God's Calling*

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1 Introduction

We will examine case studies using primary historical resources, including the Bible, to explore how God enters humans' lives, revealing his purpose for their lives. Secondarily, we learn how we can prepare ourselves for (or learn how to hide ourselves from) God's calling us. For each people, we will focus on the initial revelation of God's purpose or love, not on subsequent actions or theology. If we did the latter, we would have to study the entire Bible and more!

It is your responsibility to find the patterns and determine how what you learn applies to your life. Some questions to ask yourself as you read the studies include

- Why was the person chosen? Did she have an ancestry, do good works deserving God's intervention, or have a particular skill?
- How did God contact the person? Did God use a dream, another person, the Bible, a thunderbolt?
- What did God ask of the person? How precisely was the request presented? Could the recipient have rejected the request? Was the request difficult or easy to fulfill?
- How did the person react? Did he cower, stand confidently, step forward, run away, laugh, seek counsel from others?
- What type of relationship did God seek to establish with the person? Did it rely on the person's actions or thoughts? Was it conditional?
- What was the historical and geographic context for the encounter? How did this change how God and the person interacted, the request, and the method of contact?
- What can you learn from the encounter? How can you make yourself more available to God?

2 Summary of Case Studies

person	reason chosen	method of contact	message delivered	person's reaction
Abram (Ge 12.1–9)	unknown	God's voice	"I will make of you a great nation."	did as LORD told him
Augustine (*Confessions*)	educated, former professor of rhetoric	emotional breakdown, random reading of Bible, Bishop Ambrose	live for Lord Jesus Christ, not the flesh	"There was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away."
Esther (Esth 4)	access to the king	her uncle Mordecai	"Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this."	"Go fast on my behalf.... I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish."
John Denver (*Oh, God!*)	randomly chosen	repeatedly appearing note, voice, George Burns	God loves you and you have all the tools needed to solve all your problems.	Why me? Who is this really? How do I say it?
Martin Luther (*LW* 34, 336–337)	everyone is chosen	extensive study, work, and prayer; "At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to" Romans 1.16–17.	"The righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith."	95 Theses, Lutheranism, Protestant Reformation
Moses (Ex 3.1–4.23)	previous experience with both Hebrews and Egyptians/Pharaoh	burning bush / angel of God	lead the Hebrews out of Egypt and "I [God] will be with you [Moses]."	"But," e.g., "Who should I say sent me?" "But suppose the Hebrews do not believe me." "I have never been eloquent."
Noah (Ge 6.5–22)	"found favor in the sight of the LORD"	recorded as words but otherwise unknown	build an ark and God will establish a covenant	"Noah did this."
Saul (Paul) (Acts 22.3–16)	well-educated Jew, zealot	great light, Jesus's voice, blindness, Ananias	Go to Damascus. God has chosen you.	obedience

3 Callings in the Bible

(Leader: Have the class members suggest names of individuals. Here is a partial list of callings.)

Abraham: Ge 12.1–9; direct communication

Adam: Ge 2.15–17; direct communication

David: 1 Sam 16; Samuel anoints David

Elisha: 1 Ki 19.19–21; comes through stranger Elijah

Esther: Esth 4; no mention of God

Hannah: 1 Sam 1.1–2.10; barren, prays, priest Eli, dedicates Samuel to God

Hosea: Hos 1.1–3

Isaiah: Is 6; vision

Jacob: Ge 28.10–22; wrestles with God

Jeremiah: Jer 1.1–10; God appears directly

Jesus: Mt 3.13–17, Mk 1.9–11, Lk 3.21–22, Jn 1.29–34 (different); baptism by John

Jonah: Jon 1.1–3

Joseph: Ge 37.1–11; ¿God? through dream

Mary: Lk 1.26–38; mother of Jesus; comes through angel Gabriel

Moses: Ex 3.1–4.23; burning bush and talking back

Noah: Ge 6.9–22

Paul: Acts 22.3–16 or 26.9–18

random disciples including Simon Peter: Jn 1.35–51; comes through Jesus

Rachel: Ge 29.1–20; wife of Jacob; comes through Jacob

Rebekah: Ge 24.1–61; wife of Isaac; comes through servant

Samuel: 1 Sam 3.1–18

Zechariah and Elizabeth: Lk 1.5–25; parents of John the Baptist; comes through angel Gabriel

4 Augustine

(Leader: Use Augustine, Abram, and Hannah for a theme of "it takes time."

