

JAMES BOURNE



His Life and Letters

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

of

JAMES BOURNE



S. Taylor, pinxt. 1838.

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James Bourne

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

of

JAMES BOURNE

EDITED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW

WILLIAM BENSON

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Jude 3

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

Acts 14. 22

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PREFACE

To many older readers James Bourne's letters need no recommendation as they have been read and valued by spiritually minded people of God for many years. However in a day when spiritual exercise is generally speaking so shallow, and the true communion of the saints so intermittent, James Bourne's letters are a salutary reminder of the scriptural standard of real religion, and of its sanctifying effects in the heart, life and conversation that believers ought to covet.

Written over the many years of his fruitful ministry they cover a wide range of both spiritual and practical matters which should be a concern to those who fear God in their daily walk and conversation.

James Bourne had a special gift in being able to deal faithfully, and yet kindly with his correspondents. Drawing from the rich experience of the Lord's dealings in his own soul, he continually pointed his readers to the necessity for the application of the Word of God by the Spirit to the heart, if any gracious effect was to be effected.

Two features stand out, above many others, which especially commend these letters. Firstly James Bourne was very honest about his own failings and his need of God's mercy. He writes as a sinner needing mercy to other sinners who need the same mercy. Secondly, as the Puritans used to exhort their hearers, he kept short accounts with God, and thus, by grace, was enabled to keep in close fellowship with the Lord. Like his contemporary, Sukey Harley, if the Lord should hide His face or withdraw His presence, he would give Him no rest until once again he received the smile of reconciliation in his own soul.

May the reading of these precious letters, be a means of grace, whereby their readers are brought into that same closer walk which characterised this dear man of God.

G D Buss
January 2008

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OUTLINES OF MY OWN LIFE

“In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion.” Thou hast been my strong habitation, whereunto I have continually resorted; thou hast been my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb. “I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.”

“O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.”

JAMES BOURNE

CHAPTER 1

[HIS EARLY LIFE – RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS – DISAPPOINTMENTS IN BUSINESS. FINDS DIRECTION WHAT TO DO. HEARS THE WORD. SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS AND DELIVERANCE. 1773-1807.]

It is my desire in much humility to give some account of the teaching of the Spirit of God upon my heart.

I was born (in 1773) at a village called Dalby, near Spilsby, in Lincolnshire. My father was a country gentleman of considerable landed property. My mother’s name was Fowler, of Boothby Hall, in the same neighbourhood. She died when I was but eighteen months old; and whilst almost an infant I was sent daily to a school kept by a poor woman who had been servant in the family, and was often through neglect left there for days together. At the age of four and a half I was sent to Louth Grammar School.

My father’s second marriage turned his affections from me until his death, which was very wounding to me. He died when I was fifteen, leaving the paternal estate to his eldest son, and a small legacy to the rest of his children by his first wife, of whom I was the youngest. The surviving son by the second wife inherited his mother’s property. Thus were two of the family rendered independent, and placed in a very different situation from the rest.

At school it was easily seen that I was neglected at home, and therefore the same liberty was taken by the master. I was continually punished, disgraced, and disheartened, and never allowed to rise in the school. I must acknowledge that my natural disposition was volatile, and that I was a boy that had no mind for study; nor did the master attempt to correct this deficiency, but was always jeering and setting me at nought; so that at last I entreated my friends to let me go to another school in the same town. Here I made more progress in one year than in all the time before, greatly to the surprise of my new master, and regained my lost character, and was fitted by this short attention to my education to enter upon anything that might be eligible for me to pursue in life.

In the same town I had a brother articled to a solicitor, who during my absence in the holidays had joined himself to the Methodists. On my return he said much on the new profession of religion he had engaged in, and I was not long listening before I went with him to hear, and soon became his constant

companion. I remember the first text I heard was 2 Kings 4. 26, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" The last sentence lighted upon me. I replied in my heart, It is not well with the child, meaning myself. This I could not easily shake off; and from the impression it made on me, together with my brother's conversation, I became a professor of religion. Being a schoolboy at a public school, I was presently noticed by all parties, flattered and admired by the poor professors, laughed at by others, and scorned by my schoolfellows, who used to set themselves in such places and positions in the chapel as to make me if possible ashamed of myself and of the despicable cause I had espoused. In a few weeks I was solicited to join the society, the nature of which I neither understood nor laid to heart. Being made tender through fear I only thought I must do as I was bid. So on the next public meeting my brother and myself appeared in full congregation to give some account of the work of God upon our souls, of which (as yet) I had no comprehension, yet after a few broken accents we were admitted.

All this time I had to endure much reproach in the boarding house from those around me, but this text continually followed me, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and of the holy angels" [Luke 9. 26.] This kept me patient and willing to hear, though I had no spiritual view or knowledge of Christ as my Saviour.

I was told to pray to obtain the justification of my soul as they called it; and after some weeks I found a great flow of comfort that I understood not, which they told me was the first blessing, and it produced something that looked like fruit. I remember that in consequence of the unkind treatment I received from the mistress of the boarding house, I had imbibed a great secret hatred to her, but after this change I told my brother that now I could love her dearly; he said that was right and was a proof that the work was genuine.

I continued some time at this place, with many changes in my mind, and found the profession I made was the cause of a great deal of unhappiness in many ways, both as to what I did, as well as what I denied myself.

At length the time came that I must leave school, and it was thought necessary that I should go to London, and that I might be trusted, though not quite sixteen, being what is termed serious. I spent a year and a half experiencing many vicissitudes, and being left to myself I did not so strictly adhere to the rules of the society I belonged to as before. I tried in various ways to seek for occupation, but was not a proper judge of what was likely to prove advantageous to me, nor had I as yet learnt that all things are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. I knew not the Lord as a God of providence, and not asking counsel of him nothing prospered. Yet I must say that though the many dangerous circumstances I fell into have proved the ruin of thousands, the impressions of tenderness I had received in my religious profession did not entirely leave me, nor did the Lord give me up to a designing world. When I was sixteen and a half years old I was pressed to pray in the public chapel in West Street; though very painful to my feelings I yielded, and I think the admiration and praise I obtained on account of my youth had a great influence on my outward conduct in keeping me from the common vices of the world.

Being so situated as to be unable to attend class regularly, my ticket was at length withheld, but in consequence of the intervention of an influential friend who represented me as a gentleman's son, it was immediately restored. On mature reflection I wondered how such a circumstance could have any weight. There appeared, even to my youthful mind, such a worldly spirit in the measure, that I never, after this, felt any value for or attachment to that cause, but continued to attend with less and less cordiality, and less and less constancy, till at length I finally left it.

After various unsuccessful attempts to engage in some line of business, I at last settled in Manchester. Here I addicted myself to visiting and public amusements, and by this means soon lost sight of my profession of religion, endeavouring to drive all care and despondency from my mind. Yet the Lord did not give me over to a reprobate mind. I could not quite forget the little understanding I had of divine things, and there were many vices I dared not enter into as others did. Thus the Lord kept still alive in my conscience that spark which he had put there, though balls, card parties, and the like occupied nearly the whole of my time, till my little patrimony began to sink, and conscience began to awaken at the same time, and to bring on terrible fears.

I remember one Sunday being invited by six or seven young persons to take a ride. This I shall not forget while I live. My friends were altogether of the world, but I had not totally forgotten the restraint I had formerly felt; yet I ventured. The heavens seemed to me covered with sackcloth. I felt as if hell were already begun. We at length arrived at the River Mersey, which we must ford; here I faltered, not daring at first to cross, but said nothing. I let four or five pass and then spurred on my horse but exceedingly feared I should perish in the river. I could not for one moment raise my drooping spirits, but my heart kept saying, Is this the way to spend your Sundays? Will this bring a blessing? I could not answer, I felt so ashamed, only that if I should be spared to get safe home I would never do the like again. The company was vain and thoughtless, but as for me, though I knew not the Lord, his terrors made me greatly afraid. I shall never forget the black cloud that was upon my heart, as an evident mark of the wrath of God for my sin.

But notwithstanding this check, instead of religious society, I still sought what is called the best company in the place, and was intimately acquainted with many good families in the neighbourhood, whose houses frequently become my home; yet a throbbing heart would often tell me this would not last; and I devised in my mind many changes. I thought I would sink the little remains of my property, and go into the neighbourhood of the Lakes, or some other very retired and cheap place, and never more be heard of by my friends. But the Lord had other purposes for me, and the times growing very heavy at Manchester I found no means of support; therefore, for fear of losing the wreck of my property, I left the place.

After I left Manchester I had the offer of a commission in the army, which I accepted because anything seemed better than an idle life. I also entered at St. John's College, Cambridge, but everything combined with my unsettled state of mind to stop all purposes but that to which the Lord soon led me. I wandered about not knowing what next to do; nor how I should be eventually provided

for; and what was worse, full of sorrow and guilt, I knew not how to call upon the Lord. For about two years I was thus tossed, being unsettled in my mind and unprovided for, and finding my finances very small I often feared I should come to utter disgrace and ruin.

One day I was so cast down and so ill-treated by some with whom I had resided a few weeks, that I felt myself filled with the utmost despondency and completely overwhelmed with grief. I went to my bedroom and fastened the door, and then fell on my knees, and with all my heart and soul cried to the Lord as nearly as I can remember in these words – O Lord, what shall I do to maintain myself? I cannot endure this miserable way of living. No sooner were these words out of my mouth, than it was impressed on my mind: *You must draw*. I was quite surprised, and though as yet I knew not the Lord, yet I considered this a plain direction from him, and I at once gave up all other plans and began to occupy myself in the art of drawing, which has afforded me a liberal supply for many years, and enabled me to bring up a large family respectably.

I immediately went to a kind and wealthy relation, who gave me time and opportunity to practise drawing, until by a singular circumstance I had the opportunity of a journey to London, and with my little store of knowledge in the arts I called on an old schoolfellow and told him very frankly my history. He was immediately interested for me, and said if I would settle in London he would introduce me to the Countess of Sutherland and Lord Spencer who was then Lord of the Admiralty. My heart throbbed, knowing my deficiency, yet it seemed an opening that I dared not set aside; but how I should stand my ground I knew not, neither did I know the Lord.

I had five guineas left with which I took lodgings, and found immediate employment in those families. I had many anxieties and fears, and laboured hard to make myself equal to my engagements.

Now London once more became my home; and having parted with all those friends with whom I had lived in dissipation and gaiety, I began to think of the religious life I had formerly led, and was now willing from many causes to hear the most noted preachers up and down London. This pacified my legal conscience, and I began to be cheerful and happy, though I was not able to discriminate between truth and error, not knowing anything of my own heart; and in this way I went on with very little variety for three or four years. In this space of time I had a dangerous fever which threatened my life. Some of my professing friends visited me and encouraged me to hope in the Lord, saying they had not a doubt I should die happy, though at that time I had not the least foundation for hope, knowing nothing but an empty profession. After it had pleased the Lord to restore me to health, these very friends endeavoured to entice me to wickedness; but my eyes were in some measure open to such iniquities, and I had become not only outwardly religious, but I believe in some measure sincere.

During this period I was one night at the theatre. What the performance was I cannot nor do I desire to recollect, but on a sudden the fear of death seized me, and my guilty conscience sank under the alarm; and no doubt others could have perceived the dismay and trouble I felt. This increased till I was obliged to leave the theatre in the midst of the performance, and I went home and cried

and groaned, and confessed my wretchedness; but not knowing the Lord I knew not how to carry my trouble to him, but soon stifled it with other amusements. How often have I, since then, blessed his holy name for that mercy, light, and truth, that has discovered to me the snare of the fowler, and brought me out of all my troubles.

