

TO HIS WIFE

MARY

LETTERS

BY

JOHN NEWTON

John Newton's letters to his wife

Towcester, August 12, 1755.

My dearest,

Before this reaches you, your brother will have told you how easy and composed he left me. Indeed, I wonder at myself. But the Lord has been very gracious to me, and fulfils his promise of giving me strength according to my day. My mind is not distressed. My companions in the coach are civil and agreeable in their way; but I had rather have been alone; for to commune with God and my own heart, would be much more pleasing than the empty, amusing chit-chat I am engaged in at present.

I was enabled this morning to commend you to the Lord's blessing, with much comfort. And I have a cheerful hope that He will raise you up in due time; and that we shall again have a happy and thankful meeting. 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 give us to see, and to say, that *it was good for us to have been afflicted*.

I esteem it a mercy that you found some mitigation of your pain, and some symptoms of amendment, before I left you. But, had I been called away in the hour of your greatest extremity, I ought to have relied on the Lord's goodness, and to have been resigned to his will. But, alas! how weak is my faith!

I am in perfect health, and not uneasy for you. To be sure I think of you continually—but my trust in God bears me up. I shall endeavor to write by every post—but, if one should pass me upon the road, I hope you will not be anxious. The Lord is my guard and my guide.

Litchfield, August 13, 1755.

Thus far I am brought in safety, and am not willing to trust the post any further, and therefore must be brief. I met Mr. T___ at Daventry, and requested him to send you word how cheerful he found me; fearing you would scarcely believe my own report, unless I had someone to vouch for me. I shall be glad to hear a like account of you—but I know who has the care of you, and what good ground I have to trust him. I hope my first news will be, that your recovery is advancing. Many prayers to this effect I have offered, and am every hour adding to the number, though not with the solemnity I could wish. For we have hitherto found no much company upon the road, and have come in so late, that I have not had the opportunity of a single retired room. This the only

inconvenience I have met with. But I know I do not serve a hard master. 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 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, and remain, beyond expression,

Liverpool, August 15, 1755.

I cannot write much tonight—but I must tell you, in a few words, all is well. I have met with the usual kind reception from our dear friends—have done my business at the Custom-house, and received many congratulations. I have a holiday until Monday, and shall then enter upon my office. As there are two surveyors, and I shall be upon the river only every other week, the place is likely to afford me leisure, which, in its turn, will be as welcome to me as money. Well, since the Lord has given me so many blessings, shall I not trust him throughout? Yes, I thank him, I hope I am warranted to say, *I can, and do*. My thoughts were much interrupted while in the coach; but I had a pleasant ride indeed from Warrington, and was led to be astonished at my many mercies, and to resign both you and myself into the hands of God, with much satisfaction.

I have received your brother's letter, and I thank him for his punctuality. As the Lord is pleased to give you intervals of ease and sleep, so I know he can remove all your pains by a word; and I trust he will in the best season. May he, at present, sanctify his hand, to the increasing of our faith and patience! Amen.

Liverpool, August 20, 1755.

I have received your sister's obliging letter, with your own dear name, in your own dear hand, at the bottom. A welcome sight! May I be thankful!

I entered upon business yesterday. I find my duty is to attend the tides one week, and to visit the ships that arrive, and such as are in the river; and the other week to inspect the vessels in the docks, and thus alternately the year round. The latter is quite easy—but the former requires pretty constant attendance, both by day and by night. I have a good office, with fire and candle, fifty or sixty people under my direction, with a handsome six-oared boat and a coxswain, to row me about. Mr. W*** went with me on my first cruise down to the Rock. We saw a vessel, and wandered upon the hills, until she came in. I then went on board, and performed my office with all due gravity. And, had it not been my business, the whole might have passed for a party of pleasure.

Today the wind blows hard; but you need not be uneasy about me at such times. For, though my department will lead me to be much upon the river, it is at my option to embark or not, as I find the weather. I like my station, and shall soon be master of it. Remember that I am in the path of duty, and under the protection of Him whom the winds and seas obey.

I perceive that you have thoughts of removing to Eltham. I pray the Lord to direct you when and where to go; and that his presence may be with you, to preserve you from being hurt by unsuitable company, so as to forget the vows you have offered in the time of your trouble. I hope our late trial will be sanctified to us, and that while we live we may have cause to say, that 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 a final visitation, to put an end to all our views which are bounded with the term of 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 the last enemy, death.

I hope and trust we are yet spared that we may recover our strength, before we go hence, and are no more seen. I hope, if the Lord is pleased to conduct you safely to me, and to give us a house of our own, we shall act, in some measure, suitably to our obligations for so many deliverances and restorations as we have known; and learn to trust in his providence, and no more offend him by our unbelieving fears. I hope in a few more posts to have the pleasure of a letter of your own writing. But do not attempt it too soon. It is not necessary to make me easy. For I have been helped to trust you to the Lord's care, with few intervals of anxiety, since I left you.

Liverpool, August 24, 1755.

The good hand of God has brought me safely through a bustling, tempestuous week. I am to keep watch tonight, until about two o'clock. But do not pity me. I shall be most of the time beside a good fire, reading, writing, and, at intervals, praying for you and myself. I hear you are still upon the recovery, for which I wish to be thankful. But, alas! how much am I otherwise! I seem almost to forget the bitter time we both have lately known, and to be nearly impatient to see you here. But do not think me uneasy; I assure you I am not. But I cannot help feeling that you are not with me. Tomorrow my week of rest begins; then some of my friends may expect to hear from me. Of late I have only had leisure to write to you. Be cheerful and dependent. 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.

Liverpool, August 26, 1755.

I hope I am not capable of undervaluing any of your former letters—but surely this now in my hand is the most pleasing and welcome one I ever received. May the Lord make me thankful that you are again able to hold a pen. Your brother repeatedly encouraged me with hopes of your recovery, when, as I now find, you were in the greatest pain and danger.

There is something so close and pertinent in the little you have written, that I am filled with joy. I have hardly known you allow, until now, that you were enabled to pray. *We may praise God for that pain or sickness, however severe, which teaches us, in good earnest, to call upon Him.* You have been in trouble, you called upon him, and he has delivered you according to his word. What shall we render to Him for all his mercies! Alas! we are poor, and can render nothing of our own. But he will not despise the efforts of a thankful heart.

I wish you well to Eltham. I fear the company there will not be quite suitable to the present state of your mind. But I trust you will keep a strict guard over yourself, and redouble your prayers to the God of all grace, to preserve you from evil. Secure seasons for retirement, and let not the world break in upon you, until you have daily committed and dedicated yourself to Him, who has raised you from the borders of the grave!

Liverpool, September 2, 1755.

The strain of your letters now makes me think light of our *temporary separation*. Be not afraid—only believe. The Lord Jesus, whom you need and seek, invites you, and has declared, *Whoever comes to Me—I will never cast out.* By nature, we all dislike his Gospel, and see no excellence in his person that we should desire him; if this is not your disposition at present, the change already wrought is his work. He is not like the unwise, inconsiderate builder: whatever he *begins*, he is both able and willing to *finish*. You have cause to lament the backwardness and hardness of your heart, (the Lord alone, knows how hard and backward mine is!) but let not this cast you down; He can take away the heart of stone! Nor think it strange if now, upon your setting your hand to the plough, the enemy should assault and trouble you. He will, if permitted, tempt you to suspect the reality of all that you have experienced; he will set your sins in order before you, and persuade you, if possible, to look into *yourself* for *qualifications* and *conditions* of acceptance. But answer him from the Word of God, and tell him that he is a liar, and the father of lies.

Christ not only has mercy for the unworthy, the ungrateful, and perishing sinner—who cannot offer one plea (as from himself) why he should be spared; but it was purposely for those who answer to this character, that he came into the world to die, that he might save them to the uttermost. He gives qualifications indeed—but he requires none from us. Perhaps this enemy will quote Scripture against you, and press such texts upon your mind as might lead you to form hard conclusions against yourself. But you will bear

this, if you consider that he had the impudence to assail our Lord himself in this manner, Matthew 4. This Jesus whom you seek, was in all points tempted and afflicted (sin excepted) like unto us. He has tasted suffering and anguish of mind, as well as death, for all his followers. Therefore He is a high priest who can have compassion upon our infirmities, and is able to succor them that are tempted, and knows what temptations mean.

Go on, my Dearest, I trust you are in the right way; wait patiently upon the Lord. Do not cast away the confidence you express in his mercy, for in keeping it you will find a great reward. Greater is He who is with us, than he who is in the world. Changes you must expect. The Christian life is a warfare; and though the Captain of our salvation, by conquering for us, has secured us the final victory, we may be sorely pinched, and sometimes wounded, while on the field of battle; but there is healing balm provided, and He will be always near to apply it. There may be fighting without and fears within; but He is faithful who has promised, who also will do it.

I have been so affected and engaged by the former part of your letter, that I have not time to answer the other particulars. It is my boarding week again, and the weather is bad. But fear not for me; I am in safe hands!

Liverpool, September 5, 1755.

On the stormy night you mention, I was safe in bed. I have been but once upon the river this week. The wind blew very hard then, it is true; but I was in no danger. I hope a little practice will teach you to trust me with equal ease, at all times, and in all places, where my *duty* calls me.

When you come hither, you will perhaps be more thankful for my being settled on shore, from what you will observe of the anxiety of those who have husbands, or parents, or children at sea, in the way of the approaching war. From such fears you will now be exempted; you will no more have to wait eight or ten months in suspense. When I think of my settlement here, and the manner of it, I see the appointment of *Providence* so good and gracious, and such a plain answer to my poor prayers, that I cannot but wonder and adore!

These circumstances which fixed my lot here, appear to me extraordinary, though of a piece with many other parts of my singular history; and the more so, as, by another *mistake*, I missed the land-waiter's place, which was my first object, and which, I now see, would not have suited us nearly so well. I thank God I can now look through *instruments* and *second causes*, and see his wisdom and goodness immediately concerned in fixing my lot. He knows our needs and our infirmities. He knows what indulgences may, by his blessing, promote our real good, and excite us to praise his name; and what those are which might be *snares* and *temptations* to us, and prove hurtful. And He knows

how to bestow the one, and to withhold the other. He does all things well!

Liverpool, September 7, 1755.

I wish you well in the country, and in what part you best approve. To be sure, I rejoice to see you—but I hope I shall not be impatient. However, when you are able, the sooner the better for your own sake, as bad roads and cold weather are approaching; and all the doctors here think that such an effectual change of air would strengthen you; but they have already mistaken your case. I wish you to come when you think you can travel as I mentioned, so as to hold out four or five hours, setting out late and putting up early; if you can thus advance only twenty miles in a day, it will bring you to me in time. But I only give my opinion; I leave you to your own prudence, or rather to the direction of Divine Providence, which, I trust, you will both seek and find, and to which I recommend you with a humble confidence. Many inquire after you, are pleased to hear of your amendment, and hope to see you soon. I say, *Amen*, at the Lord's best time. Until then may he sanctify our separation, and enable us to trust his precious promises and tried faithfulness.

Liverpool, September 9, 1755.

I will not own, as you do, that I am *indolent*—but I am rather *weary*. I am thankful for the account you give of your health, appetite, and color. I hope your strength will return soon, and I shall wait with cheerful patience until it does. When it shall please God to bring us together again—I hope we shall strengthen each other's hands. Let us pray for this, while we are yet separated, that we may not be left any more to live to *ourselves*—but to *him*; and may look upwards and forwards, to be prepared for the next trial—for sooner or later more will come!

The town is almost in mourning, because the *stage-players* are gone. On their last night, the house was filled by four o'clock. Gaiety and dissipation of all kinds increase daily here; when this frivolous spirit will stop, I know not. For myself, I live easy and retired, three or four hours every day, in my apartment, if business will permit. I need no diversions, and walking or reading are my only amusements, for I keep very little company; but my time is far from hanging upon my hands. I lack nothing that this world can afford to amend my situation—but to have my dearest wife with me, and for this, the Lord's time will be the best.

Liverpool, September 12, 1755.

I shall take care to write upon *large* paper, as you desire. But I believe the smaller may suffice for today. Most of my leisure this

week will be taken up with Mr. *George Whitfield*, from whom I hope both for comfort and benefit. He came to town on Wednesday, preached on that evening, twice yesterday, and so will continue preaching twice a day while he stays. We shall try to keep him until Monday; though he says he never was in a place where he had so little encouragement to stay as here. I made myself known to him the first night; went to see him, and conversed with him the next morning, when he invited me to supper. I went home with him from the preaching, and stayed until ten o'clock. May the Lord yet give him to see, that his labor of love among us is not in vain! But surely this is the most unconcerned town, for its size, in the kingdom. I hope he is sent to awaken some of the people out of their *false peace*. However he is, as he was formerly, very helpful to me. He warms my heart, makes me more indifferent to cares and crosses, and strengthens my faith.

I find you are making acquaintance with Mr. M____. Well, go on; I hope you will leave London soon, or you will be thought as *peculiar* as your husband. To speak seriously, it makes my heart glad to see in you one mark of a real believer, in that you love the ministers and people of the Lord, and are not offended with the Gospel, which is a stumbling-block and *rock of offence* to many. May he carry on his work, and build you up in knowledge, faith, and much assurance. Amen. Think of me as always thinking of you—and praying for you.

Liverpool, September 16, 1755.

Mr. Whitfield left us yesterday morning; I accompanied him on foot a little way out of town, until the chaise overtook us. I have had more of his company than would have come to my share at London in a twelvemonth. I heard him preach nine times, supped with him three times, and dined with him once at Mr. F____'s, and on Sunday, he dined with me. I cannot say how much I esteem him, and hope, to my dying day, I shall have reason to bless God in his behalf. Having never been here before but one night, he was not known or regarded by the *fashionable folks*, though several of them went to hear him. But many of the poorer sort are inquiring after him with tears.

I commenced an acquaintance yesterday with a godly man, who lately lost his wife. He is the very picture of sorrow. I attempt to comfort him, though I succeed but poorly. It is only *God* who can give comfort in such a case. Yet I think few can be more capable of sympathizing with him than myself. What I have lately gone through is fresh upon my mind. And why was not the event the same to me? Every way I am distinguished. My prayers turn much upon the thoughts of our future settlement. It will require both prudence and resolution to set out right from the first; but, if we ask of God, it shall be given us. I would have you gradually prepare for such a house as it will be our duty and privilege to

keep; where God may be worshiped, and nothing practiced or permitted that is contrary to our Christian profession.

Liverpool, September 19, 1755.

I follow you in my mind to Eltham, Bromley, etc. though I know not the country. May the Lord be with you wherever you go, make known to you his covenant, and assure you of an unalienable interest in it.

I thank you for the account of Mr. B___'s sermon. You will observe, that the principal effects or properties of Abraham's 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 his 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 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. He having borne our reproach, has a just right to require that we should be ready and willing to bear reproach for him.

If the present fair weather continues, the road will be good to Warrington, where it will suit me rather better to meet you. But, if you come by Chester, I can bring you by water in a pilot-boat very cleverly. Be sure, that, for the sake of saving a little expense or time, you do not overwork your strength. I could go on for an hour, in giving you foolish directions and precautions for your journey; but, after all, it is best to leave you to the *care of the Divine Providence*, and to submit the method of your route to your own judgment.

Liverpool, September 23, 1755.

I pray the Lord to direct and strengthen you, and to give me a joyful sight of you again. My poor weak heart sometimes rebels, and I almost complain because you are not yet able to come. But this humor seldom lasts a full minute, before my thoughts recur to the day when I left London, and that silences me at once.

I go on making useful acquaintances. The Lord honors me in the eyes of his own people, which is the honor I most desire. And though some of the wags of my acquaintance have given me the name of *young Whitefield*, from my constant attendance upon him when he was here, it does not grieve me; and perhaps, if they would speak the truth, they do not think the worse of me in their hearts. I find I cannot be consistent and conscientious in my profession, without incurring the charge of *singularity*. I shall

endeavor to act with prudence, and not give needless offence; but I hope I shall never more be ashamed of the glorious Gospel.

Liverpool, September 26, 1755.

May the Lord unite us, still more closely, in his faith and fear!

When I first asked Mrs. D___ to hear Mr. Whitefield, she could hardly give me a civil answer, (though otherwise she is very obliging and respectful.) But curiosity, or a better motive, prevailing, she went on the second day. She returned very well disposed; and asked me if I had any of his printed sermons. I lent her a volume. She went to hear him again, and became his great admirer. She herself first proposed my asking him to dinner; and his behavior there, confirmed her respect for him. I invited four or five Christian friends to partake of his company. She provided a handsome dinner, and when I spoke of the additional expense, she said she was very willing to bear it; but I do not intend that she shall. She has borne the *reproach* and *laugh* of many of her neighbors very well. They call her a *Methodist*, and she seems as easy under the charge as I am. So, we see—very *unlikely* things may be brought about!

Liverpool, September 30, 1755.

I must transcribe part of a letter from Mr. W___. "I have several times had the pleasure of conversing with your wife. God has been pleased to give her a great measure of your spirit," (so he writes.) "She is neither afraid nor ashamed to own her profession. After a sermon of Mr. B___, on [Psalm 25:14](#), she told me, that the hearing of the Great Physician had done her more good than all her other medicines."

May the Lord help you to go on, and to increase! Now, methinks, I am happy indeed! Now my highest wishes are answered, if my dearest wife is partaker of the same blessed hope with myself. How pleasant will all the future comforts and blessings, which the Lord may be pleased to afford us, prove, if we can discern them conveyed to us in the *channel of redeeming love*! How pleasant will it be, to look beyond them all, and, as the apostle speaks on another occasion, not to think that we have attained anything as yet, comparatively speaking, even when we have all we can wish for—but still to press forward in our hopes and views, towards the prize of our high calling in a better world, where our pleasure will be without abatement and without end!

Since you were so ready to believe me when I said I had not been well—why could you not take my word about my recovery? For shame, my Dearest, these fears and distrustful thoughts passed with us once—but we must aim above them now. Let us have no more *idolatry*—if we value each other's peace, or are willing to avoid such fiery trials we have lately known. However, whether

you can believe me or not, I must tell you again, that I am in good health. May the Lord be with you where you are, and in your journey when you move this way; and may we trust and serve him, according to what he has done for us!

Liverpool, October 3, 1755.

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 other sincere Christians, and that there is not a person upon earth who knows himself—but must make the same complaint. I can find no words more suitable to my own case, than those which you make use of, only substituting your name for my own, "I delight, admire, and love to hang upon every sentence, and every action of my dearest Polly; and yet how lacking, and how cold, am I to the gracious Author of all our mercies, to whom we owe each other, our happy affection, and all the satisfaction that flows from it!" He might justly have parted us long ago for my ingratitude; He might have shut out my prayers in your late visitation; but He has raised you up to a new life. Oh! that it may be so indeed!

I shall endeavor to temper my *zeal* with *prudence*. 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.

