**John Newton**

CHOICE EXCERPTS

Courtesy www.gracegems.org

Abominations, like nests of vipers, lie quietly in us — until the *rod of affliction* arouses them. Then they hiss and show their venom!

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The more vile we are in our own eyes — the more precious Christ will be to us!

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How unspeakably wonderful is it, to know that all our concerns are held in hands that bled for us!

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Our sea may sometimes be stormy — but we have an infallible Pilot, and shall infallibly gain our port.

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Our work is great — our time is short — and the consequences of our labors are infinite.

~ ~ ~ ~

My grand point in preaching, is to break the *hard* heart — and to heal the *broken* heart.

~ ~ ~ ~

I am persuaded that *love* and *humility* are the highest attainments in the school of Christ — and the brightest evidences that He is indeed our Master.

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A deep sense of indwelling sin is essential to humble living.

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We serve a gracious Master — who knows how to overrule even our mistakes to His glory and our own advantage.

~ ~ ~ ~

Can we wish, if it were possible, to walk in a path strewed with flowers — when His path was strewed with thorns?

~ ~ ~ ~

May we sit at the foot of the cross — and there learn . . .
what *sin* has done,
what *justice* has done,
what *love* has done.

~ ~ ~ ~

I have reason to praise Him for my trials — for most probably, I would have been ruined without them!

~ ~ ~ ~

To see Him as he is, and to be like Him! This is worth dying for — and worth living for!

~ ~ ~ ~

People do their country more service by pleading for it in prayer — than by finding fault with things they have no power to alter!

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Prosperity may cause us to rise in the world — but affliction is needful to raise us above the world!

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The storms are guided by the hands which were nailed to the cross.

~ ~ ~ ~

We have work to do in the world, more to do in the Church and in our homes — but most of all, in our own hearts.

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To behold the glory and the love of Jesus is the only effectual way to be conformed to his image.

~ ~ ~ ~

Resist every temptation to doubt Christ's love — as you would resist a temptation to adultery or murder!

~ ~ ~ ~

That monster *SELF* has as many heads as Hydra — and as many lives as a cat! (The Hydra was a serpentine mythological water monster with many heads. For every head chopped off — the Hydra would re-grow a couple new heads.)

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The more simply we commit the how, when, and where, to God's wisdom and will — the more we shall be free from heart-eating anxiety.

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Wonderful are the effects when a crucified, glorious Savior is presented to the eye of Faith. This sight destroys the love of sin.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Lord is my strength — yet I am prone to lean on reeds.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man who once hung dead and forsaken upon the cross — is now the Lord of glory!

~ ~ ~ ~

Reproof should be — in season, in secret, and in love.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Lord Jesus, and the world that crucified Him — are competitors for our hearts.

~ ~ ~ ~

If our awareness of indwelling sin humbles us and makes our sovereign Christ more precious to us — then we are safe.

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Satan will preach free grace when he finds people willing to believe the notion, as an excuse and a cloak for idleness.

~ ~ ~ ~

Depend upon it, our hearts are all alike. To know that they are deceitful and desperately wicked, and to look to Jesus for mercy, help, and salvation — are, I think, the greatest attainments we can rise to in this imperfect state.

~ ~ ~ ~

When believers, after a long experience of their own deceitful hearts, after repeated proofs of their weakness, willfulness, ingratitude, and spiritual insensibility — they find that none of these things can separate them from the love of God in Christ — then Jesus becomes more and more precious to their souls.

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*Self* likes to do great things; but *grace* teaches us to do little things with a great spirit — that is, for the Lord's sake.

~ ~ ~ ~

We are never more safe, than when we are most sensible that we can do nothing without Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~

We are too much attached to our own petty concerns, and too little concerned for the glory of God.

~ ~ ~ ~

Sin cannot be hated for itself — until we have seen the malignity of it in Christ's sufferings!

~ ~ ~ ~

Sooner shall a tender mother sit inattentive to the crying of her distressed infant — than Jesus be an unconcerned spectator of His suffering children.

~ ~ ~ ~

The firmament of Scripture is spangled with *promises* — as the sky is with stars. God's promises are only perceptible to us in the night of affliction.

~ ~ ~ ~

God's Sovereignty is but another name for the unlimited exercise of His wisdom and goodness.

~ ~ ~ ~

"None but Jesus!" is my motto!

~ ~ ~ ~

*My usefulness* was the last idol I was willing to part with — but the Lord has enabled me to give even this up.

~ ~ ~ ~

O precious, irrecoverable *time!*

~ ~ ~ ~

O the excellency of the knowledge of Christ! It will be growing upon us through time — yes, I believe through eternity.

~ ~ ~ ~

O what a mercy — to see all power in Heaven and earth exercised by Him who was nailed to the cross for sinners.

~ ~ ~ ~

One 'Thus says the Lord,' ought to have more weight and authority with us, than a thousand arguments.

~ ~ ~ ~

One view of the brazen serpent (Christ) will do you more good than poring over your own wounds for a month!

~ ~ ~ ~

Persecution has hurt its thousands.
Popularity has slain its ten thousands!

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian life is Christ. This is a truth which deeply reassures our souls, focuses our hearts, and simplifies our spiritual lives.

But it is a principle that we perpetually fumble. The veil removed from our eyes in conversion — gives way to clouds over our eyes in trials, and sleepiness in our steps with the spiritual disciplines. The greatest challenges we face, are Christ-clouding distractions.

~ ~ ~ ~

The best advice I can give you is this: Look unto Jesus, beholding His beauty in the written Word!

~ ~ ~ ~

The cross of Christ, is the tree of *life* and the tree of *knowledge* combined.

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The *fear of man*, under the name of prudence, like a chilling frost, nips everything in the bud.

~ ~ ~ ~

God works powerfully — but for the most part gently and gradually.

~ ~ ~ ~

If you truly love Him — then you will study to please Him.

~ ~ ~ ~

Healing and wounding are equally from His hand, and equally tokens of His love and care over us.

~ ~ ~ ~

If you walk closely with God forty years — you will have a much lower opinion of yourself than you have now.

~ ~ ~ ~

Blessed be my Lord and Savior, who saved me from destruction — in defiance of myself!

~ ~ ~ ~

Every drop of rain hits its appointed target!

~ ~ ~ ~

Every new day is filled up with new things — new *mercies* on the Lord's part, new *ingratitude* on mine.

~ ~ ~ ~

"He has done all things well." Mark 7:37
Everything is necessary which God sends our way.
Nothing can be necessary which He withholds.
He does all things well. It is never ill with us — but when our evil hearts doubt or forget this plainest of truths.

~ ~ ~ ~

I hope to die like the thief upon the cross. I have no hope, no comfort in myself.

~ ~ ~ ~

"God made Him who had no sin — to be sin for us" 2 Corinthians 5:21
Behold the beloved Jesus, perfectly spotless and holy — yet made an example of the severest justice.
Behold Him . . .
prostrate and agonizing in the garden;
enduring the vilest insults from wicked men;
torn with whips, and nails, and thorns;
suspended, naked, wounded, and bleeding upon the cross — forsaken by God.
Sin was the cause of all His anguish. He stood in the place of sinners, and therefore was not spared.
Not any, or all, the evils which the world has known — afford such proof of the dreadful effects and detestable nature of sin, as the knowledge of Christ crucified!

~ ~ ~ ~

The oceanic torrent of evil — the world, the flesh, and the devil all conspired together — cannot extinguish the smallest spark of faith — when that spark has been ignited and sustained by God. Indwelling sin provides us with a marvelous proof of God's sustaining grace.

~ ~ ~ ~

Experience and observation proves that no doctrine but Jesus Christ and him crucified will withstand the stream of the world.

~ ~ ~ ~

Gladly would I receive more of comforts, but it is more necessary for me now, both as a Christian and minister, that I be humbled.

~ ~ ~ ~

Alas! how difficult is it to draw the line exactly between undervaluing and overvaluing the gifts of God.

~ ~ ~ ~

All my hopes and comforts may be summed up by saying — I have a rich and gracious Savior!

~ ~ ~ ~

Your constitution, your situation, your temper, your distemper, all that is either comfortable or painful in your lot — is of His appointment. Even the hairs of your head are all numbered!

~ ~ ~ ~

If I may speak my own experience, I find that to keep my eye simply upon Christ, as my peace, and my life — is by far the hardest part of the Christian life.

~ ~ ~ ~

Self-righteousness can feed upon *doctrines* — as well as upon works!

~ ~ ~ ~

He found us when we sought him not. Then we began to seek Him — and He was pleased to be found by us.

~ ~ ~ ~

Keeping Christ in view at all times is, by far, the hardest — and the most essential part of our calling as Christians.

~ ~ ~ ~

"By the grace of God, I am what I am" 1 Corinthians 15:10
The humble Christian will not be easily angered — nor will he be dogmatic and judgmental.
He will be compassionate and tender towards the infirmities of his fellow-sinners; knowing, that, if there is any difference between himself and others — it is grace that has made it. He knows that he has the seeds of every evil in his own heart!
Under all trials and afflictions, the humble Christian will look to the hand of the Lord, and lay his mouth in the dust — acknowledging that he suffers much less than his iniquities have deserved.
These are some of the advantages and good fruits which the Lord enables us to obtain from that bitter root, indwelling sin.

~ ~ ~ ~

God has given us a capacity and thirst for happiness which, both experience and observation demonstrate, the world cannot satisfy.

~ ~ ~ ~

The same power which produced the planets, is necessary to the production of a single hair; nor can one hair fall to the ground without His ordaining it — any more than the stars can fall from their orbits! In providence, no less than in creation — He has ordained both the greatest and the least. Therefore fear not — only believe.

~ ~ ~ ~

He will put *His silver* into the fire to purify it; but He sits by the furnace as a refiner, to direct the process.

~ ~ ~ ~

A minister may be diligent in his work, regular in his family, attentive to his people, and in many respects exemplary in his outward conduct — and yet not preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified!

~ ~ ~ ~

Hearers are disposed to be pleased with the preacher — if he says nothing to make them displeased with themselves.

~ ~ ~ ~

I want nothing of that 'knowledge' which has not a tendency to make sin more hateful, and Jesus more precious to my soul.

~ ~ ~ ~

I want to deliver up that rebel Self in chains — but the rogue, like Proteus, changes into so many different forms, that he slips through my fingers!

~ ~ ~ ~

If I am redeemed from eternal misery by the blood of Jesus, and if He is now preparing a mansion for me near Himself, that I may drink of the rivers of pleasure at His right hand for evermore; then the question ought not to be: How may I pass through life with the least inconvenience?
Rather, the question should be: How may my little span of life be made most subservient to the praise and glory of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me?

~ ~ ~ ~

I'm a slow scholar, and make bungling work at my lessons to apply the gospel to the common concerns of every hour.

~ ~ ~ ~

How different were Christ's sufferings from ours?
There is no *sting* in our rod, nor *wrath* in our cup.

~ ~ ~ ~

In London, I am in a crowd of temptations.
But in the country, there is a crowd of temptations in me.
My mind is a Vanity Fair.

~ ~ ~ ~

It is the triumph of God's grace, to make the rich humble and the poor thankful.

~ ~ ~ ~

Look unto Jesus!
This is the duty, privilege, safety, the unspeakable happiness, of a believer, are all comprised in that one sentence.

~ ~ ~ ~

Lord, save us from our golden calves!

~ ~ ~ ~

May Christ be our theme in the pulpit, and in the parlor.

~ ~ ~ ~

May we sit at the foot of the cross — and there learn what sin has done, what justice has done, what love has done.

~ ~ ~ ~

My heart is like a country but half subdued. Mutinies and insurrections are daily happening.

~ ~ ~ ~

My heart is vile, and even my prayers are sin. My soul is very sick — but my Physician is infallible.

~ ~ ~ ~

My hope is built, not upon frames and feelings, but upon the atonement and mediation of Jesus.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian knows that the season, measure, and continuance of his sufferings — are appointed by Infinite Wisdom, and designed to work for his everlasting good; and that grace and strength shall be given him according to his need.

~ ~ ~ ~

When we look at the ungodly, we are not to hate them — but to *pity* them, *mourn* over them, and *pray* for them. Nor have we any right to boast over them — for, by nature, and of ourselves, we are no better than they!

~ ~ ~ ~

I renounce all wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and happiness, which does not spring from and center in Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Bible is the grand repository of truth. It is the complete system of divine truth, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken, with impunity. Every attempt to disguise or soften any branch of this truth, in order to *accommodate* it to the prevailing taste around us — either to avoid the displeasure, or to court the favor, of our fellow mortals — must be an affront to the majesty of God, and an act of treachery to men!

~ ~ ~ ~

There is many a thing which the world calls disappointment — but there is no such thing in the *dictionary of faith*. What to others are disappointments — are to believers intimations of the will of God.

~ ~ ~ ~

Dangerous and inveterate diseases are seldom cured by cakes and candies.

~ ~ ~ ~

When I was young, I was sure of many things. Now there are only two things of which I am sure: one is, that I am a miserable sinner; and the other, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior. He is well-taught, who learns these two lessons.

~ ~ ~ ~

If the Lord is with us — then we have no cause of fear. His eye is upon us, His arm over us, His ear open to our prayer, His grace is sufficient, and His promise is unchangeable.

~ ~ ~ ~

The love I bear to Him is but a faint and feeble spark, but it is an emanation from Himself; He kindled it, and he keeps it alive.

~ ~ ~ ~

There is only one political maxim which comforts me: "The Lord reigns!"

~ ~ ~ ~

This is the worst enemy we have to deal with: self-will, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, self-seeking, self-dependence, self-boasting.

~ ~ ~ ~

Though my disease is grievous, it is not desperate. I have a gracious and infallible Physician.

~ ~ ~ ~

Too much of my time passes in busy idleness.

~ ~ ~ ~

What a privilege to possess God in all things, while we have them — and all things in God, when they are taken from us.

~ ~ ~ ~

When people are right with God — they are apt to be hard on themselves, and easy on other people.
But when they are not right with God — they are easy on themselves, and hard on others.

~ ~ ~ ~

Whoever is truly humbled — will not be easily angry, nor harsh or critical of others. He will be compassionate and tender to the infirmities of his fellow-sinners, knowing that if there is a difference — it is grace alone which has made it! He knows that he has the seeds of every evil in his own heart.

~ ~ ~ ~

Under all trials and afflictions — the believer should look to the hand of the Lord, and lay his mouth in the dust, acknowledging that he suffers much less than his iniquities have deserved.

~ ~ ~ ~

The chief and grand means of edification, without which all other helps will disappoint us, and prove like clouds without water — are the Bible and prayer — the Word of grace and the Throne of grace.

~ ~ ~ ~

We are engaged in a good cause,
we fight under a good Captain,
the victory is sure beforehand, and
the prize is a crown — a crown of eternal life.

~ ~ ~ ~

Every sin has a tendency towards a final apostasy! By repeated exercises of sin and grace — we begin at length to learn that we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing — but sin. And thus we are gradually prepared to live more out of ourselves — and to derive all our sufficiency of every kind from Jesus, the fountain of grace. That we are so totally depraved, is a truth which no one ever truly learned by merely being only told it.

~ ~ ~ ~

How happy is it to know the Lord, the Fountain of living waters! Every other acquisition without Him, will prove to be a broken cistern.