One night as I returned to my lodgings my landlord said to me, "As you are so fond of hearing preachers, I wonder you do not go and hear Mr. Huntington." I replied, "I never thought of him. I go chiefly to church and have not heard much about him; but I will go in a few days to hear him." I remember the first time I heard him, I thought him the most agreeable preacher I had ever heard, and was not in the least tired. I continued for two years to frequent his chapel together with the established church. I now grew very anxious and much in earnest respecting the salvation of my soul, but had no understanding what spiritual life meant, or what secret communion with God was. I used to pray as I thought, but never waited for any answer; I supposed that I should get that in heaven, not now; and though I found nothing in my heart to forbid the spirit of the world, or anything which was not openly flagitious, yet I believed without doubt that all was right within.

About this time I met with Mr. Huntington's book called *The Barber*, which I was told was very scurrilous; but I ventured to read it alone, and the Lord was pleased by this book to discover the nature of my profession, that it was altogether vain, and would by no means stand when the rain began to beat and the winds to blow, but would certainly fall, because founded on the sand. This by the power of God swept away every refuge of lies I had been hid under, and left me without a hope, and yet not without a cry. This led me to hear more attentively the author of the book. It made religion of importance to me, and I could no longer be a trifling professor, for I was in earnest to seek salvation, but found I had lost my way. It was by very slow degrees that I could at all understand the Word though so faithfully preached, yet now and then I had a little hope that the Lord would not utterly cast me off. Especially once from these words: "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" [Hab. 2. 3]. This made me patiently wait and look out for a further and clearer token than I had ever yet found of my interest in Christ. I could give very little account all this time of the doctrines of the gospel, only I felt I was a lost sinner, and the minister told me how such were to be saved, and the Lord made me very much in earnest to seek in the way I was directed by the Word.

My business was subjected to many changes, but upon the whole very prosperous, and lest this should share too great a portion of my heart the Lord was pleased to lay upon me a long and grievous affliction. This was the cause of many sighs and bitter groans, which were every now and then accompanied by some encouraging hope. While I write this I feel a measure of sweetness at the recollection of the kind help often afforded me in my extremity, and which has been continued up to the present day.

My custom was to spend my summers in the country with families of rank, in the way of business. And as the time drew near for my leaving town I began to feel many fears, for I had laboured long in darkness, and had not as yet

attained to the comfortable knowledge of God's favour toward me in Christ Jesus; and I felt afraid lest being deprived of the public worship, and also debarred from spiritual intercourse with the people of God, I should defer that which my heart was now set upon for I understood in some measure by the ministry that I must come to a knowledge of Christ by the remissions of sins. Under these apprehensions I was engaged to go into the country with a young gentleman of the Temple, and thinking all hopes of finding the happiness I sought were about to be far removed, I laid it greatly to heart. After performing our journey we parted, and I went to the house of a friend, where I found the family were absent from home, but had requested me to stay as long as I liked. I went to bed fatigued and full of fears, but when I awoke in the morning I felt something I did not quite understand. I was particularly cheerful; all the darkness in which I had so long been involved was gone. Something seemed to say, You had better get up. So I arose; and the happiness greatly increased. I found the burden of all my sins, which had so sore oppressed me, was gone, and I could do nothing but bless and praise God's holy name. I had never heard anyone speak of this happiness, but I felt it was what the minister had set forth by the Word as the revelation of Jesus Christ to the soul, and I knew now that I was a sinner saved by grace, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one Eternal God, was my Friend. I could now only tell of my joy, as before I could only tell of my misery. I knew the voice, according to the scripture: "Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I" [Isa. 52.6]. I was now as sure of eternal life as of my existence, nor had I the shadow of a fear about it. The Sun of righteousness had arisen with healing in his wings, and my soul could do nothing but rejoice. These things confirmed the many seasons in which I had found a distant hope; and though after this I had many changes, yet did it effectually show me that the Lord had given me spiritual life.

CHAPTER 2

[TRIALS FROM FRIENDS IN THE WORLD AND IN THE CHURCH. 1807-1810.]

About this time I was meditating one day on what the Lord had done for me. I was surrounded by outward difficulties, yet was my heart kept peaceful; and I felt greatly afraid of losing my peace, for I was naturally lively and easily betrayed into levity; and as I was mourning over this, and regretting before God the sad places into which I should fall (if suffered) in consequence of it, these words were spoken on my heart, causing much surprise: "*Never fear but you will have affliction enough to keep that down.*" And so it came to pass.

I had some friends who had been very kind to me in many ways; but in consequence of my being much concerned about the salvation of my soul, I became a continual reproach to them, so that they now turned to be my enemies. I dined with them, I think twice, and was going a third time in my

simplicity, not knowing there was any harm likely to accrue to me, but within fifty yards of their door, these words were whispered in my heart with mighty force: "Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats; for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he; Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words" [Prov. 23. 6-8]. This made me return home immediately, and as soon as my back was turned to their house, I found such peace flow in as I cannot express. I shut myself up for prayer and praise, and was much comforted with the sensible approbation of God.

This soon led to new trials. My friends had been exceedingly profitable to me in a way of business; but now I found their hearts were not towards me as they had been, and I perceived it must finally grow to a total separation, which I foresaw would be a heavy temporal loss. These thoughts filled my mind with much anxiety; and one night I dreamt I was sitting in the room they usually occupied, and the same candlesticks which were always on the table stood there, with candles not quite new nor far burnt down. My friends addressed me as usual, How goes on business? I fear you get nothing. You will soon come to want; why don't you save a little beforehand? While they were thus speaking in my dream, one of the candles suddenly died out, and then the other; upon which I felt a great alarm, and these words were distinctly pronounced as I thought in my dream: "*Their lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.*" I was exceedingly cast down, but presently these words were put into my mouth: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation" [1 Sam. 2. 1]. This made me so happy as to awaken me out of my sleep repeating the words. Herein I saw the sovereignty of God; and in this strength I resolved to cast myself upon the Lord, and leave the profits, pleasures, and favours that constantly accrued from this connection.

I continually felt something painful in my communications with many with whom I had formerly associated. Though I endeavoured to be very cautious, I perceived at length, "He that feareth God shall come forth of them all" [Eccl. 7. 18]; and that it is the Lord who divides the house [Luke 12. 49-53]. All our employment, pleasures, conversations, and prospects, differed so much that I saw it was impossible for me to continue on an intimate footing. Under such feelings, on taking leave of a near relation for my journey home, I said (I scarcely know how), This is a long farewell. I think it must be now nearly forty years since, and I have never had an opportunity of returning.

I now returned to London, and went from thence to Brighton, where I lodged with a poor God-fearing woman whose counsel and conversation I found to be both sweet and wholesome. Here I began to think of the steps I had taken and the little prospect I had of being supported without the patronage of my friends. I was often exceedingly cast down, finding my money nearly spent and my resources completely exhausted. At first I found the comfort of God's presence and love filled up every vacancy, but soon darkness and distance, in spite of all my mighty resolutions, would often overpower me, for I had little or no understanding in the Spirit's teaching. When I was in darkness, I felt as if I had no religion; and when I was happy in the Lord, I neither wanted nor feared

anything. God's judgments, on his own people, were far enough out of my sight. The furnace-work and chastening, the rod and reproof, were all misunderstood by me. It was happy for me that the Lord did not leave me in my ignorance, but brought me in the end to some understanding in his wonderful dealings with the children of men. I often feared both my money and my religion would end together. I had closed the means which had been fruitful, and I knew not but that the Lord would take vengeance on this my invention, and leave me to ruin. I used to go in secret and weep bitterly before the Lord, not knowing what would become of me, temporally or spiritually. At length I received a letter from a gentleman in London, promising me immediate employment. This encouraged me much, and proved an opening in providence which did not close for many years. Yet I still found the truth of the apostle's assertion, that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" [Acts 14. 22].

I had two friends about my own age, with whom I had often taken sweet counsel, and whom I had often freely reproofed for what I saw inconsistent in their conduct. One night in the middle of private prayer in my own room, and not thinking of my friends, I was stopped with these words which seemed spoken in my heart: "*Suppose you were called upon to give up your friends?*" (alluding to the above two.) I was greatly surprised, and replied, I could not do that; but I felt seriously disposed to recall my words, and said, O Lord, if thou wilt enable me, I can give them up. Upon which these words followed: "*You will be called to give them up forever.*" This startled me and I was filled with fear, but could not tell what it meant. All this passed from my mind until on the following Sunday we met as usual, but to my great surprise they told me they could no longer associate with me, and therefore begged me to leave them. I was much cast down, and went home very sad and solitary, for the cause of their behaviour at this time never once entered my mind (I was afterwards informed that it was my absolutely setting my face against the intended marriage of one of them with a worldly woman, I believing that he was a child of God), but I concluded, as David did when Shimei cursed him, that the Lord had bidden them; so I feared they had discovered I was an hypocrite, and that I was unworthy of the notice of any of God's people. I sank in spirit "like lead in the mighty waters". I think I never cried to the Lord in such agony of spirit before, I seemed to be on the brink of despair, and could think of nothing but a person I had heard of who had died in despair. The people of God (as I believed) having judged me altogether wrong, I thought it was needless for me to eat or to drink for nothing but hell. Yet under all these feelings I never gave up crying to God. My two friends went to Mr. Huntington and gave such an account of me, as to cause him to direct his utmost severity against me from the pulpit, which made all who knew me by sight to avoid me. My health became impaired; I could not properly attend to business, and mine appeared altogether a lost case. One morning I was brought to such an extremity of despair as to fear I should die in it, and be forever lost. I said in secret, If nothing appears in my behalf before seven o'clock this evening, I am gone for ever. I well remember the evening. While I was in bitter cries before the Lord, lying on the floor in a state of utter hopelessness as to my own feelings, these words were gently whispered in my heart, "THOU SHALT RETURN IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT." I said, Lord, what does this mean? and it was repeated

again and again seven times, and at last broke my heart to pieces and set my soul free from the misery and bondage under which I had laboured so long. Now I knew by the power of the Word that the Lord Jesus Christ was my Saviour, and my comfort was great and inexpressibly sweet, so that I could not describe it. The Lord was now with me, though my friends had forsaken me. I went to public worship, and the minister preached from these words: "Show me a token for good, that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed; because thou, Lord, hast holpen me and comforted me" [Psa. 86. 17]. The whole discourse was so sweetly applied to my heart, and so suitable to my case, that though I believed it was intended to favour them that had taken part against me, yet I do not know that I ever before had heard with such sweetness and power.

This comfort abode with me for many weeks, only now and then interrupted by some sudden reproach cast upon me, for no one would receive my testimony, or even hear it. One day a person in the chapel told me that I must not sit where I usually did; I felt in a moment cast down, not knowing what this being forsaken of all meant. But as I was sorrowing and fearing that I must be totally wrong, the Lord comforted me again with these words, "The battle is not yours, but God's" [2 Chron. 20. 15]. This made me again to rejoice in his salvation. Once while walking on my way, I found my comfort abated, and a cloud gathered over my mind, and having for so long enjoyed the sweet savour of the Lord's presence, I grieved sorely after him, and these words were sent to my heart with great power and encouragement: "What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?" [Luke 15. 8]. The word "DILIGENTLY" sounded in my heart louder than all the rest, and I said with much earnestness, O Lord, give me this diligence, and I shall find! Upon this the Lord was most graciously pleased to return; and though the outward trial continued for a time, and rather increased than otherwise, yet was he pleased to make it up to me in much sweet communion and nearness of access in private prayer.

Every now and then something would occur to open the deep wound which this dispensation had made in my soul; and as often did the Lord pour in the oil and the wine. Those who took part against me drew over many to their side, and I became of small estimation. I used to be pointed out as the apostate; and many would cross the street rather than meet me.

I now believe that God's purpose in all this was to humble me, and to separate me from false professors. It was not long before Mr. Huntington died, and on his death the people were scattered to all winds, and many of those whom I had formerly associated with separated from the truth; and some have since died, leaving no testimony of salvation. But by this affliction the Lord in mercy answered me "by terrible things in righteousness" [Psa. 65. 5], and kept me from embracing errors, and humbled me in the dust before him as an abject sinner, feeling the utmost need of a Saviour; and I cannot describe how precious his love was to me.

