an unscriptural name. The manner of their baptizing is according to truth; the articles of faith and church covenant; the counsel and constitution, is according to the traditions and doctrines of men; of which the scripture saith, touch not, taste not, handle not. The manner of dismissing the people is the same. I did then reject them with all my heart; may the Lord ever deliver me from them. When I presented these things before the minister, who said that he would have, thus saith the Lord, and thus it is written, for all that he did; although he was a very ready man in the scriptures and kept a concordance in his house, yet he could not recollect the passages of scripture that proved these things, but said they were necessary. The reason why he could not remember them was, because they were not in the bible. When I mentioned these things to my brethren, they seemed almost as much astonished, as though I had denied the bible, saying that I was wild, &c. At that time I viewed myself alone on the earth, not knowing of any one that believed with me.

I think it is my duty to give the reader an account of the travail of my mind as to doctrine. From my infancy I had always been taught the following ideas, viz. That God from all eternity had elected or chosen a certain number for salvation, and that he would call them in such a manner, that they could not resist it, because he had before determined to save them. As for the rest of mankind, they were left to work out their own damnation by sin; yet they held that God gave them a common call, which he never meant they should obey, yet the condemnation would entirely turn upon the creature, because he did not obey. As for unenlightened heathens, it was held that they all must be damned, because they had not the light of the gospel. O! horrid ignorance. As I felt in great trials about preaching, it was a query in my mind whether God called men to preach contradiction, yea, I was fully convinced that he did not. Under this trial I besought the Lord that he would shew me the consistent line of truth respecting these things; promising that if he would, I would go and preach the gospel to sinners if he called me thereunto. My mind remained in this situation for a

considerable time; at length one day the Lord opened my eyes to see it from this passage of scripture, St. John 16:8, "and when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." A part of the 13th verse followed, viz. "he will guide you into all truth." These scriptures seemed to come with great and sweet power on my mind, and the following reflections seemed freely to flow. (I knew it was the holy ghost or comforter that was to reprove the world of sin, and guide into all truth.)

What is meant by the world here? The inhabitants, for Christ said to his disciples, I have chosen you out of the world. Here for the first time, I saw all men reprov'd by the spirit of God. The thought struck my mind, who is here said shall be guided into all truth? the answer was, the apostles. The thought struck my mind, why does it not guide all men into the truth? The answer was, because they will not follow it. Here my mind was brought out of a dark, narrow prison, into the clear sunshine of a free gospel offer'd to all men; and in such a manner as that they might really partake of it.

Glory to God for this salvation. I never saw the consistency of the creature's condemnation in such a clear light before. My soul was set at liberty. I discovered also, a consistent way of preaching to sinners. Afterwards, when I came to read the scripture, I found this consistent chain running thro' the whole. I found Christ was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The Lord God is a sun and a shield, darting his rays of light in as many directions as there are souls to see it. On whom doth not his light arise? Those ideas were entirely new to me, for I never heard them held forth by any body, neither had I heard of any body that believed them; and so foolish was I as to believe that no other person ever did believe them. I cried out, my hand is against every man's hand, and every man's hand against my hand. When I came to think on the subject, I dare not communicate it to my brethren, supposing that they would call me a worse heretic than they did before; so I hid my light under a bed of Calvinism, which brought great darkness on my mind. And I do not remember of divulging it to any person, for more than five years.

Abner Jones - 10-Still Resisting the Call to Preach

Still Resisting the Call to Preach

After living in Hartland a year and four months, I engaged to keep a school in Hartford, the town adjoining on the north. In Hartford I found myself very differently situated from what I was in Hartland. The people in Hartford were very civil and polite, and used me with good manners; finally, I never was treated more handsomely in any place than in Hartford.

About this time I had a great notion of entering into the study of Physic, and strong conflict I had on the subject, for as yet it was strongly impressed on my mind, that I must go out into the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Here I laid down my public testimony, & I had no sooner done it than I found condemnation, and the life and power of religion seemed to vanish away. I felt no inclination to join with the usual amusement of the times, yet I did not feel engaged in religion, and when I attempted to pray I felt very little freedom, and a great deal of condemnation. Whenever I asked God for a blessing, the way to obtain it seemed to be pointed out to me by doing my duty, viz. by improving what he had already given me. When the duty was presented to me, I felt a shrinking, saying, Lord I cannot. After a while it became such a trial, that when I attempted to pray, I felt such condemnation, that I dare say nothing more than God be merciful to me a sinner. In this eclipse of the sun and dark time of the moon, I dove into the study of Physic head and ears. I now gave my mind entirely up to the study. I read no books only such as concerned my study, (to my great shame.) I almost entirely left of reading the bible, which for two years before, had been almost entirely my study. By this time I had gotten where I dare not pray in any form whatever. The moment that I even thought of praying, duty would present itself right before me, and I felt entirely unwilling to do it. This often struck me with such condemnation, that I could not endure it, but was obliged to cast it out of my mind as soon as possible; yes, I dared not think on the subject.