4.1 Background

Ask:

- Who was Augustine?
- Why is/was he important?
- What did he do?
- When did he do it?
- What impact did these actions have?
- What was Augustine's occupation?

(Leader:

- Lived 354–430 AD in northern Africa, near Carthage.
- bishop of Hippo 396–430
- Britannica: "one of the Latin Fathers of the Church, one of the Doctors of the Church, and perhaps the most significant Christian thinker after St. Paul. Augustine's adaptation of classical thought to Christian teaching created a theological system of great power and lasting influence. His numerous written works, the most important of which are Confessions and City of God, shaped the practice of biblical exegesis and helped lay the foundation for much of medieval and modern Christian thought."
- born into moderately-wealthy family
- mother Monnica was a moderate Christian
- first-class education including some church experience, studying at universities including Carthage
- taught rhetoric at Carthage, the great city of Roman Africa
- about age 30, imperial professor of rhetoric at Milan, the de facto capital of the western Roman Empire
- St. Ambrose, champion of orthodoxy, converted him
- left after two years for hometown of Tagaste

)

4.2 *Confessions*, Book 8, Chapter 12

> 28. Now when deep reflection had drawn up out of the secret depths of my soul all my misery and had heaped it up before the sight of my heart, there arose a mighty storm, accompanied by a mighty rain of tears. That I might give way fully to my tears and lamentations, I stole away from Alypius, for it seemed to me that solitude was more appropriate for the business of weeping. I went far enough away that I could feel that even his presence was no restraint upon me. This was the way I felt at the time, and

he realized it. I suppose I had said something before I started up and he noticed that the sound of my voice was choked with weeping. And so he stayed alone, where we had been sitting together, greatly astonished. I flung myself down under a fig tree—how I know not—and gave free course to my tears. The streams of my eyes gushed out an acceptable sacrifice to thee. And, not indeed in these words, but to this effect, I cried to thee: "And thou, O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord? Wilt thou be angry forever? Oh, remember not against us our former iniquities" (cf. Ps 6.3, 79.8). For I felt that I was still enthralled by them. I sent up these sorrowful cries: "How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why not this very hour make an end to my uncleanness?"

29. I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when suddenly I heard the voice of a boy or a girl I know not which—coming from the neighboring house, chanting over and over again, "Pick it up, read it; pick it up, read it." Immediately I ceased weeping and began most earnestly to think whether it was usual for children in some kind of game to sing such a song, but I could not remember ever having heard the like. So, damming the torrent of my tears, I got to my feet, for I could not but think that this was a divine command to open the Bible and read the first passage I should light upon. For I had heard how Anthony, accidentally coming into church while the gospel was being read, received the admonition as if what was read had been addressed to him: "Go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me" (Mt 19.21). By such an oracle he was forthwith converted to thee.

So I quickly returned to the bench where Alypius was sitting, for there I had put down the apostle's book when I had left there. I snatched it up, opened it, and in silence read the paragraph on which my eyes first fell: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Ro 13.13). I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away.

30. Closing the book, then, and putting my finger or something else for a mark I began—now with a tranquil countenance—to tell it all to Alypius. And he in turn disclosed to me what had been going on in himself, of which I knew nothing. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him, and he looked on even further than I had read. I had not known what followed. But indeed it was this, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive" (Ro 14.1). This he applied to himself, and told me so. By these words of warning he was strengthened, and by exercising his good resolution and purpose—all very much in keeping with his character, in which, in these respects, he was always far different from and better than I—he joined me in full commitment without any restless hesitation.

Then we went in to my mother, and told her what happened, to her great joy. We explained to her how it had occurred—and she leaped for joy triumphant; and she blessed thee, who art "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3.20). For she saw that thou hadst granted her far more than she had ever asked for in all her pitiful and doleful lamentations. For thou didst so convert me to thee that I sought neither a wife nor any other of this world's hopes, but set my feet

> on that rule of faith which so many years before thou hadst showed her in her dream about me. And so thou didst turn her grief into gladness more plentiful than she had ventured to desire, and dearer and purer than the desire she used to cherish of having grandchildren of my flesh.

