

THE
WORKS
OF
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LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

CONTAINING
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &C., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA,
DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED
MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.

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LETTERS

TO MRS. G——.

LETTER I.

June 20, 1776.

MADAM,

It would be both unkind and ungrateful in me, to avail myself of any plea of business, for delaying the acknowledgment I owe you for your acceptable favour from ——, which, though dated the 6th instant, I did not receive till the 10th.

Could I have known in time that you were at Mr. ——'s, I should have endeavoured to have called upon you while there; and very glad should I have been to have seen you with us. But they who fear the Lord may be sure, that whatever is not practicable is not necessary. He could have over-ruled every difficulty in your way, had he seen it expedient; but he is pleased to show you, that you depend not upon men, but upon himself: and that, notwithstanding your connections may exclude you from some advantages in point of outward means, he who has begun a good work in you, is able to carry it on, in defiance of all seeming hindrances, and make all things (even those which have the most unfavourable appearances) work together for your good.

A sure effect of his grace, is a desire and longing for gospel-ordinances; and when they are afforded, they cannot be neglected without loss. But the Lord sees many souls who are dear to him, and whom he is training up in a growing meetness for his kingdom, who are by his providence so situated, that it is not in their power to attend upon gospel preaching; and perhaps they have seldom either Christian minister or Christian friend to assist or comfort them. Such a situation is a state of trial; but Jesus is all-sufficient, and he is always near. They cannot be debarred from his word of grace, which is everywhere at hand, nor from his throne of grace; for they who feel their need of him, and whose hearts are drawn towards him, are always at the foot of it. Every room in the house, yea, every spot they stand on, fields, lanes, and hedge-rows, all is holy ground to them; for the Lord is there. The chief difference between us, and the disciples when our Saviour was upon earth, is in this: They then walked by sight, and we are called to walk by faith. They could see him with their bodily eyes, we cannot; but he said before he left them, "It is expedient for you that I go away." How could this be, unless that spiritual communion which he promised to maintain with his people after his ascension, were preferable to that intercourse he

allowed them whilst he was visibly with them? But we are sure it is preferable, and they who had tried both were well satisfied he had made good his promise; so that though they had known him after the flesh, they were content not to know him so any more. Yes, Madam, though we cannot see him, he sees us; he is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. In a natural state, we have very dark, and indeed dishonourable thoughts of God: we conceive of him as at a distance; but when the heart is awakened, we begin to make Jacob's reflection, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And when we receive faith, we begin to know that this ever present God is in Christ; that the government of heaven and earth, the dispensations of the kingdom of nature, providence, and grace, are in the hands of Jesus, that it is he with whom we have to do, who once suffered agony and death for our redemption, and whose compassion and tenderness are the same, now he reigns over all blessed for ever, as when he conversed amongst men in the days of his humiliation. Thus God is made known to us by the gospel, in the endearing views of a Saviour, a Shepherd, a Husband, a Friend; and a way of access is opened for us through the veil, that is, the human nature, of our Redeemer, to enter, with humble confidence, into the holiest of all, and to repose all our cares and concerns upon the strength of that everlasting arm which upholds heaven and earth, and upon that infinite love which submitted to the shame, pain, and death of the cross, to redeem sinners from wrath and misery.

Though there is a height, a breadth, a length, and a depth, in this mystery of redeeming love, exceeding the comprehension of all finite minds; yet the great and leading principles which are necessary for the support and comfort of our souls, may be summed up in a very few words. Such a summary we are favoured with in Titus ii. 11–14, where the whole of salvation, all that is needful to be known, experienced, practised, and hoped for, is comprised within the compass of four verses. If many books, much study, and great discernment, were necessary in order to be happy, what must the poor and simple do? Yet for them especially is the gospel designed; and few but such as these attain the knowledge and comfort of it. The Bible is a sealed book till the heart be awakened, and then he that runs may read. The propositions are few: I am a sinner, therefore I need a Saviour, one who is able and willing to save to the uttermost: such a one is Jesus; he is all that I want, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But will he receive me? Can I answer a previous question? Am I willing to receive him? If so, and if his word may be taken, if he meant what he said, and promised no more than he can perform, I may be sure of a welcome. He knew long before, the doubts, fears, and suspicions, which would arise in my mind when I should come to know what I am, what I have done, and what I have deserved; and therefore he declared, before he left the earth, "Him that cometh

to me, I will in no wise cast out." I have no money or price in my hand, no worthiness to recommend me; and I need none, for he saveth freely for his own name's sake. I have only to be thankful for what he has already shown me, and to wait upon him for more. It is my part to commit myself to him as the physician of sin-sick souls, not to prescribe to him how he shall treat me. To begin, carry on, and perfect the cure, is his part.