Thus I remained in my mind more than five years. I do not think there was a day passed in the course of the above mentioned five years, but what the thoughts of preaching would be troubling of me, and I endeavouring to banish them from me. I was in this situation when I married. When I really concluded to marry, I viewed the matter to be solemn, and concluded it was my duty to make known to my intended the situation I was in. I asked her if she thought that she was acquainted with the man with whom she expected to unite for life? She said she thought she was. I told her that she was under a mistake. I farther proceeded to tell her that I was a deserter from my native country, and that I intended to return home some time or another, and if she was not willing to go with me, I should leave her. That is, said I, I have made profession of religion, and have revolted from it, and I hope I shall yet return. But I must tell you farther, I have been tried in my mind concerning preaching, and I expect that I must yet preach, although I am so in the world now. Said I, God has always visited me with judgments for my rebellion, and I expect God will still visit me with judgments again. I expect to be one of the poorest creatures of all God's creation. I farther proceeded to say, I expect after I have been married three or four years, and have three or four children around us in rags, crying for bread and milk, and I not a suit of clothes decent to appear

abroad, and my wife in rags at home; in this situation I expect I shall have to go out preaching, and if you are not willing to marry such a man as I have described, you must not marry me.

While I lived in Hartland, which was about two years and an half, I feel to confess with shame that I did not live as a Christian ought to live. I was shamefully mixed with people like Ephraim of old, (although I did not join with any profanity, not yet with the youth in their scenes of vanity) but I trust that I feel heartily to forsake it, believing that I have found pardon for the same.

After I left Hartford, I lived about one year in Grafton, in the State of New-Hampshire, but not finding business to my mind, I left Grafton, and removed into the town of Lyndon, in Vermont, County of Caledonia.

While I lived in Grafton, I must confess I found my attention more taken up on the things of the world; the riches and honors of the same were objects that took my main attention. Here by degrees my mind was more and more drawn away. My good name in the world I wanted to maintain, and rather than be odd when I fell into company, I began to join in those amusements, for which I felt greatly condemned. I feel, before God, to confess it was entirely wrong. I hope no one will stumble over my stumbling blocks, for I feel it a duty and pleasure to remove them out of the way.

After moving to Lyndon, my mind was altogether taken up in the things of the world. I was well pleased with the country and people. The country was new, but the soil was rich, and it was settling rapidly with very likely, enterprising people as to the things of this world, but paid very little attention or no attention to religion. Here also, as well as in Grafton, I was endeavoring to maintain an honorable name in the world, and at the same time was striving with all my might to accumulate property. In that part of the country my business lead me into all kinds of company, both civil and profane, and I joined with them in a great degree, I confess; but as to their profanity and gambling I did not join with it. When I fell in company, I joined with them in what the world called innocent amusement. This, I generally did out of accommodation, lest I should be looked upon as singular. But now I feel free to confess that I did entirely wrong. I feel to testify that these things lead down to death. In the course of the third year of my living in Lyndon, I read in the news paper, a number of accounts of revivals of religion at the southward, and could not help feeling glad as dead as I was; and I really wished it might come into our northern climes. I thought I should be willing to go fifty miles, for the sake of seeing a reformation. Not many days after this, I heard of a reformation in Billymead, about ten mile to the northward of us. This struck me with a considerable weight, and set me on consideration of my ways. I had not felt so great impressions on my mind for more than five years past, yet I kept it, entirely concealed. I drew up a determination that I would go and see it; but there was so much talk about it, and so much ridicule made of it, that I was ashamed to go for fear of being reproached on the account; and so I never went for about six weeks. My mind was much exercised at times, although I kept it concealed as much as possible. At length, one Saturday night, I was called upon to go into the neighborhood, where the reformation was, to visit a person who was very sick. I determined therefore, that I would tarry over night, and on the sabbath day would go to meeting, and see the reformation. As I had seen two reformations before in Woodstock, I had it all planned out in my mind how it would appear, supposing it would be very solemn and entirely still, for I had never seen any noisy meetings; but when I came to see and hear, I found myself much disappointed. There was a great outcry among some for mercy. Many

were groaning, some crying amen, others crying glory to God. These things were new to me, which made me greatly doubt whether it was the work of God or not; but when I looked at the fruit I found it was good, so I concluded the work was good, although I could not see through their making so much noise. This meeting took great hold of my mind, and I felt it my duty to confess my backsliding, but the pride of my heart was so great that I did not comply. Here I had opportunity of seeing and hearing elder Quimby of Sandwich.

Abner Jones - 11- What has befallen Dr. Jones?

“What has befallen Dr. Jones?”

