

The Letters of Ruth Bryan, 1805-1860

All spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus,
and to be dispensed to the poor and needy

To E. M., Nottingham, November 1848.

My Dear,

There is in my heart a strange and unaccountable drawing towards you and your dear sister, a full tide of feeling which will break through all opposing timidity, and find its way to you, in the shape of earnest longings after you "in the affections of Jesus Christ," that He may be formed in you "the hope of glory." I would not mention this, but in the hope that it may be from the Lord, and for His glory, which He can accomplish by the most weak and insignificant means. With this encouragement, then, I venture to write to you in that Name, through faith in which the lame do "leap as an deer," "and the tongue of the dumb" is made to "sing,"—that Name which is to the believing soul "as ointment poured forth"—the Name of Jesus, who was so called because He would "save His people from their sins."

This well suits a sin-sick soul. His name is also Emmanuel, which is "God with us;" "God manifest in the flesh;" God taking our nature—becoming our brother, born for our adversity—to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, to be tempted as we are tempted, that He might for us conquer the tempter, and deliver His tempted brethren. He can pity, for He has felt; (Heb. 2:18) He can relieve, for He has broken the power; He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Satan tried every arrow in his quiver; but our glorious God-man repelled them all. Satan foiled the first Adam with one temptation, and all his seed in him; he came against the same nature in the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven," in whom again a seed was included to stand or fall with Him. And here our nature came off victorious in union with our glorious Head. Truly it makes my heart glow to see Jesus as our champion on the battle-field, vanquishing our foes—Satan, sin, the world, our old man, and death itself. They have all been so overcome by our spiritual David, that they shall never be the destruction of the least lamb in His flock. The lion and the bear may come out together against them, and seem just ready to devour; but He will arise, smite the beasts of prey, deliver His trembling one, and none shall pluck it out of His hand.

This is precious consolation to such as feel they have no might at all, and feel, too, the world drawing, Satan tempting, sin striving, and the flesh lusting. Oh, what would we do at such times if we had not One to fight for us, and fight in us too! We would certainly be "swallowed up quick," but the Lord has laid help upon "One who is mighty;" and this mighty One that is for us is more than all that can be against us. What makes it so beautiful is, that Himself is our very strength and victory; so that our weakness and inability are no hindrance at all. Of this one of old was so well convinced, that he exclaimed, "When I am weak, then am I strong." What a paradox to carnal reason! and how long we are learning this lesson perfectly, by reason of the working of our carnality and self-love!

Our Father has determined that Christ shall be all, and we nothing. To accomplish this experimentally, He undoes our work. When we have been washing with soap, He plunges us in the ditch; when we seem to be getting on a little better than usual, He turns us upside down. This is hard work, and while the process is going on, we think it must be for destruction, for we appear to grow worse and worse. But in truth it is for salvation—to show ourselves to ourselves, to bring us to forsake

ourselves, (Luke 9:23) and to give us Christ, instead of ourselves. (Gal. 2:20) Oh, what a blessed exchange! It is worth being spoiled in all the labor of our hands, and marred in our very best things--to possess such a treasure. There can be no drinking of the living waters while we have a price in our hand, be it much or little; no buying the gospel wine and milk while we have any money; no triumphing in "the Lord our righteousness," while we are hunting about for shreds of our own, and sewing them together. All this is Christ-rejecting and God-dishonoring. Therefore be not cast down at the Lord's ways towards you, for if we are anything, or have anything, Jesus cannot be everything; and if He is not everything, He is nothing. He must be all, for holiness and happiness, for justification and sanctification, (1 Cor. 1:30) for acceptable appearing before God and suitable walking before men, for holy living and happy dying.

Do we want good works? we are "created" unto them in Him. (Eph. 2:10) Do we desire "the fruits of righteousness?" we are filled with them by union with Him. (Phil. 1:11) In short, our Father has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings" in Him; (Eph. 1:3) and the reason we do not enjoy them more is because we seek them in ourselves. Oh to have the single eye which looks at Jesus only! Then would our whole body be "full of light." But thus to venture right away from self is a venture indeed, and can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is He effects that blessed closure of the soul in Christ, which is like the weary dove getting into the ark; and you know she was pulled in after vainly seeking rest elsewhere. May you have such a precious pull of Divine power, that you may enter into rest by believing; (Heb. 4:3) which faith is "not of" ourselves, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8)

When once admitted to the loving heart and loving arms of Jesus, you will find that which would superabundantly compensate for more than a thousand years waiting: such a complete and blessed salvation—such a precious and glorious Savior—such fullness in His work, blood, righteousness, love, and person--as to eternity will never be fully developed—and such blessed entrance thereinto by faith now, that, though I dare not trust myself to speak of it, I sincerely wish you its happy and speedy enjoyment. May the sweet love of Jesus constrain us more and more to speak well of His name, and may its savor perfume our souls, lips, and lives, that men may take knowledge of us, as being much with Him, and much like Him! May you have full experience of those words, "And in view of this, we always pray for you that our God will consider you worthy of His calling, and will, by His power, fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1:11, 12)

Yours affectionately,
Ruth Bryan.

Christ proved to be all-sufficient in near views
of eternity, and recommended to seeking souls

To E. M., April 1849.

My Dear,

It was not my intention that your kind notes should be so long unanswered; but true, indeed, is Jeremiah 10:23, "I know, Lord, that a person's life is not his own. No one is able to plan his own course." And my heavenly Father had prepared for me a journey I then knew not of--I mean down into

the valley of affliction, having been much prostrated in health since I had the pleasure of hearing from you. The descent was gradual, and quite safe, for I was enabled to lean upon my Beloved, who kindly granted me, that as the outer man was weakened, the inner man was renewed by the Spirit day by day. From the beamings of celestial glory which sparkled through the crevices of a decaying body, I joyfully hoped soon to put off mortality and enter the presence-chamber of my Lord, to behold Him, not "through a glass, darkly," but "face to face;" to see that countenance, once "marred more than any man's" for my sake, but now in resurrection glory, shining above the brightness of the sun in his meridian splendor. Such was my anticipation, but apparently not my Lord's intention at this time, as He is now gradually strengthening this poor tabernacle, and sending me back a second time from the very gates of the Celestial City. May He condescend to be glorified in my return to the discipline of the wilderness, and pardon my unwillingness.

Perhaps He is saying to me as before, "The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying--Return home and tell how much God has done for you." (Luke 8:38, 39) And my heart says, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard;" (Acts 4:20) and, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul." (Psalm 66:16)

I must come to you again in the sweet name of Jesus; and if ever one poor sinner more than others had cause to extol that precious name, it is she who now addresses you; in whose SOUL it is "as ointment poured forth;" in whose EAR it is more melodious than music; and in whose HAND it is a staff either to pass over Jordan, or journey forward in the pilgrim road. Feeling that I am the most vile, worthless, and unlikely of all creatures to have sat down so blissfully at the banquet of Love--this poor heart must praise the Founder of the feast, who is also the substance of it; and who, by His own irresistible power, sweetly brought me in, and then said, "Eat, O friend, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Having thus partaken of life, I am constrained to testify in my feeble way that this is the bread of God, which nourishes the soul; this is the wine of the kingdom, which cheers the heart, and, with the oil of the Spirit, makes the face to shine.

Moreover, having just come from very near views of eternity, I must solemnly testify that Christ only is the Rock upon which the soul can be safe and triumphant, when the waves of death seem going over the body. At such a time the world stands afar off; friends can only look on, or look up; and all that is to come appears a vast forever--either in the fiery wrath, or the blissful presence of the Lord God and the Lamb. Nothing can be solid but "Christ in you, the hope of glory." To realize this at such a moment is worth a thousand such worlds as this; and, indeed, whatever you may be called to give up, is not worth a name in comparison of a precious Christ. My heart glows with a desire to speak well of His dear name, His finished work, His glorious person, and, if it might be His will, to set other souls on fire with love or longing after Him. For what can I do while away from my glory-home, but to be a savor of Christ, telling poor dead sinners, that whatever be their profession, they are "feeding on ashes;" that "a deceived heart has turned them aside" from the only way of salvation?

I would also seek to encourage poor, trembling souls, who are already brought into judgment, and feel the sentence of death in themselves, to put their case, bad as it is, into the hands of the "Wonderful Counselor," (Isa. 9:6) prevailing Intercessor, (Rom. 8:34) and "Advocate with the Father," who is "Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1) I think, beloved, He is just what you seemed to need when you wrote to me, for the sentence of death appeared to be working deeper, that you might not

trust in yourselves; (2 Cor. 1:9, 10.) And the goodness of your flesh seemed to be fading, I hope, by the blowing of the Spirit Jehovah thereupon, (Isa. 40:6, 7) to make way for the beauty of Jesus. By your words, your loveliness seemed turning into corruption, (Dan. 10:8) and the Lord, with inward rebukes correcting you for iniquity, was making your beauty to consume away like a moth. (Psalm 39:11) Though to your feelings these dark discoveries make against you, they are in truth for you, for it is the light which makes manifest; and better that the leprosy should be exposed, than have it working death unheeded.

When the things over which you lament were within, they troubled you not; and now they are disclosed, the great enemy would suggest that you are too filthy for the fountain, too cold for the fire, too much diseased to appear in the presence of the great Physician. He does this in a wily way, bringing to mind, when you would approach the mercy-seat, some shortcoming or misdoing, in order to turn your eye away from that sprinkled blood which is the sinner's all-prevailing plea. May the Comforter reveal Christ, as He convinces of sin, and take of His precious things--and set them against your vile ones, giving you heavenly skill and understanding to plead--His precious blood against your sin--His perfect obedience against your constant disobedience--His power to heal against your desperate disease.

You know those before the throne overcame Satan "by the blood of the Lamb;" and our victories must come in the same way. Yet this way we are so slow to learn, because it is completely out of and against that SELF which it is so hard to leave. However, the Holy Spirit will not forsake His own work; the least beginning shall have a sure ending, for He will perfect that which concerns us. David tells us how he became such a skilful warrior: "It is God who girded me with strength." "He teaches my hands to war." "By you I have run through a troop; by my God have I leaped over a wall."

There is a very encouraging word in Hebrews 11:33-34, "who through faith . . . out of weakness were made strong"—strong through faith; which faith leaves the creature and 'creature-working' behind--and fastens upon a precious Christ, determined to go through all, trusting in Him, and saying heartily, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14) My soul earnestly desires that you may obtain "like precious faith" to venture wholly upon Jesus; and though that faith should seem small "like a grain of mustard seed," it will not prove a delusion; for "He knows those who put their trust in Him," although sometimes they know not to whom they really belong. May it please our gracious Lord soon to reveal Himself, as you desire, and grant you that sealing of the Spirit (Eph. 1:13) for which you long. May the Lord bless you indeed, enlarge you out of SELF into Christ, and keep you from evil, that it may not grieve you.

So prays, yours affectionately,
R. Bryan.

1 Peter 5:10; Eph. 3:14-19; 1 John 5:21; Jer. 29:11-13.

The matchless love of Christ as the Bridegroom

To E. M. October 31, 1849.
(To be received, "if the Lord wills," on her wedding-day)

"I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as Lord." Hosea 2:19-20

And why does dear sister wish for a line from the humble, unworthy Gleaner, when so many tender sensations will be thrilling round her heart? Is it that she thereby desires to forsake all, (even when her net is drawn to shore right full of mercies, (Luke 5:6-11)) and follow Jesus only? Is it that she longs, on the very day she receives her earthly bridegroom, to give him back to the Lord, and, embracing her heavenly One, to become so absorbed in Him that He shall ever be between her soul and her heart's best earthly love? If thus it be with her, the Gleaner's heart warmly says, Amen! and may the Lord say so too.

Dear Miss —, as you have requested me to send you a line at this season, it would be unseemly in me to withhold it, but I humbly confess that it is not in me to write what you desire. Therefore, let us look up to the dear Testifier of Jesus, that under His Divine anointing our meditation of Him may be sweet.

It is as the heavenly Lover and Bridegroom of His people that we love to think of Him. Oh, what a contrast to the very best earthly husband! They love and choose because of something congenial and pleasing in their wives, and in hope of a faithful return of affection. But He, our wondrous Husband—loved, chose, and determined to betroth and espouse unto Himself, in the certain fore-view of debt, disgrace, and sin; ah! and of unchaste wanderings too, for He says, "Well do I know how treacherous you are; you were called a rebel from birth." Yet, through all He loved His people, and from all He has redeemed them with His own precious blood. When His spouse "has played the harlot with many lovers," His marvelous language is, "Return, for I am married unto you," thereby overcoming His faithless one with the very love which she has slighted—a love, indeed, beyond comparison! May its fires afresh be kindled in your soul, that you may now count all things but loss, yes even as rubbish, for the sake of such a Beloved.

Did Jacob serve seven years for his Rachel—by day in the heat, and by night in the frost—and did they seem but as a day unto him—for the love he had to her? Our spiritual Jacob has far exceeded him! He left the throne of His glory for His poor Rachel, and took her humble flesh in the form of a servant; and for her sake served thirty-three years under the Law! He bore the heat of temptation, weariness, and thirst; as well as the cold of reproach and scorn, and the malice of sinners against Himself. This He thought not too much; for when He had finished the work on her behalf, for her He cheerfully entered upon the most bitter part of His sufferings, which made even His mighty heart to shudder with agony, while His dear lips prayed—"O my Father, if it is possible, (with the rescue of my Bride) let this cup of suffering be taken away from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Behold the depth of His unflinching love! The 'cup of curse' must be drunk, or the captive Bride must perish! And so He takes the bitter cup, and does not turn away until every dreg is consumed! And the same sacred lips which emptied it could say in triumph, "It is finished!"

For the joy that was set before Him (of possessing His beloved bride) He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has now sat down at the right hand of God, until the blissful consummation before assembled worlds, when it will be joyfully proclaimed, "The marriage of the Lamb has come,

and His wife has made herself ready!"

Then shall the spiritual Jacob and His Rachel meet and embrace, and part no more forever! She awaking up after His likeness, shall be satisfied! And He seeing her in glory, (the very travail of His soul,) shall be satisfied likewise! "May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" Ephes. 3:17-19

"Haste, blissful dawn of endless day,
When sin shall cease, and death shall die,
And Christ His glory shall display,
And beam upon our longing eye!

"Then, wrapped in everlasting bliss,
'Midst heaven's innumerable throng,
His love shall all our powers employ,
And be the theme of every song!"

Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! that this most glorious Immanuel, the Prince of Peace, whom angels worship, and before whom the seraphim bow--should from all eternity engage to come and seek His Bride from this poor world, and claim her for His own! Yet so it is!

But she is filthy and polluted! (Ezek. 16:6; Job 15:14-16; Isa. 64:6) Then His own precious veins shall pour forth the rich crimson flood to cleanse her, (Rev. 1:5) and His Spirit shall open the fountain to her for her sin and uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1)

But she is naked and bare! (Ezek. 16:22) Then He will cast His skirt over her, (Ezek. 16:8) and will for her, weave in the loom of the Law (Rom. 5:19) fine linen--clean and white--a robe in which she shall be fit to appear at His court. Moreover the Spirit shall bring near the righteousness of Jesus, (Isa. 46:13) clothing her with "the garments of salvation," and covering her with the "robe of righteousness," "as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

But she is diseased! (Isa. 1:5, 6) She is a leper! (Ps. 51:5) Yet will He bring her health and cure, for He says, "I am the Lord who heals you;" and He is actually made to be sin for her, (2 Cor. 5:21) that she might be made "the righteousness of God in Him."

But she has no personal charms--she is ugly! Then He will put His loveliness upon her, and through it her beauty shall be perfect.

But she is poor! So He bestows Himself and His fullness upon her--and thus endows her with unsearchable riches!

But she is unwilling, and has no heart to the match, for she obeys a hostile prince! (Eph. 2:2,3) Her delights, too, are in the world and the flesh. A new heart will He give her, and a right spirit will He put within her. The Holy Spirit shall make her willing in the day of His power. "I will cause you to forget your images of Baal; even their names will no longer be spoken." (Hosea 2:17) So that, prostrate at His feet, she shall say, "Lord, our God, other lords than You have ruled over us, but we remember

Your name alone!"

And now that the Spirit has touched her heart, she feels she is diseased, and discovers her filthiness (Rom. 7:8, 9, 18) and nakedness, knows she is ugly and poor, and cannot think the Bridegroom's heart is towards her, or that she can find favor in His eyes. And therefore she cries out, "I am black!" "Behold, I am vile!" My loveliness has turned into corruption! But He overwhelms her by responding, "You are all beautiful, my love, there is no spot in you!"

Then she exclaims, "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame!" He replies, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!"

Now she ventures, with a captivated heart, to declare, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His! He is the chief among ten thousand! He is altogether lovely!"

Thus do the matters of this marvelous betrothment and union go on, "which things the angels desire to look into," and devils desire to defeat. The first desire shall be blessedly gratified; (Eph. 3:10) but the other shall be disappointed, for none shall be able to pluck His beloved one out of His hands; and against her the gates of hell shall never prevail. Praise Him forever for such love as this!

Well may it be asked, Who is this wondrous Beloved, who would go to such depths for His spouse; and on whom the weak one is leaning as she comes up out of the wilderness?

Ah! He is the same who, from all eternity, was the great "I Am!" the mighty God, by whom all things were created, who is before all things, and who holds all things together! It is He who, in the fullness of time, scorned not the lowly Virgin's womb, but became a babe. It is the same glorious Person who was seen coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength, who tread the winepress of Almighty wrath alone! It is He whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength, yet whose "visage was marred more than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men." It is the same glorious Person who is a holy One of the holy ones; and yet "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!" It is the same glorious Person who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" and yet "numbered with the transgressors."

Under the weight of sin and its punishment, Jesus agonized in the sacred garden of Gethsemane, and sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Oh, those rich, rich drops from His precious veins! They are of more value than all the gold and gems His hands have made!

This is the matchless Bridegroom of whom we speak--who, on Calvary, was stretched on the accursed tree, and there finished the love-scene of His mystic sufferings!

Come, sit with me a moment beneath the shadow of His cross! Look up, and remember it is your Husband who hangs bleeding there! It is the Bridegroom, in love for the Bride, enduring those unknown pangs! See how His holy flesh is bruised with scourging, and His precious hands and feet

pierced with rugged nails! How is His heavenly brow torn with piercing thorns, and His dear side with the cruel spear; each gaping wound proclaiming, "Man is guilty--God is love! But God is justice too!" Oh, see His precious blood trickling down. It flowed forth for sinners like me--like you! Look and wonder! Look and be comforted! Look and adore!

"Here look until love dissolves your heart,
And bid each slavish fear depart!"

Say, does not your very soul move towards this glorious Well-Beloved! and will it not join mine in saying—

"Bruised Bridegroom, take us wholly,
Take and make us what You will."

O glorious Lord, we worship You! You are fairer than the children of men! Grace is poured into Your lips—

"Your beauties we can never trace
Until we behold You face to face."

We love to meditate on Your sufferings, but rejoice that they are over. You have suffered, and you die no more! You have gone to our Father and to Your Father; and we are expecting you to "come again" and receive us unto Yourself, to be with You, and behold Your glory, when, in nobler and sweeter strains we'll sing Your never-dying love, and tell

Your power to save; while with open face and ravished heart--we forever gaze upon Your matchless beauty!

Please, excuse my many words. It is to me a thrilling subject, full of blessedness; and the very writing it has been a lattice through which my precious Beloved has shown Himself. Oh, may He shine on you; and when you give your hand and heart to —, may the Holy Spirit rouse you in powerful enablings to give yourself more fully to Jesus than ever before. I come not to you with worldly compliments; they befit not our holy religion, and the peculiar people of God. But I come with an honest heart, desiring for you both every choice covenant blessing, with the sweetest mercies of the new state upon which you are entering, and that these may be to you but as the shadows of a substance, you, in and through them, coming by the Spirit's power to fuller enjoyment of union and communion with our all-lovely Immanuel, and with the Father in Him. May your union be of the Lord, in the Lord, and for the Lord. May His name be glorified, and Jesus doubly precious to your souls. The theme wants more than an angel's power to tell all its fullness.

Ever yours in Jesus,
Ruth.

The patience of the heavenly Farmer

To E. M., Nottingham, May 10, 1850.

My Dear,

All health and peace to you in our glorious Covenant-Head. My soul desires that yours may prosper, and greets you affectionately in that dear name which, when breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit, is truly precious. (1 Pet. 2:7) Precious indeed He is, but not to the carnal mind; to such He has no loveliness, no beauty, that they should desire Him. There must be spiritual life, spiritual sight, and spiritual appetite, before a glorious Christ can be appreciated in His preciousness and suitability!