This translation by Albert C. Outler, 1955, available at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/-basis/confessions-bod.html. Biblical references have been added.

5 Martin Luther

5.1 Background

Ask:

- Who was Martin Luther?
- Why is/was he important?
- What did he do?
- When did he do it?
- What impact did these actions have?
- What was Luther's occupation?

(Leader:

1483 Nov 10	birth in Eisleben (Germany)
1505 Jul 02	hit by thunderbolt and vows to become a monk
1505 Jul 17	becomes a monk
1511 Apr	transfer to Wittenberg
1512 Oct 19	obtains doctorate of theology
some time	assumed chair of Bible at Wittenberg
1513 Aug 16	begins lectures on Psalms
1515 Apr	begins lectures on Romans
1516 Sep 07	ends lectures on Romans
1517 Oct 31	posts ninety-five theses
1546 Feb 18	death in Eisleben

Luther was a monk, but he was busy. 1516 October, he wrote

> I could use two secretaries. I do almost nothing during the day but write letters. I am a conventual preacher, reader at meals, parochial preacher, director of studies, overseer of eleven monasteries, superintendent of the fish pond at Litzkau, referee of the squabble at Torgau, lecturer on Paul, collector of material for a commentary on the Psalms, and then, as I said, I am overwhelmed with letters. I rarely have full time for the canonical hours and for saying mass, not to mention my own temptations with the world, the flash, and the Devil. You see how lazy I am.

)

5.2 Luther's Rebirth

Read Romans 2.1–11 and 3.9–20 to form an idea of the Church's emphasis during Luther's life. What words and ideas are repeatedly emphasized? As a good Christian, i.e., Catholic, how would Luther be forgiven his sins?

(Leader: Apparently, the Church's main focus was on saving people from condemnation by Jesus at the Last Judgement. Evil people were sent directly to hell. Good people who committed a few sins would be sent to purgatory until God decided enough punishment had been administered. The Church did not claim to know the punishment for each sin but did claim the ability to shorten the purgatory period by specific amounts by purchasing indulgences or viewing holy relics. For example, on All Saint Day, Christians viewing the relics accumulated by Frederick the Wise in Luther's town of Wittenberg and paying the necessary indulgences could reduce their purgatory stay by 1,902,202 years and 270 days.

(Being a monk, Luther could receive forgiveness of his sins through confessional, but each sin must be confessed. A perfectionist, he spent hours confessing minor sins and worried he might forget one or, even worse, sin by omission, not commission. "Sometimes my confessor said to me when I repeatedly discussed silly sins with him, 'You are fool. Man, God is not angry with you, but you are angry with God'" (*LW* 54, 15).)

> Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that He was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and … I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lose through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!" Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted. And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hated with which I had formerly hated that word, "the righteousness of God" (*LW* 34, 336–337).

Read Romans 1.16–17.

> At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God (*LW* 34, 337).

(Leader: Ask the normal calling questions.

Ask: How should we order these as occurring in a Christian's life? righteousness, faith, grace, eternal life, death.)

5.3 More Luther Quotations

> [Christians] are safe under Christ's grace, not because they believe and have faith and his gift, but because they have these in his grace (*LW* 8, 114).

> Therefore the whole life of a good believing Christian after baptism is nothing more than awaiting the revelation of a holiness which he already has. He surely has it whole, though it is still hidden in faith (*LW* 10, 108).

6 Charles, John, and Susanna Wesley

6.1 Review of Previous Callings

1. When Augustine used the "open the Bible at random method," what book did he read?
2. What was Luther's profession before his calling?
3. How would Luther order these as occurring in a Christian's life: righteousness, faith, grace, eternal life, death?
4. Reading which book of the Bible most influenced Luther's calling?
5. What change in his life did Luther's calling cause?

6.2 Charles Wesley

1707 Dec 18	born in Epworth, Lincolnshire
1726	matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford
1735	went with John as missionaries to Georgia
1749	married Sarah Gwynne
1788 Mar 29	died in London

published more than 4500 hymns, leaving 3000 in manuscript form

Charles Wesley, the more emotional, younger brother of John Wesley, was suffering pleurisy, inflammation of the lining of the lungs, somewhere in London. Having graduated Oxford and served as a missionary in Georgia, he was not married.