After this meeting, for the greater part of the time, I felt a great burden on my mind, but I told no one of it, for my proud heart was not willing to be despised. I now found it hard to keep up my usual uprightness, yet I strove hard to do it. But at length my impressions were so great I could not conceal them. I never found any relief in my mind, until I came to a determination, that I would do my duty; which was first to confess and forsake; secondly, to take up my testimony which I had laid down. My confession I made both public and private, at meetings, among my neighbors, and in my own family. This caused no small talk among the people, saying, what has befallen Doctor Jones? has he got to be one of the Billymead Christians? &c. Some said, he has nothing to confess, for he always behaved himself very civilly. Some said, he is a little deluded, he will soon get over it. Some said, he is feared, it will not last long. Some of the Children of the devil raised up false reports about I confessed, saying, that I confessed particular out breaking crimes that I was guilty of, but that was false. I own with shame that my life was filled up with lightness and vanity, but what is termed out breakings, I was not guilty of. When I think how I have wounded the cause, and brought up an evil report of the goodly land, I must confess I feel ashamed before God and man. I think I have great reason of thankfulness. O may I walk softly before the Lord all my days. O brother backslider, if this should fall into your hands, I entreat of you, for Christ's sake, to return, and dwell no longer on barren mountains.

After this I felt my soul once more encircled in the arms of a reconciled God. Glory to his name therefore. This was I think in the month of December 1800. After this I felt it from the Lord laid upon me, to warn my fellow mortals, and to call upon them to come to Christ, which also I endeavoured to do, as opportunity presented. I also felt the trial of preaching seven fold greater than ever, if possible. Thus I continued until the next September. The impression of preaching at length was so strong on my mind, that it seemed to wean me from my business entirely, and it became a great burden to attend to it, which before used to be a delight. My mind was entirely turned from the subject of Physic, neither could I get my mind upon it. Often times while I was on my horse riding, texts of scripture would come with force on my mind, and ideas flowing from them, and I longing to be among people where I could preach the Gospel unto them. I still, however, had trials on my mind whether those impressions were not temptations from Satan, or the fruit of a forward mind, or some thing that was not from the Lord. At times I had great trials in my mind about leaving all my prospect of worldly gain, which was then pretty considerable. I found my business was gaining ground in so much that it yielded double the profit to what it did one year before, and my mind was led to go right out, and give myself entirely to preaching the word, and so of consequence I must give up my business. At a certain time when I was retired, and enquiring of the Lord what I should do; This scripture in Proverbs 18:16, came into my mind with great weight. "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men." This scripture calmed my mind in a moment, and I felt entirely at peace. I now made a solemn vow to God that if he would open doors for me to preach without any of my endeavors, I would consider it as room made for

me; I also promised the Lord that I would go when ever room was made for me. I now concluded that I would say nothing to any person about my trials concerning preaching, but wait and see if the Lord put it into the heart of any one to ask me to come and preach at their house. And for a few days I felt entirely delivered from all anxiety about the matter. Not long after this I was called upon one evening to ride about 5 miles to a person who was sick. While I was on the way I fell into religious conversation with the man who came after me, viz. Mr. Peck. He informed me that he had been seriously impressed in times past, and that he still felt something of it. He said his neighbors all made light of these things excepting one or two. We had some conversation, about the reformation at Billeymead. He said his neighbors made sport of the reformation at Billeymead, and that was a great part of their conversation. I observed that I should really be glad to see them together, for I had been to Billeymead and had seen the reformation myself, and that I should feel happy to tell them what I knew about the reformation. Mr. Peck then said he wished I would come out to his house some time and hold a meeting, saying, he would notify his neighbors, and he guessed they would come. At first I made but little answer to the request for I must confess I was some surprised at the request, for I never had named the matter of preaching to him; I had never said much about it to any one. This however brought my vow before me, viz. that I would go where the Lord made room for me by putting of it into their hearts to come and ask me to preach in their houses. A query arose in my mind whether this door was opened of the Lord, or whether I had pushed it open myself, by saying that I should like to see his neighbor's together, that I might tell them what I knew of the reformation. I did not give him any direct answer at first. But the circumstances were such that I tarried all night in the neighborhood. The next morning Mr. Peck wished for an answer, and at length I told him I would come on such a sabbath, unless I was called away to attend on the sick. When the day arrived, I had a number of sick people to attend to, I however attended upon them in the forenoon, and rode to my appointment in the afternoon. As I rode along, I prayed in spirit continually, that the Lord would decide the doubtful case that day, whether he had called me to preach or not; if he had not called me, I prayed him to confound me before the people, and shut me up in silence; but that if he had called me, he would give me a message right from Heaven, in such a manner, as that I might know that it was from the Lord. A few days later, I composed the following hymn on the subject, (in Smith and Jones' collection, page 78.)

O LORD, I pray that thou wilt show
Whether that I am call'd to go.
And found the gospel trumpet loud,
To high and low, to meek and proud. When I before the people stand
O Lord, I ask it at thy hand.
To chain my tongue in silence tight,
If thus to speak I am not right. But if thou sayest unto me, Go,
O may thy spirit sweetly flow
Into my soul, and my tongue loose!

Then I'll proclaim the joyful news:
Peace on earth, to men good will;
Come, all who thirst, and drink your fill;
Come, taste of Jesus' dying love,
And you shall reign with him above. But if you will refuse to come,
Christ will declare your dreadful doom:
Depart from me, I know you not;
From my fair book your name I'll blot.
Depart from me; it is too late:
You've spent your day, and fix'd your fate
In darkness, blackness, and despair;
And no deliv'rance you shall share.