During this sore trial I was visited in my sickness by a medical man who attended the same ministry, and he kindly sent a friend to see me. This friend was Mr. Burrell, and his conversation with me then formed the beginning of that bond of unity of spirit which I believe will continue to all eternity.

[The following letter was written to Mr. Bourne at this period (1809) by his friend Mr. Burrell:

“Dear Friend in the Lord, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed’ [Isa. 66. 5]. This has been fulfilled in your heart’s experience. The more I dive into this matter, the more I am convinced that the hand of God is in it; and instead of being ashamed of your acquaintance I think myself highly honoured of the Lord to be made an instrument of some good towards you. I perceive that the Lord has given me a right view of your state and case; and I have not a doubt but he will bring you out with a high hand.

“I am glad to find that you cleave close to your best Friend, and that he also cleaves close to you. Continue still daily to make your calling and election more sure; and every fresh manifestation of our ever-blessed Friend to your soul will surely effect this, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. He will bring us to hope in his mercy, and to believe his love towards us, and to lay fast hold upon his strength by faith; though the minister, with all the deacons and elders, and all the saints, should set themselves against us. I know that reproach will break the heart, but our good Father will heal it. ‘No weapon formed against thee shall prosper.’ When heaven and earth set themselves against Hezekiah, the good Spirit secretly made him turn toward the wall and pray, and he obtained a glorious victory. Your case is somewhat similar to David’s, for God has put your acquaintance into darkness, and they stand aloof from your sore, because they do not understand your case. But ‘woe to them that are at ease in Zion’, and to them also that ‘are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph!’ [Amos 6. 1-6]. I hope that the Lord will still continue to wean you from man. Remember that the most upright among them is like a thorn [Micah 7. 4]; but our good and gracious God has said he will never leave us nor forsake us, and that he will put his fear into our hearts, and we shall never depart from him.

“God is doing a great work in your soul, and is about leading you in a plain way, where there is no stumbling. Your being able in the strength of the Lord to stand against friends as well as foes, will greatly redound to the glory of God’s grace, and you will perceive that the faith of God’s elect, the rich gift of God, is not to be daunted by either men or devils; it is, as Mr. Hart beautifully describes it,

‘A principle active and young,
That lives under pressure and load.’

I am yours in the Lord,

JOSEPH FRANCIS BURRELL.”]

[After the death of Mr. Huntington (July 1813) Mr. Burrell ministered the gospel to a part of his congregation, with whom Mr. Bourne joined in church fellowship.]

CHAPTER 3

[HIS MARRIAGE. YEARS OF TEMPORAL PROSPERITY. AFFLICTIONS THAT FOLLOWED. 1810-1828.]

Some little time after this I was made very earnest in prayer upon the occasion of my proposed marriage; for having suffered so much in my late trial I was sorely afraid of proceeding in anything without the especial approbation of God. I think in many different ways I found the Lord's approval of my measures. And here I must acknowledge that instead of lightness and vanity on my wedding day, I found a secret sweet and comforting presence of the Lord, which caused a measure of holy awe to rest upon my spirit. This beginning has produced many secret appeals to the Lord which he has been pleased to own. We have had many afflictions and many difficulties, but the Lord has been with us in them all, and has never left us to this day.

After my sore trial it pleased God to restore my health, and to prosper the work of my hands for some years, but that evil nature, that proud heart of mine, still needed further humbling; and that mercy the Lord would not withhold for my much crying. [Prov. 19. 18.]

I have often found that various afflictions meet together, and so (about the year 1823) in addition to some grievous calamities which befell us (as the loss of part of our income) I was severely attacked by the jaundice, and the lowness of spirits which this sickness left continued for nearly five years. This exercise was truly humbling through the fear of death, also the suspicions of many of those around me, lest my religion was wrong, for they could not believe that the children of God were ever so deeply tried. In consequence of these suspicions I met with much unkindness. But as on former occasions so now I continued to cry to the Lord: that I could never give up. Having tasted of the new wine of the kingdom, I desired no other, and therefore nothing could make me cease to pray. I was one night sorely cast down, more than usual – I wept bitterly before the Lord, and the words which he spoke to Hezekiah came with great power to me, and removed all my burdens for the time: "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears" [Isa. 38. 5]. How I rejoiced at these tidings, to think of God's goodness and condescension in hearing my weak and feeble petitions! But I soon sank again, and was ready to give up all for lost. I had many days of sorrow and sad unbelieving fears which brought on great despondency; but the Lord's eye was upon me, and he sent these words with such understanding and power to my heart, that I saw clearly why I could not be lost, and how the Lord would save me: "The rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew" all this I felt, and this I perceived was the hour of trial for me, and the powers of darkness were against me; but when I came to the words: "it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock", then I found Christ the Rock of Ages my eternal safety. This made me rest in hope for a season but my weakness and depression still continuing, it was often suggested to me by the devil and my unbelieving heart together, You will soon sink without hope, and die in despair. But the Lord would not have it so. I remember one day, fearing, and yet against hope

believing in hope, these words greatly surprised me, for I felt the Lord sent them to raise me, a poor beggar, from the dunghill: "Well done, good and faithful servant." I could not receive them at first, saying, Lord, I have never been faithful! But the Lord sent along with them such healing power and efficacy, that I could not any longer doubt, nor did I wish to, for the sweetness and strength they afforded was beyond my power of expression. These seasons were very refreshing, though very short.

My health still continued impaired. Wherever I went, everything seemed covered with sackcloth; all was melancholy, so that I trembled at the prospect and near approach of death. One day in particular, though I tried as much as possible to hide my feelings, I was noticed by some friends who endeavoured to comfort me, but it was not in the power of man to relieve me; the pride of my heart wanted bringing down, and the Lord was determined to do it. As I returned home, on that very day, through Kensington Gardens, in a private part I cried with all my heart to the Lord to have mercy upon me, and if consistent with his will to remove this sad melancholy from my spirit; and the Lord condescended to hear me, and told me that I should have no more of it. I knew the voice, and I believed that I should find relief. As I went along I had almost forgotten what I had felt in prayer, till I arrived in town, and then I said, I am not so low as I was, I feel cheerful, quite different from what I have felt for months; how is it? Something within me seemed to reply, Did you not pray that this melancholy might be removed, and did not the Lord tell you it was gone? And then it was added, You will have no more of this; it is gone for ever. Now I began to wonder, and had hard work to believe it without fear or suspicion; but I found it a truth; and blessed be God, for I know he hears and answers prayer.

It was not long before I was tried again as it respected my hope and comfort in the Lord, though not in the least with my former melancholy. I sank into many misgivings respecting the salvation of my soul, and could not at such times keep off the fear of death, it seemed so near, and I so unfit. One night I thought the Lord was gone for ever, and I fell into great distress, and continued to sink so low, that again several of my friends began to fear lest the work on my heart might not be genuine. But just as I was retiring to bed, the Lord came with those words: "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary" [Psa. 68. 9]. This brought a healing power not only to my mind, but to my weary body also; I wanted no sleep, but found the sweet presence of the Lord afforded all the rest I needed, and I sang his praises for his marvellous deliverance. At another time, while bemoaning myself under many fearful apprehensions of danger, these words were attended with such glory and power to my soul, as to remove all fear and torment: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord!" [Deut. 33. 23]. What shall I say to these things? I can only say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

After the period above mentioned, it pleased God to restore me to health and prosperity; and by his various dealings with me he caused me to know more and more that the Lord "rules in heaven above and upon the earth beneath". But yet I perceived that so powerful is the corrupt body of sin within, that nothing

but repeated furnace-work can keep us in a low place, with our mouth “in the dust”, solely and entirely dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another trial was now become needful, and the Lord gave me intimations of its approach. His mercies are new every morning, and his faithfulness never fails in the time of extremity. These words followed me for six months, sometimes comforting me, and sometimes filling me with great fear: “I will show thee how great things thou must suffer for my name’s sake” [from Acts 9. 16]. The trial was very severe, and followed the warning in about three months. I seemed quite broken down in despondency; and not to name the nature of it, let it suffice that nothing but the Word of God could reach my case. I have been in agony and prayer for two hours and a half, and could not let the Lord go without a blessing, and I must say that though I was continually sinking in spirit, he has often lifted me up and set my feet upon the rock. I think I had more establishing views of God’s love and mercy to me in Christ Jesus in this affliction, than I ever knew before. His Word was most precious to me, and though from home, and having no means of hearing the outward preaching of it, yet these sharp exercises kept my soul alive to God, for I could not abide without his sweet presence comforting me.

During this affliction I was often residing at the seats of my employers, or travelling with them, and sometimes with all my endeavours I could not so hide the conflicts of my mind, but that they perceived something was the matter. I earnestly entreated the Lord to give me wisdom and discretion, and power to fulfil my engagements with them, in which I was sometimes all the day travelling with several families, and obliged to attend to them all at once. I have often stolen a few moments to pray and cry for help and mercy, and I have had the sweetest tokens of the Lord’s favour that can be known. Once under an oak I poured out my heart to the Lord, entreating his pity, praying in the anguish of my soul, and I never before felt anything so tenderly and gently spoken to my heart, as these words were at that time (the manner of it was so tender): “*I am touched with the feeling of all thine infirmities, and I know how to succour.*” However enthusiastic this may appear to some, yet I know this was real communion with God; it was as the apostle expresses it “having our conversation in heaven”. The Lord was graciously pleased often to renew his love-tokens in this time of my extremity, and my soul was filled with love, patience, resignation, and self-abasement.

I gave satisfaction to my employers, and in due time returned home; and then I saw that the Lord had many lessons to teach me; especially not to be entangled by the spirit of the world in my business; also self abasement, and a conscious feeling of my perilous, yea, lost, condition by nature, as well as the rich remedy which he has provided in Christ Jesus.

This humbling dispensation left a deep impression on my heart of God’s terrible majesty. I have been made to perceive something of his holiness, and also to feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and by the means of all this spiritual teaching my proud heart has been brought down, so that I have been made to understand that the lowest place is the best and safest, and that it is better to have it said to me, “Friend, come up higher,” than “Give this man place,” and to be obliged with shame to take the lowest room. “Better it is to be of an humble

spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" [Prov. 16. 19]. These last must be speechless when the King comes in to see the guests; the former must and will sing the high praises of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for so wonderful a redemption of such abject sinners.

CHAPTER 4

[SPIRITUAL TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS. 1828-1838.]

The next trial I was brought into, which was about five years after the affliction mentioned last, was also very humbling to me; yet I have always found the Lord has put down the mighty, and exalted them of low degree. And though it has been painful in the exercise of this coming down, yet, as Bunyan says, "He that is down needs fear no fall." Seeing my proud and stubborn heart had need of heavy strokes, the Lord was pleased thus to make full proof of my sonship, and not let me escape the chastening, as a bastard and not a son.

As I was one day meditating on the path I was then in, thinking I was too free of trouble to be quite in the footsteps of the flock, something seemed to whisper, You need not mind that circumstance; you are too well established to need the perpetual furnace. But having often been suddenly overtaken by trials, a fear sprang up, and I said secretly, Who knows but trouble is near? and I felt a caution on my spirit that kept me from lightness. That very evening a circumstance took place in which I perceived I could not but be involved in trouble; and from the serious caution on my spirit, I feared it might turn out more important than it appeared at first. As it continued and increased, I soon fell into deep exercise and trouble of mind; and one morning, whether awake or asleep I could not tell, there appeared before me a smoking furnace, such as metal is melted in. I seemed to hear these words distinctly: "Son of man, what seest thou?" I replied, A smoking furnace. I awoke with much fear upon my spirit, and had many serious thoughts, and continued some days to watch what this furnace should prove.

