**John Newton** \

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CHOICE EXCERPTS #2  
  
  
"**He opened their minds**—so they could understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45   
  
When God opens the eyes of our understanding, we begin to see everything around us to be just as the Scripture has described them. Then, and not until then, we perceive, that what we read in the Bible concerning the horrid evil of sin, the vileness of our fallen nature, the darkness and ignorance of those who know not God, our own emptiness, and the impossibility of finding relief and comfort from creatures—is exactly true.   
  
And as we find our ***disease*** precisely described—so we perceive a suitableness in the proposed ***remedy***.   
  
We need a SAVIOR, and He must be a mighty one. And though our needs and sins, our fears and enemies, are great and numerous—we are convinced that the character of Jesus is sufficient to answer them all.   
  
We need a REST, a rest which the world cannot give. Inquire where we will among the *creatures*, experience brings in the same answer from all, *"It is not in me!"* This again confirms the Word of God, which has forewarned us that we shall meet nothing but disappointment in such worldly pursuits. But there is a spiritual rest spoken of, which we know to be the very thing we need, and all our remaining solicitude is how to attain it. "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and heavy burdened—and I will give you rest!" Matthew 11:28

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**I saw the Lord!**  
  
"In the year King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord!** He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Hovering around Him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. In a great chorus they sang, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with His glory!' The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke! Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!'" Isaiah 6:1-5   
  
Oh! for a glance of what *Isaiah* saw, and has described! Oh! that we, by the power of that faith, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence and the attitude of His attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of His majesty; and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as *creatures*, to render Him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to Him!   
  
Oh! that, by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription—'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is filled with His glory!' If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or, if a comfortable hope in the Gospel prevented us from crying out, *"Woe is me, for I am ruined!"* we should, at least, say, (the Hebrew word might be so rendered,) *"I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"*  
  
If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not perplex ourselves concerning the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The *evil of sin*, contrasted with the *holiness and glory of God*, will engross our thoughts! And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear—to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.  
  
  
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**The *eye* of Divine Providence**   
  
"Not even a *sparrow*, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father! And the very *hairs* on your head are all numbered!" Matthew 10:29-30  
  
Let us learn to see and acknowledge *God's hand* in all we have, and in all we meet with. Such a deep and abiding persuasion of the Most High God, ordering and over-ruling all our concerns, would—like the light, diffuse a luster and a beauty upon everything around us. To consider every comfort of life, as an effect and proof of God's favor towards us, would, like the *fabled magic stone*—turn all our possessions to gold, and stamp a value upon things which a common eye might judge as insignificant.  
  
**The *eye* of Divine Providence** is upon every flitting *sparrow* of the field. Nor can we properly term any circumstance of our lives as *small*, since such things as seem most *trifling* in themselves, do often give birth to things which become most important. On the other hand—to be able to discover the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, through the darkest cloud of *troubles* and *afflictions*; to see all our *trials* appointed to us—in number, weight, and measure; nothing befalling us by *chance*; nothing without need; nothing without a support; nothing without a designed advantage—what a support must this truth be to the soul!   
  
Take away this truth—and man is the most forlorn, helpless and miserable object in the world! He would be pining for everything he has *not*—and trembling for everything he *has!* He would be equally suffering under the pressure of what *does* happen—and the fear of what *may* happen! He would be liable to thousands of unsuspected dangers—yet unable to guard against those which are most obvious!  
  
Let us learn the secret of being content in any and every situation, "Our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, before we ask Him!" "The earth is His, and the fullness thereof;" and His *goodness* is equal to His *power*.

In Christ, He has already given us more than ten thousand worlds! Are you **poor**? Be satisfied with the Lord's appointment. It were as easy to Him to give you large estates—as to supply you with the bread you eat, or to continue your breath in your nostrils. But He sees that *poverty* is best for you—He sees that *prosperity* might prove your ruin! Therefore He has appointed you the *honor* of being in this respect, conformable to your Lord, who, when on earth, "had nowhere to lay His head!"

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**True religion**  
 **True religion** is a serious and personal concern. It arises from a right knowledge of *God* and *ourselves*; a sense of the great things He has done for fallen man; a persuasion, or at least a well-grounded hope, of our own interest in His favor; and a principle of unbounded love to Him who first loved us.   
  
True religion consists in an entire surrender of ourselves, and our all, to God; in setting Him continually before us, as the object of our desires, the scope and inspector of our actions, and our only refuge and hope in every trouble. It also consists in making the goodness of God to us—the motive and model of our behavior to our fellow-creatures: to love, pity, relieve, instruct, forbear, and forgive them, as occasions offer, because we ourselves both need and experience these things at the hand of our heavenly Father.   
  
The two great points to which true religion tends, and which it urges the soul, where it has taken place, incessantly to press after, are: *communion* with God, and *conformity* to Him. And as neither of these can be fully attained in this life, it teaches us to pant after eternal glory; to withdraw our thoughts and affections from temporal things, and fix them on that eternal state, where our desires shall be abundantly satisfied; and that work begun by *grace*—shall be crowned with *glory!*

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**Christ reigns in the hearts of all His people**  
 **Christ reigns in the hearts of all His people.** There He writes His precepts, impresses His image, and erects His throne; ruling them, not merely by an outward law, but by an inward secret influence, breathing His own life and spirit into them; so that their obedience becomes, as it were, natural, pleasurable, and its own reward. By the discoveries He affords them of His love—He wins their affections, captivates their wills, and enlightens their understandings. They derive from Him the "spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind," (2 Timothy 1:7) and run with alacrity in the way of His commandments.  
  
They are the willing subjects of His government; are really pleased with His appointed way of salvation, approve of His precepts, and, from a view of His wisdom and goodness, cheerfully submit and resign to the disposal of His kind providence.   
  
In all these respects, we are *by nature* at variance with Him. We are too proud to be indebted to His grace, too wise in our own conceits to desire His instruction, too obstinately attached to the love and practice of sin to be capable of relishing the beauty and spirituality of His commandments. And our love of the world, and the things of it, is too strong and grasping, to permit us to be satisfied with the lot and with the dispensations He appoints for us. We wish, if possible, and as far as possible we attempt—to be our own god. We are unthankful when He bestows, and impatient if He withholds; and if He sees fit to take back the gifts of which we are unworthy—we repine and rebel against His will. This enmity must be subdued, before we can be pleased with His government: in other words, we must be changed, we must be made new creatures.   
  
To produce this change, this new creation, the Gospel is the only expedient; and when revealed and applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, the miracle is wrought! The sinner who is first convinced of his guilt and misery, and then reconciled to God by faith in the great atonement, willingly yields to His administration. He owns and feels the propriety of His proceedings, is ready to acknowledge, in his sharpest afflictions, that the Lord is gracious, and has not dealt with him according to the desert of his iniquities. He considers himself as no longer his own, but bought with a price, and brought under the strongest obligations, "to live no longer to himself, but to Him who loved him, and gave Himself for him." And what was before his dread and dislike, becomes now the joy of his heart—the thought that the Lord reigns, and that all his concerns are in the hands of Him who does all things well.

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**It is an ocean without either bottom or shore!**  
  
"May you experience the love of Christ—though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" Ephesians 3:19   
  
There is no love which can be compared with the love of Christ. He is God manifest in the flesh; all things were created *by* Him, and *for* Him. This high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, in the fullness of time, assumed our nature, was born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law—so that sinners, believing in Him, might not only escape deserved condemnation—but actually become His children!  
  
For this great purpose, though truly God, He emptied Himself and appeared upon earth in the form of a servant; submitted to a state of poverty, reproach and opposition; was despised and rejected of men, lived a suffering life, and terminated His sufferings by a cruel and ignominious death—for He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!  
  
The LAMB, once upon the *cross*, is now the Lamb upon the *throne*, possessing and exercising all power in heaven and on earth. Yet He is still mindful of those for whom He suffered; His heart is made of tenderness; His affections melt with love; He appears in the presence of God for them, as their great High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor. By His holy Word He invites, and by the power of His Holy Spirit He draws, and encourages, and enables the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him for rest. He promises to save them to the uttermost; to support and guide them safely through all their conflicts, temptations, and trials; to lead them safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death; and then to receive them to Himself, that they may be forever with Him to behold His glory!  
  
You may truly say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I have everything I need. I need not fear. He will support me by His arm, cheer me with His presence, protect me by His power, guide me by His counsels, and afterwards receive me to glory!"  
  
*Such is the love of Christ!* When we attempt to consider the glory of His divine person, the depth of His humiliation, the unknown sorrows and agonies which wrung His heart in Gethsemane, and on Golgotha; and that He endured all this for His *enemies*, even for those whose hearts were, both by nature and habit, alienated from Him; the power He exerts in reconciling them to Himself; the blessings He bestows upon them in this life, when they are renewed by His grace; and the eternal happiness He has prepared for them in the eternal state—I say, when we attempt to conceive of this love, in its origin, progress, and effects—*we are soon overwhelmed, our thoughts are swallowed up, and we can only wonder and adore in silence!*  
  
This love of Christ to sinners is inexpressible, unsearchable and unfathomable! **It is an ocean without either bottom or shore!**  
  
"May you experience the love of Christ—though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" Ephesians 3:19

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**Sin will *distress*—but it cannot *condemn!***  
  
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. **Sin will *distress*—but it cannot *condemn***, those who believe in Jesus!

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**Their little girl has died!**  
  
"Yet another messenger came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house! It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!' 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 1:18-21  
  
My dear wife,  
Our dear friends have sent me word, that **their little girl has died!**   
  
Thus, at one time or another, every family and every person finds *vanity* entwined with their *choicest comforts.* It is best for us that it is so; for, poor and vain as this life is—we are too greatly attached to it. How strong then would our attachment to this world be—if we met with no *trials* or *thorns* along the way? Is not the history of every day, a comment upon those words, "Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy!" Micah 2:10  
  
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**The Lord our Preserver**  
  
My dear wife,  
I thank you for your letter. I do not complain of its brevity. A single line to inform me of your safe arrival, would have gladdened my heart, and, I trust, have excited my gratitude to **the Lord our Preserver**. Not that I think you in more real danger upon the road than when at home; for a thousand unthought-of dangers are always near us, and our own shortsighted care is insufficient to preserve ourselves, or each other, for a single moment! Yet my foolish mind is prone to be more solicitous about you when you are out of my sight.   
  
I have had another peaceful night, and awoke this morning in health. We lie down and arise in safety, because the Lord sustains us. Oh! to say, *"This God, this great God—is our God—our Sun, and Shield and Portion!"* What a privilege is this! What a counterbalance for every trial!  
  
God is as near us in a *storm—*as in a *calm*; and we need His protection no less in a *calm—*than in a *storm*. The earth is the Lord's; and His servants, wherever their lot is cast, have His throne of grace always near them.   
  
It is good to trust the Lord, and leave the management of **all** to Him. He is wise. He sees to the end of our path. We, poor short-sighted creatures, cannot see an inch before us, and if left to our own choice, would embroil ourselves in troubles by the very steps we would take to prevent them.  
  
Sickness and death have entered many houses here. But we are still preserved. Our times are in the hands of Him who cares for us!  
  
"Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117  
  
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**I am a living commentary!**  
 **We are poor, weak, inconsistent creatures**—if left but a little to ourselves.   
  
When I think how cold, dull and heartless I have been; how often I have wandered, how often trifled upon the brink of temptation; when I consider what powerful, vigilant, and subtle *enemies* are combined against me; and how many *professors* have fallen on my right hand and my left—I am amazed at the greatness of His mercy in preserving me! **I am a living commentary**, that there is forgiveness with Him—and that He is able to save to the uttermost!  
  
"Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117  
  
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**God's grace will make us scorn-proof**  
  
"He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because *he saw Him who is invisible!"* Hebrews 11:26-27  
  
My dearest wife,  
You will observe, that the principal effects or properties of *Moses' faith*, by which he walked with God, were **humility** and **integrity**. He humbled himself before the Lord in secret, claiming no higher title than 'dust and ashes'. And he stood up boldly, as God's avowed, devoted servant, before men. Let us imitate him.   
  
I little doubt, but he was thought peculiar, and perhaps laughed at—and so probably shall we. But I trust that **God's grace will make us scorn-proof**, and not allow us to be in the number of those who are *ashamed* of the Lord Jesus and His Gospel. No, I hope He will enable us to *glory* in the cross, and to endure the opposition we may meet with, as *seeing Him who is invisible*, who, when upon earth, submitted to be laughed to scorn Himself, for us. Having borne our reproach—He has a just right to require that we should be ready and willing to bear reproach for Him!  
  
This you may be assured of—that you cannot live out a consistent profession of Christ's religion in this town, without incurring the charge of being *strange* and *singular*. And, unless you can confine yourself wholly to the mirthful and careless, and go all their lengths, you will certainly have *a bit of the* ***cross*** *to carry*, and must prepare yourself to be thought very strange, by some of your acquaintances. The less we are connected with *worldly people*, the better.  
  
We must endeavor to act with prudence, and not give needless offence; but we must never be ashamed of the glorious Gospel.  
  