Abner Jones - 12-My First Experience Preaching

My First Experience Preaching As I was riding through a piece of woods, about half a mile from the place where the meeting was appointed, the following words came to my mind with great weight, "But they made light of it." In the language of my mind I cried out, O Lord, I know not where these words are; if it is they will that I should preach from them to day, I pray thee direct me immediately to them. My meaning was, that I might open the bible and cast my eyes immediately on that sentence, even that it might be the first word that I should see in the bible. When I arrived at the house, I found nearly all the neighborhood collected together, (I suppose they thought to hear some strange thing.) When I entered the house, a chair was presented me for a seat, with a small table before it, with a bible and psalm book on it; a new seat indeed for me, but I must take it without hesitation, as the people all expected I was about to try to preach. I soon took up the bible to see whether the Lord would answer my request, and to my great joy and surprise, my prayer was answered completely, insomuch, that the first place I opened was the very place, and the very first sentence that my eyes caught, was, BUT THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT, Matthew 22:5. The manner of the words coming to me, together with the manner of my finding them, raised my mind above every trial and fear, although I was about to attempt something very great and entirely new. After introducing the meeting by singing and praying, I read the whole parable to the people which reads as follows. "And Jesus answered and spake unto them again in parables, and said, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which were bidden, behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm; another to merchandize, &c." And I think my mind on the occasion, was drawn out in such a manner as I scarce ever had it before. It pleased the Lord to deliver me entirely from the fear of man, and my whole mind was occupied on the subject, insomuch that I think I can say I was not interrupted with one worldly thought in my discourse; yea, I can say I was not troubled with one wandering thought of any nature whatsoever. It appeared to me as though every person present heard as for their lives, and a more attentive meeting I never saw.

I treated the subject in the following manner: First, to take notice of what the character in the text made light of; this I considered in two particulars; first, the gospel feast; secondly, the invitation to the same, and thirdly, I endeavoured to shew how people made light of the gospel feast, and invitation to the same. In giving a description of the gospel feast, I considered several particulars, such as its being full and exhaustless, rich and freely offered to all the sons of Adam, in such a manner as that they might receive it without money and without price. I held it up as being ready in the present time. The invitation to this feast I considered as being just as extensive as the nature of the feast would admit; and this I considered as reaching every son and daughter of Adam, without distinction, calling loudly as in the language of our context; Come, for all things are now ready. In shewing how people made light of the all important subject, I pointed out a number of

ways which people made use of in performing the wicked action, viz. such as making sport of the work of God in reformations, making use of the scriptures in a funny way to carry on their sport; also, by ridiculing the expressions of young converts, and souls under distress, &c. I endeavoured to shew the consequence of making light, viz. that if persisted in, it would end in damnation; and in short, that the only reason why any were damned was, because they would not receive the gospel, when it was offered to them without money and without price. The people seemed to hear with all diligence, and even with astonishment, for it seemed as though they scarce moved hand, foot or eye, while I was speaking. Among the rest of my hearers, I observed one man by the name of Burns, who seemed as attentive to hear as any, but of his dress (and also of his intentions in coming to meeting, as he afterwards told me) merits a particular description. His dress was his dirty frock and trowsers, which he had worn about the dirtiest kind of work, he had neither stockings nor shoes on; however, he appeared to hear with as strict attention as any one present, and behaved himself with as much propriety. In preaching this discourse, I entirely freed my mind of the burden that laid on it. I felt almost, if not quite, as great a deliverance as when I was first converted. When I came to walk, it seemed as though I hardly touched the ground. I felt certain that the Lord assisted me in delivering his subject, as it was entirely unstudied, and as new to me as it was to my hearers; and at that present moment, I did not think whether I should ever want to preach again or not. The first assembly to which I preached, was almost as singular as my sermon; for there was not one present that professed religion, of any denomination whatever; and I do not know as there were more than two persons present that appeared (previous to this meeting) to have any regard for religion in the least.

Before I went from the house where I held the meeting, the man of the house asked me to come and attend another meeting. This threw me into a trial at first, but after calling to mind my vow, viz. that I would preach, wherever doors opened, I dared not refuse. So I appointed a meeting the third Sabbath from that day, unless I was detained by visiting the sick. Notwithstanding the evidences that I had of the Lord's helping me when I attempted to preach before, yet my mind fell into great doubts whether the Lord was calling me to preach any more; although I was sure he assisted me the other time, yet my vow rested so weightily upon me that I dare not go back. Before the time arrived for my second appointment, I saw the above named Mr. Burns who desired me to step aside, being in company, and he thus began to address me, "Doct'r, I understood before you come into our neighborhood to preach, that you were coming on purpose to give me a dressing, on account of my making light of the reformation in Billymead, and when I heard of it I swore that if you said one word that come across me, I would oppose you; and when you come to preach, I fully believed what I had heard for I never had such a dressing in all my life." I then asked him why he did not do as he swore he would? he replied, "my wife asked me when I came out of meeting, why I did not oppose you as I said I would? I told her it was handsomely done, and I thought it best for me to hold my peace. And now I wish you would come and preach among us as often as you can.