In a few days I had to hear further particulars concerning the same matter, which I did with firmness though much grief, fearing what the Lord intended to do. But I had not left the room many minutes, when I was overpowered with such a flood of grief, and had such a painful sensation at my heart, that I thought it would terminate my life; yet while this lasted, I had a sweet supporting hope in the Lord, that if I died he would be my Friend, and that I should be for ever with him. But heaviness of spirit soon again overwhelmed me, and I sank into great despondency, yet laboured much with the Lord in spirit to see what he would condescend to do. I was some days before I could obtain any sensible help from him, but in reading Psalm 99 my spirit was greatly moved with divine awe. "The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity; thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob... Thou answeredst them (Moses and Aaron), O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them;

though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy." The meditation upon this kept me steadily looking to the Lord, and very sober minded; and some few days after, in reading Psalm 126, I was greatly surprised by the inflowing and power of God's love to my heart, and for the first time had a distinct hope concerning the trial I was then under. "The Lord hath done great things for us." I had no view as to the time when these great things should be done, but that the Lord would yet look upon us. And when I came to the 5th verse, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy", I had the sweetest, clearest, tokens that mine were the tears here spoken of, so that I could not but rejoice with all my heart and soul and strength; and on further reading these words, "He that that goeth forth and weepeth, BEARING PRECIOUS SEED, shall DOUBTLESS come again with rejoicing, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES WITH HIM," they caused an inexpressible revolution in my soul, and made me willing to bear the cross, until it should please God to bring to pass his purposes of humiliation. I think I never found my spirit so broken, meekened, and humbled, for so long a continuance, in my life before. Oh, how hateful sin appeared, how loathsome I felt myself, how great his salvation appeared to me! The sweets of this visit supported me for many days, perhaps a fortnight. The Word preached, my family worship, and private reading, meditation, and prayer, all so sweetly harmonized, that I now understood what it was to walk with God in peace and equity.

Notwithstanding all this, the trial was not removed as yet, and I gradually sank again into despondency, fear, and sorrow, and almost into despair. One day wandering up and down in the park in this disconsolate state, these words shot like lightning across my mind and passed away: "*You shall see better days.*" It seemed to take me by surprise, and for a short time comforted me, in spite of all my misgiving fears. My wife referred me to some verses in Judges 10, and when I went home I turned to the chapter, and found some heavy threatenings and judgments which filled me with dismay, such as, "Ye have forsaken me, wherefore I will deliver you no more." I was greatly cast down at these words, and knew not to what extent the Lord would leave me, but in reading on, I was astonished at the relenting of the Lord so soon. He says, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." This came with a sweet personal application that I was that Israel; and I replied, How wonderful, Lord, that thou shouldst be touched with the feeling of our infirmities! I perceive that thou wilt not utterly forsake me, but wilt plead my cause, and make me still hope in thee. This stayed my soul for some days, but one night losing sight of all my hope (and a dark night of affliction it was), I seemed to sink almost to utter despair, and could not rest in bed or up. Now, it was suggested to me that though the Lord was grieved for the misery of Israel, yet mine was not to be relieved; he could only grieve for me, he could not help me. In this distressing state I lay for nearly two days, but returning to the chapter to know more minutely what the Lord could mean by it, with a trembling heart I ventured to look at the marginal references. The first led me to Zechariah, where it is written, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." This once more warmed my heart with hope, and brought into my soul much contrition and sensible abasement before the Lord for his great kindness and condescending care of me under such distressing circumstances. I continued

the search and was next referred to Exodus 2. 23-25, which shone like diamonds with such lustre and sweet invitation to take them, that I dared not say nay: the sweetness, the power, the meekness, the contrition they brought in afforded me unspeakable support. "Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God, by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Precious words! they afforded me sweet saving health, and my heart was broken to pieces under a sense of the unheard of unexpected relief the Holy Spirit afforded me in them. My family, perceiving that I was richly entertained, continued reading to me chapter 3. When we came to the 7th verse, I was still more astonished, not knowing where to hide my face, nor contain my feelings of great humiliation before God: "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them." I shall never be able to express the inconceivable sensation I felt of God's mercy and condescension in stooping so low as to help me in this despairing place.

The whole of this opened a new line of things to me, and gave me a sweet confidence that the Lord would plead my cause, and encouraged me greatly to bring all my troubles to him. It made me understand that the casting down of my soul so low that I could not even say anything, was yet no token of ruin, but rather of the mighty power of God that could keep me in this deplorable helpless place, and at the same time manifest his grace and mercy another way, which according to his promise made to me, should fall out "rather to the furtherance of the gospel".

The Word has been through all this affliction hitherto a sweet portion, and my only delight – not given up, even when sinking in despair, but constantly looked into, whether anything could be found suitable for such a poor miserable sinner, and whether the Lord would ever speak to me again or no; and thus being found in the way, the Lord has every now and then met me with a word here, or a smile there, a pleasant look, or some comfortable persuasion of his favour toward me, so that hitherto the Lord has helped me, and I continue pursuing though faint, to the present day.¹

I have to remark to the honour of God's grace that this deep exercise has been particularly sanctified in one especial circumstance, namely, that his supports have been too great to leave room for repining, or finding fault with God's dispensations, or making a tale against any, or muttering perverseness against individuals. I have often been comforted and counselled in reading Matthew 27 where our Lord is taken before his judges, and answered them to never a word. Oh! the sweet safety of being able to do as he did. I have often feared lest I should be betrayed into the contrary spirit; yet I have had more than once or twice this sweet testimony, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

¹ The reader will perceive that this was written during the progress of the trial.

I have been much melted with godly sorrow in these troubles, those words often being brought warmly to my heart, "Jesus, MOVED WITH COMPASSION," and that FOR ME, in all my calamities. And here I was also brought more sensibly to feel for our Saviour when he expresses himself under pain, temptation, grief, or contempt, "Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" [Lam. 1. 12], and when at last he cried out under the load of our sins, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and nothing could be extracted from man, but a sponge dipped in vinegar. This vinegar is often suffered to be given to us when in the deepest trouble; and we do well always to remember that our sins procure these things, and to beg for grace to bear the indignation of the Lord, until he is pleased to plead our cause.

O sweet example of patience and deep sense of demerit in David, when he said of Shimei, "Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him; it may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." I have many fears that I have not yet got to the end of this affliction, and am greatly afraid lest through pride or impatience I may be left to take matters into my own hands. I know full well, by happy experience, that safety is of the Lord. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" [Prov. 16. 3].

In the midst of my tribulation a friend one day gave me an account of his trouble, and his happy deliverance out of it in reading Psalm 46, the relation of which melted my heart exceedingly, though I said but little about it at the time. The first words that caught my attention were, "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." I immediately said within myself, I know where this river is; and at the same moment a sweet draught of its streams entered my soul and made me exceeding glad. The Lord Jesus Christ by this made all war to cease within, and every weapon that appeared formed against me was broken to pieces, and I then full well understood his power and authority. The troubled sea was still, and I found that the Lord of Hosts was with me, and the God of Jacob was my refuge. Nor did the comfort of this end quickly, but revived again and again for many days, and would come into my heart in various shapes, as "a very present help in trouble". "God is our refuge and strength" – so I found him. This also would sound aloud in my heart, so that all my despondency could not shut it out: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." These things would be hovering about me continually to counteract despondency; and they did sweetly keep my head above water, but I have since lost sight of this sweet comfort, and am now trembling, fearing, desponding, but sometimes hoping I shall not be utterly cast down, nor finally lose my labour in the Lord.

On going to bed last night after a most distressing, tumultuous, and anxious day, I found my heart so still, I could scarcely account for the change; no enemy assaulted, no fear tormented, but all seemed composure. In this state I soon fell asleep, after the fatigue of many wearisome days and nights. This quiet sensation came over me, without any word being applied, but when I awoke in the morning, and found the same composure on my spirit, these words sounded over and over again in my soul, till I was forced to cry out, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the

Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” The words, “Let the redeemed”, came with such a singular sweetness and personal application to my heart, as if it said, Let James Bourne say so, “whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy”. I can truly say, Hungry and thirsty my soul fainted in me, but crying to the Lord in my trouble, he was moved with compassion and delivered me from all my distresses. And though I have found it a path of much tribulation, yet I feel with the utmost acknowledgment of God’s righteous dispensations, that he hath led me forth by the right way, that I might go to a city of habitation. “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men” [Psa. 107. 1-8].

In my family reading I was overcome with many feelings when I came to these words, at the end of the same psalm: “Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock. The righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” They filled my soul with a sweet meditation on the mysterious way the Lord had led me; and now at the age of sixty-five, I am enabled to declare, “He hath done all things well.” I do not look for a cessation in this spiritual warfare while I live; but have often had this sweet promise made good to me: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” I therefore wish to ascribe the glory of this great salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ, and daily entreat him to be my guide through this “waste howling wilderness” [Deut. 32. 10].

CHAPTER 5

[THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY. VISITS HERTFORDSHIRE AND SHROPSHIRE. 1838.]

I have before stated how I was led into my professional employment, and that when it was clearly impressed upon my mind what I had to do I immediately began to practise drawing. Not having the means of paying for instruction, I was obliged to work hard to attain to any degree of skill. I have often wondered how the Lord blessed me in my endeavours to sketch from nature, which was one essential point. My first attempt was at the Lakes, where I made a hundred sketches, which were very profitable to me in various ways for forty years, the subjects being so well chosen. The following year I went through Devon and Cornwall, and was equally successful there, and in this way I became well supplied with materials to work upon. It was very surprising to me that my first employment was in families which, though of high rank, were as little acquainted with the arts as I was; but as it pleased God to increase my talent gradually, so I gradually rose to be employed by those who were better acquainted with the arts. It has often been a wonder to me how the Lord maintained my lot with so very little talent, making me to be well received and respected for thirty years; and how he also preserved my spirit so that I was

LETTERS OF JAMES BOURNE

LETTER 1

[To his Sister E.] November 1807.

Dear Sister,

I was permitted for years to go on in my own strength, to let me see what mighty acts I could perform. A self-righteous spirit will lead us to make such a patchwork garment as will for awhile conceal the filthy imaginations of the heart; and thus we carefully preserve our reputation and honour, and get the name of devout Christians; the chief of our food is the applause of those about us. If we are disposed to exercise our bowels of compassion, we take care to blow the trumpet, lest we should not be seen of men; and leave nothing undone but the weightier matters of the law.

But as God had purposes of grace towards me, I was not suffered to go on in this spirit to the end; for all my fair and fond hopes of keeping everything straight, shunning the cross and appearing outwardly devout, were brought down, being founded on my own strength and on my own wisdom. I was permitted to raise this airy tower till it reached nearly to heaven, but the Lord looked down and scattered all my lofty thoughts, and I was obliged to acknowledge that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, and I was so hemmed in on every side as to be made to cry for quarter, "Lord, save, or I perish."

In this frame of mind I was suffered to continue for some time, till I was filled with my own devices [Prov. 1. 30]. I felt much pity for myself and much enmity against God, and thought I was dealt hardly by; and began to look for nothing but the fiery indignation of the Lord. Every refuge seemed to fail me, every false confidence was destroyed; my life hung in perpetual doubt, and every outward providence untoward. But underneath all this there certainly was an almighty arm of mercy, so that though exceedingly perplexed, I was not in utter despair; and it was in the midst of the darkest outward providences that the Lord was pleased to raise my soul to a hope that Jesus would reveal himself to me as my Friend; and in the strength of this I was enabled to go many days. For faith, though "as a grain of mustard seed", yet being of the operation of the Holy Spirit, will enable us to creep along fearful of our own strength, looking to Christ for strength, hoping and despairing. So it was with me, till at length he revealed himself to me as the sinner's all in all; and then I knew the Lord by this most glorious name "I AM THAT I AM".

Yours affectionately, J. B.