~ ~ ~ ~

I have felt impatience in my spirit — which is utterly unsuitable to my state as a *sinner* and a *beggar*.

~ ~ ~ ~

How seldom do we think how much we are indebted to Christ living in us!

~ ~ ~ ~

I advise you by all means to keep close to the atonement. The doctrine of the cross is the sun in the system of truth.

~ ~ ~ ~

I am a riddle to myself. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do!" Romans 7:15

~ ~ ~ ~

I am afraid we have been, and still are, too guilty of idolatry — and the Lord might justly blast our boasted paradise.

~ ~ ~ ~

You have liberty to cast all your cares upon Him who cares for you. By one hour's intimate access to the throne of grace, where the Lord causes his glory to pass before the soul that seeks Him — you may acquire more true spiritual knowledge and comfort, than by a day or a week's converse with the holiest of men, or the most studious perusal of many folios!

~ ~ ~ ~

I could not live comfortably a day, or an hour — without the doctrines of grace.

~ ~ ~ ~

I am prone to puzzle myself over twenty things which are out of my power — and equally unnecessary, if the Lord is my Shepherd.

~ ~ ~ ~

I feel like a man who has no money, but is allowed to draw from one infinitely rich. I am at once both a beggar — and rich man.

~ ~ ~ ~

God could have over-ruled every difficulty in your way, had He seen it to be best for you. He who has begun a good work in you, is able to carry it on — in defiance of all seeming hindrances, and make all things (even those which have the most unfavorable appearances) work together for your good!

~ ~ ~ ~

Not only the guilt — but the love of sin, and its dominion — are taken away, subdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing pardoned sinner.

~ ~ ~ ~

A knock at the door, or turning a corner — may be events which lead to important consequences. There are no such thing as accidents!

~ ~ ~ ~

If communion with God affords the greatest happiness which we are capable of — then whatever indisposes us for this, must be our great loss.

~ ~ ~ ~

If I was not a Calvinist, I think I would have no more hope of success in preaching to men, than to horses or cows!

~ ~ ~ ~

Our sufferings are light — when compared with what many endure.
They are still more light — when if compared with our deserts.

~ ~ ~ ~

Dread whatever grieves the Spirit of God.

~ ~ ~ ~

Like the sun, Christ has sufficiency to fill innumerable millions of eyes with light in the same instant.

~ ~ ~ ~

Trouble excites prayer, prayer brings deliverance, and deliverance produces praise.

~ ~ ~ ~

The progressive cure for our spiritual maladies, is looking to Christ's glory as we endure the proper medications of necessary pain and trials — the bitter circumstances that make us whiny patients. Yet Christ is always on call, His patience is infinite, and He bears with our complaints as He works out our spiritual health. Only in Him, do sinners find healing.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian life is about Christ. Or to say it more starkly, to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21).

~ ~ ~ ~

My heart is like a country but half subdued, where all things are in an unsettled state, and mutinies and insurrections are daily happening. I hope I hate the rebels that disturb the King's peace. I am glad when I can point them out, lay hold of them, and bring them to him for justice. But they have many lurking-holes, and sometimes they come disguised like friends, so that I do not know them, until their works reveal them.

~ ~ ~ ~

Sin is what makes the things we know we ought to do, so difficult and lifeless.

~ ~ ~ ~

Christian growth is never measured by a Christian's satisfaction in himself.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian's hope is based not on our unsettling feelings of joy in Christ — but on Christ Himself.

~ ~ ~ ~

Spiritual maturity is expressed by a suspicion of the heart's evil tendencies, and a turning to the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in every time of need.

~ ~ ~ ~

The more sick I am — the more need I have to apply to such a great, compassionate, infallible physician. I cannot heal myself, and why should I wish I could — when he has undertaken my case.

~ ~ ~ ~

These two convictions stand as marvelous evidences of saving grace:
an awareness of our heart's depravity, and
an awareness of our Physician's infallibility.
The sum of my complaints amounts to this — that I am a sick sinner, diseased in every part.
But if He who is the Infallible Physician has undertaken my case — then I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

~ ~ ~ ~

I am vile indeed, but Jesus is full of grace and truth.
He leads and guides me.
He feeds and guards me.
He restores and heals me.
He is an all-sufficient Savior.
Under the care of such an all-sufficient Christ — the chief of sinners does not despair, but presses on toward holiness.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian life is not only about simplicity of dependence and intention — but also about a simplicity of affection. We give up all vain attempts to self-medicate our souls with the broken-cistern pleasures of the world.
The simple Christian looks to God alone to supply him with spiritual joys — understanding that there will be times when those joys may be withheld by God for a divinely appointed reason. Yet, because he aims to live for God's glory alone — he looks to God alone for his soul's pleasure.
"Bring joy to your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul." Psalm 86:4

~ ~ ~ ~

We cannot keep our eyes focused on Jesus — while our greed lusts for worldly security. We may go through the motions, but eventually the misplaced priority of worldliness will corrode the soul's joy.

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian life is Christ. This is a truth which deeply reassures our souls, focuses our hearts, and simplifies our spiritual lives.
But it is a calling that we perpetually fumble. The veil removed from our eyes in conversion — gives way to clouds over our eyes in trials, and sleepiness in our steps with the spiritual disciplines. The greatest challenges we face, are Christ-clouding distractions.

~ ~ ~ ~

True faith in Christ unites the soul to Christ, and this unity brings a peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7) and a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory (1 Peter 1:8). *Union with Christ* teaches us that we are weak in ourselves — but strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (Ephesians 6:10). Union with Christ connects us to God — binding us to our supreme pleasures.

~ ~ ~ ~

I wish you health, peace, and prosperity — but, above all, that your souls may prosper. I wish that you may still prefer the light of God's countenance to your chief joy; that you may still delight yourselves in the Lord. I wish that you may be daily hungering and thirsting after him, and daily receiving from his fullness, even grace upon grace — and that you may rejoice in his all-sufficiency.

~ ~ ~ ~

**I am not what I once was!**

In his old age, when he could no longer see to read, John Newton heard someone recite this text, *"By the grace of God—I am what I am."*

He remained silent a short time and then, as if speaking to himself, he said: "I am not what I **ought** to be—ah, how imperfect and deficient! I am not what I **wish** to be—I abhor that which is evil, and I would cleave to that which is good. I am not what I **hope** to be—soon, soon I shall put off mortality, and with mortality all sin and imperfection! Though I am not what I *ought* to be, what I *wish* to be, and what I *hope* to be—yet I can truly say, **I am not what I once was**—a slave to sin and Satan! I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge, *"By the grace of God—I am what I am!"*

~ ~ ~ ~

**You would pity me indeed!**

Dear friend, *Wickedness prevails and increases in our city to a dreadful degree!* Our streets are filled with the *sons of Belial*, who neither fear God, nor regard man. I wish my *heart* was more affected with what my *eyes* see and my *ears* hear every day! I am often ready to fear lest the Lord should show His displeasure in some dreadful way!

And surely, if He were strict to mark *all* that is amiss—I myself would tremble! Oh, were He to plead against me—I could not answer Him one word! Alas! my dear friend, you know not *what a poor, unprofitable, unfaithful creature I am!* If you knew the evils which I feel within, and the snares and difficulties which beset me from without—**you would pity me indeed!**

So much forgiven—yet so little love to Jesus.

So many mercies—yet so few returns.

Such great privileges—yet a life so sadly below them.

Indwelling sin presses me downwards; when I would do good, evil is present with me! I can attempt nothing—but it is debased, polluted and spoiled by my depraved nature! My sins of omission are innumerable. In a word, there is . . .
much *darkness* in my understanding,
much *perverseness* in my will,
much *disorder* in my affections,
much *folly* and *madness* in my imagination!

In short, I am a riddle to myself—a heap of inconsistency!

Alas! when shall it be otherwise? I have a desire of *walking with God*—but I cannot attain unto it. Surely it is far better to depart, and to be with Jesus Christ—than to live here **up to the ears in sin and temptation!**

But, "We have an Advocate with the Father." Here my hope revives! **Though wretched in myself—I am complete in Him!** He is my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. On this "Rock" I build—for time and eternity!

~ ~ ~ ~

**'Tis a point I long to know**
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His—or am I not?

If I love—why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard His name!

Could my *heart* so hard remain,
*Prayer* a task and burden prove,
Every *trifle* give me pain,
If I knew a Savior's love?

When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Filled with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?

If I pray, or hear, or read,
*Sin is mixed with all I do!*
You who love the Lord indeed,
Tell me—Is it thus with you?

Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall;
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?

Could I joy His saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorred,
Find, at times, the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?

Lord, decide the doubtful case!
You who are Your people's sun,
Shine upon Your work of grace,
If it is indeed begun.

Let me love You more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not loved before,
Help me to begin today!

~ ~ ~ ~

**Every man's shoes should be exactly of one size!**

The *church of Christ* is composed of all who are savingly united to Him by genuine faith. They are infallibly known only to Himself. They are scattered far and wide, separated from each other by seas and mountains; they are a people of many nations and languages. But, wherever their lot is cast, they hear His voice, and are under His gracious eye. They do not have equal degrees of spiritual light, or measures of grace—but they are all *'accepted in the Beloved'.* They are all spiritual worshipers, and joint partakers of grace—and all will hereafter appear together at their Savior's right hand in glory! In whatever is *essential* to their salvation, they are all led by the same Spirit, and mind the same things.

But at present they are in an *imperfect* state. Though they are new creations—they are not freed from the 'principle of indwelling sin'. Their *knowledge* is clouded by much remaining ignorance; and their *zeal*, though right in its aim, is often warped and misguided by the corrupt influence of SELF. They still have many *corruptions*. They live in a *world* which furnishes frequent occasions of enticing them. And *Satan*, their subtle and powerful enemy, is always upon his watch to mislead and ensnare them!

Besides all this—they are born, educated, and effectually called, under a great variety of circumstances. Habits of life, local customs, early relationships with families and friends, and even bodily constitution, have more or less influence in forming their characters, and in giving a *bias* and *turn* to their manner of thinking; so that, in *matters of a secondary nature*—their sentiments may, and often do—differ as much as the features of their faces! A uniformity of judgment among them on these secondary matters, is not to be expected, while the *wisest* are defective in knowledge, the *holiest* are defiled with sin, and while the weaknesses of human nature, which are common to them all—are so differently affected by a thousand impressions which arise from their various situations.

They might, however, maintain a unity of spirit, and live in the exercise of mutual love, were it not that almost every individual unhappily conceives that they are bound in conscience, to prescribe their own line of conduct—as a standard to which all their brethren ought to conform! They are but few, who consider this "narrow mind-set" to be as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, as it would be to insist, or expect, that **every man's shoes should be exactly of one size!**

Thus, though all agree in asserting the authority and right of the Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His church—yet the various ideas they frame of the rule or standard to which He requires them to conform, and their pertinacious attachment to their own conceptions of it—separate them almost as much from each other, as if they were not united to Him by a principle of living faith! Their *petty difference*s form them into so many separate churches; and the fury with which they defend their own ideas, and oppose all who cannot agree with them in every minute point, makes them forget that they are *children in the same family*, and *servants of the same Master!* And, while they vex and worry each other with disputations and censures—the *world* is bewildered by all this, and laughs at them all! The spirit of love is restrained, offences are multiplied, and Satan is gratified by beholding the extensive effects of his pernicious and long-practiced maxim, *Divide and conquer!*"Accept one another, therefore, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Romans 15:7

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**The most generally prevailing and ensnaring sin**

"For of this you can be sure: that no sexually immoral or impurenor *covetousness* person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of God." Ephesians 5:5

**What is covetousness?**
Covetousness is a sin from which few people are entirely free. It is eminently a *deceitful* sin! It is decried and condemned in *others*—by multitudes who live in the habit of it *themselves!* It is very difficult to fix a conviction of this sin—upon those who are guilty of it!

Whether drunkards or profligates regard the warnings of the preacher or not, when he declares that those who persist in those evil practices, shall not inherit the kingdom of God—they at least know their own characters, and are sensible that *they* are the people intended.

But if the preacher adds, "nor the covetousness person—such a man is an idolater" —the covetous man usually sits unmoved, and is more ready to apply the threatening to his *neighbor*—than to *himself!* If he now and then gives a few dollars to some charity—he does not suspect that *he* is liable to the charge of covetousness!

I consider covetousness as **the most generally prevailing and ensnaring sin**, by which professors of the gospel, in our materialistic society, are hindered in their spiritual progress. A disposition deeply rooted in our fallen nature, strengthened by the *custom* of all around us, the *power of habit*, and the *fascinating charm of wealth*—is not easily counteracted.

If we are, indeed, genuine believers in Christ—we are bound by obligation, and required by our Scriptural rule—to set our affections on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. Christ has called us *out* of the world, and cautioned us against *conformity* to its spirit. While we are in the world—it is our duty, privilege, and honor—to manifest that grace which has delivered us from the love of the world. Christians must indeed eat and drink, and may buy and sell, as other people do. But the principles, motives, and ends of their conduct, are entirely different—they are to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior, and to do all for His glory!

The Christian knows that it is not necessary to be rich, or to be admired or envied by the vain unthinking world—and that it is absolutely necessary for him to maintain peace of conscience, and communion with God. In these respects, all God's people, however differently situated—are exactly upon a par.

But, alas! how many who *profess* to know and value the gospel—are far otherwise minded! The chief mark of their profession, is their attendance on Sunday services! At other times, and in other respects—they are not easily distinguished from the ungodly world! Their houses, furniture, tables, and other belongings; and the manner in which they seek worldly things—sufficiently proves them to be covetous! Their love of money, and the desire of more—are always in exercise. They attempt to look *two ways at once*—and to reconcile the incompatible claims of *God*—and *mammon!* They rise early, go to bed late, and *eat the bread of worry*—that they may be able to vie with the world in their possessions; and to lay up snares, and thorns, and encumbrances for their children!

Often, they already have a lawful employment, which affords a competence for a comfortable support. But if opportunity offers, they eagerly catch at some other *prospect of gain*, though they thereby double their anxieties, and encroach still more upon that **time** (too little before) which they should allot to the concerns of their souls!

Such opportunities they call *providential openings*, and perhaps say they are thankful for them; not considering that such *openings of Providence* are frequently temptations or tests, which the Lord permits a man to meet with—to prove what is in his heart, and to try him, whether his affections are indeed set on the things above—or still cleave to the earth!

For those who, as the apostle expresses it, *"long to be rich,"* who will strain every nerve to be found in the list of the wealthy—may, and often do, obtain the *poor reward* they seek. As in the case of Israel, when, not satisfied with *bread* from heaven, they clamored for *meat.* God gives them their desire—but with it, sends leanness into their souls. They expose themselves to temptations and snares, to foolish passions and pursuits; and thus too many, who promised fair at the first setting out, are *drowned in destruction and perdition!* For it is written in the Scripture, "For of this you can be sure: that no *covetousness* person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of God." Ephesians 5:5 And the Scriptures cannot be broken!

"For the love of money is the root of all evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows!" 1 Timothy 6:10. Who can enumerate the many sorrows with which the covetous and worldly-minded professor is pierced! Sooner or later, his schemes are broken; losses and crosses, disappointments and anxieties, wear down his spirit. Improper connections, which he formed, because he longed to be rich, become *thorns* in his sides and in his eyes! He trusted in men—and men deceive him! He leaned upon a weak reed—which breaks, and he falls! Thus he finds that the way of transgressors and backsliders is hard!