I told Mr. Burns that I had no particular intention to preach to him, more than any one present, and also that I never said any such thing as he had heard; but that if any thing come close to him, he must conclude that the Lord directed it, as I had nothing studied out before hand, only to speak as the Lord enabled me. I suppose some rude chaps, hearing that I was expected to attend meeting in the neighborhood, made up this story in a funny way, and told it to Mr. Burns in order to make sport, in hopes that Mr. Burns would really blackguard me in meeting.

Abner Jones - 13- I did not at that time call my improvements ■preaching■.

"I did not at that time call my improvements 'preaching'." The week following, I had some business in Danville, and after having attended to my business, I thought that I would call on Deacon Dow, who lived near the court house. I believe I had never seen the Deacon more than twice before that time, and that was in meeting; for I never was in his house before. When I first went to the house Deacon Dow was not at home, but I was courteously received by his wife and family, who never saw me before excepting one of his daughters, who introduced me to her mother. After I had been there perhaps an hour or such a matter, the old gentleman came home, who seemed very glad to see me, and as near as I can recollect, addressed me in the following manner, "Well brother Jones I am glad to see you, I want you should come to my house and preach." I answered, what do you mean? I never preached in my life. For I did not at that time call my improvements preaching. And I was very sure in my own mind that he had not heard of my attempting to speak in the way that I have described above. He answered, I know that, but the Lord has shewed me that you have got to preach. You have got to give up your practice of physic, and all your ideas of greatness, and be a preacher; and now my house is free, and you must come and preach here. This declaration and invitation together, almost thunder struck me, my vow that I made to the Lord was fresh before me, (viz.) That if the Lord would put it into the hearts of the people to open their doors, I would consider it as a token from God, that he had called me to preach, and that I would improve when such doors were open. I felt also what the Apostle Paul said, "WOE IS ME IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL." Therefore I dare do no other way than to appoint the meeting, but I appointed it a number of weeks forward, so that it would not come until after my other appointment. I believe it was not more than two weeks after I made the above vow, before I was invited to preach in four different towns. At length the time arrived for my second appointment, it being on the first day of the week. I now found myself under as great a trial as at the first, my fears were that I now was about to run when no tidings were ready, and if that should provide to be the case, I should wound the cause, and be confounded before the people. I had not one doubt but what God helped me when I attempted to preach, and gave me a message from heaven; but now I feared I was going in my own name. But no discharge in this war for me, I have put my hand to the plough and dare not look back. So I mounted my horse in the morning to ride about five miles to preach, but the feelings of my soul I cannot describe. I however set out with the same servant designs as when I first went to the same place on the same errand, viz. Lord if thou has called me to go and preach to day, gave me a message right from heaven, if not chain up my mouth before the people in such a manner that I cannot speak. I thought if he was determined to give me a text to preach from, I should receive it in the same piece of woods, where I received my first message, as I have before described. But to my great surprise, I had no passage of scripture come to mind, one more than another, and so I began to feel extremely tried and cast down. In this situation I passed on to the place appointed. When I came thither I found myself under a new trial; for not so much as one person had assembled for meeting. I now began to conclude that the people did not succeed to their minds in

opposing me in my first sermon and now they had made an agreement together not to come to meeting, so that I should not have any body to hear me, so impose upon me in that way. I began to think how the people would salute me on my return, and say who have you been visiting this way that is sick, &c. O, thought I, what can I say? how can I see any body? what a fine story by tomorrow will be ringing over town (viz.) Doct. Jones has tried to preach once, and appointed to preach again, and not one soul went to hear him. While these thoughts were passing my mind, the people began to collect for meeting, so this temptation proved short lived, for in a small pace of time almost every person in the neighborhood assembled.

I now began to be exercised very differently from what I was a few minutes before; my cry was, Lord what shall I say to these people? for I have no passage of scripture on my mind, one more than another. While I sat there I could not fix my mind on one passage of scripture in all the bible, I turned the bible from place to place, but could not find any lead of mind on any thing. I thought of some scriptures, that my mind had been greatly lead upon in times past, but my mind seemed entirely shut up, even to the ideas that had been on my mind before. I was then still more confirmed that the Lord helped me in trying to preach before, for if I might had a thousand worlds, I could not speak as I had done before. In this situation, I began to think, surely I have run this time before I was sent, and God has heard my prayers, and stopped my mouth completely. I was just thinking of telling the people that I could not speak, unless the Lord gave me something to say, and that he had not given me any thing, and so I had nothing for them. But suddenly this passage of scripture rolled through my mind, "is any afflicted let them pray." I had no ideas to speak from that scripture, only it taught me that it was my duty to pray, I immediately obeyed and found freedom in the same.