LETTER 2

[To his Sister E.] December 1807.

Dear Sister,

I promised to give you an account of my visit to Manchester, but I must defer it till I see you. When the mind is dark and the soul barren, it is hard work to spin out anything that will be profitable, but as I desire the glory of God when

I write, so I hope he will stop my pen when it is no longer profitable to you. I am so bewildered as scarcely to know what I am about. I am ready to say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" My days seem to consume in vanity and trouble. I know that the Lord hath done great things for me, and it is my grief that I have not a heart to thank him for it. My unbelief is greater than anything, and I am ready to say, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Can he give me the bread of life, who am so barren? Thus my unbelief brings the sensible anger of God upon me. O that I knew where I might find him! for there is nothing in this world that can satisfy my soul. I feel the conflict is begun, and begin to understand something of those words, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." We carry about a body of sin, and this pulls one way, while the renewed man will not agree to it, and pulls another way: "With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin." I am proud, self-willed, perverse, and I know God will bring all this down. Into the furnace I must go; and I tremble lest I should be consumed, though the Word of God tells me I shall come forth purified a vessel meet for the Master's use.

It is certainly a token for good, when afflictions make us cry to God and produce a longing after him and a waiting for him, while others are made to call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the wrath of God and of the Lamb. The one sort cry for mercy, while the other flee from his presence; I am sure I am of the former number; have no desire to flee from his presence; it is his presence I want and the sense of his favour; for it is only in his light I have light; of myself I am total darkness, and can only complain of my detestable ways. I have a keen and sensible fear of God, and would not for the world (when in my right mind) offend him; but the old man of sin and the devil are so combined and strong that faith seems often almost out of hearing.

Yours affectionately, J. B.

LETTER 3

[To Mr. Gadsby, Minister of the Gospel, Manchester] London, 1807.

Dear Sir,

I fear you will begin to think, and that not without cause, that I have entirely forgotten you; but I have only been at home one week, and I found much to be done after so long an absence. I feel a great backwardness to write even now – I am so dark and shut up that I cannot come forth; yet there is a secret something tells me I am under the leading of God – yea, according to that word, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not," and blind indeed I am, for I am groping for the wall at noonday. I have been very sharply tried in various ways since I saw you, and have been many times ready to give all up, but thanks be to God, he will not give me up; and at other times I have had the sweetest refreshings, which I cannot describe. Indeed, it may be said of me, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel" [Gen. 49. 4].

This one thing is at all times a source of consolation to me – I cannot help looking back at the miserable condition I was in when the Lord Jesus Christ first espoused me to himself, made me one with him, and put a ring upon my finger,

an emblem of his eternal and unchangeable love. And though in my gloomy moments I call all this into question, yet the devil has not yet made me believe it entirely a delusion. I know God hears prayer, even put up in the dark seasons, for he often gives me the desire of my heart. But the happy moments are so transient that I scarcely know what to make of it. Unbelief seems to be the only thing that prevails in my heart. O how I hate myself for it! For I would fain take my Jesus at his word, and feed thereon and grow, but instead of this, I am always getting on the sand.

I feel I have no power to quicken my own soul. He shutteth and no man openeth; he hideth his face, and we are troubled. It is sin, and nothing else, that separates God from us. O how I loathe myself on this account! But blessed be God, though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. I had such a sight and sense of what I am, that it made me greatly to fear, and say, Will the Lord be gracious? Are not his mercies clean gone for ever? I began to look for some fearful thing to happen to me; but under Mr. Huntington's preaching last night the Lord broke my heart with his goodness, and I was filled with the keenest sense of my own nothingness, and of his unchangeable and everlasting love to me.

Yours affectionately, J. B.

LETTER 4

[To a Friend] 1808.

Dear Sir,

As it respects *The Barber*, I can speak with confidence. It was the first book that ever was attended with light, as well as power, to show me the desperate condition I was in. I had been convicted, and I believe it was the Spirit of God that convicted me, yet I had not light to understand what it meant; and I went on in misery and vexation eighteen years, till this book (whoever likes or dislikes) fell into my hands. I always determined never to read Mr. Huntington's controversial books, lest I should be prejudiced against his preaching, because I was told they were cruel and abusive, and written in a bad spirit. But one night, walking along Oxford Street, I thought I would turn into a bookshop and ask if they had any of Mr. Huntington's works. They replied that they had *The Barber* and another, both of which I bought, and immediately read. Till then I knew nothing of the spider's web I had been weaving, but that book plainly showed me the difference between the letter and the spirit, the form of godliness and the power. God by it so entangled me with my own deceivings, that I was forced to cry out, "Lord, save, or I perish." Let who will find fault with *The Barber* or his bad spirit, I will thank God that he should condescend to send that book with such power to my heart, and will pray that the author may be established in his own soul, and blest in all his labours.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

LETTER 5

[To Mr. Henry Birch] Brighton, 1808.

Dear Sir,

I was very glad to see your letter; it was a word in season and it really rejoiced my heart to hear that you find a greater earnestness with God. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." We both have felt this.

You saw by my letter the state of my mind when I first arrived here, and the rebellion and unbelief of my heart. But thanks be to God, he does all things well; instead of entering into judgment with me, he poured his loving-kindness into my heart, insomuch that I had not one petition left – my prayers were turned into praises. The grief and joy I felt were beyond all power of words to describe. Indeed I repented in dust and ashes, but found a full and complete satisfaction. He became my all in all, and myself worse and less than nothing.

I had some conversation with Mr. Brook, and I have no doubt the Lord enabled him to open all his heart to me; he told me all his trials and difficulties. I saw so clearly the hand of God in it that my heart was drawn out to believe that he does regard both the spiritual and the temporal wants of his chosen ones, and that I should lack no good thing. This stopped my unbelief, and I was made to be very passive, desirous of knowing God's will toward me, and patiently to wait. I felt myself very sober-minded all Saturday, and on Sunday walked alone to Lewes, with a spirit of prayer, when Mr. Brook preached from these words, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." This really suited my case. I found that my Friend, Christ Jesus, had loved me, and that it was from everlasting to everlasting the same; and the latter part of his discourse made the ungodly world retire many miles out of sight. I felt myself a poor, helpless, lost creature, but at the same time found my Elder Brother was "in all points tempted like as we are" and was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; and that every affliction was to try me and prove me, and to do me good in my latter end.

In the evening at Brighton he preached from the words, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." I had faith given me to receive every word he said as my own portion. I knew that he had honoured me, and made me his son by adoption. I was fully persuaded of this truth, that where God does not incline the heart to cry to him, he does not design to give. He will make a man feel his wants before he ever supplies them. I cried earnestly to the Lord, and he heard my petitions, and gave me an answer of peace; this is better than ten thousand pounds; and I know all this comes from him by the fruits. It has meekened and humbled me, given me patience and resignation, and destroyed every present anxious care for this life. I supped on Sunday evening with Mr. Brook, and told him of my happy deliverance that day. It seemed greatly to warm his heart. He is very affectionate and kind, and has no reserve, but tells me all his heart. He will take me to see Mr. Jenkins when he returns, if I stay till then.

If I meet with any employment, I continue here some time. I have a garret, and sit occasionally with the old landlady in the kitchen, who provides my breakfast. I look so little like a beggar that few could credit it. I have now one guinea left, and I shall spin it out as far as possible.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

LETTER 6

[To Mr. Henry Birch] London, 1808.

Dear Sir,

For three weeks after I wrote to you last, I enjoyed much of God's presence: "the candle of the Lord" shone bright upon my head and "his visitation preserved my spirit"; and I often thought this was fitting me for some serious affliction, and that I should soon be fast "bound in affliction and iron". And surely the thing that I greatly feared came upon me, so that my spirit was overwhelmed within me. The enemy tried hard to turn me out of the chapel, telling me I was not fit to walk about; he has made me to skulk and hide myself where I could, like a thief that is detected. He followed me as close in my business, so that I was obliged to resign much of my employment. These things made me cry mightily to God for help, for I knew not where it would all end. I could neither eat, drink, nor sleep; everybody perceived something was the matter, but none could find out the cause, for I told nobody the real state of my case. O what a hornet's nest appeared within! What rebellion, self-will, what tender compassion for self, and what secret anger sometimes against God for not appearing immediately to deliver me! I have often lain on the floor weeping and calling upon God for a long time together, and it seemed as if the more I cried and groaned, the less help I found. I thought I went in faith; but alas! there was no resignation, and conscience has often secretly told me that from my heart I could not add these words – if consistent with thy righteous will. O no! I would fain be delivered at all events; no patiently waiting, nor quietly hoping. Here I lay for six weeks, like a fool brayed in a mortar. God has at length given me light and understanding to see that it was his hand upon me, and that for good. He has given me a measure of meekness and submission, and enabled me feelingly to say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." But then I am more brutish and proud than any man, and therefore the furnace must be heated sevenfold. I would be something, and God is showing me that I am less than nothing. I was taking the highest room; but God has said, Go down to the lowest, and give every man place.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

LETTER 7

[To the Rev. W. J. Brook, Minister of the Gospel, Brighton] London, 1808.

Dear Sir,

I fear it can be no entertainment to you to hear how I go on, but I feel disposed to write, and may God enable me to do it in godly sincerity. My health is better, but I move very heavily on. I cannot get to hear the Word, being kept in such bondage and fear that I have not presumed to set my foot nearer than the top step of the gallery, where I can hear but little, and sometimes not at all. This is a sore grief to me, and I have cried bitterly to God to deliver me, but find no strength; and I now begin to fear that God has utterly separated me from his people, and that I shall be held in perpetual contempt. A little time past I enjoyed his presence, and then I thought my afflictions were all the best things that could befall me, but I have lost all sight of his dear face and all sense of his

favour towards me; I walk in sore darkness and seem troubled on every side. If I could have ever so distant a hope that God would restore me, I think I should then be satisfied. What you told me in the vestry at Providence Chapel is the only thing that has abode with me; and that was, that God had some purpose to answer in my affliction, and when that was answered he would remove the rod. Amen. If I could but fully believe this, I think I should then wait for the day in patience, for I have sinned against him.

I find at times uncommon energy in prayer to God in this trouble, but get no sensible deliverance. O that I could quietly wait for his salvation! I think I never asked you to write to me, but if God should put it into your heart to do so now, how thankful I should be! Peradventure he may send a word of support by you.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

LETTER 8

[To the Rev. W. J. Brook] 1809.

Dear Sir,

I thank you much for your kind letter; my mind has been much more composed since I received it. I believe God is doing me good, and in this he is pleased to say he delights. Though we cry hard under his chastening hand, the rod will not be spared. This quietly waiting for God is a hard lesson, and flesh and blood will have a voice here, and say it is cruel. Hence comes the contention; so that when I would quietly submit and patiently wait, this evil is present with me.

I often wonder at God's merciful forbearance to such a perverse fool as I am; for surely he shows at times such a tender regard for one, and gives me such sweet indulgences and familiarities, as to melt my soul into gratitude for his loving-kindness, and cover my face with shame for all my rebellion and hard thoughts towards him. I believe it is good to be afflicted, for I am sure it is the source of a deal of secret intercourse between the soul and God, which they that walk in a clear path know but little of. It causes me to watch every turning of his hand, and many, many times in the day my heart is lifted up in prayer to him, and I feel at times sweet and speedy answers. When my case appears quite desperate, I am holpen with a little help. It is true I have thought my troubles great, yet invariably when I feel Christ in my heart, "the hope of glory", then I can rejoice in tribulation and kiss the rod. Then again the corruption of the heart and unbelief bring a cloud over the mind, and all is fretfulness again. But by all these things I learn that I am in the footsteps of the flock, and in all these things is the life of my soul. Who teacheth like God?

I have heard much of your persecutions at Brighton, but blessed be God that he has left on record that the trial of faith shall "be found unto praise, and honour, and glory". "Such honour have all his saints."