I much more fear our being cowardly, than imprudent. But, if we are of the number of those whom the Lord will not be ashamed to own in the great day, he will give us a measure of grace, that we shall not be ashamed to own his cause and people, in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation. But, as you say, there is a way of doing things, I shall try to carry it handsomely to others. It is not necessary to affront or quarrel with any who have treated us civilly; but experience will convince you, that the less we are connected with worldly people, the better. And, as the Lord, by his providence, has placed us in a state of entire independence, and there is no consideration of trade or customers to prevent us from living, in all points, just as we please, I hope we shall judge better than to sacrifice our happiness and true interest, to an *empty sound*.

But I perceive that you, likewise, have picked up a fine set of *Methodist* acquaintances. Should your aunt know it—she would set you down as almost ruined! But I, who love you better than a thousand aunts could do, congratulate you upon the acquisition. You may now see, by the examples before you, that *true religion has nothing in it of the unsociable or gloomy*; but is, on the

contrary, the source of peace and cheerfulness. If, as you say, you love godly people, He who has inclined your heart to love them here, will give you a portion *with* them both here and hereafter. Upon this single evidence, the apostle John grounds an assurance of heaven, saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life—because we love the brethren." We may, indeed, love a godly man upon other considerations; but to love him because he is godly, because we think we see the image of our Savior in him, and to love him most for the best parts of his character, is not possible until we have grace in our hearts; for, until then, we have an enmity to the Gospel. And, though this is not always visible and active, in people of mild and gentle dispositions, the farthest such can go is to say, I love the man because he is of a good life and behavior—but he has some strange, unaccountable whims and prejudices.

Liverpool, October 5, 1755.

I believe you do not guess how I am disappointed, when I receive only half a letter from you. Indeed, if writing is inconvenient to you, I could be content with half a line; but your excuse seems to suppose you are afraid of wearying me; for you say, "I shorten this merely because my last letter was so long." Well, I hope a few more posts will bring us together; in the mean time, let me have as much of you as you can conveniently commit to paper. I fear lest, by the pressing manner of my writing, you should sometimes think I wrong you by a suspicion that you will stay a day longer than needful. But indeed it is my happiness to believe that your heart is as much here as mine is at London. I cannot make you a more expensive compliment.

But, alas! where am I running? I forget my own duty and yours. I fear it is of the number of our great sins, that our hearts cleave so close to each other, and so little to the Lord; that we are so thoughtful about the future, and so negligent of the present. It is, at least, thus with me. I still feel that *you are my idol*, and though the Lord has lately afflicted you for my sake, and is now raising you up for me again, as it were from the grave, I am not yet instructed.

Liverpool, October 7, 1755.

I cannot express what I felt today while I was reading your dear letter, which informs me that you hope to set out next week; but you can guess for me. Ten thousand thoughts crowded upon me at once. The remembrance of that mournful, painful week at London, when I could only behold and share, and, by sharing, increase your distress, without procuring you the least help or ease, (which I hope I shall never forget while I can remember anything,) the situation in which we parted, when the Lord enabled me to hope against hope—the joy to think you now recovered from a most dangerous illness—the expectation of seeing you in a few days,

and the former experience I have had, of what a happy meeting with you includes—all these different emotions of joy and sorrow, of love and gratitude, took possession of my soul at once. And is it so indeed? Shall I receive you soon as restored from the grave, and have all my pleasures heightened by the contrast of my late trials? Oh, then, what shall I render to the Lord for all his goodness? Could money or friends have helped us, you would have been relieved sooner—but there was no power in heaven or earth, that could restore ease to you or peace to me—but God alone.

To him, therefore, be the glory and the praise; all the glory and all the praise! And let us aim to declare his goodness, not merely in secret, or to each other—but in the whole course of our lives, by choosing what is pleasing to him, and avoiding what he hates. And especially, let us watch and pray against setting up our rest here below, and misplacing that regard upon each other, which is due only to him. May we be enabled to commit our dearest concerns, and have recourse in every trouble, to Him who has so often heard our prayers, and done us good. And, oh! that we may have that *moderation*, both in affection and practice, towards earthly things, which becomes those who profess themselves strangers and sojourners here, and who look for a better inheritance, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Surely it was our own folly that brought our late distress upon us. We had lived too much to ourselves, and had not glorified, as we ought, the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways.

When Hezekiah was sick, near unto death, the Lord raised him up, and prolonged his life fifteen years. But we are told that *he rendered not according to the benefit he had received*, ([2 Chronicles 32](#)). Alas! how strongly does this charge lie against us! How often have we been restored to each other, after long and dangerous separations! How wonderfully have we been preserved from innumerable evils, to which, in such a world as this, we are hourly exposed! And yet it has now pleased God to give us a prospect of passing our days together comfortably, and free from many inconveniences which formerly affected us. But to keep us from growing too secure, just at the time He did this, He laid his hand upon you, and by one stroke brought us both down to the ground. Now again, He is returning in mercy, bringing us health, peace, and joy. Let us hear the *rod*, and *him* who has appointed it. For, if we come together yet again in a thoughtless ungrateful, self-seeking temper, he can again separate us, in a way that we are not aware of. But, I hope and pray we shall be enabled to serve him from gratitude, and from a consideration of the great things He has done for us, rather than from a principle of slavish fear.

If you are really afraid of being an hypocrite, it is a good sign that you are not one. For the hypocrite is secure and confident, and has no suspicion of a mistake. But the most godly people upon earth must own, that though, through grace, they are not hypocrites, there is too *much hypocrisy remaining* in them. Their real and fundamental aim is the glory of God; but wretched, sinful,

SELF creeps in, and taints their best performances. However, our comfort is, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from *all* sin. What a great word is that little word *all*! Not only from sins of one kind, or of one degree—but of all kinds, and of all degrees, when we apply to it in a truly humble and repenting spirit.

I was not angry with you for doubting of my health, (how do you think I can be angry with you at all?) I only meant to caution you against an overweening, distrustful care, which answers no good end—but is a species of sinful unbelief. And I foresee, that, against my judgment and experience, and notwithstanding all my grave admonitions to you, I shall too often offend in the same way, and you will have frequent occasions of giving me the same advice. But this is a part of our duty, and our privilege—to exhort and admonish each other, lest we should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

I was last night with Mr. and Mrs. ***. I think you will like their acquaintance. They are sober, sensible people, and seem very happy in each other. What a pity that the *one thing needful* should be lacking, when nothing else seems to be lacking! But so it was with us once; and it may be better with them hereafter.

Liverpool, February 2, 1756.

My dearest,

I would not give you occasion to think that the return of your birthday is less interesting to me at present, than it was seven years ago; or that my concern in it gives me less pleasure, now I am with you in Liverpool, than when I was exiled from you on the coast of Africa. It is a part of my happiness, and demands my daily acknowledgment and praise to God, that my regard for you is no more capable of being weakened by time than heretofore by absence. You will not expect me to address you in the strain of modern politeness—but I am persuaded that you will favorably accept what I may write, because you will approve of my motive and my sincerity.

I often wonder at the ill-timed festivity and gaiety with which the return of a birthday is usually observed. Multitudes, who, with respect to the past, can find little to make them reflect with pleasure on their having been brought into the world, and, with respect to the future, tremble, in the midst of all their *parade*, at the serious apprehension of death, yet agree to drown both the past and the future in noise and dissipation. For my own part, I see sufficient reason to make my birthday more especially a season of *serious reflection*. And I recommend the practice to you. For what is the language of a birthday? Has it not a warning voice, to remind us that another year of our time and opportunities is closed upon us, (time and talents for which we are accountable, and seasons which cannot be recalled,) and that death and eternity have advanced nearer to us by the stride of a whole year! And, therefore, I judge that a birthday is a very improper day for mortals to be frolicsome. To those whose hearts are deeply

engaged in the things of this world, I would imagine the very thought of the occasion would be (like the hand-writing on the wall to Belshazzar, Daniel 5) sufficient to put a full stop to their feast, and to turn their joy to heaviness. But such is our depravity, that, until grace touches the heart, the most obvious and most profitable truths can make no proper impression upon us. But I seem to forget that I am writing to you.

I am no enemy to joy; and I am sure the real Christian, who has peace with God and peace in his own conscience, has both the best title to joy, and the best disposition for it. I invite you to rejoice; but let it be in the right way, and in the right manner. "Rejoice in the Lord!" and "Rejoice with trembling!" Let us learn from the first, the sure grounds we have for rejoicing; and from the second, the many considerations which should correct and qualify our joy, that it may not deviate into a wrong channel, and become sinful and dangerous.

I say, "*Rejoice in the Lord!*" I congratulate you on your birthday; not to give you a vain complacency in yourself—but to lead you back to the time and circumstances of your birth, that you may reflect on the goodness of God. You were born of honest and affectionate parents, in easy circumstances, with a body neither diseased nor deformed, and a mind endued with rational faculties, with a soul formed for immortality, capable of loving and serving God here, and being happy with Him forever. Your lot was cast in a land favored with the Gospel, without which, all temporal blessings would have been of little worth; but if you take them together, and compare your own state with that of millions of your fellow-creatures, what great reasons have you to rejoice in this first view! But I would lead your thoughts forward from thence, step by step, through every succeeding year, to this day; through infancy, childhood, and especially *youth*, that dangerous period, in which such numbers make shipwreck of their hopes and prospects.

Must you not say, "Surely mercy and goodness have followed me all the days of my life." What sorrows, what sicknesses, what snares, have you either been exempted from, or preserved safely through? How many, within the circle of your own acquaintance, have died before they reached your term of life? How many, who are yet living, are suffering from evils to which you are equally exposed?

I make no scruple to number our happy marriage, among the blessings for which you see cause to be thankful; that it pleased God to bring us together, to bless us with a true affection, to restore us to each other after long separations, to recover us from long sicknesses, to fix us in our present situation, and, above all, to direct our hopes beyond the present world for our chief happiness. This is the *crowning* mercy! If the Lord has shown you and I those things which are hidden from many of the wise and prudent; if we know our *disease*, and our *remedy*, that we are sinners, helpless and hopeless, in ourselves—but sinners for whom a sure and free salvation is provided in Jesus Christ, and that we have ground to hope that we are interested in the pardons and

promises of the Gospel; that the hairs of our head are numbered, and that all things are working for our good; that God will be our sun and shield here, and our portion forever; if these things are so, we may well rejoice—but still it must be in the Lord; for all our good, present and hoped for—is from him alone!

But I say, secondly, "*Rejoice with trembling!*" Our joy in this world cannot be *unmixed*. There are unavoidable things, which, though they cannot take it from us, will and ought to temper it; such as these—a sincere sense of our unsuitable returns for so many and great mercies. May God preserve us from that terror of mind on account of sin, which, sooner, or later, will be the portion of those who know him not! We need not be distressed, for though we have sinned—Christ has died for sinners, and is able to save to the uttermost. Yet, certainly, we have much cause to grieve and be ashamed, that we have lived so long to so little purpose, that we have received so much and rendered so little, and that, after all our experience and resolutions, we are still so inactive and unstable in his service. The *snares, temptations, and enemies* around us—may make us thoughtful, if they do not make us tremble. These would surely prevail against us at last, were not the Lord on our side.

We may almost tremble, likewise, for the sins of those among whom we live. Lot chose to reside in Sodom, because it was a pleasant country, and well watered; but the sins of the inhabitants soon made him forget the advantages of the place. His righteous soul was vexed, from day to day, by their ungodly deeds. And so shall we feel, if we have a due regard for the glory of God, the love of Christ, and the souls of our neighbors. We have likewise cause to tremble, when we think of the judgments that seem at present hanging over this sinful, insensible nation. We have just reason to fear lest mercy, so long despised, should be withdrawn. Let us, like good Eli, tremble for the ark of God. And in this view we may tremble for ourselves, for we have contributed our part to the filling up the measure of national iniquity. We have neither borne that testimony against sin in public, nor mourned for it in secret, as we ought. And though, I trust, it shall be well with us at last, who can tell what scenes of distress and difficulty we may be appointed to struggle through, while we are upon earth? And therefore we should tremble, while we rejoice.

I could enlarge my homily, would time and paper permit. In brief, you have, to my comfort, been spared to finish another year. The event of the next year is uncertain. I would therefore exhort you and myself, to live this year, as though it would, as though it certainly were to be, our last year. It may possibly prove so. Let us renew our application to the throne of grace, and the blood of sprinkling. Let us pray that we may be always ready, that our hearts may be withdrawn from worldly things, and be fixed, trusting in the Lord. And then, come life, come death, let peace be continued, or troubles be multiplied, nothing shall be able greatly to move us.

Warrington, December 13, 1758.

My dearest,

Thus far it is well, and, I trust, shall be to the end. The weather is fine, the roads good, the horse free and easy. He has not started once; though he sometimes raises his ears.

Now and then I feel some twinges as being forced from you, though but for a season; but the cause makes amends. Three or four weeks will, I hope, re-unite us, and then, one hour will repay the pains of absence. Let us not wish away the interval—but make the most of it, for it will soon be over. The new scene of life which appears to be opening before us is very important. We have need to pray earnestly, constantly, for each other, and for ourselves. Make much of the means of grace; reserve seasons for retirement. Endeavor to avoid the company which you cannot improve, and to improve that which you cannot avoid. Adieu. May the peace of God here prepare you for his glory hereafter! Amen.

Hunslett, December 15, 1758.

I have received my title from Mr. C***, and shall proceed tomorrow. I can hardly be more happy, while separated from you, than at present. Dear Mrs. A***, who is well, is sitting by me upon her husband's knee, while poor I, am like a dove without my mate. But I trust my time will come again. Until then, I can think, write, and pray; I can repeat your name a thousand times; and therefore I look at them now with a pleasure unmixed with envy. But I must not trifle. I expect soon to assume a character which ought, if possible, to wean me from every thought that terminates in *self* or *time*. Pray for me, my dearest, my hour of trial is at hand; a solemn hour, which will call for all my faith, strength, and zeal. But the needful supply is near. In our Lord there is a fullness of grace, a sufficiency for me, for you, and for all who seek it. May he give you that peace that passes all understanding, may he bless us while apart, and join us again to our mutual comfort, here for a time, and hereafter forever!

Chatham, December 25, 1758.

Though the Lord permits difficulties and hindrances to arise for the trial of our faith and patience, I cannot believe that he either disapproves, or will finally disappoint, my desire to serve him. I surrendered myself to his disposal without reserve, and I cannot wonder, nor ought I to complain, if He takes me at my word, and puts my sincerity to the proof. Mr. B*** doubts not but the Lord will give us more than He will call us to part with. Be this as it may, as to *filthy lucre*; if He gives us grace and peace; if He continues our affection, and preserves us to each other; if He is pleased to be with us in every trouble and exigency; if He affords us a clear evidence of our interest in a heavenly inheritance; if He favors us with a calm, believing, acquiescence in his will; if He

honors us with usefulness in this life, and crowns us with glory in eternity—we shall surely have no cause for complaint. Once we reach heaven, we shall not think all that we did, or suffered, too much for Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. *One glance of that happiness which shall endure forever, will abundantly overpay us for all the cares and fears we experienced during our earthly pilgrimage.*

I cannot express the satisfaction your dear letter gave me, in finding you so easy and resigned, upon the denial of my late attempt for the ministry. This is a mercy I would, if necessary, or possible, or lawful, have purchased at the price of a limb. Nothing disquieted me from the first of my design—but the fear of involving you in difficulties, or causing you uneasiness. But in this, as in a thousand instances, I have found the Lord to be a hearer of prayer. And I hope, and believe, He has a blessing in store for you upon this account. You know me too well to suspect me of flattery; I give you my plain advice, when I think it needful. It is a proof of my affection. But neither ought I to withhold deserved praise. You have, from the first rise of this affair, acted a part which perhaps few of your gender could equal. To make such sacrifices, so cheerfully, and upon such slender grounds, is not common. I can only say, it has not been lost upon me. My primary thanks, indeed, are due to the Lord, who gave you to me, and who gave you every qualification that could engage my heart, and gratify my utmost wishes in a wife. My next are due to you. The whole term of our union forms a series of many a proof of *recollected love*, as Thomson speaks. But nothing has more strongly enhanced my love and gratitude to you, than your conduct when we were last at Leeds, and ever since. Take courage, hold on, the end will answer your expectations.

I can say nothing as to particulars; but, in general, I am sure that none who put their trust in God shall be finally ashamed. I suppose you have your fits of fear and unbelief. I have likewise severely felt them at times. But mind them not; or turn them to advantage, by making them occasions of more frequent and earnest prayer. For it is written, "Call upon me in trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." Let us be diligent in the means of grace; these are the paths in which the Lord has commanded us to walk, and where he has promised to meet us, and bless us. The enemy would gladly keep us from them, or make them burdensome; and he has too often prevailed. Should not experience make us wise? Has it not always been best with us—when we have been most diligent in prayer, most attentive to the Scriptures, and most disengaged from the world and from trifling company? Have we not found a vanity in everything but piety, especially when trouble has stared us in the face, or when pain or sickness have taken hold of us? Why, then, should we be fooled and deceived any more? Let us return to the Lord; there is forgiveness with him for the past, and supplies of grace suited to every coming need. None that come to him shall be cast out; none that rest on him shall be overthrown; none that love and serve him shall be unrewarded.

Loughborough, January 3, 1759.

I hope this will come in time, either to prevent or relieve your uneasiness on my account. Whatever you have suffered, or may suffer, for me, you shall be made amends, so far as gratitude will pass for payment, and so far as the study of my life can promote your satisfaction. If you have had fears for me, they were needless. And I hope you will in time learn to trust me, and all your concerns—to God, who cares for us.

I left London on Saturday about ten—but soon found I had a very stubborn horse. I have been obliged to travel his pace, for he positively refuses to travel mine; and though I tell him how impatient I am to see my dear wife, he will not move one foot the faster. When I came to Barnet, I demurred about the road; at length I turned to the right, not knowing when I might have so good an opportunity of seeing the people I mentioned in my last letter.

I put up at Welling, sent a note to Dr. Young, and received for answer, that he would be glad to see me. I spent an hour with him. His conversation was agreeable, and much answerable to what I expected from the author of the *Night Thoughts*. He seemed likewise pleased with me. It would have surprised you to hear how I let my tongue run before this great man. He approved my design of entering the ministry, and said many encouraging things upon the subject; and, when he dismissed me, desired that I would never pass near his house without calling upon him.

I spent Sunday at Everton, and am glad I went, though it will cost me two days more absence from you. The first five miles from thence into the York road were, I think, the worst I had ever rode or seen. I was sometimes in fear for myself—but more frequently for my poor horse, lest I must have left him sticking in the clay, as a memorandum of my having passed that way. When I put up at night, I found that I had come about six miles beyond the place where I should have turned off. It was a poor day's journey—but eighteen miles in all, and six of them out of the way. On Tuesday, I was advised to keep on sixteen miles further, and I should find a road to Leicester. If I had missed this turning likewise, I would have missed some trouble and trepidation. I had thirty-three miles cross-road to go, and found much of it a cross-road indeed. Though the worst pieces of it, if taken together, were not above ten miles, I would rather go a hundred miles round, than travel it again. I am still a hundred miles from you—but I have no more kind friends, nor cross-roads to detain me. Thank the Lord for preserving me in health and safety. My horse is recovered from his fright, and seems in better order than when I left London. I am likely to jog on by myself; for, if any people were going my way, they would hardly have patience to wait my horse's motions, nor would he mend his pace to please anybody. But I trust I am not alone, nor do I often feel a lack of any company but yours. Continue to pray for me. I trust we shall live to see the hand of

God overruling everything for our benefit; and that every separation, inconvenience, or expense, occasioned by a desire of promoting his glory, shall be well made up to us in the best time.