After I arose from prayer, one of Dr. Watts Psalms or Hymns, struck my mind to read and sing, and yet I had no text on my mind to speak from. I rose up to read the Psalm, or Hymn, with as much composure as ever I did in my life for ought I know, but after I had read it I felt for a moment a kind of fluttering in my mind, for no one present was capable of taking the lead of singing but myself, therefore this must fall on me also, yet I had no text to preach from. These thoughts passed my mind; O that some one was capable of taking the lead of singing, perhaps I might find something to preach from while they are singing. The thought then passed my mind, the Lord never requested more from his creatures than he will enable them to perform, and so my mind was calmed in a moment. I named a tune and went on and sung with as much deliberation as usual; as we were singing the last, or the last verse but one, this passage of scripture rolled through my soul and brought with it a pleasing chain of ideas. "Lord how is it that thou will manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world," John 14:22. This passage of scripture was quite new to me, for I do not think I ever had a moment's contemplation on it in my life, neither did I know where to find it, only I knew it was Christ's words.

After singing I sat down and opened the bible, wishing to find my text, and turning a leaf or two over I cast my eye on the passage. I rose up and named my text, and God assisted me to speak with great freedom. I dwelt principally on Christ's manifesting himself to his children, and among the rest I told my hearers, how he manifested himself to me in giving me the text to preach from. A very great attention to hear the word, appeared in every person present, and there seemed a very great solemnity on the minds of the people. After meeting I was desired to appoint another meeting, which I accordingly did. My third meeting was in the same place where my two first were,

my text was in the 2d. Psalms 12:1-8 th verse. "Kiss the son, lest he be angry, & ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled, but a little. Blessed are all they, who put their trust in him." I had great freedom in speaking, and the people seemed to hear with solemn attention. Since that time I have not preached in that neighborhood. My fourth appointment was at Danville, at Maj. Morrill's. My text was, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life," &c. I found very little freedom in speaking, and my soul was exceedingly tried, for I had until that time found great freedom in speaking. But notwithstanding my embarrassment in the day time, Deacon Dow, insisted that I should appoint a meeting in the evening at his house, so I did, in the midst of smoking furnace. This evening was the first time that I had attempted to speak more than once in one day; but the Lord stood by me and gave me freedom that evening. I then felt my soul greatly refreshed, and fully determined to go on in my feeble manner preaching Christ. If I recollect right, I preached also on Mond. afternoon, & on Tuesday returned home, being absent from Sunday morning, until Tuesday.

Abner Jones - 14-Be a Doctor or Be a Preacher?

Be a Doctor or Be a Preacher? In this period of time I had calls to go among the sick, and no small stir was made among the people about my turning preacher, as they termed it. When I returned home I found Mrs. Jones under great agitation about the loss that I met with, since I had been gone, for so many dollars I might have earned, if I had been at home; what was worse than all the rest, was the mortification she had received by peoples calling and saying where is the Doct.? I told them you was gone to Danville. What said they, is he gone to doctor any body, or is he gone to meeting to preach? I told them I supposed you were gone to meeting, and I supposed some body was sick too. Well said they, if he does not attend to his business better, we must have another doctor, if he is going to be gone so. She said that she was saluted four times in one night, hallow! where is the doct.? and I had to tell them, gone to Danville, gone to Danville. My wife concluded it was as much my duty to stay at home, and attend to my business, as it was to go about preaching, earning nothing. Said she, you say yourself you will not be settled, and have a salary, but only receive just what the people are pleased to give you, and as for the cold hand of charity, that will never maintain any body. Once you wanted to have something in the world as well as I, but now you care nothing about it, all you care for is to go about and preach. We shall soon come to nothing, and be as poor as poverty itself and come to begging. I told my wife that what she said concerning poverty, it was quite likely would be true, for I expected nothing but to be poor, in this world. I asked my wife if she did not remember what I told her before we were married, about preaching and being poor? her answer was I do not know as I do. I then said, do you not remember, that I asked you before we were married, whether you were acquainted with the person, with whom you expected to unite with for life. You said you thought you did. I then told you that you were under a mistake. For I was not a native of this country, but that I was a runaway from my native country, and I expected that if I lived, I should return some time or other, and that if you did not like to go with me, I should go and leave you. That is, said I, I have been a professor of religion, and wandered from it, but I hope to return some time or other, and enjoy religion again. But I must tell you still further, that I have been tried about preaching, and I expect that I must preach yet; for God always visited me with judgments for my wanderings from him, and I expect he will still continue to do so. I expect after I have been married three or four years, and have had three or four children, and my children crying for bread and milk, and my wife in rags, and I not a suit of clothes decent to appear abroad; in this situation I expect to have to go out and preach, and if you cannot be willing to come to this, you must not marry me.