I do love to watch God in everything, in our going out and in our coming in; for I am sure he is in everything, and is said to be about our path; nor can I see in what other way we can be said to walk with God.

I like your idea of liberty – those sons of liberty are slaves to sin, and are the devil’s prisoners; none but those whom Christ makes free are free indeed.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

LETTER 9

[To Mr. Burrell, afterwards Minister of the Gospel, London] 1809.

My dear Friend,

The feeblest and weakest of all creatures desires to speak a little of the wonderful loving-kindness of God, so visibly shown in my behalf, and so sweetly felt in my heart. I seem more and more comforted under these tumults, and have fresh assurances of God’s everlasting love to my soul. These words came sweetly into my mind while reading before chapel this morning: “He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me” [Psalm 55. 18]. Oh, how suitable and supporting! I can bless my dear Redeemer for these unlooked for mercies. He knows my weak and trembling state, and therefore encourages me by these sweet and frequent visits. “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.” I have lost a few earthly companions, and the dear Lord Jesus is come in their stead. O that God would condescend still to teach me, to be my guide, counsellor and friend, and give me a grateful heart for all his condescension and mercy to the vilest and unworthiest of his people; and may he bless you for your kindness to me; and though I have been made acquainted with you under a cloud, yet I do believe God will, in rich mercy, make it manifest that he has chosen me; and that your labour of love towards me shall not be in vain.

Yours affectionately, J. B.

LETTER 10

[To a Friend] 7 March 1810.

My dear Friend,

Since I saw you last I have been much exercised in various ways, but I find my hope is still in the Lord; and that none are able to pluck me out of his hand. It is now that the testimony of God supports me, while I have looked in vain for that of man. His comfortable presence, which is often with me, and has been so with very little intermission ever since Monday fortnight, at half-past six, is now my strength. I sometimes think that if this dear Friend, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, were wholly to withdraw himself, I should indeed be at my wits’ end, but it is not so with me yet; the blessed Spirit is pleased to help my infirmities, and quiet my soul under all these storms. Those that have risen up against me will find in the end that nothing can by any means hurt me, because the Lord is on my side, and he will, in his own time and manner, manage all these matters in my behalf. I desire to leave my cares in his hands, and often feel enabled to do so.

I sincerely hope matters go on well with you, and that the joy of the Lord is your strength. I beseech you to keep close to God, begging earnestly of him to teach and instruct, and to reveal himself more clearly to you.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 11

[To the Rev. W. J. Brook]

My dear Sir,

I was very desirous of seeing you when you were in town last, but things so happened that it could not be. I had much of God's goodness fresh upon my heart, and could have told you of many sweet interventions of God in my behalf. I have been sorely tried with distressing fears for many months respecting my old malady. These have exercised me nearly as much as the actual affliction; but all has brought me into the dust before God, to cry mightily to him, and has been the means of much intercourse between God and my soul, accompanied with the fullest and sweetest assurances of his love and favour. His kind familiarity and condescending care over me have so endeared him to me, that even in my sorest troubles I have stood astonished, and said, Lord, I love this sore affliction, however hard to flesh and blood, while I feel such a close union with thee, my best and only Friend, who lovest at all times. How can I wish to be delivered from what seems to be the means of such inexpressible delight? I can have no other heaven. O let me be perfectly resigned, knowing that thou art righteous in all thy dealings!

O how little did I appear in my own eyes, and yet how much strong confidence I had in the Rock of Ages! I see God's wonderful kindness, in taking such pains with us to make us understand his loving-kindness, and to hide pride from our eyes.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 12

[To his Wife] Southampton, 1812.

My dear Wife,

It is indeed a grief to me to hear of my little boy's relapse. It is my earnest desire to leave the event with God. On opening your letter I felt it sorely, but no contention. It immediately came into my mind how tenderly and kindly the Lord had dealt with me; and I was much softened under a sense of his goodness. I am sensible I have no power to resign my child, or patiently submit to any afflictive dispensation, yet I am much drawn out to beg of God to make me passive in his hands; and at times feel sweetly satisfied that he is doing all things for our good.

O how many mercies and blessings I enjoy! How I am comforted at times with an entire sense of his love to me in Christ Jesus, and so kind is he in all his providences, that, were it not for the reproach I lie under, and the sickness of my child, I could hardly be in the footsteps of the flock, for tribulation is and must be the lot of God's children.

I cannot describe to you how desirous I feel at times to bear every adverse providence, not only with patience but thankfulness. I am very sensible that ballast is necessary; mine neither is nor has been a common case. Never man so unworthy as I am was dealt with so tenderly. It is true all cry out against me, but God in Christ is very, VERY precious to me. I now enjoy the secret reward, and believe one day or other I shall have it openly. Don't misunderstand me; I mean, I have a comfortable testimony of God's love now, and whether I am ever

received by God-fearing people or not, this I know, I shall have “an inheritance incorruptible and that fadeth not away”.

Matters come to a very narrow point, if we could think so, for how little it signifies whether I go first or my boy; a few years must settle the whole. But everything is on my side. “Chosen of God, elect, precious”; “All things are yours.” I feel everything sweet, but the River Jordan. At times that looks deep and broad, and it is injected into my mind that it will be doleful, but all beyond is pleasant; and I live in hopes that God may be better to me than all my fears, even in this matter.

I do most earnestly beg my dearest wife to write by return of post, and let me hear all.

Adieu. J. B.

LETTER 13

[To M. B.] London, 1819.

Dear Cousin,

I have many anxious fears about you, when I consider the reasoning of these people. All genuine experience is called *impulse* and *natural feeling*; all faith without doubt, upon the written Word, is called *the true confidence*; and all those sweet visitations and lifts by the way, all secret hints to keep me out of mischief, all spiritual counsel and direction to keep me from the paths of the destroyer, are called *a narrow, bigoted spirit*; and this being backed with that scripture, “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged”, seems right. I can only come off clear with this scripture: “As deceivers, and yet true.” Here, I trust, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, I shall be able to stand till the day of judgment, and then all deception will be at an end; yet through grace I am made to feel my own blindness and helplessness.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 14

[To M. B.] London, 1819.

Dear Cousin,

I believe the way to be so narrow, that millions that think they are in it will never pass through; and many in our own family are among that number, unless grace prevent the sad mistake. I hope to abide in this narrow spirit with my latest breath. The general profession of the day is no religion; it amounts to very little more than what Hart calls “mere notion”. The part I value above every earthly comfort is considered as *nonsense, delusion, and conceit*; all those sweet visitations that preserve my spirit from the spirit of the world, all those secret rebukes and reproofs that God sanctifies to my soul to keep me from evil, and that I may not be condemned with a wicked and sinful world, are considered as *fanaticism*. Even so; let me be accounted as a deceiver, and yet be true in Christ, and be made willing to pass through evil report as well as good report. I heartily wish you no worse than to join us in these divine things, and not content yourself with anything short of the truth.

In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* there are two sorts that get into the Slough of Despond, but only one of them gets out on the right side. Ponder this, my dear cousin; it is an important matter. The whole of your happiness turns upon this. I have no doubt you find many trials and many rebukes and yet no wisdom to know how to proceed. So it was with me. But God was pleased, by due and slow degrees, to unfold his providence by little and little, and led me to watch his hand, and earnestly at all times to beg his help, and that he would show me his will concerning me both temporally and spiritually. I really found it sweet living in this way; and everything appeared plainer and plainer as I went along. The Lord gave me an understanding to know how I was to proceed; yet I must confess I brought many afflictions and rods upon myself by my untoward and perverse ways, though not left in them to destruction, but he was pleased to sanctify the cross, and to humble me under it, and to heal my soul; and has never yet left me nor forsaken me.

Now, try him in the same way, and see if you do not find him faithful and true.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 15

[To M. B.] 7, Somerset Street, London, January 1820.

Dear Cousin,

If God is pleased to make you sick of your evil ways in every sense, and of your evil nature too, you will so sicken and die to the world, that neither the kindness of friends, nor the hypocrisy of false professors, will be able to keep you from crying for mercy. I know you must have many difficulties to encounter, and find nobody to counsel you. This is hard, but, however hard it may appear, I really think we are too apt to go to human means (if near at hand), and by that are kept longer in misery; whilst, if human means are withheld, we **MUST** go to the fountain-head, where alone all real and efficacious help is to be had. This has been much my case in the beginning of my profession; and I find it much the same now.

I have had many anxious cares and feelings about my new abode, and have been dreadfully afraid of entangling myself in expenses too great for me. I have had many sleepless nights, crying earnestly to God to undertake for me; and on Monday last I was so ill in body, and so burdened with care, that I knew not how to exist. I had long cried to God to relieve me, but found no sensible help. There is a quietly hoping and patiently waiting for the salvation of God. My desires after him were intense. I wanted his approbation, and an assurance that he would bring me through life and give me an expected end; and in my new house, just before bedtime, when alone, the Lord was pleased to shine into my heart in the sweetest possible manner. It was attended with such godly repentance, godly sorrow, and self-abhorrence, as I shall never be able to describe, Christ assuring my heart of his tender mercy to me, and that I was walking in the steps of his providence, and that my happiness and privilege were to cast my care upon him, for it was not in my power to manage matters, but

God would in infinite condescension undertake for me both spiritually and temporally.

O what happiness to be in such hands! Troubles we must have, but a sweet hope of mercy at last sweetens all; and if you attain to a comfortable assurance of your interest in Christ, it will be more to you than all outward earthly comfort whatever. My wife joins in kind regards.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 16

[To a Friend] London, 1821.

Dear Friend,

Whatever may be your thoughts, where you are to settle and how to manage your business, they ought to run in this channel: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." While I make business first, I find "death in the pot"; everything goes counter, and I am as lifeless as a post; but when I am earnestly seeking for a better portion, and eternal things are uppermost, then I consider by what means God will preserve this spiritual life, and what steps will be most conducive to it; whether a distant country, where no fellowship with the saints is found, no sound of the gospel is heard, no affliction with the people of God suffered, but plenty of business, and plenty of admirers, and a soul as dark and as dry as a potsherd; or to be content with the daily manna, watching the hand of God, living with his people, and, like Ruth of old, saying, Let nothing prevent me following the people of God: "Thy people shall be my people, thy God my God; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." So let all your plans and pursuits be, and so shall they have a happy issue.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

LETTER 17

[To Mr. Nunn] Hampstead, 1823.

Dear Friend,

I am truly sensible of the kindness God has put into your heart towards me. I have found much fellow-feeling in your sufferings, and also in a measure have been made partaker of those comforts that you have had. If the Lord shall enable me I will tell you honestly the things I have lately been through, and beg that God for Christ's sake may have mercy upon me, and show me if I am wrong.

I thought I saw much of the mercy of God in all my stay at Peper Harrow. After I had finished there, I remained a short time in the country on some further business, and was taken so ill that I despaired of ever returning home; but my spiritual coldness was by far the worst grievance. I seemed to sink without measure, and groaned most earnestly that my life might be spared to return. I seemed to get worse every day, and the more I cried to the Lord, the more gloomy everything seemed, and what would become of me I knew not. I did from my very soul justify the Lord in his dealings with me, and agreed that my afflictions were due to my folly. The night before I came away I fainted, and the next morning was hardly able to prevent fainting again, and put up many

earnest petitions that the Lord would enable me to get home to die. Now, I think, if ever, I was made honest and tender and sincere. I longed to see some of the friends, yet dared not send for them, thinking God had bid them stand aloof from my sore, and being made willing, even if I perished in the contest, still to cry mightily to God to help me, for I knew that my evidences must be something more than the kindness of friends. God knows how glad I was to see you when you called. On Wednesday night when alone I read the Word of God, and prayed and cried most bitterly that he would look with mercy upon me, for I had no strength to contend with the various assaults I met with, and the fear and horror of death in such a state seemed to drink up my spirit. The Lord was pleased to soften my heart and made me feel much meekness and patience, and a sweet sensation of his kindness towards me. O how I begged that he would be with you all at chapel, and with the preacher that he might abound with blessings for himself and the people. My heart was truly with the work, and I could bear witness in my soul that the Lord was with us. But this only continued till next day. I began again to sink into all the horrors of darkness beyond what I can express, and gave up everything. I was so ashamed I knew not where to hide my face. No guilty condemned wretch could fear death more than I did; and so I continued till Sunday morning, when I found much encouragement and was sweetly refreshed.