These gifts, my beloved friend, I believe you have received through rich sovereign grace; and it can be truly said, "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." This one mercy of quickening, this first communication of grace, is a sure pledge of glory, according to Phil. 1:6. Eternal life is the same in kind, though not in development, in "the blade," "the ear," and "the full corn in the ear." The great Farmer is watching over all, giving sun and rain as well as storms and frosts in due season. We like the showers and sunshine, but would rather go on without the cold and stormy weather, which is likewise needful, and often very conducive to our spiritual growth. I have often said before the Lord, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23, 24) But when a cutting north wind has come, I have complained, little thinking that it was just an answer to my prayer. Perhaps you may pass through some such experience, and in these wintry seasons you may think that growth is stopped, and life will soon be gone; but no, it is "incorruptible seed" of which you are born, which lives and abides forever. (1 Pet. 1:23) Amidst our many changes, how encouraging is this thought; and also the knowledge that the great Farmer has more interest in the seed, than it has in itself. "You are not your own," but His who bought you with His blood. You are His portion, His inheritance, in whom He will be glorified.

Truly the gospel of the blessed God, while it is most strengthening as showing all the work to be His; is most humbling, as showing all weakness and sin to be ours. Had it not been so, such mighty cost and pains would not have been needful for our redemption. I pray that the oil and wine of gospel grace may flow into your soul, for this makes us nothing, and Jesus all. I hope you are well, and that the Lord is making your holiday a holy day unto Himself by His own presence and power. The Lord be with your spirit, and strengthen your faith, and make all needed grace abound towards you.

So desires, with much love, your very affectionate, but very unworthy,
Ruth.

Earthly things bedimmed by clear
views of the glory of Christ

To E. M., Bethel Cottage, August 27, 1850.

My very dear,

In the precious Name which is above every name, I come to inquire--Is it well with you? Does the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear? (Song 6:11) and do you find the savor of the Beloved's ointments give a very good fragrance? Is Jesus increasingly precious, more than ever desirable? Is He, in your esteem, better than rubies, and all the things that may lawfully be desired not to be compared to Him? Is the Holy Spirit sharpening your appetite for this Bread of Life, so that with more

ardent longings you are saying, "None but Jesus!" When He is in the right place, other things will be so; it is His rising in the soul that makes them sink to their proper level. And oh! He is so worthy, so suitable, so altogether lovely--we cannot prize Him too much, or hold Him too fast, or lean on Him too heavily. My highest praise of Him is far below His worth; but through rich grace, I, a vile sinner, have tasted and handled of this precious Word of life, and found such blessed benefit, such soul-invigoration, that I want to set others longing for these royal dainties!

Perhaps I might think that the Lord will do His own work, and I am only meddling in vain, if I did not read in His Holy Word about "exhorting one another," and "stirring up pure minds by way of remembrance." But, as these things are there, I venture; and if by many poor attempts I may be used to stir up but one warm loving remembrance of Him, I shall be thankful. Satan is ever striving to divert the mind from this blessed Object. He will allure or alarm, he will use what is pleasing or painful, anything to keep the soul from delighting in Jesus, from looking unto Jesus, and believing in Him for life and salvation. Nevertheless, all those who are ordained unto eternal life shall believe in spite of his efforts, and all those in eternal union with Christ shall close with Him by living faith. Cords of love shall entwine, and ropes of kindness shall draw--until the poor soul is brought into conscious union with the Beloved, and can say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me!"

Oh, the blessed provisions and securities of the everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things, and sure! Not only are all things made ready, but the soul is made willing to receive them; the appetite given, and the required garment put on. (Isa. 61:10) The precious Savior is a free gift, and the faith which receives Him is a free gift also; the blood which CLEANSSES is Heaven's royal bounty, for freely did it flow from the veins of heaven's King, and the application of it is Heaven's sole prerogative. By mercy, not by merit, do all the blessings come. This salvation is for the poor, and the poor only--and they must be stripped even of their rags! It is not enough to confess that their rags are filthy and worthless--they must be parted with, and this necessity touches very closely the heart of the 'old Adam'. But all must go, that Christ may wear the crown--that he who glories may glory in the Lord our righteousness.

How is it with you, my beloved? Are you stripped of your own righteousness, emptied, and bankrupt? If so, I hail you blessed, for "the poor have the gospel preached to them;" and it is written, "When they had nothing to pay, he graciously forgave them both." Nothing to pay! how our proud flesh does murmur and complain, and only wish that it had something to bring! But why? "He has magnified the law and made it honorable." He has endured every stripe that justice required, paying every farthing the creditor demanded, and that in Heaven's own coin, for "without shedding of blood is no remission of sin." His pure blood was freely shed that sin might be honorably remitted. "The soul that sins--it shall die." He dies, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God;" and when at the close of His work He cried aloud, "It is finished," there was not a voice heard in heaven, earth, or hell to contradict him. Take courage, then, my beloved; we can afford to be poor with such "unsearchable riches in Christ!" All He is and has is ours, for "my Beloved is mine, and I am His." "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." He is "Head over all things to His body the Church."

"Ah! but," say you, "I want to know more clearly that He is mine. I want personal application and appropriation." Well, this is not unlawful coveting; go on longing, for this very same Jesus "satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." You want to know your sonship? "We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" faith is the manifestation of sonship, and by it we come to the enjoyment of family privileges. Living faith is the gift of God, and "faith comes by hearing, and

hearing by the Word of God." While Rebekah was listening to Abraham's servant, there was a moving of her heart towards his master's son, for when asked if she would so quickly leave all for him, she said, "I will go." So, perhaps, while you are hearing of the "things which are Jesus Christ's," the Holy Spirit will be kindling love and longing in your soul, bringing it to believe and venture. May the blessed Comforter speedily make you as willing as Rebekah, and work in you the same obedience of faith. She went forth, and her faith was not in vain--she found her husband. So shall you; for eternity will never unfold all the love, loveliness, and glories of our wonderful Emmanuel! Oh, I do want to know more of them here, and thus have all the things of earth bedimmed!

Sweet Testifier of Jesus! O Wind Divine! "awake," and "come," and blow away the dust of earth, and clouds of flesh and sense, which seem to come between us and our souls' Beloved, revealing Him in warmer love, more manifested union, and more endeared communion. Oh, make us walk in Him!

"Closer and closer may we cleave
To His beloved embrace,
Expect His fullness to receive,
And grace to answer grace."

If for Jesus you pine, come and beseech Him for more of His love. Come, O Beloved! into the garden of our souls; breathe upon the graces of Your own Spirit there, that the spices may flow forth for Your regaling. Eat, O Beloved! Your own pleasant fruits, and give us, Your unworthy ones, to find Your fruits sweet to our taste--the fruits of Your love, of Your doing, of Your suffering! Give us to feast on Your rich fruits--to eat, by faith, Your flesh and blood, and thus live by You. (John 6:57) Say to us, "Eat, O friends! drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" for Your "biddings are enablings." Amen. (Eph. 20, 21.)

Now if there should be one drop of living water for your refreshment in this little vessel, give God the praise. To Him I commend you in love.

Your very affectionately, but in myself, very unworthy,
Ruth.

Bearing one another's burdens

To E. M., September 25, 1850.

My very dear,

Breathe, Holy Comforter, on our souls that they may be quickened. Breathe in providences, that we may be edified by them. Breathe in the written Word that we may be instructed. Breathe on the Rose of Sharon, the Incarnate Word, that by the fragrance thereof our souls may be revived and refreshed. Breathe upon these hearts, that we may commune sweetly in and of, the Beloved, for His glory, and our soul-strengthening. Amen, amen. "Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into His garden and taste its choice fruits." Song of Songs 4:16.

Jesus is the never-tiring theme! It is He who is the precious stone, wherever He turns, he succeeds.

(Prov. 17:8) On the mount of high communion He is precious. In the valley of humiliation He is precious. Also, unto you who believe, He is precious. Faith is the "Christ-receiving grace." By faith we apprehend Him, by faith we know more and more of His preciousness; by faith we have the felt benefit of His blood and righteousness, (Romans 3:22, 25) and by faith we cast anchor on this Rock, when to sense and feeling all is dark and stormy.

Ah! indeed there are seasons in experience when we can neither see nor hear nor feel Him whom our souls love and long for; and all within seems barren and powerless--then is the trial of faith, and the time for its exercise. If we are walking by sense, our confidence will be shaken, and we shall draw wrong conclusions (Isa. 9:14;) but if faith prevails, we shall not be greatly moved. The soul does not voluntarily choose to be "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed," neither, if under self-direction, would it prefer to travel "three days in the wilderness and find no water." We would rather linger always at Elim, beside the wells and the palm-trees. Thus sense would grow mightily, and faith become weak for lack of exercise. But He who ordains all our encampments, and who is to us "instead of eyes," knows best where to lead us; having determined that "faith, though the smallest, shall surely be tried."

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for, "think it not strange concerning the trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Whether that trial be inward exercise from indwelling sin, or the fiery darts of the wicked one, or outward affliction, or something in prospect which makes the heart tremble; for all these, and every other, we have the promise, "My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness."

What can be weaker than a worm? Yet the Lord says, "Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you--declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I am holding you by your right hand--I, the Lord your God. And I say to you--Do not be afraid. I am here to help you." "But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says--Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" (Isaiah 41:13, 14; 43:1-3)

These are sweet cordials for a time of weakness and trial. May the Lord fulfill them in your experience, and grant that your faith fail not. May you be kept instant in prayer, "watching thereunto with all perseverance" to learn the mind of the Lord respecting you. Times of trial are inquiring times.—See Gen. 25:22, 23; 1 Sam. 23:2, 4, 11; 1 Sam. 30:8; 2 Chron. 18:4; Job 10:2. There are those now living who can testify to the Lord's glory, that they have found a great blessing, in the close dealing with God to which they have been brought by afflictive dispensations under the Divine exercising (Heb. 12:11) of the Holy Spirit. It is spoken of ancient Israel that "the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew." Often, indeed, is it thus with the spiritual seed of Abraham, being "chastened of the Lord" there is growth out of SELF--into Christ. Blessed is it when we turn our face to the wall; that is, away from every creature expectation, and pour out our hearts before Him. One who did so, in the bitterness of his soul, had afterwards thankfully to say, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit; so will You recover me, and make me to live." The Lord grant you like experience, that with me you may have to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

My heart earnestly desires for you that the present afflictive dispensation, and what may be

approaching, may be very much sanctified, that the Lord's name may be glorified, and you come forth as gold, saying, "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me;" (Psalm 119:75) and heartily choosing, as Moses did, "to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Heb. 11:25)

"For though our cup seems mixed with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all."

Is it not so? Have you not found some drops of Divine love in this bitter cup? May the Beloved further show Himself through this lattice, and walk with you in this furnace, causing some fetters to be burned off, that you may freely walk in the way of His commandments. It is better to walk with Jesus in the fire, than to walk after the flesh in the slippery places of worldly indulgence and carnal security. I trust He has a special favor towards you, and means to have you walk very closely with Himself. Would that I could speak more worthily of our precious Well-Beloved, who may safely be trusted in the flood and in the flame. Praise Him, O our souls. Adieu, much-beloved.

Your very affectionately,
Ruth.

1 Thess. 3:3.

You have many petitions to present to the King just now. Psalm 20.

Christ is all!

To E. M. December, 1850.

My very dear,

I cannot but again inquire--Is it still well with you? Has Israel's God proved faithful in your time of need? Have you had 'strength as your day' and can you now say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted?" The cloud of affliction or trial often looks very dark at first. "Men see not the bright light which is in the cloud, but the wind passes and CLEANSSES them." (Job 37:21.) The Holy Spirit by His Divine exercising, comes with the affliction, and then is discovered some light of instruction, and the dark cloud is found to be full of mercy, and "breaks with blessings on our head." Earnestly do I hope this is the case with yourself and your husband. I desire mercies of the God of heaven for you my beloved, that when you come to the tribulated waters they may either divide, that you may go over dryshod; or, if they overflow, that their depths may only prove to you the deeps of God's mercy, faithfulness, and love. May you feel the Rock firm beneath while the billows roll over your head; and may you be brought up again with a new song of praise, even "salvation is of the Lord."

Our God is a refuge for us. Our Rock will stand the storm. Our Guide may be safely trusted, though we see neither sun nor stars for many days. He sees us when we can see nothing but gloom, and cannot see Him at all--when we have not one glimpse of the King in His beauty. He hears us when we cannot hear Him--when He seems to answer us never a word; but many an answer of peace is prepared, while the poor petitioner is long allowed to go on pleading in sackcloth and ashes. (Dan. 9:3, 23.) Our God is wonderful in His way of working; and, for myself, I must confess that He

generally deals very contrary to my expectations. Yet "He does all things well." It is

"Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

I have proved my own strength to be complete weakness, my own wisdom consummate folly, and my own righteousness filthy rags. What a mercy, then, to be stripped of all, and have Christ for wisdom, Christ for righteousness, Christ for strength, Christ for purity, Christ for power, Christ for beauty, Christ for holiness, Christ for acceptance above, Christ for our daily walk, Christ for our daily work, Christ for rest, Christ for food, Christ for medicine; yes, to know nothing among men or before God--but Jesus crucified and glorified!

But, say you, I cannot be so free with Christ, I dare not claim Him for everything. Perhaps not, and we read that Ruth felt no claim upon the mighty man of wealth when she fell at his feet to thank him for a few handfuls of corn, (Ruth 2:10) and a morsel at meal-time. But there was the secret of relationship behind, and she afterwards found a claim and made it, nor did she do so in vain; for she obtained not only her hands full and her veil full, but also the Lord of the Harvest Himself! I trust before long you will be thus led on by the Spirit from gleaning ears of mercy and pardon, to say, "Spread your skirt over me--for you are my near kinsman." He will then acknowledge relationship, and give you that freedom of love which may now appear almost presumptuous, though indeed it is not so. Where Christ is thus revealed in the soul in His fullness, He is to be to us instead of ourselves--and all besides. As Rutherford says, "Not myself but Christ, not my ease but Christ, not my honor but Christ." Oh! blessed are those who can deny themselves, and put Christ in the room of themselves. Ah, indeed! this is the true starvation of the flesh, and the true strengthening of that inner man--the life of which is Christ.

Well-beloved friend, if you have not yet full possession, I hope you are Christ-hungry and Christ-thirsty; then I am sure you will not die for lack--for such are blessed and shall be filled. Take encouragement. May the Lord give it, and make your soul as a watered garden, for He shall come down as the rain, as showers which water the earth.

All this is from one who has had an exchange of hearts with Jesus, and therefore he is the never-tiring theme! That He should be my constant subject needs no apology--but only that He is not more worthily spoken of. Ah, indeed! of all words and comparisons, we may say—

"All are too base to speak His worth,
To set Immanuel's glories forth!"

To His loving heart and powerful arm I again commend you for all your needs; and may you both receive of His fullness, and grace for grace.

Yours affectionately,
Ruth.

The deceivableness of the form,
without the power of godliness

June 11, 1851.

My Dear,

This is a day of much lip-profession without real heart work, and the "kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." "The kingdom of God is within you." This is what Satan seems in this day to be most fighting against. He does not oppose a general profession of religion, which is now deemed respectable. Nor does he mind great strictness in outward religious forms--as that is often a means of lulling the conscience into false peace. He will not even disturb a sound creed, and much zeal in contending for the truth of the Bible--so long as the truths rest only in the natural mind, whereby they induce vain confidence and terrible self-deceiving. The great enemy of souls will endeavor to keep all in peace who have 'a name to live, but are dead.' And if one of his subjects passes over either from gross sins or from the more refined pleasures of this perishing world to an outward profession, he will not be alarmed. For he cares not whether souls perish under the title of 'worldling' or of 'Christian'--so long as he gets them into his own fearful damnation. Nay, I believe if he sees one become restless under some sense of sin, and that he cannot urge that poor soul on further in the old sinful way--he will transform himself into an angel of light, and recommend reformation and external religious duties, such as reading and hearing the Word--taking care to substitute 'form' for 'power'.

Oh! the dreadful danger of such souls, soothed into carnal security! They are only blinded to their danger--not delivered from it. Better were it to endure years of anguish in weeping, and seeking for mercy by Jesus Christ--than to be turned to such "a refuge of lies," and to walk in such "sparks of their own kindling." Better to walk in sorrow all one's life--than to lie down in sorrow at death to end in eternal woe! May the Lord deliver souls thus deceived from this snare of the great fowler, so that they may thankfully say, "The snare is broken, and we are escaped" by Divine power into that kingdom of God which is not outward things, such food and drink--but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Ah! my beloved friend, it is this stronghold which Satan fights against--and fallen flesh is in league with him! He may tolerate outward forms and external religious exercises--but inward power is represented as contemptible, unreasonable, and is called fanaticism and enthusiasm! Yet the eternal world of glory is full of this, swelling broader and deeper the anthem of praise to the holy Lord God and the Lamb. Without this divine life within, no soul of man can be saved, as the great day shall declare. It is, indeed, fearful to think what that dreadful day will reveal; and of all characters, I think those are in the most fearful condition--who have had Christ on the lip--but not in the heart, as in Matt. 7:21-23. My heart often says: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23, 24.)

True it is, that our vigilant foe does not mind a new creed--but he hates a new heart! He does not object to outward reformation--but hates inward regeneration, and also those who are regenerated. He does not fear good words of prayer on the lip--but he well knows he shall suffer loss when it is said of a soul, "Behold, he prays!" for—

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

O you trembling souls, let not the subtle serpent drive you from this stronghold! Your God will hear and help you. He has taught you to pray; He will answer your prayers. If He long delays--He is worth waiting for. If He shuts His door against you--it is only to make you knock the louder. It is better to wait on God for His salvation in sackcloth and ashes--than to wait on the world and the flesh clothed in scarlet; "for the end of these things is death!"

It matters not who may deride or scoff, or how your own evil heart may shrink from the contempt of the cross. "How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." You cannot serve them both! Oh, be wise.

If the world and Satan and the flesh seem too strong for you, as they surely are--go into your closet, and pour out your heart before the Lord; He will be a refuge for you. "He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might He increases strength."

The sighs and groans of a broken heart are heard in the high court above, and the tears of a contrite spirit are audible there! For before the throne is Jesus, the Brother of the broken-hearted, the atoning sacrifice for sin--the Advocate for sinners who loathe themselves for their iniquity. (1 Kings 8:38, 39.) That blessed Savior understands all the broken utterances; He knows what each of His children would say if he could, and "He ever lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25.) It may be the law condemns you, O trembling one--conscience condemns you--thoughts, words, actions, all condemn you. Be it so--may it be your mercy, and the beginning of your salvation, for this is like the power with which the Holy Spirit begins in the soul, thereby translating it out of the kingdom of darkness "into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Col. 1:13.)

The religion of Jesus is a religion of power; (1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 24.) and if, through the power of the Holy Spirit, there is a discovery of sin and condemnation--may Jesus say, "Your sins," (oh, the sweetness!) "your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you;" then the burden is lawfully lost, and the soul has solid peace. Thus shall it be with everyone quickened by the Spirit. Satan may strive to drown and stifle the conviction, but it will return with double misery, and the burden grow heavier and heavier, until the poor soul finds there is no way of escape but through the blood of the cross. May the Spirit enable you to come just as you are! I know you are seeking for Jesus, may He soon be found by you.

From your affectionate but unworthy,
Ruth—a sinner saved.

Signs of spiritual life

To E. M., September 15, 1851.

"Look unto Me, and be saved!"

Beloved,

I thought much of you last evening, while hearing a sermon from Phil. 1:6. "The day of Jesus Christ" was spoken of, as the day when He comes to receive the soul unto himself; and the glorious day when He will raise the body in His own likeness. It was said, how surely the Lord will carry on His work in the soul, through all the doubts, fears, temptations, sins, and corruptions which assail it, and

are bitterly felt. Though they threaten to swallow up and destroy, the Lord is above them, and will secretly maintain the precious life He has given. Perhaps, however, the great point with some is, whether they truly have this life. They are thoroughly established in the comfortable doctrine we speak of—the final perseverance of the saints—but fear they are not one of them. How is it with you? Do you hunger and thirst for Christ? Do you plead, pant, groan, strive against sin, and for salvation? Then you are alive, and it is eternal life, which cannot die; incorruptible seed which cannot decay; and grace which was given to you in Christ before the foundation of the world; (2 Tim. 1:9.) nor can anything which occurs in time take it away.

I well know the night is long and dreary to the quickened soul, while the Lord delays His coming. It is no longer "alive without the law," but the Spirit has brought the commandment home; it bears upon the conscience heavily; and in the pure light of that holy law is discovered evil, only evil, and that continually; fresh sin at every turn; new stumbling at every step. It is night with the soul, and "he who walks in the night stumbles." Though the law is light, (Prov. 6:23.) it is only to make manifest evil, (Eph. 5:13.) not to guide in the way of peace. The Holy Spirit must do that. The light of the law upon the black soul only makes its night more horrible before it has found the Law-fulfiller; the sun has not arisen, and corruptions creep forth to its great dismay. But He that shall come will come in the set time, and will not tarry. He knows those who love His appearing, and will not let them long for it in vain. As in His law they have seen their own darkness and deformity, so in this light they see light, even the light of life when He comes; and then they learn that all those sharp reproofs of instruction were the way of life, though, indeed, they felt like death and destruction.