Charles Wesley's journal entry for the Day of Pentecost [Tys89, pp. 98–99]

> Sun., May 21st, 1738. I waked in hope and expectation of His coming. At nine my brother and some friends came, and sang an hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half-an-hour they went: I betook myself to prayer; the substance as follows:—"O Jesus, thou hast said, 'I will come unto you'; thou has said, 'I will send the Comforter unto you'; thou hast said, 'My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you,' Thou art God who canst not lie; I wholly rely upon thy most true promise: accomplish it in they time and manner." Having said this, was composing myself to sleep, in quietness and peace, when I heard one come in (Mrs. Musgrave, I thought, by the voice) and say, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities." I wondered how it should enter into her head to speak in that manner. The words struck me to the heart. I sighed, and said within myself, "O that Christ would but speak thus to me!" I lay musing and trembling: then thought, "but what if it should be Him? I will send at least to see." I rang, and, Mrs. Turner coming, I desired her to send up Mrs. Musgrave.

She went down, and, returning, said, “Mrs. Musgrave had not been up here.” My heart sank within me at the word, and I hoped it might be Christ indeed. However, I sent her down again to inquire, and felt in the meantime a strange palpitation of heart. I said, yet feared to say, “I believe, I believe!” She came up again and said, “It was I, a weak, sinful creature, spoke: but the words were Christ’s: he commanded me to say them, and so constrained me that I could not forbear.”

I sent for Mr. Bray, and asked him whether I believed. He answered, I ought not to doubt of it: it was Christ spoke to me. He knew it; and willed us to pray together: “but first,” said he, “I will read what I have casually opened upon: ‘Blessed is the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit is no guilt.’ ” Still I felt a violent opposition and reluctance to believe; yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own and the evil spirit, till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I know not how, nor when; and immediately fell to intercession....

I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. My temper for the rest of the day was, mistrust of my own great, but before unknown, weakness. I saw that by faith I stood; by the continual support of my faith, which kept me from falling, though of my self I am ever sinking into sin. I went to bed still sensible of my own weakness, (I humbly hope to be more and more so), yet content of Christ’s protection.

6.3 John Wesley

1703 Jun 17	born in Epworth, Lincolnshire
1720	matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford
1724	graduated
1725	became a deacon
1726	elected fellow of Lincoln College
1728 Sep 22	ordained priest
1729 Oct	returned to Oxford, forming Holy Club
1735	went with Charles as missionaries to Georgia
1738 May 2	Aldersgate experience
1791 Mar 02	died in London

Excerpts from John Wesley’s journal entry for Wednesday, 1738 May 24 [Wes88, pp. 242–250]:

1. I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that ‘washing of the Holy Ghost’[1] which was given me in baptism, having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved *by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God*, in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed. And those instructions, so far as they respected, outward duties and sins, I gladly received and often thought of. But all that was said to me of inward obedience or holiness I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the law as I was of the gospel of Christ.

2. The next six or seven years were spent at school[2]; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not

[1] Cf. Titus 3:5.

[2] At Charterhouse, 1714–20.

scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers, morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by, was, (1) *not being so bad as other people;* (2) *having still a kindness for religion;* and (3) *reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.*

3. Being removed to the university[3] for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and private, and read with the Scriptures several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all the while so much as a notion of inward holiness. . . .

4. When I was about twenty-two[4] my father pressed me to enter into holy orders. . . . I began to alter the whole form of my conversation and to set in earnest upon *a new life*. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sins,[5] whether in word or deed. I began to aim at and pray for inward holiness. So that now, *doing so much and living so good a life*, I doubted not but I was a good Christian.

5. . . . I cried to God for help and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying him as I had never done before. And by my continued *endeavour to keep his whole law*, inward and outward, *to the utmost of my power*, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.[6]

6. In 1730 I began visiting the prisons, assisting the poor and sick in town, and doing what other good I could by my presence or my little fortune to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessaries of life. I soon became 'a byword'[7] for so doing, and I rejoiced that 'my name was cast out as evil.'[8] The next spring I began observing the Wednesday and Friday fasts, commonly observed in the ancient church, tasting no food till three in the afternoon.[9] And now I knew not how to go any farther. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful. I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. I omitted no occasion of doing good. I for that reason suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing unless as it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all, by doing his will, not my own. Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, nor any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was then not a little surprised, not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand,[10] nor considering that 'other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid by God, even Christ Jesus.'[11]. . .