If therefore, my dear reader, you wish to avoid trouble, and to pass through life as smoothly as possible, take heed and beware of covetousness!

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**Thank Him for His prescription!**

*Trials* are **medicines** which our gracious and wise Physician prescribes, because we *need* them. He proportions the *frequency* and *weight* of them—to what our case requires. Let us trust in His skill—and **thank Him for His prescription!**

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**True patriotism!**

Dear friend,
Allow me to say, that it excites both my wonder and concern, that a *Christian minister* such as yourself, should think it worth his while to attempt *political reforms*. When I look around upon the present state of the nation, such an attempt appears to me, to be no less vain and foolish, than it would be to paint the *cabin*—while the *ship* is sinking! Or to decorate the *parlor*—while the *house* is on fire!

When our Lord Jesus was upon earth, He refused to get involved in disputes or politics, "Friend, who appointed Me a *judge* or arbitrator over you?" Luke 12:14. "My kingdom is not of this world! If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight!" John 18:36. God's children belong to a kingdom which is not of this world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and a part of their Scriptural character is, that they are the "quiet in the land." Psalm 35:19.

Satan has many contrivances to amuse people, and to divert their thoughts from their real danger!

My dear sir, my prayer to God for you is—that He may induce you to employ the talents He has given you, in pointing out *sin* as the great cause and source of every existing evil; and to engage those who love and fear Him, (instead of wasting time in political speculations, for which you are not competent,) to sigh and cry for our abounding abominations, and to stand in the breach, by prayer, that God's wrath may yet be averted, and our national mercies prolonged! This, I think, is **true patriotism**—the best way in which people in private life may serve their country.

I consider the ungodly as *saws* and *hammers* in the hand of the Lord. So far as they are *His instruments,* they will succeed—but not an inch further! Their wrath shall praise Him, and be subservient to His designs!

If *our lot* is so cast that we can exercise our ministry free from stripes, fines, imprisonments, and death—it is *more* than the gospel has promised to us! If Christians were quiet when under the cruel governments of Nero and other wicked persecutors, when they were hunted down like wild beasts—then *we* ought to be not only *quiet* but very *thankful* now! It was then accounted an *honor* to suffer for Christ and the 'offence of the cross'!

Those are to be greatly pitied, who boast of their 'liberty'—and yet they do not consider that they are in the *most deplorable bondage* as the slaves of *sin* and *Satan*, under the curse of God's law and His eternal wrath! Oh! for a voice to reach their hearts, that they may know their true and dreadful state—and seek deliverance from their horrific thraldom! May you and I labor to direct them to the *one thing*, which is absolutely needful, and abundantly sufficient.

If I had the wisdom or influence to soothe the angry passions of mankind—I would gladly employ them! But I am a stranger and a pilgrim here in this world. My charter, my rights and my treasures, are all in heaven—and there my *heart* ought to be. In a very short time, I may be removed (and perhaps suddenly) into the unseen and eternal world—where all that now causes so much *bustle upon earth—*will be of no more importance to me—than the events which took place among the antediluvians!

*In the hour, when death shall open the door into eternity*—many things which now assume an 'air of importance', will be found as light and unsubstantial as a child's dream!

How crucial then, is it for me—to be found watching, with my lamp burning, diligently engaged in my proper calling! For the Lord has not called me to set *governments* right—but to *preach the gospel*, to proclaim the glory of His name, and to endeavor to win souls! "Let the dead bury their own dead—but *you go and proclaim the kingdom of God!"* Luke 9:60. Happy is that servant, whom his Master finds so doing, when He returns!
As you have forced me to respond—both *duty* and *love* have obliged me to be faithful and free in giving you my thoughts.

I recommend you to the care and blessing of the great Shepherd and Savior; and remain for His sake, your affectionate friend and brother,
John Newton

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**Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd**

We are in the *Lord's school*—the *school of the cross*. His daily providential dispensations are suited to wean our attachment from everything here on earth—and to convince us that this world cannot be our rest, for it is polluted. Our *roses* grow on thorns; our *honey* brings a sting. Frequently our *sharpest trials*—spring from our *choicest comforts*. **Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd**—a *worm* is secretly preying upon its root! As every *bitter* thing is sweetened to a believer—so there is some bitterness mingled with every *sweet* thing. This is wisely and mercifully ordered by our heavenly Father. It is necessary. With such *hearts* an we have, and in such a *world* as we live in—much discipline is needful to keep us from *sleeping* upon the *enchanted ground*.

But the time is short. It will not always be thus. We shall soon be out of the reach of sin and temptation. Happy hour, when troubles and sorrows, hitherto our inseparable companions, shall flee away, to return no more! When Jesus, with joy and gladness shall come forth to meet us, and conduct us to our eternal home! Then we shall drink of the *rivers of pleasure* that are at His right hand—and our happiness shall be unspeakable, uninterrupted, without abatement, and without end!

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**The *poor worm* is secretly indulging self-applause!**

Among the many general *causes of decline in grace*, we may assign a principal place to **spiritual pride** and **self-admiration**. If our attainments in *knowledge* and *giftedness*, and even in *grace*—seduce us into *a good opinion of ourselves*, as if *we* were wise and good—we are already ensnared, in danger of falling every step we take, of mistaking the right path, and proceeding from bad to worse, without a power of *correcting* or even of *discovering* our deviations! That is—unless and until the Lord mercifully interposes, by restoring us to a spirit of *humility,* and *dependence* upon Himself. For God, who gives more grace to the *humble*—resists the *proud!* **He beholds them with abhorrence**—in proportion to the degree in which they admire themselves! It is the invariable law of His kingdom, that everyone who *exalts* himself—shall be *abased!*

True Christians, through the remaining evil of their hearts, and the subtle temptations of their enemy, are liable, not only to the workings of that pride which is common to our fallen nature—but to a *certain kind of pride*, which, though the most absurd and intolerable in any person—can only be found among those who make profession of the gospel. We *have* nothing but what we have *received*, and therefore to be *proud* of our titles, wealth, knowledge, success, or any temporal advantages by which the providence of God has distinguished us—is downright sinful! For those who confess themselves to be 'sinners', and therefore deserving of nothing but misery and wrath—to be *proud* of those peculiar blessings which are derived from the gospel of God's grace—is **a wickedness of which even the demons are not capable of!**

The apostle **Paul** was so aware of his danger of being exalted above measure, through the abundant revelations and peculiar favors which the Lord had afforded him—that he says, "There was given me a messenger of Satan to buffet me." He speaks of this sharp trial as a great *mercy*, because he saw that it was necessary, and designed to keep him humble and attentive to his own weakness.

**Ministers** who are honored with singular abilities and success, have great need of watchfulness and prayer on this account! Simple-hearted hearers are apt to admire their favorite preacher—taking it for granted that he is deeply affected himself with the truths, which, with so much apparent liberty and power—he proposes to them. While, perhaps—**the *poor worm* is secretly indulging self-applause**, and pleasing himself with the numbers and attention of those who hang upon his words!

Perhaps such thoughts will occasionally rise in the minds of the best ministers; but, if they are *allowed*, if they become *habitual*, and enter strongly into the idea he forms of his own importance; and if, while he *professes* to preach Jesus Christ—he is *preaching himself*, and seeking his own glory—he is guilty of high treason against the Majesty of Him in whose name he speaks! And sooner or later, the effects of his pride will be visible and noticed. Doctrinal errors, gross misconduct, an abatement of zeal, of gifts, of influence—are evils, always to be dreaded, *when* ***spiritual pride*** *has gained an ascendancy*, whether in public or in private life.

"The Lord Almighty has planned it, to *bring low the pride* of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth." Isaiah 23:9

*"For who makes you different from anyone else?* What do you *have*—that you did not *receive?* And if you did receive it—why do you *boast* as though you did not?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

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**If he is a liar, a talebearer, a railer, a flatterer or a jester**

There is, perhaps, no one test or proof of the *reality of a work of grace upon the heart*, more simple, clear and infallible—than the general tenor of our *speech*; for our Lord's aphorism is of certain and universal application, that "out of the abundance of the *heart*—the *mouth* speaks."

To the same purpose, the apostle James proposes to all who make a *profession* of the gospel, a searching criterion of their sincerity, when he says, "If anyone considers himself religious, and yet does not keep a tight **bridle** on his tongue—he deceives himself and his religion is worthless!" James supposes that the grace of God in a true believer will check the evils of the heart, and prevent them from breaking out by the tongue.

The grace of God will necessarily influence and govern the tongues of those who partake of it, in what they say when they speak of *God*, of *themselves*, and of or to their *fellow-creatures*.

Having seen a glimpse of the holiness and majesty, the glory and the grace, of the great **God** with whom they have to do—their hearts are impressed with *reverence*, and therefore there is a *seriousness* in their language. They cannot speak *lightly* of God, or of His ways. One would suppose that no person, who even but seems to be pious, can directly and expressly profane His glorious name. But there is a *careless* and *flippant* manner of speaking of the great God, which is very disgusting and very suspicious. Likewise, the hearts of believers teach their mouths to speak *honorably* of God under all their afflictions and crosses, acknowledging the *wisdom* and the *mercy* of His painful dispensations. And, if an impatient word escapes them—it grieves and humbles them, as quite unfitting to their situation as His *creatures*, and especially as *sinful* creatures, who have always reason to acknowledge, that it is of the Lord's mercy alone—that they are not wholly consumed.

When they speak of **themselves**, their tongues are bridled, and restrained from *boasting*. They speak as befits poor, unworthy creatures—because they *feel* themselves to be such! In what they say, either of their comforts or of their sorrows, *sincerity* dictates a *simplicity* which cannot be easily counterfeited.

In what they say of or to **others**, the tongues of believers are bridled by a heart-felt regard to *truth*, *love* and *purity*.

Where saving grace is in the heart—the tongue will be bridled by the law of TRUTH. It is grievous to see how nearly and readily some professors will venture upon the *borders of a lie*; either . . .
to defend their own conduct,
to avoid some inconvenience,
to procure a supposed advantage,
or sometimes merely to embellish a story!
Where instances of this kind are frequent, I hardly know a *fouler blot* in profession, or which can give a more just warrant to fear that such professors know nothing aright, either of God or themselves! The Lord is a *God of truth*; and He teaches His servants to hate and abhor lying, and to speak the truth from their hearts. I may add likewise, with regard to *promises*—that the person, whose *simple word* may not be safely depended upon—scarcely deserves the name of a Christian!

Where grace is in the heart, the tongue will likewise be bridled by the law of LOVE. If we love our neighbor—can we lightly speak evil of him, magnify his failings, or use provoking or insulting language to him? Love thinks no evil—but bears, hopes and endures. Love acts by the golden rule, to "Do unto others—what you would like them to do unto you." Those who are under the influence of Christian love, will be gentle and compassionate, disposed to make the most favorable allowances, and of course their tongues will be restrained from the language of malevolence, harsh censure, and slander—which are as familiar to us as our mother tongue—until we are made partakers of the grace of God.

The tongue is also bridled by a regard to PURITY, agreeable to the precepts, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths!" "Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking!" Ephesians 4:29, 5:4. Grace has taught believers to *hate* these things! How then can their tongues *speak* of them?

There are false professors, indeed, who can suit their *language* to their *company*. When with the people of God—they call talk very seriously. But at other times, they are well pleased to join in vain, frothy and evil conversation. But this double-mindedness is of itself, sufficient to discredit all their pretenses to a pious character.

Upon the whole, though *perfection* is not to be expected, though true believers may, on some occasions, speak rashly, and have great cause for humiliation, watchfulness, and prayer, with respect to the government of their tongues; yet Scripture authorizes this conclusion: That, if the tongue is frequently without a bridle; if it may be observed, that a person often speaks . . .
lightly of *God* and of divine things,
proudly of *himself*, and
harshly of his *fellow-creatures*;
**if he is a liar, a talebearer, a railer, a flatterer or a jester**—then, whatever other good qualities he may seem to possess—his *speech* betrays him! He deceives himself, and his religion is worthless!

Let us think of these things, and entreat the Lord to cast the *salt of His grace* into the f*ountain of our hearts*—that the *streams of our conversation* may be wholesome.

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**But my eye and my heart are to Jesus!**

(from the *diary* of [John Newton](http://gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm))

January 1, 1773
This is the ninth New Years day I have seen in this church. I have reason to say, 'The Lord crowns every year with His goodness!' The entrance of this year finds me and my dear Mary in health and peace. I am still favored with strength, and with some liberty for my pastoral work, and hope the Lord is still pleased to work by me—for the *edification* of His people, and the *awakening* of lost sinners.

As to myself . . .
my exercise of *grace* is faint,
my *consolations* small,
my *heart* is full of evil,
my *chief burdens* are, a wild ungoverned imagination, and a strange sinful backwardness to reading the Scriptures, and to secret prayer.

These have been my complaints for many years, and I have no less cause of complaint than formerly. **But my eye and my heart are to Jesus!** His I am; Him I desire to serve; to Him this day, I would devote and surrender myself anew.

O Lord, accept, support, protect, teach, comfort and bless me. Be . . .
my Arm,
my Eye,
my Joy and
my Salvation.
Mortify the power of sin—and increase the image of Your holiness in my heart. Anoint me with fresh oil, make me humble, faithful, diligent and obedient. Let me in all things attend . . .
to Your *Word* as my rule,
to Your *glory* as my end, and
depend upon Your *power* and *promise* for my safety and success.

I am now in the 49th year of my life, and may expect in the course of a few years at most—to go whence I shall no more return; nor have I a certainty of continuing here a single *year*—or even a *month* or a *day!* May Your grace keep me always until *my appointed change* shall come, and when the summons shall come—may I be enabled to rejoice in You, as the strength of my heart and my portion forever!

"You guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards You will take me up in glory. Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever!" Psalm 73:24-26

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**The load will be too heavy for us!**

I compare the **troubles** which we have to undergo in the course of the year—to *a great bundle of sticks*, far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole bundle at once. He mercifully unties the bundle, and gives us first one stick, which we are to carry today; and then another, which we are to carry tomorrow, and so forth. *We can easily manage our troubles*, if we would only carry the trouble appointed for each day. But **the load will be too heavy for us**—if we carry **yesterday's**burden over again today, and then add the burden of **tomorrow** to the weight, before we are required to bear it.

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**Poor ship!**

(The following is a [letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) to his 14 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school)

"He got up and rebuked the *wind* and the *raging waters*; the *storm* subsided, and all was calm!" Luke 8:24

My dear Betsy,
Sometimes, when I consider what a *world* you are growing up into, and what *snares* and *dangers* young people are exposed to, with little experience to help them—I have some painful feelings for you!

The other day I was at the harbor, and saw a ship launched—she slipped easily into the water; the people on board cheered; the ship looked clean and mirthful, she was freshly painted, and her colors flying. But I looked at her with a sort of *pity*, **"Poor ship!"** I thought, "you are now in port and in safety; but before long you must go into the wild sea! Who can tell what *storms* you may meet with hereafter, and to what *hazards* you may be exposed! How weather-beaten you may be before you return to port again, or perhaps you may not return at all!"