Hunslett, May 17, 1759.

I cannot tell you how often your dear name has been in my mouth since I left you, nor how earnestly and frequently I commend you to the Lord's blessing. May He teach us to improve these short occasional separations. When I am absent from you—I most sensibly feel how dear you are to me; and what a heavy trial I would have, if God was to take you wholly from me. I ought to believe that He will enable me to bear whatever he may appoint, because such is his promise; but at present it seems, that a blow so near to my heart, would be long and deeply felt in every other circumstance of life, and that I would find pleasure in nothing but in bemoaning my loss. I doubt not but you have similar thoughts, upon the supposition of my being removed. May we therefore learn, in the first place, to be thankful that we have been so often restored, and so long preserved, to each other; and that our affection is still maintained inviolable and increasing; and, secondly, to be watchful and cautious, that we do not, by our *idolatry*, or *ingratitude*, render it necessary for the Lord, even in mercy, to wound us in the most sensible part, and to punish either of us in the person of the other.

London, July 4, **1760**.

You did not bid me write, because, I suppose, you hardly thought I could refrain, for so many tedious days, from giving my mind a little vent. How often have I told you, that, whatever pleasure or amusement I may find in the company of friends, yet there is a peculiar something, that shares in, and gives an inexpressible cast to, every motion of my mind, when you are absent? A man deprived of his right hand, may go about his business with the same spirit and alacrity as in time past; yet everything he undertakes will necessarily remind and convince him of his loss. This, or something like it, I may have hinted a thousand times; but, as I write and speak from my heart, the thought occurs as readily to me as at the first, and I cannot easily avoid repeating it.

I am afraid of *idolatry*; I am afraid we have been, and still are, too guilty of the charge; and the Lord, to whom alone we belong, and to whom all our services and affections are primarily due, might justly, very justly, blast our *boasted paradise*. Yet we owe it to him that our souls are susceptible of tender and affectionate feelings. He formed us for each other, and his good providence brought us together. It is no wonder, if so many years, so many endearments, so many obligations, have produced an uncommon effect; and that, by long habit, it is become almost impossible for me to draw a breath in which you are not concerned. If this mutual affection leads us to the *Fountain* from whence our blessings flow, and if we

can regard each other, and everything about us, with a reference to that *eternity* to which we are hastening, then are we happy indeed. Then, not even death (the dread of mortals, especially of those who live in the possession of their wishes) can greatly harm us. Death itself can only part us for a little space, as the pier of a bridge divides the stream for a few moments—but cannot make a real separation. The friendly waters soon mix again, and, with one force and consent, press forward to the ocean.

Were it not for the support of believing that there is a brighter and a longer day beyond the grave, I would sink down in despair, and *starve*, if I may use a vulgar saying, *in the midst of plenty*. For, though I have known too much, not to smile at the cold disciples (if there are any such) of Platonic love; yet, methinks, a regard like ours is designed to flourish in a better world than this, and can never appear displayed to its full extent and advantage, until transplanted into those regions of light and joy, where all that is imperfect and transient shall be no more known.

Here, then, is the true plan of happiness for us; to consider that God, who made us, made us immortals; and appointed us to spend so many years in the most loving companionship, not only to sweeten the cares of life, and to render our path through this wilderness more easy—but chiefly that we might be helpful in animating each other in our progress to that kingdom and crown which is incorruptible and undefiled; a kingdom to which we are called by Him who died once, to purchase it for us, and now lives forever, to give us entrance into it.

Liverpool, August 6.

I am glad you ventured to London by water; for I wish you to strive against, and conquer, vain fears. The only way of doing this effectually, is by placing our hopes and fears where alone they are due. Let us pray for grace to fear the Lord, and his goodness, and then we need not be afraid though the earth be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea. Many a prayer I have put up for you, since I saw you. I hope the Lord will answer us for ourselves and each other. I hope you will not be lacking to pray for yourself. *Prayer is the great secret which gives the true relish to life*. When I can pray with some liberty, I find all goes on well; when I cannot, I have no real pleasure in anything. I believe I would not have begun my letter in so complaining a strain, if I was not much out of frame for prayer. Draw near to God—and he will draw near to you, is a maxim that we ought always to regard. Tomorrow I set off for Yorkshire. But how gladly would I give up the pleasure of visiting my friends there, to fly by the shortest road to you, that I might tell you by word of mouth, if I was able, how much I am,

Liverpool, June 14, **1762**.

You will, perhaps, wonder that I choose the formality of writing, when we have so many happy opportunities of exchanging hearts by discourse. But in this way I can collect my thoughts, and present them to you in one view. And you can likewise peruse and re-consider them at your leisure. Therefore, without further apology or preamble, I proceed to the point.

Though it is not necessary, it always gives me pleasure, to repeat how truly I love you, how much my happiness depends upon you, and that I never taste pleasure more sincerely myself, than when I am instrumental to the promoting of yours. And that, on the contrary, I account it among my most painful trials, if, either through inadvertence or necessity, I occasion you any uneasiness. I assume no merit from being able to say this. It amounts to no more than that I know when I am well. Besides, it is a just debt, in which I stand bound for the innumerable obligations your affection daily increases upon me. I would be blind not to perceive, and ungrateful if I did not acknowledge, that you are not behind-hand with me in your inclination; and, from the turn of our circumstances, you have had fairer opportunities of showing what sacrifices you can make for my repose, especially within these last three years.

And still, it seems, the advantage is, and will be, on your side. I am still striving to decline the thoughts of an undertaking which, though otherwise I would think agreeable, has this momentous difficulty attending it—that it has not your full concurrence and approbation. If I thought myself in the path of duty, and had you on my side, methinks all trials would be comparatively light; but, when duty seems to call one way, and my regard for your peace seems to plead powerfully for another, how can I but be greatly perplexed?

Not but that I am well assured, if I told you I was at such a pinch that I could see no medium between grieving you, and acting against the light of my own mind, you would comply with any proposal I could make; and would rather suffer in silence, than see me at continual variance with myself. But such a consent would not satisfy me. The more you constrained yourself for me, so much the more would I be pained for you; and thus, by our sensibility, we would give each other greater trouble, in proportion as we endeavored to avoid it.

I hope, therefore, that I write this in a happy hour, and that the Lord, who has power over all hearts, (to whom we owe our all, and especially our mutual love,) will accompany it with his blessing, that I may not merely extort your consent—but obtain your full concurrence and approbation to my design. I much desire to enlarge my little attempts in the way of preaching, or expounding, (call it what you please,) in Liverpool. The wish of many here, the advice of many absent, and my own judgment, (I had almost said my conscience,) are united on one side; which I think would preponderate against Mr. B***'s single sentiment, if your fears did not add weight to his scale.

The late death of Mr. Jones, of St. Savior's, has pressed this concern more closely upon my mind. I fear it must be wrong, after having so solemnly devoted myself to the Lord for his service, to wear away my *time*, and bury my *talents* in silence, (because I have been refused ministry in the Church of England,) after all the great things that He has done for me. And, should He throw me upon a sick bed, or visit you for my sake, I believe the sense of my cowardice and indolence, in this business, would greatly aggravate my distress.

I think there are but two possible objections against my purpose. The first is, that I would probably draw upon myself some of that scorn or opposition which, in a greater or less degree, is the usual portion of those who determine to be faithful. But, even if this was a weighty something, though indeed it is quite light when compared with the blessings promised to those who suffer for the truth, it is some encouragement to find, that after it has been publicly known, for more than a year, that several of my friends frequent my house on a Sunday evening, I have not had the least disturbance near home, nor been treated with the least disrespect or ridicule abroad, upon that account. And, if I procured a larger place to speak in, I might still go on as quietly. However, I am willing to venture.

The other objection, being started by prudence, ought to be attended to. But I think that, if I chose such times only as would not interfere with my business, I would run no hazard of losing my place. And this is the opinion of my immediate superiors in office, whom I have consulted upon the point. Nay, I know not but the diminutions I have found in my emoluments may be owing to my hesitation. If I serve the Lord heartily, he will be answerable for consequences; but, if I continue to serve him by halves, and to rebel against the conviction of my mind, will it be any wonder that, when I look for much, it should come to little?

You know that I am not wholly incompetent, either as to knowledge or expression. Shall I flatter your regard for me by hinting, that perhaps a step of this kind may, in a little time, gain me more respect and estimation than I have yet known? But, I hope, we both wish to be governed by a nobler motive. It will be of little consequence, what the people of the world once thought of me, when they and we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ!

You justly complain of dull Sabbaths. Let us then embrace the first favorable opportunity of aiming at what may more enliven them. You love to hear me speak, upon all occasions. And I think you have sometimes heard me with pleasure as a preacher. And you know not what blessings may be yet reserved for you. Perhaps the Lord may send you the greatest favors by the hand of him, from whom you are kind enough to accept the smallest trifle with complacence.

After all, as I have already said, I cannot be content with forcing your bare acquiescence. I beg, therefore, that you will think it

over frequently, and entreat the Lord to direct us both. Perhaps, before long, it may seem to deserve your approbation. To hear you say so, would make me quite another person. For, while I remain in this suspense, I feel, at times, a burden which I can hardly bear, and cannot possibly shake off. May the Lord bless, guide, and guard you, and abundantly reward you for all your affection and kindness.

London, April 5. **1764.**

Your poor husband has need of your prayers, that he may not forget himself amidst the many caresses he meets with. I hope I shall not—but my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; and I can already see how *prosperity* blinds and hurts even people of good sense and much experience.

I cannot but be pleased to find so many truly *gracious* people in the higher scale of life. But I hope I could take as much pleasure in conversing with the poor of the flock. I think I could be happy at *Olny*, if the Lord made me useful to the people there, though neither they nor I should be spoken of beyond the bounds of the parish. I am glad you are pleased with the prospect; for no earthly consideration can animate me so much as to have our hearts and desires united in this point, as they are in everything else. What a blessing do I possess in our undivided, unabated, affection. May the Lord sanctify it, as a means to lead us both more closely to himself. We are comparatively happy now; but we shall not be completely so, until we arrive in the better world of perfect peace and purity!

My heart rejoices at the thoughts of soon meeting you at Liverpool; but what will that be, compared to the joy when we shall stand together before the throne of glory, free from every imperfection and trial; when we shall see Jesus as he is, be fully conformed to his image, and join in singing his praises forever! With what delight shall I then consider you as the instrument the Lord prepared to preserve me from ruin? And how will you praise him for our union, if he is pleased to make me, in any measure, useful to promote your faith and hope?

I cannot, as yet, judge how my affairs will terminate. If it pleases the Lord, if it is the right place and the right time—I shall succeed. But I would have you prepared for what we call a *disappointment*. But *disappointments are neither more nor less than providential intimations of the will of God.*

London, April 12.

I was with the Bishop of Lincoln this morning, and he has fixed on next Monday for my examination. If I get safely through that scene, I suppose my ordination will soon follow. He received me with great civility and candor. The beginning of my interview with

the Bishop of Chester was not so pleasing. I suspect that some person or people at Liverpool had written to him, and not in my favor. Great men, not being able to see everywhere with their own eyes, must depend upon information, and are liable to be imposed upon by *misrepresentation*. He said, that, before he could authenticate my testimonials, he must ask me some questions. But, when I showed him Lord D___'s letter, a full stop was put to all inquiries but what were agreeable. He became very sociable; kept me in chitchat nearly an hour; and, when I took my leave, he wished the much success.

I shall be glad to have this business fairly finished. My mind has been greatly unsettled. *Much company and frequent changes* do not well suit me. Friends smile and favor me on all sides; but *creature-regards* affect me too strongly, and I feel a degree of *dearth* in the midst of *plenty*. I hope I shall be better when we return to our old uniform way of life, so far as the expected change will admit of uniformity. I have been more familiar with the higher sort of life of late than formerly, and see it in its greatest advantage and beauty. But still my heart is at home; and I am fully convinced, that no assemblage of earthly things could make me more happy than I have been, and hope to be again, in the moderate situation to which we have been accustomed.

I desire to praise God for the progress of your recovery; and begin now to think seriously of our move. How will you be able to travel, so soon after your long illness and confinement? But why do I look so far beforehand? Will not He, who has done so much for us, do what is still needful? I must break off. May the Lord bless and comfort you.

London, April 16.

Just in the apparent moment of success, new difficulties occurred, which seemed to threaten a total overthrow to my business—just as the poor sailor is sometimes alarmed with the apprehension of shipwreck, when his port is in view. But, as I trust all difficulties are now obviated, through the kind interference of Lord D___, to whom I have occasioned too much trouble, I shall say no more of them.

I waited on the Bishop of Lincoln this morning, have reason to revere him for his candor and tenderness. The examination lasted about an hour, chiefly upon the *principal heads of divinity*. As I was resolved not to be charged hereafter with dissimulation, I was constrained to dissent from him in some points. But he was not offended; he declared himself satisfied, and has promised to ordain me, either next Sunday, in town, or the Sunday following, at Buckden. Let us praise the Lord!

London, April 20.

What thanks do I owe to the Lord, for all his goodness to me! He made me willing to resign all, and to enter upon a very obscure and limited service, for the sake of his Gospel; but, when it came to the point, he mercifully interposed to prevent it. I ascribe it to his goodness—that my application to the Archbishop, six years ago, did not succeed. There is now a probability of my being comfortably fixed, in a more agreeable connection. May he keep me humble and dependent, and all will be well. But I see some striking and unexpected instances of the great danger to which the countenance and friendship of *people of distinction* may expose a minister. We are poor, weak, inconsistent creatures, if left but a little to ourselves. "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" [Psalm 119:117](#)

My next acknowledgments are due to Lord D____. He has greatly interested himself in my behalf. Considering his rank and some other circumstances, I might wonder that he should submit to take so much trouble, did I not observe, from other instances, that he thinks not of himself, where there is any probability that his influence can procure benefit to others.

As I have a little leisure time, I must fill up the paper; but how? I can repeat that I love you, that I continually offer up prayers and thanks on your behalf. I can tell you again, as I have told you a thousand times, that your dear person, your affection, and all its interesting proofs and pledges, are deeply engraved on my heart. Oh! what do I owe, what do we both owe—to the God of our lives! Shall not the *mercies* we possess in each other, though great and valuable in themselves, be much more so in their effects? Shall they not lead us higher, and prove as *steps* by which we may rise to a still greater happiness? Yes, I trust so! When I look back with wonder to see how the Lord has led us thus far, by a way which we knew not, I am encouraged to hope that the *end* will crown the whole. How gracious has he been to me, in preserving me from innumerable troubles into which I have been ready to plunge myself; and in giving me so many advantages and friends! How gracious has he been to you, in visiting you seasonably, yet gently, from time to time; in mitigating your illness; preserving and composing you during my absence; in permitting you again to go abroad!

And now, I hope, you have a change of situation before you, which will prove to your comfort in every respect. It is true, as you observe, if we move to *Olney*, we shall not be wholly without trials. They are inseparable from this mortal state, and they are necessary to discipline us, and to keep us from wandering. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your Word!" [Psalm 119:67](#). "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees!" [Psalm 119:71](#). Let us, therefore, guard against resting in the *creature*. Let us pray for submission to the will of God, and that we may welcome every event, from a sense of his hand being concerned in it, and a persuasion (which his promises warrant) that, some way or other, all shall conduce to our final advantage. "We know that all things work together for the good of

those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose!" [Romans 8:28](#)

Buckden, April 28.

I have waited upon the Bishop this afternoon; have gone through all the previous forms, and am to be ordained (if the Lord pleases) at eleven tomorrow.

I hope the repeated intimations I have given you concerning this *long-expected tomorrow*, have been in time to engage you in earnest prayer for me. I now almost *stagger* at the prospect before me. My heart is in some measure, though I dare not say, suitably affected. I am to stand in a very public point of view, to take the charge of a large parish, to answer the incessant demands of stated and occasional services, to *preach* what I ought—and to *be* what I preach. Oh! what zeal, faith, patience, watchfulness, and courage will be needful for my support and guidance! My only hope is in the name and power of Jesus. May that precious name be as ointment poured forth to your soul and mine! May that power be triumphantly manifested in our weakness!

I purpose now to cross the country to *Olney*, just to peep at the place and people, and to take the Liverpool coach at Stony-Stratford. If so, we may meet on Thursday. My heart jumps at the thought. But the Lord's time will be the best!

Buckden, June 14.

I came hither in safety, about eleven this morning. I have been twice at prayers at the chapel. The Bishop received me very kindly. Whether I have a second examination to go through or not, I cannot yet tell.

I understand I cannot be dismissed very soon on Monday; so that it will probably be tea-time before I am with you. I think you will trust me not to make any unnecessary delay. You know where I left my heart. And that, even if I was in a much more agreeable situation than at present, I would break through all for your sake, and prefer the little vicarage of *Olney* with you in it—to the palaces of kings without you!

I meet here with many candidates for orders—but I know not that there is one of my own turn of heart and mind. However, they are all very civil; and I endeavor to accommodate myself to them, as far as duty and conscience will permit.

I pray the Lord to fill your heart with his love. Then you will bear my absence as easily as we can bear the lack of a *candle* when the *sun* shines in his noon-day strength. Pray for me, and for yourself. And remember that, amidst the many things which require a

degree of our attention, one thing is more especially needful. I commend you to his grace and blessing.

Olney, July 12.

Your letter (as you will believe) was very welcome. I desire to be thankful for your safe journey. I set off the moment the coach was out of sight, and had a pleasant walk home. As I was passing through Emberton, an old woman came after me, and invited me to her cottage. Five or six more women soon joined us. We talked, sung a hymn, and I prayed. I thought it a good place along the way.

I am well, and as comfortably settled as I can desire, during your absence. I feel the lack of your company—but hope to bear it without anxiety. I cannot wish to love you less; I hope it is impossible. But I wish for us both, that our regard for each other may be *sanctified*, and kept in due subordination. While I rejoice, that we are so happily sensible of what we owe to each other, I have cause to mourn that our love to him should be so faint and disproportionate. His love to us passes knowledge. He loved us, when we were enemies, with a love beyond expression; a love, that exposed him to ignominy and torture, that cost him his blood and his life; a love, that makes over to those who believe in him—all the riches of grace and glory!