I then asked her again, do you not remember I told all this? she then acknowledged she did. I then told her it was not so bad yet, for my family was not in want, and moreover, through the goodness of God, my wife is not in rags, and I have yet a decent suit of clothes to wear. I told my wife that I believed it was my duty to preach, and that if I had lost five thousand dollars, I should not begrudge it, I had seen so much of the goodness of God. I proceeded to say, we have enough to last us one year to live upon, and I am determined to spend my time in preaching, while that lasts, and if no door opens for me to maintain my family, I will return to my former occupation, or any

other lawful business. And I can say, at that time I felt willing to make a full surrender of all that I had, both property and family, time and talents.

Directly after this conversation the Doctor of a neighboring town came in to see me. He had been called to go to some of the places, where I had been called upon to go in my absence. He also gave me a considerable of a lecture, on the impropriety of leaving my business, but I let him know my intentions also. By this time, a number of my acquaintance began to enquire whether I meant to give up my business and go about preaching. I told them plainly that I did, and that they might look out for another doctor as soon as they pleased. Some said one thing, and some another; some urged, what will you do to maintain your family? you are now in good business, and who will pity you, if you suffer ever so much, if you leave your business? Some said, you will be glad to take it up again or beg, &c. Some said, well, if you are determined to preach, preach on Sabbath days and evenings, but attend to your business on week days. I believe it would fill a large volume, to write all that was said to, and about me on this subject, but this must suffice for this place, but more by and by. By this time it was noised abroad that I had given up business and gone to preaching. And indeed so many doors opened for preaching, that in a short time, my time was all taken up.

I now made it my business to settle with every one that I had dealings with, and so drew my business to a close as soon as possible. About this time, I had great trials in my mind, about my dear wife and children's suffering on my account, for I saw no way for the support of my family, only what little I had before hand, and that would soon be gone. On my own part I felt as tho' I deserved nothing but poverty and sufferings, on account of my former rebellion. But thoughts of my wife and children's suffering on my account, I shall not reckon among my least trials. I was also under the greatest doubts possible at times, whether the Lord had called me or not, and yet I could not go back, on account of the vow that I made to the Lord; for doors kept opening more and more continually, and my promise to the Lord was, to go where doors opened, so there was no way for me to go back.

I was like the leapers at the gate of Samaria. "If we stay here we must die, if we go into the city we cannot but die." So it was with me, If I stay here I must die, and if I go forward to preach I can but die. Under these afflictions, the words of Paul were a great consolation to me. "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." So with Paul I felt determined to suffer the loss of all things. I never set out to preach the gospel for the sake of money, or honor, or ease, but because, "woe is me if I preach not the Gospel."

Under these exercises of mind which I have above mentioned, I was lead to cry unto the Lord that if he had called me to preach, to open some unexpected way for the support of my family, that the cause might not be wounded in this way, for the people said my family would soon suffer, but blessed be God we have not yet. And I will take occasion here to say that I never have once been sorry that I give up my business. It is now a little over six years since I began to preach, and the Lord has been much more bountiful to me than what I deserve, or expected. The desire that I have just mentioned, that the Lord would provide some way, for the support of my family, was that which rested with great weight on my mind, for a number of months. In the latter part of October or the first part of November, I took a journey to Hartford, Woodstock, Bridgewater, &c. In this journey I had repeated opportunities of preaching among my former acquaintance, generally with freedom.

In Woodstock and the vicinity around I found the work of the Lord, powerfully going on among many of my acquaintance, and particularly, in my wife's father's family. I also heard of a good work that had lately taken place in Lebanon, New-Hampshire, at the mouth of white river, I felt also a particular desire to visit the people there, but as I had no invitation I did not go; for I always go by invitation, and in no other way to any place to preach. I returned home about the last of November. I commenced preaching in September 1801.

Abner Jones - 15-The Lord Provides

The Lord Provides

After this I continued to preach in Lyndon, Wheelock, Sheffield, Billeymead, Burk, Danville and Peacham. In Lyndon, the town where I lived, there were about a dozen of us who covenanted together in Church, by the name of CHRISTIANS only. This was as my mind had been lead for a number of years before. In the month of February following, I set out in a sleigh, with my wife and two children, to go to Woodstock, and other places, to visit our friends. We called at Vershire to visit Mrs. Jones' brother and family. There I found a good work of God going on, this was the second noisy reformation that I ever saw, yet I fully believed it was a good, powerful work of God. But whether the Lord called them to make so much noise, I leave with him who knows all things. From thence we came to Hartford, where I preached on the Lord's day, and evening. Here I had an invitation to go to Lebanon, and Hanover to preach. We afterwards proceeded on to Woodstock, and Bridgewater; in those towns we tarried several weeks. Here I had an opportunity of preaching frequently. I then went to Lebanon, according to invitation, and preached three times. After I had preached the third time, there were 3 brethren, who requested to speak with me, and they thus addressed me.

"We understand that you have a family, and we believe the Lord has called you to preach. And we conclude it is our duty to take your family and take care of them, in order that you may be liberated to preach." Such an address, from three strangers, you must suppose was a little surprising, yet I could not help thinking, whether it was not in answer to my prayer. Yet I thought best to know their motives, in making this proposal unto me. The proposal was not that they would support my family, if I would come & preach with them; but that I might be liberated to preach the gospel. I told them I would not sell myself, for said I, if you maintain my family, you then will expect that I shall preach constantly with you. They said no, that was not according to their faith, but their meaning was, that I should preach where I thought it my duty; & to preach with them as much as I thought it my duty.