Then my thoughts turned from the *ship*—to my dear *Betsy*. The ship seemed to be an emblem of your present state—you are now, as it were, in a safe harbor; but by and by you must launch out into the *world*, which may well be compared to a *tempestuous sea.* I could even now almost weep at the resemblance! But I take courage, as my *hopes* are greater than my *fears*. I know there is an *infallible Pilot*, who has the *winds* and the *waves* at His command! There is hardly a day passes, in which I do not entreat Him to take charge of you. Under His care—I know you will be safe. He can guide you, unhurt, amidst the storms, and rocks, and dangers—by which you might otherwise suffer—and bring you, at last, safely to the haven of His eternal rest!

"Who is this? He commands even the *winds* and the *water*—and they obey Him!" Luke 8:25

I hope you will seek Him while you are young—then you will be happy, and I shall rejoice. *Nothing will satisfy me but this!* Though I should live to see you settled to the greatest advantage in temporal matters—unless you love Him, and live in His fear and favor—you would be quite miserable! I think it would nearly break my heart; for, next to your dear mamma, there is nothing so dear to me in this world as you! But the Lord gave you to me—and many a time upon my knees, I have given you back to Him. Therefore I hope you must, and will, and shall be His!

I am, with great tenderness, my dear child,
Your very affectionate father

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**If you could form a 'little creature' and make it live**

(The following is a [letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) to his 13 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school)

My dear Betsy,
*Idleness* is a very great evil—the door by which a thousand temptations and mischiefs may enter!

Though you yourself have not been a *sufferer*—I wish for you to cultivate a *sympathetic* and *benevolent* spirit—a disposition to have *compassion* on the distresses of others—even though you cannot *relieve* them. *Compassion*, next to the grace of God, is the brightest ornament of human nature. When it is genuine, it is one of the best *effects* and *proofs* of saving grace. It was the mind of Jesus the Savior—and those who love Him, will in a degree resemble Him! *A hard-hearted, unfeeling, selfish Christian* is a total contradiction.

When you think what multitudes of mankind are suffering by war, famine, sickness, storms, earthquakes, and other calamities—let it lead your thoughts to the **evil of sin**—which brought all these other evils into the world.  *But what is sin?*

Sin is presuming to do our own will—in opposition to the will of God—who is our Creator, Lawgiver and Benefactor. By sin we . . .
attempt independence from our Creator,
affront the authority of our righteous Lawgiver, and
are guilty of base and horrid ingratitude against our greatest and kindest Benefactor!

**If you could form a 'little creature' and make it live**—and if it hated you and opposed you, slighted your kindness, and took pleasure in displeasing you—would you not soon be weary of it, and, instead of feeding and taking care of it, be provoked to tread it under your feet? But, oh, the patience of God—though He could destroy rebellious men much more easily than you could kill a loathsome spider—yet He waits to be gracious, and has so loved them as to send His own Son to die—that they may live!

Sin has not only filled the world with woe—but it was the cause of all the woe that *Jesus* endured. He groaned and wept, and sweat blood, and died upon the cross—only because we had sinned! May I live to see you duly affected with the *evil of sin*—and the *love of Jesus!* There is nothing more that I desire for you!
I am, my dear child,
Your most affectionate father

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**I would teach you a way to be never be disappointed**

(The following is a [letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) to his 13 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school)

"The LORD does whatever pleases Him—in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths!" Psalm 135:6

My dear Betsy,
*How vain are all things here below!* "Vanity of vanities!" says the preacher. And you, and I, and your mamma, may say so likewise; for we all counted upon seeing you *last* Sunday. We *listened* at the door—and *peeped* out of the window—but *no Betsy came!* Now we will venture to expect you *next* Sunday.

Indeed, it is not amiss that you should now and then meet with a *hindrance*—that you may learn, if possible—not to count too much on what *tomorrow* may do for you—and that you may begin to feel the impossibility of being happy, any further than *your* will is brought into submission to the will of *God*. In order to learn this—you must have your own will frequently crossed. And things *do* and *will* turn out, almost daily in one way or other—contrary to our wishes and expectations.

When such *disappointments* happen—most people fret and fume! They are angry and impatient! But others, who are in the *Lord's school*, and desirous of being taught by Him—get benefit by these things, and sometimes find more pleasure in yielding to *His appointments*, though contrary to their own wills—than they would have done, if all had happened just as they had desired!

I wish for you my dear child, to think much of *the Lord's governing providence*. It extends to the *minutest* concerns. He rules and manages all things; but in so *secret* a way, that most people think that He does *nothing*. When, in reality—*He does ALL!*

He appointed the time of your coming into the world. And the day and hour of your coming home from school to us—totally depends upon Him likewise! *Nor can you safely travel one step of the road*—without His protection and care over you!

It may now seem a small matter to you and I, whether you came home *last* Sunday—or are to come home *next* Sunday. But we know not what different *consequences* may depend upon the day—we know not what *hidden danger* you might have escaped by staying at school last Sunday. The Lord knows all things! He foresees every possible consequence! Often what we call **disappointments**,are really **mercies** from Him to save us from harm!

*If I could teach you a lesson*, which, as yet, I have but poorly learned myself—**I would teach you a way to be never be disappointed**. This would be the case—if you could always form a *right judgment* of this world, and all things in it.

If you go to a *bramble*-bush to look for *grapes*—you must be disappointed; but then you are old enough to know that *grapes* never grow upon *brambles*. So, if you expect much *pleasure* here in this world—you will not find it. But you ought not to say you are disappointed, because the Scripture plainly warned you beforehand, to look for crosses, trials and hindrances, every day. If you *expect* such things—*you will not be disappointed when they happen!*

"At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: Naked I came from my mother's womb—and naked I will depart. The Lord *gave*—and the Lord has *taken away!* May the name of the Lord be praised!" Job 1:20-21

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**I asked the Lord, that I might grow**
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know;
And seek more earnestly His face.

Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair!

I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request;
And by His love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins—and give me rest!

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part!

Yes more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to *aggravate* my woe!
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds—and laid me low!

*"Lord, why is this!"* I trembling cried,
"Will you pursue your worm to death?"
"This is the way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These *inward* *trials* I employ,
From *self* and *pride* to set you free;
And break your *schemes of earthly joy,*
That you may seek your all in Me!"

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**Be thankful, my dear, that he treats you as his enemy!**

November 13, 1772
My dear Miss,
I am glad that you complain of *evil thoughts* and *temptations*; for, though these things are grievous, they always accompany a saving work of grace. Though every Christian does *not* suffer greatly by persecution, poverty, and worldly troubles—yet they *all* suffer much from indwelling sin, temptation and Satan.

As to **evil thoughts***,* they as unavoidably arise from an evil *nature*—as steam arises from a boiling tea-kettle! Every *cause* will have its *effect*—and a sinful *nature* will have sinful *effects*. You can no more keep such thoughts out of your mind—than you can stop the course of the clouds!

But if the Lord had not taught you—you would not have been sensible of them, nor concerned about them. This is a token for good. By nature your thoughts would have been *only evil*, and that *continually*. But you find *'something' within you* that makes you dislike these thoughts; makes you ashamed of them; makes you strive and pray against them.

Now, this 'something' that resists your evil thoughts—what can it be? It cannot be human nature; for we naturally love our vain imaginations. It is the grace of God! The Lord has made you sensible of your disease—that you might love and prize the great Physician! The knowledge of His love for you—shall make you hate these thoughts! Yet you will be *pestered* with them more or less, while you live in this world. For sin is wrought into our bodies, and our souls must be freed from our bodies—before we shall be fully freed from the evils under which we mourn!

Your other complaint of **temptations** is likewise a good one. If you were to visit some young ladies who know no other end of living—but to dress and dance and socialize; and if you were to ask them if they are *troubled with Satan's temptations*—they would think that you were out of your wits! Poor things! They know no better! They are *blinded by the god of this world*; they go on quietly in the way of sin and vanity, careless of their souls, and mindless of eternity! While they continue in this course, you may be sure that Satan will not disturb them! They are *asleep*, and it would not be for his interest to do anything that might awaken them out of their *pleasant dream!*

And if you yourself were thus *asleep*, Satan would be content that you should sleep on—and take your rest. But, when he sees anyone awakened out of this *deadly sleep*, he probably tries first to lull them asleep again. And, if the Lord prevents that by His mercy, then Satan alters his measures, and *roars like a lion* which has lost his prey! **Be thankful, my dear, that he treats you as his enemy!** For the state of those to whom he behaves as a *friend*, is miserable indeed! And always remember that he is a *chained* enemy! He may *terrify*—but he cannot *devour* those who have fled for refuge to Jesus!

You cannot be too jealous of your own *heart*, or too cautious of the *snares* which you are exposed to. But the Lord is able and faithful to keep those from falling, who, sensible of their own weakness, cry daily to Him, *"Hold me up—and I shall be safe!"* Continue in prayer, that you may be preserved humble and abased in your own eyes—and then I am sure that you will not fall.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil!" Ephesians 6:10-11

I am sincerely, your affectionate friend and servant,
John Newton

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**I am sure I cannot endure to the end!**

"I will put *My fear* in their hearts—so they will never turn away from Me." Jeremiah 32:40

Jesus, to whom I have been led to commit myself, has engaged to save me, absolutely, and from first to last. He has promised not only that *He* will not depart from me—but that He will put, keep, and maintain *His fear* in my heart—so that *I* shall never finally depart from Him! And if He does not do this for me—I have no security against my turning apostate! For I am so weak, inconsistent, and sinful; I am so encompassed with deadly snares from the world; and I am so liable to such assaults from the subtlety, vigilance, and power of Satan—that, unless I am "kept by the power of God," **I am sure I cannot endure to the end!**

I do believe that the Lord will keep me *while I walk humbly and obediently before Him*; but, were this all—it would be *cold comfort!* For I am prone to *wander*—and need a *Shepherd* whose watchful eye, compassionate heart, and boundless mercy—will pity, pardon, and restore my backslidings!

For, though by *His* goodness and not *my* own—I have hitherto been preserved in the path of holiness; yet I feel those *evils within me*, which would shortly break loose and bear me down to destruction, were He not ever present with me to control them.

Those who comfortably hope to see His face in glory—but depend upon *their own* watchfulness and endeavors to preserve themselves from falling—must be much wiser, better, and stronger than I am! Or at least they cannot have so deep and painful a sense of their own weakness and vileness, as daily experience forces upon me. I desire to be found in the use of the Lord's appointed means for the renewal of my spiritual strength—but I dare not undertake to watch a single hour, nor do I find ability to think a good thought, nor a power *in myself* of resisting any temptation! My strength is perfect weakness—and all I have is sin.

In short, I must sit down in despair—if I did not believe that He who has begun a good work in me, will carry it out to completion.

"Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

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**God's work of grace in the soul**

"The soil produces grain—
first the *blade*,
then the *stalk*, and
then the *ripe grain* on the stalk."
Mark 4:28

The Lord compares the usual method of **growth in grace**—to the *growth of grain*, which is perfected by a *slow* and almost *imperceptible progress*.

The *seed* is *hidden* for a time in the soil; and, when it appears, it passes through a succession of *changes*—the blade, the stalk, and lastly the ripe grain.

And it is brought forward amidst a *variety of weather:* the dew, the frost, the wind, the rain, the sun—all concur to advance its maturity, though some of these agents are contrary to each other; and some of them, perhaps, seem to threaten the life of the plant! Yet, when the season of *harvest* returns—the grain is found ready for the sickle!

Just so is **God's work of grace in the soul**. Its *beginnings* are small, its *growth* for the most part slow, and, to our apprehensions, imperceptibleandoften precarious.

But there is this difference in the comparison: frosts and blights, drought or floods, may possibly disappoint the gardener's hopes. But the *great Gardener of the soul*—will not, and cannot be disappointed. What *He* sows—*shall* flourish in defiance of all opposition! And, if at times it seems to *wither*—He *can* and He *will* revive it!

For the most part, God's people are exercised with sharp trials and temptations; for it is necessary they should learn not only what *He* can do for them—but how little *they* can do without Him! Therefore He teaches them not all at once—but by degrees, as they are able to bear it.

"The soil produces grain—
first the *blade*,
then the *stalk*, and
then the *ripe grain* on the stalk."
Mark 4:28

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**For pastors only!**

"He is a dear brother, *a* *faithful minister* and fellow servant in the Lord." Colossians 4:7

Dear fellow pastor,
You have desired a good work—may the Lord give you the desires of your heart. May He give you . . .
the *wisdom* of Daniel,
the *meekness* of Moses,
the *courage* of Joshua,
the *zeal* of Paul, and
that *self-abasement* and *humility* which Job and Isaiah felt—when they not only had *heard* of Him by the hearing of the ear—but when they *saw* His glory, and abhorred themselves in dust and ashes!

May you be taught of God—for none teaches like Him—and come forth an able minister of the New Covenant, well instructed rightly to divide and faithfully to distribute the Word of truth.

In the *school of Christ*, you will have to learn some lessons which are not very pleasant to flesh and blood. You must learn to *labor*, to *run*, to *fight*, to *wrestle—*and many other hard exercises—some of which will try your strength, and others your patience.

You know the common expression, *'a jack of all trades'.* I am sure a minister had need be such a one:
a brave *soldier*,
an alert *watchman*,
a caring *shepherd*,
a hardworking *farmer*,
a skillful *builder*,
a wise *counselor*,
a competent *physician*,
and a loving *nurse*.

But do not be discouraged—you have a wonderful and a gracious *Master*, who does not only give *instructions*—but *power* and *ability!* He engages that His grace shall be sufficient, at all *times* and in all *circumstances*, for those who simply give themselves up to His teaching and His service.

"Be an **example** to all believers . . .
in what you *teach*,
in the way you *live*,
in your *love*, your *faith*, and your *purity*."
1 Timothy 4:12

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**Did you ever see my picture?**

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do—that I do not do; but what I hate—that I do. I have the desire to do what is good—but I cannot carry it out. For what I do—is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing!" ***Romans*** *7*
 **Did you ever see my picture?** It has been drawn by a masterly hand. And though another person, and one whom I am far from resembling, sat for it—it is as like me as one new penny is like another! The original was drawn at *Corinth*—and sent to the Christians at ***Rome***. Many copies have been produced, and it has a place in most public and private libraries, and I would hope in most families. I had seen it a great many times, before I could discover one of my own features in it—but then my eyes were very bad.

What is most remarkable, is that it was drawn long before I was born! And now, having been favored with some excellent *eye-salve*, I quickly knew it to be my own. I am drawn in a posture which would be strange and peculiar, if it was not so common with me—looking two different and opposite ways at once, so that you would be puzzled to tell whether my eyes are fixed upon *heaven—*or upon the *earth!* I am aiming at two things inconsistent with each other at the same time, so that I can accomplish neither.

According to the *different light* in which you view the picture, I appear to rejoice—or to mourn; to have nothing—or possessing everything; to be a conqueror—or a captive. In a word, *I am a double person! I am a riddle*! So it is no wonder if you know not what to make of me—for I cannot tell what to make of myself!
I would—and I would not.
I do—and I do not.
I can—and I cannot.
I find the hardest things easy—and the easiest things impossible.
I am both rich—and poor.
I can do nothing—yet I can do all things.
I am opposed beyond my strength—yet I am not overpowered.
I gain when I lose—and I often am a loser by my gains.