You need not propose Mr. T____'s case to me as a caution. Our situations and constitutions are different. However, I shall try to be prudent and careful. But our times are in the Lord's hands. He who preserved me at Liverpool, will preserve me at Olney, so long as he has service for me to do. Beyond this, I have no great desire to live, unless upon your account. And, I trust, he will spare me while it is needful, and good for you. If we have an eternity to spend together in his praise, it is no great matter who is removed first, or how soon. All our tears will be then wiped away. "For to me—to live is Christ and to die is gain!" [Philippians 1:21](#). "I desire to depart and be with Christ—which is better by far!" [Philippians 1:23](#)

All our friends here seem to vie in civility; and those who are not friends are kept quiet. I hope not to provoke them by any part of my behavior; but, if they will be offended with me for *speaking the truth*—I cannot help it. As to provision, I am quite easy about it. The Lord, who brought me from Africa, where I was destitute of everything; who has given you to me, and dealt so bountifully with us hitherto, will not allow us to lack any real good, now he has so visibly displayed his power and providence in placing me here.

Olney, July 14.

I observe what you say about Hampstead. It seems a situation in some respects desirable; and, was I only to consult my affection for you, I would wish to see you in more agreeable circumstances than I can expect to procure you here. But we have striking examples to remind us of the *danger of choosing for ourselves*, and being *dazzled by great prospects*. I am well convinced, that the Lord brought us hither; and, without as clear an intimation of his will, I hope I shall not indulge a wish for a removal. The people love me; express a warm desire for my continuance; our assemblies are crowded, and I hope the Lord makes my preaching useful. While things bear this pleasing appearance, I would not only be ungrateful to the Lord and my friends—but blind to my own comfort, if I listened to a new offer.

My health continues good, and I can hardly form a wish but for you. But when, which is very often, I think of the distance between us, I give a little sigh, and long to see you. I pray many times in a day for your peace and establishment in grace; and I rejoice in the hope that God is gently drawing you to himself, by the alternate inducements of light afflictions—and weighty comforts and favors. Let this be your encouragement and mine, that no one ever sought him (in the way of his own appointment) in vain. Though he may seem to delay, he will surely come, and overpay our expectation. For myself, I have been brought, almost imperceptibly, thus far. 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!

Olney, July 21.

The account you give me of the gentleman who dined with you, is very affecting. Every loss is gain, that is overruled to bring the soul home to God. But the Lord has dealt still more favorably with us. How often have we deserved to be separated! Yet we are spared to each other. May our lives praise him, and may we be freed from *idolatry*! To love each other, and dearly too—is no sin; nay, it is our duty. But He will not allow a *creature* to usurp his place in the heart. The time of our ignorance, he mercifully winked at; but, now he has shown us what is right, it behooves us to be upon our guard. Oh! that he may so display the power of his grace, that the bonds and shackles which detain our souls might be broken! He can, he will do it, if we wait and pray.

I now can judge by my own feelings, how much you must have suffered during my long stay in London, especially sick and confined as you were, and anxious for the outcome of my journey. I never pitied you, as I ought, until now. For, though I likewise longed every day and every hour to see you, I had many things to

divert my attention, and alleviate the feelings of absence. But, at present, I am as you were then, at home and alone. But, as I know, let who will have your *company*—I have your *heart*, I can make a good shift for a time.

How are ___? Do they love like us? No, they cannot yet. For love at first is a child, and grows stronger by age. I wish them happy; more happy than this world can make them.

Olney, August 5.

I feel your head-ache at this distance. 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, in all probability, 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 past; leading you, if slowly, yet, I hope surely, nearer to himself. How much of his ways, how many of his people has he shown you! And he has given you a heart to love them, and reconciled you to things to which you were once as little inclined as those whom you now pity.

If I consider the endearing union he has cemented between us, with all its effects, only in a temporal view, I prefer it to all the treasures, pleasures, and honors, this world can afford; so that I would not exchange the joy I feel in the thought that you are mine, to be monarch of the whole earth. But, surely, it is much more valuable, considered as the means by which the Lord designed to unite us both to himself.

Olney, September 12. **1766.**

I pray God to bless to you the ordinances and fellowship which you are favored with in London, that you may go into Kent filled with the spirit of truth and love. When you are there, I hope you will make good use of the Bible, and throne of grace, to preserve you from being infected by the spirit of the world. Ah! what a poor vain thing is the world! We have both found it so at times, (though we once loved it,) and shall find it so again. But may the Lord keep us alive to a sense of its vanity, before more evil days return to extort the confession from our feelings! Sickness and pain, and a near prospect of death, force upon the mind a conviction of the littleness and vanity of a worldly life. But there is a more pleasing way of learning this lesson, if we pay due attention to the Word of God, and pray for the light of his countenance. If he is pleased to

make his face to shine upon us, all that the world can offer to bribe us, will appear insignificant and trivial as the sports of children.

He who has given us this desire, will, I trust, answer it, and unite our souls to himself forever. What a happy state we are in! We have peace with God, by Jesus Christ; liberty of access to the throne of grace; a saving interest in all God's promises; a sure Guide along the way; and a sure inheritance at our journey's end! These things were once hidden from us! We were so blinded by the god of this world—that we could look no farther than the present life! But, even then, the Lord looked upon us with an eye *of mercy*. He led us on, gradually, by a way which we knew not—to bring us into the paths of eternal peace. How wonderful has our history been, not mine only—but also yours! How often has he made himself known as your Deliverer and Physician, in raising you up from the gates of the grave! May we always remember his goodness in your last affliction! How did he sweeten the bitter cup; strengthen you with strength in your soul; enable you to pray for yourself; engage the hearts of many in prayer for you, and then speedily answer our prayers! Let us then excite each other to praise him!

I hope this little interval of absence will be useful, to make me more sensible of his goodness in still sparing you to me. I make but a poor shift without you now from day to day; but I am comforted by the hope of seeing you again shortly. Had you died by your late fever, I would not have had this relief! May we then live to him, and may every day be a preparation for the parting hour! Dark as this hour seems in the prospect, if we are established in the faith and hope of our Lord, we shall find it supportable; and the separation will be short. We shall soon meet again, happy meeting! to part no more! to be forever with the Lord; to join in an eternal song to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! Then all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall weep no more forever.

Olney, September 26.

I was with you in spirit this evening, and prayed that the Lord would give a blessing to what you might hear. To love and trust the Lord Jesus, is the great lesson we have to learn. We are slow scholars—but he can teach us effectually. Without him, the very best of this life is insipid, and his presence can make the worst things supportable. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!" [Hebrews 12:2](#)

I often think, and hope, you do not forget how graciously he supported and answered you in your late distress. There was a something that could, and did, bear you up under pain and anguish, and refresh your spirit when your bodily strength was almost worn out. This is an instance of what he can do; and should be a bond of gratitude upon both our souls. Your health is restored, and mine is preserved. May we devote our whole selves

to him. He has great things to bestow; and, if we feel our need of his mercy, we are properly qualified to receive it. We are not called to buy—but to beg; to receive, without money and without price. By believing, all becomes freely and surely our own; not on the account of our prayers—but of his promise, blood, and mediation. And all he requires of us is to be humble and thankful; and the more he gives us, to desire still the more.

Oh, my dearest wife, I bless his name for bringing us together, and for sparing us to have some knowledge and communion in these great things! How many that were joined about the same time with us, or since, have been separated by death! How many are living in mutual disgust! And how many who seem happy, are, in reality, miserable, because they know nothing of the Lord, and of his goodness!

Olney, October 8.

I begin to count the hours to Friday. I am very desirous, though not anxious, to see you. The Lord has been good to me in your absence; the time has not seemed tedious, and all things, at home and abroad, as well as I could wish. I begin to write tonight, because I have devoted tomorrow to be spent, with as little interruption as possible, as a day of prayer, to entreat him to give us a happy and sanctified meeting, and that our future lives may be devoted to him. How great are our obligations for uniting us at first; for restoring us so often; or raising you up from so many illnesses; for preserving our affection; for overruling our concerns; for providing us friends; and, especially, for directing our hearts to seek his face. And still he is loading us with his benefits. Though we have not been without our trials—yet, all things considered, who has passed more gently through life thus far? And with whom, upon the face of the earth, would we now desire to change places? But with nothing has my heart been more affected, than with his goodness in and since your late illness. I am persuaded something passed then, that has left a relish and effect upon your mind ever since. Is it not so? Are you not determined to be his? Next to the salvation of my own soul, I have had no desire so often in my heart, so often in my lips, as to see you wholly given up to him. And, I trust, He has been answering my prayers, my many thousand prayers, from year to year. What a bauble, in my eye, would the possession of the whole earth be—in comparison with our being fellow-heirs of the hope of eternal life!

I purpose to be in time to receive you at Newport. Perhaps I may wait at Mr. R____'s, as he lives opposite to the inn gate. But, when I hear the sound of the coach, I shall take my leave with very little ceremony. You never were more welcome to me in your whole life, than you will be this time.

Olney, April 5. **1768.**

I hope this will be the more welcome, for being unexpected. May it find you in health and peace, panting after communion with God!

I think of you all day; and, though I do not seem quite so much at a loss when you are away from me, as I have sometimes formerly been; I am sure it is not because I love you less. The Lord has given us a sufficiency of mutual affection, which has been strengthened by a long series of endearments and kind offices, and by a near participation in the comforts and trials of life. And now it should be our great concern and prayer, that our love may not be inordinate, or irregular; nor interfere with what we owe to the great Lover of our souls. The apostle's question, "Was Paul crucified for you?" suggests a thought which disparages all creature regard, as the splendor of the noon-day sun overpowers the twinkling of the stars.

May the Lord open your ears and your heart, that you may receive profit where you are. Do not give place to unbelief. Jesus is both an able and a willing Savior. Pray for a tender conscience, and a dependent spirit. Watch against the motions of *SELF*; they are subtle and various. Let no engagements prevent you from reserving seasons of retirement for prayer, and reading the Scriptures. The best company, the best public ordinances, will not compensate for the neglect of these. At the same time, guard against a spirit of bondage; nor fetter your mind by too many rules and resolves. It is our privilege to serve the Lord with cheerfulness; not considering him as a hard Master—but as a tender Father, who knows and pities our weakness; who is ready to pardon our mistakes, and to teach us to do better. He accepts us, freely and graciously, when we present ourselves before him, in the name of Jesus, his beloved Son.

Martham, April 15.

We reached this place today, about noon. I am very well, only much fatigued. The man you saw step into the coach, was drunk all the way to Colchester, (where we left him.) He swore, for a time, almost in every sentence. As soon as I could find a favorable opening, I spoke to him. He was civil, and promised to swear no more. But, poor man! He might as well have promised not to breathe. However, he was tolerably quiet afterwards.

My heart loves you, my dearest, and many a prayer I breathe out for you; which, indeed, is almost the only kind of prayer I have found time or room for since I left London. But I hope to be recruited and composed soon. I am likely to have business enough in hand next week. At present, I am dry and empty; but the *fountain* from whence I have been often supplied, is still full and flowing. Excuse a short letter. If it was not to you, I could not write at all.

Olney, May 1.

The Lord brought me home in safety last night. I believe our dear people are truly glad to see me; and I am sure I rejoice to be with them again. I preached this morning from [2 Samuel 7:24](#), "You established Your people Israel Your own people forever, and You, Lord, have become their God". I wish my dearest, a growing experience of the subject. No honor can be compared to that of being the Lord's people; no privilege like that of having him for our God.

I must not write much, for it is almost time to find a *text* for the afternoon, which I have not yet done. I went this morning into the pulpit, as having only a small piece of bread to set before the multitude. But, through mercy, it multiplied in the distribution, and, I hope, there was a comfortable meal for those who were present, and some fragments left that will not be lost.

It is not choice—but necessity, that makes me sometimes live, as we say, *from hand to mouth*. While my head is full of new people and places, I cannot do otherwise. And I have reason to be thankful that my hopes are seldom disappointed upon such occasions; though I know not when I have been so straitened and embarrassed, as I was the other night at the Lock. I rather wonder that this happens so seldom, than that it happens at all. How justly might the Lord take his word of truth out of my unworthy mouth! Perhaps he saw it good for me, that *Mr. Self* should have his pride cut rather there, than in another place; and I hope there is that in me, which is as willing to appear to a disadvantage (if it must be so) at the Lock as at Olney: though, to be sure, flesh and blood are pleased to be thought *somebody*, when among dear friends or fine folks.

Olney, May 3.

I did not promise to write today—but my heart is always ready, and opportunity always welcome. I am in good health, and glad to be again retired from yonder noisy city.

I wrote yesterday to Mr. A___, and, in my evening walk, my thoughts and prayers turned much upon the affecting stroke he has received. Indeed, it has been seldom out of my mind since I came home. Besides my concern for his loss and my own, (there is no cause to mourn for her,) I consider it as a loud speaking lesson to you and I. How often has she been raised up from the brink of the grave, in answer to prayer; and yet, now, suddenly and unexpectedly dead! We likewise have been long preserved, and often restored to each other. But a time will come when every *gourd* will wither, every *cistern* be broken. Let us pray for a waiting, resigned, and dependent fame of spirit; for ability to commit ourselves, and our all, into the merciful hands of Him who cares for us; and that, while we are spared, we may walk together, as help-meets and fellow-heirs of eternal life. We shall not be parted a moment sooner, for living in daily expectation of our appointed change; but the thought may be a happy means of composing our minds, and of preventing us from being too much

engrossed, either by the *sweets* or the *bitters* of this transitory life!

Many occasions of care and perplexity, that are apt to waste our time and wound our peace, would be avoided, could we duly consider how soon we shall be done with all these things. May you, may I, be more rooted and grounded in the truth, more humbled and comforted, more filled with that love, joy, and unspeakable peace, which the Gospel reveals, and for which the promises of God warrant us to pray. Be not discouraged, because you have nothing of your own. The empty bucket is put into the well, and, because it is empty, the Lord has opened wells of salvation for us, and has promised that we shall not seek his face in vain.

I long to have you at home with me; for, though I am, in a sense, very comfortable, the house looks unfurnished without you, and I miss you in every room. How then must the Moor-side look to our dear friend! Every step he takes, every person he meets, must remind him of his loss! But I trust the Lord is, and will be, his support. May his grace be with us! Then we shall be equal to everything that can possibly befall us, and need not be afraid of evil tidings.

Olney, May 5.

Your last dear letter found me in peace, and, I hope, did me good. It quickened my prayers and praises on your behalf. I never attempt to pray without putting up some petitions for your spiritual welfare, nor without aiming, at least, to express my sense of gratitude to the Lord for joining our hands and hearts. Your affection, and its consequences, are continually upon my mind, and I feel you in almost every thought. I am willing to hope that I am, in some degree, freed from that *idolatrous regard* which made me place you too long in a light, for which I deserved to forfeit you every day. But I am sure my love has suffered no abatement; yes, I am sure it has increased, from year to year, though I endeavor to hold you more in subordination to Him to whom I owe you, and by whose blessing alone it is that we have found comfort in each other. I trust the Lord had a further design than our accommodation in the present life, in bringing us together; even that we might be joint witnesses and partakers of his grace, and fellow-heirs of his salvation. Our earthly connection must cease; but an eternal union in happiness is an important prospect indeed! Everything else, however valuable in its place, sinks into *nothing* upon the comparison.

If youth, and health, and life, could be prolonged for a thousand years, and every moment of that space be filled up with the greatest satisfaction we can conceive, this seemingly long period must at last terminate; and, when once past, it would appear short and inconsiderable, as the eighteen years we have already spent together do at present. But, if we are united in the faith and hope of the Gospel, we shall never part. Even that separation

which must take place, (so painful at times to think of,) will not deserve the name of *parting*. It will be but like the one coming down first from London, and the other safely following in a few days. And, however flesh and blood may startle at the apprehension, the case of Mr. A____, and many others, sufficiently prove the Lord's faithfulness to his promise, and that he can support those who trust him in the most trying circumstances.

Let it, therefore, be our chief concern to attain a good hope that we are his, and he is ours, and then we may cheerfully commit the rest to him. He can forgive sin, impart grace, subdue corruption, silence unbelief, make us strong out of weakness, and do more than we can either ask or think. And what he does, he does freely, without money and without price. He does not require us to help ourselves, before we apply to him—but to come to him for help, and we shall not come in vain. Fight, therefore, my dearest, against unbelief, and the Lord will give you the victory. Tell him, what I am sure you are convinced of, that you have nothing, deserve nothing, can do nothing; but that you have heard he is mighty to save, and has promised, that none who apply to him shall ever be cast out. None ever did miscarry in this way. If they did, his truth and faithfulness must miscarry with them.

Olney, May 15.

I hope your visit in Kent, will, upon a review, be made profitable to yourself. You will admire the Lord's goodness in *choosing* you (as one of a thousand) to the knowledge of his truth, when you might (according to the views with which you first entered upon life) have been *still swimming down the stream of vanity and folly with the thoughtless multitude!* How little did either of us think, in those early days when I first knew you, to what the Lord designed to lead us! Do not you see, and say, He has done great things? How often has he raised you from the gates of death? With what *mercies* and *gentleness* has he followed you? What a great advantage has he afforded you, in so large an acquaintance and intimacy with those who fear and love him?

Shall the *enemy* urge you to draw discouragements from these multiplied instances of the Lord's goodness? I hope not. Do not give way to unbelief. Do not indulge perplexing thoughts of the secret counsels of God. What is revealed in the Scripture calls for our attention; and there it is written, as with a sun-beam, "Those who seek—shall find." It is true, when we are seeking, he often exercises our patience; but he has told us beforehand to expect it, and has given us encouragement, by parables, examples, and promises—to continue praying, and not to faint. Though he tarries, wait for him. Though he may seem to treat you like the woman of Canaan for a time—yet he is full of compassion and mercy. The humble spirit, the principle of faith, the heart-felt repentance, and every other gracious disposition to which the promises are made, are all his gifts, which he bestows freely on the unworthy.

Since you know that you are a sinner, and that he is the only Savior, what should prevent your comfort? Had he bid you do some *great* thing, you would, at least, have attempted it. If a pilgrimage to some distant place was the appointed mean of salvation, would you be content to sit at home and perish? How much rather than should you keep close to the throne of grace, when he has only said, "Ask—and you shall receive!"

When we first joined hands, neither you nor I knew much of the things pertaining to our eternal peace. But, as soon as the Lord began to show me a little of the way, how much, from that time to this, you have been upon my heart, is only known to him; and I trust he has answered, and is still answering, my prayers. What passed in your last illness I shall never forget. I think, had he then taken you from me, I could have *rejoiced* in the midst of my grief. From that period I have had a hope of more value to me than the possession of the earth, that he has taken a sure hold of your heart, and that he will not cease to draw you nearer and nearer to himself. Continue to pray, and watch over your spirit. Keep always in mind that you are a *sinner*, and Jesus is a Savior of sinners. Such thoughts frequently recurred to, are means by which the Lord composes and sanctifies the frame of our tempers, and the strain of our conversation. Accept this little homily in good part, and may a blessing attend you in the perusal.

Olney, May 18. **1769.**

I preached yesterday at Collingtree. The church was full. Returned in safety before nine in the evening.

The case of those who depart from the gospel way, after they seem to have chosen it, is lamentable. Thus it might have been with us; but this I trust, shall not be. The Lord has made known to us His name of *love*, and has shown us, what we would never have seen, had it been his pleasure to damn us. Let us live under abiding views of the all-sufficiency of Jesus the Savior, and we may rejoice in hope.