I am not writing to you merely from the map, but marking down a few of my own steppings, that you may thereby trace whether you are in the footsteps of the flock; and though this cannot satisfy you, because the way is not the end, yet it may comfort and stimulate you afresh to press on towards the mark, looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of Christ in your own soul. There are times when the hands hang down and the knees are feeble, and the soul says, "Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts." (Ezek. 37:11.) Then a word from the Lord, through a fellow-traveler, does good, like a medicine; the Word of the Lord is precious in those days when there is no open vision. I mean when the soul has never been able to say, "I have found Him whom my soul loves," and cannot make the personal appeal, "You know that I love You," but does long to know, it is loved by Him. Then it sometimes gets a sweet melting season in hearing that others have trodden the same in and out path; and a feeling of comfortable hope that "being in the way," the Lord will before long meet with it, and lead it into the House of the Master's brethren. (Gen. 24:27.) Be it mine to welcome you there in the appointed season, and to try to encourage you while you occupy the waiting-place. It is at least a safe one: "Blessed are all those who wait for Him." But through unbelief we are too apt to think we shall wait in vain, and He never will come to us; although He has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." This passage was very sweet to me in days gone by, when tasting the wormwood and gall; and it is so still. My soul has the bitterness still in remembrance, and is humbled in me, (Lam. 3:19, 20.) for instead of tasting only, I deserve to be drinking to all eternity; but He has taken the cup of trembling out of my hand, and has given me the cup of salvation and blessing. He has brought my soul out of prison; and dealt bountifully with me, and now I like to point other poor prisoners to the way of escape.

I know the heart of a "captive exile," as well as of a stranger, and would not impose heavy burdens; but you know how happy I would be to hear from you. How blessed when the captive exile, described in Isaiah 51:14, experiences the deliverance spoken of in Zech. 9:11, 12. Affectionate remembrance

to you all in the Beloved. May the blessing of the Lord flow freely in your family circle. 2 Thess. 3:16 and 18.

Yours ever,
Ruth.

Encouragement to a burdened soul

To E. M., November 14, 1851.

My Very Dear,

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, by the anointing and teaching of the Holy Comforter. "For," said our Lord, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you." "He will guide you into all truth." "He will bring me glory by revealing to you whatever he receives from me." The Holy Spirit is the living guide to Jesus. It is He who says, with power, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." It is He who convicts of sin, who wounds, and probes the wound, and lays open the evil of our nature, causing us to know that we are corrupt within and without. But He not only thus discovers the malady, He also applies the remedy. He abases the sinner; and exalts the Savior. He gives the deep sense of sin--that the great salvation may be more appreciated and enjoyed. We are as bad as we can be, and it is needful to know it; but the knowledge of our depravity will not save us. It is, "Look unto ME, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." Some seem to glory in their deep discoveries of depravity; but nay, rather "let him that glories, glory in the Lord."

The end of a thing is better than the beginning: the beginning of the Lord's teaching is to know ourselves; the end to know Him, whom to know is life eternal, and happy is it for those who tarry not in all the plain, but amidst all the sense of sin and the loathing of self, are kept pressing on, crying, "That I may know Him;" "that I may find Him;" "that I may be found in Him;" "I press towards the mark;" "I long for the prize."

We read, Luke 6:19, "The whole crowd was trying to touch Him, because power was coming out from Him and healing them all." Their miseries pressed them on to seek His mercies; and so the poor woman with the issue of blood; it seemed incurable; it made her unclean. How dare she approach the Holy Jesus? How dare she presume to touch His unspotted garment? Ah, but she believed that He had power, and that that power was to be received by faith; and thus she obtained the cure. "Somebody did touch Me, I know that power has gone out from Me." She had believed with the heart, and thus He drew her on to confess with the mouth, and then He openly gave her the full reward of her faith—"Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith had made you whole; go in peace." (Luke 8:43-48.)

Ah, many are now thronging and pressing Jesus by noisy profession, but only a few are getting the healing virtue, and those are unclean diseased ones who think themselves most unlikely of all. But of Him they hear; and "faith comes by hearing." To Him they are brought, for "all that the Father gives me shall come to me." And they do not come in vain, for "he who comes to me I will never cast out." "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Yes, power to forgive sins also. Yes, my precious Savior, with hand and heart do I subscribe thus--You have power to save those whom none else

could or would; for You have clothed such a vile sinner as I am with the garments of salvation. You have covered me with the robe of righteousness. Therefore my soul does greatly rejoice in the Lord, and is joyful in my God. Oh, those words, "My God!" when lawfully and feelingly uttered, have in them a world of blessedness!

Well, you see how it is with me. I am still delighting in the love of the altogether lovely Jesus; but not half enough. What do you think of Christ? Surely my heart's desire is, that He may be enthroned in your affections, for "He is worthy," and the more unworthy you feel, the better He will suit you! In your flesh "dwells no good thing." While you dwell in that tent you will find evil, only evil. Like the father of the faithful, you will have to go forth into the land (Deut. 8:7-9.) which the Lord will show you; but He must order all your journeying, as He says, "I will guide you with my eye, I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go."

It seems, however, that at present you are under the ministry of condemnation, because you are resting in your own righteousness, which you will never establish, as it is contrary to the law of faith. (Rom. 10:3.) The contrast is, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This is the ministry of righteousness which follows the other and exceeds in glory; for the work of righteousness is peace, "and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." Here is that which establishes us. "You have set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established." (2 Chron. 20:20.) "In righteousness shall you be established." (Isa. 54:14.) "He that establishes us in Christ and has anointed us is God, (2 Cor. 1:21,) who also seals us with that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance." (Eph. 1:13, 14.)

All the operations of that Spirit in the soul are either to make known or make way for Christ; the latter seems at present His work in your heart. He is discovering your evil, and shaking your movable things. (Heb. 12:27.) Like John, He goes before the Lord to prepare His way. Be of good cheer, this Divine Messenger betokens that the Lord is at hand. He would not have showed you all these things if He meant to destroy you. "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" "through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The Lord bless you, and grant you the instructions of wisdom for the training of your dear child, and all else you are called to. And now, farewell! May you be brought home at the appointed season in safety, and with dew resting upon your branch. As your husband is a lover of husbandry, he perhaps will not be offended with the Christian love and greeting of a gleaner, who can feelingly say, "The Lord bless you," (Ruth 2:4,) and make you a blessing. (Mic. 5:7.) This is the true wish of my heart for you both.

Your very affectionately,
Ruth.

The blessings of affliction

To E. M., September 22, 1852.

"Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security." Jeremiah 33:6

Much beloved and often-remembered friend,

The tidings received from you this morning made me sorry, and yet I must say, "It is well," for I do believe it, knowing that "He does all things well." May this trial be as a lattice, through which Jesus will show himself to your souls. Trial is one lattice, which He often looks through, with much tenderness, (Isa. 63:9,) upon His redeemed ones. He looked through the pillar of fire and cloud, to trouble His enemies, and hinder their flight; (Exod. 14:24;) but He was in the fire and cloud to preserve and guide His people safely through the deep, so that not even a little one was left behind. It might be that "little faith" looked at the walls of water, and feared they would give way; but those fears did not make the promise of no effect, though they might rob the soul of comfort. Was it not wonderful that the same cloud, which was light to Israel, was darkness to the foe; and the same water, which was as walls of salvation to one, was death and destruction to the other? (Exod. 14:28, 29.) So it is with bodily afflictions and providential trials; to the worldling they are destroyers of his best enjoyments; to the child of God they are often the very high road to them. To the worldling they are only bitter; to the other it is a mingled portion, for

"Though their cup seems mixed with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all."

"I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto You, O Lord, will I sing." And it is as of old: "Our God turned the curse into a blessing."

Last evening, the love of God, (John 3:16) its gift, its effects, and its consummation, (Rev. 7:9) were simply and sweetly spoken of. Oh, indeed! the love of God is a precious theme with those who feel it and who can say, "We love Him because He first loved us." What an amazing love to bestow such a gift! My soul does muse and marvel. Bring it home to yourself. Think of giving one of your sweet babes to poverty, hardship, toil, disgrace, and a torturing death. You could not do it even for your loved husband; and they are not as lovely as that precious, spotless Lamb; and they are not as much beloved as He. Yet His Father gave Him, and bruised Him, and "put Him to grief" for the ungodly, (Rom. 5:6) for enemies, (Col. 1:20, 21) for the unjust. (1Pet. 3:18.) Truly, herein is unparalleled love. May the Holy Spirit apply it, shed it abroad in our hearts, and encourage us to come unto the Father by Him.

The Lord has prepared of His goodness for the poor; so if you are learning your poverty, it is to prepare you for the feast prepared for you.

Yours affectionately,
Ruth.

These inward foes

To E. M., March 7, 1853.

Dearly-beloved and longed-for in Christ Jesus,

"Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ." "Blessed are all who wait for Him." "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." "Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance." "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty."

You mentioned being cast down by Psalm 41:11, "By this I know that you favor me, because my enemy does not triumph over me," because your inward enemies seem to triumph over you. Did you not forget that word, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last," and I believe, indeed, that most of the Lord's soldiers experience this before they can say, "By you I have run through a troop;" and "By my God I have leaped over a wall."

Our own strength must be exhausted--that out of weakness we may be made strong. And our own efforts in 'creature will and power' be proved of no avail--that we may feel and know that the battle is the Lord's, and cry to Him for help, while giving Him all the glory. I was much struck the other day in observing, that though Joshua bid the captains set their feet on the necks of the five kings, he himself slew them. So it is with our spiritual Joshua; He alone could finish transgression and make an end of sin. He has done it; and in the set time does, in the experience of each of His children, take away the dominion of their corruptions, though they are prolonged for a season like those beasts mentioned in Dan. 7:12.

If you, beloved, have not yet had that sensible overcoming given which you desire, be not cast down, but cry unto the Lord, and you shall before long find it, as in 1 Chron. 5:20, 22. Many have realized this who have felt like the Psalmist, in Psalm 6, with regard to these inward foes. The Lord pardon what I have wrongly expressed. "If you will, you can make me clean;" and He said, "I will, be clean." Perhaps your heart will join me once more in saying, "Lord, increase our faith."

I sincerely wish you every blessing and covenant-favor.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus,
Yours, Ruth—less than the least.

Counsels how to meet daily cares

To E. M., Saturday Morning.

Much-beloved friend,

My heart has just been much drawn out towards you in Isaiah 28:26, "His God instructs him and teaches him the right way"--desiring that you may have the experience of it in those domestic and secular cares which must necessarily devolve upon you; that you may not set them as a "wall between" your soul and your God. May each concern and perplexity, which seems to have more of Martha than of Mary--be to you just an errand to Jesus, that you may commune with Him in them and by them, and thus walk with God while you walk in the duties of your family and station. How beautiful to read from the 23d verse of the same chapter, and to see that the Lord so minutely instructs the laborer how to prepare the ground and sow the seed, as also how to prepare the corn for food. Also

in Exodus 31:3-6, 35:25, 26, and 36:2, how encouraging to read of the Lord putting wisdom into the hearts of men and women to guide their hands, though their work was for the Tabernacle, and ours for the circumstances in which He has placed us, saying, "Occupy until I come." He will as really instruct us as He did them.

How touching also to read of David going to inquire of the Lord about everything with such sweet simplicity, asking whether he should go against his enemies, (2 Sam. 5:19) and pursue those who had robbed him, (1 Sam. 30:8) even telling the Lord of a report he had heard about Saul, and asking if that were true. (1 Sam. 23:10, 11) Satan and the carnal mind would say, "It is not right to approach the Lord in such inward confusion; wait until the mind is more calm and spiritual." But David came in the midst of all, bringing his doubts and uncertainties with him, and in all the Lord answered him, so that it was with him as with Jotham—"He became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." (2 Chron. 27:6)

I cannot tell you how precious these thoughts have been to me, or how often I have resorted to them to encourage my heart to trust in the Lord in secular things, and to expect His teaching in daily concerns--great and small. Though I have mentioned it before, I just stir up your mind by way of remembrance, because you seem to be laid upon my heart in this matter. I know the enemy will fight hard to keep you out of this privilege, trying to make it appear that in 'different circumstances' you could walk more closely with the Lord. This is one of his "devices" to separate us from our God. Oh, for the Spirit's light to discover his snares of darkness!

We are each in the best place to glorify the Lord; and present events, whether pleasing or painful, are those in which to be seeking Him. In this sense we may safely say, "Whoever is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." (Psalm 107:43.) That the Lord may give you this heavenly wisdom in earthly things is the affectionate wish of, Ruth Bryan.

The world seen in the light of eternity

To E. M.

Beloved,

How frail are we! How often reminded that these tabernacles have their foundation in the dust! "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return;" and thus end all the pride and pomp of vain mortals. A few short days they flutter in the sunbeams of pleasure and earthly prosperity--and then lie down in their lowly bed of dust, until aroused by the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. But in what likeness shall they come forth? Ah! there will be no mistake in that great harvest-day. The seed of the serpent, and the seed of Christ--will doubtless each have their own likeness. According to the sowing will be the reaping, (Matt. 13:37-39) which the Day will declare.

O my dear friend, I do more and more like to see things in the light of eternity, the light of the Spirit, which shows things as they really are, and as the Word declares them. I desire this not for the sake of judging others, but that I may judge myself daily and hourly, (1 Cor. 11:31) and not be beguiled by this deceitful and desperately wicked heart, which always pleads on the side of the old Adam, urging in time of temptation, "This is not very wrong, and that can be of no great consequence." But ah!

away with it all! "There is death in the pot!"

What says the Scripture? "To be carnally minded is death." "If you live after the flesh you shall die." (Rom. 8:6,13) "He who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:8) I think that these verses do not refer only to the utter death of the unrenewed state, but also to such a deadness in the believer's experience as "sowing to the flesh" must bring. The truth of this I have sorrowfully proved since quickened into spiritual life, yes, since I have felt Jesus to be precious. And I have had to take to myself the words of Jer. 2:17—"Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God, when he led you by the way?"—and know the experience described in a great part of that chapter and the following one. Oh! what a picture they give of this wandering heart! But the return spoken of in chapter 3, verses 12-14, 22, is wonderful! "Who is a God like unto You," pardoning "iniquity, transgression, and sin?" for He not only calls us to, but insures our return. (Hosea 14:7) They "shall return," and they "shall revive." This is one of the new-covenant blessings, and a pledge that iniquity shall never be our ruin.

Can this lead to presumption or light thoughts of sin? Nay, verily: "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" and though the believer falls, "he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His right hand." He "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation." He "will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape." These are sweet promises to a trembling soul that feels it cannot stand a moment alone, and yet longs to walk in the Lord's way without stumbling; yes, to "run the way of His commandments" with an enlarged heart.

Such may be overtaken in a fault, but they will not trifle with sin. They feel it an evil and bitter thing; and if sure that they are delivered from its final consequences, they want deliverance also from its present power. This is the breathing and panting of a regenerated heart; the new creature, or new man, is "created in righteousness and true holiness," though it dwells in a leprous house. Still its aspirations are after its own element, that of holiness and love; and never will it be satisfied until it awakens with His likeness. No dead soul has these desires: they are signs of life; He has been there who says, "I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Precious words to a soul that wants life "more abundantly!"

How thankful I am that you are more spoiled for the world, and that the Holy Spirit is making your conscience tender. I wish every act of conformity to the world may sting like an adder, and bite like a serpent! How cruel of me to think thus! but it is what I wish for myself. I would be as separate from the world in appearance and life, as in heart; and as separate in heart as I shall wish to be altogether when "He shall set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left." Oh, we would not then have one goat's hair upon us--and yet we often tolerate them now.

Truly, we owe hearty thanks to the convincing Spirit for all His sharp rebukes. He is that faithful friend who will not allow us to sin without a reproof. Smiting is welcome from this righteous One; for it is better to sit in sackcloth and ashes under His discipline, than be a careless one "at ease in Zion." It is true, as you say, we have contending nations within, great and mighty; but the Shulamite is a company of two armies, and the spiritual Joshua says, "As captain of the Lord's army am I now come." With the Lord on our side, we shall put the foot of faith upon the necks of our enemies, and He will subdue them. Fear not! the battle is the Lord's! And though you may often feel foiled, it is to teach

you where your strength and victory lie; not in any conquests of your own, but in the achievements of your Captain upon Mount Calvary. There see Him bruise the head of Satan, the captain of the Canaanites; there see your sin pierce Him; there see His Father bruise Him, and put Him to grief for your iniquities, and in your stead. Would you know what sin is, what justice is, what pardon is, what love is, what victory is? You must learn all at Calvary and in Gethsemane. I know the Holy Spirit keeps the key of those sacred places; but it is well to wait prayerfully at the gate until it shall be said, in experience, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

As to the time you have been waiting, it is nothing in comparison with the value of what you are waiting for. The first sight of your name upon the heart of the crucified One, the first beam from His precious eye, will overpay you for an age of painful waiting. To see others stepping in before you, may sometimes cast you down; and the enemy may suggest: "Jesus has no favor for you." Answer him not a word; cry to his Conqueror, "Let my sentence come forth from YOUR presence." Do not be ready to believe hard things of that Friend of sinners, whose heart is made of tenderness. His heart melts with love. When did He cast out a coming sinner? When did He leave a helpless lamb to the wolf? When did He refuse to deliver a distressed soul, crying, "Lord, help me!"

My hope of you is steadfast, that as He has begun, so He will finish in you the good work, that together we may witness for the dear Redeemer, that He still "receives sinners, and eats with them." You long to love Him more, and well indeed you may, for He is worthy. But do not forget—"We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) When you can by faith know and believe the love God has to you, your love will flow back again to Him. But now you are doubting and questioning it, which shows your feelings are more under the influence of fear than love. Those whom you see so warm in their love to Him have known and believed His love to them. In fact, the one is the effect of the other. "The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit," and then it rises up again to its source. You long to look away from self; but you are like the poor woman who was bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. But Jesus will come and break your bands, and make you go upright and look upward. Oh, cry for faith; and may the Lord open to you. I commend you, my precious one, to the infallible Teacher, whose word is with power.

In Him I may take a warm adieu,
Ruth.

Encouragements to venture on Christ

To E. M., May 1854.

My Very Dear,

I have wished to write a line of inquiry, but having been far from well, had not energy enough to do so. When the people of Israel came to Marah, the waters were bitter, so that they could not drink of them, but the Lord showed Moses a tree, which when he had cast into the waters they were made sweet. "So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he threw it into the water, the water became drinkable. He made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah and He tested them there." (Exodus 15:25) Thus have I found it many a time. Christ in the trial has taken away the bitterness, and it has been as an "ordinance" to my soul, which has fed upon Him and been strengthened to endure. He has also tested me by these things. Praise, O my soul, Your ever-loving

Lord, who changes not. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

I desire to speak to you in love of our glorious Christ, who "has been mindful of us, and will bless us." He will be with us through life in six troubles, and in death, the seventh, He will not forsake us. He is full of pity and of tender mercy to everyone who knows and feels the plague of plagues—that of his own heart. "Go, show yourself to the priest," however bad it be, for "Him has God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." He sweetly invites all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him, and says, "I will give you rest." Are you weary of SELF, and heavy laden with your sins--and are you coming to Jesus? "Come just as you are," come to Jesus, who says, "Him that comes to me I will never cast out." Not for hardness, coldness, darkness, wandering, past sin, present sin, the guilt which presses at this very moment, nor for any other--will Jesus cast out a coming sinner. The Spirit convinces of sin, the Father draws the sinner, and the Son "receives sinners." So the holy Three in One are engaged in this great work of bringing souls to Jesus; and who or what shall prevent their coming? Shall the world or Satan without, or sin within? Nay, verily, "All that the Father gives me--shall come to me."

But, you say--am I given by the Father? Coming to Jesus is a proof of it; desiring after Jesus is a proof of it; hungering and thirsting for Jesus is a proof of it. Listen not to unbelief and Satan, who would keep you away from the only place of victory. Fall down at His dear feet and tell Him all the truth—the very worst of it; and it may be your heart will melt and your spirit soften into contrition in the doing of it; and it may be He will hold out the scepter and say, "Return unto me, O backsliding daughter; for I am married unto you." But if not so just now, it is better to wait at His threshold than wander; it is better to follow a 'frowning Jesus' than to parley with a 'smiling world'! And however roughly He may answer, or however long keep silence, He will not cast you out.

But why write I thus? It may be you are walking in the light of His countenance, and finding Him near, though in a far off country and a barren land. If so, my heart shall rejoice, and you will forgive any remark that seems out of place. I wish you to draw nearer and nearer to the dear Friend of sinners, and to drink still larger draughts of the river of the water of life, which makes glad the city of God.

The Lord bless you, and be not silent to you, and keep you from idols. May your children be kept in their proper place, blessed of the Lord, held in the Lord, and consecrated to the Lord. You will not wish to gain for them the admiration of the world, because you would shudder if they would hereafter be embraced by it, and embosomed in it. A mother in this vicinity lately lost a precious daughter of sixteen. As she stood over the coffin, she said, "There lies my beautiful girl. Oh, I have been proud of her!" And, turning to a minister who stood beside, "Do you think, sir, the Lord has taken her away on my account, because I was proud of her? I have been too proud of her." I do not know the minister's reply, but that which we are to learn from the mother's deep anguish is very plain—"Flee from idolatry!" The Lord make all grace abound towards you.