But while I am in this *perplexity*, you will observe in the same picture—a *hand* stretched forth for my relief, and may see a label proceeding out of my mouth with these words, "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" The more I study this picture, the more I discover some new and striking resemblance, which convinces me that *the Painter* knew me better than I knew myself!

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do—I do not do; but what I hate—I do. I have the desire to do what is good—but I cannot carry it out. For what I do—is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing!" *Romans 7*
In a word, I am a *sinner*, a vile one—but a sinner believing in Jesus!

I am a *silly sheep*—but I have a gracious, watchful Shepherd!

I am a *dull scholar*—but I have a Master who can make the dullest learn.

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**I am a perverse and unruly patient!**

I am bound to speak well of **my Physician**—He treats me with great tenderness, and bids me in due time to expect a perfect cure. I know too much of Him (though I know but little) to doubt either His skill or His promise.

It is true, *I have suffered sad relapses* since I have been under His care. Yet I confess, that the fault has not been His—but my own! **I am a perverse and unruly patient!** I have too often neglected His prescriptions, and broken the regimen He appoints me to observe. This *perverseness*, joined to the *exceeding* *obstinacy of my disorders*, would have caused me to be turned out as ***an incurable*** long ago—had I been under any other hand but His! Indeed—there is none like Him! When I have *brought myself* very low—He has still helped me. Blessed be His name—I am yet kept alive only by means of His perfect care.

Though His medicines are all *beneficial*—they are not all *pleasant*. Now and then He gives me a *pleasant* cordial; but I have many severe disorders, in which there is a *needs-be* for my frequently taking His *bitter* and *unpalatable* medicines!

We sometimes see published in the newspapers, *acknowledgments of cures received*. Methinks, if I were to publish my own case, that it would run something like this:

"I, John Newton, have long labored under a multitude of grievous disorders:
*a fever of ungoverned passions,*
*a cancer of pride,*
*a frenzy of wild imaginations,*
*a severe lethargy, and*
*a deadly stroke!*
In this deplorable situation, I suffered many things from many physicians, spent every penny I had—yet only grew worse and worse!

In this condition, Jesus, the Physician of souls, found me when I sought Him not. He undertook my recovery ***freely***, without money and without price—these are His *terms* with all His patients! My *fever* is now abated, my *senses are* restored, my *faculties* are enlivened! In a word, *I am a new man!* And from His ability, His promise, and the experience of what He has already done—I have the fullest assurance that He will infallibly and perfectly heal me—and that I shall live forever as *a monument of His power and grace!"*

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**Walking with Jesus**

When I speak of **walking with Jesus**, my idea is helped by considering how it was with His first disciples—*they lived in His presence!* While He stayed in a place—they stayed; and when He moved—they went with Him. Having Him thus always *near*, always in *view*—the sight of Him undoubtedly gave a composure to their whole behavior; and was a check upon their eyes, their tongues, and their actions!

When they had *hard questions* upon their minds—they did not puzzle themselves with vain reasonings. When they were in *need*—they looked to Him for a supply. When they had *difficulties* and *dangers*—they little doubted of deliverance, knowing that He was with them.

Just so, I need a faith that shall have such **an abiding, experimental conviction of His nearness and presence—as if I actually saw Him!** "Lord, increase my faith!"

Surely, if He were now upon earth, and I expected a visit from Him this afternoon—my heart would bound at the thought! With what a mixture of joy and fear would I open the door to receive Him! How cautious would I be—not to *do* or *say* anything that might grieve Him, and shorten His stay with me! And how gladly, if He gave me permission to speak, would I catch the opportunity of telling Him all my concerns! Surely I would be unwilling to let Him go—until He had healed the wounds in my soul, and renewed my spiritual strength; until He had taught me better how to serve Him, and promised to support me in His service. And if I heard Him say, with an audible voice, "Though they fight against you—they shall not prevail, for I am always with you to deliver you!" I would bid *adieu* to fear!

But, alas, my unbelieving heart! Are not these things true, even at present? Is He not as *near* and as *kind?* Have I not the same reasons and the same encouragement to set Him always before me—and to tell Him . . .
all my *needs*,
all my *fears*, and
all my *troubles*—
as if I saw Him with my bodily eyes!

"Be sure of this: **I am with you always**—even to the end of the age!" Matthew 28:20

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**Worship God in the shop or kitchen**

May 2, 1771
My dear friend,
The more the Lord blesses you in earthly things—the more sensible you will be that true happiness is only to be found in Himself; for *sin* and *vanity* are closely connected with everything beneath the skies! In this view, I trust He will enable you to *number your troubles among your mercies*, as necessary to keep your soul from cleaving to the dust, and to quicken your prayers and desires heavenwards.

Our *necessary relationships* in this life, especially those which are most pleasing, are attended with many *snares*. May the Lord keep you sensible of the danger, that you may be watchful against the first appearances of spiritual decline, and be continually crying, "Hold me up—and then I shall be safe!"

I am, however, fully persuaded that a due attention to the *concerns of our relative duties and callings in this world,* can never be a hindrance to our walking with God. These earthly things require some of our *thoughts*—and much of our *time*; and if we can manage them in obedience to His will, and with a reference to His glory—they are then sanctified, and become *holy actions*. A believer, acting in a right spirit, may be truly said to **worship God in the shop or kitchen**, no less than when waiting on Him in prayer and Scripture meditation. A person called by God's providence to *sweep the streets*, if he does it to the Lord, performs as acceptable a service as another who should preach the Gospel to thousands!

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**The magical lantern blinding us with a *splendid delusion!***

"Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place—because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy!" Micah 2:10

My dear friend,
What a *poor*, *uncertain* and *dying* world is this! What a *wilderness* in itself! Without the saving knowledge of Jesus—how dark, how desolate it is! It does not appear to us thus, before we were saved—because we were then in *a state of enchantment*, **the magical lantern blinding us with a *splendid delusion!***

It is a great mercy to be *undeceived in time*; and though our *mirthful dreams* are at an end, and we awake to everything that is dismaying—yet we see a *highway* through the wilderness, and a powerful and infallible *Guide* at hand to conduct us through it! And we can discern, beyond the limits of the wilderness—a better land, where we shall be at *rest* and at *home!*

What will the *difficulties we met along the way*—then signify? The remembrance of them will only remain to heighten our sense of the love, care, and power of our Savior and Leader! O how shall we then admire, adore, and praise Him—when He condescends to unfold to us—the beauty, propriety, and harmony of the whole train of His providential dealings with us—and give us a clear retrospect of all the way, and all the windings of our earthly pilgrimage!

In the mean while, the best method of adorning our profession, and of enjoying peace in our souls—is simply to trust Him, and absolutely to commit ourselves and our all to *His wise and loving management*. *By casting our burdens upon Him*—our hearts become light and cheerful. We are then freed from a thousand *anxieties* and *worries—*which are *wearisome* to our minds, and which are *needless* for us—yes, even *useless!*

Oh the blessedness of this confident trust in our Father's care, through all the changes and vicissitudes we meet with—knowing that His love, purpose and promise—are wise, good and unchangeable! *May this be your experience!*

~ ~ ~ ~

**He drank the whole cup!**

"God is our refuge and strength, *an ever-present help in times of trouble!* Therefore we will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas!" Psalm 46:1-2

November 2, 1761
My dear sister,
Let us not be greatly discouraged at **the many tribulations, difficulties and disappointments** which lie in the path which leads to glory. Our Lord has plainly told us, that "in this world, you will have many trials and sorrows." Yet He has also made a suitable *provision* for every case we can meet with; and is Himself always near to those who call upon Him—as a sure refuge, an almighty strength, *a never-failing, ever-present help in every time of trouble!*

Jesus Himself was a *man of sorrow*, and acquainted with grief for our sakes. **He drank the whole cup of unmixed wrath for us!** Shall we then refuse to *taste a sip* of the *cup of affliction* at His appointment; especially when His wisdom and His love *prepare* it for us—and He *proportions* every circumstance to our strength; when He puts it into our hands, not in anger—but in tender mercy—to do us good, to bring us near to Himself; and when He sweetens *every bitter sip* with those comforts which none but He can give?

All former believers were once as we are now—they had their *afflictions* and their *fears*, their *enemies* and *temptations*; they were exercised with a *wicked heart*, and a *wicked world!* Now they are all before the eternal throne of God and the Lamb! While we are sighing—they are singing! While we are fighting—they are triumphing!

The *time* is short—and the *world* is passing away! All its *troubles* and all its *vanities* will soon be at an end! In a little while, "we shall **see** Him as He is!" Every *veil* will be taken away, every *seeming frown* will be removed from His face—and every tear wiped away from ours! We shall also be **like** Him! Even now, when we contemplate His glory as shining in the looking-glass of the Gospel—we feel ourselves, in some measure, transformed into His image! What a sudden, wonderful, and abiding change we shall then experience—when He shall shine directly, immediately, and eternally upon our souls, without one interposing cloud between!

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:3

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**The secret of being content!**

"Godliness with *contentment* is great gain!" 1 Timothy 6:6

August 17, 1776
My dear friend,
It befits every Christian to say—It is *not necessary* for me to be *rich*—or what the world accounts *wise*. It is not necessary for me to be *healthy*—or *admired* by my fellow-worms. It is not necessary for me to pass through life in a state of *prosperity* and *outward comfort.* These things *may* be, or they may *not* be—as the Lord in His wisdom shall appoint them for me.

But it *is necessary* for me to be humble and spiritual, to seek communion with God, to adorn my profession of the Gospel, and to yield submissively to His disposal, in whatever way, whether of service or suffering—that He shall be pleased to call me to glorify Him in this world. It is not necessary for me to *live long*—but highly expedient that while I do live—I should live unto Him! *Here then, I would bound my desires;* and here, having His Word for my rule, I am secured from asking amiss. Let me have His presence, wisdom to know my calling, and opportunities and faithfulness to improve them; and as to the rest, Lord, help me to sincerely pray,
*Whatever* You will,
*whenever* You will, and
*however* You will.

"I have learned to be *content* whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned **the secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want!" Philippians 4:11-12

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**There are only two things which I am sure of**

When I was young, I was sure of *many* things.
But now that I am old, **there are only *two*
things which I am sure of**:
One is that I am a miserable sinner!
Secondly, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior!

He is well taught—who learns these two lessons.

"This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full
acceptance: *'Christ Jesus came into the world
to save sinners'*—and I am the worst of them!"
1 Timothy 1:15

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**If I ever reach heaven, I expect to find three wonders there**:

first, to *meet* some I would *not* have expected to be there;

second, to *miss* some I *would* have expected to be there;

third, the greatest wonder of all—to find *myself* there!

"By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

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**Academic studies**

Dear friend,
I truly pity those who rise early and study late—with no higher prize and prospect in view, than the obtaining of *academic honors!* Such pursuits will before long appear (as they really are) as *vain as the foolish games of children!* May the Lord impress them with the noble ambition of living to and for Him. If these scholars, who are *laboring for pebbles* under the semblance of *goodly pearls*, had a discovery of the *Pearl of great price*—how quickly and gladly would they lay down their *admired attainments*, and become fools—that they might be truly wise! Their **academic studies**, if taken in the aggregate, are little better than ***splendid trifles!***

*Friend, what a snare have you escaped!* You would have been nothing but a *scholar*—had not God visited your heart and enlightened you by His grace! Now I trust you account your former *academic gains*, but loss—compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus. What you have attained in the way of *learning*, will be useful to you—if sanctified, and chiefly so by the knowledge which you have of its *insufficiency* to any valuable purpose in the great concerns of life—*knowing* God and *walking* with Him!

~ ~ ~ ~

**His sheep feed in the midst of wolves!**

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I have everything I need!" Psalm 23:1

The Lord is my *Shepherd!* This is a comprehensive word. The sheep can do nothing for themselves. The Shepherd must guide, guard, feed, heal and recover. It is well for us—that *our Shepherd* is the Lord Almighty! If His power, care, compassion and fullness were not infinite—the poor sheep would be forsaken, starved and die! But we have a Shepherd full of care, full of kindness, full of power, who has said, "I will search for My lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak!" Ezekiel 34:16. How tender are these expressions, and how well fulfilled! **His sheep feed in the midst of wolves**—yet are safely preserved; for, though they cannot see Him—His *eye* and His *heart* are ever upon them!

Which of God's children have not cause to say, ***"My soul is among lions!"*** But our Shepherd stops their mouths, or only permits them to gape and roar, and show their teeth. He does not allow them to bite and tear us at their will. Let us trust our Shepherd—and all shall be well.

As to daily occurrences, it is best to trust that a daily portion of *comforts* and *crosses*—each one the most suitable to our case—is adjusted and appointed by the *hand which was once nailed to the cross for us!* We must trust, that where the path of duty and prudence leads us—that there is the best situation we could possibly be in, at that time.

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**The fight!**
September 1764
My dear Madam,
I understand something of your **warfare**. Paul describes his own case in few words, *"Conflicts on the outside, fears on the inside."* Does not this comprehend all you would say? And how are you to know experimentally, either your own weakness—or the power, wisdom and grace of God, seasonably and sufficiently afforded—but by frequent and various *trials*? How are the *graces* of patience, resignation, meekness and faith, to be discovered and increased—but by the exercise of trials?

The Lord has *chosen*, *called*, and *armed* us for **the fight!** *Shall we wish to be excused from the battle?* Shall we not rather rejoice that we have the honor to appear in such a *cause*, under such a *Captain*, such a banner and in such a company?

God has graciously provided:
a complete suit of *armor*,
formidable *weapons*,
precious *balm* to heal us—if we receive a wound, and
precious *cordials* to revive us—when we are in danger of fainting!

Further, we are assured of the victory beforehand! O what a *crown of glory* is prepared for every conqueror, which Jesus, the righteous Judge, the gracious Savior—shall place upon every faithful head with His own hand!

So let us not be weary and faint, for in due season we shall reap! *The time is short!* In a little while, the struggle of indwelling sin, and all the conflicts surrounding us, shall be known no more! "Be faithful, even to the point of death—and I will give you the crown of life!" Revelation 2:10

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**He has a numerous and necessitous family!**

What a multitude of eyes and hearts wait at the Throne of Grace! **He has a numerous and necessitous family**—but He is rich enough to supply them all—and His tender compassions extend to the poorest and most unworthy of them! Like the *sun*—He can cheer and enlighten millions of His poor pensioners at once! He gives to each one as bountifully—as if there were no others to partake of His favor!

His best blessings are not diminished—by being shared among many. The greatest earthly monarch would soon be poor—if he was to give but a pittance to all his subjects. But Jesus has *unsearchable, inexhaustible riches of grace* to bestow!

The innumerable assembly around the Eternal Throne are all continually supplied from His fullness; and yet there is enough and to spare for His earthly children also—and for all who shall come after us! May He give us an eager appetite—a hunger and thirst that will not be satisfied with anything short of the *Bread of Life*. We may confidently open our mouths wide—for He has promised to fill them!

"Let us therefore approach the Throne of Grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need!" Hebrews 4:16

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**Mr. Cox's Museum**

August, 1772
My dear Miss,
I received some instruction where I little expected it—at **Mr. Cox's Museum**. The efforts of his ingenuity amazed me—while at the same time I was struck with their *insignificance*. His fine things were curious beyond all I had any idea of; and yet what are they better than *toys* and *amusements*, suited to the taste of children! And notwithstanding the variety of their motions, they were all destitute of life.