The *peace of God* which passes understanding, is seldom attained—but through a course of *conflict*. God gave Canaan to Israel by *promise*, and put them in *possession* of it by the power of his own arm—yet they must *fight for every inch of ground*. The desire, and the accomplishment, are equally of grace; yet, in the use of means, and with our eye to him, we must strive. Our poor exertions would be in vain, if he did not require them; but now they are needful, and shall be successful. The *rod of Moses*, the instrument of performing so many miracles, was no better than common stick, until the appointment of God gave it a wonderful virtue. Had Moses then refused, or neglected, to use it—he could have done nothing. Now the means of grace, especially prayer, may be compared to the rod of Moses. If we go on, with this rod in our hands; if we call upon God, meditate upon his promises, and plead them from day to day—he will make our way prosperous.

Olney, May 28.

The Lord has mercifully brought me home in peace. The fatigue of the journey, and the excessive heat on Tuesday, occasioned a slight fever, which went off that evening, and returned yesterday, as I was riding my horse at Bicester. However, I rode, not unpleasantly, to Buckingham; and there, for fear of overdoing, we took a carriage to Stratford, where Mrs. U___ kindly met us, and brought us home. I preached without pain on Sunday. The fever is now gone, my appetite returned, and I am well. My slight illness was rather a balk and hindrance with respect to my friends at Oxford and Sutton. But, taking all things together, I never had a more comfortable journey. I felt such a peace and composure in considering myself and all my concerns in the hand of the Lord, as I cannot describe, and can seldom attain when in health. I had not one impatient or anxious thought, not even about you; and seemed quite willing, if the Lord had so pleased, to have *died* upon the road. I was yesterday, if ever in my life, as a *weaned child*. I hope this account of my sickness will not hurry you home sooner than you intended, for I am quite recovered.

Olney, May 30.

My thoughts will accompany you to Wimbledon today. Give my affectionate respects to our dear friends, and tell them, I would have had much pleasure in being of the party. Besides the chief inducement of their company, I am fond of the place, and should promise myself some pleasant hours in the walks. But I know neither *places* nor *company* can communicate any real good—unless the Lord be present; and, when he is near—any place, and even solitude itself, is agreeable. It is my mercy to find that in Olney, which contents and satisfies me.

I have such a group of kind inquirers every morning, that I am much interrupted in writing. It is pleasing to be beloved, and doubly pleasing to me to know that the *favor* the Lord has given me here is chiefly on account of the Gospel which I preach. The affection that is built upon this foundation will endure forever, and will flourish when every other tie shall cease; and thus, I trust, it is between my dearest wife and I. How closely has the Lord united us, by marriage, by affection, by the strongest and most endearing obligations! But all these respect the *present* life, and must terminate with it. But I trust there is a still nearer relation between us, in the Lord and in his truth—which shall exist to eternity. In the mean time, may he give us to know more of the power and comfort of it, while we walk together here below; that we may rejoice in the knowledge of what he has done already, and in the prospect of what he has provided for us hereafter. *Believe*, my dearest, and you shall be established. *Pray*, and your faith shall be confirmed. Resist the devil with the sword of the Spirit, the good Word of God—and he shall flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. I know your discouragements;

but they are not peculiar to yourself. Surely, he has appeared for you in times past, and I cannot doubt but he will come again.

I am glad to think the time of your return draws near. I miss you every day and hour; yet I cannot say that time is burdensome, or that I am very dull, or unked, as they call it here, in your absence; as the people think I must be. Several of them almost threatened to write on Sunday, to tell you how ill I was, and to beg you to return immediately; but their fears magnified the case. They long to see you, however, for your own sake, and give the most simple and affecting proofs that they love you dearly.

Olney, May 20. **1770.**

I have had a morning walk, in which I was favored with some liberty; at such seasons you are always remembered. While I would praise God that we have been so long and so comfortably spared to each other, I must not forget that an hour of separation *must* come, and that the time is uncertain. It must be so; and it is well. *Surely we would not wish to live always in this poor world!* Oh! for a clearer view of our interest in the love and all-sufficiency of the Savior; that we may stay our souls upon him, and possess a stable, unshaken peace! It is He who has given us a desire to seek him, because He has purposed to be found by us, [Jer. 31:3](#). And, though our desires are too faint, and disproportionate to the greatness of their object—he will not despise the *day of small things*, nor quench the *smoking flax*.

I feel your absence, and long for your return; but I am not disconsolate. It was otherwise with me once. I can remember when the sun seemed to shine in vain, and the whole creation appeared as a blank—if you were away from me. Not that I love you less, as the fellowship of many successive years has endeared you more and more to my heart. But I hope the Lord has weakened that *idolatrous disposition*, for which I have so often deserved to lose you. I am astonished at his patience and forbearance, that, when I presumptuously gave you that place in my heart which was only due to Him—He did not tear my idol from me! To what dangers has my ill-conducted regard often exposed you! But he is God and not man. I hope it is now my desire to hold nothing in competition with Him, and to entrust my all to His keeping and disposal. If we hold each other in a proper submission and subordination to Him, He will bless us, and make us mutually comforts and helpmates. He will sanctify the *bitters* of life, and give the *sweets* a double sweetness. His blessing is the one thing needful; without it, there is neither *security* for what we possess, nor true *satisfaction* in the possession. We have no good in or of ourselves, or which we can impart to another. We may *pity*—but we cannot *relieve* each other when in trouble. We cannot remove one pain, or give one moment's peace of mind—to those whom we best love.

Many prayers are, and will be, put up for you and Mrs. U___ while you are away. It is this which endears Olney to me—the Lord has

a praying people here, and they pray for us. To be interested in the simple, affectionate, and earnest prayers of such a people, is a privilege of more value than the wealth of kings! In answer to their prayers, the Lord has placed a *hedge* about all our concerns, blessed our going out and coming in, and preserved us and ours in health, when sickness or death have been in almost every house around us. And, doubtless, I am much indebted to their prayers, that, with such a heart as mine, and such a frame of spirit as I frequently mourn under—I am still favored with some liberty, acceptance, and usefulness in my ministry.

London, November 19, **1771**.

We came safely to town about noon. I have just parted with my dear and honored friend, with whom the hours of the journey passed very pleasantly. I am wondering at myself, and at everybody about me. It seems strange to think of being so suddenly whirled away from you. So many preaching and other engagements are provided for me, that I believe I cannot return before Saturday. I hope the Lord will be with you, and that you will be led earnestly to seek His blessing for me and for yourself. I have breathed out many a prayer for you since I saw you, and hope to do so while I can breathe at all. May he give us to grow daily in the knowledge of his grace, and to rejoice in the views of his excellency, and of our interest in Him as our God and Savior. This is the one thing, and the only thing which is promised absolutely, and without a possibility of failure, to those who desire it. Everything else is vain, uncertain, and changeable. But he will surely, though gradually, make himself known to the heart that seeks Him.

I have been with Mrs. C****, she is sorely afflicted—but appears to be in a humble, dependent frame. From how many heart-rending distresses by which *others* are suffering, has the good providence of God preserved *us*! May he make us thankful for the exemption, and teach us to bear our *smaller crosses* with a befitting submission to his will!

Clapham, July 2, **1772**.

If it was not to my dearest wife, I could not write so soon after dinner. But, though my *belly* is full, and my *head* empty, I must tell you that I had very quiet agreeable company in the coach, and a pleasant ride to Deptford; where I mounted a horse dear Mr. T___ had sent for me, which said horse brought me safely hither. Thus the Lord graciously preserves me from place to place.

I am always a little awkward without you, and every room where you are not present, looks unfurnished. It is not a humble *servant* that says this—but a *husband*—and he says it, not in what is called the honey-moon—but in the twenty-third year after marriage. Nor do I speak it to my own praise—but to the praise of our good Lord,

who, by his blessing, has endeared us to each other. Fickleness and vanity are inherent in our fallen nature; and, if left to ourselves, we might have been indifferent, weary, and disgusted with each other long ago. But He has united our hearts; and, I trust, the union shall exist to eternity. May we possess, while here, the peace which passes understanding, and live under the abiding expectation of *perfect happiness* hereafter!

Olney, July 9.

I have not much news to tell you. I have been to see Mrs. R____. You remember how near death she was, by falling into the water, about two weeks ago. She was since persuaded to take a one-horse coach. They were hardly half a mile from the house, when the horse suddenly fell, upon a smooth road, and by the shock—was thrown out of the coach, over the wheel. You will not wonder that she was much hurt and bruised, if you consider her weight. No bones were broken; but the fall, in addition to her previous illness, has brought her very low, and I think she cannot continue long. What thanks do we owe to the Lord, for his merciful care of *us* in all our journeys, when *others* meet with such disasters close to their own home!

The state of some of our family, where you are, is much upon my mind. I hope I have engaged many to pray for them. May the Lord grant that all you see, hear, and feel, where you are, may draw your heart still nearer to himself! What is all below—but vanity and vexation? There is no solid comfort, no abiding peace—but what we derive from God. Once we knew nothing of this. But the Lord directed our path in life, in subservience to the designs of his grace. How few of those with whom you were acquainted in your early years, have any right knowledge of *God*—or of *themselves*. We ourselves set out upon this dreadful plan; and, if mercy had not stopped us, we would have gone on, until we had perished with a lie in our own right hands!

Do, my dearest, take encouragement from what the Lord has done, to believe that he will do still more for you. Do not think that he has opened your eyes, and taught you that your help is in Him alone, only to disappoint you. The enemy would keep you from seeking him diligently and constantly, and would persuade you that you get little or no good from all your attempts; but believe him not. Rather believe the Word of promise, that, though he may seem to delay, he will not, he cannot, deny those who persevere in asking in the name of Jesus.

How little do I know of my own heart! While I thought myself sure of a letter, I vainly supposed I could be easy, though I should not receive one. But, when the post arrived, and brought no letter from you, my spirits sunk in a minute; and, I fear, I shall be too impatient in wishing for Friday. Surely, my dear wife knows me too well to think that, after a whole week's absence, I should not be longing to hear from her. If you inadvertently neglected to write, I must gently blame you; it ought, indeed, to be very gently, as it is

the first fault of the kind I can charge you with, since our happy marriage. I rather think you have written—but by some mistake the letter has miscarried; for I am willing to hope you are well. I am quite disconcerted. But, if I receive one by the next post, you need be in no pain for me, for that will set all to rights. I have been to bury a corpse at Weston this evening. I promised myself a pleasant walk—but the want of a letter spoiled it. I would gladly have directed my thoughts to subjects of more importance—but I could not. Alas! I am a poor creature. Pray, my dearest, write often; for, next to your company, I prize your letters above anything, merely temporal, that this earth can afford.

Olney, July 12.

I waited about the street yesterday. At half-past four the horn sounded, and my heart went pit-a-pat. But I soon saw Molly pass the window, and by her looks and her speed, I guessed she had a letter. I snatched it from her and read it, and was presently well.

My heart was melted the other day, when I found the little book in your drawer, in which you had begun to set down such texts of Scripture as had more particularly engaged your notice, and especially when I read the two pages of prayer with which you had prefaced them; a prayer agreeable to the promises of God, and, I trust, dictated to you by his Holy Spirit. My soul gave a hearty Amen to every petition. I am sorry that anything prevented you from proceeding in what was so well begun; but I hope you will resume it when you return. The blessings of the Gospel are open to you. Could you steadily strive against the hindrances and discouragements thrown in your way, and simply and patiently abide in the use of the means of grace, without giving way to vain reasoning, you would soon experience a growth in peace and comfort. To *patient faith*—the prize is sure. May the Lord help you thus to wait; and may he give us more freedom to converse for our mutual encouragement.

I am a strange, inconsistent creature in this respect, as in many others. Next to the salvation of my own soul, there is nothing which lies so near my heart as your spiritual welfare; and yet I am often tongue-tied, and can speak more readily to anybody than to you. Let us mutually endeavor to break through every restraint, that we may be *helpmates* in the best sense of the word. I preached this morning from [Deut. 32:10](#). The passage applies to all the Lord's people, "He found them in a waste howling wilderness." How emphatically does it apply to me? He redeemed me from slavery in Africa, and has selected me as a pattern of his grace to the chief of sinners! What a mercy to me! I trust to you also. For he appointed us for each other from the first, and his hand brought us together, and into our present situation, by a train of miracles.

London, November 16, **1773**.

Past three o'clock on this cloudy morning. I hope my dearest is now in a sweet sleep. When I am done writing, I shall proceed to the coach, which sets off exactly at four. Please do not fear my being robbed or hurt in the dark. For I expect a *guard* will go with me—One to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike." I went through a very long dark lane, on Wednesday evening, with dear Mr. Th____; but no one disturbed us, for the Lord was our Preserver.

You may be sure that my heart is continually with you. I seldom pass many minutes without darting a prayer upwards in your behalf. The knowledge of your *affection* affords me the greatest pleasure I can receive or desire, of a temporal kind. But your *apprehensions* on my account, when I am called from you for a season, give me pain. I wish we could both more simply entrust each other, without anxiety, to the Lord's goodness and care. Surely, he delights in our prosperity, or else why have we been spared so long? or how have we been so mercifully supported, so seasonably relieved, and enriched with so many blessings, from year to year? May all that we experience be sanctified, to humble us, and to increase our dependence upon Him, who is always near and willing to help us.

I must go. I carry with me from place to place a heart full of an affectionate and grateful sense of your love, and of the innumerable and invaluable mercies and comforts the Lord has given me in the relation I stand to you.

Olney, April 27, **1774**.

I sympathize with you; I already feel the concern which you will shortly feel, when you say farewell to your sister and your family. Methinks, if I could prevent it, you would not have a moment's uneasiness, pain, or trial, from the beginning to the end of the year. But how could you then be a partaker of that good which the Lord bestows upon his people through the *medium of afflictions*? I hope he will give you an entire resignation to his will; and that the grief you and your sister will feel at parting, will be compensated by a cheerful hope of meeting again, perhaps more than once, in this life; but, if not here, in the better and eternal world. And, when you drop a tear at leaving your father, sister, aunt, and friends, remember that you are coming to a *husband* who loves you better than it is possible any or all other friends can. You will be more welcome to me on your return, than on the happy day which first made you mine. How will my *eyes* delight to see you, my *ears* to hear you speak, and my *arms* to enfold you!

My text tonight is [Psalm 36:7-8](#). It is a full and gracious promise. The weak and defenseless shall be sheltered under the wings of the Almighty! How does the hen cover her brood with her wings! If her power was equal to her will, nothing could hurt them. The Lord our Savior makes use of this *picture* for your encouragement; and his *power*, like his *compassion*, is infinite. Again, the hungry soul shall be *satisfied* with fatness; not merely kept alive—but

feasted, so that it shall thrive and flourish. Lastly, the miserable shall not only *taste*—but *drink* of pleasures; not a single *draught*, nor out of a vessel that will soon be empty—but from a river whose stream is perpetual, whose source is inexhaustible! The streams of this river—make glad the city of God upon earth. How much more abundantly will it flow in heaven! Here, then, is our encouragement. Creatures fail and change—but the Lord is always the same. And he gives the water of life freely, without money and without price. He invites all who hear, and receives all who come.

The clock is striking twelve, therefore I wish you a good night. May the angels of the Lord, yes, the *Lord of angels* himself, watch over your bed and your sleeping hours. My chamber looks rather solitary at present; yet, through mercy, I sleep soundly.

Olney, April 17.

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 am conscious of many things which make me wonder at the Lord's goodness in sparing you to me so long; and that you have not been oftener, or more heavily, afflicted for my sake. But his thoughts are high above mine, as the heavens are higher than the earth. And it is our mercy that we are not under the *law*—but under *grace*.

I rose from my knees to take my pen in hand, and shall daily pray for you all. I trust the Lord has given your sister that knowledge of himself which will make her situation in Scotland agreeable. The earth is the Lord's; and his servants, wherever their lot is cast, have his throne of grace always near them. I know not how she may fare there in point of ordinances. However, if the Lord is pleased to dwell in her heart and in her house, he can make up every defect. His Providence, undoubtedly, leads her there; and we can be nowhere better than in the path of duty. His blessing upon *secret prayer* and the reading' of his *Word* will keep her soul alive, though the public preaching should not be quite to her wish.

Though I miss you continually, I am neither lonely nor dull. I hope the Lord will give me a heart to wait upon him, and then I shall do well enough until you are restored to me. I need not wish the time away: it flies amazingly fast, and, alas! too poorly improved. These little separations should engage us to seek his blessing, that we may be prepared for the hour (which must come) when one of us must have the trial of living a while without the other. The Lord, who appoints and times all things wisely and well—He only knows which of us will be reserved for this painful exercise. But I rely on his all-sufficiency and faithfulness to make our strength equal to our day. It will require a power above our own to support us under

either part of the alternative, whether we are called to leave or to resign. But He who so wonderfully brought us together, and has so mercifully spared us hitherto, can *sweeten* what would otherwise be most *bitter* to the flesh. If he is pleased to shine upon us, all will be well. His presence can supply the loss of the most endeared creature-comforts, as a candle may be easily spared when the sun is seen.

Olney, April 23.

Yesterday I went to see Mr. C____. I found him in much distress, and his wife in more. The the coming of the coroner prevented my stay. The burial was last night. The church-yard was full of people; but, as the hour was late, and the parents broken-hearted, I did not say much at the grave. The lad was in his fourteenth year; was just come home from school; and asked to eat—but, before he ate, went with the cart, which was going for hay. His father was cutting the hay at a small distance, and, seeing the boy get up upon the shafts, he called to him—but was either not heard or not regarded. Another son drove the cart; the horse suddenly took fright, and the field being full of hillocks, the cart was soon overturned. The boy fell under the wheel, and was instantly killed. He neither spoke nor stirred. Mr. C____ saw all that passed, and was then forced to be the mournful messenger of the news to his wife. It seems, she was wrapped up (as we say) in her children. I was told that, when she heard of the event, she flew out of the house, and ran a considerable way she knew not where, before she could be stopped. She had afterwards a long succession of fits, and they feared she would have lost her senses. But, when I saw her, she was more composed. She seems to be not without a sense of religion; she had been long a hearer in the lower meeting—but of late has come more to my church.

It is a heavy trial; but the Lord can cause *good* fruits to grow from a *bitter* root. How much praise do we owe him for that protection which has covered us, as with a shield, in all our journeys, as well as at home! I hope soon to have a call to thank him, for conducting you safely into Kent.

I have been to see Mrs. C____ again. It is a pleasant retired walk to their house; but it was not pleasant to me this time. My heart, alas! was dry as a wood-chip, unsettled as a weathercock. However, I could and did pray for them. I hope she is a good woman. She told me, she had often wished that some occasion might bring me to their house. But neither she nor her husband could take courage (such a formidable animal, it seems, am I) to ask me. She is now troubled for having wished I might come. But I hope the stroke may prove a blessing to them both.

Olney, April 25.