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**The empty, amusing chit-chat**  
  
August 12, 1755  
My dearest wife,  
My companions on my trip are civil and agreeable in their way. But *I had rather be alone*; for to commune with God and my own heart, would be much more pleasing and profitable, than **the empty, amusing chit-chat** I am engaged in at present. Still, I pray to Him who can hear the *breathings of my thoughts*, when in the midst of company, and who is more ready to hear than I am to ask. I am astonished at my many mercies, and resign both you and myself into the hands of God, with much satisfaction.  
  
I hope you, my dearest, will continue waiting upon Him—for from Him only our help can come. Pray for a praying spirit; lay all your hopes and all your fears before Him. In this way, and in no other, peace and comfort will be surely found. I recommend you to His blessing.  
  
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**They hatch *viper's eggs* and weave *spider's webs!***   
  
Dear friend,  
The true Christian has no home in this present world. He is, and must be—a *stranger* and a *pilgrim* upon earth. His citizenship, treasure, and real home are in a better and eternal world. Every step he takes—is a step nearer to his Father's house! He sets the Lord always before him, and finds himself equally near the Throne of Grace at all times and in all places.  
  
I trust, my dear sir, that you will carry out a determination similar to that of the patriarch Jacob, who made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if He will bring me back safely to my father—then I will make the Lord my God!" Genesis 28:20-21. May the Lord Himself write it on your heart!  
  
You are now at **Rome**, the center of the Fine Arts; a place abounding with everything to gratify a person of your taste. **Athens** had the pre-eminence in the Apostle Paul's time; and I think it highly probable, from many passages in his writings, that he likewise had a *taste* capable of admiring and relishing the beauties of *painting*, *sculpture* and *music*—which he could not but observe during his abode in Athens.  
  
But he had *a higher, a spiritual, a divine taste*, which was greatly shocked and grieved by the ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness which surrounded him; insomuch that he could attend to nothing else! This taste, which cannot be acquired by any effort or study of ours—but is freely bestowed on all who sincerely ask it from the Lord, divests the *vanities* which *the duped world* admire; and enables us to judge of the most *splendid works of unsaved men*, according to the declaration of the Prophet, "**They hatch *viper's eggs* and weave *spider's webs!*** Whoever eats their eggs will die; crack one open—and a viper is hatched!" Isaiah 59:5.   
  
Much ingenuity is displayed in the weaving of a *spider's web*—but, when finished, it is worthless and useless. Incubation of *eggs* requires close diligence and attention; if the hen is too long away from her nest, the egg is spoiled. Why should she sit at all upon the egg, and watch it, and warm it night and day—if it only produces a viper at last!   
  
Thus *vanity* or *evil* are the chief ends of *unsanctified genius*. The *artists* spin spider's webs; and the *philosophers*, by their learned speculations, hatch viper's eggs—only to poison themselves and their fellow-creatures! Few of either sort have one serious thought of that dreadful eternity—upon the *brink* of which they stand for a while; or the "depth of misery" to which they successively and shortly must fall.  
  
A part of the sentence denounced against *the city which stood upon seven hills*, is so pointed and graphic, that I must write it out, "How terrible, how terrible for that great city! She was so beautiful—like a woman clothed in finest purple and scarlet linens, decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls! And in one single moment all the wealth of the city is gone! They will weep as they watch the smoke ascend, and they will say, 'Where in all the world is there another city like this!' And they will throw dust on their heads to show their great sorrow. And they will say, 'How terrible, how terrible for the great city! She made us all rich from her great wealth. And now in a single hour it is all gone!' Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder as large as a great millstone. He threw it into the ocean and shouted— **Babylon**, the great city, will be thrown down as violently as I have thrown away this stone, and she will disappear forever. Never again will the sound of music be heard there—no more harps, songs, flutes, or trumpets. There will be no industry of any kind, and no more milling of grain. Her nights will be dark, without a single lamp. There will be no happy voices of brides and grooms. This will happen because her merchants, who were the greatest in the world, deceived the nations with her sorceries!" Revelation 18   
  
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**People who *long* to be rich**  
  
An inordinate desire and attachment to the things of this present world, is a *prevailing cause of a spiritual declension*. Unless this evil principle is mortified in its root—by the doctrine of the cross—it will in time prevail over the most splendid profession. That *love of the world*, which is inconsistent with the true love of God—manifests itself in two different ways, as men by temper and habit are differently inclined:  
  
The first is **covetousness** or greediness for gain. This was the ruin of *Judas*, and probably the cause of the defection of *Demas*. By the honorable mention made of him in some of Paul's epistles, Demas seems to have had much of Paul's confidence and esteem for a season. Yet at length his *covetous passion* prevailed, and the last account we have of him from the apostle, is, "Demas has deserted me—*because he loved this present world*." 2 Timothy 4:10  
  
Again, there are people not chargeable with the love of money for its own sake—for they rather *squander* it—than *hoard* it. Yet they are equally under the influence of a worldly spirit! They manifest their *worldly hearts*—by an *expensive taste* in the articles of dress, furniture and feasting—which are always unsuitable to a Christian profession.   
  
It is not easy to exactly mark out the *precise line of Christian conduct* in these respects, which befits the different situations in which the providence of God has placed us. Nor is it necessary, to those who are poor in spirit—and upright in heart. A simple desire of pleasing God, and adorning the gospel, will solve most cases of how a believer should spend his money—which occupy little and trifling minds. The *inclination of our heart*—will always direct and regulate our *voluntary* expenses. Those who love the Lord, and whose spirits are lively in His service, will avoid both *stinginess* and selfish *extravagance*. They will rather lean to the *frugal* side in how they spend their money on *themselves*—that they may be better able to promote God's cause, and to relieve the necessities of His people.   
  
Misers, who can be content with the mere form of religion, will **hoard** all they can save—in order to gratify their avarice! Others will **spend** all they can spare—to gratify their vanity, or their worldly appetites!   
  
It is not easy to determine which of these evils is the greatest. Perhaps of the two, the *miser* is least accessible to conviction, and consequently the most difficult to be reclaimed. But a desire for extravagance and indulgence, if persisted in, will gradually lead to such compliances with the *spirit and maxims of the world*, as will certainly weaken, if not wholly suppress—the exercise of vital godliness. In whatever degree the "love of the world" prevails—the "health of the soul" will proportionably decline.  
  
"**People who *long* to be rich**, fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows!" 1 Timothy 6:9-10

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**The worst of all *trades*!**  
  
The Christian ministry is **the worst of all *trades****—*but the best of all *professions*.  
  
My grand point in preaching, is to break the hard heart—and to heal the broken one!

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**A signature of wisdom and power**  
  
There is **a signature of wisdom and power** impressed on the 'works of God', which evidently distinguishes them from the feeble imitations of men. Not only the splendor of the *sun*—but the glimmering light of the *glow-worm*, proclaims His glory!  
  
"The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make Him known!" Psalm 19:1-2

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**Like a sword in a madman's hands!**  
  
**Learning**, though it is useful when we know how to make a right use of it; yet considered as in our own power, and to those who trust to it without seeking God's guidance—is usually the source of perplexity, strife, skepticism, and infidelity. It is indeed, **like a sword in a madman's hands**, which gives him the more opportunity of hurting himself than others!

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**The Lord's school**  
  
'Experience' is **the Lord's school**.   
  
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.  
  
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**The origin of evil?**  
  
"Avoid foolish controversies . . . because these are unprofitable and useless!" Titus 3:9  
  
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; with this I begin and end.

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**My principal method for defeating error and heresy**, is, by *establishing the truth.* One may purpose to fill a bushel with *tares*; but if I can fill it first with *wheat*, I may defy his attempts.

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**Let the world have the world!** The Lord has provided better things for His children! "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived—what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

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**My chief desire for you**  
  
(The following is a [letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) to his 11 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school)  
  
My dear Betsy,  
I wish you to be as cheerful as possible. *Cheerfulness* is no sin, nor is there any grace in a *sullen countenance*. On the other hand, I would not have you light or giddy with levity; it will hurt your own spirit, and hinder you from the pursuit of what, in your serious moments, you most desire.   
  
One of the best methods of keeping free from uneasy, troublesome thoughts, at least of lessening them—is to be always employed. Strive and pray against *indolence*, look upon it as a hurtful, yes, a sinful thing.  
  
**My chief desire for you**, is that you may know and love the Lord. If not, though you were accomplished and admired beyond any of your age, and though you could live in all the splendor of a queen, *I would weep over you!* I would lament your birth!   
  
When you *read* our Savior's discourses in Scripture, pay attention as if you saw Him with your own eyes standing before you! Form your ideas of Him from the accounts the evangelists give you—that He was meek and lowly when upon earth, full of compassion and gentleness, ready to pity, to heal, to help, and to teach all who come to Him. "Yes, He is altogether lovely!" Song of Songs 5:16.   
  
Do not let a day pass without thinking on His sufferings in Gethsemane, and on Mount Golgotha. Surely His love to poor sinners, in bleeding and dying for them, will constrain you to love Him in return. And, if once you love Him—then you will account it your greatest pleasure to please Him. Not to love the Lord Jesus—is *the height of wickedness, and the depth of misery!* "If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed!" 1 Corinthians 16:22  
  
And when you *pray*, assure yourself, before you begin, that He is actually in the room with you, and that His ear is open to every word you say! This will make you serious, and it will likewise encourage you, when you consider that you are not speaking into the air, or to one who is a great way off; but to One who is very near you, to your best Friend, who is both able and willing to give you everything that is good for you!  
  
May the Lord bless you. I love you dearly.  
Your affectionate father  
  
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**Richard died about two weeks ago**  
  
(The following is a [letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) to his 11 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school)  
  
My dear Betsy,  
**Richard died about two weeks ago**, and I buried him and three others within a week. All four were rather young people, that is, about thirty years of age.  
  
Mrs. \_\_\_ died recently, and was buried yesterday. I had often visited her during her illness. She was well a few months ago—but a consumption soon brought her down to the grave. But, though she was young, she was not sorry to leave such a poor world as this. I always found her happy and cheerful, though her illness was very painful. She suffered much by cold sweats; but she said, a few days before her death, that it would be *worth laying a thousand years in a cold sweat*, for one hour's such happiness as she then felt. "Oh," she said, "if this is dying, *what a pleasant thing dying is!"*You have told me that you are often terrified at the thoughts of death. Now, if you seek the Lord, as Mrs. \_\_\_ did, while you are young—then, whenever you come to die, you will find that death has nothing terrible in it to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. He has disarmed death, and taken away its sting; and He has promised to meet His people and receive them to Himself—when they are about to leave this world, and everything they loved in it, behind them.   
  
You have the same advantages that Mrs. \_\_\_ had. Like her, you are placed under the care of those who wish well to your soul; the Scriptures, which made her wise to salvation, are put into your hand likewise, and you also have the opportunity of hearing the gospel. She was exhorted and encouraged from a child, to pray to the Lord for His saving grace—and so are you. I hope you will do as she did; and the Lord who was gracious to her—will be gracious to you.  
  
Your conscience tells you that you are a sinner—and that makes you afraid. But, when the Lord gives you faith, you will see and understand, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Then you will love Him; and, when you love Him, you will find it easy and pleasant to serve Him! And then you will long to see Him who died for you! And, as it is impossible to see Him in this world—you will be glad that you are not to stay here always; you will be willing to die, that you may be with Him, where He is!  
  
We must know we are *sick*, before we can prize a *physician*. If I live to see you a partaker of the grace of God, one of the chief desires of my heart will be gratified! This would please me more than to have your weight in gold! And therefore you may be sure I often pray for you.  
  
Your affectionate father

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**When you see anybody sick, or hurt or lame**  
  
(The following is a [letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) to his 11 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school)  
  
My dear Betsy,   
I am thankful that the Lord preserves you in health and safety. I hope you are thankful too. **When you see anybody sick, or hurt or lame**—I would have you think it is of the Lord's goodness, that their case is not yours.   
  
Sin has filled the world with sorrow; all the calamities you read or hear of, or see with your eyes—are the fruits of sin! And, as you are a sinner, you might suffer what others do! It is only the Lord's mercy that preserves you, and provides you good things which many others have not.   
  
You know many children are brought up in poverty, meet with evil treatment, and have no parents or kind friends to take care of them. But, though the Lord removed your parents before you were old enough to miss them—He took care to provide you a home with us; He inclined us not only to receive you—but to love you; and now your needs are all supplied. And, besides this, you have been and are instructed and prayed for every day. You have great reason to be thankful indeed, and I hope you will pray to the Lord to give you a thankful heart—for you cannot have it—unless He gives it to you.  
  
Oh, it is a great blessing to be sensible that we deserve nothing from God but eternal misery—and that all the good we receive is from His wondrous mercy! When you understand this, you will love Him, and then you will be happy indeed. Then it will be your pleasure to please Him, and then, putting your trust in Him, you will be preserved from anxiety and evil.  
  
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**See the bread multiply!**

"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." 2 Timothy 4:2  
  
Dear friend,  
The Word does not flourish here as I ought to wish it; but, through mercy—it is not wholly without effect. I would rather be the pastor of this church, than in any situation the *world* can afford! Oh, the honor, the blessedness—of being **an instrument in His hands**—of feeding His gathered *sheep* and *lambs*, and bringing *wanderers* into His fold!  
  