There is unspeakably more wisdom and skill in the mechanism of a *butterfly* or a *bee* which flutters unnoticed in the fields—than in all his fancy apparatus put together! But the works of *God* are disregarded, while the *feeble imitations* of them which *men* can produce gain universal applause! If you and I could make *self-moving lions and elephants*, what would it profit us?

Blessed be God, that He has given us some glimpses of His wisdom and love—by which our hearts, more hard and lifeless by nature than the stones in the street—are constrained and enabled to move upwards, and to seek after Him. He has given us in His Word, a greater treasure than all that we ever beheld with our eyes, and a hope which shall flourish when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up! What will all the *fine things of men's devising* be worth on that day?

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**Then they hiss and spit their venom!**

"I know, O Lord, that Your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness *You have afflicted me!"* Psalm 119:75

*"God disciplines us* for our good—that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10

In Scripture, we read much concerning the emptiness, vanity and uncertainty of the present world.

When our minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit—then we receive and acknowledge what His Word declares to be truth. Yet if we remain long without *changes* and *trials*, and *when our path is very smooth*—we are for the most part but faintly affected with what we profess to believe. But when some of our dearest friends die, or we ourselves are brought low with pain and sickness—then we not only *say*, but *feel* that this world must not, cannot be our rest!

We know by experience, that though *afflictions* in themselves are not joyous—but grievous—yet in due season they yield the peaceful *fruits* of righteousness. Various are **the blessed fruits which afflictions produce**:

By affliction, **prayer** is quickened—for our prayers are very apt to grow languid and formal in a *time of ease.*

Affliction greatly helps us to understand the **Scriptures**, especially the *promises*; most of which are made to *times of trouble*. We cannot so well know their fullness, sweetness and certainty—as when we have been in the situation to which they are suited, have been enabled to trust and plead them, and found them fulfilled in our own case.

We are usually indebted to affliction—as the means or occasion of the most signal discoveries we are favored with—of the **wisdom, power, and faithfulness of the Lord**. These are best observed by the evident proofs we have—that He is near to support us under trouble, and that He can and does deliver us out of it.

Likewise, many of our **graces** cannot thrive or manifest themselves, without trials—such as resignation, patience, meekness and long-suffering. *Strength of grace* is not ordinarily acquired by those who sit still and live at ease.

Afflictions do us good likewise, as they make us more acquainted with what is in our own **hearts**, and thereby promote humiliation and self-abasement. There are abominations which, like *nests of vipers*, lie so quietly within our hearts, that we hardly suspect they are there—until the *rod of affliction* rouses them! **Then they hiss and spit their venom!** This discovery is indeed very distressing—yet, until it is made, we are prone to think ourselves much less vile than we really are, and cannot so heartily abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes.

I must write a *sermon* rather than a *letter*—if I would enumerate *all the good fruits* which, by the power of sanctifying grace, are produced from this *bitter tree of affliction!*

While we have such a depraved nature, and live in such a polluted world; while the roots of pride, vanity, self-dependence and self-seeking, are so strong within us—we need a variety of *sharp afflictions* to keep us from cleaving to the dust!

"Before I was afflicted I went astray—but now I obey Your Word." Psalm 119:67

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**Stupid creature!**

"What a wretched man I am!" Romans 7:24

*January 27, 1778*
My dear friend,
At present it is *January* with me—both *within* and *without.* The outward sun shines and looks pleasant—but his beams are faint, and too feeble to dissolve the frost.

Is it just so in my heart. I have many bright and pleasant beams of truth in my *mind's* view—but they have but little power to *warm* my heart—and *cold predominates in my frost-bound spirit*!

I could tell a stranger something about Jesus, which would perhaps astonish him—such a glorious person is He! Such wonderful love! Such humiliation! Such a life! Such a death! I could tell of what He is in Himself, and what He is to His people! What a sun! What a shield! What a fortress! What a friend! My *tongue* can run on upon these themes sometimes; and could my *heart* keep pace with it—*I would be the happiest fellow in the country!* **Stupid creature!** to *know* these things so well—and yet be no more *affected* with them!

Indeed, I have reason to be upon ill terms with myself! It is strange that *pride* should ever find anything in my experience to feed upon—but this completes my character for *folly, vileness, and inconsistency*—that I am not only *vile*—but *proud!* And though I am convinced I am a *very wretch*, and *nothing* before the Lord—yet I am prone to go forth among my fellow-worms, as though I were wise and good!

You ask me what I am doing. I must admit, that too much of my **time** passes in *busy idleness*, too much in *waking dreams*. I *aim* at something—but *hindrances* from within and without—make it difficult for me to accomplish anything! *I dare not say that I am absolutely idle*, or that I *willfully waste much of my time*. I have seldom one hour free from interruption: letters come that must be answered, visitors who must be received, and business which must be attended to. I have a good many sheep and lambs to look after—sick and afflicted souls, dear to the Lord—and these must not be neglected. Among these various avocations, *night* comes before I am ready for *noon!*  **O precious, irrecoverable time!** O that I had more wisdom in redeeming and improving you!

I beg you to pray for me. I am a poor creature—and full of needs. I seem to need . . .
the *wisdom* of Solomon,
the *meekness* of Moses, and
the *zeal* of Paul—
to enable me to fulfill my ministry.

~ ~ ~ ~

**I would have carried the whole human race to hell with me!**

"By the grace of God—I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

October 27, 1778
My dear friend,
How industriously is Satan served! *I was formerly one of his most active under-tempters!* Not content with running down the broad way which leads to destruction by myself—I was indefatigable in enticing others! And, had my *influence* been equal to my *wishes*—**I would have carried the whole human race to hell with me!** And doubtless some have already perished, to whose destruction I was greatly instrumental, by tempting them to sin, and by poisoning and hardening them with principles of infidelity. *And yet* ***I*** *was spared!* When I think of the most with whom I spent my ungodly days of ignorance, I am ready to say, "I alone have escaped alive!"

Surely I have not half the activity and zeal in the service of Him who *snatched me as a* *brand out of the burning*—as I had in the service of His enemy! *Then* the whole stream of my endeavors and affections went one way; *now* my best desires are continually crossed, counteracted, and spoiled, by the sin which dwells in me! *Then* the tide of a corrupt nature bore me along; *now* I have to strive and swim against it.

Had my *abilities* and *opportunities* been equal to my heart desires—**I would have been a monster of profaneness and profligacy!** A common drunkard or harlot is a *petty sinner*—compared to what I once was! I had unabated ambition, and wanted to rank in wickedness among the foremost of the human race!
 *"O to grace how great a debtor—daily I'm constrained to be!"*

~ ~ ~ ~

**Filled with folly, vanity, and vexation!**

August 28, 1779
My dear friend,
The days speed away apace! Each one bears away its own burden with it—to return no more. Both *pleasures* and *pains* which are **past**—are gone forever! What is yet **future** will likewise, soon be past.

Our final end will shortly arrive! O to realize the thought, and to judge of things now in some measure suitable to the opinion which we shall form of them, *when we are about to leave them all!* Many things which now either *elate* or *depress* us—will then appear to be *trifles as light as air!*
 **Only one thing is needful**—
to have our hearts united to Jesus in humble faith;
to set Him always before us;
to rejoice in Him as our Shepherd and our portion;
to submit to all His appointments, not of necessity, because He is stronger than us—but with a cheerful acquiescence, because He is wise and good, and loves us better than we do ourselves;
to feed upon His truth;
to have our understandings, wills, affections, imaginations, memory—all filled and impressed with the great mysteries of His redeeming love;
to *do all for* Jesus;
to *receive all from* Jesus;
to *find all in* Jesus!

I have mentioned many things, but they are all comprised in one—*a life of faith in Jesus!*

We are *empty vessels* in ourselves—but we cannot remain empty. Unless Jesus dwells in our hearts, and fills them with His power and presence—they will be **filled with folly, vanity, and vexation!**

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**Wholly taken up with contriving methods of *amusing* themselves**
 *Concerning* ***'Handel's Messiah'*** *John Newton wrote:*
How shall we view the people of our times? I see the great mass of people involved in one common charge of *high treason against the omnipotent God!* They are already in a state of *imprisonment*, but have not yet been brought to their *trial*. The evidence against them is so plain, strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved—and that nothing but a free pardon from God can preserve them from their deserved eternal punishment!

In this situation, it would seem in their best interest—to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining God's mercy. But they are entirely heedless of their imminent danger, and are **wholly taken up with contriving methods of *amusing* themselves**, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible!

Among other resources, they call in the assistance of *music*—and they are particularly pleased with *'Handel's Messiah'*. They choose to make . . .
the solemnities of their impending judgment,
the character of their Judge,
the methods of His procedure, and
the dreadful punishment to which they are exposed
*—the themes of their musical entertainment!*

And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the outcome—their attention is chiefly fixed upon the *skill of the composer*, in adapting the *style* of his music—to the very solemn subjects with which they are trifling!

The offended King, however, unasked by them, and out of His great mercy and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, sends them a gracious message. He assures them that He is unwilling that they should eternally perish; and that He *requires*, yes, He *entreats* them to submit to Him! He points out a way in which He offers them a free and a full pardon!

But, instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with His undeserved and gracious offer—*they set His message to music!* And this, together with a description of their present hopeless state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is *sung for their entertainment,* and accompanied with *every kind of music!*

Surely, if such a case as I have supposed, could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people—I would certainly commiserate their stupidity and hardness of heart!

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**There is no such a word in the 'dictionary of faith'**

"Godliness with *contentment* is great gain." 1 Timothy 6:6

There is many a thing which the world calls *'disappointment*', but **there is no such a word in the 'dictionary of faith'**. What to others are disappointments*,* are *divine appointments* to believers.
 **If two angels were sent down from heaven**—one to *conduct an empire*, and the other to *sweep a street*—they would feel no inclination to change employments.

"I have learned to be *content* whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the *secret of being content* in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in need." Philippians 4:11-12

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**A vulnerable heel**

"In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan knows how to suit his temptations to our personal tempers and circumstances. And if, like *Achilles*, you have **a vulnerable heel**—the *old serpent* will be sure to strike there!

"Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil." Ephesians 6:11

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**I am glad that it is a mortal disease, from which I will not recover!**

"For to me, to *live* is Christ—and to *die* is gain!" Philippians 1:21

Dear friend,
You kindly inquire about my *health*. I am, through the grace of God—perfectly well. Yet, as healthy as I am—*I labor under a growing disorder, for which there is no cure—I mean* ***old age****.* **I am glad that it is a mortal disease, from which I will not recover!** I would not always want to live in such a poor world as this! I have a Scriptural hope of a glorious inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—reserved in heaven for me!

I am now in my seventy-second year, and have lived long enough. I have known something of the *evils* of life—and have had a large share of the *good* things of life. I know what the world can do—and what it cannot do. It can neither give nor take away that *peace of God* which passes all understanding; it cannot soothe a wounded conscience, nor enable us to meet death and eternity with comfort.

I have an abiding and abounding experience, that the *Gospel* is the "universal remedy" adapted to all our wants and all our woes; and a "suitable help" when every other help fails!

Your affectionate friend,
John Newton

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**If I should meet a child who has lost his penny**

"The *Lord's servant* must not quarrel; instead, he must be *kind* to everyone." 2 Timothy 2:24

*John Newton's biographer writes,* "When Mr. Newton moved to London—being of the most friendly and generous disposition, his house was open to Christians of all social ranks and church denominations. Here, like a father among his children, he used to *entertain*, *encourage*, and *instruct* his friends. Here also the *poor*, the *afflicted*, and the *tempted* found an asylum and a sympathy, which they could scarcely find, in an equal degree, anywhere else. Sometimes his whole day was so benevolently spent, that he was found both *rejoicing* with those who rejoiced—and *literally weeping* with those who wept!

"I remember to have heard him say, 'I see **two heaps** in this world—of human *happiness* and *misery*. If I can take but the smallest bit from one heap—and add to the other, I shall be content. As I am on my way home, **if I should meet a child who has lost his penny**—and if, by giving him another penny, I could wipe away his tears—I feel I have done something. I would be glad, indeed, to do greater things—but I will not neglect these *smaller acts of kindness*.'

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

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**The rich followers of this poor Savior**

"There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, **feasting lavishly** **every day**. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from *the rich man's table*." Luke 16:19-21

However some professors may seem to differ from the world—they are not easily distinguished upon many other points; particularly at their meals. The people of the world can scarcely exceed them in the cost, care, profusion, and variety with which their *tables* are covered.

Perhaps there is no one circumstance in the history of our Savior so little laid to heart, so generally overlooked, by those who acknowledge him as their Master and their Lord—as that state of *poverty* to which He submitted, while upon earth. He had no home. He did not even have money to pay His tax. He was hungry when He went to the fig-tree. He wrought no miracle solely for His own relief; but He felt for the necessitous, and miraculously fed them by thousands; not with *dainties*, which would have been equally easy to Him—but, finding a few loaves and fish among them, He satisfied their needs with *plain food*. Yes, after His resurrection, when He had taken possession of all power and authority both in heaven and in earth—He condescended to dine with His disciples upon broiled fish and bread, which He likewise provided for them.

Alas! **the rich followers of this poor Savior** have more reason to be ashamed of . . .
their gorgeous apparel,
their fine houses,
their elegant furniture, and
their sumptuous feastings
—than to value themselves upon *such trifles!*
They are unavoidable appendages to people in some situations; but, I believe, those who have drank deeply into our Lord's spirit, account them rather *burdens* than *benefits!*We must be watchful of that *sinful, shameful conformity to the world*, which spreads like a gangrene, which is the reproach of the gospel, and threatens the utter extinction of vital religion in multitudes who profess it.

"In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him—Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire!" Luke 16:23-24

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**If I were not so poor, so sick, so foolish**

May 31, 1775
My dear friend,
**You ask how I am**—but I know not what answer to give. My experience is made up of *enigmas*—but the sum and solution of all is, *"That I am a vile creature—but I have a good and gracious Savior!"*

He has chosen me—and through His rich grace—I have chosen Him! There is a union between Him and my soul, which shall never be broken, because He has undertaken for *both parts*—that He will never forsake me, and that I shall never forsake Him. Oh, I like those royal, sovereign words, "*I will*," and "*they shall*."

"*I will* make an everlasting covenant with them, that *I will* not turn away from them, to do them good; but *I will* put My fear in their hearts—that *they shall* not depart from Me!" Jeremiah 32:40

How sweetly are they suited to the long experience He has given me of my own weakness, and the power and subtlety of Satan! If my spiritual conflicts terminate in victory—it must be owing to His own arm, and for His own name's sake. For I in myself have neither strength nor plea. **If I were not so poor, so sick, so foolish**—the power, skill, riches, wisdom and mercy of my Physician, Shepherd, and Savior—would not be so signally illustrated in my own case! Upon this account, instead of complaining, we may glory in our infirmities. Oh, it is pleasant to be deeply indebted to Him, to find Him, and own Him, *all in all*—
Our Husband, Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
Our Guide, and Guard, our Way, and End!

"Christ is all!" Colossians 3:11

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**What a happy state we are in!**

*My dear wife,*
I hope you will make good use of the Bible, and throne of grace, to preserve you from being infected by the spirit of the world. Ah! what a poor vain thing is the world! We have both found it so at times, (though we once loved it,) and shall find it so again. May the Lord keep us alert to a sense of its vanity!