Your ever affectionately, unworthy,
Ruth.

Isaiah 49:14, 16. How striking is Isaiah 43:22-26.

Christ the Burden-bearer

"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you." Psalm 55:22

To E. M.

Much-beloved friend,

The above words came to my mind when thinking of your weak health and present anxieties, in both of which I feel tender sympathy. Oh may the Spirit enable you to make use by faith of your heavenly Husband, who is ever present, who is afflicted in all your afflictions, who has delivered, who does deliver, who will yet deliver. May you not be carrying your burdens when you have such a precious Burden-bearer, so able, so willing, who says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble—I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." Pour out your heart before Him. God is a Refuge for us.

Roll your burdens upon Him as fast as they come upon you. This is a very profitable exercise of faith in the time of tribulation; it is one which He much approves, and which often is the means of bringing the soul into an endearing familiarity with Him, unknown before. Of this, I am a living witness; for it was by means of many weights, and many trials, that I was pressed to try how much I might put upon Him, and brought to know the blessed 'life of faith' in the every-day occurrences and many perplexities of the wilderness way. I can truly praise Him now for those heavy storms, and "sharp-pointed things," which made every creature help too little, and made me to live in the sympathy of such a heart, and the home of such a love as His. May you, dear friend, have like benefit, and now, even now, find rest in the midst of trouble by realizing that infinite love, power, and wisdom are working all things together for your good, and His glory. May the felt utterance of your heart be "Father, glorify Your name!"

May the droppings of the sanctuary this day be refreshing to our souls.

With tender and sympathizing love, your grateful and affectionate,
Ruth.

See Mark 4:37-40. If Jesus seems to be asleep in the storm, it is only for the trial of faith. He is watching all the time, and waiting to be gracious!

(The following letter was received under peculiar circumstances. The friend to whom it was addressed had been asked to attend some Highland games, and complied, notwithstanding many doubts whether by so doing she should dishonor her Lord and bring a cloud upon her own soul. On her return home she found this letter lying on her table, written by Ruth without any knowledge of the circumstances, but which truly came as a seasonable word of reproof. It was like an arrow from the bow of the King, drawn at a venture, but directed by the Spirit himself.)

A word of warning against worldly conformity

"Adam, where are you?" Genesis 3:9

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" 1 Kings 19:9

To E. M., August 5, 1854.

My Beloved Friend,

The above questions came to my mind for my beloved friend, I know not why. This evening I have heard a sermon from the last of these passages, and I must send you the substance of a few remarks, though not in the exact words. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" It may be said to some believers, "What are you doing here--inactive and indolent in your Lord's cause? You were very lively in the service of Satan and the world. Why are you so lethargic in the service of Him who bought you with His blood, and knew what it was to be weary in working for you?"

Again, it may be said to some, "What are you doing here--in a place, or in society, where your Lord is not loved, honored, or known?" Your soul will suffer, your spirituality will be withered, for it is a very tender plant; and it is easily injured. If the believer will be in worldly society, uncalled by Providence, his spirituality is sure to suffer blight. Ah! What are you doing here, Elijah?

"What are you doing here?" it may be said again, when the believer is in the midst of mist and gloom, which hide the Savior from his view. What are you doing here?—you whom I have ransomed—you to whom I have manifested myself—you whom the Spirit has sealed—whom I have loved with an everlasting love—what are you doing here with darkened evidences? Is it not because you are looking into your own heart instead of looking unto Me, and coming unto Me, who am made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption?

The Spirit may discover to us what is in our hearts to abase us and lay us low; but if we look into our hearts to find comfort or encouragement, then our evidences will be darkened, the clouds will gather quickly around us, and our dreariness will grow yet more dreary! What are you doing here, Elijah? We must look away from self, and learn that we are not to live upon past experience, however real, or upon past manifestations, however bright; but we must be seeking for fresh incomings of grace. It is a great lesson which we are very slow in learning, not to live upon grace received.

Victory over SELF by abiding in Christ

To E. M., August 14, 1854.

My Dear Friend,

You have been rambling among the wonders of nature, but you find, as I have always done, that the works of our Lord's hands, however lovely, will not do without the love of His heart. If that spring be not open to us, it is all as a dry and thirsty land; but when we have freedom there, then every place is cheerful, and "December is as pleasant as May."

I see, more and more, that we live very far below our privileges in Christ. Some say that they want to hear more of duty and precept; but truly I find duty and precept very dry--and all condemnation without privilege in Christ--that is oil to the wheels. And if we are living by faith in a fulfilled law, and in the Law-fulfiller--the fruits of righteousness will as surely flow out as effect follows cause--for those fruits are only by Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:11) Precious things are put forth by the moon, (the Church,) as she receives by faith the precious things brought forth by the sun, (Christ,) and in no other way.

Hence we often weary ourselves in vain, because we are looking more after the fruit than the abiding in Him from whom alone it can come. "From Me is your fruit found."

It has been well said, that "in a mere legal way, many believers have toiled all their time for power over some corruptions, who, like Peter and the rest, have caught little or nothing--because Jesus Christ was not in the company." That, you know, is self-effort; and if any fruit were to spring from thence, it would only be to self-pleasing and self-praise—all "wild gourds," which bring "death in the pot!" If we want good fruit--it must spring from the true vine. If we want plenty of fish--it must be by casting on the right side of the ship. If we desire close walking, holy living, much victory, communion, enjoyment--it must come by abiding in Jesus. Hear what Himself says, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

O precious Christ-exalting, self-abasing grace of faith--be it ours in lively exercise by the blessed Spirit's operation, and may Christ be "all in all." It seems to me that we know nothing of His "unsearchable riches;" and yet how we often turn to toys and trifles of time. He is such a precious and full Christ. There is enough in Him to occupy and satisfy all our powers in time and eternity! Oh! send out Your light and Your truth into our hearts; let them lead us and guide us to this Your holy hill; and when our heart is overwhelmed, lead us to this Rock, which is higher than self!

Now, farewell! Every covenant blessing be with you and yours. "They shall be mine--says the Lord Almighty--in that day when I make up my jewels." We tread a thorny desert, but

"Judah's Lion guards the way,
And guides His pilgrims home!"

There we shall meet, from clog and fetter free, to behold our Beloved without a cloud between. Having sipped of the rivers of His pleasure below, we shall drink full draughts above--and in His love and glory be absorbed forever and ever!

Ever most affectionately yours,
Ruth

The simplicity of faith

To E. M., Thursday, 1854.

My very dear,

I trust you will not forget the "near way to the City" of which Mr. S— told us. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I have been thinking much lately how the apostles gave this direction to every inquiring soul; but are we not often like Eccles. 10:15: "The labor of the foolish wearies every one of them, because he knows not how to go to the city." Then how sweetly come in the words of our dear Lord, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

If we toil for twenty years, we must come to this at last: "believe and be saved." May the Holy Spirit

bring you there and keep you there, "that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." May He take away the dominion of that giant sin, UNBELIEF, though its life is to be prolonged for a season. Goliath, the uncircumcised Philistine, came forth only to be cut down; may it be so in your soul with the unbelief which seems increasingly to trouble you. The Lord give you faith to put this foe into His hands.

Your very affectionately,
Ruth

A seeking soul encouraged to come to the Lord's Table

"Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified." Matthew 28:5

To E. M.

Much-loved,

You are, indeed, on my heart as regards the coming solemnity of the Lord's Supper. I feel that it is a matter between the Lord and the soul, and dare not press your attendance lest I bring you further into bonds. But I may venture to say that the Lord's table is a feast for the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind; also for such as feel they are outside, wandering in the highways and hedges. It was for such the true Paschal Lamb was slain; surely then such are welcome to the emblems of His death and sufferings, of His body broken and His blood shed. If a sense of sin and unworthiness is not to keep us from Jesus the substance of the feast, should it prevail to hold us back from the shadow and type thereof? Would any self-improvement or self-delight be a suitable preparation for this ordinance? Are we not rather to come with the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves--and so to embrace the Rock for lack of a shelter? Are we not thus to come, feeling that we deserve death, and showing forth that we have no hope of escape but by the obedience, blood-shedding, and death of the worthy Lamb? The woman who was a sinner came to weep at the feet of Jesus before she had sense of forgiveness; and though she presumed to wash those holy feet with her polluted tears, He did not rebuke her, but sent pardon sweetly home to her heart, and she went away with all her sins forgiven. (Luke 7:48)

True, it is sweet to come to the table under a sense of pardoning love, but I believe it is safe to come hungering and thirsting for this assurance. "He fills the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away." It is sweet to come with the sacrifice of praise, singing, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;" but it is safe to come with the sacrifice of a broken spirit, for such the Lord will not despise. (Psalm 51:17) Surely those who come with the blessing, and those who come for the blessing, are each bidden guests, for who could make a soul hungry and thirsty but the master of the feast? Christ is the only passover from sin to salvation, from condemnation to justification; therefore to be knocking at this door, in every appointed means, seems a suitable exercise for those who are feeling their sin and condemnation. To take the bread and wine clinging and crying to a crucified Savior, does not look like receiving unworthily, since He has said, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and what better response than "Dear Lord, remember me."

May the Divine Spirit guide you in this matter; and if, like Esther, you are led to venture without a positive call from the King, I shall desire to pray as he of old, "May the Lord, who is good, pardon

everyone who sets his heart on seeking God--the Lord, the God of his fathers--even if he is not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary," (has not free exercise of that faith which purifies the heart, or sweet application of that blood which cleanses from all sin.) "And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." (2 Chron. 30:18-20) "What, do you think that He will not come to the feast?" Let us invite Him, and ask Him to make our new heart manifestly His guest-chamber, where the passover shall be truly eaten in His presence. Who can tell but we may have to say that He was known of us in breaking of bread. But if not, be it ever with us as Hab. 2:1-3, and the Lord (the Spirit) "direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. 3:5) He is worth waiting for, and says, "those who wait for me shall not be ashamed." May that be your privilege, whether you come to the feast, or whether you be absent (Rev. 22:17; John 7:37)

Excuse all this in true affection, from your unworthy,
Ruth

Christ the only Physician for a sin-sick soul

To E. M., 1854.

"But now He has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself!" Hebrews 9:26

Dearly-beloved friend,

These rich words still follow me. That word "sin" feels weighty to a sensible sinner. But oh! that word "Himself!" seems a million times more weighty! "Himself!" the mighty God, the precious Man Christ Jesus! "Himself!" by whom all things were created, and for whom they exist! "Himself!" whose smile is heaven, whose frown is hell; whom all angels worship, and all devils obey! "Himself!" the sacrifice! Such another could not be found! Sins deep as hell and high as heaven cannot overmatch it, for it is infinite! Sins of scarlet and crimson dye cannot resist its power, for it makes them whiter than snow. See as much as you can of the vileness of self, and the demerit of sin--yet "Himself," a bleeding sacrifice, exceeds it all! Here is the sweet-smelling savor, or savor of rest, both to the Lawgiver and the lawbreaker. The Lawgiver is honored, the lawbreaker is saved!

See how He stands most lovingly, as with open arms, saying to every laboring, weary, heavy-laden sinner, "Come!" "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." "I still receive sinners, to the uttermost I save them, and never am weary of healing their backslidings, forgiving all their iniquities, and multiplying pardons as they multiply transgressions against Me. I blot all out with My blood, and love them freely and forever." Sinner, will not this suffice? It will if the Spirit applies it--and opens in a little measure Himself and His sacrifice in contrast to yourself and your sins. It will take eternity to know it fully; but that your heart may find rest and refreshing in it now, is the affectionate prayer of His gleaner,
Ruth

A foretaste of glory

To E. M, August 15, 1855.

"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." Isaiah 33:17

Ever-dear friend,

Although we have met so seldom lately, I am glad to find our hearts still beat in unison. When I read of your pleasant 'Highland tour', and its grand scenery, it made my heart bound, for I love the beauties of Nature. But my spirit quickly turned to its own anticipations; for, you know, dearest friend, I expect before long fully to enjoy High-land scenery too. I am looking forward to my eternal change, and delivered from the chilling damps of flesh and blood; to the being raised above the vapors of these lowlands, blissfully to range the mountains of myrrh and hills of frankincense in unclouded day; and, more steadily than the eagle, to gaze all the while upon the Sun!

O my glorious Christ, what will it be to see You, face to face, in Your own light! to see "the King in His beauty," and be absorbed in Your love! This is the climax of love's anticipations; these are the mountains of myrrh and hills of frankincense; even His perfections, His glory, and His transporting charms! Oh! methinks how riveted I shall be; eternal ages will roll on, but still my eyes and heart will have room for no other object but for Him, who died for my sake, but is alive again—my Lord, my life, my all!

Those love-prints in His hands, and feet, and side; that precious body broken for you and for me; we shall behold, we shall gaze upon them; and from the scars of those once bleeding wounds, unutterable radiations of glory will beam forth forever. There we shall eternally see that He was crucified for us—the slain Lamb! Truly, I feel that mortality could not bear it; such "new wine" would burst the "old skin" but mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and then shall I be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness.

Modern believers rebuke my deep longings to be "away in the land of praises;" yet in the works of the dear old writers I find warm-hearted companions, who step on far beyond me in foretasting the glory which is to be revealed. I am not afraid of walking in such company, because it is God, the Eternal Spirit, who enlarges my heart with desire for this land of Beulah, and gives me a sip of the ocean of love, which none can have without longing for the full draught—yes, to launch out into the ocean itself, and be ever filled!

I am very fond of 1 Cor. 2:10—"We know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit;" and verse 12: "we have received . . . the Spirit which is of God, so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us,"—not only possess them, which every believer does, but know them—have them opened and set out before our spiritual mind; and then out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak of heavenly treasures. I shall desire to be looking up to the Lord for you, that you may banquet with the King at the coming communion; and forget self with its poverty and misery, while He says, "Fear not, I have redeemed you! You are mine!"

Luke 24:29 has been very delightful to me; that word, "constrained," how wonderful! This 'constraining Jesus to abide' is still done by faith in the Spirit's operation. The King sweetly allows Himself to be held in the galleries of the new heart: "The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it." But how unbelief weakens; it is like, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson;" and when his secret of faith is shorn away he is weak indeed.

Those words, "those who dwell under His shadow shall return," have also been very precious to me. That "shall return" is in some seasons worth more than words can express. Adieu! duty calls me away; but my heart would sit still at His dear feet, receiving the gracious words which fall from His lips!

Yours,
Ruth

A Christmas feast on Christmas-day

"My soul follows hard after You, Your right hand upholds me."

To E. M., December 23, 1855.

Dearest Friend,

Is your heart with my heart this morning? If so, you will join me in following hard after Him who is our glory and joy, and who is the substance of every type. In finding Him, we do indeed inherit substance, whatever be the changes in our frames and feelings. My soul is longing after Him as my Christmas portion and my Christmas cheer; for the Lamb's flesh is heavenly food, and to be feeding upon Him by faith is a foretaste of heaven, where the Lamb Himself shall feed us and lead us to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes!

Now, therefore, in the wilderness let us be seeking HIM, not seeking merely pleasant sensations of His manifested love and presence—but Himself, for they who so seek shall not be ashamed.

Have you thought of Acts 10:11,12,16, and 11:5,10? All those ceremonially unclean creatures were let down from heaven and drawn up into heaven again, no doubt primarily referring to the Gentiles; but surely that sheet also typified the covenant in which the whole redeemed family were let down to earth, and all shall be drawn up again into heaven. It seems to be the same with the younger children as with the Elder Brother; He came from God and went to God.

Christmas-day—I now must finish this in His name which is above every name, and which is truly at this time as ointment poured forth in my soul. I seem to be drinking living water from the well of Bethlehem, and would pour it out again unto the Lord by sending it to some of my loved ones for whom I intensely long—that they may have a Christmas blessing, being filled with the Holy Spirit.

I am all alone in the house, and have had a royal feast in the blessed company of the King, who drew near so lovingly that my soul melted, my tears flowed, and with a glad heart, though unmusical voice, I heartily sang—"Crown Him Lord of all!" I think much of that celestial concert in which a multitude of the heavenly host sing His worthy praise.

I once scarcely thought to have been here another Christmas—but He who wills it is making it all up me, for surely this is the land of Beulah. He has brought me into His banqueting-house, and His banner over me is love. Love brought Him from the bosom of the Father. Love made Him take our nature into His own, and thus come under the law as our Husband, by circumcision acknowledging Himself a debtor to do it all, not for Himself but for us. We are dead to the law by the doings of

Christ--as He fulfilled its every jot and tittle, and endured all its penalty. Since, therefore, we are now married to Him, whatever the law has to say about us must be said to Him. He has "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." It was for this He took the prepared body; it was for the suffering of death He was made a little while lower than the angels. His "goings forth" towards this were from everlasting--and since time began, promise and prophecy, type and shadow, symbol and ceremony--have all been full of Him.

There is a veil over all these holy things which none but the Spirit can remove—but when He does so, the soul in which Jesus has been revealed, leaps for joy, as David did before the Ark.

In His birth, too, there was a covering of lowliness, so that none but the Spirit-taught mind could discern the Savior-King or know the Lord of glory. But oh! the amazing privilege of those to whom this blessed Spirit has been as the star in the East--so that from the very ends of the earth they are brought, saying, "We have come to worship Him." That privilege is ours. We have felt the need of Him, have seen His suitability, and are brought to partake of the saving benefit. What can we render? We can only sink deeper in the debt of love by joyfully receiving more, as I, a most unworthy worm, do this happy Christmas-day.

The mystery of iniquity is great—but the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, is greater, and swallows the other up in the ocean of redeeming blood, so that when the iniquity of Jacob is sought for it shall not be found, and of Israel there shall be none. O precious Babe of Bethlehem, how wondrous was Your errand to this land of curse. Though so little and lowly, You traveled down to earth in the greatness of Your strength mighty to save. Sweetly has my heart been feeling of You, "This same shall comfort us." (Gen. 5:29.)

Fare-well! With much warm love, your ever affectionate,
Ruth

To the Dove in the cleft of the Rock

"A man there is, a real man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side."

To E. M., December 31, 1855.

My Dearly Beloved,

In His fragrant name I must greet you at this time in remembrance of His mercy, whereby He visited you with His salvation, and took off your garments of heaviness, and covered you with the robes of righteousness and praise; when the "banner of love" was over you, the arms of love were embracing you, the object of love was filling your heart, and you only wanted the wings of love to flee away and rest forever in the dear delights of His unveiled presence, who was then revealed as your "Ishi"—your heavenly husband. (Hosea 2:18)

Oh, it was mercy to you, and to me also. We cannot forget it, and would sing His worthy praise, who

from all eternity had thoughts of peace to you. (Psalm 103.) Ah! dearest friend, you felt as I did when I found him—as in Luke 8:38. But He sent us back to learn the excellent life of faith, and do as verse 39. Oh! forever fresh anointings with fresh oil to do it more and more feeling.

I do think this is a safe and sure way to be separated from the world and those who have a form of godliness only. Such strains of love and felt salvation are too warm for them. But having felt the cure, we must speak well of our Divine Healer. I wish you a fresh baptism into Him (Rom. 6:3-6) by the power of the Spirit, that it may be your very element to tell "to sinners round, what a dear Savior you have found;" or to be silent for His sake where you cannot speak to His honor, saying of all worldly and flesh-feeding converse, "But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way"—the fear of love.

And for all these things your Lord says, "My grace is sufficient for you." In all our journey through this fallen flesh-and-blood condition, our Divine Judah is with us! He has stood surety to our Father to bring us safely back, and set us before Him with joy; and on Him it devolves to guide, provide, and speak for us, when guilt is evidently charged home, as in Gen. 44:12-18. Judah was the advocate. (1 John 2:1.) We do not hear that the accused Benjamin spoke a word. In like manner He, our Judah, will also speak through us when we long to honor Him—but feel unable to say a word in His name. He is our strength for everything, and we need not fear to use Him or trouble Him too much. We are too shy this way, through conferring with flesh and blood.

I have been enjoying Jesus through Ezekiel 22:30-31—"I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one. So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them in the fire of my anger. I will heap on them the full penalty for all their sins, says the Sovereign Lord." A man was sought for to stand in the gap; but none being found, the indignation and wrath came upon the guilty party. It must fall somewhere—God's judgment must be executed. But mark the contrast. For us a Man is found! He comes forth from the invisibility of Jehovah, and in the likeness of man undertakes our cause, which he had espoused with our persons in eternity, when the council of peace was between them both. He saw there was no man, therefore He said, "Here am I, send Me!" And in the fullness of time He came and stood in the gap, and filled up the breach in the law; and on His holy head fell our storm of wrath and punishment! Thus He became our covert and hiding-place!