That is a striking and beautiful thought of the apostle, "as poor—yet making many rich." When I feel . . .  
my own poverty,  
my *heart* wandering,  
my *head* confused,  
my *graces* languid,  
my *gifts* apparently dormant;   
when I thus stand up with *half a loaf*, or less, before a multitude—and **see the bread multiply** in the breaking; and that the hungry, the thirsty, the mourners in Zion—are not wholly disappointed; when I find that some, in the depth of their outward afflictions, can rejoice in me, as the messenger by whom the Lord is pleased to send them . . .   
a word in season,  
balm for their wounds, and  
cordials for their cases;   
then indeed, my heart rejoices!  
  
"I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth." 3 John 1:4   
  
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**Whatever your papa and mamma have told you**  
  
March 3, 1772  
Dear Miss,  
Your obliging request to hear from me has not been forgotten; and, if my leisure time were equal to my inclination, I would write very often.  
  
It rejoices my heart to think, that at a time of life when you might have been *plunging into the vanities of the world*—you are seeking Jesus! The Lord, who appointed the hour of your birth, and the bounds of your habitation, was pleased in His good providence to withdraw you early from the *giddy circle of vanity* in which you might have lived, and to favor you with the advantages of godly example and instruction. You live at a distance from those *ensnaring temptations* by which the minds of young people are blinded and stupefied. Yet this alone would not have secured you. His *providence* has been subservient to His *grace*; otherwise, by this time, you would have been weary and impatient of restraint; you would have accounted the means of grace burdensome, and your home a prison! The evil of the heart is too deeply rooted to be overcome by anything less than the power of God. **Whatever your papa and mamma have told you** concerning your state as a lost sinner, and your need of a Savior—you would not have believed them—unless the Lord Himself had borne witness in your heart to His own truths.   
  
You are now seeking Him—yet, if He had not found you first, you would never have sought Him at all. This I mention for your encouragement, as a good reason why you may be assured that you shall not seek Him in vain.   
  
I take it for granted, that, though you are but a *young soldier*, you have already met with *conflicts*. There is a **subtle enemy** who labors to distress, hinder, and wound all who desire to serve the Lord. If you would give up the way of holiness, and be content to make the world your portion—you would meet with no disturbance from him! If you were asleep—he would make no noise to awaken you. Those who are content with his service and wages—he manages with so much skill, that, though he leads them captives at his will, though he dwells and works in their hearts, though all the faculties of the mind and members of their body are under his influence—yet *they are not aware of him at all!* Yes, when many in this state pretend to dispute his very existence—he does not attempt to undeceive them!  
  
Thus, while the *strong one* armed keeps his house—his goods are in peace. But, when the *Stronger* than he, the gracious Redeemer, comes to deliver His prey out of the hand of the mighty, and to release His child from Satan's captivity—then the *foul enemy* begins to show himself as he really is! And therefore I suppose by this time you can tell in a measure, from your own experience, why he is called in the Scripture— an accuser, an adversary, a serpent, a roaring lion; and what is meant by his wiles, devices, and fiery darts!   
  
But, if he assaults you in any of these ways, you need not fear him; for he is a conquered and a chained enemy! Jesus has conquered him! He has broken his power, and taken away his dominion, so far as concerns those who flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel. And Jesus holds him fast with an breakable chain, and sets limits to his rage and malice, beyond which he cannot pass! Therefore, fear him not! He who delivered Daniel from the lions—will deliver you, and make you more than a conqueror by faith in His name, and at last bruise Satan under your feet!   
  
Dear miss, may all your desires and all your actions be regulated by His Word, directed to His glory, and animated by a living principle of grace, derived from Him who is the fountain of grace.   
  
"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Ephesians 6:10-11

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**Our best graces and services**  
  
"All our righteous acts are like filthy rags!" Isaiah 64:6   
  
**Our best graces and services** are, and always will be, *defective* and *defiled*. The sole exclusive ground of our hope and salvation is Jesus Christ—who is our . . .  
wisdom,  
righteousness,  
sanctification, and  
redemption.  
  
I trust only in the freeness and riches of His grace, not withstanding I feel myself polluted and vile. "For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, **Christ died for the ungodly!**" Romans 5:6

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**His most afflictive dispensations**  
  
Dear friend,  
I hope that you have found *your trials* so sweetened, and so sanctified, by God's blessing, that you have been enabled to rejoice in them!   
  
Whatever may be the immediate causes of your troubles—they are all under the direction of a *gracious hand*—and each, in their place, cooperating to a gracious end. Your afflictions all come from God's heart, who loves you better than you love yourself! They are all *tokens of His love and favor*—and are necessary means of promoting your growth in faith and grace.  
  
You are in the hands of *Him who does all things well*, and conducts **His most afflictive dispensations** to those who fear Him, with *wisdom* and *mercy!*The Lord knows what is best for you! When there is an especial *need-be* for your being in the *furnace*—He knows how to support you; and at what season, and in what manner, deliverance will best comport with *His glory* and *your good*. These are the two great ends which He has in view, and which are inseparably connected together.   
  
He knows our frame, and of what we are made. His *pity* exceeds that of the most tender parent. And though He causes grief—He will have compassion. Your afflictions which at present are not joyous but grievous, shall, when you have been duly exercised by them—yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I trust the Lord gives you a measure of patience and submission to His holy will. If so, everything shall be well. And when He has fully tried you—you shall come forth as gold!  
  
The thoughts of what we have *deserved* at His hands—and what Jesus suffered for our sakes—when applied by His Holy Spirit, have *a sovereign efficacy to compose our minds*, and enable us to say, "Not my will—but may Yours be done!" How unspeakably better is it to be chastened by the Lord now—than to be left to ourselves for a season, and at last condemned with the world.  
  
The *path of affliction* is sanctified by the promise of God, and by the consideration of our Lord Jesus, who walked in it Himself, that we might not think it too much to *tread in His steps.* Yes, it has been a beaten path in all ages; for the innumerable multitudes of the redeemed who are now before the eternal throne, have entered the kingdom by no other way. Let us not then be weary and faint—but cheerfully consent to be the followers of those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises!  
  
If, after much tribulation, we stand accepted before the Lord in His glory, we shall not then think much of the *difficulties* we met in our pathway to glory. Then sorrow and sighing shall cease forever—and songs of triumph and everlasting joy shall take their place! Oh, happy transporting moment, when the Lord God Himself shall wipe every tear from our eyes!  
  
Until then, may the prospect of this glory which shall be revealed, cheer and comfort our hearts! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. He has delivered us in six troubles—and we may trust Him in the seventh.  
  
Whatever *storms* may arise, we have an infallible and almighty Pilot, who will be a Sun and a Shield to those who love Him!  
  
As long as we live, new trials will be needful. It is not that the Lord delights in grieving us and putting us to pain; on the contrary, He rejoices in the prosperity of His servants. No, it is not for His pleasure—but for *our profit*, that we may be made partakers of His holiness!   
  
Perhaps you may have observed a **bird**, in a hedge, or upon the boughs of a tree; if you disturb it—it will move a little higher—and thus you may make it change its place three or four times. But if it finds, after a few trials, that you continue to follow it, and will not allow it to rest near you—it takes wing at last, and flies away!  
  
Thus it is with us! When the Lord drives us from one *creature-rest*, we immediately perch upon another! But He will not allow us to stay long upon any. At length, like the bird, we are sensible that we can have no safety, no stable peace below! *Then our hearts take flight and soar heavenwards*, and we are taught by His grace to place our treasure and affections out of the reach of earthly vanities. So far as this end is accomplished, we have reason to be thankful and say, *happy* ***rod****—that brought me nearer to my God!*

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**Our friend's conversion**  
  
**Our friend's conversion**, if it could be generally known and understood, would be more effectual than many volumes of arguments to confirm what the Scriptures teach concerning the *author*, the *nature*, and *effects* of that *great change* which must be wrought in the heart of a sinner, before he can see the kingdom of God.   
  
His natural and acquired abilities were great; his moral character, as it is called, unblemished; he was beloved and admired by his friends, and perhaps had no enemies. To see such a man made willing in an instant to give up all his *supposed righteousness*; to rank himself with the chief of sinners; and to glory only in those self-denying truths which a little before were foolishness to him; and to see him as suddenly possessed of a solid peace, reconciled to the thoughts of death, and rejoicing in a hope and an eternal happiness of which he had not the least idea until then—this is indeed wonderful.   
  
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**Your shoes shall be iron and brass!**  
  
"**Your shoes shall be iron and brass**; and as your days—so shall your strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25  
  
That valuable promise, *"Your shoes shall be iron and brass,"* intimates, that **we must not expect a path strewed with flowers, or spread with soft carpets**—but rather a rough and thorny path, otherwise such shoes would be unnecessary. But it is sufficient if divine strength is given according to our day, and if the Lord is pleased to be with us.

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**In this point they all agree!**  
  
"**The carnal mind is enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* it be." Romans 8:7   
  
The carnal mind is not only desperately wicked—but deeply deceitful! It deceives others—and often it deceives itself!  
  
The history of all ages and countries uniformly confirms the Scriptural doctrine—that man is a depraved and fallen creature; and that some selfish temper, ambition, avarice, pride, revenge, and the like, are, in effect, *the main springs and motives of his conduct*; unless so far, and in such instances, as they are corrected and subdued by Divine Grace.  
  
Therefore, when Paul speaks of the most dreadful degree of impiety that can be imagined—*enmity against God*—he does not consider it as the fault of the particular time in which he lived, or impute it singly either to the idolatrous Heathen or the obstinate Jews—but he affirms universally, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Men differ considerably in capacity, rank, education, and attainments; they jar in sentiments and interests; they mutually revile, hate, and destroy one another; but **in this point they all agree!** Whether Greeks or Barbarians, wise or ignorant, slave or free—the bent and disposition of their minds, while unrenewed by grace, is atrocious and implacable enmity against the blessed God!  
  
*What can be stronger marks of enmity against God*—than to despise His Word, to scorn His favor, to oppose His will, to caress His enemies, and to insult and abuse His servants, and with unwearied malice, persecute our Lord Jesus to the death of the cross?  
  
"So then those who are in the flesh *cannot* please God!" Romans 8:8

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**I was the worst of them all!**  
  
"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and **I was the worst of them all!**" 1 Timothy 1:15  
  
The more sensible we are of the *disease*—the more we shall admire the *great Physician*.  
  
Innumerable cases might be published to the honor of the great Physician; none more memorable perhaps than my own. I was laboring under a multitude of grievous evils: fired with raging madness, possessed with many devils, and bent upon my own destruction!   
  
But Jesus interposed—unsought and undesired. He opened my eyes, and pardoned my sins! He broke my fetters, and taught my once blasphemous lips—to praise His name. **For the foulest of the foul—He dies!**

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**A hot-bed or nursery for wickedness!**  
  
*When I was in London*, the *cloud of smoke* hanging over the city, to which every house contributes its quota—led me to *daydream*. I imagined it to be an emblem of that *cloud of sin* which is continually ascending with a mighty cry into the ears of the Lord Almighty!  
  
Sin overspreads the earth; but in London the number and impunity of offenders, joined with the infidelity and profligacy of the times, make it a kind of **a hot-bed or nursery for wickedness!** Sin is studied as a science, and there are professors and inventors of evil things in a variety of branches, who thrive on teaching others to sin with delight.   
  
Could we have knowledge of the monstrous enormities and villainies which are committed in a single day in London—it would make us groan and tremble!   
  
Such were a part of my meditations, accompanied with some degree of praise to Him who snatched me out of that state in which *I was a monster in iniquity*—and brought me to a knowledge of salvation and peace!

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**My advice**

Concerning the point on which you asked **my advice**—continue to look to Jesus, my dear friend, and He will *guide* you with His eye, give you *support* for the present, and *direction* for the future.   
  
If He were upon earth, and you could get near Him—would you not lay your difficulties before Him? You have the same liberty and encouragement to do it now—*as if you saw Him with your eyes!*   
  
I need not tell you this—you know it! Yet though our *judgments* are fully convinced that He is as near, as kind, as attentive to our concerns, as ready to hear and as willing to assist as our own hearts can wish—it is not always easy to *reduce these sentiments to practice*.  
  
If you find, through grace, that you are submissive, and only desirous to know His will, and continue waiting upon Him—then fear not! He will not allow a soul that depends upon Him to take a wrong step in a matter of such importance. The Lord can and will order all things for the good of His children, and especially of those who are desirous to give themselves up, without reserve, to His service, and to cast all their care and concerns on Him by faith and prayer.

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**Simple, poor, afflicted, and unnoticed**  
  
My friend whom you met, is *a simple-hearted, honest man*. I account him a good *sample* of our flock. Most people in our church are somewhat like him:  
not abounding in that *wit* which the world calls *wisdom*;  
more *spiritual* than clever,  
have more *grace* than politeness,  
and are more desirous to live above the world—than to be wealthy, or be admired by it.   
  