The doubts and fears you speak of, are, in a greater or less degree, the common experience of all the Lord's people, at least for a time. Whilst any unbelief remains in the heart, and Satan is permitted to tempt, we shall feel these things. In themselves they are groundless and evil; yet the Lord permits and overrules them for good. They tend to make us know more of the plagues of our own hearts, and feel more sensibly the need of a Saviour, and make his rest (when we attain it) doubly sweet and sure. And they likewise qualify us for pitying and comforting others. Fear not; only believe, wait, and pray. Expect not all at once. A Christian is not of hasty growth, like a mushroom, but rather like the oak, the progress of which is hardly perceptible, but which in time becomes a great deep-rooted tree. If my writings have been useful to you, may the Lord have the praise. To administer any comfort to his children is the greatest honour and pleasure I can receive in this life. I cannot promise to be a very punctual correspondent, having many engagements; but I hope to do all in my power to show myself, Madam,

Yours. &c.

LETTER II.

August 20, 1776.

MADAM,

THOUGH in general I think myself tolerably punctual when I can answer a letter in six or seven weeks after the receipt, yet I feel some pain for not having acknowledged yours sooner. A case like that which you have favoured me with an account of, deserved an immediate attention, and when I read it, I proposed writing within a post or two, and I can hardly allow any plea of business to be a sufficient excuse for delaying it so long; but our times are in the Lord's hands. May he now enable me to send you what may prove a word in season.

Your exercises have been by no means singular, though they may appear so to yourself; because, in your retired situation, you have not (as you observe) had much opportunity of knowing the experience of other Christians; nor has the guilt with which your mind has been so greatly burdened been properly your own. It was a temptation forced upon you by the enemy, and he shall answer for it. Undoubtedly it is a mournful proof of the depravity of our nature, that there is that within us which renders us so easily susceptible of his suggestions; a proof of our extreme weakness, that after the clearest and most satisfying evidences of the truth, we are not able to hold fast our confidence, if the Lord permits Satan to sift and shake us. But I can assure you these changes are not uncommon. I have known persons, who, after walking with God comfortably in the main for forty years, have been at their wits end from such assaults as you mention, and been brought to doubt, not only of the reality of their own hopes, but of the very ground and foundation upon which their hopes were built. Had you remained, as it seems you once were, attached to the vanities of a gay and dissipated life, or could you have been content with a form of godliness, destitute of the power, it is probable you would have remained a stranger to these troubles. Satan would have employed his arts in a different and less perceptible way, to have soothed you into a false peace, and prevented any thought or suspicion of danger from arising in your mind. But when he could no longer detain you in his bondage, or seduce you back again into the world, then of course he would change his method, and declare open war against you. A specimen of his power and malice you have experienced; and the Lord whom you loved, because he first loved you, permitted it, not to gratify Satan, but for your benefit—to humble and prove you, to show you what is in your heart, and to do you good in the issue. These things, for the present, are not joyous but grievous; yet, in the end, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. In the mean time his eye is upon you: he has

appointed bounds both to the degree and duration of the trial; and he does and will afford you such supports, that you shall not be tried beyond what you are able to bear. I doubt not but your conflicts and sorrows will, in due time, terminate in praise and victory, and be sanctified to your fuller establishment in the truth.

I greatly rejoice in the Lord's goodness to your dying parent. How wisely timed, and how exactly suited, was that affecting dispensation, to break the force of those suggestions with which the enemy was aiming to overwhelm your spirit! He could not stand against such an illustrious demonstrative attestation, that the doctrines you had embraced were not cunningly devised fables. He could proceed no farther in that way; but he is fruitful in resources. His next attempt, of course, was to fix guilt upon your conscience, as if you had yourself formed and willingly entertained those thoughts, which, indeed, you suffered with extreme reluctance and pain. Here likewise I find he succeeded for a time; but he who broke the former snare, will deliver you from this likewise.