And because the Holy Jesus was taken and executed, the guilty Barabbas is set free; for there must needs be one released at that feast of the Passover, because it commemorated the release of Israel from Egypt, which typified the release of the spiritual Israel, by the blood of the true paschal Lamb. How has my soul melted in viewing Him thus—as my door of hope and way of escape. All our deliverances come by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and every new view of it brings forth a new song to His praise!

May you have the renewings of the Holy Spirit in recounting the benefits of the past year, and may a precious Jesus be the Alpha and Omega of the one just approaching.

You are going to have walks through the Tabernacle. (This refers to some proposed lectures on the Typical Character of the Tabernacle.) May the blessed Spirit take off the coverings, that, from the door to the mercy-seat, every whit of it may set forth His glory!

Sweetly remembering what a summer Sun you had last winter, and wishing you frequent renewals of

His healing beams, I rest in Him with much tender love.

Your own affectionate, unworthy,
Ruth

Spiritual Declension (part 1)

To E. M., February, 1856.

Much-beloved in Jesus,

In His ever-fragrant name I desire again to commune with you in Him and of Him; that in so doing He may be exalted, and our hearts caused anew to burn with His love, which is the source of ours—His love being the cause, our love the effect. It is self-evident that the more we have to do with the cause, the more freely effects will flow. Hence our dear Lord says, "Continue you in my love;" (John 15:9) not thereby implying that His love can be turned away from its objects—but exhorting us to a continued realization or apprehending of His love by the lively acting of a Spirit-wrought faith. Thus will our little spark be increasing into a flame by constant communication with the fire from whence it springs.

Of this communication faith seems to be the medium; and if this precious grace is not kept in healthy exercise upon the person and work, the sufferings and death, the blood and righteousness of our dear Redeemer—the soul will be sure to become languid and drooping in its spiritual condition. Prayer, praise, love, joy, peace, and all other graces—will be at a low water-mark. And whatever external appearances or profession there may be, the heart will be conscious of distance and shyness with its Lord.

You know I am speaking of one who has been quickened by the Spirit, and is a living soul, for we may be alive but not lively. We may be active in our Lord's cause—but not spiritual in our own souls. We may be earnest for the salvation of others—but not be living in the joys of salvation ourselves. We may be instrumentally distributing the bread and water of life—but not be enjoying daily refreshment in our own experience. I do sorrowfully think that this is too much the case in the present day; according to that Scripture, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards—but my own vineyard have I not kept." May we not say, as our Lord did upon another subject, "These things you should have done without neglecting the others."

The reason why I thus judge, is from finding people so lively in conversing upon what they are doing for the Lord, yet so slow to speak of what He is doing for them. They seem delighted to tell of the great things which are going on all around—but immediately shrink back if any heart-subject is brought home to them. In fact, if one speaks of personal enjoyment of the love, blood, and salvation of Jesus, there is no response from some—but they put it down to the score of egotism. While others refer to years past, when they did feel Him to be precious—but they confess that they know little of it now. They are so occupied in what they call working for Him, that they hear little from Him, say little to Him, enjoy little of Him, and may truly say, "While I was busy here and there, He had left."

It is most lamentable for any living soul to be in constant religious engagements for the good of others, while following Jesus "afar off." Very many such I fear there are, as well as hundreds who only know Him in the judgment, and yet are continually reading, teaching, and conversing on His blessed

name. This is a day of great profession—but yet real vital godliness is at a low ebb, and close walking with God in sweet communion is too little sought after. Solemn, indeed, are these facts; we may well say, with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting."

You will not much wonder that I have been led into this train of thought, because we have, more than once, touched upon the subject in conversation; and indeed, dearest friend, I feel more and more the deep importance of being kept in a freshness of experience by the anointings of the Spirit; so that whatever engagements we may have for the good of others, and however abundantly we may be laboring for their salvation, there should still be a constant communication kept up with our dear Lord, and our souls should never rest satisfied without freedom at Court. To be constantly employed in errands for the King, and never to see His face, hear His voice, or receive a token from Him; oh! how chilling to one who has enjoyed His love, has sat under His shadow with great delight, and has found His fruit sweet to the taste. How unsatisfying to one truly longing to taste that the Lord is gracious. The former may well say, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation," and the latter, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that you bear unto your people! Oh visit me with your salvation!" When we are enjoying personal fellowship with the King, and by faith walking in Him and living on Him, then will His messages be most warmly delivered, being fresh from Himself. Then will there be evidently a sweet savor of Him, as well as a good word for Him.

I cannot tell you how sad it is to my heart when I find this savor lacking in some who have been long in the Lord's ways, and active in serving Him too. They are cumbered with many things, and too little alone with Jesus, without which we shall become like salt which has lost its savor. It makes me mourn for them, and tremble for myself, thinking of some passages which have often brought me to great searchings of heart, and wrestlings with the Lord; Matt. 5:13; Hosea 10:2, "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty;" and much of Jer. 2, and also Rev. 2:4, "I have something against you, because you have left your first love." It matters not what great works there be if the spice of love be lacking.

Oh may our gracious Lord bring us closer and closer to Himself, and cause us to dwell in love, and "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge." May He fill us with the Spirit, that by His power we may so testify of what we taste and hear and see, that other hearts may be kindled with desire to enjoy the same blessed fellowship, even as the beloved apostle said, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." He desired that they might have joy in the Lord; and the kingdom of God is not in word but in power; it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are things with which the stranger to God intermeddles not, for such have only to do with the outworks—but "the kingdom of God is within you." "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Oh what an unspeakable mercy, that by the spirit of adoption we can say, "our God," and "our Father;" and though He be a consuming fire to those on whom sin is found, yet has He made for us a "way of escape" by the blood of our Elder Brother; having laid upon Him all our iniquities. These briars and thorns were set against Him in battle, and on His sacred person did the fire of divine justice burn them up altogether. Oh let us turn aside from creature things and see this great sight, for it is

heart-warming and Christ-endearing, to see the bush of humanity in that devouring fire, and yet unconsumed; to behold our precious Surety enduring all the bitter anguish until every sin of His chosen was expiated, and He could triumphantly say, "It is finished."

That was indeed "the conqueror's song," and with joy it is re-echoed again and again from the believing heart by the power of the blessed Spirit. "It is finished, and finished for me." The personality of it is the sweetness; here is food for faith, here is a feast for love. In such believing views of a crucified Savior we get raised above the things of a dying world; and, in realizing by faith our union with Him, we can say, "I am crucified with Christ;" then He becomes our life, that we which live should henceforth live only for Him. (2 Cor. 5:14, 15.) This is a heart-warming subject—but I must cease. May we have more and more experience of it in the heart, and never be left to rest in the mere "talk of the lips," which "tends only to poverty" of soul. There is a talking of Christ which is impoverishing, that is, when the lips outrun the heart; but when He is dwelling there by faith, and causing His Naphtali to give goodly words of Him, (Gen. 49:21) in such scattering there is increasing; He is honored, and the soul refreshed.

Oh may He pour out His Spirit upon His people to quicken the dead, and arouse the living who may be in a sleepy state of soul, who need their lamps trimming and their loins girding afresh. May there be great searchings of heart, causing the inquiry--Why, being a King's child, should there be leanness from day to day? Is there not a cause? Is there not bread enough in the Father's house? or, rather, has there not been a turning away from His spiritual provision to some beggarly elements of the creature or the world. May the Lord in mercy restore all such to their first love, and also lead them on to those more blessed revelations of Himself which are to be enjoyed even in the house of our pilgrimage. I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, says the Lord Almighty, to do it for them. The Lord ever bless you with sweet and close communion with Himself.

A warm adieu, with tender love, from your ever affectionate,
Ruth

Spiritual Declension (part 2)

To E. M., March 1856.

Much-beloved in Jesus,

I must send you another thought or two on our last subject. You know it was Spiritual Declension, and consequent lack of savor and unction in living souls. We were especially considering the cases of those who have been kept accurate in all outward observances, active in works of charity, and even been zealous promoters of the salvation of others. Sad, indeed, is a case like this; but I am forcibly arrested with the possibility of such being convicted of the state—but not converted from it. An acknowledgment of wandering is not return; a consciousness of a dry, barren state is not restoration. Perhaps you can hardly conceive a living soul, convinced of being in the wrong and lingering there, without earnestly and diligently seeking after the right—but I can; for this bad, bad heart has experienced what drowsiness and listlessness sometimes follow sleep, when there is no heart to arise and call upon the Lord for deliverance. Seeing the case to be bad, we just shrink from knowing it fully, and fear rather to be thoroughly aroused to reap painfully what has been sown to the flesh, than desire at any cost to be brought back to close communion with our God.

Look at Jonah: he knew he was a wanderer—but there seemed no anxiety to return; he would rather forget it in sleep. The storm was the Lord's messenger to oblige the man to awaken him, and the fish His servant to swallow him up; so that from his senseless sleep he must go down to "the belly of hell," to make him heartily call upon his God; and from that low place the sweet song was to be put into his mouth, "Salvation is of the Lord." Not only salvation from hell is of the Lord—but also the many experimental salvations which we need on our pilgrim journey. And oh! it is a blessed salvation to be brought near when there has been a following of "Jesus afar off;" and by His precious blood to be purged and cleansed from our own doings, works, and inventions, when they have come to be like a crowd between the soul and Him. It is blessed to have any secret thing taken away which makes the consolations of God small with us. But here is the trying point—whatever is between God and the soul must be taken away to restore nearness; and this is a sacrifice at which most of us tremble, finding it easier to condemn the wrong in others, and even to acknowledge it in ourselves, than to ask the Lord honestly and heartily to take it away.

As I said before, there are many in this busy but cold-hearted day, many of the Lord's people who are most active and energetic in His service—but the cream of their communion is gone, and the fire of love has languished. There are sounds of Jesus and salvation on the lips—but none of His sweet savor flowing from their hearts, nor any of His fresh tokens to tell to those who fear His name. (Psalm 66:16) Some are in a measure aroused to a sense of their state—but are not delivered from it; they know that it is not with them as in years gone past—but they are too busy to give close attention to personal facts, and to be really diligent to know the state of their own flocks and herds. (Prov. 27:23) They desire a change in their experience—but have not time to seek it, and in this sense are like the slothful who "desires and has nothing." (Prov. 13:4) All their energies go out another way, and they are too closely occupied with their religious engagements to follow their Lord, who withdrew from the multitude into the wilderness and prayed, and who another time "went up into a mountain to pray," and on another occasion "continued all night in prayer to God." O my beloved, did the immaculate Lamb of God so much use retirement and prayer, as we find by many portions of Scripture He did? How much more do we need it who have sin dwelling in us, and often working under the most specious forms! The truth is, we cannot thrive without it.

Where the experience has indeed become as a wilderness, what double need there is to withdraw from the cases of others, and cry mightily unto God to make that "wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose." Where there has been much talking about gospel day—but long, long night within, what cause is there to withdraw from all, and wrestle with Him, who "turns the shadow of death into morning." (Amos 5:8) In so doing the feeling of the wilderness state will probably deepen before the rejoicing returns, and the night will seem to grow darker before the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness rises again upon the soul. Still, the blessed Spirit can enable us to endure; and though He keeps the soul waiting for the Sun and watching for Him, "more than those who watch for the morning," yet such experience shall not be in vain, for "blessed are those who wait for Him," and "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." However weak they have become, the Lord does renew His people's youth like the eagles, and causes them to sing as in the day when He brought them up out of Egypt.

It may seem presumptuous in me thus to speak of the state of useful active Christians; but if some are watching while others are working, they should give the result of their observations for the general good; and especially if they discover danger, should give an alarm. Now this is just what I feel. I am

fast nearing eternity, and am proving the deep importance of having matters clear between God and the soul. Moreover, He has been pleased to give me much close retirement with Himself, and a little power of observing what is going on in the Church. Finding, therefore, many active members of the royal family shy at court, and having very little personal fellowship with the King, my heart yearns towards them, and the love of Christ constrains me to say, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be;" "shall not God search this out? for He knows the secrets of the heart," and if the searching out should be on the deathbed, and the wood, hay, and stubble have to be burned up then, how bitter would it be. Oh, I would cry mightily unto God for myself, and the whole living family, that by His Spirit He would search our hearts as with a candle, and discover to us wherein they are in any measure departing from Himself; also that He would not let us shrink from the light when we feel some convictions of an evil—but cause us to desire and seek to know it fully, and to be brought to the light to have our deeds reprov'd, and our souls delivered as a bird from the snare of the fowler.

I earnestly desire to know the real state of my case, and to have my soul laid open to the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" for whom He loves He wounds, and whom He wounds He will heal. Faithful are the wounds of this Friend, though painful; and I would rather covet them than hear Him say--'Let her alone; she has loved idols, after idols let her go.' Oh no, my precious Jesus; I could not bear that, even for a little while; I want to be continually with You in my own experience, to know much of Your mind, enjoy much of Your love, and daily to walk with You in endearing communion. I want this also for the whole living family, and would especially plead for those zealous workers who are promoting every means to bring others to You, yet themselves rarely see Your face or hear Your voice, and yet are not in mourning about it. Oh, grant them a revival, a re-quickening, a return, and a daily partaking of those fruits they are commending to others. Put in Your pierced hand by the hole of the door of their heart, and cause their affections to be moved for You, (Song 5:4) that with earnest longings they may say, "I will rise now," and go forth and "seek Him whom my soul loves." (Song 3:2)

O precious Savior, we would seek You for them, and seek You with them, for our soul can never be satisfied with dwelling at Jerusalem without seeing the King's face. Shine on us, shine in us, shine through us; and in such light there will be living warmth. Bring us to sit at Your dear feet, and lean upon Your bosom, and through much communion with You to be fragrant with Your perfumes, and thus to be refreshing to each other. Thus shall the Three-one Jehovah have glory, to whom Your poor handmaid gives heartfelt, though feeble praise: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and amen."

One word more, dearest friend. The thought arose in my mind, What is the best means to be used for one conscious of decay, and longing to be restored to freshness of experience? Of course a fresh view of Jesus by faith—"Look unto me, and be saved." "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed;" and the place to get this view is the Throne of grace—"Pour out your heart before Him." When the Lord was promising a gracious return to Israel He said—"With weeping and with supplication will I lead them." While thinking thus, I opened the blessed Book, and was forcibly arrested with these words about the transfiguration of our blessed Lord, "And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." Oh, it did tell upon my heart, which went forth in earnest longings that such souls as have descended, in whom the fine gold has become dim, might, in an experimental sense, have it fulfilled in them; being by the Spirit brought into fervent prayer, and as they pray, the fashion of their spiritual countenance might be altered from dimness to brightness, by the glory of their Lord arising afresh upon them, as in Isaiah 60:1, and 2 Cor. 3:18.

May we also constantly experience the same, for I feel how much we need these Divine renewings. I do like to have some personal applications of what I write or say, without which we are apt to fall into a mere intellectual way of speaking or writing, which is not wholesome for the soul, and helps to bring about the dearth we have been lamenting. And now may He, to whom all power belongs, bless what is His, pardon what is mine, and give you that profit in reading which, to His praise I confess, He has granted me in writing—He knows how to speak a word in season. Oh, what joy will it be to get home and see our Savior face to face!

In Him I remain, with much warm love, your ever affectionate,
Ruth—less than the least.

The blessedness of separation from the world

To E. M., May 5, 1856.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

"The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Much-beloved friend,

How welcome was your letter; and how does my heart feel for you in the stand which you are called to make at this time for the Lord. May you be filled with the Spirit to testify plainly that such things come of the flesh, in which no good thing dwells, and that they lead to evil, even to walking after the flesh, which brings death into the experience, according to Romans 8:13. Mark how strong is the expression—"Mortify the deeds of the body." The carnal mind would like to mix with the world, and to compromise a little, desiring not to seem singular—but to let religion appear pleasant and agreeable to all, enjoying innocent amusements and recreations, serving God in this way as well as by other means, and letting both the old man and the new man have their part.

How very many are now deluding themselves with such a profession as this, which is a mere false light leading them on to the pit of perdition. But we "have not so learned Christ." We know experimentally, that if the old man feeds--the new man starves, and that they cannot both fatten and strengthen at the same time. Moreover, we solemnly fear that those who can willingly mix with the world, and find no painful effects from it, have not the true life which feels where death is, or the true light which discovers darkness and evil deeds. They may "chew the cud," (Lev. 11:3-8) in a lower sense by talking of the things of God; but they do not "divide the hoof" by separating from the enemies of God; for "friendship with the world is enmity with God." What strong language! We are taught that none are clean in God's account but such as spiritually "chew the cud" and "divide the hoof" also. His word is a separating word, His Spirit is a separating spirit, His command is to "Come out and be separate," and the love of Christ constrains those who are spiritually alive to live not "unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." "The Lord has set apart him who is godly for Himself;" and in whatever measure or manner such "mingle themselves with the seed of men" (Dan. 2:43) they must suffer experimental hindrance and loss, for they will find it like being clogged with "miry clay"--and who then can be healthily "running the race," "fighting the good fight," or

using the dove's wings. (Psalm 68:13)

This will never answer, my beloved friend; and whoever would persuade you to such things, less or more, it must be said, "This persuasion comes not of Him that calls you," for He persuades Japheth to "dwell in the tents of Shem," not with the children of Ham. Your love will bear with me in saying this, though you know these things, and are fully persuaded of this present truth—and likely it is that you will be called more and more to carry it out in a practical way as you go on. Perhaps the Lord may even require of you to separate more from those who oppose your separation from the world, for He has said, "Bad company corrupts good character." And if these people profess not to be of the world--yet they do not "hate the garments spotted with the flesh," which He has told us to do.

Do not be alarmed, my dear friend; it is most blessed to forsake all for Christ; and when He calls you to any new forsaking, He will command your strength for it; yes, the more He circumcises your heart to love Him, and your lips to witness of and for Him, the more will you find mere professors to forsake you. They do not like such warm-hearted company, and if they cannot win you over to their cold-water system, they will get tired of the effects of your spiced wine, which causes the lips of those who are asleep to speak of Him whom the soul loves. Nor should I think you an object of pity—but rather of congratulation, if, from the above cause, these compromising ones should go out, one by one, and leave you alone with Jesus and His despised remnant.

The more we lose for him--the more we find in Him; and to get rid of anything that is between us and Him is a gainful loss. Fear not. "His reward is with Him," and a rich one it is, even the unfolding and enjoyment of Himself. Hear Him say, "Listen to me, O royal daughter; take to heart what I say. Forget your people and your homeland far away. For your royal husband delights in your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord." (Psalm 45:10-11) It seems as if cleaving to the first Adam family is like a cloud or veil over the beauty of the spouse—forsake them, so shall the king desire, yes greatly desire, your beauty, which they cannot see or appreciate. How encouraging are these things for you, though many may rise up against you.

How I have run on! Love oils the wheels and moves the pen—love to Jesus, and love to you, and earnest longing that you may never be drawn into the "doubtful territory," or listen to those who "only consult to cast you down from your excellency." You may remember that true saying, "Those who will needlessly mix with the world and worldly professors shall only enjoy a partial Christ." Oh, may you never rest without enjoying a whole Christ and the fullness of Christ, and ever fresh revealings of Him.

I am proving this a place of tribulation—but am joyful in Him, and desire to live by the moment within that small safe enclosure--"Your will be done." Self is, indeed, a loathsome object, and all its words and deeds have a very ill savor; but He is our place of refuge from it all. The fountain of His blood, the robe of His righteousness, the arm of His power, and the bosom of His love just suit us as we travel through this dreary, dusty desert, encumbered with "the body of this death." And so while one makes us groan, the other makes us sing, "Thanks be unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Farewell, my dear friend. Soon will the shadows of time flee away, and we shall see our Beloved face to face.

With much warm love in Him, I remain, your ever affectionate but unworthy,
Ruth

I wish you the experience of Numbers 14:24. "But since My servant Caleb has a different spirit and has followed Me completely, I will bring him into the land where he has gone, and his descendants will inherit it."

The fullness of Christ

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

"I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto you, O Lord, will I sing."

To E. M., May 1856.

My tenderly loved friend,

I cannot tell you with what mingled feelings I read your last note. It is a solace in this desert land, "when spirit can with spirit blend," in Him and His precious love; but I have reason to believe that Sovereignty shines even in this. May we not safely conclude that our gracious Lord keeps the "fellowship of hearts" under His own control, for His own glory as much as anything else? I am fond of that saying: "True friendship is one soul in two bodies." This explains being understood without effort, and in spiritual things is both helpful and delightful; for in trying to make others understand we sometimes get into confusion ourselves, and almost mystify to our own minds what before was simple and plain.

How sweet was that portion of Scripture which was applied to you—how precious that covenant word "yet," which bears down all creature unworthiness. Oh! what free love, free grace, free mercy flows to poor sinners through the bleeding heart of a crucified Savior--all without money and without price! It is wine and milk indeed. Whatever crooks and twists I find in self, creatures, or circumstances--Jesus is always my only remedy, and in Him I discover something just to fit my case. Yet how it seems hidden from us for a season, to keep us sensible that power belongs unto God; and when the revealing comes, how plain it is that all we need is treasured up in Jesus! "The unsearchable riches of Christ!"