How mightily I feel all matters relating to the soul! With me it is a case of life and death. Though this conflict has been, is, and I fear will yet be, very sharp, I have at times a sweet secret hope that he is doing me good, and intends to give me an expected end. Dear friend, I believe my sharp conflict has made me more sincere, honest, and in earnest than I ever felt in my life. O what a depth of sin has been discovered, which in the day of prosperity was never suspected! May you be led to pray for me, that the Lord would be with me to instruct me, and to work in me all the good pleasure of his will.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 18

[To his Wife] Kidbrook, 11 August 1824.

My dear Wife,

I was rather low on leaving London (partly owing to nervousness), and anxious to have some token for good before entering Kidbrook. I felt much earnestness, with godly fear, that I might not be found where I had no right to be, and I could not quite satisfy myself, unless I could perceive some access, or the Lord taking some notice of me, some way or other. In reading Job 37 I cannot describe the sensation I felt, cleaving to the Lord with much watchfulness and humiliation, and a great sense of my weakness. I saw some beauty in these words: "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him that is perfect in knowledge? How thy garments are warm when he quieteth the earth by the south wind?" Yet I did not get all I wanted. But when I came to these words: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" [Job 38. 31], I could not help crying, No, Lord, I cannot; I wish with all my heart I could but continually keep them while I live on earth! And with much joy the Lord visited

me and meekened me under a sense of his love, and I went on quite satisfied that God was with me. I said, Lord, if I am to meet with vexation and disappointments, let thy good Spirit teach me how to bear it, and let it be seen that this is of thee by a discreet behaviour, which is so contrary to my nature. In this frame I put up many petitions, and found my heart filled with such composure and watchfulness as I cannot tell; nor did I forget you.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 19

[To his Wife] 19 August 1824.

My dear Wife,

I was exceedingly happy on Sunday morning in reading and meditation. I do not know when I found so much meekness and humility before God, and such godly sorrow and real grief of heart on account of sin. I was first much struck in reading Elisha Coles, where he says: "Moses for once speaking unadvisedly was shut out of Canaan, though he would fain have gone into that good land, and solicited the Lord much about it as if he would have no denial. Yet the Lord would not hear him. 'Speak no more to me of this matter.'" I felt great fear and trembling here, and could bring many things to mind, if God had been pleased to enter into judgment; but I was led to confess my folly, acknowledge my sin and its deserts, and found the Lord heard my prayer, and broke my heart with his goodness. As I went on with Elisha Coles I read: "It shall be no grief of heart to thee to remember thy mortal sufferings when thou seest such peaceable fruits of righteousness brought forth thereby." O no! But I cannot paint my feeling in what follows: "He will never repent who sows in tears, when he brings home his sheaves with joy, to eternal life." What sweet and powerful words! Can so poor and wretched a creature as I be brought to receive such an inexpressible feeling in his heart? Yes, by the mighty power of God. What purity and love it works! How sweet and undefiled! Dare I say so? Yes, I must say so; but it is all in Christ Jesus, and what he works in us. How odious it makes sin, and how ashamed we are when we bow before him in adoration! Nothing can describe my humiliation at such a time, nor the grief I feel for my sinful nature; and the more because of his pardoning love. It is wonderful to say it, but it seems almost too much. But O what a sweet union exists between Christ and the soul under such influences! I give a very lame account of it, very short of what I wish to describe.

I afterwards found much sweetness and encouragement in reading 2 Peter 1. 10, 11, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." O do seek for this! Slack not, nor tarry in all the plain. I also saw much in Micah 4. 6-12 – not to take heed to any that may be watching for our halting, but rather to watch what the Lord will do for us, and see that we obtain a FULL REWARD. I hope the Lord will appear for you, and do you good, and make you much in earnest.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 20

[To M. B.] 25 July 1825.

Dear Cousin,

I feel quite sorry for — , yet when I consider the mighty power of God that must be displayed in the behalf of every sinner that is saved, I know that he can make every mountain a plain, and remove every obstacle. When he will work, NONE SHALL LET. Pray tell her to listen to none and to go to none but God; and let her beg earnestly for a spirit of prayer and supplication. May the Word of God dwell richly in her heart, and be her rule and guide! Let her pray over it, and entreat the Lord to grant her his Holy Spirit, who shall guide her into all truth. I am sure if she be rightly led, she will often feel ready to despair and to give up praying; but hope will revive in prayer, and encouragement spring up. Her time, like mine, appears as if it would not be long on earth; and to have God on our side when we draw near our end is worth more than all the treasures of earth.

By reason of my sin, I perceive that I must pass through that spiritual baptism which our Saviour speaks of, and in which he cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In every such place of horror, darkness, and fear, I should utterly faint if he did not please to return with some strength, some hope, some consolation, to raise up my sinking spirit. This makes me to stand my ground.

We all (like the virgins in the parable) sleep by the way, and often the heaviest troubles take us at such a time. We should thus soon come to destruction, were it not for the fear of the Lord, like a sentinel, to rouse us, and make us tremble at the prospect of his judgments, which seem to be coming heavily upon us; and work in us such a falling down before him, that he cannot but look upon us in mercy. Hereupon we find once more the oil in our lamps, and are ready for the marriage supper.

I am sure that there is no other way than that of trouble and anguish because of sin, and joy and gladness because of mercy. These, more or less, are constantly the frames of all such as have divine life.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 21

[To Mr. Nunn] Middleton Park, 1826.

Dear Friend,

I feel much disposed to give you some account of myself; but when I was most willing, time and power were both wanting. I never leave home on such an occasion without much anxiety, knowing the manifold snares and difficulties which are sure to befall me. I was very unhappy on Wednesday afternoon with a great mixture of deadness and barrenness; and though I was led to cry to the Lord, unbelief seemed to say that there was no use in it; a backslider in heart can only be filled with his own ways. I fretted against the Lord, but did not quite give up hoping; and when I heard the text that evening, "Who is on the Lord's side," the very words seemed to vibrate in my heart, and I thought I could say, *I am*. Then something replied, *Keep praying*; and in a little time I found a spirit of meekness and godly sorrow, and my mind greatly refreshed, and my heart

turned to be quite in earnest. I went home and read the chapter from which the text was taken [Exod. 32] and the following one; and my heart sweetly kindled as I went on to these words, "Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight;" and the following words took me greatly by surprise: "And he said, My presence shall go with thee." Out of the abundance of my heart, feeling such ineffable sweetness in the sense of his loving-kindness and care over me, I cried, "My Lord and my God!" Sin was acknowledged and in heart forsaken, and many petitions put up that he would remember me when I forget myself! O, my dear sir, where is there such a Friend? These are not cunningly devised fables, but solid realities. How it prepares my heart against disappointments, and makes me still under many crosses! This God is our God, and will be our guide unto death.

Tell Mrs. N. to try this way. Perhaps she will reply that she does try, but not with all the heart. A savour in what she says is wanting. Secret prayer and meditation not only bring life into the soul, but their effect is sure to be felt by those about you. Moses' face shone so much after his secret converse with God, that the children of Israel could not well look at him; and if I meet a friend that has prevalency with God, and hear him tell the tale, I feel the glory with such inexpressible shame and guilt, that I cannot look my friend in the face; and why? because something says, "God is no respecter of persons," and that my backsliding, giddy, and foolish heart has kept back these blessings from me.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 22

[To M. B.] Peper Harrow, 6 August 1826.

Dear Cousin,

It is true I was low and gloomy when I was at your house, yet I felt a cleaving to the Lord, and a measure of hope that he would be with me; and after supper, in returning thanks, I was most sweetly comforted with his presence, with a great sense of my own insufficiency. I had a good journey down, and found my little place retirement itself. Though not much exercised, I have been occupied with prayer, to be kept discreet and sober-minded, and have found much meekness on my spirit; and this sort of communion has, by the great goodness of God, kept me in a good place.

I was much struck with reading these words, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." It felt to me as if to fall into temptation was to fall into sin, for that I was the most foolish and weak creature possible; and the power to keep me is the Lord's, and the kingdom is his, which I long to have maintained in my heart, but which sin always puts down as to the present enjoyment of it. But when in the enjoyment of it, there is a hearty ascribing the glory to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

I have been sleepless and languid through the heat, but have put up many petitions not to complain, and find my past afflictions have been exceedingly sanctified, by the great goodness of God, in leading me to turn every apparent trifle into prayer.

While you seem so much exercised where to go, I think you are not yet in the spot where God designs you to be. One place I would advise you to lodge in is, "Let patience have her perfect work" – patiently wait, and quietly hope, for the salvation of God. Those little whispers that you hint at, I would have you attend to. They will not lead you hither and thither; but they will lead you, like Samuel of old, to attend, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 23

[To Mr. Nunn] Sezincot, October 1827.

Dear Friend,

I am never happy at the thought of leaving town without some token for good. While with my family on Sunday, after chapel, the Lord was pleased to draw near with all the assurances of mercy and friendship that could be conceived. The more I debased myself, the more he assured me of his favour. I could now commit my family to God; and many in the church also crowded upon my mind. O that they did but know the goodness and tenderness of our God! They would never reproach him with keeping them at a distance, but would readily acknowledge that sin alone separates between God and them.

Tell Mr. T. that such a visit as this would make the lips of him that is asleep to speak, and what will he speak? He will speak all that is good of God's name; he will exonerate God in all things, and put all darkness, confusion, distance, dryness, barrenness, and unbelief, to his own account. In these visits he will also wonder at the unbounded freeness of God's everlasting love in Christ Jesus, overtopping all our misery and sin.

To return to my subject, I cannot express to you my joyful surprise and gratitude to God, nor with what willingness I took my journey the next morning. In the coach I read Romaine's *Walk of Faith*, and again found many sweet and precious sips, many times in spirit lying prostrate in the dust, deeply sensible of my unprofitable life, and yet seeing my High Priest ready to atone, feeling the peaceful application of his Spirit upon my heart; and this wrought an unspeakable wonder at his picking up me, yes, unworthy me! My prayers also were towards our little flock, that he would remember them, though separated, and hated of all, and many amongst them asleep in the midst of light! – some making all kinds of excuses for their continual sorrow and want of power to make clear work, and laying the fault upon God! O how I can, with all my heart, declare that he is pitiful and of tender mercy, and is very nigh to every one of us if haply we feel after him! Let us consider the difference of the two parties that give us an account of the promised land. One brought an evil report, the other, precious fruit. O that men were wise!

In former days I well remember that these visits were a seasoning for some approaching trial; and as I always fear the enemy at hand, I did, on my journey, most earnestly beseech the Lord to be beforehand with me, that he would so manage for me as not to let me play the fool; that he would keep me spiritually-minded, and that when my feet were ready to slip, he would be pleased to remember me. I wished to be in a low place, for then I knew I should not have

far to fall. It is high and large expectations, lofty conceits, and towering prospects that bring a man down in sorrow.

Tell Mr. C. that he need not go back to a certain stile near Witney for another visit from the Lord; I hope he has found even Hampstead none other than the house of God, none other than the gate of heaven. Our God does not grudge his visits; I have the sweetest sensation on my heart while I write, declaring the inexpressible freeness of his grace. Only remember how Josiah acted when Huldah the prophetess declared her message; may we all go and do likewise, and our end shall be peace.

