The following writing is from a website slightly modified by me. I intend to display the best stories that will motivate, rebuke, and fire up Christians to become faithful servants for Christ just like the men of God from the past. May you be richly blessed by the following material:

John Bunyan was born in 1628 at Elstow, near Bedford, to Thomas Bunyan and Margaret Bentley. Thomas Bunyan, a brazier or tinker, was poor but not destitute. Still, for the most part, John Bunyan was not educated well. He became rebellious, frequently indulging in cursing. He later wrote, “It was my delight to be taken captive by the devil at his will: being filled with all unrighteousness; that from a child I had but few equals, both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.” Sporadic periods of convictions of sin helped restrain some of that rebellion, however.

When Bunyan was sixteen years old, his mother and sister died a month apart. His father remarried a month later. Young Bunyan joined Cromwell’s New Model Army, where he continued his rebellious ways. Fighting in the Civil War sobered him considerably, however. On one occasion, his life was wonderfully spared. “When I was a soldier, I with others, was drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it. But when I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room; to which when I consented, he took my place, and coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel he was shot in the head with a musket bullet and died.”

Bunyan was discharged from the army in 1646 or 1647. His military experience was later reflected in his book, The Holy War. In 1648, Bunyan married a God-fearing woman whose name remains unknown, and whose only dowry was two books: Arthur Dent’s The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven and Lewis Bayly’s The Practice of Piety. When Bunyan read those books, he was convicted of sin. He started attending the parish church, stopped swearing (when rebuked by a dissolute woman of the town), and tried to honor Sunday service. After some months, Bunyan came into contact with some women whose joyous conversation about the new birth and Christ deeply impressed him. He mourned his joyless existence as he realized that he was lost and outside of Christ. “I cannot now express with what longings and breakings in my soul I cried to Christ to call me,” he wrote. He felt that he had the worst heart in all of England. He confessed to be jealous of animals because they did not have a soul to account for before God.

In 1651, the women introduced Bunyan to John Gifford, their pastor in Bedford. God used Gifford to lead Bunyan to repentance and faith. Bunyan was particularly influenced by a sermon Gifford preached on Song of Solomon 4:1, “Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair,”

as well as by reading Luther's commentary of Galatians, in which he found his own experience "largely and profoundly handled, as if [Luther's] book had been written out of my own heart." While walking through a field one day, Christ's righteousness was revealed to Bunyan's soul and gained the victory. Bunyan writes of that unforgettable experience,

"One day, as I was passing in the field, this sentence fell upon my soul: Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ, at God's right hand; there, I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was a-doing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for that was just before Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away. Now I went home rejoicing for the grace and love of God. I lived for some time very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. Oh! methought, Christ! Christ! There was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes. I saw now not only looking upon this and the other benefits of Christ apart, as of His blood, burial, and resurrection, but considered Him as a whole Christ! It was glorious to me to see His exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of all His benefits, and that because now I could look from myself to Him, and would reckon that all those graces of God that now were green in me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunk at home! Oh, I saw that my gold was in my trunk at home! In Christ my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all."

The year 1654 was a momentous one for Bunyan. He moved to Bedford with his wife and four children under the age of six; his firstborn, Mary, was blind from birth. That same year, he became a member of Gifford's church, and was soon appointed deacon. His testimony became the talk of the town. Several people were led to conversion in response to it. By the end of the year, he had lost his beloved pastor to death. In 1655, Bunyan began preaching to various congregations in Bedford. Hundreds came to hear him.

A man from Cambridge university met Bunyan on the road. He indignantly accused to Bunyan, "How dare you preach when you do not have the original scriptures?" Then Bunyan asked the scholar, "Do you have them, the copies written by the apostles and prophets?" The scholar replied, "No, but I have what I believe to be a true copy of the original." Bunyan answered confidently, "And I believe the English Bible to be a true copy, too."

Bunyan published his first book the following year, Some Gospel Truths Opened, written to protect believers from being misled by Quaker and Ranter teachings about Christ's person and work. Two years later, he published A Few Sighs from Hell, an exposition of Luke 16:19-31 about the rich man and Lazarus. The book attacks professional clergy and the wealthy who promote carnality. It was well received, and helped establish Bunyan as a reputable Puritan writer. About that same time, his wife passed away.