I thank God I continue in good health, and well enough in spirits. But the frame of my mind is cold, wandering, and unpleasant. For the most part, when you have been abroad, I have been favored with more composure, and the hours have passed more agreeably and profitably, than at present. But you need not wish yourself at home merely upon this account. For the Lord alone can remove the complaint of a dull, dissipated frame. Your tenderness can do much for me—but you cannot relieve me in this case. But, though I am not as I wish to be, I am not unhappy.

My text tonight, when I lay my head upon my pillow, will be [Psalm 34:15](#). Who are the righteous, upon whom the eye of the Lord is fixed, and to whose cry his ear is open? Not the self-righteous, but the helpless, unworthy sinners, who, without any plea but the word of promise, put their trust in the name of Jesus. These are accounted righteous for the Savior's sake. They are accepted in the Beloved; and, because they ask in his name, their prayer is heard. Why should not we, my dearest, open our mouths wide, and expect great things, when we have such an Advocate? Do you say, How shall I know that He is mine? I answer, He is an advocate for all who will commit their cause to Him. They are not described by *name*—but by *character*; as sinners who have no hope in themselves, are not willing to perish, and therefore, hearing that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost, venture upon his word, cast themselves at his feet, and commit their all into his hands. Have not I, and have not you, such thoughts of ourselves, and of Jesus the Savior? Wait then for Him, give not way to unbelief. He can do all that He says, and He says no more than He means to perform.

Olney, April 30.

I feel for you every day while you are at Chatham; but I hope and pray the Lord will sanctify all your trials to your profit. If it depended upon me, you would have nothing to grieve you for a moment; but I am glad our concerns are in his wise and gracious hands, who appoints us a mixture of afflictions and trials, not because he takes pleasure in giving us pain, (our many comforts afford sufficient proofs of his goodness,) but because he sees that troubles are often better for us, than the continual enjoyment of our own wishes.

I am concerned to find you so very accessible to fears and alarms upon my account. Indeed I would not exchange the affection which gives rise to them, for crowns and kingdoms. But why should you make yourself unhappy? Why distrust the good hand of God, which has so long preserved us? Why should you take the course which, in the nature of thing, is most likely to bring upon you the evil which you fear? Do not you consider, that you yourself expose me to the greatest danger, by your sinful distrust of the Lord, and your over-much dependence upon a poor creature, who loves you, it is true, even as his own soul; but who, with the warmest desires of your happiness, is, in himself, quite unable to

promote it; unable to procure you the smallest good, or to shield you from the greatest trouble. May it please God so to impress and fill your heart, that your supreme and undivided regard may be fixed upon Him who alone is worthy. Then we shall be happy in each other indeed, when all our thoughts and aims are properly subordinate to what we owe to Him. *If we loved Him with all our hearts, we would find it easy to trust him with all our concerns.* And then it would not greatly signify which of us went first to heaven, or by what means.

Let us, my dearest, pray for each other. Methinks we still wander in a wilderness, upon the very brink of a happy state, and yet cannot enter. How strange that we who read of such a Savior, who are acquainted with such promises, (made to the most unworthy,) and are so fully convinced of the reality of spiritual blessings; how strange is it, that we should be thus alternately elevated or cast down by *mere trifles!* that we should sit, like Hagar, lamenting over an empty *vessel*, when the *fountain* of life runs so near us! Keep this to read to me, when it may come to *my turn* to be pinched with unbelief. Perhaps you will soon have occasion to say, *Physician, heal yourself!*

I have had a pleasant walk this evening, and was enabled to pray for you, that you may gain a blessing upon all your relocation, and be restored to me in peace. My pillow-text tonight will be in [Psalm 39:1-13](#). Suppose I take [Psalm 39:8](#). "Deliver me from *all* my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish." How rich is the grace that has provided a ground for so great a petition, as is expressed in the first clause! What arithmetic can compute the whole that is included in the word *all!* One transgression would be sufficient to sink the soul into ruin. But the blood of Jesus Christ frees those who believe in him from the guilt of all. And his Spirit is sufficient to set us at liberty from the power of all sin, so that not one shall have dominion over us. Yet the supply of this Spirit is to be sought by earnest prayer; otherwise, notwithstanding what we know, and what we have received, we are liable to take such steps as would make us the reproach of the foolish.

Whenever you return, you will be welcome to me, as gold to the miser. But I hope to support the interval without being burdened. My days are filled up with employment, and at night I sleep soundly; so that no part of my time hangs heavy upon my hands.

Olney, May 2.

Methinks I see you just now. Your spirits sink a little, because you are taking leave of your sister and friends. I allow you to drop a tear or two. But I hope tomorrow, and before you have traveled many miles, you will resume your cheerfulness, and leave them and yourself in the hand of the Lord without anxiety. He fitted your sister for the post he has assigned her, and, I trust, he will not only bless her—but make her a blessing to many around her. I sometimes think, that the child's lameness may give such a

different turn to his future life, may prevent so many things that might otherwise have happened, and give occasion to so many things which otherwise would not have happened, that, in the way of means, it may have a near connection with the salvation of his soul. 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.

I shall be glad to hear you are at London, because you will then be thirty miles nearer to me. But I remember when there were not only *hills*—but *oceans* between us. Then the Lord brought us together in safety. It seems to me now, almost as if we had been separated for the time of an African voyage. But I wait with patience your summons to meet you at Newport. I would rather see you—than all that the world accounts magnificent. I had rather hear you speak—than hear all Handel's music. I would rather call you mine—than possess wagon-loads of gold. Some people would deem this the language of folly; but it is the language of *love* and of *truth*.

It grows late. The maids are gone to bed, and I shall soon retire to mine. It is rather lonely at present; but, I thank God, I am a stranger to the remotest wish that it were lawful to me to have any companion but yourself. Since the Lord gave me the desire of my heart in my dearest wife, the rest of the gender are no more to me than the weeds in the garden. Oh, what a mercy is it, that I can say this! I speak it not to my own praise—but to the praise of the Lord. I have a vile heart, capable of any and every evil; and, in myself, am as prone to change as a weathercock. But, with respect to you, he has been pleased to keep me fixed, as the north-pole, without one minute's variation for twenty-four years, three months, and one day; and I humbly trust that he will thus keep me to the end of my life.

Olney, May 4.

The wind blows hard at N___ so that I suppose your brother and sister are embarked. If they are, I do not mean to be very uneasy for them; and I hope you will not. The God of the dry land—is God of the sea likewise. He 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*. May the Lord give to them and to us his grace; that, looking to him, we may be comforted under all separations and changes, by an assured hope of meeting, to unspeakable advantage, in a better world! We are all quickly lessening the distance to our everlasting home! Our voyage through this life will sometimes be disrupted by troublous storms—but the Lord Jesus is our infallible, almighty Pilot. The winds and the seas obey Him! None ever miscarried under His care—He takes charge of all who entrust themselves to Him. Let us make His good Word our compass to direct our hearts to the haven, to the heaven, where we desire to be!

I need not wish time away; it flies with an amazing swiftness, even in your absence. But I hope it will be better with me when you return. I am not uncomfortable—but I am a little unsettled. I can do more business in two days when you are at home, than in three when you are abroad. For, though I sit many an hour in my study without seeing you—yet to know that you are in, or about the house, and that I can see you when I please, gives a sort of composure to my mind: so that I must say your company is a hindrance to me upon the whole; though occasionally my attention to you might make me leave something undone which I ought to have done. In short, whether with you or without you, I am a poor creature, and see much to be ashamed of every day, and in every circumstance. However, I have great reason to bless God that I ever saw you.

Olney, May 9.

I am very glad you heard and approved Mr. ____ and especially that you mean to call upon him. I hope you will pray and strive against those prejudices which your affection for me, and your jealousy lest any person should not look upon me with the same partiality which you do, have sometimes occasioned. These thoughts have been the greatest hurt to your spirit, and the greatest hindrance to your comfortable progress, of anything that I know; and have sometimes given me no small uneasiness. I cannot wish you to *love* me less—but I often wish you could be less *anxious* about me. Pray for me, that I may be simple, upright, and diligent, in my walk and work—and then you may cheerfully leave my concerns with the Lord, and may be assured that he will give me as much acceptance and favor as is good for me. Be upon your guard against making yourself, and of course me, uneasy about *things which neither of us can help or alter*. Temptations follow tempers; and Satan is always subtle and busy in his attempts to break our peace, and divert our thoughts from the main object. Though your company is my dearest and most valued earthly comfort, I shall be well repaid for a month's absence, if you bring home a desire to watch and pray against those wrong impressions which your love to me has sometimes obtruded upon your mind. And I hope to study myself the lesson I recommend to you; and to strive and pray for the *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*. But, alas! though I know in theory what a Christian should be, I am still sadly deficient in practice.

Give my love and thanks to all my kind friends. I was once without a friend; but God has since given me many. Who that had seen me as a slave in Africa, would have expected what has since taken place! How unworthy am I of all that I have received! I am most unworthy of the honor of preaching the Gospel, which I too long despised and blasphemed!

My evening walk was outwardly pleasant—but my mind was confused. However, I prayed for you. Let me be as I will in other respects, you are always present to my thoughts. My love has

been growing from the day of marriage, and still it is in a growing state. It was once as an acorn—but it has now a deep root and spreading branches, like an old oak. It would not have proved so, if the Lord had not watered it with his blessing.

Olney, December 21.

As you intimate you shall not come before Saturday, I write again. I need not wish the interval away, though I long to see you: Saturday will soon be here. I thank the Lord, and I thank you, for your letter. Indeed, he has been very gracious in supporting you and your father, so much beyond expectation; surely my heart has had a fellow-feeling with you. But such *sorrow* as he by his grace is pleased to sanctify, will be hereafter numbered among our *mercies*. I often speak much in public, of his all-sufficiency to uphold under every trial. I have seldom had a more remarkable proof of it, than in the course of this late affliction. May he enable you to improve this instance of his goodness, as an argument against that vain reasoning of unbelief which has so often discouraged you. If he had not been with you, I am sure you would have been crushed like a moth. I hope, when we meet, we shall rejoice in his loving kindness; and that you will be able to say, "Because he has heard me, therefore I will call upon him as long as I live."

May we learn from what we have felt, and from what we daily see, of the vanity of all earthly things—to fix our thoughts upon the one thing needful; that we may experience his loving-kindness to be better than life itself, and may have a sure resource in his love, against the pressure of every remaining trial that may be allotted us; that we may rejoice as those who are still liable to be called to mourn, and mourn as those who have a happy prospect of rejoicing forever at last.

I thought on Monday morning that I was praying for you, while you were stepping into the coach. But, when you actually did set off yesterday, I was asleep. But the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was pleased to watch over you in your journey; for which I desire to praise him. Sickness and death have entered many houses here since you left home. But we are still preserved. Our times are in the hands of him who cares for us.

I have had another peaceful night, and awoke this morning in health. I hope you can say the same. 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! And since he has said to our hearts, "Seek you my face," and has given us a desire to answer, "Your face, O Lord, will we seek," it is not possible that we should seek in vain. The Lord bless and keep you, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

London, August 26, 1775.

I must send you a short letter for once. May the Lord bless you, give you composure of mind, and do you good every day. I know you will be ready enough to come to me when you can, and therefore I leave the *when* to you. I prefer you to come on Monday—but if you stay until Tuesday, I will wait patiently. But you know I am not quite myself, when you are absent. I desire to always you always at my! Give my love to our dear adopted child, who, I hope and believe, will be a good girl. And I beg of her, and of all who are about her, that your rules, to which she cheerfully submits when at home, may be broken as little as possible. Tell all her friends that I love her, and accept her as my own child, and shall account the care of her to be one of the most important concerns of my life.

Olney, November 18.

I began to listen at four for the sound of the mail horn. I listened until five before I heard it. Soon after I received your dear letter. My heart traveled with you from stage to stage, and I set you down in the Old Jewry, just at the time you mention. But, oh! what cause have I to be thankful that you were shielded, by the Lord's protection, from the many possible events which might have spoiled my calculations, and sent me to bed tonight with an aching heart. I hope you are now at Chatham. I have put you into the Lord's hand, who I trust will do you good. Yet I cannot help being anxious until I know how you felt, and what you met with, upon your arrival. If your dear father is still living, give my love and respect to him, and assure him that he is always in my thoughts and prayers. May the Lord support you and keep up your spirits, by a sense of his power and goodness!

Olney, November 21.

I told the people, on Sunday evening, my good news, and read your father's letter. Both he and you were earnestly prayed for. But I suppose more than a hundred were detained from us by colds and illness. There is scarcely a house without some people ill in it, and the general word is, that they never had such a sort of cold before. Many have taken to their beds; but in a few days most of them begin to amend.

W___ and R___ sent me word that their little girl was dying, and I have since heard she is dead. I expect to find them in much distress. 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](#).

I think you and I must acknowledge that the Lord has given us, from the beginning of our union, a favored lot. I think we have experienced as much of the good, and as few of the evils of life, as any people whom we know. And yet, if we could fairly estimate all the pains, anxieties, and crosses we have met with, from first to last, it would make a considerable abatement in what, when taken in a more general view, may well be deemed a *happy state*. And how soon has the best of it passed away! Nothing now remains of many *endeared hours*—but the *remembrance*. Though we have had the best that such a life can afford, it would be a poor happiness, indeed—were this our all. But, blessed be God, who has given us a better hope than we had when we set out—for, I think, we then proposed no higher satisfaction than we could find in *each other*. It was well for us both that I was constrained to leave you for three long voyages—for, though those frequent separations were very irksome at the time, they were sanctified to make us look higher. Oh! he has led us wisely and graciously! He has done all things well. We have nothing now to ask—but for a deeper and more thankful sense of His goodness.

Olney, November 26.

I am thinking of you, and lifting up my heart for you, almost continually. You are in the *Lord's school*. He sent you, to give you the most satisfactory proofs of his goodness, to your father; which I hope will prove an encouragement, and a cause of great thankfulness, to yourself. He is very gracious, and, I trust, will show himself so to you, and in you. But you deprive yourself of comfort by listening to the *voice of unbelief*, which weakens your hands and prevents your progress. How often are you distressed, as though you were only to see the goodness of the Lord to others—and not to taste of it yourself! Yet the path of few people through life has been more marked with peculiar mercies than yours! How differently has he led us from the way we would have chosen for ourselves! We have had remarkable turns in our affairs; but every *change* has been for the better, and in every *trouble* (for we have had our troubles) he has given us effectual help. Shall we not then believe that he will perfect that which concerns us?

When I was a mere child in grace, and knew not what I wanted, he sent you into the world to be, first, the principal hinge upon which my part and character in life was to turn, and then to be my companion. We have traveled together nearly twenty-six years; and, though we are changeable creatures, and have seen almost everything change around us—he has preserved our affections by his blessing, or we might have been weary of each other. How far we have yet to go, we know not; but the *greater* and (as to externals) the *pleasanter* part of our journey is probably passed

over. If our lives are prolonged, the shadows of the *evening*, old age, with its attendant infirmities, will be pressing upon us soon. Yet I hope this uncertain remaining part of our pilgrimage will, upon the whole, be the best: for our God is all-sufficient, and can make us more happy by the light of his countenance, when our temporal comforts fail—than we ever were when we possessed them to the greatest advantage.

Olney, December 3.

When you told me that S___ was coming home, my heart sunk like a stone; but it soon revived upon finding you had altered your purpose. If she had come, I must either have sent her back again, or have set out myself to fetch you. If you were not where you are, she would be very useful to me here—I feel the need of her. But, as things stand, you must either both *come*, or both *stay*; for I would not have one comfortable day if you were alone at Chatham. Every inconvenience will seem light, if compared with the thoughts of your being left by yourself. Your dear father is not acquainted either with my feelings or my situation; but you will do your best to apprise him of both.

As to your return, if there is good grounds to think that the time of *his departure* is near at hand, I ought not to desire it; but, if the unexpected turn the physician speaks of should prolong his life for months or years, and restore him to the same state in which you left him in September, your presence at home will soon be so necessary, that nothing but the most urgent call of duty can dispense with it. I speak not merely upon my own personal account; you are greatly needed by the sick, by the poor, and by your family. There are many things to which I cannot attend as I ought, while you are away. I hope, if your father recovers so far as to bear a relocation, he will give up business, and come and live with us; and spend the remnant of his days among those who can join with him in talking of that *better land* to which he is going, and in praising the Lord for his goodness.

I hope nothing that I have written will make you uneasy. My mind has been a little agitated; but, now that I have put down my thoughts upon paper, I am composed again. Your absence is, indeed, a trial; but who am I, that I should not have trials? Ah! I have deserved much more than this; even to be broken with breach upon breach, and to be deprived of you altogether. The Lord helps me, in some measure, to resign all to his disposal, and to say, *Not my will—but yours be done*. This separation is not like some which we have formerly known: there are no *oceans* between us now, nor am I under a painful suspense, as when I could not hear of you for a whole twelvemonth. Even then he was pleased to watch over us, to support us, and restore us to each other again and again. Therefore, *my soul—hope in God, for I shall yet praise him!* Yes, I will praise him now, for his goodness to you.

I know you have felt much: *afflictions must be **felt** to be sanctified*. But you have been strengthened according to your day. We seem, as I lately observed, to have had as smooth a journey, thus far, as most people. Yet, at intervals, our trials have been very sharp. Mine are always so when I feel for you; though few things, with which your peace or comfort are not connected, give me much trouble. I pay, at some seasons, a heavy tax for loving you, I had almost said too well: but I cannot love you too well, unless I love you improperly. I believe it was of the Lord's goodness that I loved you at first; and I am sure that both duty and gratitude bind me to love you now. The love which a husband should bear to his wife is expressed in very strong terms by the apostle, [Eph. 5:25-28](#). But *you certainly have been my idol*—and I often fear you are too much so still. Alas! how difficult is it to draw the line exactly between *undervaluing* and *overvaluing* the gifts of God! The good Lord pity and pardon us both, and take such a full possession of our hearts—that no *rival* may interfere with what is due only to him!

Olney, December 7.

If your letters (as you think) afforded me neither pleasure nor comfort, I would not so earnestly wish you to write; but you may be assured they afford me both, and that, in your absence, nothing of a temporal kind can give me equal satisfaction. I usually grow thoughtful about four o'clock, when I expect the post is coming, until I hear the horn; then my spirits flutter. But, when I receive a letter from you, have read it, and find you were well, I presently feel composed, and, I hope, a little thankful. Thus it was tonight. Glad I am to hear that your dear father is preparing to part with his house, and seems not unwilling to come to *Olney*; where, I trust, he will find me heartily joining with you to do everything in our power to make his remaining days comfortable.

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 us, and done so much for us—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.

In [Isaiah 43:24-25](#), we have a character of the Lord's salvation: it is free—for his own sake. It is full—blotting out all sin, like a cloud, beyond recall and remembrance. And the subjects of this salvation—are those who have wearied him by their iniquities.

Olney, December 23.

Many *prayers* are offered for you; and I hope we shall soon have to offer *praise*. I pray, not only that we may be restored to each other—but that our long *separation* may be sanctified to us both. Though it has been a gentle trial, compared to what the Lord might justly have sent, and mingled with great mercies—yet a trial it is to me, and perhaps more so to you. Not that I mean to yield the palm to you, as if you can be more sensibly affected by separation than myself; but I allow that my situation at home is more pleasant than yours while abroad. Considered as a *trial*, we have cause to be thankful that it has been so much *sweetened*; and we should likewise aim to draw some useful *lessons* from it. I feel I have only *learned* them—if I can but *practice* them.