They know the Lord and the truth—but very few of them know much of anything else.  
  
Such are the people whom, for the most part, the Lord chooses and sets apart for Himself—**simple, poor, afflicted, and unnoticed** in the present world—but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of glory!

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**But alas! I am a slow scholar!**  
  
I am desirous to learn to apply the great truths of the Gospel, to the common concerns of every day and every hour.   
  
I desire to learn, not only to believe that my *soul* is safe in the Redeemer's hand—but that the *hairs of my head* are all numbered! Not only that those events in life which I call *important* are under His direction—but that those which I account the most *trivial* are equally so! That I have no more right or power to determine for myself where or how I would spend a single day—than I had to choose the time of my coming into the world or of going out of it! **But alas! I am a slow scholar**, and make bungling work at my lessons!  
  
Oh, would it not be a blessed thing simply to follow Him, and to set Him by faith always before us! Then we might be freed from anxious cares, and be out of the reach of disappointment! For, if His will is ours—we may be confident that nothing can prevent its taking place.   
  
When I hire a *carriage*, I give myself up, with the most absolute confidence, to the *driver*. He knows the way, and how to manage better than I do. Therefore I seldom trouble him either with questions or directions—but I sit at my ease, and read a book.  
  
*I wish I could trust the Lord so!* But though I have given myself up to the care of His infinite wisdom and love, and, in my judgment, believe they are engaged on my behalf; I am ready to *direct my Guide*, and to *question Him* at every turn, and secretly to wish that I had the reins in my own hand! "So stupid and ignorant am I—even as a beast before Him!" Psalm 73:22

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**What a family has He to bear with!**   
  
"The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion!" Numbers 14:18   
 **What a family has He to bear with!**   
  
Those whom He has graciously *saved*, have secret idols in their hearts!   
  
His *friends* hold a secret correspondence with His enemies!   
  
His *children* repine against Him, and quarrel one with another!   
  
His *servants* (ministers) serve themselves!  
  
"But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness!" Psalm 86:1

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**This includes all I can wish for you**  
  
"Looking unto Jesus—the author and finisher of our faith!" Hebrews 12:2  
  
My dear friend,  
**The great secret of the Christian life**—is to be always looking unto Jesus! Oh, that I could learn it better!   
  
Oh, that thus by the *eye of faith*—we might obtain such a sight of the glory, beauty, and love of King Jesus—as might unite our scattered thoughts, and attract all our powers and affections to Himself! But, alas! we are prone (at least I may speak for myself) to forsake the *fountain* of living waters—and to hew out *broken cisterns!*  
I wish we may learn never think ourselves either safe or happy—but when we are beholding the *glory of Christ* by the *light of faith*—in the *looking-glass of the Gospel*. To view Him as all in all in Himself, and all in all for us—  
this is cheering,  
this is strengthening,  
this makes hard things easy,   
this makes bitter things sweet!  
  
**This includes all I can wish for you**—that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.   
  
To *know* Jesus—is the shortest *description* of true grace.   
  
To know Jesus *better*—is the surest mark of *growth* in grace.   
  
To know Jesus *perfectly*—is *eternal life!*   
  
This is the prize of our heavenly calling!   
  
The sum and substance of all we can *desire* or *hope* for is—to *see* Jesus as He is, and to be *like* Him! He will surely bring all who sincerely love Him—to this *honor* and *happiness*. We need not think much of the difficulty of any *way*—which leads to this blessed *end!*  
  
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**Our gourds must wither one day!**  
  
"In this world you will have *trouble!"* John 16:33  
  
*Uncertainty* and *brevity* are written upon all below. Therefore, may we be enabled both to weep and rejoice—as those who know that *we shall not be here in this world very long!*  
  
We should be thankful for *present* blessings; but, oh, what greater thankfulness for *spiritual* blessings—for pardon, peace, and eternal life! **Our gourds must wither one day**—but our heavenly portion will be ours forever! Jesus, the *fountain*, will be full—when every *creature-stream* will be dried up!  
  
His presence with us, is now sufficient to comfort us under all the pains, losses and trials—which we can either feel or fear. Oh, then, let us rejoice in the Lord, and welcome every painful trouble, knowing and believing that all we receive is conveyed to us by *infinite love* and *unerring wisdom!*  
  
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**I find the return of my old sins and temptations**  
  
Dear friend,  
**I find the return of my old sins and temptations**:  
this evil heart of unbelief;  
this wicked spirit of *SELF*;  
this stupidity and deadness in the things of God; and  
this groveling attachment to the vanities of time and sense.   
For these things I groan, being burdened.  
  
But we have heard of *One* who is able to save to the uttermost; and we find that His compassions never fail. His arm is not shortened, nor is His ear heavy! And, though our many iniquities might justly keep His good things from us—yet still He is gracious!   
  
"The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion!" Numbers 14:18   
  
"But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness!" Psalm 86:1

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**Let me tell you a heathen story**  
  
"I am the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. **Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it!**" Psalm 81:10   
  
He would not say this—if He did not mean it!   
  
Oh, He gives bountifully—like a king!   
  
A little is too much for *our deserts.*

But much is too little for *His bounty!*  
  
**Let me tell you a heathen story**. It is said, that a man once asked King Alexander to give him some money for his daughter's wedding. The king bid him go to his treasurer, and ask whatever he pleased. So he went, and demanded an enormous sum. The treasurer was startled, and said that he could not part with so much without an express order, and went to the king, and told him he thought a small part of the money the man had named, might serve for the occasion. "No!" said the king, "let him have it all. I like that man—he does me honor—*he treats me like a king*, and proves by what he asks—that he believes me to be both *rich* and *generous!*"   
  
Come, my friend, let us go to the throne of grace, and put up such petitions as may show that we have honorable views of the *riches* and *bounty* of King Jesus! Alas! I have such *poor scanty desires*, as if I thought He was altogether such a one as myself. Speak a word for me when you are near Him; entreat Him to increase my love, faith, humility, zeal, and knowledge, a thousand-fold. Ah! I am poor and foolish—and I need a great supply! I cannot dig, and yet am often unwilling to beg.

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**Shall I say that I am sorry?**  
  
"I have refined you in the *furnace of suffering!*" Isaiah 48:10  
  
My dear friend,  
I hear that you still continue **very sick**. **Shall I say that I am sorry?**This is allowable—as we have in the sympathizing Savior—the best example and authority to sympathize with suffering friends.   
  
Yet our sorrow should be *mixed* with joy, for we are directed to *rejoice always* in the Lord. *Always*—not only when we are well—but when we are sick! I rejoice, therefore, that **you are in safe hands**; in the hands of Him whom you love best—and who best loves you! You need not fear that He will lay more upon you than you are able to bear—for He has engaged His faithfulness to the contrary.  
  
I trust this sickness of your *body* is, and shall be, for the health of your *soul*. Yes, perhaps even now, if you were able to write, you would tell me that, as your *afflictions* abound—so your *consolations* in Christ do much more abound. *All the fruit of your affliction, shall be to take away sin!* Therefore be of good courage. We count them happy and blessed—whom the Lord chastises. He deals with you as His child. He intends this painful dispensation to revive in you a sense of the *uncertainty* and *vanity* of all things here below; to give you a nearer and closer perception of the importance of *unseen realities*; to afford you the honor of greater conformity to Jesus, who went through the greatest sufferings—to the kingdom!   
  
But how different were His sufferings—from yours! There is no *sting* in your rod—nor *wrath* in your cup! Your pains and infirmities do not cause you to sweat blood, nor are you left to cry out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me!"   
  
I pray for your recovery at the Lord's best season—but especially that the *rod* may be sanctified, and that you may be brought forth from the furnace—refined as gold!  
  
"I will bring this third through the fire and make them *pure*, just as gold and silver are *refined* and *purified* by fire!" Zechariah 13:9  
  
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**You have lately been in the furnace**  
  
"I have refined you in the *furnace of suffering!*" Isaiah 48:10  
  
Dear friend,  
The day must come when all creature-comforts shall vanish. And *when we view things in the light of eternity—*it seems comparatively of small importance whether it is this year—or twenty years hence.   
  
**You have lately been in the furnace**—and are now brought safely out. I hope you have much to say of the grace, care, and skill of the *great Refiner*—who watched over you; and that you have lost nothing but your dross.  
 **The Lord has been pleased to put me in the fire**; but, blessed be His name—I am not burnt! Oh, that I may be brought out refined, and that the outcome may be to the praise of His grace and power! The Lord drew near in the day of distress, and gave me some degree of peaceful resignation to His will. Yet my evil heart of impatience and unbelief displayed itself, and I have the greatest reason to lie ashamed in the dust, and cry "Unclean, unclean!" But truly God is good; He considers my frame; He remembers that I am but dust. He delights in mercy—and therefore I am not consumed.  
  
Our faithful God will surely make our strength equal to our day! It will not be long before He will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Therefore let us not fear—whatever sufferings may be yet appointed for us—they shall work together for our good! They are but *light* and *momentary*, in comparison of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which we are drawing nearer every hour!  
  
The day is coming when all the Lord's people who are scattered abroad, who praise Him in different ages and different languages, shall be collected together, and stand with one heart, consent, and voice before the throne! Oh, the glorious assembly! How white are their robes! How resplendent their crowns! How melodious their harps! Every hour the chorus is augmented by the accession of fresh voices! Before long we hope to join them! Then shall we remember the *way* by which the Lord led us through this dark wilderness world; and shall see that all our afflictions, our heaviest afflictions, were *tender mercies*—no less than our most pleasing comforts. What we shall then see, it is now our privilege and duty to believe.  
  
"I will bring this third through the fire and make them *pure*, just as gold and silver are *refined* and *purified* by fire!" Zechariah 13:9

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**Sickness is a greater mercy!**  
  
**Health** is a blessing, a great mercy, enabling us to relish the comforts of life, and to be useful in our generation. But **sickness is a greater mercy** to the children of God; for it is and shall be sanctified . . .  
to wean us more from the present world,  
to stir up our thoughts and desires heaven-ward,  
to quicken us to prayer, and  
to give us more opportunity of knowing the sweetness and suitableness of the promises, and the power and wisdom of a promise-performing God!   
  
Troubles have many uses—when the Lord is pleased to work by them for the good of His children. They are necessary, because we would miss the meaning and comfort of a great part of the Bible without them! I hope the Lord blesses you both with a measure of submission to His will and confidence in His love—then, with respect to other things you will say, *All is well!*   
  
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**That word, *uttermost***   
  
"Therefore He is able to save to the *uttermost*, those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them!" Hebrews 7:25  
 **That word, *uttermost*** includes all that can be said. Take an estimate of . . .  
all our *sins*,  
all our *temptations*,  
all our *difficulties*,  
all our *fears*, and  
all our *backslidings* of every kind  
—still the word *uttermost* goes beyond them all. And, since He ever lives to make intercession, since He is the Righteous One who is always heard, since His promise and compassions are unchangeable—He is indeed able and willing and determined—to save us even to the uttermost!  
  
"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:2

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**Oh! who is a God like Him**  
  
My dear friend,  
Every year, and indeed every day—affords me new proofs of the evil and deceitfulness of my heart, and of my utter insufficiency to think even a good thought by myself! I have had much experience of warfare, on account of the remaining principle of indwelling sin. Without this experience, I would not have known so much of the wisdom, power, grace and compassion of Jesus. I have good reason to commend Him to others—as a faithful Shepherd, an infallible Physician and an unchangeable Friend! I have found Him such. His name is precious! His love is amazing! His compassions are boundless!   
  
I trust I am enabled to choose Him as my all, my Lord, my Strength, my Savior, my Portion! I long for more grace to love Him better; for, alas! I have reason to number myself among the least of saints, and the chief of sinners.  
  
Had He not been with me, and were He not mighty to forgive and deliver—long ago I would have been trodden down like mire in the streets. He has wonderfully preserved me in my outward walk, so that they who have watched for my halting have been disappointed. But He alone knows my innumerable backslidings, and the great perverseness of my heart. It is of His grace and mercy that I am what I am! Having obtained help from Him, I continue to this day!   
  
I am, indeed, a poor servant—but He is a gracious Master! I am sure that He is with me, and is pleased to keep up in my heart, some sense of . . .  
the evil of sin,  
the beauty of holiness,  
my own weakness, and  
His glorious all-sufficiency.   
 **Oh! who is a God like Him**—who forgives iniquity, and casts the sins of His people into the depths of the sea! I shall not always live at such a poor dying rate. The land to which we are going is far different than this *wilderness* through which He is now leading us. Then we shall see His face—and never, never sin!   
  
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**The Lord preserves His people**   
  
March 1, 1769  
Dear madam,  
Through grace, I can say, that, as I never saw more of *my own vileness*—so, I think, I never saw Jesus more precious and desirable; or was more clearly sensible of the vanity of everything without Him, than I have of late. *"None but Jesus!"* is my motto. All wisdom, righteousness, holiness and happiness, which does not spring from and center in Him—I renounce.  
  
The *heart* is deceitful,  
the *world* is ensnaring,  
the *enemy* is subtle and powerful.  
But we know Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for you!" He is able to keep us from falling, in every circumstance and station to which His providence calls us.  
  