Your recent sickness and near prospect of death, force upon your mind a conviction of the littleness and vanity of a worldly life. But there is a more pleasing way of learning this lesson, if we pay due attention to the Word of God, and pray for the light of His countenance. If He is pleased to make His face to shine upon us—all that the world can offer to bribe and tempt us, will appear as insignificant and trivial as the sports of children!
**What a happy state we are in!** We have . . .
peace with God, by Jesus Christ;
liberty of access to the throne of grace;
a saving interest in all God's promises;
a sure Guide along the way; and
a glorious inheritance at our journey's end!
These things were once hidden from us! We were so blinded by the god of this world—that we could look no farther than the present life! But, even then, *the Lord looked upon us with an eye of mercy*. He led us on, gradually, by a way which we knew not—to bring us into the paths of eternal peace.

Though death will eventually part us—we shall soon meet again—to part no more! to be forever with the Lord; to join in an eternal song to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood! Then all tears shall be wiped from our eyes—and we shall weep no more forever!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined—what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

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**Swimming down the stream of vanity and folly**

*My dear wife,*
What is all below—but *vanity* and *vexation!* There is no solid comfort, no abiding peace—but what we derive from God. Once we knew nothing of this. But the Lord directed our path in life, in subservience to the designs of His saving grace. How few of those with whom you were acquainted in your early years, have any right knowledge of *God*—or of *themselves.* We ourselves set out upon this dreadful plan; and, if God's mercy had not stopped us—we would have gone on, until we had perished with a lie in our own right hands! Admire the Lord's goodness in *choosing* you (as one of a thousand) to the knowledge of His truth—when you might have been still **swimming down the stream of vanity and folly***, with the thoughtless multitude!*

**The great lesson we have to learn**, is to *love* and *trust* the Lord Jesus. We are *slow scholars*, but He can teach us effectually. Without Him, the very best of this life is insipid. His presence can make the worst things supportable. He can . . .
forgive sin,
impart grace,
subdue corruption,
silence unbelief,
make us strong in our weakness, and
do more than we can either ask or think!
And what He does—He does *freely*, without money and without price!

A *humble* spirit, sincere *faith*, heart-felt *repentance*, and every other grace and virtue—are all His gifts, which He bestows freely on the unworthy.

We *have* nothing, *deserve* nothing, can *do* nothing; but He is mighty to both *save* and to *preserve* all who come to Him in sincere faith and love.

May we grow daily in the knowledge of His grace, and views of His excellency. He will surely, though gradually, make Himself known to the heart that sincerely seeks Him. Everything else is vain, uncertain and changeable.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus—the author and perfecter of our faith!" Hebrews 12:2

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***Old age* is creeping in upon us!**

"For this God is our God for ever and ever! He will be our guide even unto death!" Psalm 48:14

August 6, 1785
My dear wife,
The Lord has preserved us through a long course of *years*, and in different *situations*, from various *calamities* which have overtaken others. Our obligations to thankfulness are singular and numerous.

Tell our niece Eliza that I love her very dearly. She would soon be well—if I could make her so. But she is in better hands than mine! I have a comfortable hope that her *illness* has been, and will be, sanctified to an end far more desirable than *health* or *life* itself. Therefore I leave her to the wise and merciful direction of the Lord, who loves her better than I can.

May the Lord bless *this little separation* to quicken us to mutual prayer, and to lead us to a thankful review of the mercy and goodness which have followed us through the many years we have been united.

How many *changes* have we seen!

Under how many *trials* have we been supported!

How many *deliverances* have we known!

How many *comforts* have we enjoyed!

Especially, what great *advantages* have we possessed, in knowing those things which pertain to our everlasting peace!

The years we have passed together—will return no more. The *afflictions* are gone, the *pleasures* likewise are gone, forever. The longer we live, such pleasures as this world can afford, will, more and more, lose their power of pleasing. Only our love, I trust, will exist and flourish to the end of life—yes, beyond it! It will always be a truth, that the Lord, in giving you to me—gave me the best *temporal* desire of my heart. But the shadows of the *evening* advance. ***Old age* is creeping in upon us**, and the days are approaching when we shall have no pleasure—but what we can derive from the good Word of God, and the consolations of his Holy Spirit. These, if we are favored with them, will sufficiently compensate for the abatement, or the loss, of all the rest. The *streams* may run dry—but the *fountain* of living waters will always flow! May His presence be near our hearts—and then all will be well.

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**He became sick on Saturday—and died on Monday!**

Dear friend,
Two people who were well the day you left us—have since died. One of them has already been buried—he was a poor ungodly creature, suddenly cut off in the prime of life! The other man was young, jovial, jesting and thoughtless. **He became sick on Saturday—and died on Monday!**

Oh, my friend, what do *we* owe to the grace of God—that *we* were not cut off in the days of our ignorance—as so many others have been!

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ—He is exalted to *"save to the uttermost!"* That word *'uttermost'* has an extensive meaning—it includes a conquest over all difficulties, and a supply of all that is necessary! How totally, and how often, would I have been lost—had not Jesus engaged to save me to the uttermost! And many a time I would have given up all hope—but for that text, *"He is able to save to the uttermost!"* "To the uttermost" reaches to all possible circumstances. He can . . .
*enlighten* the most ignorant,
*soften* the most obdurate,
*support* the most tempted,
*comfort* the most distressed,
*pardon* the most guilty!

Oh, may His precious name be engraved upon our hearts, and sound sweeter than music to our ears—for He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and will save us to the uttermost—in defiance of . . .
all our sins,
all our fears and
all our enemies!

~ ~ ~ ~

**If every man was compelled to *speak* all that he *thinks***

*"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve."* Jeremiah 17:9-10

The heart, with all its deceitful and wicked workings—is incessantly under Divine inspection and examination! The Lord searches the heart—He traces and investigates, the inmost principles of our souls and their motives, with the utmost exactness!

To form a more just idea of this scrutiny, let us ask ourselves how we could bear to be compelled to declare aloud, in full company—every *thought*, *wish* and *desire* which pass through our minds—with no exception! People, if they were brought to this trial, would rather choose to die than comply with it!

**If every man was compelled to *speak* all that he *thinks***—there would be an end of human society; and man would no more venture to dwell with man, than with tigers and bears!

We know what mischief *one ungoverned tongue* may sometimes occasion. But the *tongue* can do no evil, any farther than as it is *an instrument of disclosing the hidden things of the heart*—yet it is but a small part of these, that the worst tongue is capable of disclosing! *What then would be the case, if all our hearts were open—and all our evil thoughts, motives and desires known to one another!* What a mixture of confusion, defiance, shame, rage, fear, and contempt—would overspread every countenance!

And yet, we are thus exposed to the searching eye of a pure and holy God! The Lord knows the thoughts of man's heart, that they are vain. He long ago declared the result of His examination, "God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually!"* Thus, we see how vile and hateful our *hearts* must appear—in the sight of a heart-searching God!

And consider that the Lord does not observe the heart of man with the *indifference of a mere spectator*—but as an impartial and inflexible Judge! "I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve!" Alas! Is it not sufficient to fill our souls with dread—that He sits as Judge, not only upon *outward actions*, but He examines the very *thoughts* and *intents* of the heart! Can any of us stand under such a trial?

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account!" Hebrews 4:13

This is a most uncomfortable doctrine indeed—were there no *remedy* provided! *"The blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin!"* 1 John 1:7

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**I am still sadly deficient in practice!**

Who that had seen me as a *slave in Africa*, could have expected what has since taken place! How unworthy am I of all that I have received—and most unworthy of the honor of preaching the Gospel, which I too long despised and blasphemed! The language of Psalm 40:5 suits my soul well, "Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders You have done. The things You planned for us no one can recount to You! Were I to speak and tell of them—they would be too many to declare!" *There is no end to the inventory of my mercies!* May He who has *given* so much to me, and *done* so much for me—add the crowning mercy of a thankful heart! Though I can *talk* of thankfulness, I *feel* much insensibility and hardness of heart; but, I know that, while sin dwells in me, it will have such effects.

Alas! though I know in theory *what a Christian should be*—**I am still sadly deficient in practice!** I am a poor creature, and see much to be ashamed of every day, and in every circumstance. Yet, though sin will *distress*—it cannot *condemn*, those who believe in Jesus! "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Romans 8:1

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**Those mistakes, blemishes and faults in *others***

"*Accept one another*, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Romans 15:7

The Christian, especially he who is *advanced* and *established* in the life of faith, has a fervent zeal for God—for the honor of His Name, His Word and His Gospel. The honest warmth of zeal which he feels, when God's Word is broken, His Gospel is despised, and when the great and glorious Name of the Lord his God is profaned, would, by the occasion of his infirmities, often degenerate into *anger* or *contempt* towards those who error—if he was under the influence of *zeal alone*.

But his *zeal* is blended with *benevolence* and *humility*; it is softened by a consciousness of his own frailty and fallibility. He is aware, that his *knowledge* is very limited in itself, and very faint in its transforming power in his own life; that his *attainments* are weak and few, compared with his deficiencies; that his *gratitude* is very disproportionate to his obligations; and that his *obedience is* unspeakably short of conformity to his prescribed rule; that he *has* nothing but what he has received, and has received nothing but what, in a greater or less degree, he has either misapplied or misimproved. He is, therefore, a *debtor to the mercy of God*—and lives upon His multiplied forgiveness.

The Christian also makes the gracious conduct of the Lord towards himself—a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-worms. He cannot boast of *himself*—nor is he anxious to censure *others*. He considers himself, lest he also fall. And thus he learns *tenderness* and *compassion* to others, and to bear patiently with **those mistakes, blemishes and faults in *others****—*which once belonged to his own character; and from which, as yet, he is but imperfectly freed.

He therefore acts in character, as the follower of Him who was compassionate towards the *infirmities* and *mistakes* of His disciples, and taught them *gradually*, as they were able to bear it—and not *everything* at once.

But then, the same considerations which inspire him with meekness and gentleness towards those who oppose the truth—strengthen his regard for the truth itself, and his conviction of its importance. For the sake of peace, which he loves and cultivates—he accommodates himself, as far as he lawfully can, to the *weaknesses* and *mistakes* of other sincere Christians; though he is thereby exposed to be censured by 'bigots' of all parties, who deem him *flexible* and *wavering*, like a reed shaken with the wind.

But there are other *fundamental* points, *essential* to the Gospel, which are the foundations of his hope, and the sources of his joy. For his firm attachment to these, he is content to be treated as a 'bigot' himself! For here he is immovable as an iron pillar; nor can either the *fear* or the *favor* of man prevail on him to yield the truth of the Gospel, no not for an hour! (Galatians 2:5). Here his judgment is fixed; and he expresses it in simple and unequivocal language, so as not to leave either friends or enemies in suspense, concerning the *side* which he has chosen, or the *cause* which is nearest to his heart.

Knowing that the Gospel is the wisdom and power of God, and the only possible means by which fallen man can obtain peace with God—he most cordially embraces and avows it. Far from being ashamed of it—he esteems it his glory. He preaches Christ Jesus, and Him crucified. He disdains the thought of *distorting, disguising, or softening* the great doctrines of the grace of God, to render them more palatable to the depraved taste of the times (2 Corinthians 4:2). And he will no more encounter the errors and corrupt maxims and practices of the world, with any *weapon* but the *truth as it is in Jesus*—than he would venture to fight an enraged tiger with a paper sword!

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**A weak, defenseless, foolish creature!**

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Isaiah 40:11

Our Lord expressly calls Himself the "*good* Shepherd of the sheep", and the apostle Peter calls Him the "*chief* Shepherd." (John 10, 1 Peter 5:4)

With respect to power and authority, He is the *chief*, and, indeed, the *sole* Shepherd. The eyes of all His people are upon Him—and His watchful eye is upon and over all His flock. None but an omnipotent and omnipresent Shepherd can relieve all the necessities of all of His people, in all places, in the same moment, and be equally near and attentive to each one! Such is our *great* Shepherd! He is eminently the *good* Shepherd also, for He laid down His life for His sheep, and has redeemed them by His own blood.

This great and good Shepherd has a **flock**, whom He loved from eternity, and whom having once loved—He will love them to the end! (John 13:1). He humbled Himself for their sakes, submitted to partake of their nature and their sorrows, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He died for His sheep, "the just for the unjust," to redeem them from the curse of the law, from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the power of Satan—and to bring them to God!

They all, by nature, had "gone astray, every one to his own way;" but having thus bought them with His blood, in His own appointed time—He seeks, finds and restores His sheep! By the power of His Word and Spirit, He makes Himself known to their hearts, causes them to hear and understand His voice, and guides them into His fold! They are then under His immediate protection and government.

Considered as individuals, they are fitly described by the name of "sheep". A sheep is **a weak, defenseless, foolish creature**; prone to wander, and can seldom return of its own accord. A sheep has neither *strength* to fight with the wolf, nor *speed* to escape from it; nor has a sheep the *foresight* of the ant, to provide its own sustenance.
 *Such is our character, and our situation!* We are . . .
unable to take care of ourselves,
prone to wander from our resting-place,
exposed to enemies which we can neither escape nor withstand,
without any resource in ourselves, and
taught, by daily experience, the insufficiency of everything around us.

Yet, if Jesus is our Shepherd, as weak and helpless as we are—we may say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd—I have everything I need! Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever!" Every sheep has an inheritance reserved for them in heaven, (1 Peter 1:4-5) and they shall be safely kept, while they are sojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Israel is their keeper.

The Good Shepherd cares for His flock. Not the slightest circumstance in their concerns, escapes His notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exercises of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and disconsolate in their hearts—He seasonably revives them. Nor are they in *affliction* without a needs-be for it. All His dispensations towards them are *medicinal*, designed to correct, or to restrain, or to cure—the maladies of their souls. And they are all adjusted, by His wisdom and tenderness, to what they can bear, and to what their case requires.

The Good Shepherd is represented as counting their *sighs*, putting their *tears* into His bottle, recording their *sorrows* in His book of remembrance; and as being "able to sympathize with our weaknesses".

There are **lambs** among His flock, and for these He expresses a special tenderness. "He will carry the *lambs* in His arms, holding them close to His heart." Though they are weaklings, they shall not be left behind. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep up with the flock, He shall carry it. These are *new converts* in the Lord's family—they are, as yet, weak, unsettled and inexperienced. Almost every day brings them into a new and untried situation. They often meet with opposition and discouragement. What would become of them in such circumstances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promised that "He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart!"

~ ~ ~ ~

***He is my Beloved, my Shepherd, my Savior and my Husband!***

The *life of faith* is a happy life. Though it is attended with *conflicts*—there is an assurance of *victory*. If we sometimes get a *wound*—there is *healing balm* near at hand. If we seem to *fall*—we are *raised* again. And, if *tribulations* abound—then *consolations* shall much more abound. Is it not happiness to have . . .
an infallible Guide,
an invincible Guard,
an Almighty Friend?

It is bliss, to be able to say of the Maker of heaven and earth, *"****He is my Beloved, my Shepherd, my Savior and my Husband!****"*Oh, the peace which flows from believing that all the events in which we are concerned, are under His immediate disposal; that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; that He delights in our prosperity; that there is a need-be, if we are in heaviness; and that all things shall surely work together for our good!