We think we never can so lose sight of this again, when we have such riches in Him; but ah! we truly need hourly renewings of the Holy Spirit to keep us in "the simplicity which is in Christ." Oh! most blessed Spirit, keep us from grieving You, keep us from slighting Your still small voice in our souls, which yet is full of majesty. Oh! testify of Jesus, tell us of Him, and take of those things which are His, and so show them unto us that we may forget our own. Awake, O divine north wind, and come O south south wind--blow upon our souls continually to keep them from a dangerous calm. Oh! cause the spices of our Beloved to flow in, and then flow out--that He and we may be both regaled with His own, for we have no entertainment for so royal a guest. Precious Beloved, we would have our poor heart Your guest-chamber, daily and nightly too; we would constrain You to abide with us, and beg You to turn all out that is an offence. Nothing on earth can compensate Your absence, for You are to us the chief among ten thousand, and the only altogether lovely. You will not forsake us because it has pleased You to make us Your Bride, and you hate divorce. "I will make you My wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you Mine, and you will finally know Me as Lord." Hosea 2:19-20

How sweet is the free grace promise: "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my

praise." We can say from our hearts, "He is worthy to be praised, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." It is well to be looking at these riches of our Surety when our debts are in view, and we shall find there is no default of payment—but such abundance, such ample satisfaction, that "our souls can make their boast in the Lord," and say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Jesus is made unto us "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Oh! may He be more and more revealed to us by the blessed Spirit.

I remain, with very tender love and sympathy, your ever affectionate,
Ruth

The Believer's power

To E. M., Tuesday Morning.

Much-beloved and longed-after in the affections of Jesus Christ, I fear lest when with you I did not give you a clear idea of what I meant about the believer having spiritual power. I have no idea that we possess in the least an independent power. Apart from Christ, we have a power to do evil—but none to do good; yet after union with Him by the Spirit, and after He has been revealed in the soul through faith, it is our privilege to live by faith on His power, which works against our own evils, (Luke 10:19) and brings forth His good fruit in us. (John 15:5; Phil. 1:11) It is the privilege of faith to take hold of Him by the power of the Spirit for the continued exercise of faith and every other grace, that there may be strength and vigor in the soul.

But then it is asked, "Have we power thus to live in His strength? and have we power thus to take hold of Him?" Yes, we have, through the Spirit, and by reason of our union with Him. He himself says, "Come unto me." He says, "Labor for that labor which endures unto everlasting life." He says further, "Abide in me;" and that in so doing there shall be "much fruit." He does not say these things to mock us. His servant says, "Lay hold on eternal life," "fight the good fight of faith," "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," "walk in Him," &c., &c. He does not say these things for nothing; or only to make us feel we have no power—but to stir us up to prove wherein our strength lies. I would much rather be hourly seeking to have these blessed exhortations fulfilled in me than be defining them to a hair's-breadth, and turning back from these messages of the Lord, saying, I have no power. That is a wrong use of creature inability. It has robbed many a soul of the secret of strength, which is to live in another.

In living upon Jesus, we do not become stronger in self—but more independent of self, and more happily dependent upon Him who never was a barren wilderness to those who trust in Him, and who says, "From me is your fruit found."

I do not know whether I have made clear to your mind what I wish, namely, that I have no conception of a creature power or self-acting power in the believer; but I believe in the privilege of faith, to go out upon Jesus and find in Him all we need, to rejoice in Him alone, and that even in times of most sensible poverty and barrenness, as Hab. 3:17, 18. Hart's hymn, 88, sets forth the activity of faith very sweetly, and hymn 79, verse 3, shows the very climax, where it is truly, "Not I—but Christ lives in me."

So if I were questioned—Have you any spiritual power? the most conclusive answer would be, "Christ is my power," and by faith I have the privilege and benefit thereof. I am all powerlessness—but He is

power in me and for me, therefore I rather "glory in my infirmity, that His power may rest upon me." "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." May the Lord bring us more into union-privilege and union-power, which is blessed indeed.

From your own most loving but unworthy,
Ruth

"Looking unto Jesus" the way to
resist the devil and his temptations

To E. M., April 1856.

Ever dear,

I am sorry that you are on the sinking sands of unbelief—but there is Rock at the bottom, and you will sensibly feel it again before long. "He is my Sun, although He refrains from shining."

"Though for a moment He depart,
I dwell forever on His heart;
Forever He on mine."

"Therefore cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward," for "the just shall live by faith," but we die by unbelief. Oh! give Him the glory due unto His name, and "give not place to the devil," but "resist him and he will flee from you." Resist him by flying afresh for refuge to the Cross and Blood of Jesus; for even though all the past had been fleshly excitement and delusion, He is still "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." Therefore, "Unto whom coming," even as that Syro-Phoenician of old: and though, for a while, "He answered her never a word," yet did she follow after Him, crying, "Lord, help me," and at length came the wondrous answer, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will." May the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, be found unto praise, and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, "even though now for a season, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

With much warm love, your ever affectionate,
Ruth.

"For You have been a stronghold for the poor, a stronghold for the humble person in his distress, a refuge from the rain, a shade from the heat." Isaiah 25:4

"There is no one like the God of Israel. He rides across the heavens to help you, across the skies in majestic splendor. The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you."
Deuteronomy 33:26-27

Sympathy in suffering

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" Song of Songs 8:5

"Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." Song of Songs 2:3

"Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens." Song of Songs 2:2

To E. M., August, 1856.

My precious friend,

It has given me a new song to hear that you are really improving. I have been suffering much of late. I know that "He does all things well," but we may feel, since the immaculate Jesus wept at the grave of His friend. I felt constrained to pray for your precious life, yet also felt it cruel to hold you back from perfect bliss in the open vision of the Lamb. Most bitter to this heart would have been the pang of parting with you. Yet I think I could not have held you among thorns for my own sake; but those close dear ties in the flesh, for their sakes I did cry, "spare." How earnestly I long too that you may be a bright living witness for Jesus in the family and Church. Oh! that this purging may be to bring forth more fruit, and this chastening to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, "which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

I trust it is light in your tabernacle, and that the glory of the Lord is filling the house; or, if not, that you are coming up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. He is the apple tree among the trees of the forest; while His Bride is the lily among thorns. With me it has been emptying from vessel to vessel, and finding plenty of dregs—but not sensibly finding Him whom my soul loves. I am willing to suffer anything, so that the wood, hay, and stubble may be consumed, and Christ be all. I commend you to the Brother born for adversity. May He draw you near to Himself, (Gen. 45:4, 5) and open His stores of love.

With much tender love, your ever affectionate,
Ruth.

Hebrews 2:14 to end.

The fullness of Christ revealed by the Spirit

To E. M., April 30, 1857.

Much beloved friend,

My heart rejoices that the glorious Testifier has been again taking of the things of Jesus, and showing them unto you; for it is in His days that "the righteous flourish." As Jesus is exalted in the soul, self is abased. "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

I confess, some things you mention in your letter I had not before seen in that way. My soul longs more than ever for an increase of this spiritual knowledge of Him. Thorns within and thorns without I often keenly feel; but in Him is also found such rest and refreshing as to make one sing, even while feeling the smart.

May we cleave unto Him with full purpose of heart, that it may be with us as with Paul, "I live, yet not I; but Christ lives in me." Thus, too, will it come to pass that we shall not seek our own things—but the things which are Jesus Christ's; and whether we live we shall live unto the Lord, or whether we die we

shall die unto the Lord, and so living or dying, we are the Lord's.

Truly, my dear friend, we should be learning more and more how completely He has saved us in Himself, (Isa. 45:17) and how constantly He delights in us with all His heart, so that we have no need to seek for anything in ourselves to make us more entirely accepted or more beloved—"He cannot love us more, nor will He love us less; for in loving her (His Church, His Bride,) He loves Himself." The experience of this union releases the soul from a host of cares and anxious thoughts. Living in His love, that same love flows back to His own dear Person, and being satisfied with Him and His goodness, the heart has "leisure from itself" to seek His glory. "And you are complete in Him." Colossians 2:10

The things which I taste and handle, I declare unto you, my beloved; and most ardently do I long to grow in willingness to be poor in self, that I may be learning experimentally more of His unsearchable riches, who will be all or nothing. When He is ALL, there is no complaining; much of our complaining shows a desire to be something which He will never gratify. But viewing us in Himself, He ever says, "You are absolutely beautiful, my darling, with no imperfection in you." (Song of Songs 4:7) And the response of faith and love is, "He is altogether lovely!" (Song of Songs 5:16)

You will see where I am--just delighting in the same dear object; yes, I think more absorbed in Him than ever, and more desiring to be so. When I hear anyone speak against so much preaching and talking of Christ, I can only think—Well, if this is to be vile, I must be yet more vile, and will be base in my own eyes--that He may be more and more exalted. I do not wish to conceal this, for it is the truth, and I would always be honest. Moreover, to His praise I must confess, that the more I am taken up with Him, the more blessedly do I realize His grace to be sufficient for me, and that amidst many trials and temptations, and through all the plague of indwelling sin. I find sin is more subdued by looking at Him, rather than looking at it, because our Father has laid all our help upon this mighty One. I humbly conceive, too, that much heartburning would be enjoyed, if pilgrims were to meet to search for Him in all the Scriptures, (Luke 24:32) and to ask for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

You will remember what a blessing I had in tracing His sorrowful footprints under the pain of unanswered prayer in Psalm 22. It is rather singular that my own steppings since have been in the same path, and thus He sometimes says, "Follow me." But He has given sweet encouraging words, and He is a precious sympathizing companion in tribulation. Yet little did I think, when telling you of my Good Friday feast, that I was going to follow the Lamb in the sharp exercise of unanswered petition, and that when thinking I had the promise of an answer. I believe all is for the further abasing of self, and for the lifting up of my precious Jesus on high. How true is that word, "I will lead the blind by a way which they know not."

I want also to tell you how I have been enjoying those words, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." You know I have often enjoyed them in an experimental sense—the fire of love burning on the altar of our heart, and kept alive by Him who kindled it. Now the ever-burning fire on the Jewish altar seemed to set forth the unsatisfactory nature of those sacrifices; for, though thousands of goats, of bullocks, of rams, and of lambs were consumed, still the fire burnt on, crying, as it were, "Give, give." And as that flame was kindled from heaven, how did it show that sin remained unatoned for, the law unfulfilled, justice unsatisfied; and that in all the multiplied offerings the Divine Lawgiver had found no pleasure. They were only like promises of payment; and the

unextinguished fire seemed like that word, "In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin you have had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God."

And oh, what a glorious contrast: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him;" because every stroke brought payment of the debt. He did find pleasure in that sacrifice, because it brought honor to His Divine attributes, and salvation to His people. Thenceforward the altar fire burns not again; the fire of justice has gone out as regards the Church, for the blood of the Lamb has quenched and extinguished it. And "this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Oh, what fathomless depths of grace and love are in those words! The sins were remembered against Him—but they shall not be remembered against them; for them waits no unquenchable fire. Their Surety said, "It is finished!" Justice said, "It is enough!" He quenched His Father's flaming sword in His own vital blood!

I know not whether you will get any of the savor of His sacrifice through my weak words; but my endless, blissful theme is ever new, and it is a very transporting one—Jesus and salvation will never wear out. Oh, what will it be to see Him face to face—while foretastes are so blissful? "In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I remain your tenderly affectionate (in Him, though in self unworthy)
Ruth

Isaiah 41:14-17.

Faith's view of Christ

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!"
(Ephesians 3:19)

To E. M., August, 1857.

Much Beloved in Jesus,

I was delighted with your short line, and its sweet enclosure. Dear Miss C., I do rejoice with her, how the Lord does think upon the poor and needy, and visit them in their most needy times. She can say, "He has done all things well." May this be only as the pledge of greater things, leading her to press after yet fuller revelations of Jesus. I would never have any sit down satisfied—but still press on after what is beyond; for there are heights and depths in the love of Christ of which the most favored have no conception; and there are beauties and glories in His person which none have yet beheld! Oh! I would have none rest short of the revelation of His person. His benefits indeed are all precious; His atoning blood and sacrifice, His justifying righteousness, and the effects flowing therefrom, pardon, justification, peace in the conscience, etc., etc.; these are essential to salvation, and we seek them first—but it is a further and sweeter privilege to know and enjoy Himself. Salvation is sweet—but the Savior crowns all; and when He is revealed in us, we bless the Lord and do not forget His benefits.

Having once been brought to enjoy Him, may we be more and more jealous of felt distance or absence. Absent He never is—but He is at times silent, and we do not feel His presence. Oh to make immediate and diligent search, and not go even a day's journey merely supposing He is in the

company, for then will follow a sorrowing seeking for Him, as in Luke 2:44-48, of which I have thought much today in this experimental sense. It is poor, heartless work when we can be quieted by "supposing" He is near; and how vainly we may seek Him among kinsfolk and acquaintance! Very often we find Him not there—but in Jerusalem, the place of sacrifice. "You shall seek me and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart."

I must now tell you how much I have been enjoying Lev. 14:18. The oil, as a type of the blessed Spirit, to be poured upon the head; and only think of whom—of the poor leper just healed. Who could enjoy it so much as he who had been so afflicted; shut out from the house of God; separated from His people; being so polluted that he must dwell alone, outside the camp, and if any were coming near him, he must warn them by the sorrowful cry, "Unclean, unclean!" Now he is to have the oil poured upon his head. Oh! would not such a one most joyfully sing, "He anoints my head with oil, my cup runs over!" Yes, indeed he would! I know it, and you know it too, for you have felt the same. "Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has done it; shout, you lower parts of the earth." He has said to the leper, "I will--be clean!" And as the true Priest, He has poured on that healed, pardoned one--the true anointing. And now no longer shut up and shut out, he comes up to the house of the Lord, to see the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple. Precious, all precious Jesus! I feel the truth of what I write, and like the poor stranger of old, would fall at Your dear feet, giving You thanks. (Luke 17:15, 16) My soul does "give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures for ever." "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Psalm 107:2, 3)

My heart is full, and cannot half express what I would in praise of my Beloved. The chief sinner, and the chief and only Savior--have met and embraced again and again. And she sweetly finds that by Him she is justified from all her own evil things, from which she could never be justified by the law of Moses. In believing, she apprehends and enjoys the justification, for by faith we have experimental access into this grace in which we always stand before God. In short, this chief sinner finds such fullness and freeness in the salvation--such love and loveliness in the Savior--that she can hardly leave off extolling and praising Him in whom she is justified, and in whom she may glory. Oh, come and "magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." May He fill us with His love, and use us for His glory. May He so reveal Himself to us and through us, that it may be like oil from vessel to vessel; for thus "sweet to my heart is communion with saints" through communion with the King of saints.

I must cease, though I seem to have said nothing of the endless, blissful theme, the love and loveliness of our dear Redeemer, the Redeemer of worms. May He favor you with His precious presence, and may many new Ebenezers be set up!

A warm adieu, with best love, from your tenderly attached but unworthy,
Ruth

The triumph of faith over difficulties

To E. M.,

I had a nice time this wet evening in musing on the subject of living faith, and the Word of the Lord. It is a true Word—but also a tried Word. When a promise is given, it certainly will be fulfilled; but we are

sure to come into circumstances to try it, and try our faith in it. The Lord promised a son to Abraham and Sarah—but what years elapsed for the trial of faith before his birth; and when the son was given; what a fiery trial to take him up to Mount Moriah for a burnt-offering. Could faith live upon its prospects through such a trial? And could the promise stand sure amidst such apparent contradictions? Yes, indeed! "He was faithful who promised;" and He enabled faith to rest in the promise, even when the shadows of death had fallen so heavily upon it: and we know that faith was not disappointed.

Again, He promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed; but see what came between, what bondage and hard service in Egypt, what ups and downs in the wilderness. But faith was kept alive in some hearts: see Joseph's command concerning his bones, (Gen. 50:25) and Joshua and Caleb's noble testimony in the face of all difficulties and opposition. (Num. 14:8, 9) What their faith expected came fully to pass: see Joshua 21:43-45.

Again, David was anointed king, and the kingdom was promised to him; but see how faith was tried when he was hunted by Saul like a partridge upon the mountains, when he was a stranger in Gath, and, when like a homeless wanderer, he was sheltered with his men in the cave of Adullam; yet he was still a king in the Divine purpose, and at the set time he possessed the kingdom. And thus throughout the Word and in our own experience, we find how faith and the promise have been sharply tried, providentially and spiritually. The Lord may seem to have given us a promise; faith and hope may have been drawn out to expect it; and the Word may quite warrant it; but it has to go into the fire before fulfillment, as it was with our fathers.

If the case be a spiritual one, the soul hopes for deliverance, watches for it, and has at times a sweet pledge thereof; but yet it comes not, and again seems to be as far off as ever. The soul looks for light—but beholds darkness; for peace—but beholds evil. This is a hard lesson—but it is the way of faith, and leads to the city which has foundations. See what apparent contradictions the worthies of old had to endure; how contrary to flesh and sense were the Lord's dealings with them. But as surely as the promised seed was born unto Abraham; and as surely as his children inherited the promised land; and as surely as David sat upon the throne of Israel—so surely shall the soul which the Holy Spirit is exercising with the hard things of its nature's evils, find the end better than the beginning. Having had the face of desire turned toward the land of Canaan, it shall, in due time, surely enter there, and prove the difference between bondage and liberty, though now all these things seem against it.

The Believer "cast down" by the power
of indwelling sin, "yet not destroyed"

"He will not always accuse us or be angry forever." Psalms 103:9

"Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love." Lamentations 3:32

To E. M., 1857.

My very dear friend, and now companion in tribulation,

My heart yearns towards you, and will indulge itself a little, because we are both in the same low place—feeling our vileness, and mourning after our Beloved. Surely there never was such an one as

I, so weak and wicked; so willful, not full of His will—but of my own. How I need the emptying from vessel to vessel. I need to have my purposes and enterprises broken that I may learn that His purposes shall stand fast, and that He will do all His pleasure. I can say, as the repenting thief did, I am "in the same condemnation," and "indeed justly," receiving but the due reward of my deeds. I have been walking after the sight of my eyes. "The legs of the lame are not equal;" so when we act from sight and sense, our walk is not consistent; it is only when walking by faith that it is so. Vile, ungrateful worm that I am, what has it cost me in bitter anguish; yet the sorrow is nothing to the sin. And, as I said to you, the ill savor will come up continually, until the blessed Comforter brings the savor of rest, even the fragrant sacrifice for sin which was once offered, and which is now pleaded by Him who is the sinner's surety and the sinner's friend. Well, I can only lie at His feet and continue confessing all. I dare not promise to do better; I am in self-despair; but to Him will I look for pardon of the sin, and power against it.

And shall it be in vain? Is His mercy clean gone forever? No, dear friend, we will speak well of Him. He is faithful. He rests in His love, nor does it cool in the least in the midst of all our treacherous dealings. "Once again He will have compassion on us. He will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!"—having cast all our sins into the deep red sea of His own blood! Where our sin has abounded, His grace shall much more abound. And again we shall sing of pardoning mercy and restoring love.

How vain is the help of man. We may listen to the song of some, and join in the mourning of others—but none can lift the burden off, but Jesus. He is the Physician of value who says, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." Indeed, I do expect it; faith is looking again towards His holy temple, and love is stretching out for the first sight or sound of the Beloved's approach. "Look unto me, and be saved"—saved from the sin and from the punishment. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Nothing, nothing; we will hope in Him, for we shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.

Since writing the above this word has come to me with sweet encouragement, "Your enemies shall be found liars unto you; and you shall tread upon their high places." (Deut. 33:29) The very things which Satan and the flesh cast up as hindrances, faith shall tread upon in the name of the Lord. Oh, this is the victory, even our faith. Sweet have I found that verse also, "For with God nothing shall be impossible;" therefore I would say to myself and my friend, "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." His blood shall cleanse, and His power shall conquer: I feel a sweet assurance of it, though with an aching heart. Flesh shall not prevail against Him, for He has that mighty power "whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." What then is better for the poor Esthers than to be still going in unto the king with the venture of faith—"if I perish, I perish." "She fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the malice of Haman the Agagite." Yes, this is what we want, to have the devices of the flesh frustrated and brought to nothing, when, like Haman, they seem most powerful. Shall Esther thus press her plea against the enemy; and shall the earthly king yield to her suit, devising means to put away that which seemed to be irrevocable? and shall we have worse success with Him who waits to be gracious, and is exalted to show mercy? No, no! He will arise to deliver. (Psalm 12:5)

Therefore, though shame and confusion of face belong unto us, we will, by the Spirit's help, keep crying to the King against sin and self; and if for a long time He answers us never a word, we deserve it, (Psalm 119:75) and must still follow Him with "Lord help me!" This sowing in tears will be followed

by a harvest of joy, love, and praise. Yes, O gracious near Kinsman, Your treacherous one does heartily believe that love will bring You back, and that we shall sing together for Your goodness, for wheat, for wine and for oil, and for the young of the flock, for in Your feast are royal dainties. A little waft of Your fragrance comes now and then, which betokens You near; though the cloud has hid You out of our sight, and our sin is not yet blotted out of the conscience with precious blood--yet it is all blotted out of Your book. Nothing stands against us there; the debt is paid; and You can holily and honorably come and receive us afresh to Your embrace, and show us every black item put away by the sacrifice of Yourself. "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

Thus have I written to you, dear friend, in hope; and I scarcely know why; only as I have often sent you a song from the mount, I thought you should hear also the low note of the valley, from whence only at times the heart could pour itself out to the Lord.