**The Lord preserves His people**—by putting His fear in their hearts, by making them sensible of their dangers, and drawing them to come boldly to His throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.   
  
Our daily prayer should be, "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

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**I would wish for a thousand hands and eyes, and feet, and tongues!**  
  
September 10, 1760  
Dear Madam,  
The best *advice* I can send, or the best *wish* I call for you, is that you may have an abiding and experimental sense of those words of the apostle, "LOOKING UNTO JESUS!" The *duty*, the *privilege*, the *safety* and the unspeakable *happiness* of a believer, are all comprised in that one sentence!   
  
Let us first pray that the eyes of our understanding may be opened and strengthened; and then let us fix our whole gaze upon Him! But how are we to behold Him? I answer, in the looking-glass of His written Word! There He is represented to us in a variety of views. The wicked world can see no loveliness in the portraiture He has given of Himself; yet, blessed be God, there are those who can "behold His glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth!" And while they behold it, they find themselves, changed into His image," by the transforming influence of His Spirit.  
  
In vain we use our reasonings, and arguments, and resolutions, to beat down our corruptions and to silence our fears. A believing view of Jesus is the only effectual means!  
  
When heavy trials in life are appointed us, and we are called to give up, or perhaps to pluck out a right eye—it is an easy matter for another to say, "Be comforted;" but this is totally useless. Only a believing view of Jesus will sustain us!

When:

we can fix our thoughts upon Him, as submitting, for our sakes, to drink our whole bitter cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs; and

we consider, that He who thus suffered in our nature, who knows and sympathizes with all our weakness, is now the Supreme Disposer of all that concerns us, and

we further consider, He numbers the very hairs of our heads, appoints every trial we meet with in number, weight, and measure, and will allow nothing to befall us but what shall contribute to our real good—this view, I say, is **the sure remedy for every disease**, and powerfully reconciles us unto every affliction.   
  
Again, we are afraid of being swallowed up by our many restless *enemies*; and are *weary* of our long pilgrimage through such a thorny, tedious, barren wilderness. *A sight of Jesus*, as Stephen saw Him, crowned with glory, yet noticing all the sufferings of His poor servants, ready to receive them to Himself and make them partakers of His everlasting joy—this will raise the spirits, and restore strength; this will animate us to hold on and to hold out! *This will do it—and nothing but this can!  
  
Looking unto Jesus* will melt the soul into love and gratitude; and those who greatly *love*, and are greatly *obliged*, find *obedience* to Jesus to be easy. *When Jesus is upon our thoughts,* then we can ask the Apostle's question with befitting disdain, "What! Shall I continue in sin—that grace may abound? God forbid! What! Shall I sin against my Lord, my Love, my Friend—who once died for my sins, and now lives and reigns on my behalf; who supports, and leads, and guides, and feeds me every day? God forbid! No! Rather **I would wish for a thousand hands and eyes, and feet, and tongues**, for ten thousand lives—that I might devote them all to His service!"   
  
"Looking unto Jesus—the author and finisher of our faith!" Hebrews 12:2

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**The best of Christians**, and under their highest attainments, have found cause to make the acknowledgment of the Apostle, "When I would do good—evil is present with me!" But, blessed be God, though we must feel hourly cause for shame and humiliation for what we are in ourselves; we have cause to rejoice continually in Christ Jesus, who holds out to our faith:

a *balm* for every wound,

a *cordial* for every discouragement, and

a sufficient *answer* to every objection which sin or Satan can suggest against our peace.

If we are *guilty*—He is our Righteousness;

if we are *sick*—He is our infallible Physician;

if we are *weak*, helpless, and defenseless—He is the compassionate and faithful Shepherd who has taken charge of us, and will not allow anything to disappoint our hopes of heaven, or to separate us from His love.

He knows our frame, He remembers that we are but dust, and has engaged to:

*guide* us by His counsel,

*support* us by His power, and at length to

*receive* us to His glory—that we may be with Him forever!  
  
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**The history of mankind**  
  
July, 1777  
Dear sir,  
I have recently read *"Robertson's History of Charles V",* which, like most other histories, I consider as a commentary upon those passages of Scripture which teach us the depravity of man, the deceitfulness of the heart, the ruinous effects of sin; and the powerful, though secret, rule of Divine Providence, moving, directing, controlling the designs and actions of men, with an unerring hand—to the accomplishment of His own purposes, both of mercy and judgment. Without the *clue* and the *light* which the Word of God affords—**the history of mankind**, of any, of every age, only presents to view—a labyrinth and a chaos; a detail of wickedness and misery to make us tremble; and a confused jumble of interfering incidents—as destitute of stability, connection, or order—as the clouds which fly over our heads!   
  
But with *the Scripture key*—all is plain, all is instructive. Then I see truly, that there is a God, who governs the earth, who pours contempt upon princes, captures the wise in their own craftiness, over-rules the wrath and pride of man—to bring His own designs to pass; and restrains all that is not necessary to that end; blasting the best concerted enterprises at one time, by means apparently slight, and altogether unexpected, and at other times producing the most important events from instruments and circumstances which are, at first thought, too feeble and trivial to deserve notice!  
  
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**They *will* not—and they *can*not come!**  
  
Where the Gospel is preached, those who perish do willfully resist the Gospel light, choose and cleave to darkness, and stifle the convictions which the truths of God will, in one degree or other, force upon their minds. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the love of other things, the violence of sinful appetites, their prejudices, pride, and self-righteousness either prevent the reception, or choke the growth of the gospel seed. Thus, their own sin and obstinacy is the proper cause of their destruction. "You WILL not come to Me—that you might have life." John 5:40   
  
At the same time, it is true that they *can*not come, unless they are supernaturally drawn by God! "No one CAN come to Me—unless the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44. **They *will* not and they *can*not come!** Both are equally true.  
  
The natural man is so blinded by Satan, so alienated from God by nature and wicked works, so given up to sin, so averse from that way of salvation which is contrary to his pride and natural wisdom—that he *will* not embrace it or seek after it! And therefore he *can*not receive it—until the grace of God powerfully enlightens his mind, and overcomes his obstacles.   
  
The unbeliever is insensible of his lost and dreadful condition. He does not know the evil of sin, the strictness of God's law, the majesty of the God whom he has offended, nor the total apostasy of his heart! He is blind to eternal realities, and ignorant of the excellency of Christ! He thinks that he is whole—and sees not his need of this great Physician! For salvation, he relies upon his own wisdom, power, and supposed righteousness.   
  
Now, in this state of things, when God comes with a purpose of saving mercy—He begins by convincing the person of sin, judgment, and righteousness; causes him to feel and know that he is a lost, condemned, helpless creature; and then reveals to him the necessity, sufficiency, and willingness of Christ to save those who are ready to perish—without money or price—without personal doings or deservings.   
  
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**For the guilty, the helpless, the wretched**  
  
"The carnal mind is enmity against God!" Romans 8:7  
  
The heart of man—of any man, every man,

however apparently amiable in his outward conduct,

however benevolent to his fellow creatures,

however abundant and zealous in his religious devotions

—is, by nature, enmity against God!

Not indeed against *the idea which he himself forms of God*

—but against the character which God has revealed of Himself in the Scripture!

Man is an enemy to the justice, sovereignty, and law of God.   
He is an enemy to the one method of salvation,   
which God has appointed in the Gospel, which is by grace alone.  
  
All that is godly or gracious in a person

—is the effect of a new creation, a supernatural principle,   
wrought in the heart by the Gospel of Christ, and the agency of His Spirit!

Until that is effected, the highest attainments, the finest qualifications in man,

however they may exalt him in his own eyes,

or recommend him to the notice of his fellow-worms,

are but abominations in the sight of God!   
  
The Gospel is calculated and designed—to stain the pride of human glory.

It is not provided for the wise and the self-righteous, for those who   
think they have good hearts and good works to plead

—but **for the guilty, the helpless, the wretched**, for those who are ready to perish!   
It fills the *hungry* with good things—but it sends the *rich* awayempty!   
  
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**The heavenly gardener**  
  
"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9  
  
The *soil of human nature*, though many spots are certainly better weeded, planted, and fertilized than others—is everywhere the same—*universally bad!* The human heart is so bad, that it cannot be worse—and of itself is only capable of producing noxious weeds, and nourishing venomous creatures!   
  
We know that culture, skill, and expense will make a garden—where all was desert before. When Jesus, **the heavenly gardener**, encloses a soil, and separates it from the wasteland of the world, to make it a residence for Himself—a change presently takes place; it is planted and watered from above, and visited with beams infinitely more nourishing and fertilizing than those of the material sun.   
  
But its *natural propensity to bring forth weeds* still continues, and one half of God's dealings with us, may be compared to a company of *weeders*, whom He sends forth into His garden—to pluck up all which He has not planted with His own hand; and which, if left to grow, would quickly overpower and over top the rest!  
  
But, alas! the ground is so *impregnated with evil seeds*, and they shoot in such quick succession, that if this **weeding work** were not constantly repeated, all former labor would be lost! Hence arises the necessity of daily crosses and disappointments, and such multiplied convictions that we are nothing, and can do nothing, of ourselves! All these trials are needful, and barely sufficient, to prevent our hearts from being overrun with pride, lust, worldliness and self-dependence.  
  
And as we have chosen Him for our Physician—let us commit ourselves to His management, and not prescribe to Him what He shall prescribe for us. He knows us and He loves us better than we do ourselves—and will do all things well.

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**What a Christian *ought* to be**  
  
The life of faith seems so simple and easy in *theory*, that I can point it out to others in few words. But in *practice* it is very difficult; and my advances are so slow, that I hardly dare say I get forward at all. It is a great thing indeed to have the spirit of a little child, so as to be habitually afraid of taking a single step without God's leading.  
  
I have some idea of **what a Christian *ought* to be**; and it is, I hope, what I *desire* to be.   
  
A Christian should be conformable to Christ in his spirit and in his practice. That is, he should be spiritually minded, dead to the world, and filled with zeal—for the glory of God, the spread of the Gospel, and the good of souls. He should be humble, patient, meek, cheerful, and thankful under all events and changes. He should account it the business and honor of his life—to imitate Him who pleased not Himself but went about doing good.   
  
The whole deportment of a Christian should show that the saving knowledge of Jesus affords him all he could expect from it—

a balm for every grief,

an amends for every loss,

a motive for every duty,

a restraint from every evil,

a pattern for everything which he is called to do or suffer, and

a principle sufficient to constitute the actions of every day, even in common life—as acts of piety.   
  
A Christian should make every event through which he passes, subservient and subordinate to his main design—the glory of Christ.

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**Our losses**  
  
We often complain of **our losses**; but the expression is rather improper. Strictly speaking, **we can lose nothing**, because we have no real property in anything. Our earthly comforts are all **lent** to us by our good and gracious God; and when recalled, we ought to return and resign them with thankfulness—to Him who has let them remain so long in our hands!

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**I shall not always live this poor dying life!**  
  
May, 1774.  
My dear Madam,   
Death and illness are still walking about the town. The sudden death of our friend is a heavy blow. He was an amiable, judicious, candid man, and an excellent preacher in a great sphere of usefulness; and his age and constitution gave hopes that he might have been eminently serviceable for many years. How often does the Lord write *vanity* upon all our expectations from men! O for grace to take warning by the sufferings of others—to set loose to the world, and so number our days as to incline our hearts to the one thing needful. Indeed that one thing includes many things, sufficient to engage the best of our thoughts and the most of our time—if we were duly sensible of their importance.   
  
But I may adopt the Psalmist's expression, *"My soul cleaves to the dust!"* How is it that the truths of which I have the most undoubted conviction, and which are, of all others, the most weighty—should make so little impression upon me? O I know the cause! It is deeply rooted. An evil nature cleaves to me; so that when I would do good—evil is present with me.  
  
It is, however, a mercy to be made sensible of it, and in any measure humbled for it. Before long, this evil nature will be dropped into the grave—then all hindrances shall cease! This thought gives relief—**I shall not always live this poor dying life!** When I shall see the Redeemer as He is—I shall be like Him! This will be a heaven indeed—to behold His glory without a veil, to rejoice in His love without a cloud, and to sing His praises without one jarring or wandering note, forever!  
  
In the mean time, may He enable us to serve Him with our best. O that every power, faculty, and talent, were devoted to Him! He deserves all we have—and ten thousand times more if we had it; for He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood! In one sense we are well suited to answer His purpose; for if we were not vile and worthless beyond expression, the exceeding riches of His grace would not have been so gloriously displayed. His glory shines more in *redeeming one sinner*—than in preserving a thousand angels!   
  
And now, dear madam, farewell. If the Lord spares our lives, I hope we shall see each other again upon earth. But above all, let us rejoice in the blessed Gospel, by which immortality is brought to light, and a glorious prospect opened beyond the grave! There at least, after all the changes and trials of this earthly state, we shall meet to part no more!  
  
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**I set no value upon any doctrinal truth**  
  
We learn more, and more effectually—by one minute's communion with God through the medium of His Word—than we could from an assembly of theologians, or a library of books!  
  