How happy to have such views of His sovereignty, wisdom, love, and faithfulness—as will enable us to meet every difficult dispensation with submission; and to look through the painful changes of the present life—to that unchangeable inheritance to which the Lord is leading us, when all evil shall cease, and where our joy shall be perfect and eternal!

~ ~ ~ ~

**A child of God in *London!***
"You have a few people in *Sardis* who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with Me, dressed in white, for they are worthy!" Revelation 3:4

*July 7, 1778*
My dear friend,
I don't know that I have anything to say worth the postage. But I do pity you in *London!* I see you melted with *heat*, stifled with *smoke*, stunned with *noise!*

Ah! what a change from the brooks, and woods, and birds, and green fields—to which you lately had access. Of old they used to retire into the deserts for contemplation and meditation.

If I was to set myself a *moderate penance*—it might be to spend two weeks in London in the height of summer! But I forget myself. I hope the Lord is with you—and then all places are alike. He makes the *dungeon* and the *stocks* comfortable, Acts 26. Yes, even a *fiery furnace*, and a *lion's den!* **A child of God in *London***—seems to be in all these trying situations—but Jesus can preserve His own people. I honor the *grace of God* in those few (comparatively few, I fear,) who preserve their garments undefiled in *that Sardis!* The air is filled with spiritual infection; and it is by God's special power and miraculous preservation, that they enjoy spiritual health—when so many sicken and fall around them on the right hand and on the left. May the Lord preserve you from the *various epidemic soul diseases* which abound where you are—and may He be your comfort and defense from day to day.

"Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

~ ~ ~ ~

**Let them alone!**

"They are joined to their idols—**let them alone!**" Hosea 4:17

*God sometimes leaves men to themselves*—their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the lusts of their own evil hearts! A more dreadful judgment than this, cannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

*Matthew Henry writes,* "People go on in sin until the Lord says, *'Let them alone!'* Then they receive no more *warnings*—and feel no more *convictions*. Satan takes full possession of them—and they ripen for destruction! It is a sad and sore judgment for any man—to be **let alone in sin**! Those who are not *disturbed* *in* their sin—will be *destroyed* *for* their sin! May we be kept from this dreadful state; for the wrath of God, like a strong tempest—will soon hurry all impenitent sinners into eternal ruin!"

~ ~ ~ ~

**We can't even imagine!**

Our most enlarged ideas of our future glory, are faint and imperfect. Who can describe or conceive the happiness of heaven? It will be as unlike as possible—to this *wilderness of sin and sorrow* where we are now confined. Here on earth, we are in a *warfare*—but then we shall enter into *perfect rest*. We now cry out, "O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I flee away and be at REST." (Psalm 55:6)

Heaven will be a rest from all SIN. No 'unclean thing' shall ever defile or disturb us forever! We shall be free from all *indwelling* sin. *This alone would be worth dying for!* *Indwelling sin* is a burden under which all the redeemed must groan, while they sojourn in the body.

And those who are most spiritual—are most deeply affected with shame, humiliation, and grief, on account of their sins—because they have the clearest views of the holiness of God, the spirituality of His law, the love of Christ, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts! Therefore the Apostle Paul, though perhaps in grace and talents, in zeal and usefulness, was distinguished above all saints—accounted himself the *'chief of sinners,'* (1 Timothy 1:15) *'less than the least of all saints,'* (Ephesians 3:8) and cried out under the disparity he felt between what he *actually was*—and what he *desired to be*, "O wretched man that I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin!" (Romans 7:24)

But we shall not carry this *burden of sin* beyond the grave. The hour of death shall free us from our *inbred enemies* (the inseparable attendants of this frail perishing nature) which now trouble us, and we shall see them no more forever!

Heaven will also be a rest from all outward AFFLICTIONS, which, though necessary, and, under the influence of Divine grace, are profitable—yet they are grievous to bear. But in heaven, they will no more be necessary. Where there is no *sin*—there shall be no *sorrow*. Then, "God will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever!" (Revelation 21:4)

Heaven will also be a rest from SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS. How *busy* is this *adversary* of God and man—what various arts and *schemes* he employs! What surprising force, what constant assiduity does he employ to ensnare, distress, and terrify those who by grace have escaped from his servitude! He says, like Pharaoh of old, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will destroy!" (Exodus 15:9) He follows them to the last stage of life—but he can follow them no farther. The moment of their departure out of the body—shall place them beyond his reach forever!

Heaven will also be a rest from UNSATISFIED DESIRES. Here on earth, the more we drink—the more we thirst. But in heaven, our highest wishes shall be *crowned* and *exceeded!* We shall rest in full communion with Him whom we love; we shall no more complain of interruptions and imperfections, and a careless heart.

Here on earth—we obtain a little glimpse of His presence, when He brings us into His banqueting-house, and spreads His *banner of love* over us! And how gladly would we remain in such a desirable frame! How unwilling are we to 'come down' from the *mount!* But these pleasing and holy seasons are quickly ended, and often give place to some sudden unexpected trial, which robs us of all that sweetness in which we lately rejoiced. But when we ascend the *holy hill of God above*—we shall never again 'come down'! We shall be forever with the Lord, never offend Him, and never be separated from Him again! "I will see Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I will be fully satisfied with Your presence!" (Psalm 17:15)

Here on earth—we find a *mixture of evil* in our most holy moments! When we approach nearest to God, we have the liveliest sense of our defilement, and how much we fall short in every branch of duty, and in every temper of our hearts. But when we shall see Jesus as He is—we shall be fully transformed into His image, and be perfectly like Him!

"Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and **we can't even imagine** what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when He comes—we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is!" 1 John 3:2

"No *eye* has seen, no *ear* has heard, and no *mind* has imagined—what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

~ ~ ~ ~

**The more vile we are in our own eyes,
the more precious Christ will be to us!**

~ ~ ~ ~

I aim to speak plain truths to a plain people! May it please the God of all grace, to accompany my feeble endeavors to promote the knowledge of His truth! If my letters are owned to comfort the afflicted, to quicken the careless, to confirm the wavering — I will rejoice.

~ ~ ~ ~

When I was young, I was sure of many things. Now there are only two things of which I am sure: one is, that I am a miserable sinner; and the other, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior. He is well-taught, who learns these two lessons.

~ ~ ~ ~

Heart-anatomy is my favorite science. I mean, the study of the human heart, with its workings and counter-workings, as it is differently affected in the different seasons of prosperity, adversity, conviction, temptation, sickness, and the approach of death. I aim to speak plain truths to plain people!

~ ~ ~ ~

May we sit at the foot of the cross — and there learn . . .
what *sin* has done,
what *justice* has done,
and what *love* has done.

~ ~ ~ ~

I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ — and the brightest evidences that He is indeed our Master!

~ ~ ~ ~

My grand point in preaching, is to break the *hard* heart — and to heal the *broken* one!

~ ~ ~ ~

John Newton's last words: *"I am still in the land of the dying. I shall be in the land of the living soon!"*

~ ~ ~ ~

If the Lord is with us, we have no cause of fear.
His *eye* is upon us,
His *arm* over us,
His *ear* open to our prayer,
His *grace* sufficient, and
His *promise* unchangeable.

~ ~ ~ ~

Our work is great.
Our time is short.
The consequences of our labors are infinite.

~ ~ ~ ~

We can easily manage if we will only take, each day, the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday's burden over again today, and then add the burden of the morrow before we are required to bear it.

~ ~ ~ ~

We serve a gracious Master who knows how to overrule even our mistakes — to His glory and our own advantage.

~ ~ ~ ~

As to myself, if I were not a Calvinist, I think I would have no more hope of success in preaching to horses or cows — than to men!

~ ~ ~ ~

The Christian must know that the season, measure, and continuance of his sufferings — are appointed by Infinite Wisdom, and designed to work for his everlasting good; and that grace and strength shall be afforded him according to his need.

~ ~ ~ ~

I make it a rule of Christian duty never to go to a place where there is not room for my Master as well as myself.

~ ~ ~ ~

Christ has taken our nature into Heaven — to represent us.
He has left us on earth, with His nature — to represent Him.

~ ~ ~ ~

I can conceive a living man without an arm or a leg — but not without a head or a heart.
In the same way, there are some truths essential to vital religion, and which all awakened souls are taught.

~ ~ ~ ~

If two angels were to receive a commission from God — one to go down and rule earth's grandest empire, and the other to go and sweep the streets of its poorest village — it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot. For the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will, and with equal joy they would lift a Lazarus in his rags to Abraham's bosom — or be a chariot of fire to carry an Elijah home.

~ ~ ~ ~

I compare the troubles which we have to undergo in the course of the year — to a great bundle of sticks, far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole at once. He mercifully unties the bundle, and gives us first one stick, which we are to carry today; and then another, which we are to carry tomorrow; and so on. This we might easily manage, if we would only take the burden appointed for us each day. But we choose to increase our troubles by carrying yesterday's stick over again today — and adding tomorrow's burden to our load, before we are required to bear it.

~ ~ ~ ~

Many have puzzled themselves about the origin of evil. I am content to observe that there is evil, and that there is a way to escape from it — and with this I begin and end.

~ ~ ~ ~

What a mercy that we are only truly known to Him Who alone is able to bear us!

~ ~ ~ ~

Faith upholds a Christian under all trials, by assuring him that every painful dispensation is under the direction of his Lord.

~ ~ ~ ~

Of all people who engage in controversy, we, who are called Calvinists, are most expressly bound by our own principles to the exercise of gentleness and moderation.

~ ~ ~ ~

I am not what I *ought* to be. Ah! How imperfect and deficient!
I am not what I *wish* to be. I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good.
I am not what I *hope* to be. Soon, soon, I shall put off mortality, and with mortality all sin and imperfection.
Yet, though I am not what I *ought* to be, nor what I *wish* to be, nor what I *hope* to be — I can truly say that I am not what I *once* was — a slave to sin and Satan. And I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!"

~ ~ ~ ~

If you truly love Him — you will study to please Him.

~ ~ ~ ~

When people are right with God, they are apt to be hard on themselves and easy on other people. But when they are not right with God, they are easy on themselves and hard on others.

~ ~ ~ ~

Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: *I am a great sinner* — *and Christ is a great Savior.*

~ ~ ~ ~

Assurance grows by repeated conflict — by our repeated experimental proof of the Lord's power and goodness to save. When we have been brought very low — and helped; sorely wounded — and healed; cast down — and raised again; have given up all hope — and been suddenly snatched from danger, and placed in safety; and when these things have been repeated to us and in us a thousand times over — we begin to learn to trust simply to the word and power of God, beyond and against appearances. This trust, when habitual and strong, bears the name of assurance; for even assurance has degrees.

~ ~ ~ ~

There is many a thing which the world calls disappointment — but there is no such thing in the dictionary of faith. What to others are disappointments — are to believers intimations of the will of God.

~ ~ ~ ~

What will it profit a man if he gains his cause and silences his adversary — if at the same time he loses that humble, tender frame of spirit in which the Lord delights, and to which the promise of His presence is made? If our zeal is embittered by expressions of anger, invective, or scorn — we may think we are doing service of the cause of truth, when in reality we shall only bring it into discredit!

~ ~ ~ ~

This is faith: a renouncing of everything we are apt to call our own and relying wholly upon the blood, righteousness and intercession of Jesus.

~ ~ ~ ~

All shall work together for good. Everything is needful that He sends. Nothing can be needful that He withholds.

~ ~ ~ ~

Whoever is truly humbled — will not be easily angry, nor harsh or critical of others. He will be compassionate and tender to the infirmities of his fellow-sinners, knowing that if there is a difference — it is grace alone which has made it! He knows that he has the seeds of every evil in his own heart. And under all trials and afflictions — he will look to the hand of the Lord, and lay his mouth in the dust, acknowledging that he suffers much less than his iniquities have deserved.

~ ~ ~ ~

God often takes a course for accomplishing His purposes directly contrary to what our narrow views would prescribe. He brings a death upon our feelings, wishes, and prospects — when He is about to give us the desire of our hearts.

~ ~ ~ ~

God works powerfully — but for the most part gently and gradually.

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The best advice I can give you is: Look unto Jesus, beholding his beauty in the written Word.

~ ~ ~ ~

I endeavored to renounce society, that I might avoid temptation. But it was a poor religion — and so far as it prevailed, only tended to make me gloomy, stupid, unsociable, and useless.

~ ~ ~ ~

We have no clear ideas of the agency of demonic spirits, nor is it necessary. The Scripture says little to satisfy our curiosity; but tells us plainly that he is always watching us, and desiring to sift us as wheat. I believe we give him no more than his due, when we charge him with having a hand in all our sins.

~ ~ ~ ~

A soul disengaged from the world is a heavenly one. We are ready for Heaven — when our heart is there before us.

~ ~ ~ ~

By one hour's intimate access to the throne of grace, where the Lord causes His glory to pass before the soul that seeks Him — you may acquire more true spiritual knowledge and comfort, than a week's converse with the best of men.

~ ~ ~ ~

By affliction prayer is quickened — for our prayers are very apt to grow languid and formal in a time of ease.

~ ~ ~ ~

I look upon *prayer-meetings* as the most profitable exercises (excepting the public preaching) in which Christians can engage. They have a direct tendency to kill a worldly, trifling spirit, and to draw down a Divine blessing upon all our concerns, compose differences, and enkindle (at least maintain) the flames of Divine love among brethren.

~ ~ ~ ~

A real friendship should not fade as time passes, and should not weaken because of space separation.

~ ~ ~ ~

How many times has He delivered me! Yet, alas! How distrustful and ungrateful is my heart even until the present!

~ ~ ~ ~

If we venture beyond the pale of Scripture — we are exposed to all the illusions of imagination and enthusiasm.

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Whether men are pleased or not, we will, we must, worship the Lamb who was slain.

~ ~ ~ ~

Many are *convinced*, who are not truly *converted*. They are afraid of the consequences of sin — though they never saw the evil of sin. They have a seeming desire of salvation — which is not founded upon a truly spiritual discovery of their own wretchedness, and the excellency of Jesus.

~ ~ ~ ~

There are many who stumble in the noon-day, not for lack of light — but for lack of eyes.

~ ~ ~ ~

I know not a better rule of reading the Scripture, than to read it through from beginning to end — and when we have finished it once, to begin it again. We shall meet with many passages which we can make little improvement of — but not so many in the second reading as in the first, and fewer in the third than in the second — provided we pray to him who has the keys to open our understandings, and to anoint our eyes with His spiritual ointment!

~ ~ ~ ~

Experience is the Lord's school, and those who are taught by Him, usually learn by the mistakes they make, that in themselves they have *no wisdom*; and by their slips and falls, that they have *no strength.*

~ ~ ~ ~

Not only the guilt of sin — but the love of sin, and its dominion, are taken away, subdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing pardoned sinner.

~ ~ ~ ~

If it were possible for me to alter any part of God's plan — I would only spoil it.

~ ~ ~ ~

Every drop of rain hits its appointed target!

~ ~ ~ ~

So dress and conduct yourself — so that people who have been in your company will not recall what you had on.

~ ~ ~ ~

Though the island of Great Britain exhibits but a small spot upon the map of the globe, it makes a splendid appearance in the history of mankind, and for a long space has been signally under the protection of God and a seat of peace, liberty and truth.

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If we seem to get no good by attempting to draw near to Him—we may be sure we will get none by keeping away from Him.