Tell Mrs. Nunn that if she could get a little of the new wine of the kingdom which I have had this day, or, in plain language, if she could get some comfortable and friendly intercourse between God and her soul, it would clear up her doubtful path, and make her to know that her salvation is of God. I have told another friend she is spending the best period of her life without this spiritual friendship. The word says, "Occupy till I come;" the slothful professor says, I knew thou wert a hard master, and therefore "hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine." Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids, until thou hast "found out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob", even in thine heart. Pray admit him; you will never meet with a better Friend. Farewell.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 24

[To M. B.] Sezincot, 1827.

Dear Cousin,

I was very sorry on one account to hear so poor an account of yourself; yet when I see what the world is after, and the exceeding shortness and uncertainty of all things, I seem more desirous of ending my days in peace, yes, much more desirous of ending well than of planning for life. I will endeavour to give you some reasons. Since I have been here I have had some sweet, very sweet, and precious moments; my whole heart laid out for God; no room for earthly objects, no wish for any change; persuaded that the Lord would be with me at last. But my foolish heart soon changes; sin soon takes occasion; and I am carried whither I would not, as our Saviour says of Peter. Then I fret and pine after what I have lost, and bitterly complain of what I have got in exchange – dryness, barrenness, and distance; very little power to pray, and yet no heart to anything else; exceedingly mortified at the loss of the Lord's sweet presence, and (I am sorry to add, yet must tell all) feeling angry because I am so served, and thinking it hard that when I would do good, evil is suffered to be present with me.

I believe you are brought into the straits you speak of for the very purpose that you may make your calling and election sure, and may have a clearer insight into the depths of your heart. I think I find this daily more and more. We should never know what a great salvation it is, unless we were brought into these sad places. Do excuse my expressions; but were I to weep drops of blood, I could not paint out to you the grief and bitter sorrow I often feel on account of my sinful nature. Alas! what am I, and what have I done? All that I could do,

and be, against the best of friends. What is he, and what has he done for me? All that he could do, and be, on behalf of the worst of enemies. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." They need not tell us that therefore we may live ungodly or in sin; we love his sweet presence too much for that.

Can I harm any one by wishing him this blessed Friend, this ready Saviour? O, Mr. T., let not the enemy befool you out of the presence of this kind Friend; do not submit to be continually blinkered by the enemy. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" How I wish Mrs. B. could obtain admission, and for once "see the King in his beauty"! Then she would feel his power in breaking every yoke. Poor Mr. R.! I believe the Lord is with him, and will make it manifest that his deeds are wrought in God. The first trial did not seem sanctified to his wife, perhaps this will have a closer effect. As Mr. Burrell says, God now looks for fruit.

I much wish I could see spiritual life increase amongst our elder brethren in the church; I am persuaded it would greatly encourage the younger ones. Many get their heads well furnished, but very little dew upon the branches. The shadows of the evening are greatly lengthened with many of us, and the harvest may be past and the summer ended, before we have found a place of shelter. It shall certainly go ill with the wicked, but well with the righteous; they shall never be confounded that seek the Lord.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 25

[To M. B.] London, July 1828.

Dear Cousin,

What you say in your letter respecting the spending of your first Sunday, I quite agree with. Unless there is an entire seeking of God and giving yourself up to that service, when thus separated from the public means, I know there will be nothing but death and confusion. If we through fear give way, and give that to man which so justly belongs to God, we shall find God will resent it, by hiding his face and making our path dark. I hope God will give you courage to spend your Sundays privately, in seeking him; wholly so.

I am truly grieved for Mrs. —; you see in her the lamentable effect of living without the means, and having no converse with lively Christians. I hope the Lord will be pleased to direct you in your conduct and conversation with —. Pray do not enter into contention; watch the death that such things bring into the soul. Let his conversation be ever so exciting, beg of God that your words may be few, and those few attended with godly fear, not mixed with wrath and bitterness, for that will not work the righteousness of God. If the poor man knew the plague of his own heart, he would gladly hear the tale of those who have had their plague healed. He *will* look upon us as enemies; whereas it is not in the power of a carnal man to wish so well to him, as we in the fear of God most earnestly desire.

I have had various exercises; a deal of death, a daily cross, and many, many petitions put up, that I might not be left to backslide and grow indifferent. How unprofitable is a dead soul! All that such speak is like the white of an egg. When the cross pinches hard, many petitions go up. This was my case yesterday; and in

my pleadings and acknowledgements I found by the power of the Spirit a perfect acceptance of the rod, and such repentance unto life as I cannot describe. I could not help saying, "Behold the goodness and severity of God", severity against this evil heart of unbelief, but goodness and mercy towards that principle of divine life planted in the heart. Meditating on the deadness and darkness I felt the day before, and fearing and wondering how it would end, the Lord applied with great power and sweetness these words: "Be silent," O Earth, "and let the people renew their strength" [Zech 2. 13; Hab. 2. 20; Isa. 41. 1]. At first I did not quite understand it, though I received it with much sweetness upon my spirit; but I soon saw that God, by his Spirit, silenced in my heart all carnal-mindedness, and all that was earthly, sensual, and devilish; and instead thereof, peace, tranquillity, and godly sorrow flowed in. By this my strength was renewed, and my spirit greatly refreshed. I then soon found out the spiritual meaning of the words.

This morning at chapel I found the text most precious, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go," etc. [Psa. 32. 8-11]. The prayer was also very suitable to my wants and feeling of gratitude, and the whole a sweet anointing for my journey tomorrow.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 26

[To M. B.] Aylesbury, July 1828.

Dear Cousin,

I see great beauty in the constant exercise of prayer: "CONTINUING INSTANT IN PRAYER." I perceive its prevalency, and that God does indeed hear us when we cry earnestly at the approach of an enemy. Communion with God is a check against levity, and a maul upon the old man of sin, on every occasion; we see what is going on within, watching every emotion of the heart, and are led to bring all our miseries to the "fountain opened", and are made spiritually-minded, which "is life and peace". With David we say, "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love."

You are now in an enemy's country, and I hope you will keep a double watch. Let me intreat you not to get into distaste with your closet; as secret prayer ebbs and flows, so you will find your spiritual strength ebb and flow. Delilah is a fair speaker, but will certainly betray us, if we be found sleeping in her lap. The lock will be cut off; and then, like Samson, we may shake ourselves, but to our sorrow it will cost much time and labour before the lock be grown again. Only the Lord can preserve your spirit, and give you divine wisdom and discretion, that you may not prove a sport to the Philistines. The world is very congenial to our old man; and the professing world is a sort of plaster to the carnal mind, and often hushes a benumbed conscience to sleep; but be sure to listen to every little dictate within, and browbeat it not. Be sure you do as this inward monitor bids, and beg to be like a little child at the foot of Christ. As I told you in my last, Enter not into contention; "Keep the door of thy lips;" and let the Word of God dwell richly in you; so shall you prosper.

Yours &c. J. B.

LETTER 27

[To M. B.] Wiston Park, July 1828.

Dear Cousin,

I am with much pleasure able to inform you that I do not seek the face of God in vain. I have been in the deepest distress, but kept constantly crying to God; and though at times I find his gracious presence, at other times I tremble from head to foot with fear; but under all this cleave the more closely to him. O what happiness to find no reproof, no rebuke! but I am bid to look at all those that have gone before me in the path of tribulation, and learn that our reproach need not be borne single-handed; our sweet privilege is to believe that our reproach fell upon Christ. May you and I consider "that though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;" and may we by prayer and supplication make manifest the same in our life and conversation. Our blessed High Priest was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities", and "was in all points tempted like as we are". Such things as these are inconceivable supports [Heb. 4. 15, and 5. 8].

Thus I am occupied here, and kept with a mighty hand. My spirit is much preserved, and my trouble too complicated and severe to allow me time to trifle, and too heavy to be borne by flesh and blood. This morning, reading the epistle to the Hebrews, I have had a sweet season; much enlargement of heart, liberty in prayer, and fresh assurances of God's loving-kindness and tender care; many accusations from the enemy, many lying predictions, and painful threatenings, which the Lord is graciously pleased to remove by some word or other on which he causes me to hope. How sweet were these words to me today (I believe spoken by the Spirit, and imprinted on my heart), "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount" [Heb. 8. 5]. In this mount God has often put me lately (the mount of his presence), and the pattern I there saw was to be clothed with humility, longsuffering, patience, meekness, temperance, and spiritual-mindedness; no murmuring at God's dispensations, no sparing the flesh, no contention in the soul; see that your profiting appears in all these things. O Lord, be pleased to grant that this spirit may grow and increase more and more, that we may really walk in the enjoyment of them, is the prayer of,

Yours affectionately, J. B.

LETTER 28

[To Mr. Nunn] Wiston Park, July 1828.

My dear Friend,

The various exercises I have been under render it very difficult for me to send you an especial account, yet I cannot help endeavouring for your encouragement to tell you something of them.

I have laboured under many grievous and sore conflicts; and between despair, murmuring, contention, and all such like feelings, and the fixedness of my heart in fighting against them, it has proved no small work. I have been groaning deeply under manifold sorrows, and have as it were lived in the Word of God and prayer. As I was entering my employer's garden, I seated myself

privately under a large oak tree, and prayed most earnestly that the Lord would hear my cry and appear for me. I was enabled to pour out my sorrow before him; and I think I shall never forget the tender sound of these words, "TOUCHED with the feeling of our infirmities; IN ALL POINTS tempted like as we are;" and as if it further said, I am no stranger to your fears and dismay, but am with you in all. I cannot tell you the revolution this caused in my soul; my sins appeared like mountains, and unspeakably offensive to me, and yet broken to pieces with the sense of my standing completely justified in Christ's righteousness. On my return I could not but stop in the same corner and bless his holy name for revealing himself so kindly and tenderly to me, and he again repeated his assurances of tenderness and care, and laid great emphasis on the word *touched*, as if he said, I feel and am troubled for you in all your troubles, but you shall understand my loving-kindness in all these dispensations.

All that day and all night, I had a sweet view of Christ's being near to help, and a kind Friend at hand; but again I sank at once into much gloom and many fears; yet the Word of God was still my meat and drink. It does indeed talk to me by the way, and look at me in every direction. I said, O Lord, what shall I do? Be pleased to show mercy, and let not murmuring once come into my heart. O Lord, stand my friend. In this case I stood by the roadside, trembling from head to foot, and these words sounded with the same tenderness as the above, "O MY FATHER." I said, May I use these words? Yes, doubtless, my Father, my faithful Friend in time of need. "O MY FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE let this cup pass from me." Here I was shown the lawfulness of praying to be delivered from every burden. But the next word "NEVERTHELESS" I prayed earnestly might never be forgotten by me: "Nevertheless NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT" [Matt. 26. 39].

How shall I describe my sensations here? This I can say, that I did with all my heart, soul, and strength, accept the punishment of my sins, and lay meekened at the footstool of Christ, crying, Do unto me what seemeth good in thy sight, for I perceive that truly as thou hast said in thy Word, so thou art well acquainted with all our sorrows, and art very near to help, if haply we feel after thee.

I was sweetly instructed again in reading the following words, and cannot describe to you the compassion and tenderness with which the Lord was pleased to bring them, as if he really felt every trial I was under just as I did. "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them" [John 16. 4]. That is, that when you are in your trouble, you may not be taken by surprise, but remember that I told you before that it would come. Yes, Lord, I said, by thy grace I do remember thou didst once tell me that "Bonds and afflictions abide me in every place;" but I did not know that I should meet with such heart-breaking compassion, and that the consolations should so certainly abound, as the tribulation increased.

Can I praise the Lord enough for all his goodness to me? I want an eternity to show forth all his praise, and words to declare my gratitude. How I wish with one of old to tell all delayers that they are "unwise sons", and ask them why they "stay so long in the place of the breaking forth of children" [Hos. 13. 13]. If they did but know even what I know of the preciousness of this salvation, they could not "tarry in all the plain" of this world, but must come to this Friend of sinners,