**I set no value upon any doctrinal truth**, farther than it has a tendency to promote practical holiness.

"If anyone teaches other doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with **the teaching that promotes godliness**, he is conceited, understanding nothing, but having a sick interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slanders, evil suspicions, and constant disagreement among men whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth." 1 Timothy 6:3-5

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**The lesson Paul learned**  
  
"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak—then I am strong!" 2 Corinthians 12:9-10   
  
August 19, 1775.  
Dear friend,  
Do not be afraid—even when you feel your own *weakness* and *insufficiency* most sensibly. We are never more safe, and never have more reason to expect the Lord's help—than when we are most sensible that we can do nothing without Him. This was **the lesson Paul learned**—to rejoice in his own poverty and emptiness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Could Paul have done anything, Jesus would not have had the honor of doing all.   
  
This way of being *saved entirely by grace*, from first to last—is contrary to our natural pride. It mortifies *SELF*, leaving it nothing to boast of. When we think ourselves so utterly helpless and worthless, we are too ready to fear that the Lord will therefore reject us. Whereas, in truth, such a *poverty of spirit* is the best mark we can have of a saving interest in His promises and care.  
  
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**Learned by painful experience!**  
  
January 16, 1775.  
Dear friend,   
*I can sympathize with you in your troubles*—yet, knowing the nature of our salvation, that, by an unalterable appointment, *the way to the kingdom lies through many tribulations*; I ought to *rejoice*, rather than *sympathize*, that to you it is given, not only to *believe*—but also to *suffer!*  
  
If you escaped these hard things, whereof all the Lord's children are partakers, might not you question your adoption into His family? How could the power of grace be manifest, either *to* you, *in* you, or *by* you—without afflictions? How could the corruptions and devastations of the heart be checked, without a cross? How could you acquire a tenderness and skill in speaking to those who are weary, without a taste of such trials as they also meet with? You would only be a *hearsay witness* to the truth, power, and sweetness of the precious promises, unless you have been in such a situation as to need them, and to find their suitableness and sufficiency.  
  
The Lord has given you a good desire to serve Him in the Gospel, and He is now *training* you for that service. Many things, yes, the most important things, belonging to the Gospel ministry, are *not to be learned by books and study*—but by **painful experience!** You must expect a variety of difficult trials—but two things He has promised you—  
that you shall not be tried above what He will enable you to bear,   
and that all things shall work together for your spiritual good!  
  
Were we to acquire no other knowledge of the *Christian warfare*, than what we could derive from cool and undisturbed book study, instead of coming forth as able ministers of the New Testament, and competently acquainted with the devices, the deep-laid devices and stratagems of Satan—we would prove to be worthless. But the Lord will take better care of those whom He loves and designs to honor. He will try, and permit them to be tried, in various ways. He will make them feel much affliction in themselves, that they may know how to feel much for others.  
  
This painful discipline is necessary to enable us to take the field in a public capacity with courage, wisdom, and success, that we may lead and animate others in the fight! It is equally necessary for our own sakes, that we may obtain and preserve the grace of **humility**, which He has taught you to set a high value upon. Indeed, we cannot value it too highly; for we can be neither comfortable, safe, nor habitually useful, without sincere humility! The **root of pride** lies deep in our fallen nature, and, where the Lord has given great abilities—pride would grow apace, if He did not mercifully watch over us, and suit His dealings with us, to keep it down.   
  
Therefore I trust He will make you willing to endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. May He enable you to behold Him with faith holding out the prize, and saying to you, "Fear none of those things that you shall suffer! Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life!"  
  
We sail upon a turbulent and tumultuous sea—but we are embarked on a good vessel, and in a good cause. We have an infallible and almighty Pilot, who has the winds and weather at His command, and can silence the storm into a calm with a word, whenever He pleases. We may be persecuted—but we shall not be forsaken; we may be cast down—but we cannot be destroyed. Many will molest us that we may fall—but the Lord will uphold us!  
  
I am sorry to find that you are quite alone. Yet, you are not alone; for the Lord is with you, the best Counselor and the best Friend!   
  
There is a strange backwardness in us (at least in me) to fully improve that *gracious intimacy* to which He invites us. Alas! that we so easily wander from the *fountain of life*—to hew out *broken cisterns* for ourselves; and that we seem more attached to a few *drops* of His grace in our fellow-creatures, than to the *fullness* of grace that is in Himself! I think nothing gives me a more striking sense of my depravity, than my perverseness and folly in this respect. Yet He bears with me, and does me good continually.  
  
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**Your dear friend's death**  
  
I sympathize with you in your sorrow for **your dear friend's death**. Such things are very distressing! But such a case might have been our own. Let us pray for grace to be thankful for ourselves, and submit everything in humble silence to the sovereign Lord—who has a right to do as He pleases with His own.   
  
We feel and grieve for any deaths in *our own little circles*; but O, the dreadful mischief of sin! Human death is as frequent as the hours, the minutes, perhaps the moments of every day. And though we may be impacted by but one death in a million—the souls of all others have an equal capacity for endless happiness or misery!  
  
In this situation, the Lord has honored us with a call to warn our fellow-sinners of their danger, and to set before them His free and sure salvation! And if He is pleased to make us instrumental of snatching but one as a brand out of the fire—it is a service of more importance than to be the means of preserving a whole nation from temporal ruin!   
  
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**It is better to feed our people like chickens!**  
  
([Letter of John Newton](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm) *to a minister*)  
  
It has been reported to me—that the length of your sermons is frequently two hours, and the vehemence of your voice so great—that you may be heard far beyond the church-walls.   
  
I would be unwilling to dampen your zeal—but I feel unwilling likewise, that by excessive, unnecessary exertions, that you should wear away very soon, and preclude your own usefulness!   
  
I know that the spirits of some high-strung people are highly volatile. I consider you as mounted upon a fiery steed, and provided you use due management and circumspection, you travel more pleasantly than *we plodding folks* upon our sober, stolid horses. But then, if instead of pulling the rein—you *plunge in the spurs*, and add wings to the wind—I cannot but be in pain for the consequences. Permit me to remind you of an old adage—the end of speaking is to be heard; and if the person farthest from the preacher can hear, he speaks loud enough.  
  
Upon some occasions, a few sentences of a discourse may be enforced with a voice still more elevated—but to be uncommonly **loud** from beginning to end—is hurtful to the speaker, and in no way useful to the hearer! It is a fault which many inadvertently give into at first, and which many have repented of too late—when the harmful practice has rendered it habitual, and not easily corrected. I know some think that *preaching very loudly*—and *preaching with power*—are synonymous expressions. But your judgment is too good to fall in with that false sentiment.   
  
There is a quotation from Homer, where he describes the eloquence of Nestor, and compares it, not to a *thunderstorm* or *hurricane*—but to a *fall of snow*, which, though pressing, insinuating, and penetrating—is soft and gentle. I think the simile is beautiful and expressive.  
  
Secondly, as to **long** preaching. There is an old-fashioned instrument called an *hour-glass*, which in days of yore, before clocks and watches abounded, used to be the measure of many a good sermon, and I think it a tolerable stint. I cannot wind up my ends to my own satisfaction in a much shorter time than an hour—nor am I pleased with myself if I greatly exceed an hour.   
  
**If an *angel* was to preach for two hours**—unless his hearers were angels likewise—the greater part of them wish that he had preached for a much shorter time! It is a shame it should be so—but so it is! Partly through the *weakness* and partly through the *wickedness* of the flesh—we can seldom stretch our attention to spiritual things for two hours—without cracking it, and hurting its spring! When *weariness* begins—*edification* ends! **It is better to feed our people like chickens**—a little and often; than to cram them like turkeys, until they cannot hold one more mouthful!  
  
Besides, overlong sermons break in upon family concerns, and often call off the thoughts from the *sermon*—to the *pudding* at home, which is in danger of being over-boiled! Long sermons leave likewise but little time for secret or family devotions, which are entitled to a share of each Sunday.   
  
Upon the preacher long sermons must have a bad effect, and tend to wear him down before his time. I have known some, by over preaching at first, have been constrained to sit still and do little or nothing for months or years afterwards. I recommend you to this wise advice: *Set* out at such a pace—that you may *hold* out to your journey's end.   
  
Now, if Fame with her hundred mouths has brought me a false report of you, and you are not guilty of preaching either too **long** or too **loud**, still I am not willing my remonstrance may go for nothing. I desire you to accept it, and thank me for it as a proof of my love to you, and likewise of the sincerity of my friendship; for if I had wished to *flatter* you—I could easily have written on another subject.

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**The spiritual conflict**  
  
July, 1764  
My dear Madam,  
**The spiritual conflict**which you express, is inseparable from a spiritual acquaintance with our own hearts. I would not wish you to be *less* affected with a sense of *indwelling sin*. It befits us to be humbled into the dust—yet our grief, though it cannot be too great, may be under a wrong direction; and if it leads us to impatience or distrust, it certainly is so.  
  
Sin is the sickness of the soul, in itself mortal and incurable as to any power in heaven or earth—but that of the Lord Jesus only. But He is the great, the infallible, Physician. Have we the privilege to know His salvation? Have we been enabled to put ourselves into His hand? Then we have then no more to do but to attend His prescriptions, to be satisfied with His methods, and to wait His time.   
  
It is lawful to wish we were well; it is natural to groan, being burdened—but still He must and will take His own course with us; and, however dissatisfied with ourselves, we ought still to be thankful that He has begun His work in us, and to believe that He will complete it. Therefore while we mourn—we should likewise rejoice! We should encourage ourselves to expect all that He has promised; and we should limit our expectations by His promises.   
  
We are sure, that when the Lord delivers us from the *guilt* and *dominion* of sin, He *could* with equal ease free us entirely from sin—if He pleased. But He has appointed that sanctification should be effected, and sin mortified, not at *once* completely—but little by little; and doubtless He has wise reasons for it. Therefore, though we are to desire a growth in grace, we should, at the same time, acquiesce in His appointment, and not be discouraged or despond, because we feel that *conflict* which His Word informs us will only terminate with our lives.  
  
Your heart is not worse than it was formerly—only your spiritual knowledge is increased. And this is no small part of the growth in grace, which you are thirsting after—to be truly humbled, and emptied, and made little in your own eyes.  
  
Further, the examples of the saints recorded in Scripture (and indeed of the saints in general), prove that the greater measure any person has of the grace of God, the more conscientious and lively they have been, and the more they have been favored with assurances of the Divine favor—so much the more deep and sensible, is their perception of indwelling sin and infirmity! So it was with Job, Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul.   
  
It is likewise common to *overcharge* ourselves. Indeed we cannot think ourselves worse than we really are! Yet some things which abate the comfort and alacrity of our Christian profession, are rather *natural impediments* than properly sinful—and will not be imputed to us by Him who knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.   
  
Thus, to have an *infirm memory*; or to be subject to disordered, irregular, or depressed spirits—are faults of the constitution, in which the *heart* and *will* has no share; though they are all oppressive, and sometimes needlessly so, by our charging ourselves with guilt on their account. The same may be observed of the unspeakable and fierce *temptations of Satan*, with which some people are pestered—but which shall be laid to him from whom they proceed, and not to them who are troubled and terrified because they are forced to feel them.   
  
Lastly, it is by the experience of these evils within ourselves, and by feeling our utter insufficiency, either to perform duty or to withstand our enemies—that the Lord takes occasion to show us the suitableness, the sufficiency, the freeness, the unchangeableness of His power and grace!   
  
Let us then, dear madam, be thankful and cheerful! And while we take shame to ourselves—let us glorify God, by giving Jesus the honor due to His name!  
  
Though we are poor—He is rich.   
Though we are weak—He is strong.   
Though we have nothing—He possesses all things.   
  
He suffered for us. He calls us to be conformed to Him in sufferings. He conquered in His own person, and He will make each of His members more than conquerors in due season.   
  
It is good to have one eye upon ourselves—but the other should always be fixed on Him who is our Savior, Husband, Sustainer and Shepherd! In *Him*—we have righteousness, peace, and power. He can control all that we fear; so that if our path should be through the fire or through the water, neither the flood shall drown us, nor the flame kindle upon us! Before long He will cut short our conflicts, and say, 'Come up higher!' Then shall our grateful songs abound—and every fear be wiped away! Having such promises and assurances, let us lift up our banner in His name, and press on through every discouragement!

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**Some of the last notes of this 'swan'**  
  
July, 1764  
My dear Madam,  
In a letter I received from Mrs. \*\*\*\* yesterday, she writes thus:   
  
"I am at present very ill with some disorder in my throat, which seems to threaten my life. But death or life, things present or things to come—all things are mine, and I am Christ's! O glorious privilege! precious foundation of soul-rest and peace, when all things concerning us are most troublous! Soon we shall be at home with Christ, where sin, sorrow, and death have no place! In the mean time, our Beloved will lead us through the wilderness. How safe, how joyous we are—in the most dire case!"   
  
If these should be **some of the last notes of this 'swan'**, I think them worth preserving. May the Lord grant that you and I, madam, may be happy in the same assurance, when we shall have death and eternity near in view!