The dark and dishonourable thoughts of God, which I hinted at as belonging to a natural state, are very different from the thoughts of your heart concerning him. You do not conceive of him as a hard master, or think you could be more happy in the breach than in the observance of his precepts. You do not prefer the world to his favour, or think you can please him, and make amends for your sins, by an obedience of your own. These, and such as these, are the thoughts of the natural heart,—the very reverse of yours. One thought, however, I confess you have indulged, which is no less dishonourable to the Lord than uncomfortable to yourself. You say, "I dare not believe that God will not impute to me as sin, the admission of thoughts which my soul ever abhorred, and to which my will never consented." Nay, you fear lest they should not only be imputed, but unpardonable. But how can this be possible! Indeed, I will not call it your thought, it is your temptation. You tell me you have children. Then you will easily feel a plain illustration, which just now occurs to me. Let me suppose a case which has sometimes happened; a child, three or four years of age we will say, while playing incautiously at a little distance from home, should be suddenly seized and carried away by a gipsy. Poor thing! how terrified, how distressed must it be! Methinks I hear its cries. The sight and violence of the stranger, the recollection of its dear parents, the loss of its pleasing home, the dread and uncertainty of what is yet to befall it. Is it not a wonder that it does not die in agonies? But see, help is at hand! the gipsy is pursued, and the child recovered. Now, my dear Madam, permit me to ask you, if this were your child, how would you receive it? Perhaps, when the first transports of your joy for its safety would permit you, you might gently chide it for leaving your door. But

would you disinherit it? Would you disown it? Would you deliver it up again to the gipsy with your own hands, because it had suffered a violence which it could not withstand, which it abhorred and to which its will never consented? And yet what is the tenderness of a mother, of ten thousand mothers, to that which our compassionate Saviour bears to every poor soul that has been enabled to flee to him for salvation! Let us be far from charging that to him, of which we think we are utterly incapable ourselves. Take courage, Madam; resist the devil and he will flee from you. If he were to tempt you to any thing criminal, you would start at the thought, and renounce it with abhorrence. Do the same when he tempts you to question the Lord's compassion and goodness. But there he imposes upon us with a show of humility, and persuades us that we do well to oppose our unworthiness as a sufficient exception to the many express promises of the word. It is said, the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin: that all manner of sin shall be forgiven for his sake; that whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast him out; and that he is able to save to the uttermost. Believe his word, and Satan shall be found a liar. If the child had deliberately gone away with the gipsy, had preferred that wretched way of life, and had refused to return, though frequently and tenderly invited home; perhaps a parent's love might, in time, be too weak to plead for the pardon of such continued obstinacy. But, indeed, in this manner we have all dealt with the Lord; and yet, whenever we are willing to return, he is willing to receive us with open arms, and without an upbraiding word, Luke xv. 20, 22. Though our sins have been deep-dyed like scarlet and crimson, enormous as mountains, and countless as the sands, the sum total is only this, Sin has abounded; but where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. After all, I know the Lord keeps the key of comfort in his own hands, yet he has commanded us to attempt comforting one another. I should rejoice to be his instrument of administering comfort to you. I shall hope to hear from you soon; and that you will then be able to inform me he has restored to you the joys of his salvation. But if not, yet wait for him, and you shall not wait in vain.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

June — 1777.

MY DEAR MADAM,

TEMPTATIONS may be compared to the wind, which, when it has ceased raging from one point, after a short calm, frequently renews its violence from another quarter. The Lord silenced Satan's former assaults against you, but he is permitted to try you again in another way. Be of good courage, Madam, wait upon the Lord, and the present storm shall likewise subside in good time. You have an infallible pilot, and are embarked in a bottom against which the winds and waves cannot prevail. You may be tossed about, and think yourself in apparent jeopardy; but sink you shall not, except the promises and faithfulness of God can fail. Upon an attentive consideration of your complaint, it seems to me to amount only to this, that though the Lord has done great things for you, he has not yet brought you to a state of independence on himself, nor released you from that impossibility which all his people feel, of doing any thing without him. And is this indeed a matter of complaint? Is it not every way better, more for his glory, and more suited to keep us mindful of our obligations to him, and in the event, more for our safety, that we should be reduced to a happy necessity of receiving daily out of his fulness (as the Israelites received the manna), than to be set up with something of a stock of wisdom, power, and goodness of our own? Adam was thus furnished at the beginning with strength to stand; yet, mutability being essential to a creature, he quickly fell and lost all. We, who are by nature sinners, are not left to so hazardous an experiment. He has himself engaged to keep us, and treasured up all fulness of grace for our support in a Head who cannot fail. Our gracious Saviour will communicate all needful supplies to his members, yet in such a manner, that they shall feel their need and weakness, and have nothing to boast of from first to last, but his wisdom, compassion, and care. We are in no worse circumstances than the apostle Paul, who, though eminent and exemplary in the Christian life, found, and freely confessed, that he had no sufficiency in himself to think a good thought. Nor did he wish it otherwise; he even gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Unbelief, and a thousand evils, are still in our hearts; though their reign and dominion is at an end, they are not slain or eradicated; their effects will be felt more or less sensibly, as the Lord is pleased more or less to afford or abate his gracious influence. When they are kept down, we are no better in ourselves, for they are not kept down by us: but we are very prone to think better of ourselves at such a time, and therefore, he is pleased to permit us