8. In this *refined* way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness (so

[3]Matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, July 18, 1720; B.A. 1724.

[4]I.e., *c.* 1725.

[5]1740, 'sin'.

[6]JW footnote: "And I believe I was" [added as a footnote in 1775].

[7]Dt 28.37, etc.

[8]Cf. Lk 6.22.

[9]These were the 'stations', or stationary fasts, so called because they came on specific occasions every week, instead of being movable, like those observed on days differing each year according to the date of Easter. JW had been rather unsuccessful in his early efforts at fasting; this new attempt to link himself with the church universal, begun on June 2, 1732, was one of several ways in which the High Church tendencies of John Clayton began to influence the life of the Oxford friends. See Heitzenrater, *John Wesley*, pp. 162–63, 365–67.

[10]JW footnote: "Not so: I was right, as far as I went"[added as a footnote in 1775].

[11]Cf. 1 Co 3.11.

zealously inculcated by the mystic writers), I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein, till the time of my leaving England. . . .

9. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus 'beating the air'.[12] Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which by a living faith in him bringeth salvation 'to every one that believeth',[13] I sought to establish my own righteousness, and so laboured in the fire all my days. I was now properly 'under the law'[14]; I knew that 'the law' of God was 'spiritual'[15]; 'I consented to it that it was good.'[16] Yea, 'I delighted in it, after the inner man.'[17] Yet was I 'carnal, sold under sin'.[18] Every day was I constrained to cry out, 'What I do, I allow not; for what I would do not, but what I hate, that I do.'[19] 'To will is indeed present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.'[20] For 'the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.'[21] 'I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me,'[22] even the 'law in my members warring against the law of my mind', and still 'bringing me into captivity to the law of sin'.[23] . . .

11. In my return to England, January 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief, and that the gaining a true, living faith, was the 'one thing needful'[24] for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was *wholly void of this faith*, but only thought *I had not enough* of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ (which is but one) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, 'dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness', I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. . . . I felt it not. . . .

12. . . . Nor could I therefore allow it to be the true till I found some living witnesses of it. . . . And accordingly the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified of their own personal experience that a true, living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present sins. They added with one mouth that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God, and that he would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced. And, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end, (1) by absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon *my own* works or righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up; (2) by adding to 'the constant use of all the' other 'means of grace',[25] continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on

[12]Cf. 1 Co 9.26.
[13]Ro 1.16.
[14]Ro 6.14,15.
[15]Cf. Ro 7.14.
[16]Cf. Ro 7.16.
[17]Cf. Ro 7.22.
[18]Ro 7.14.
[19]Cf. Ro 7.15.
[20]Cf. Ro 7.18
[21]Ro 7.19.
[22]Cf. Ro 7.21.
[23]Ro 7.23.
[24]Cf. Lk 10.42.
[25]For the source of this phrase in the *Book of Common Prayer*, see editorial introduction to JW's Sermon 16, 'The

the blood of Christ shed for *me*; a trust in him as *my* Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.

13. I continued thus to seek it (though with strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin) till Wednesday, May 24. I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words:—'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature.'[26] Just as I went out I opened it again on those words, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of the God.'[27] In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, 'Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? But there is mercy with thee; therefore thou shalt be feared.[...] O Israel, trust in the Lord: For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins.'[28]

14. In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street,[29] where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans.[30] About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.[31]

15. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me.[32] I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?' Then was I taught that *peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation*[33]*; but that as to the transports of joy* that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply,

Means of Grace'.

[26] JW footnote: 2 Pet 1.4.

[27] Mk 12.34.

[28] Ps 130.1–4, 7–8 (*Book of Common Prayer*).