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**He will not spoil them!**  
  
1769.  
Dear friend,  
I heard of your being laid on the *bed of affliction*, and of the Lord's goodness to you there, and of His raising you up again. Blessed be His name! He is all-sufficient and faithful; and though He causes grief, He is sure to show compassion in supporting and delivering.   
  
Ah! the evil of our nature is deeply rooted and very powerful—or such repeated, continual *corrections* and *chastisements* would not be necessary! And were they not *necessary*, we would not have them. But such we are—and therefore such must be our treatment. For though the Lord loves us with a tenderness beyond what the mother feels for her nursing child—yet it is a *tenderness directed by Infinite Wisdom*, and very different from that *weak indulgence* which in parents we call *fondness*, which leads them to comply with their children's desires and inclinations, rather than to act with a steady view to their true welfare.   
  
The Lord loves His children, and is very indulgent to them so far as they can safely bear it—but **He will not spoil them!** Their *sin-sickness* requires strong medicines, some of which are very unpalatable. But when the case calls for such, no short-sighted entreaties of ours can excuse us from taking what He prepares for our good. But every dose is prepared by His own hand, and not one is administered in vain, nor is it repeated any oftener than is absolutely needful to answer His purposed end. Until then, no other hand can remove what He lays upon us. But when His merciful design is answered, He will relieve us Himself; and in the mean time He will so moderate the operation, or increase our ability to bear up—that we shall not be overpowered.   
  
It is true, without a single exception, that all His paths are mercy and truth, to those who fear Him. His love is the same, when He wounds—as when He heals; when He takes away—as when He gives. We have reason to thank Him for all—but most for His loving corrections and chastisements.

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**Though we are all dunces!**  
  
"He began to *teach* them many things." Mark 6:34   
  
Though we are *poor, slow scholars*—the *great Teacher* to whom we have been encouraged and enabled to apply, can and will effectually teach us! He communicates not only *instructions*—but *capacities* and *abilities*. There is none like Him! He can make . . .  
the *blind* to see,  
the *deaf* to hear, and  
the *dumb* to speak!   
  
How great is His condescension and patience! How does He accommodate Himself to our weakness—and teach us as we are able to bear! **Though we are all dunces** when He first receives us, not one was ever turned out as *incapable*—for He makes us what He would us to be! "The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14:26

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**A sad story in a newspaper**   
  
1772.  
Dear friend,  
I can assure you of my sincere sympathy with you in your trials. I can in some measure guess at what you feel, from what I have seen and felt myself in cases where I have been similarly concerned. But *my compassio*n, though sincere, is ineffectual. Though I can *pity*—I cannot *relieve*. All I can do is, as the Lord enables me, to remember you before His throne of grace.   
  
But there is One whose **compassion** is infinite! The love and tenderness of ten thousand earthly friends, of ten thousand mothers towards their nursing infants, if compared with His—are less than a drop of water, compared to the ocean!  
  
And His **power** is infinite too. Why then do our sufferings continue, when He is so compassionate, and could remove them with a word? Surely, if we cannot give the particular reasons (which yet He will acquaint us with hereafter, John 13:7), the general reason is at hand. He does not afflict us needlessly—but for our profit; to make us partakers of His holiness, and because He loves us!  
  
I wish you much comfort from David's thought, Psalm 142:3, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me—You knew my path." The Lord is not withdrawn to a distant universe—but His eye is upon you! He does not see you with the indifference of a mere spectator—but He observes with loving attention—He *knows*, He considers your path. Yes, He *appoints* it—and every circumstance about it is under His direction! Your trouble began at the hour which He saw best—it could not come before! He has marked the *degree* of it, to a hair's breadth; and the *duration* to the minute! He knows likewise how your spirit is affected; and such *supplies of grace and strength*, and in such seasons as He sees needful—He will afford. Therefore, hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him!  
  
I do not need to remind you—that Jesus has suffered unspeakably more for you! He drank for your sake—*a cup of unmixed wrath!* And He only puts into your hand—a cup of *affliction mixed with many mercies!* What are all of our sufferings—compared to His? And yet He endured them freely. He needed not to have borne them—for He might have left us to perish! But such was His love—that He died that we might live; and endured the fiercest agonies that He might open to us the gate of everlasting peace and happiness!   
  
Remember that *we are chastened less than our iniquities have deserved*. If our illness is so grievous and so hard to bear—what do we owe to Him who delivered us from that place of unutterable torment, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth forever—without hope or respite!  
  
How amazingly perverse is my heart—that I can be more affected with **a sad story in a newspaper** concerning people I never saw—than with all that I read of His bitter passion in the garden and on the cross—though I profess to believe that *He endured it all for me!*   
  
Oh, if we could always behold Him by faith—as evidently crucified before our eyes—how would it compose our spirits as to all the sweets and bitters of this poor life! What an armor would it prove against all the snares and temptations whereby Satan would draw us into evil! I long for more love to Jesus—that I may be preserved humble, thankful, watchful, and dependent upon Him. To behold the glory and the love of Jesus—is the only effectual way to be changed into His image!  
  
To stand at the foot of the Cross, with a softened heart and melting eyes; to forget our sins, sorrows, and burdens, while we are wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of Him who bore our sins in His own body upon the cruel tree—is certainly the most desirable situation on this side the grave!

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**O these clogs, fetters, valleys, and mountains**  
  
I should be more affected than I am, with . . .  
the coolness of my love,  
the faintness of my zeal,  
the vanity of my heart, and  
my undue attachment to the things of time.   
 **O these clogs, fetters, valleys, and mountains**, which . . .  
obstruct my course,  
darken my views,  
slacken my pace, and  
disable me in service!   
  
Well it is for me, that I am not under the law—but under grace.

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**The instructions and writings of spiritual men**  
  
Remember your exalted privilege—you have the Bible in your hands, and are not bound to follow *books* or *preachers* any farther than what they teach agrees with the Oracles of Truth. We have great reason to be thankful for **the instructions and writings of spiritual men**—but they are all fallible—even as ourselves. One is our master, even Christ—what He says, we are to receive implicitly—but we do not owe implicit subjection to the best of our fellow-creatures. The Bereans were commended because they would not implicitly believe even the Apostle Paul—but searched the Scriptures to see whether the things which he taught were true. May the Lord give us a spirit of humility and discernment in all things.

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**Shall I tell you a bit of a riddle?**   
  
August, 1772  
My dear Miss,  
**Shall I tell you a bit of a riddle?** That, notwithstanding the many spiritual *fluctuations* which I pass through—*I am always the same!* This is the very truth: "In me, that is, in my flesh—dwells no good thing!"   
  
So that if sometimes my spirit is in a measure humble, lively and holy—it is not that I have grown **better** than I was—but the Lord is pleased to put forth His gracious power in my weakness!   
  
And when my heart is dry and stupid, when I can find no pleasure in waiting upon God—it is not because I am **worse** than I was before—but only because the Lord sees it best that I should *feel*—what a poor creature I am.   
  
*My heart was once like a dungeon*, beyond the reach of the sun, and always dark. Yet the Lord by His grace has been pleased to make this dungeon into a room, by putting *windows* in it. But I need not tell you, that though windows will transmit the light into a room, they cannot supply the lack of light. When the day is gone—the windows are of little use. When the day returns, the room is enlightened by them again. Thus, *unless the Lord shines*, I cannot retain today—the light I had yesterday! And though His presence makes a delightful difference, I have no more to boast of in myself at one time than another. When He is with me—all goes on pleasantly. When He withdraws—I find I can do nothing without Him.  
  
I need not wonder that I find it so; for it must be so of course, if I am what I confess myself to be—a poor, helpless, sinful creature in myself. Nor need I be over-much discouraged, since the Lord has promised to help those who can do nothing without Him—and not those who can make a tolerable shift to help themselves.   
  
In His great mercy, He does not so totally withdraw, as to leave me without any power or will to cry for His return. I hope He maintains in me at all times—a desire for His presence. Yet it befits me to wait for Him with patience, and to live upon His faithfulness, when I can feel nothing but evil in myself.  
  
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**O the happiness of such a life!**  
  
We may indeed admire God's patience towards us.   
  
If we were blind, and reduced to need a person to lead us—and yet would *dispute* with him, and *direct* him at every step—we would probably soon weary him, and provoke him to leave us to find the way by ourselves!   
  
But our gracious Lord is long-suffering and full of compassion. He bears with our frowardness—yet He will take methods both to shame and to humble us, and to bring us to a confession that He is wiser than we. The great and unexpected benefit He intends for us, by all the *discipline* we meet with—is to tread down our wills, and bring them into subjection to His. So far as we attain to this, we are out of the reach of disappointment. For when the will of God can please us—we shall be pleased every day, and from morning to night—with respect to His dealings with us. **O the happiness of such a life!** I have an idea of it; I hope I am aiming at it—but surely I have not attained it.   
  
*SELF* is active in my heart, though it does not absolutely reign there. I profess to believe that one thing is needful and sufficient—and yet my thoughts are prone to wander after a hundred more. If it is true, that the light of His countenance is better than life—why am I solicitous about anything else? If He is all-sufficient, and gives me liberty to call Him mine—why do I go a begging to *creatures* for help? If He is about my path and bed; if the smallest, as well as the greatest, events in which I am concerned are under His immediate direction; if the very hairs of my head are numbered—then my care (any farther than a care to walk in the paths of His precepts, and to follow the openings of His providence) must be . . .  
useless and needless,   
yes indeed *sinful* and *heathenish*,  
burdensome to myself, and  
dishonorable to my profession!   
  
Let us cast down the load we are unable to carry; and if the Lord is our Shepherd, refer all, and trust all to Him! Let us endeavor to live to Him and for Him today, and be glad that tomorrow, with all that is behind it, is in His hands

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**Last week we had a *lion* in town**  
*July 7, 1778*  
My dear friend,  
**Last week we had a *lion* in town**. I went to see him. He was astonishingly *tame*; as friendly with his keeper, and as docile and obedient as a pet dog. Yet the man told me he had his *surly fits*, when they dared not go near him.   
  
No looking-glass could show my face more justly—than this lion shows my heart. I could trace every feature—as wild and fierce by nature; yes, much more so—but grace has in some measure tamed me. I know and love my Keeper, and sometimes watch His looks that I may learn His will. But, oh! *I have my surly fits too!* Seasons when I relapse into *the savage* again, as though I had forgotten all.  
  
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**Our sea may sometimes be stormy!**  
  
November 27, 1778.  
My dear friend,  
I heartily sympathize with you in your illnesses—but I see you are in *safe hands!* The Lord *loves* you—and He will *take care* of you. He who raises the dead—can revive your spirits when you are cast down. He who sets bounds to the sea, and says "Hitherto shall you come, and no further," can limit and moderate those illnesses which sometimes distress you. He knows why He permits you to be thus exercised. I cannot assign the reasons—but I am sure they are worthy of His wisdom and love, and that you will hereafter see and say, *"He has done all things well!"*   
  
I do not like to puzzle myself with *second causes*, while the *first cause* is at hand, which sufficiently accounts for every phenomenon in a believer's experience. Your constitution, your situation, your temper, your distemper, all that is either comfortable or painful in your lot—is of His appointment! The hairs of your head are all numbered. The same power which produced the planet Jupiter—is necessary to the production of a single hair! Nor can one of your *hairs* fall to the ground without His notice—any more than the *stars* can fall from their orbits! In *providence*, no less than in *creation*—He is the absolute Sovereign and Ruler.   
  
*Healing* and *wounding* are equally from His hand—and are equally tokens of His love and care over us! "The Lord **gives**—and the Lord **takes away**. Praise the name of the Lord!" Job 1:21  
  
Therefore, fear not—only believe. **Our sea may sometimes be stormy**—but we have an infallible Pilot, and shall infallibly gain our port! The *way* must be right, however rough, that leads to such a *glorious end!*

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**A sealed book in all languages**  
"My soul cleaves to the dust! Quicken me according to Your Word!" Psalm 119:25  
  
The Scripture itself, whether I read it in Hebrew, Greek or English—is **a sealed book in all languages**—unless the Spirit of the Lord is present to expound and apply it to my heart!   
  
O for more of His gracious influence, which in a moment can make *my wilderness-soul* rejoice and blossom like the rose!

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**Prison cells**  
  
My dear friend,  
I hope and trust, that you find the Lord's presence with you in *your new home*; otherwise you would think it a *dungeon!* There is the same difference among people now, as there was between the Egyptians and Israel of old. Multitudes are buried alive under a cloud of thick darkness—but all the Lord's people have light in their dwellings. Ah! how many great and fair houses are there, without the heavenly inhabitant! It might be written upon their doors, *'God is not here!'* And, when you go in, you may be sure of it, for there is neither *peace* nor *truth* within the walls.   
  
This thought has often struck me, when I have been to see some *fine houses*, as they are called. When the Lord is not known and acknowledged, the *rooms* are but **prison cells**, in which the poor criminals eat and sleep a little while—until the sentence under which they lie condemned, shall be executed upon them.   
  