Take courage. The precious blood of the Surety is more powerful for us--than sin, flesh, and all the foes against us! (Rom. 8:37) Whether at your worst, or at your best, do not be looking more at yourself than at Jesus. He is the way of escape, and He is the strength to endure; and we shall be helped in all, though we sometimes faint.

Warm love from the weakest and worst of all, your very affectionate,
Ruth

"Because of the covenant I made with you, sealed with blood, I will free your prisoners from death in a waterless dungeon. Come back to the place of safety, all you prisoners, for there is yet hope! I promise this very day that I will repay you two mercies for each of your woes!" Zechariah 9:11-12

The suffering sympathy of Christ

"Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus to be in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people." Hebrews 2:17

To E. M., Good Friday Morning, 1857.
My tenderly-beloved friend,

This morning you are much on my mind in connection with our precious suffering Head, and I must send you a few lines. Jesus has showed Himself again to His poor worm. It was in Psalm 22, especially in the first part, where He is described as suffering the anguish of experimental forsaking, and also great conflict from unanswered prayer. This I never realized so fully before. Oh how He has left His precious footprints in every thorny path—"The footsteps of the flock" are thus so prepared, that "No thorns can harm, for Jesus went before to tread them down."

We feel that He, having suffered before us, is able both to sympathize and to support us. How touching to hear Him compare the deliverances of His people with His own unsuccoured condition—"Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them. You heard their cries for help and saved them. They put their trust in you and were never disappointed." (Psalm 22:4-5) Then stooping to the lowest place of abasement, as if less than any of them, He says, "But I am a worm and not a

man. I am scorned and despised by all!" It was as though in that degraded position which He had taken for His people, He must not expect to be dealt with so tenderly as they—

"O love of unexampled kind,
Which leaves all thought so far behind."

My soul was also deeply humbled in the depths of verse 2, "O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer; by night, and am not silent!" It was a night season indeed, even darkness which might be felt. For what agony of soul did our Beloved not endure when He had no answer from God. It is astonishing to see how "He was in all points tempted like as we are;" not only tempted with evil by Satan—but tried by His friends, tried by His Father, and tried in all the sensibilities of the nature which He had taken; yet, in all He endured without sin.

His sorrowful utterances were to show that He had the tenderest susceptibility of feeling in all His sufferings. But there was not one murmur or rebellious feeling, or one hard thought. He pitied His disciples—"the flesh is weak;" and though He knew they would all forsake Him through fear. He even made a way for that escape in His matchless love: "If you seek me, let these go their way." His Father He fully justified in all His dealings with Him as the Surety; for while crying with anguish, "You hear not," He directly adds, "But you are holy, O you who inhabits the praises of Israel."

He was indeed a Lamb without blemish. His Father, His enemies, and His Church, have to say, "I find no fault in Him." This precious, spotless One gave Himself for us to the sorrows of death and the pains of hell, which bitter cup of trembling He drained, even to the very dregs; so that He could triumphantly say, "It is finished!" Ah! but never will He say, either of the love or the glory, "It is finished." Oh, no! while eternal ages roll on, love will be ever inflowing, and glory ever unfolding, and all coming to us through that rich medium—His sufferings and death. We read of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." The sufferings are past; He has entered into the glory; but the full revelation of it, in and to His Bride—is yet to come. O wonderful Bridegroom, reveal to us more of Your wonderful love, in Your humiliation and exaltation. Let us live in that undying flame, that in our joys and sorrows we may be a sweet savor of You to Your loved ones—"Bruised Bridegroom, take us wholly;

Take and make us what You will;" only continually draw us out of self into You; and cause us to grow up in You in all things, while many winds and storms and heart-achings cause us to root down in You also. Oh, shine more and more brightly in us, to the perfect day.

It is blessed, dearest friend, to spend Good-Friday under His shadow as the crucified One; there His fruits are sweet to our taste. It is precious to be led on by His Spirit to His joy as the glorified One, for then our joy is full. Those who "dwell in this secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." It is a secret place for the hidden ones, of which He says, "There is a place by me; and I will put you in a cleft of the rock." This hallowed place is kept secret for all His children—they lack not this blessed hiding-place. No carnal eye never saw it; no carnal heart ever enjoyed the rest. It is the secret chamber for the secret life, where He who is our life says, "There will I give you my love." (Song 7:12) He gives all in Himself. At Calvary we see how He the Living Rock was cleft, that His dove might be spared; and how lovingly He says, "O My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely." (Song 2:14)

My dear heavenly Boaz has made this a GOOD Friday to His unworthy gleaner. I had feared I should not find Him whom my soul loves, and have fellowship of love in His sufferings; but where my enemies dealt proudly He has been above them. Praise to the worthy Lamb. "Praise is lovely for the upright!" "I made you go upright."

This is not like a letter; but if the Spirit will breathe of Jesus' fragrance through it, you will rejoice with me in Him.

With dear love, your own worthless—but in Him ever affectionate,
Ruth

Christ, our substitute, the
consolation in time of trial

September 24, 1857.

Much-loved and tenderly-remembered friend,

I was delighted to receive your note. The Lord has been gracious, He has had mercy, and I do praise Him. May we say—"It has been good for me that I have been afflicted!" No doubt there is in this trial some special message to each. May our language be—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak!"

I have this morning much enjoyed those words, "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto you, O Lord, will I sing." (Psalm 101:1) Judgment to JESUS, and mercy to vile worthless ME. Mercy flowing warmly through His pierced heart and precious veins. What a channel wherein to flow! Oh! what love of our Father to lay upon Him all our iniquities, to number Him with the transgressors, and then to give Him judgment without mercy, saving all the mercy for us rebellious younger children. Oh! what a loving Elder Brother, who for the joy of our release and blessing, was content to be judged, condemned, and executed; and what a blessed Comforter who takes of these wonders and reveals them to the soul, making it to sing for joy, like that word, "Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust."

At times we do sadly cleave to the dust; but the power of His love revives us again, causing us to awake and sing. The Lord bless you, and pour out His Spirit upon you! Fresh oil prepares for all we are called to.

And now adieu. Soon the shadows of time will be past, and we, through free grace, shall spend eternity together in the open vision of the Lamb!

In Him, your own warmly-affectionate,
Ruth

Written after seeing a microscope

To E. M., January, 1858.

Very dear friend,

I have been musing with delight upon the wonders developed by the microscope. What perfection is

there in every part of the works of our God! All creation shows His handiwork, His wisdom, and His goodness. Dr. Carson beautifully says, "The works of God and the Word of God bear the same testimony of Him as far as they go together; but the Word goes far beyond His outward works. It testifies of salvation, on which subject His works of creation say nothing."

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." "All things are possible to those who believe." The Lord gives a promise, and faith receives it in sweet assurance; but anon, all things seem against it. The fogs of sense, flesh, and carnal reason arise, and so veil the promise, that it appears as unreal as that almost invisible. But when faith is again brought into lively exercise, every line and letter is sweetly discerned, with the Divine "yes and amen" upon it. Oh, to look more through the glass of faith, and less with the blinking, deceiving eye of sense and reason.

I have been thinking further (the thought may well make one blush) that even the beauties and loveliness of Jesus, which have so ravished our souls, do at times look only like that diminutive speck, which can scarcely be discerned. How we, then, look all ways to get the clear views of Him, who before so enraptured us. But no—our efforts are vain until the blessed Spirit again sets the glass of faith, and takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. In other words, until our Beloved manifests Himself afresh in endearing communion, constraining us to exclaim, "You are fairer than the children of men; the chief among ten thousand, yes, altogether lovely."

But if it be with us that "now we see Him not," yet having once beheld His beauty, no lower charms can satisfy, no other object fill the vacuum in our soul. Oh "Come quickly, my love! Move like a swift gazelle or a young deer on the mountains of spices!" (Song of Songs 8:14) Oh come, and "cause the mountains of Bether" (division) to fall down at Your presence. Blessed Author and Finisher of faith, call into lively exercise that grace, that it may truly be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) Wishing you the renewings of the Holy Spirit, (1 Cor. 2:9, 10)

I remain, with best love, your unworthy but affectionate,
Ruth

The suitability of Christ to the sinner

To E. M., 1858.

Much-beloved friend,

I must begin with saying, Is it well with your soul? When did you see the King? Are you free at court? Can you venture in the name of any other? Have you sweet access by the faith of Jesus, and by His blood? The Father is pleased when the Son is honored. Oh! for faith in exercise by the operation of the Holy Spirit—to live in the fullness of Jesus in constant self-emptiness.

I have been sweetly seeing how the needy sinner suits the Savior; for what would He do with His fullness of grace—if He had not these dependants to receive it? And what would we do, who cannot call one mite our own—if we had not such a Savior, full of grace and love, to bestow it? We would not match together half so well if we ourselves were not so needy and helpless. We cannot put more honor upon Jesus, than by living upon His royal bounty. He is the Covenant-Head, in which all covenant blessings are treasured up for the covenant children, who are always to be poor as poverty in themselves—but are freely welcome to all this store, which is the ordained medium of

communication. Unbelief is the great barrier by which Satan works to keep us out of our privileges, and to rob God of His glory. We may well cry out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief!"

I had a sweet season at the Lord's table yesterday. My soul was touched to see my precious Jesus, the Lord of glory, in all His suffering circumstances; to see Him crowned with the curse, nailed on the tree of curse, and that between two thieves. What degradation! Oh! I could hardly bear it. "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." It is very humbling—but very sweet to meditate on the deep humiliation of that royal Sufferer! There it is that hope springs up, mercy breaks out, and love flows to a vile sinner like me! "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written--Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree!" Galatians 3:13

"Oh! the sweet wonders of the cross,
Where God my Savior loved and died;
Her noblest life my spirit draws,
From His dear wounds and bleeding side."

Remember "the blood is the life." Seek to have much of it, that it may not be with the soul "just alive," but "life more abundantly!"

I have been much delighted with those words, "He healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people." May the power of the Lord be present to heal you, if you have need of healing.

In the warm love of our unchanging Friend
and Lord, ever yours most affectionately,
Ruth—a debtor to mercy and love.

The subjugation of self through the cross of Christ

To E. M., August 1, 1858.

Very dear,

The notes you sent me of the sermon about Jacob were very nice. The expression "unselfing" was striking. Do you not think that the revealing of Christ to the soul, is the quickest of all means to effect this? John says, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead"—typical of the bringing down of self. I do humbly believe that the more we know Him in union, love, and power--the more zealous we shall be against "self" in all its varied forms. Unbelief sets up self—what I do, what I do not do, what I ought to have done, and so on, until there is only a corner in the thoughts for the dear Substitute, who has done all, and done it well too. But the more we receive of Him and His—or, in other words, the more Christ alone is exalted, the high towers of self are laid in the dust. When unbelief and self are predominant it is sad work. May the Lord tread these abominations under His feet, even as straw is trodden down for the ash-heap. Oh! my beloved friend, we long for the days of the Son of man in our souls, for in His days the righteous flourish.

I have been enjoying those words—"I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from them." (Hosea 14:4) It seems to me to be the language of the Father, who, having laid upon Jesus the

iniquities of us all, then and there visited our transgressions with the rod, and our iniquities with stripes, until not one was left unatoned for! Then His anger was turned away from the Surety, and the Father could love the poor debtors freely--because He was well pleased for Jesus' sake. He had magnified the law, and made it honorable; and He, the Father, blessed them there. In Him, "the Lord our righteousness," we may glory and rejoice; and in Him find power to do so, for He is the power of God to everyone who believes. In believing we take hold of that power, and can say with David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."

Indeed, my dear friend, we only want to know more of our Law-fulfiller, and of the unsearchable riches which He has for our use. Then the love of Christ would constrain us to glory in Him, and praise Him. Oh! let us cry mightily for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Oh! to know Him more. Oh! that He always would eclipse everything else! I desire that all things, even the most lawful, should not stand between me and the blessed Sun of Righteousness. I have seen enough in Him to ravish my heart, and make the brightest things below look dim! But I want to see Him again, for I know that there are in Him infinite glories of which I have had yet no conception! "After these things Jesus showed himself again to his disciples." Amen, so let it be.

The Lord bless you and yours; and may Jesus shine warmly in your heart, and you be constrained to speak warmly in His praise.

With dear love, ever your affectionate but unworthy,
Ruth

John 1:14; 2 Cor. 4:6.

The preciousness of Christ unfathomable and ever new

To E. M., September 23, 1858.

Much-beloved in Jesus,

I rejoice to hear you have been guided to such a good pasture, and favored with such a good spiritual appetite. Though we have had so many feasts upon a precious Jesus, we find each time as much freshness as though we had never partaken before! This has been very striking to me. Things of earth often repeated grow stale—but the same view of a precious Jesus a thousand times over is ever new! How often has the Divine Spirit testified in our souls "of the sufferings of Christ--and the glory that would follow." How often have we by faith beheld His bloody sweat in the garden, and spent sweet solemn moments at the foot of the Cross. Yet, when Jesus shows Himself again to us in either of those sacred positions--is He not as a lamb newly slain? And is not His sacrifice a sweet smelling aroma--as fragrant as though but just offered, without spot unto God? Oh yes, He is ever the same--without sameness--and will be to all eternity! The glories, beauties, and excellencies of His person are infinite! And from these boundless sources our finite minds will be feasted forever and ever! "You feed them from the abundance of Your own house, letting them drink from Your rivers of delight!" Psalm 36:8 Oh that my poor contracted heart were more enlarged into this our fathomless ocean of love and loveliness! Oh to abide in Him forever!

"I have asked one thing from the Lord; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the Lord and seeking Him in His temple." (Psalm 27:4) Christ is our

true temple. In Him we may inquire of the Lord concerning all our hard cases--and have an answer of peace. In Him we see the beauty of the Lord, even all his Divine attributes harmonizing and glorified in saving poor sinners! This is seeing the King in His beauty! And beauty indeed it is, in the eye of a sin-sick soul--to see the holy Jehovah "a just God, and a Savior" too. He was most just in punishing our sin in Jesus! He is most just also in letting us go free! Yes, accepting us in the Beloved.

"For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness overflows with even more glory!" (2 Corinthians 3:9) The ministry of condemnation was glorious, when it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. But the ministry of righteousness exceeds in glory--when the blessed Spirit brings near His righteousness, yes, puts it on the soul, saying, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him!" It is also exceedingly glorious when the righteous Father welcomes the prodigal with the kiss of everlasting love, being well pleased for His righteousness' sake; and when "the Lord our righteousness sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied," saying, "You are all beautiful, my love! There is no spot in you!" Then also is the poor soul richly satisfied, saying, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength!" "I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours alone." This is, indeed, a glorious ministry of righteousness, and is part of the abundance of Your house, my King and my God. Here is food for hungry souls who have long been starving on the husks of self; and here is clothing for the naked soul, who has been into the "stripping-room," and had the filthy rags, and all the adornments of self stripped off!

O my precious friend, it is a mercy to be made and kept poor enough for Jesus to be all.

You know how fond I am of Isaiah 29:19, "The humble will be filled with fresh joy from the Lord. Those who are poor will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." and "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Lord, make us inwardly poor, and keep us so--that Christ and nothing else but Christ may reign for evermore. O Lord, increase our faith; and increase its lively goings forth on the precious person, work, and love of Jesus! So shall we inherit substance, in the midst of our own felt poverty, and be content to have nothing in self, yet possess all things in Christ, which is one of the dear secrets of love, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

I have been much enjoying Hosea 12:9, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. I will yet make you to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast." We know that in the days of our spiritual feasts we feel the tabernacle nature of all below, and feel ready to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better. Coming out of self, we dwell in that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched--and not man. May He fulfill His promise, and bring us so to dwell.

"May He be like rain that falls on the cut grass, like spring showers that water the earth." (Psalm 72:6) This verse also has been very sweet to me--and I trust it has been fulfilled in my dry soul. How welcome the showers on the dry land, or on the mown grass! The waters from our smitten rock run in His dry places like a river. The Lord grant us daily the renewings of the Holy Spirit, and cause His Word to do us good like a medicine, that we may be kept from a dry, barren spirit, though feeling that in ourselves we are very dry. May the blessed Spirit exalt Jesus more and more in your experience, that all your casting down, may be for His lifting up!

With much tender love, your warmly-affectionate but unworthy,
Ruth

A New Year's greeting

To E. M., January, 1859.

My beloved friend,

I wonder if you got a new-year's portion yesterday. Last night, while seeking Jesus, these words came to my mind with sweetness: "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." (Proverbs 13:4)

Therefore I conclude they are to be my motto for the new year. I feel them to be very reproofing to my sluggish heart; but there is such sweetness in the mouth of our Beloved, that even a reproof from His dear lips falls like a honey-drop into the soul. Oh may the blessed Spirit inspire us with true spiritual diligence which brings us to more than wishes and desires; for we may possess 'wishes and desires' and be slothful still. "The soul of the sluggard desires and has nothing." "Diligent hands will rule--but laziness ends in slave labor"--under slavery to the world and the flesh, instead of in the liberty of the Spirit. Gracious Lord, do make us diligent, and keep us so by the renewings of the Holy Spirit.

But my main object in writing was to give you a word which melted my heart on Friday night, from Isaiah 50, a favorite chapter of mine, and in reading which our precious Lord showed Himself lovingly through the following verse: "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting!" No, He would hide us--by not hiding Himself. He would be smitten, that by His stripes we might be healed. Our living balm-tree would have the fearful incisions in His own flesh, that His balsamic virtues might flow out to our diseased souls. Our well of Bethlehem was opened on Calvary. There may we poor sinners be gathered today, and clustering round His cross, drink freely of the best wine, drink away our sloth, and drink until we are wide awake in holy diligence, seeking for more of the living stream, and so feeding upon Him experimentally, live by Him. (John 6:56, 57) Oh that holy, loving face, not hidden from such indignities for our sakes! I wonder and adore!

May your meditation of Him be sweet, and may He bring His prisoner the bread and the wine.

Your warmly-affectionate,
Ruth

Christ our near Kinsman

"A Brother born for adversity."

To E. M., January 1859.

Under this character has my faith embraced our glorious Emmanuel this morning, and found Him very precious. Oh! I wonder not that the ancient Church so longed for His incarnation, and breathed out her desires ardently, saying, "If only you were to me like a brother, who was nursed at my mother's breasts! Then, if I found you outside, I would kiss you, and no one would despise me." She had not the happy privilege of finding Him—but had to go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense to behold Him through the shadowy sacrifices. But we can say, "Our next of kin—our Brother now," "That He might sanctify us with His own blood, suffered outside the gate." Let us therefore "go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." "For we have no continuing city here—but look for one

to come." Oh! may we daily embrace Him "outside the camp," cleave to Him in all His humiliation, and walk with Him in the lowly path of suffering as the "Man of sorrows," who, in all our tribulations, has a heart to sympathize and a hand to help us!

I know as one wave of trouble rolls over another, our precious Elder Brother looks through the cloud to comfort us. This morning I was struck with Exodus 14:24, the Lord looking through the pillar of fire and of the cloud to trouble the Egyptians. It sweetly came to my mind, that as God manifested in the flesh, He looks through the cloud of His humanity, upon His people, with the tenderest love; while the same look troubles their enemies, for He overcame them by the blood of His cross. Oh! that was looking through the cloud and fire indeed, when by enduring the cross, and drinking the fiery cup of wrath, He so troubled the hosts of hell, "Spoiling principalities and powers," and triumphing over them in His cross. That look was darkness and destruction to them—but it gives "light by night" to His traveling pilgrims. Let us forever bless this precious Brother, born for adversity.

Wishing you His blessed presence and guidance now, and at every future step.

I remain, with warm love, your ever-affectionate, unworthy,
Ruth

The presence of Christ in a time of affliction

To E. M., March, 1859. (This letter was received by a mother at a time of severe trial, when her husband and her five children were ill with measles.)

Much-loved friend,

I sincerely wish you the exercising of the Holy Spirit in the afflictions through which you are passing, that you may have the full benefit thereof; for it has been truly said, that "sanctified afflictions are great promotions." And those promotions come neither from the east nor from the west—but from the Lord alone, by whose power—

"Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there."