[29] Moravian sources (extensively quoted in Curnock, I.475n.) suggest that this was a society which met weekly in Nettleton Court, Aldersgate Street. Among its members was James Hutton; Whitefield had ministered there in 1737; and Peter Böhler formed them into bands. The Wesley brothers were staying at different addresses nearby at the time. The reader is thought to be William Holland (died 1761) a devout Anglican who now introduced the Wesley brothers to Luther's commentaries on Galatians and Romans. He was a founding member of the Fetter Lane Society, and on its division in 1740 threw in his lot with the Moravians. He became one of their leading officers and preachers, succeeding Viney in charge of the Moravian settlement at Fulneck, Yorkshire. Holland had been induced by the Brethren to give up a substantial painting concern for their activities, but wishing to keep a closer Anglican connection than they wished, he first returned to business and then left them in 1747. Benham, *Hutton*, pp. 89, 153; JWJ, Nov. 28, 1747.

[30] This work, which had already been instrumental in the conversion of the elder Francke, was *A Methodicall Preface prefixed before the Epistle of S. Paule to the Romanes, very necessary and profitable for the better understanding of it. Made by the right reverend father and faithfull servant of Christ Jesus, Martin Luther, now newly translated out of Latin into English by W[illiam] W[ilkinson]* (London [1594]), and subsequently reprinted). Here Luther explains that 'those remnants of sinne are not layde to our charge, by reason of fayth which continually wrastleth with the desires of the fleishe ... not to be under the lawe is this, that out harts are to be made newe by the spirit, through fayth, that freely, willingly, and of our owne accorde, we may doo that which the lawe requires, though there were no law at all.' (cf. J. T. McNeill, 'Luther at Aldersgate', *London Quarterly & Holborn Review* [1939], 164:200–217). Luther's original preface, not to be confused with his commentary on Romans, is to be found in *Luthers Werke* (Weimer Ausgabe), *Deutsche Bibel*, VII.2–27 (1931).

[31] See Ro 8.2.

[32] See Mt 5.44.

[33] See Heb 2.10.

God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of his own will.[34]
16. After my return home I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and he 'sent me help from his holy place'.[35] And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.

6.4 Susanna Wesley

Susanna Wesley was the mother of John and Charles Wesley.

1669 Jan 20	born twentieth-fifth and last child of Dr. Samuel Annesley, Puritan cleric in London
1682	joined Church of England
1688 Nov 12	married Samuel Wesley at St. Marylebone
1690 Feb	child Samuel born
1690	moved from London to South Ormsby, Lincolnshire
1697	moved to Epworth, Lincolnshire
1703	most of parsonage burns
1709	all of parsonage burns
1735 Apr 25	husband Samuel Wesley dies; she moves out of parsonage
1742 Jul 23	dies in London, buried in Dissenters' Cemetery, Bunhill Fields, London

John Wesley's journal entry for Monday, 1739 Sep 03 as recorded in [Wes90, pp. 93–94]:

> Monday, September 3. I talked largely with my mother, who told me that till a short time since she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned as the having forgiveness of sins now, or God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; much less did she imagine that this was the common privilege of all true believers. 'Therefore' (said she) 'I never durst ask for it myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall[36] was pronouncing those words, in delivering the cup to me, "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee",[37] the words struck through my heart, and I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven *me* all *my* sins.'
>
> I asked whether her father (Dr. Annesley)[38] had not the same faith. And whether she had not heard him preach it to others. She answered, 'He had it himself, and declared, a little before his death, that for more than forty years he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all, of his being "accepted in the Beloved".'[39] But that nevertheless

[34] See Eph 1.11.

[35] Cf. Ps 20.2, 24.3, Heb 9.12.

[36] Her son-in-law, the Rev. Westley Hall, who had married John Wesley's younger sister Martha and in whose household she was now resident.

[37] Cf. *Book of Common Prayer*, Communion.

[38] Samuel Annesley (1620?–96), Puritan divine. In 1644 he became chaplain to the Earl of Warwick, admiral of the parliamentary fleet, and subsequently obtained preferment in the church. In 1648 he preached a first sermon before the Commons, was nominated by Cromwell to a lectureship at St. Paul's in 1657, and by Richard Cromwell to the vicarage of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, in 1658, from which he was ejected in 1662. He established a conventicle in Little St. Helen's. Susanna Wesley was his 25th and youngest child.

[39] Eph 1.6.

she did not remember to have heard him preach, no not once, explicitly upon it: whence she supposed he also looked upon it as the peculiar blessing of *a few*, not as promised to all the people of God.

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