On the other hand, the houses of believers, though most of them are poor cottages—are truly palaces; for it is the presence of the King that makes the court! There the Lord reigns upon a throne of grace, and there a royal guard of angels take their stand to watch over and minister to the heirs of salvation.   
  
After all, the best houses upon earth—are but **inns**, where we are accommodated a little time, while we are doing our Master's business.   
  
Your real dwelling, your real home, is in heaven; here on earth, you are but a sojourner. But, to express it in a more honorable manner—you are an ambassador, entrusted with affairs of great importance, to manage for the King, your Master!

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**Gazing-stocks and laughing-stocks**  
  
"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2   
  
We are not to stoop to a conformity to the vain world among whom we live. We are . . .  
neither to imitate their *customs*,  
nor regard their *maxims*,  
nor speak their *language*,  
nor desire their *honors* or their *favors*,  
nor fear their *frowns!*  
  
If they account us as **gazing-stocks and laughing-stocks** because of our singularity; if they reproach, revile, and despise us—we may **pity** them! For a day is coming when they shall be ashamed, when we shall stand forth with boldness and shine like the sun in our Father's kingdom!  
  
The Lord whom we serve has engaged to maintain and protect us, and has given us His instructions to which it is both our duty and our honor to conform.

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**I prefer a state of ignorance!**  
  
I have little idea as to the state of things in the world—for I seldom see a **newspaper** for two weeks together. And when I do, I meet with so little to encourage me, that **I prefer a state of ignorance**, which gives me more scope for hoping for the best.   
  
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**We are upon *enchanted* ground**  
  
"God is exalted in His power. **Who is a teacher like Him?**" Job 36:22  
  
God has given us His infallible **Word**, and promised us His infallible **Spirit**—to guide us into all necessary truth!  
  
In the study of His infallible Word, and in dependence upon His infallible Spirit, none can miss the way of peace and salvation, who are sincerely desirous to find it. But we are cautioned to keep our eye upon both; and the caution is necessary, for we are too prone to separate what God has joined together.  
  
What strange mistakes have been made by some who have thought themselves able to interpret Scripture by their *own abilities*, because they have studied with much diligence! Unless our dependence upon *divine* teaching bears some proportion to our diligence—we may take much pains to little purpose!  
  
On the other hand, we are directed to expect the teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit only within the limits, and by the medium of the *written Word*. For He has not promised to reveal *new* truths—but to enable us to understand what we read in the Bible—and if we venture beyond the pale of Scripture, **we are upon *enchanted* ground**, and exposed to all the illusions of our imagination!  
  
Only an attention to the Word of God, joined to humble supplications for the guidance of the Spirit—will lead us to new advances in true knowledge.

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**All may be reduced to these heads**  
  
Indeed, the great points of our eternal concerns, may be summed up in a few words:   
  
to have a real conviction of our sin and unworthiness;   
  
to know that Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior, and that there is no other;   
  
to set Him before us as our Shepherd, Advocate and Master;   
  
to place our hope upon Him alone;  
  
to live to Him—who lived and died for us;   
  
to wait in His appointed means for the consolations of His Spirit;   
  
to walk in His steps—and copy His character;   
  
to be daily longing for the end of our warfare—that we may see Him as He is.   
  
**All may be reduced to these heads.** But, though the lessons are brief, it is a great thing to attain any good measure of proficiency in them. Yes, the more we advance—the more we shall be sensible how far we fall short of their full import!

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**I am an avowed Calvinist**  
  
**I am an avowed Calvinist.** The points which are usually comprised in that term, seem to me so consonant to Scripture, reason (when enlightened), and experience—that I have not the shadow of a doubt about them. But I cannot dispute over them.   
  
I feel much more union of spirit with some *holy Arminians*, than I do with some *worldly Calvinists*. If I thought that a certain person feared sin, loved the Word of God, and was seeking after Jesus—I would not walk the length of my study to proselyte him to the Calvinistic doctrines! Not because I think them mere opinions, or of little importance to a believer—I think the contrary; but because I believe these doctrines will do no one any good—until he is taught them by God. I believe a too hasty assent to Calvinistic principles, before a person is duly acquainted with the plague of his own heart—is one principal cause of that lightness of profession which so lamentably abounds in this day, a chief reason why many professors are rash, heady, high-minded, contentious about words, and sadly remiss as to the divine means of grace.   
  
For this reason, I suppose, though I never preach a sermon in which the *tincture of Calvinism* may not be easily discerned by a judicious hearer—yet I very seldom insist expressly upon those five points, unless they fairly and necessarily are in my text of Scripture.   
  
I believe most people who are truly alive to God, sooner or later meet with some pinches in their experience which constrain them to flee to those doctrines of grace for relief—which perhaps they had formerly dreaded, if not abhorred, because they knew not how to get over some harsh inferences they thought necessarily resulted from them, or because they were stumbled by the miscarriages of those who professed them.   
  
In this way I was made a Calvinist myself; and I am content to let the Lord take His own way, and His own time, with others.  
  
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**Our slips and sins**

We serve a gracious Master who knows how to overrule even **our slips and sins** to His glory and our own advantage.

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**The "tyranny of fashion"**  
  
"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes—but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." 1 Timothy 2:9-10  
  
I have no doubt that many godly parents who desire to see their children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, give them many excellent lessons in the nursery. They endeavor to impress their tender minds with a sense of their sinful state by nature, of the evil of pride, and of the vanity of the world. But, when their children begin to appear in public view, for lack of due reflection, or resolution, or both—they either encourage, or at least permit them, to form habits, which have a direct tendency to counteract all the benefits which might otherwise be hoped for, from the instruction of their early years.  
  
If clothes are considered merely as a covering for the body and a defense from the cold, it will be difficult to draw the line to determine exactly between what is necessary and what is superfluous. But it is more for the honor of the gospel that a woman, professing godliness, should be distinguished from others, by modesty, sobriety and good works, than by the shape of her hat, or the color of her garment.  
  
A careful attention to 'dress' will cost you much of what is more valuable than **money**—that is, your precious **time**! It will too much occupy your thoughts, and that at the seasons when you would wish to have them otherwise engaged. And it certainly administers fuel to that latent fire of **pride** and **vanity**, which is inseparable from our fallen nature and is easily blown up into a blaze!   
  
If a woman, when going to public worship, looks in the mirror and contemplates, with a secret self-delight, the figure which it reflects to her view—I am afraid she is not in the frame of spirit most suitable for one, who is about to 'cry for mercy as a miserable sinner'.  
  
I am most concerned by what we call 'fashion', and the eagerness with which every changing fashion, however improper, is adopted by people whose religious profession might lead us to hope they had no time to attend to such trifles! If some allowance is to be made for *youth* on this subject, it is painful to see *mothers*, and possibly sometimes *grandmothers*, who seem, by the gaudiness and levity of their attire—very unwilling to be sensible that they are growing older!  
  
It may be a sufficient censure of some fashions—to say they are ridiculous. And perhaps the inventors of them had no worse design, than to see how far they could lead 'the passive unthinking many' in the path of absurdity! Why should a godly woman, or one who wishes to be thought so—make herself ridiculous, or hazard a suspicion of her character, to please and imitate an ungodly world?  
  
But the worst of all the fashions are those, which are evidently calculated to allure the eyes, and to draw the attention of men. Is it not strange that modest and even pious women should be drawn into an immodest compliance? Yet I have sometimes been in company with ladies of whose modesty I have no doubt and of whose piety I entertained a good hope, when I have been embarrassed and at a loss as to which way to look! They are indeed noticed by the men—but not to their honor nor advantage. The manner of their dress gives encouragement to vile and insidious men, and exposes them to dangerous temptations. Their immodesty has often proved the first step into the road which leads to misery and ruin. They are pleased with the flattery of the worthless, and go on without thought, "like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing that it would cost him his life!"  
  
Soon, and perhaps suddenly—the body, now adorned with so much extravagance and care, must be deposited in the grave, and be food for worms!  
  
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**I am no advocate for a monkish austerity**  
  
"Endure hardship with us like a good *soldier* of Christ Jesus!" 2 Timothy 2:3  
  
A minister is a *soldier* of Jesus Christ and, as such, is to expect to endure hardship. It is well to have this in mind in the education of young men for the Christian ministry.   
  
They are not called to be loafers—but soldiers; not to live delicately—but to prepare for battle and hardship. They should therefore be advised and accustomed to prefer *a plain and frugal manner of life*, and to avoid multiplying those expenses which *luxury* and *folly* would prompt us to multiply almost infinitely.   
  
A propensity to indulgence either in the *quantity* or *quality* of food, is a baseness unworthy of a *man*, still more unsuitable to the character of a *Christian*, and scandalous in a *minister!* **I am no advocate for a monkish austerity** or a scrupulous, superstitious self-denial, which will almost starve the body—to feed the pride of the heart. It is, however, very desirable to possess in early life, a habit of *temperance*, a mastery over appetite and a resolute guard against everything that has a tendency to blunt the activity of the mind and heart. And youth is the proper season for gaining this mastery, which, if the golden opportunity is then lost, is seldom thoroughly acquired afterwards.  
  
A propriety in *dress* should also be consulted. Neatness is commendable; but a student in divinity should keep at a distance from being a *devotee to fashion*. A finical disposition in this article not only occasions a waste of time and expense—but is an evidence of a trifling turn of mind and exposes the fine self-admiring youth, to the contempt or pity of the wise and godly.  
  
Farther, a habit of *rising early* should be resolutely formed. It redeems much time, and chiefly of those hours which are most favorable to study or devotion. It likewise cuts off the temptation to sitting up late, a hurtful and preposterous custom, which many students unwarily give in to and which they cannot so easily break, when the bad effects of it upon their health convince them too late of their imprudence.

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**I am not sorry that you complain of your evil heart**  
  
Liverpool, October 3, 1755  
My dearest wife,  
**I am not sorry that you complain of your evil heart**; for, since our hearts will always be evil—it is a mercy to be *sensible* that they are so. Nor will I contradict you when you say, that you are ungrateful and insensible to the Lord's goodness. Only remember that you are so in common with every other sincere Christian, and that there is not a person upon earth who knows himself—but must make the same complaint!  
  
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**We may praise God for that pain or sickness**  
  
My dearest wife,  
I was enabled this morning to commend you to the Lord's blessing, with much comfort. *God is gracious and merciful—even in afflicting us!* If your health should be fully restored, let us remember it is but a *reprieve*. We must experience, sooner or later, another and **final visitation**, to put an end to this frail life. Happy shall we be, if, when that hour arrives, we shall be found ready, and enabled, by faith in our Redeemer to withstand and overcome the shock of that last enemy, death.   
  
I have a cheerful hope that He will raise you up in due time. Until then, let us attend to present duty, and keep close to Him by humble prayer and a renewed dependence upon the blood of Jesus. Let us, while the *rod* is upon us, inquire into the *meaning* of it, and hear His *voice* by it. Let us *bow to His chastisement*, and acknowledge that we have rebelled against Him, and that He afflicts us far less than our iniquities have deserved. Then we may be assured, that though He causes grief, He will have compassion; and will not only deliver us—but allow us to see, and to say, that "it was good for us to have been afflicted!"   
  
Make use of *means* prescribed for restoring your health—but do not *rest* in them. The blessing must be from the Great Physician. To Him let us apply for it; and ascribe to Him all the praise if we obtain relief.  
  
**We may praise God for that pain or sickness**, however severe, which teaches us in good earnest to call upon Him in prayer.  
  
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**Our *comforts* and *crosses* are all from the same hand!**   
  
Your frequent sicknesses are not pleasant; but they are *God's mercies*, for which we have reason to be thankful. **Our *comforts* and *crosses* are all from the same hand!** We have chastisement, only because we need it. I aim to leave you in the Lord's hands. Would we not forget ourselves, if He did not seasonably remind us, *what*, *where*, and *who* we are?   
  
In the case of some of your dear friends, for whom you grieve, you may see how it would have been with you—if His eye of love had not been fixed upon you from your birth. He prepared His dispensations, to withdraw you gradually from that life of vanity and wastefulness to which you would otherwise have been enslaved all your days. And He has been gently dealing with your heart for several years; leading you, if slowly, yet, I hope surely, nearer to Himself. How much of His ways has He shown you! And He has given you a heart to love those spiritual realities, to which you were once as little inclined as those whom you now pity!  
  
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**The common wearisome pursuit of the worldling**   
  
"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" Ecclesiastes 1:2  
  
**The common wearisome pursuit of the worldling** is described in Scripture: "Why do you spend your *money* on what is not bread, and your *labor* on what does not satisfy?" Isaiah 55:2, "Many are saying—*Who can show us anything good?*" Psalm 4:6

Worldlings are wandering from object to object in quest of happiness, but are always *frustrated* by incessant and repeated disappointments. We would pity a person whom we see seeking some necessary thing day after day—in a place where we knew it was impossible to be found there. This is, however, the case with all people—until they come to Christ. *Satisfaction* is what they profess to aim at; and they turn over every stone (as we say), they try every expedient, to find lasting happiness—but in vain. Real satisfaction is only to be found in Jesus! When they come to Him, their wishes are fully answered and satisfied!  
  
"Everyone who drinks *this water* will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst!" John 4:13-14