I cannot feel how much I miss you, when you are from me but a few weeks, without thinking what support I should need if I was wholly deprived of you. The like thought, I suppose, is sometimes upon your mind. The hour will probably come, when we must experience the alternative of *leaving* or *being left*: for, though possible, it is not very likely that we shall both die at once. May the Lord impress the event of this *unknown hour* upon our minds; not to distress us—but to keep alive in us a sense of the *insignificance* of everything here—compared with the one thing needful! May He cause our faith to grow and take deep root, and fix in us such a persuasion of his all-sufficiency and grace, and of our saving interest in his promises, that we may trust and not be afraid—but cheerfully commit all that is before us to his care. He who has supported us for weeks, can support us for years, and make those things tolerable which seem the most formidable in prospect.

We are prone to be over-earnest about matters, which will one day appear to us of no more importance than the recollection of a dream! But, oh, the peace of God satisfies and fills the heart, and leaves but little room for anxious cares or worries about such trifles!

I acknowledge your kindness in sending me tolerably long letters; and, by way of thanks, I have this time taken a large sheet of paper, and will try to fill it. If I had leisure, and could find something to say, I would please myself with writing, not *sheets*—but *quires*. But I have many things to attend, and meet with hourly interruptions.

When I awakened our dear little girl this morning, I asked her for a text, and she very promptly gave me [Isaiah 42:16](#), "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the crooked places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." This verse contains an epitome an summary of my own history, and of yours also. How blind were we when the Lord brought us together! How little did we then think of the paths, by which, and to which—He had purposed to lead us. But He caused light to shine upon our darkness, and He has made a thousand crooked things straight before us, and we have good reason to trust His promise that He will not forsake us! Crooked

things will occur in our path, now and then; but, if He is with us, we need not fear. And the time is short. May we learn to speak the Psalmist's language from our hearts, "Lord! what do we wait for? Our hope is in You." We have seen much of the good which this life, in a temporal view, can afford. We have felt enough of its evils to know that all here on earth, is mingled with vanity and vexation of spirit. And I trust that, before He takes us to our eternal home, that He will make us heartily willing to go, that we may behold Him who shed His precious blood to redeem our souls!

Olney, December 26.

The Lord is very good and gracious to me. He maintains my peace, and preserves me from a thousand evils and snares! But I feel much abomination in my heart. I can truly say, 'It is a cage of unclean and hateful birds!' I dare not entrust anyone, not even you—with a detail of the wild, foolish, and dreadful thoughts which often pester my mind. The Lord, who is infinitely holy, sees all—yet He bears with me, and permits me—as vile as I am—to call Him 'mine!' Is not this astounding? Oh, He is full of grace and mercy! I hope you think and find him so.

Yesterday was a busy time—but I was led comfortably through. I had a good night, and slept this morning until past seven. I am sufficiently indulgent to Mr. Self! Do not fear my pinching or overworking him. I need a spur—more than a bridle. You often think I do too much; I much oftener see cause to confess myself to be a slothful and unprofitable servant. In the concerns of immortal souls, with eternity in view, and so much depending upon the present moment—what assiduity and labor can be proportioned to the case! I ought to be always upon the wing, seizing any opportunity of aiming to be useful, whether by word or pen; and, of course, much more careful and diligent than I am to redeem the time. May the Lord pity and pardon us all, and make us as wise in our generation, as the men of the world are in theirs!

Olney, December 27.

We are all well; and therefore you need not be alarmed at my writing so soon. Mr. R___ called on me this morning, and, when I spoke of my intended journey, he said he must go to London soon, and that, if he could be of any service, he would suit his time to ours, and willingly conduct your father to Olney. When he first spoke, my *heart* answered, "Thank you for nothing; I do not choose to miss the pleasure of seeing my dear wife at least a whole week sooner than if I wait for her at home." But I soon considered Mr. R___ as an active, strong man, who has his eyes and his wits about him, and could, perhaps, upon many occasions, be much more helpful to my father than I could. So I must mention this to you, and, if you approve it, I must, for my father's sake, submit to stay a little longer before I see her. If you think that my coming will do as well or better, here I am in waiting.

Nothing but prudence, and a sense of duty here, would prevent my setting off towards you this night. I would much prefer it to going to bed. If it depended on my will only, I feel myself well-disposed to take a journey of five hundred miles, for one day or half a day of your company, if I could have it upon no easier terms. I need not multiply words; you well know that I cannot wish for an excuse to prevent my coming to you. But your father's safe and comfortable traveling is at present a chief object with me. I love him for his own sake; when he gave his consent that you should be mine, he laid me under an obligation which I can never repay; and, over and above all this, he is your father.

Olney, January 7, **1776**.

For fear the snow should prevent my being with you on Tuesday, I write a hasty line to tell you that we are all well.

I suppose, if *SELF* had his will—he would think his journey to you of such importance, that no snow should have fallen to retard it, or make it inconvenient. Poor proud creature! What a presumptuous worm, to admit one thought against the appointment of the Most High God; instead of being duly thankful that you and I are safely sheltered, and well provided for, in this severe weather! What hardships are some people suffering this morning, while you, I hope, are sleeping peacefully in your bed, and I am sitting by a good fire. Far be it from us to repine, if in some things *our inclinations* are a little crossed. It is often, yes always, in *mercy* when they are. We have seen it so in many instances already, and shall hereafter see that it was so in all.

Let me beg you not to give way to fears on my account, nor to calculate the depth of the snow at present; nor of the floods, when the snow shall melt. Since you have had an interest in me, the Lord has preserved me in the midst of many dangers, such as you can form no idea of. We may safely trust him now. His arm is not weary; he is always near us, and his providence is ever watchful over those who fear him. But I know I cannot reason away your apprehensions, any more than I can my own when they are exercised about you. I will therefore direct my thoughts upward, "Lord, keep her heart stayed upon you, and give her power to trust all in your hand, and submit all to your will! Amen."

Olney, January 9.

If I did not feel for your anxiety, I would be quite easy; for we are all well, and surrounded with mercies. I hoped to be in London tonight, and with you tomorrow; but the Lord appointed otherwise. The greatest fall of snow I ever remember, has prevented me; but I might have been prevented by illness. Until ten or eleven this morning, I thought of making myself as easy as I could at home. But, after the wagon came in, finding that the road was open to Newport, and it beginning to thaw, I supposed, if

I could reach there, I would find the high road passable enough. As I chalked it out, I was to reach St. Alban's by eight, set out from thence at four tomorrow morning, breakfast in London, and drink tea in the afternoon with my dearest wife! Accordingly, about noon, we began our march. Mr. R___ led the van, I was in the center, and Richard brought up the rear. He was designed to bring the horses home. I was a little concerned how he would be able to manage the three horses; but my concern was needless, for we returned as we went. The road from Newport was impassable to carriages: neither carriage nor mail could move. I came safely home, well pleased that I had made the attempt, and only anxious lest you should be alarmed. I wish you may be able to *drive* away your fears upon my account, or rather *pray* them away. I am in safe hands: the Lord is my Protector, and yours too. But, if your pain fill feelings cannot be avoided, may they be sanctified! My love is unwilling that you should have an uneasy moment; but the Lord's love is not only *tender*—but *wise*!

Nor let us regret that this fall of **snow** should prolong our separation. It fell by the direction of God's providence, both as to the time and the spot. And he likewise times our concerns; or the snow might have detained your father on the road, as I hear it has some company, who were glad to be sheltered in a small public-house by the road-side, and can neither get backward nor forward. Come—all is well. We are, indeed, asunder; but I am not in *Africa*. How things are now—we know. What unforeseen events the interposition of the snow may have prevented—we know not. As it is, the consciousness of loving and being beloved remains with us; and this is better than everything else would be without it.

Olney, January 20.

You say that you cannot describe your uneasiness, when you neither saw me, as you expected, nor heard from me. I need no description. I felt it for you. I well knew how you would be situated, unless you were apprized that the roads were stopped up. Had the snow fallen with you as with us, you would have accounted for my not coming. I think no motive, less powerful than yourself, would have induced me to go to Newport when I did. It was at least an unpleasant ride; and I could not have managed it had I been alone. We were obliged, in some places, to leave the road, which was impassable, and to go around the open fields; and, at times, both the horse and his rider were almost buried in the snow. If either fatigue or expense could have prevented your anxiety, you would have had none. But I hope all is well over now.

It may help to make us patient, it should, indeed, make us thankful—to reflect upon the vast distress that *multitudes* are probably in, both by sea and land, at this moment while I am writing; some freezing with cold, others starving with hunger, some lost in the snow, others dashing against the rocks. Ah, my

dearest, how has sin filled the world with woe! And we are sinners like others—but our sufferings are light, compared with what *others* really endure; and still more light, if compared with *our deserts*.

The Lord has done a great thing for us, in showing us the way of salvation. Here may our thoughts and desires chiefly fix. If sin is pardoned, if we are accepted in the Beloved—then He will guide us by the way, and heaven will be our portion at the end! Behold! He is seated on a throne of grace, and ready to bestow every blessing that we need, more than our scanty minds can either ask or conceive. I am at a distance from you. But, alas, what am I? If you were here, I could afford you no comfort or help—but by his blessing. But He can do you good without me. He can sensibly refresh you, or secretly support you, and be unto you as *rivers of water in a dry and weary place*.

Olney, January 29.

I am not surprised that you sometimes find it hard to be reconciled to your present situation. I was much comforted by the strain of cheerful submission expressed in your two former letters; but I know, from what passes in my own heart—that we cannot maintain such a resigned frame of spirit by any power of our own. I wish you, however, to look back a month or two, to the time when you feared something had happened to me. You then thought, if you could be sure that I was well, you could make light of every inconvenience. The present severe weather is a dispensation from the Lord. Thousands feel much more terrible effects from it than we have felt; and I know no ground of claim that we have an *exemption* from a share in those trials to which all are exposed. May the Lord help us to submit, and wait patiently; for, after all, we can alter nothing. We may make things worse by a lack of resignation—but we cannot mend them.

I acknowledge that your part of the trial has been the hardest; yet mine has not been light, especially if what I have felt for you be taken into the account. Yet, upon the whole, the Lord keeps my mind attentive to what I have deserved, and to what others suffer; so that, in the main, I am quiet and peaceful. If either you or I, or our dear child, had been ill, the trial would have been much greater; yet even then we could not have helped ourselves.

Olney, January 30.

Writing to you is now almost the only thing to which I can attend. Let us try to be thankful that we are all well, and favored with the *necessities* and *comforts* of life. And let us pray that this separation, with all its inconveniences, may be sanctified. How often have I committed you and myself to the Lord, seemed willing that he should take his own methods with us, and that, in hope that he would make all things work together for our good, I

would never presume to say to Him, '*What are You doing?*' And yet, when I think of your present distress, my spirits are so softened and affected, that I am ready to overlook my innumerable causes for thankfulness. I can easily see how this trial may be one of the all things working together for our good—but it is *his blessing* which must make it so. For if left to myself, I am capable of forgetting both *corrections* and *comforts*.

I am writing by a good fire, and while I almost burn on one side, I feel the frost on the other. How true is that word, "Who can stand before his cold?" And there is another good word, which I hope, in due time, to see fulfilled: "He sends the snow like white wool; he scatters frost upon the ground like ashes. He hurls the hail like stones. Who can stand against his freezing cold? Then, at his command, it all melts. He sends his winds, and the ice thaws!" [Psalms 147:16-18](#). He can make a speedy and powerful change in the weather. When He gives his commandment, it runs very swiftly.

Such likewise is his power over the heart. He can give peace for trouble, heal our sorrows, revive our graces, and make us joyful in tribulation. If He speaks—it is done. He can bring real and enduring good—out of seeming and transient evil, water out of the rocks, and honey out of lions. Oh! that I could leave you, myself, and my all—in His hands! Be still, and know that He is God, and stand still to see his salvation. The Lord has interposed. We must not complain; if we do, we directly find fault with Him who appoints the seasons and the weather!

Olney, February 1.

Your mournful letter made me thoroughly uneasy, until this evening about eight, when I was surprised by a note, informing me that your father was at Newport, where they could not get a carriage—but wished to come to Olney tonight, if I could send one. You may guess how I ran and flew to get one. It set off soon; it is now ten o'clock, and I expect them in half an hour. Your being in the dumps, threw me into the dumps deep enough. I was distressed for your uneasiness—but still hoped what I wrote last would prevent his coming. For I was filled with the most alarming apprehensions of your father's traveling in this weather. I thought the frost would seize his legs, and imagined I saw the carriage stopped in the snow, or overturned, and that he, incapable of helping himself, would be frozen to death. The messenger arrived more than an hour before your second letter, or it would have increased my fears, to have been informed that he was actually upon the road.

I have not felt my own weakness, and lack of dependence upon God, more sensibly a great while. But I hope, when he shall have brought us happily together, what we have suffered for each other, during these last eleven weeks, will be remembered by us with thankfulness and to profit.

P.S. Your father arrived at half-past ten, safe, and well, as full of spirits as a young man, or as if he had but just risen from bed. He is very well this morning, and so we are all; and every face about me looks more pleasant, as we now can form a reasonable hope of seeing you soon.

London, Hoxton, August 6, **1785**.

I long to hear that you had a comfortable journey to Southampton, and that you are now with our dear friends. Nothing has taken place among us that can be properly called *new*; which is a great mercy. For, though you have been gone but one day, a single day, or a single hour—may produce painful alterations in a family. The Lord has preserved us through a long course of years, and in different situations, from various calamities which have overtaken others. Our obligations to thankfulness are singular and numerous.

When the carriage drove past the corner, my heart seemed to go away with it. It contained what was of more value to me than the cargoes of a whole East India fleet. Tell our niece Eliza that I love her very dearly. I feel parting with you and with her; but I can cheerfully submit to anything that may, by the Lord's blessing, contribute to her recovery or relief. She would soon be well—if I could make her so. But she is in *better hands* than mine. I have a comfortable hope that her illness has been, and will be, sanctified to an end far more desirable than health or life itself. Therefore I leave her to the wise and merciful direction of the Lord, who, I trust, loves her better than I can.

I cannot write a long letter tonight. What could I, indeed, say, if I had more time, that I have not said a thousand times over? Yet there still is, and will be, something unsaid in my heart, which I have not words to express. May the Lord bless this *little separation* to quicken us to mutual prayer, and to lead us to a thankful review of the mercy and goodness which have followed us through the many years we have been united.

How many *changes* have we seen! Under how many *trials* have we been supported! How many *deliverances* have we known! How many *comforts* have we enjoyed! Especially, what great *advantages* have we possessed, for seeking and knowing the things which pertain to everlasting peace!

The years we have passed together—will return no more. The *afflictions* are gone, the *pleasures* likewise are gone, forever. The longer we live, such pleasures as this world can afford, will, more and more, lose their power of pleasing. Only our love, I trust, will exist and flourish to the end of life, yes, beyond it! It will always be a truth, that the Lord, in giving you to me—gave me the best temporal desire of my heart. But the shadows of the *evening* advance. *Old age* is growing upon us, and the days are approaching when we shall have no pleasure but what we can derive from the good Word of God, and the consolations of his

Holy Spirit. These, if we are favored with them, will sufficiently compensate for the abatement, or the loss, of all the rest. The *streams* may run dry—but the *fountain* of living waters will always flow! May his presence be near our hearts, and then all will be well.

I am too fully employed to feel time hang heavy upon my hands in your absence; and, if I am permitted to come to you, the thoughts of the journey's end will make the journey pleasant.

Hoxton, August 17.

I thank my dear friends for their great kindness to you; tell them that I shall be glad to be with you, to share in it. But I cannot come, with propriety, at present. I hope Eliza will be able to bathe soon; and, as you are upon the spot, I think you must wait a while. Dependence and submission, in the use of prudent means, are our parts; events are in the hand of God. It was right that you should go to a proper place, whether she can bathe or not, now she is there, because the attempt was thought advisable. And, if bathing would be useful, I think she will yet be able. If not, you have acted to the best of your judgment. What we call disappointments, are God's dispensations, which, if rightly improved, will answer valuable purposes, and we shall hereafter see cause to be thankful for them. I am willing to think that I love Eliza almost, if not altogether, as well as you do. But there is an over-anxiety attending your love, which hurts you, and can do her no good. Your reflections upon this subject please me. I would do, I would suffer, much for her advantage. But still we are creatures. Our Lord God has an absolute right to dispose of us, and of ours, as he sees fit. And as he is sovereign, so he is wise and good. It is a great mercy to be enabled to yield to his will; for everything, and every heart, must either bend or break before it.

What shall I say by way of close? What—but breathe out the warmest wishes of my heart to you and for you. Daily and often I thank the Lord for giving you to me at first, and for sparing you to me so long. How very different would the history of my life have been, if yours had not been connected with it! That my *idolatrous* regard had so happy an outcome, and that my sin and folly have not yet deprived me of you, are proofs of His singular mercy to me. I have innumerable comforts to be thankful for; but my heart is so intimately united to you, that I scarcely seem susceptible either of pleasure or pain—but with some reference to you. Thus it was when our union commenced, and thus it has been every day since, to this hour. If I could say with confidence, that I hold you now in your proper place of subordination to him who gave you to me, then I need not scruple to profess that your *peace*, your *welfare*, and your *love*, are dearer to me than all earthly things. The latter I can say with truth; I hesitate about the former. I fear you are too much my *idol* still. May the good Lord pardon me in this thing. My choicest comfort has been, too often, the occasion of showing me the evil and ingratitude of my heart in the

strongest light. Oh, that we may both have grace to live the remainder of our days to Him! Do, my dearest wife, pray for me, pray earnestly for me; and may He return all the good you can ask for me a thousand-fold into your own bosom!

Hoxton, August 23.

I thank you for your letter; and I thank the Lord that dear Eliza is able to bathe. May his blessing attend every means for her relief; and, especially, may her soul prosper! She and you are daily and hourly remembered. You express the very sentiments of my heart. I am well and comfortable, in the main; but there is a lack of something, when you are absent, which no creature can make up. I hope we shall meet to praise Him soon; but, I believe, I must wait until after the fourth of September. I hope I shall then procure a proper supply for a Sunday or two. If it is the Lord's good pleasure that I shall come to you, it will be made practicable.

I cannot but wish, with you, that we may not be separated again; but it is of more importance to wish and pray that our present separation may be sanctified to us. Many things offer to amuse us: some deserve and require a degree of our attention; but one thing is especially needful. What a mercy is it that this one thing, which mountains of gold and silver cannot purchase, is to be had without money and without price! May the Lord engrave it deeply on your heart and mine! His name is Love; his Word is Power. As sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, so sure is his promise, that He will never cast out those who come unto him. If we have a desire for his blessings, He first gave it them to us, and therefore will not disappoint us. I long to see and hear you rejoicing in his salvation. He only knows the many prayers I have offered for you; I trust not in vain. I cannot doubt but the one thing needful is your chief desire. Everything else will shortly fail us; but the blessings of the Gospel will last through life, through death, and to eternity.