at seasons to feel a difference, that we may never forget how weak and how vile we are. We cannot absolutely conquer these evils, but it becomes us to be humbled for them; and we are to fight, and strive, and pray against them. Our great duty is to be at his footstool, and to cry to him who has promised to perform all things for us. Why are we called soldiers, but because we are called to a warfare. And how could we fight, if there were no enemies to resist? The Lord's soldiers are not merely for show, to make an empty parade in a uniform, and to brandish their arms when none but friends and spectators are around them. No, we must stand upon the field of battle; we must face the fiery darts; we must wrestle (which is the closest and most arduous kind of fighting) with our foes: nor can we well expect wholly to escape wounds; but the leaves of the tree of life are provided for our healing. The Captain of our salvation is at hand, and leads us on with an assurance, which might make even a coward bold,—that in the end we shall be more than conquerors through him who has loved us.

I am ready to think, that some of the sentiments in your letters are not properly yours, such as you yourself have derived from the scriptures, but rather borrowed from authors or preachers, whose judgment your humility has led you to prefer to your own. At least, I am sure the scriptures do not authorise the conclusion which distresses you, that if you were a child of God, you should not feel such changes and oppositions. Were I to define a Christian, or rather to describe him at large, I know no text I would choose sooner, as a ground for the subject, than Gal. v. 17. A Christian has noble aims, which distinguish him from the bulk of mankind. His leading principles, motives, and desires, are all supernatural and divine. Could he do as he would, there is not a spirit before the throne should excel him in holiness, love, and obedience. He would tread in the very footsteps of his Saviour, fill up every moment in his service, and employ every breath in his praise. This he would do, but alas! he cannot. Against this desire of the spirit, there is a contrary desire; and working of a corrupt nature, which meets him at every turn. He has a beautiful copy set before him; he is enamoured with it; and though he does not expect to equal it, he writes carefully after it, and longs to attain to the nearest possible imitation. But indwelling sin and Satan continually jog his hand, and spoil his strokes. You cannot, Madam, form a right judgment of yourself, except you make due allowance for those things which are not peculiar to yourself, but common to all who have spiritual perception, and are indeed the inseparable appendages of this mortal state. If it were not so, why should the most spiritual and gracious people be so ready to confess themselves vile and worthless? One eminent branch of our holiness, is a sense of shame and humiliation for those evils which are only known to ourselves, and to him who searches our hearts, joined with an acquiescence in Jesus, who is appointed of

God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I will venture to assure you, that though you will possess a more stable peace, in proportion as the Lord enables you to live more simply upon the blood, righteousness, and grace of the Mediator, you will never grow into a better opinion of yourself than you have at present. The nearer you are brought to him, the quicker sense you will have of your continual need of him, and thereby your admiration of his power, love, and compassion, will increase likewise from year to year.

I would observe farther, that our spiritual exercises are not a little influenced by our constitutional temperament. As you are only an ideal correspondent, I can but conjecture about you upon this head. If your frame is delicate, and your nervous system very sensible and tender, I should probably ascribe some of your apprehensions to this cause. It is an abstruse subject, and I will not enter into it; but, according to the observations I have made, persons of this habit seem to live more upon the confines of the invisible world, if I may so speak, and to be more susceptible of impressions from it, than others. That complaint, which, for want of a better name, we call lowness of spirits, may probably afford the enemy some peculiar advantages and occasions of distressing you. The mind then perceives objects as through a tintured medium, which gives them a dark and discouraging appearance; and I believe Satan has more influence and address than we are aware of in managing the glass. And when this is not the case at all times, it may be so occasionally, from sickness, or other circumstances. You tell me that you have lately been ill, which, together with your present situation, and the prospect of your approaching hour, may probably have such an effect as I have hinted. You may be charging yourself with guilt, for what springs from indisposition, in which you are merely passive, and which may be no more properly sinful than the headache, or any of the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to. The enemy can take no advantage but what the Lord permits him; and he will permit him none but what he designs to over-rule for your greater advantage in the end. He delights in your prosperity; and you should not be in heaviness for an hour, were there not a need-be for it. Notwithstanding your fears, I have a good hope, that he who you say has helped you in six troubles, will appear for you in the seventh; that you will not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord, and come forth to testify to his praise, that he has turned your mourning into joy.

I am, &c.