One of them said he did not think it likely that it would be my duty to preach with them more than a quarter of the time, when he considered the many places around about where they desired preaching. I told them I was really afraid they had not well considered how much cost it would be to maintain my family, and the burden would be heavier than they were aware of, yet they insisted upon saying they believed it was of the Lord. I did not however give them any direct answer at that time, as I wanted an opportunity to consider on the matter, and ask counsel of God. About this time the Lord sent a great rain, and carried off all the snow, and broke up the roads, so that I could not get back, at present with my family at any rate.

Some business which I left unsettled in Lyndon, called me loudly to return; and as I could not get back with my family, it looked more and more like duty to comply with the proposal which was made me at Lebanon, and yet I felt some doubts about the matter. After mature deliberation, I gave this answer, viz. That I would return to Lyndon, and settle my necessary business there, and leave my family at Woodstock, at my wife's father's; and that I would enquire and ask counsel of

God, and wished they would enquire of the Lord also; and when I returned if I found it duty, and they still thought it duty, I would bring my family according to their proposal. But, said I, I have one thing farther that I wish to name, and that is this, as you have now freely made an offer to take care of my family, so I want you to use the same freedom when you find it no longer duty to do the same, only let me know it, I will take the burden off your hands; for if I have to go right out into the streets, I do not fear to trust in the Lord to take care of me and mine. The next day I went to Hanover and preached on College plain, at Mr. Jedidiah Baldwin's in the evening. The people seemed attentive to hear.

Abner Jones - 16-Preaching Against Calvinism

Preaching Against Calvinism The next day I went into a different part of the town, commonly known by the name of Mill neighborhood. Here I preached in the afternoon, in the school house. I felt great freedom in preaching. I felt confirmed in my own mind, that the Lord would open a door wide and effectual in that place. In this discourse, I discovered one young man (who was a few years before, I had instructed as a school boy) considerably affected, insomuch, that the tears flowed freely down his cheeks. This gave me some consolation, in hopes that I should see greater things than these. I preached in several different places in the town, I had freedom in speaking, but found Christians in a very low state, and sinners seemed entirely stupid about their souls. The people in Hanover had been taught in the Calvinistic doctrines, and had scarce ever heard any other doctrine in all their lives, as many of them informed me afterward. Sinners seemed to rest unconcerned on this ground, saying, if God has determined to save me, he will call me in his own good time in such a manner as that it will be impossible for me to resist. And if I am not elected, it will be impossible for me to saved if I should seek all my life. On this ground, they drew the following conclusions (or at least some of them, as they afterwards informed me.) It is no matter how much I strive to put of all serious impressions, for if they are made by the spirit of God, I cannot get rid of them; if they are not from the spirit of God, they never can benefit me.

Here I must beg leave to turn aside from the pursuit of my narrative, and close this number with a few remarks.

O sinner, who ever you are, into whose hands this may fall, when you read the paragraph respecting the situation of sinners in the town of Hanover, State of Newhampshire, stop. PAUSE, and read the paragraph over again. Then read the following lines. (Smith and Jones Hymns, p. 20) STOP, poor sinner, stop and think,

Before you farther go--

Will you sport upon the brink

Of everlasting woe?

Hell beneath is gaping wide!

Vengeance waits the dread command,

Soon to stop your sport and pride,

And sink you with the damn'd.

O be entreated now to STOP,

For unless you WARNING TAKE,

Ere you are aware you'll DROP

Into the BURNING LAKE.

Stop and think, read the lines over again. Think on every line, and consider it well. Commit them to memory before you pass on, for your feet may slide before you have finished reading these few remaining pages. May God bless this caution to all sinners who may read it, I pray dear reader if you are sheltering yourself under such a covering as this, and endeavouring to stretch yourself on so short a bed, permit me in the name of the great GOD, to speak to you in the words of the Prophet Isaiah 28:20, "For the BED is shorter, than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower, than that he can wrap himself in it."

One request farther, dear friend, viz. Learn the whole Hymn by heart, and bear it in mind every moment. Remember the language is like this; Stop and consider on your ways. Stop from living in carelessness. Stop from putting far away the evil day. Stop from saying, go thy way for this time. Stop from saying, I pray thee have me excused. Stop from loving the world more than Christ. Stop from making light of religion. Stop from neglecting to cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. Stop from saying it will not do any good for me pray. Stop from reading fancies, and read the bible. Stop from swearing. Stop from lying. Stop from getting drunk. Stop from gambling. Stop from playing cards for diversion. Stop from going to dancing schools and go to the school of Christ. Stop from foolish talking and jesting, yea, stop from wickedness of every sort and kind, and be a follower of Christ Jesus, and so thy soul shall live.

END OF BOOK

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