In 1660, while preaching in a farmhouse at Lower Samsell, Bunyan was arrested on the charge of preaching without official rights from the king. When told that he would be freed if he no longer preached, he replied, "If I am freed today, I will preach tomorrow." He was thrown into prison, where he wrote prolifically and made shoelaces to provide some income for twelve and a half years (1660-1672).

Prior to his arrest, Bunyan had remarried, this time to a godly young woman named Elizabeth. She pleaded repeatedly for his release, but judges such as Sir Matthew Hale and Thomas Twisden rejected her plea. So Bunyan remained in prison with no formal charge and no legal sentence, in defiance of the habeas corpus provisions of the Magna Carta, because he refused to give up preaching the gospel and denounced the Church of England as false. In 1661 and from 1668-1672, certain jailers permitted Bunyan to leave prison at times to preach. George Offer notes, "It is said that many of the Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire owe their origins to his midnight preaching." His prison years were times of difficult trials, however. Bunyan experienced what his Pilgrim's Progress characters Christian and Faithful would later suffer at the hands of Giant Despair, who thrust pilgrims "into a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking." Bunyan especially felt the pain of separation from his wife and children, particularly "blind Mary," describing it as a "pulling of the flesh from my bones."

Prison years, however, were productive years for Bunyan. In the mid-1660s, Bunyan wrote extensively, with only the Bible and Foxe's Book of Martyrs at his side. In 1663, he wrote Christian Behaviour, intended as a handbook for Christian living and a response against charges of antinomianism, as well as a last testament, since Bunyan expected to die in prison. In 1666, the middle of his prison-time, he wrote Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, in which he declared, "The Almighty God being my help and shield, I am determined yet to suffer, if frail life might continue so long, even till the moss shall grow upon my eyebrows, rather than violate my faith and principles."

During the last part of his imprisonment, he finished A Confession of My Faith, A Reason for My Practice, and A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, an uncompromising criticism of the

rising tide of Pelagianism among the Nonconformists and latitudinarianism among the Anglican establishment. The Bedford congregation, sensing some relaxation of the law against preaching, appointed Bunyan as pastor on January 21, 1672, but Bunyan was not released until May. He had been the first to suffer under Charles II and was the last to be released. His long years in Bedford's county prison made him a martyr in the eyes of many. Bunyan had enjoyed only a few years of freedom when he was again arrested for preaching and put in the town jail. Here he wrote Saved by Grace (an exposition of Ephesians 2:5 that encourages the godly to persevere in the faith notwithstanding persecution) and the first part of his famous Pilgrim's Progress. That book, which sold more than 100,000 copies in its first decade in print, has since been reprinted in at least 1,500 editions and translated into more than two hundred languages, with Dutch, French, and Welsh editions appearing in Bunyan's lifetime. Some scholars have asserted that, with the exception of the Bible, this Bunyan classic has sold more copies than any other book ever written.

John Owen, minister of an Independent congregation at Leadenhall Street, London, successfully appealed for Bunyan to Thomas Barlow, bishop of Lincoln, who used his influence at court to secure Bunyan's release from prison on June 21, 1677. Bunyan spent his last years ministering to the Nonconformists and writing. In 1685, he published the second part of Pilgrim's Progress, dealing with Christiana's pilgrimage, and A Caution to Stir Up to Watch Against Sin.

In the last three years of his life, Bunyan wrote ten more books, of which the best-known are The Pharisee and the Publican, The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate, The Water of Life, Solomon's Temple Spiritualized, and The Acceptable Sacrifice. Most of those books were reproduced in paperback by William Frasher in the 1960s through Reiner Press, in Swengel, Pennsylvania. They are not listed separately in this book because they are included in Bunyan's Works.

In 1688, Bunyan died suddenly from a fever that he caught while traveling in cold weather. On his deathbed, he said to those who gathered around him, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves. I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, no doubt, through the mediation of his blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner; where I hope we ere long shall meet, to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy, world without end." After telling his friends that his greatest desire was to be with Christ, he raised his hands to heaven, and cried, "Take me, for I come to Thee!" and then died. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, close to Thomas Goodwin and John Owen.