Hoxton, August 27.

I laid me down in peace, and awoke in safety—for the Lord sustained me. He is about our path by day, and our bed by night, and preserves us from innumerable evils, which would come upon us every hour if his watchful providence did not protect us! He is our sure, though invisible, shield; therefore we are unhurt, though, in ourselves, we are weak and defenseless, like a city without walls or gates, and open to excursions from every quarter. Could we but live more sensible of his goodness, and maintain that feeling of gratitude towards him which we do to some of our fellow-creatures, we would be happy. For what is the great design of the Gospel? Is it not to introduce us into a state of the most honorable and interesting friendship, and to perpetuate to us the pleasure which we find in pleasing those who are dearest to us? The Lord Jesus is our best Friend: his character is supremely excellent, our obligations to him are inexpressible, our

dependence upon him is absolute, and our happiness, in every sense, is in his hands. May our love therefore be fixed upon him, and we shall do well. He will guide us with His eye, guard us by his power, and his fullness and bounty will supply all our needs.

As to dear Eliza, I hope I have made up my mind about her. If her recovery could be purchased, I think I would bid as high for it as my ability would reach, provided it was the Lord's will. But I am so short-sighted that I dare not ask for the continuance of her life, (nor even of yours,) but with a reserve of submission to his wisdom. I know not what might be the possible consequences, if I could have my own will. I know He can restore her—and I believe He will, if it is for the best. If not, I desire to *submit*, or rather, to *acquiesce*, to be satisfied. I shall feel for myself if she dies; and probably my feeling will be doubled and accented upon your account. But He can support us, and sanctify the painful dispensation to us both. I pray to be enabled to entrust and resign everything to him. This is not an easy lesson to flesh and blood; but grace can make it practical. For the rest, if she should die in a moment, I have reason to be quite easy about the event, as to herself. And, if she should decline gradually, I have little doubt but the Lord will enable her to speak to the comfort and satisfaction of all about her. *She is in his wise and merciful hands—and there I am content to leave her.*

I think of our hoped-for meeting on Tuesday next with much the same anticipation of pleasure, as when I have formerly been on the return to you from an African voyage. What difference there is, I compare to the difference between the *blossom* and the *fruit*. The blessing of the Lord upon our connection has, in the course of thirty-five years, ripened the passion of love into a solid and inexpressibly tender friendship; which, I trust, in its most valuable properties, will exist forever. I shall never find words fully to tell you how much I owe you, how truly I love you, nor the one half of what my heart means, when I subscribe myself,
Your most affectionate and obliged husband.

APPENDIX

A relation of some particulars, respecting the cause, progress, and close, of the last illness of my late dear wife.

Among my readers, there will, doubtless, be some of a gentle, sympathizing spirit, with whom I am not personally acquainted; and perhaps their feelings may so far interest them in my concerns, as to make them willing to read a brief account of my late great trial. I shall allot a few pages to this purpose, by way of close to my book, and to my history.

My dear wife had naturally a good constitution, and was favored with good spirits to the last. But the violent shock she sustained in the year 1754, when I was suddenly attacked by a fit, (I know not of what kind,) which left me no sign of life for about an hour but breathing, made as sudden a change in her habit, and subjected

her, from that time, to a variety of chronic complaints. She was several times confined, for five or six months, to her chamber, and often brought so low, that her recovery was deemed hopeless. I believe she spent ten years out of forty that she was spared to me, (if all the days of her sufferings were added together,) in illness and pain. But she had likewise long intervals of health. The fit I have mentioned (the only one I ever had) was the means the Lord was pleased to appoint in answer to my prayers, to free me from the irksome sea-faring life in which I was until then engaged, and to appoint me a settlement on shore.

Before our removal from Liverpool, she received a blow upon her left breast, which occasioned her some pain and anxiety for a little time—but which soon wore off. A small lump remained in the part affected—but I heard no more of it for many years. I believe that, latterly, she felt more than I was aware of; but her tenderness for me made her conceal it as long as possible. I have often since wondered at her success; and how I could be kept so long ignorant of it.

In the month of October, 1783, she applied, unknown to me, to a friend of mine, an eminent surgeon. Her design was, if he approved it, to submit to an operation, and so to adjust time and circumstances with him, that it might be performed in my absence, and before I could know it. But the surgeon told her that the malady was too far advanced, and the tumor (the size of which he compared to the half of a melon) was too large to warrant the hope of being extracted, without the most imminent danger of her life, and that he dared not attempt it. He could give her but little advice, more than to keep herself as quiet, and her mind as cozy as possible; and little more encouragement, than by saying, that the pains to which she was exposed, were generally rendered tolerable by the use of laudanum (a narcotic); to which, however, she had a dislike, little short of an antipathy.

I cannot easily describe the composure and resignation with which she gave me this recital, the next day, of her interview with the surgeon; nor of the sensations of my mind while I heard it. My conscience told me, that I had well deserved to be wounded where I was most sensible; and that it was my duty to submit with silence to the will of the Lord. But I strongly felt that, unless He was pleased to give me this submission, I was more likely to toss like a wild bull in a net, in defiance of my better judgment.

Soon after, the Lord was pleased to visit our dear adopted daughter with a dreadful fever, which, at first, greatly affected her nerves, and afterwards became putrid. She was brought very near to the grave indeed; for we, once or twice, thought her actually dead. But He, who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, restored her, and still preserves her, to be the chief temporal comfort of my old age, and to afford me the greatest alleviation of the loss I was soon to experience, that the case could admit.

The attention and anxiety occasioned by this heavy dispensation, which lasted during the whole of a very severe winter, were by no

means suited to promote that tranquility of mind which the doctor wished my dear wife would endeavor to preserve. She was often much fatigued, and often much alarmed. Next to each other, this dear child had the nearest place both in her heart and mine. The effects were soon apparent; as the spring of 1789 advanced, her malady rapidly increased; her pains were almost incessant, and often intense, and she could seldom lie one hour in her bed in the same position. Oh! my heart, what did you then suffer!

But, in April, the God who hears prayer mercifully afforded relief, and gave such a blessing to the means employed, that her pains ceased. And though, I believe, she never had an hour of perfect ease, she felt little of the distressing pains incident to her malady from that time to the end of her life, (which was about twenty months,) excepting at three or four short intervals, which, taken together, hardly amounted to two hours: and these returns of anguish, I thought, were permitted to show me how much I was indebted to the goodness of God for exempting her feelings, and my sympathy, from what would have been terrible indeed!

In the close of the summer she was able to go to Southampton, and returned tolerably well.

She was twice at church in the first week after she came home. She then went no more abroad, except in a coach, for a little air and exercise; but she was cheerful, tolerably easy, slept as well as most people who are in perfect health, and could receive and converse with her kind friends who visited her.

It was not long after, that she began to have a distaste for food, which continued and increased; so that, perhaps, her death was at last rather owing to weakness from lack of nourishment, than to her primary disorder. Her dislike was, first, to butcher's meat, of which she could bear neither the sight nor the smell. Poultry and fish, in their turns, became equally distasteful. She retained some relish for small birds, a while after she had given up the rest; but it was at a season when they were difficult to be obtained. I hope I shall always feel my obligations to the kind friends who spared no pains to procure some for her, when they were not to be had in the markets. At that time I set more value upon a dozen of larks, than upon the finest ox in Smithfield. But her appetite failed to these also, when they became more plentiful.

Under this trying discipline I learned, more sensibly than ever, to pity those whose sufferings of a similar kind are aggravated by poverty. Our distress was not small; yet we had everything within reach that could, in any degree, conduce to her refreshment or relief; and we had faithful and affectionate servants, who were always willingly engaged to their power, yes, as the apostle speaks, beyond their power, in attending and assisting her, by night and by day. What must be the feelings of those who, when afflicted with grievous diseases, pine away, unpitied, unnoticed, without help, and, in a great measure, destitute of common necessaries? This reflection, among others, contribute to quiet my

mind, and to convince me that I had still much more cause for thankfulness, than for complaint.

For about a twelvemonth of her confinement, her spirits were good, her patience was exemplary, and there was a cheerfulness in her looks and her language that was wonderful. Often the liveliness of her remarks has forced a smile from us, when the tears were in our eyes. Whatever little contrivances she formed for her amusement in the course of the day, she would attend to nothing until she had finished her stated reading of the Scripture; in which she employed much time and great attention. I have her Bible by me, (which I would not part with for half the manuscripts in the Vatican,) in which almost every principal text, from the beginning to the end of the book, is marked in the margin with a pencil, by her own dear hand. The good Word of God was her medicine and her food, while she was able to read it. She read Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, and the Olney Hymns, in the same manner. There are few of them in which one, two, or more verses, are not thus marked; and in many, which I suppose she read more frequently, every verse is marked.

But in October the enemy was permitted, for a while, to take advantage of her bodily weakness, to disturb the peace and serenity of her mind. Her thoughts became clouded and confused; and she gradually lost, not only the comfortable evidence of her own interest in the precious truths of the Bible—but she lost all hold of the truth itself. She doubted the truth of the Bible, or whether truth existed. And, together with this, she expressed an extreme reluctance to death; and could not easily bear the most distant hint of her approaching end, though we were expecting it daily and hourly. This was the acme, the high-water mark of my trial; this was hard to bear indeed.

My readers, perhaps, will scarcely believe that I derived some consolation, during this gloomy period, from perceiving that her attachment to me was very sensibly abated. She spoke to me with an indifference of which, a little before, she was incapable. If, when the Lord's presence was withdrawn, and she could derive no comfort from his Word, she had found some relief from my being with her, or from hearing me speak, I should have been more grieved. Her affection to me, confirmed by so many proofs in the course of forty years, was not to be impeached by this temporary suspension of its exercise. I judged the same of the frame of her mind, as to her spiritual concerns: I ascribed them both to the same causes, her bodily weakness, and the power of temptation. She was relieved in both respects, after about a two weeks spent in conflict and dismay. The Lord restored peace to her soul; and then her former tenderness to me immediately revived. Then, likewise, she could calmly speak of her approaching dissolution. She mentioned some particulars concerning her funeral, and our domestic concerns, with great composure. But her mind was not so fully restored to its former tone, as to give her freedom to enlarge upon her hopes and views as I had wished, until near her dissolution; and then she was too low to speak at all.

One addition to our trial yet remained. It had been our custom, when she went from the sofa to her bed, to exert herself for my encouragement, to show me how well she could walk. But it pleased the Lord that, by some alteration which affected her spine, she was disabled from moving herself; and other circumstances rendered it extremely difficult to move her. It has taken five of us nearly two hours to move her from one side of the bed to the other; and, at times, even this was impracticable: so that she has lain more than a week exactly in the same spot, without the possibility of changing her position. All this was necessary on my account. The rod had a voice; and it was the voice of the Lord. I understood the meaning no less plainly than if He had spoken audibly from heaven, and said, "*Now contemplate your idol! Now see what she is, whom you once presumed to prefer to Me!*" Even this bitter cup was sweetened by the patience and resignation which He gave her. When I have said, "You suffer greatly;" her answer usually was, "I suffer, indeed—but not greatly." And she often expressed her thankfulness, that, though her body was immovable, she was still permitted the use of her hands.

One of the last sensible concerns she felt respecting this world was, when my honored friend, patron, and benefactor, the late John Thornton, Esq. of Clapham, was removed to a better world. She revered and regarded him, I believe, more than she did any person upon earth; and she had reason. Few had nearer access to know and admire his character; and perhaps none were under greater, if equal, obligations to him than we. She knew of his illness—but was always afraid to inquire after the event; nor should I have ventured to inform her—but that the occasion requiring me to leave her for four or five hours, when I hardly expected to find her alive at my return, I was constrained to give her the reason of my absence. She eagerly replied, "Go by all means; I would not have you stay with me upon any consideration." I put the funeral ring I was favored with into her hands; she put it first to her lips, and then to her eyes, bedewing it with her tears. I trust they soon met again. But she survived him more than a month.

Her head became so affected, that I could do little more than sit and look at her. Our fellowship by words was nearly broken off. She could not easily bear the sound of the gentlest foot upon the carpet; nor of the softest voice. On Sunday, the 12th of December, when I was preparing for church in the morning, she sent for me, and we took a final farewell as to this world. She faintly uttered an endearing compellation, which was familiar to her, and gave me her hand, which I held while I prayed by her bed-side. We exchanged a few tears; but I was almost as unable to speak as she was. But I returned soon after, and said, "If your mind, as I trust, is in a state of peace, it will be a comfort to me if you can signify it by holding up your hand." She held it up, and waved it to and fro several times.

That evening, her speech, her sight, and, I believe, her hearing, wholly failed. She continued perfectly composed, without taking

notice of anything, or discovering any sign of pain or uneasiness until Wednesday evening towards seven o'clock. She then began to breathe very hard: her breathing might be called groaning, for it was heard in every part of the house; but I believe it was entirely owing to the difficulty of expiration, for she lay quite still, with a placid countenance, as if in a gentle slumber. There was no struggle, nor a feature ruffled. I took my post by her bed-side, and watched her nearly three hours, with a candle in my hand, until I saw her breathe her last, on the 15th of December, 1790, a little before ten in the evening.

When I was sure she was gone, I took off her ring, according to her repeated injunction, and put it upon my own finger. I then kneeled down, with the servants who were in the room, and returned the Lord my sincere thanks for her deliverance and her peaceful dismissing.

How wonderful must be the moment after death! What a transition did she then experience! She was instantly freed from sin, and all its attendant sorrows, and, I trust, instantly admitted to join the heavenly choir. That moment was remarkable to me likewise. It removed from me the chief object which made another day or hour of life, as to my own personal concern, desirable. At the same time, it set me free from a weight of painful feelings and anxieties, under which nothing short of a divine power could have so long supported me.

I believe it was about two or three months before her death, when I was walking up and down the room, offering disjointed prayers from a heart torn with distress, that a thought suddenly struck me, with unusual force, to this effect: "The promises of God must be true; surely the Lord will help me, if I am willing to be helped!" It occurred to me, that we are often led, from a vain complacency in what we call our sensibility, to indulge that unprofitable *grief* which both our duty and our peace require us to resist to the utmost of our power. I instantly said aloud, "Lord, I am helpless indeed, in myself—but I hope I am willing, without reserve, that you should help me."

It had been much upon my mind from the beginning of this trial, that I was a minister, and that the eyes of many were upon me; that my turn of preaching had very much led me to endeavor to comfort the afflicted, by representing the Gospel as an effectual remedy for every evil, a full compensation for every need or loss to those who truly receive it; so that, though a believer may be afflicted, he cannot be properly unhappy, unless he gives way to self-will and unbelief. I had often told my hearers, that a state of trial, if rightly improved, was to the Christian, a post of honor, affording the fairest opportunity of exemplifying the power of divine grace, to the praise and glory of the Giver. It had been, therefore, my frequent daily prayer, that I might not, by impatience or despondence, be deprived of the advantage my situation afforded me, of confirming, by my own practice, the doctrine which I had preached to others, and that I might not give them occasion to apply to me the words of Eliphaz to Job; ([Job](#)

[4:4-6](#)) "Your words have strengthened the fallen; you steadied those who wavered. But now when trouble strikes, *you* faint and are broken. Does your reverence for God give you no confidence? Shouldn't you believe that God will care for those who are upright?" And I had not prayed in vain. But from the time that I so remarkably felt myself willing to be helped, I might truly say to the praise of the Lord, "My heart trusted in Him, and I was helped" indeed.

Through the whole of my painful trial, I attended all my stated and occasional services, as usual; and a stranger would scarcely have discovered, either by my words or looks, that I was in trouble. Many of our intimate friends were apprehensive, that this long affliction, and especially the closing event, would have overwhelmed me; but it was far otherwise. It did not prevent me from preaching a single sermon—and I preached on the day of her death.

After she was gone, my willingness to be helped, and my desire that the Lord's goodness to me might be observed by others for their encouragement, made me indifferent to some laws of established *custom*—the breach of which is often more noticed than the violation of God's commands. I was afraid of sitting at home, and indulging myself by poring over my loss; and therefore I was seen in the street, and visited some of my serious friends the very next day. *I likewise preached three times while she lay dead in the house.* Some of my brethren kindly offered their assistance; but, as the Lord was pleased to give me strength, both of body and mind, I thought it my duty to stand up in my place as formerly. And after she was deposited in the vault, *I preached her funeral sermon,* with little more sensible emotion than if it had been for another person. I have reason to hope that many of my hearers were comforted and animated under their afflictions, by what they saw of the Lord's goodness to me in my time of need. And I acknowledge that it was well worth standing a while in the fire, for such an opportunity of experiencing and exhibiting the power and faithfulness of his promises.

I was not supported by lively sensible consolations—but by being enabled to realize to my mind some great and leading truths of the Word of God. I saw, what indeed I knew before—but never until then so strongly and so clearly perceived, that, as a sinner, I had no right; and, as a believer, I could have no reason to complain. I considered her as a *loan*, which He who lent her to me had a right to resume whenever He pleased; and that as I had deserved to forfeit her every day from the first, it became me rather to be thankful that she was spared to me so long, than to resign her with reluctance when called for. Farther, that his *sovereignty* was connected with infinite *wisdom* and *goodness*; and that consequently, if it were possible for me to alter any part of his plan, I could only spoil it—that such a short-sighted creature as I, so blind to the possible consequences of my own wishes, was not only *unworthy*—but *unable*, to choose well for myself; and that it was therefore my great mercy and privilege that the Lord condescended to choose for me. May such considerations

powerfully affect the hearts of my readers under their troubles, and then I shall not regret having submitted to the view of the public, a detail which may seem more proper for the subject of a private letter to a friend. They who can feel for me, will, I hope, excuse me. And it is chiefly for their sakes that I have written it.

When my wife died, the world seemed to die with her—I hope to revive no more! I see little now—but my ministry and my Christian profession, to make a continuance in life, for a single day, desirable; though I am willing to wait my appointed time. If the world cannot restore her to me, (not that I have the remotest wish that her return was possible,) it can do nothing for me. The Bank of England is too poor to compensate for such a loss as mine. But the Lord, the all-sufficient God, speaks, and it is done. Let those who know him, and trust him, be of good courage. He can give them *strength* according to their day; he can increase their strength as their trials are increased, to any assignable degree. And what he *can* do, he has promised he *will* do. The power and faithfulness on which the successive changes of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, depend, and which uphold the stars in their orbits, is equally engaged to support his people, and to lead them safely and unhurt (if their path is so appointed) through floods and flames. Though I believe she has never yet been (and probably never will be) out of my waking thoughts for five minutes at a time; though I sleep in the bed in which she suffered and languished so long; I have not had one uncomfortable day, nor one restless night, since she left me. I have lost a right hand, which I cannot but miss continually; but the Lord enables me to go on cheerfully without it.

May his blessing rest upon the reader! May glory, honor, and praise, be ascribed to his great and holy name, now and forever! Amen.

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains!" [Habakkuk 3:17-19](#)