Many a visit of love has the Lord paid, and many a secret of love has the Lord revealed in the time of affliction; and some of the sweetest communings in the wilderness have been with the thorn in the flesh, or the cross on the back. Does not your soul respond to the truth of this? Is not Jesus a precious companion in tribulation? Are not His sympathies most tender? Has He not drawn near in the day when we cried unto Him, and said unto us, "Fear not!" Oh yes, the fruits of the valley are very choice—but yet we fear to go down there; forgetting who has said, "I will go down with you, and will also surely bring you up again!" Are we not brought down into the valley of trouble or humiliation--to cause us to rest only in Jesus? "These things (these afflictive things) I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

At times trials seem to overcome us, yet "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." "This is the place of rest, let the weary rest; this is the place of repose." So you prove it, so I prove it; and the rock of His faithfulness is a blessed retreat, when our heart is overwhelmed within us. The honey of His love dropping from that rock does sweetly revive our fainting souls, and make us joyful in tribulation, so that we sing even in the trial, "He has done all things well!"

The measles have come at the right time, and have taken hold of the right people. They are the Lord's messengers--and are not the sound of their Master's feet behind them? "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the Refiner." The Refiner is with you; trust Him with your dearest treasures, and may you feel Him dearer than all. I am very fond of these words—"And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God!" May we have like precious faith.

Adieu! with dear love your affectionate—but unworthy companion in tribulation,
Ruth

"He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as his most precious possession. Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them in and carried them aloft on his pinions. The Lord alone guided them; they lived without any foreign gods." Deuteronomy 32:10-12

An important anniversary

Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer—"the stone of help"—for he said, "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!" 1 Samuel 7:12

To E. M., October 31, 1859.

Dearly beloved friend,

In the dear Name, "which is above every name," I once more greet you on this memorable day. May the blessed Spirit so shed abroad the fragrance of that name in both your souls, that you may regard the day in the Lord and to the Lord, while you review the goodness and mercy which He has caused to pass before you.

You, dearest friend, commemorate a birthday and a wedding-day together; and oh! the mercy that you are born of the Spirit, and you have had a second marriage. "Your Maker is your husband, the Lord Almighty is his name, and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel--the God of the whole earth shall he be called." These are personal favors of the first order—but innumerable other benefits are this day brought to mind, especially that the Lord provided one of the precious sons of Zion for your companion through life. One with whom you dwell as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, assured that though death will sever the natural union, it can never touch your oneness in Jesus; but that, having eaten together of the Paschal Lamb below with bitter herbs, you shall surely sit down together at His marriage supper above, where bitter herbs shall be tasted no more. Oh! praise Him who has dealt

wonderfully with you, and said, "My people shall never be ashamed." May He grant you much sweet communion in Himself, and abundantly bless you and your dear children, so that not a hoof shall be left behind.

You will recount many mercies today—but must end by saying, "How great is the sum of them," for the total amount of the sum you can never find out. "Praise the Lord!" (1 Thess. 5:18; Rom. 11:36) May our precious Jesus shine on you, and in you—that your souls may be as a watered garden, and as a well of water whose waters fail not. And may your beloved offspring be by the Spirit gathered, one by one, into the inner circle below, and every one of them appear in Zion above, with us also to sing the new song, "Unto Him that loved us."

So prays, with tender love, your warmly affectionate but unworthy,
Ruth.

1 Thess. 5:23, 24; 1 Chron. 17:27; Eph. 3:20, 21.

Christ in everything

"I have trodden the winepress alone." Isaiah 63:3

To E. M., 1859.

Dearest,

Thank you most affectionately for the grapes kindly left for me. How does Jesus load me with benefits—and gives me Himself too, which is best of all. He is Heaven's rich grape! He has been in the winepress of divine wrath for us, and hence it is we drink "the pure blood of the grape." I wish you much of it; for truly it cheers the heart of God and man. (This is according to Judges 9:9, 13.) What a wonder of love, and what a cordial we find it—when weary and faint in the wilderness. We drink, and forget our own poverty—in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Ruth.

The riches of Christ for the poor in spirit

To E. M., 1859.

. . . . Oh for more faith, living faith—to draw largely upon our royal Banker, who has issued such large promissory-notes for time and for eternity as exceed our utmost conceptions. For time—"All things are yours" in Him. For eternity—"He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In contrast to present "light afflictions," He has placed "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" And that we might now enjoy strong consolation, He has given us "exceeding great and precious promises." Far larger notes are these than the richest banker ever issued, and much more certain to be honored; and, what is better than all, they are for the poor—the very poor—those who are born in poverty and have nothing—even for beggars found upon a ash-heap. Oh, wondrous grace, free love, royal bounty! It melts my heart this very moment, for it has come even unto me in the richest of Divine liberality. Oh for Spirit-enlargement into our possessions and His promises. We are not limited in Him—but in our own affections. Truly our Father has prepared of His

goodness for the poor.

With warmest love, your ever affectionate,
Ruth

Warnings to an unconverted friend

"Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" 1 Kings 18:21

To Mr. J. A., December 1855.

Dear sir,

What will you say to me for taking the liberty of writing to you? Perhaps you will feel indignant and offended; but I hope that will soon pass away, for Jesus says, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." It is in His name, and for His sake I write to you, and for your soul's sake also. I feel constrained to write to you to remind you that He is "the friend of sinners." He still "receives sinners, and eats with them." He says, "If any man thirsts--let him come unto me and drink!" "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now I am sure you have not found rest; you are not happy. You have too much light on spiritual subjects to be easy in a course of vanity and worldliness. You may drink the poisoned sweet—but it leaves a sting and void behind. You may think that if you had a home, and someone to love in it--the void would be filled up. But no--it would still be left.

"And let you try Whate'er you will;
Believe me, while you live,
A something will be lacking still,
This world can never give."

That something is Jesus. He only can give true happiness. He is the one thing which is needful to put all else into the right place. If you did but know His preciousness, you would think it worth forsaking all--to find Him. He gives just what you need, a heart to love Him, His ways, and His people. He says, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." He also gives true repentance and free pardon; for He is exalted "to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." He gives deliverance from the power and love of sin, saying, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." He washes crimson sins white as snow in His own precious blood, for hear Him say, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He puts the best robe on prodigals who have been vainly trying to find satisfaction in the husks of this world's pleasures. By His Spirit He brings them to their right mind, cleanses them in His blood, and clothes them in His righteousness.

Perhaps you will say, "And what is all this to me?" Why, it is this to you, beloved—without these things you must perish forever! Should you ask, "What have you to do with it?" I answer, "I have a great concern for your soul's salvation." But you may object, "The things you have spoken of are for God's chosen people, and I do not know that I am one." You do not know that you are not one, and should rather say, "Why not, my soul? Why not for You?" And though they are a free gift not to be

obtained by any creature power, yet ask God to give them to you. Ask Him to give you the Holy Spirit to make you feel your need of them. Oh may that Holy Spirit,

"Convince you of your sin,
Then lead to Jesus' blood;
And to your wondering soul reveal
The secret love of God."

That you may have an experimental knowledge and enjoyment of these things, is the earnest and affectionate desire of yours very sincerely,

R. Bryan

Jeremiah 6:16—but I hope not the last clause. "This is what the Lord says: Stand by the roadways and look. Ask about the ancient paths: Which is the way to what is good? Then take it and find rest for yourselves. But they protested: We won't!"

Warnings to an unconverted friend

"But one thing is needful."

To Mr. J. A., January 19, 1856.

Dear sir,

I must thank you for your very kind reply to my note. When I wrote, I had not the slightest thought you would answer it; and your letter, therefore, was doubly welcome. The candor and honesty of its contents much delight me; while at the same time I truly mourn over your present state of soul. Yet I do not sorrow without hope; for I humbly trust the Lord has a purpose of saving mercy towards you, and that before long He will make you "see" and "feel" those things which, at present, you say you only hear of. I beg to say that what you hear is "true report;" and it is solemn to remember that the things of eternity are stern realities--and will be proved to be so whether you now realize it or not. The "broad road" will "lead to destruction," however carelessly people may walk therein. The threatenings of God's Word against sin will be executed, however indifferently people may hear or read of them. It will not stand as an excuse before Him to say, "I did not feel the force of the threatenings, or did not see any evil in my pursuits." What God has declared to be evil is so; and those who do such things will be judged by Him as evil-doers, just as His Word declares, "He will render to every man according to his deeds." Now the pleasures of the world are not only empty and unsatisfactory—but they destroy the soul and displease God, as the Scriptures declare; and all who persist in them are His enemies, as we read, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." They are called "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." What a true description!

You say that before anyone can give up the fascinations of the world he must have a dread of the consequences, and that to this point you are not yet come. But I would now bring before you the certainty of those consequences, even if they are not believed or dreaded. They do not hinge upon the perception or feeling of the creature—but upon the truth of Him who has said, "The end of those things is death." This is a real matter of fact; and, however unfelt, the truth of it will follow you into every party of pleasure, yes, into every one of those streams which are truly called, "The pleasures of

sin;" for "whatever a man sows that shall he also reap."

You will perhaps think me harsh—but "faithful are the wounds of a friend." These things are so; I see them, and see your danger, and cannot but say—"Stop and think--before you further go!" And would ask with the prophet, "Lord, I pray you, open (the young man's) eyes that he may see."

But perhaps you will say, "I have no other sources of pleasure; would you have me quite miserable?" O beloved, there is not a blood-redeemed sinner before the throne but was miserable once; and I well remember a time in my early days when I was miserable too. I could not enjoy the world as some I knew seemed to do; there was something lacking. I could not enjoy religion and the things of God as believers did. I felt unlike everybody else, and as if I never would find happiness either in the world or in the church. But though I knew it not, the Lord's hand was in it; and He drew me by a strange way, until at last He brought me to the foot of the cross, to find true peace and happiness in the love of a bleeding Savior. I should not, therefore, be sorry for you to lose your present poor pleasures, and feel "an aching void;" for in my Savior's heart there is yet room, and He can fill it all. I find His love so precious that I long for others to enjoy it, and cannot help saying, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!"

I am delighted that you do seek, if it is only sometimes, and ever so feebly. May the Holy Spirit enable you to pray more earnestly and seek more diligently; it will not be in vain. You little know what are the joys of His salvation. It is well worth being miserable half one's life to attain such substantial enjoyments which are forever!

I have been sorry to hear that you are out of health; and yet a hope sprang up in my heart that the Lord might thereby speak to your soul with power, saying, "Seek my face." He called Samuel many times before he knew whose voice it was; and He will make you "willing in the day of His power."

I fear you will think I am taking too much advantage of your kindness by writing again; but I could not let your note remain without a reply, because I am affectionately watching for your soul. The Lord bless you.

With much interest, I am yours very sincerely,
Ruth Bryan

Warnings to an unconverted friend

"What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away."

To Mr. J. A., August 1, 1856.

Dear sir,

I was truly surprised that you should take the trouble to answer my note, and since you have thus encouraged me, I must again venture a few lines upon the same all-important subject, namely, the salvation of your never-dying soul. It is all-important; and now is the time to consider it; for though you are young, your life is not insured; and you have already had a serious warning in that affliction, which might have opened the gate into an eternal world. Oh! had it been so--where would you now have been? and what would have been your eternal portion? Would you have been "present with the Lord,"

beholding the beauties of Jesus, and singing in the ever-new song the praises of the Lamb which was slain? Or would you have been banished from His presence, cast into outer darkness, to receive the wages of sin--that eternal death which never, never dies?

These questions may be unpleasing; but it certainly is worth while to ask them, and to answer them, because one of these two fixed states must before long be yours as well as mine. There is no medium state; with every soul of man it must be joy inconceivable--or woe unutterable. And whichever of these be our portion, it will be forever, and ever, and ever. There will be no fear of the happiness ending. There will be no hope of the suffering terminating or even abating; for in that darksome prison, never, never will be heard those precious words, "It is finished!" Sin will never be made an end of, and therefore the consequences of sin can never cease; but while eternal ages roll--it will be "wrath to come!" "Wrath to come!"

Perhaps you will think me more gloomy than ever—but this I cannot help. I have eternity in near prospect, and solemnly feel it will profit a man nothing if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul. My heart says with Moses, "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." The fact is, it will come whether it is considered or not. For the Scriptures say, "It is appointed unto men once to die: but after this the judgment!" And Jesus has declared of those that die in their sins, "Where I go you cannot come." "Cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

But perhaps you will say this is too severe, and only belongs to great sinners, such as have been profane and immoral in their conduct. Nay, beloved, mark—this last Scripture does not speak of any openly wicked sinners—but only of an unprofitable servant. Now, have not you been to God an "unprofitable servant," even though you may have been outwardly moral and correct? Again, it is written, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all those who forget God." (Psalm 9:17) You see how the sentence runs; not only to the wicked—but to all who forget God. This reaches the very thoughts of the heart, and shows that God's holy law passes judgment on the thoughts of the heart, as well as on words and actions. Yes, indeed, its first great commandment searches the heart, for it is this, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

Now, under this law we were all born, and by it must be judged. Nor can we say it is unreasonable that we should be required to love the holy God who is our Creator and Preserver. But have we loved Him supremely? Have we remembered Him in His ways? No, not one of us has done it by nature; but, as He says, "My people have forgotten me days without number!" "God is not in all his thoughts!" "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually!" "Shall not God search this out; for he knows the secrets of the heart." Surely your kind and very candid note confesses the truth of these things when you say, "It is my thoughts that lead me astray." So, then, we need go no further than the thoughts of the heart to prove that we have all gone astray from God; that we are guilty under His law; and its condemning sentence is against us, for it says, "The soul that sins it shall die;" (Ezek. 18:4) and "the thought of foolishness is sin." (Prov. 24:9) These are God's own words, not mine; you can turn to the Bible and read them.

But if it is true that we are by nature in such a fearful state, how is it that we can be so indifferent about it? And how is it that while under the sentence of death, and with the wrath of God already on us, we can be merry and sportive, and have no concern for any of these things? It is because we are

not only "shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin," but "we are dead in trespasses and sins!" That is—spiritually dead, so that we cannot know God, or love Him, or feel our real state before Him, any more than those who are literally dead can see, or hear, or feel the things that are going on around them. And because of this state of spiritual death we may tell people over and over again about their lost and dangerous condition—but they do not feel it.

And they never will until they experience what the Lord spoke of to Nicodemus in John 3, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again." This new birth is entirely of God; it is the being quickened by the Holy Spirit, and made to feel that we are sinners and enemies to God by wicked works. When this new birth takes place we feel many things to be evil, which before we thought nothing of. The Spirit convinces us of sin, makes us know what sin is, and that we are full of it; as it is written, "When the Spirit has come, he will convince the world of sin." When this takes place we no longer try to excuse ourselves—that we are not so bad as others—have wronged no one—and have done the best we can. We cannot rest here—but feel that we have sinned enough to banish us forever from the presence of God; and the great concern now is how we may get salvation.

I fear I shall weary you—but yet I should very much like to tell you the account of a little heathen girl which has much interested me, and will show you what I mean by being born again of the Spirit, and how He can quicken without outward means.

A little Hindu girl was stolen from her parents, taken to Calcutta, and sold for a slave. She was a sweet girl, and the lady who bought her, having no children, took a fancy to her, and thought she would not make her a slave—but bring her up to be a companion, and she grew very fond of her. The lady was a Mohammedan, and taught the little girl to be the same. This went on until she was about sixteen years old, when all at once it came into her mind, she knew not how or why, that she was a sinner, and needed salvation. She was in great distress of mind, and went to the lady for comfort; but she could not give her any, she could not tell her of a Savior—but tried to amuse her, and make her forget her trouble. So she hired rope-dancers and jugglers, and tried all the sports they are fond of in India, to give her pleasure. But all were of no use; she remained as miserable as ever. The lady then sent for a Mohammedan priest; but he could not understand her distress. However, he took her under his care, and taught her many prayers in Arabic, which she did not understand; told her to repeat them five times a day, and always turn towards Mecca when she said them. She tried in vain to get comfort from these things. She felt there was no forgiveness, no salvation there. After three long years, the thought struck her, that perhaps all her sorrow of mind was a punishment for having left the faith of her fathers. So she searched out a Hindu priest, and entreated him to receive her back to his church—but he cursed her in the name of his god. She told him all her distress—but he would not listen until she offered him money, and then he undertook her case. He directed her to take an offering of fruit and flowers to a certain goddess, and once a-week to offer a young goat for a bloody sacrifice. For a long time she did all he told her—but got no relief; she found that the blood of goats could not take away sin, and often cried in deep distress, "Oh I shall die! and what shall I do if I die without obtaining salvation?" At last she became ill through distress, and the lady watched her with deep sorrow, fearing she would sink into an early grave.

One day as she sat alone in a room, thinking and longing and weeping, a beggar came to the door; her heart was so full that she talked of what she needed to all she met, and in speaking to the beggar used a word which means salvation. He said, "I think I have heard that word before;" she eagerly

asked, "Where? tell me where I can find that which I want, and for which I am dying. I shall soon die, and oh, what shall I do if I die without obtaining salvation?" The man told her of a place where the poor natives had rice given them, and "there," he said, "I have heard it; and they tell of one Jesus Christ, who can give salvation." "Oh, where is He? take me to Him," she said. The beggar thought she was mad, and was going away—but she would not let him go without telling her more. She dreaded missing the prize which now seemed almost within her reach. "Well," he said, "I can tell you of a man who will lead you to Jesus," and directed her to a part of the town where Marraput Christian lived, who was once a rich Brahmin—but had given up all for the sake of Jesus. She set out that very evening in search of him, and went from house to house inquiring of those she met where lived Marraput Christian, the man who would lead her to Jesus—but none could tell her. It grew late, and her heart was nearly broken, for she thought she must return as she came, and die without obtaining salvation. She was just turning to go home when she saw a man walking along the road and thought she would try once more, so she asked him where Marraput Christian lived, the man who would lead her to Jesus. To her great joy he showed her the house, and she met Marraput coming out of the door.

She asked, with tears and anguish, "Are you the man who can lead me to Jesus? Oh, take me to Him. I shall die, and what shall I do without obtaining salvation?" He took her in, and said, "My dear young friend, sit down and tell me all." She told her history, and then rose and said, "Now, sir, take me to Jesus; you know where He is, oh, take me to Him!" For she thought Jesus was on earth, and that she might go to Him at once. Marraput knew that though He was not here, He was just as able to pity and welcome her at the mercy-seat; so he only said, "Let us pray." As he prayed, the poor Hindu felt that she found that which she so long wanted—salvation, pardon, and peace.

This simple narrative touched my heart. It does so show the work of the Spirit in one who had never seen a Bible, nor heard of the gospel, or of Jesus the sinner's friend. There she was in the midst of heathen--mourning for sin and seeking for salvation. The good Shepherd was seeking this lamb before she sought Him, and He appointed the means to bring her to His fold and His feet. Oh, that it might be thus with you! May you by the Spirit be wounded under a sense of sin, then will you, with like earnestness, seek to be led to Jesus, the Savior; for you must die, and, oh, what will you do if you die without finding salvation?

I must cease. Excuse the length of this; my heart is in it. I long for your salvation, and still mention you to the King to whom power belongs.

Believe me, with much affectionate interest, your sincere friend,
Ruth Bryan

Cast all your cares upon Him

My valued friend,
May the Lord preserve your going out and coming in, and, if it be His holy will, revive your sick daughter--your drooping, fragile flower; but, above all, bring her into His garden enclosed below, and then gather her as His lily to wear in His own bosom above. Oh! the happiness of being enfolded in His love forever, where clouds and storms can never come.

We are on the sure way—the King's highway. We are journeying therein amidst the many cares and storms of wilderness life, and I amidst the pains and weakness of decaying mortality. To each the promise stands good—"As your days, so shall your strength be." In passing through life the interests of time have their claims—but we often give them sadly too much importance. How secondary do they look in the light of eternity, for in one moment our breath may fail, and we are done with them forever. The Lord bless you with sweet communion with Himself, enabling you to cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. He clothes His lilies, He feeds His doves, He makes a way through the sea for His ransomed to pass over.

With warm love, your own unworthy,
Ruth

Heart-searching suitable to a birthday

So remember your Creator in the days of your youth--before the days of adversity come, and the years approach when you will say, "I have no delight in them." Ecclesiastes 12:1

"May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace." Numbers 6:24-26

To Miss F., March 31, 1859.

My beloved,

I have been told that you this day attain your twenty-first year. Will you accept an affectionate greeting from a pilgrim friend? and will you allow me to express the feelings of my heart, though they be not so lively or so congratulatory as may seem to comport with a birthday.

You have reached another milestone on the pathway of life, and where does it find you? In a medium path between the world and Christ? Ah! there is no middle path. Consider it, and then "consider your ways;" for either you are serving the Lord or serving His enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. I do think you sometimes long to be on the Lord's side, and that your heart says of His people—

"Numbered with them may I be,
Here and in eternity."

My heart says— Amen; and may it be soon, that I may have joy over you in the Lord, and that He may have the cream of your life, the flower of your days--for He is worthy. He who bled and died for sinners such as you and I, is worthy of all our powers, and of a thousand hearts if we had them. May the blessed Spirit make you feel deeply your need of Him, and this very day, if it be His holy will, may your language be—

"Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it in Your courts above."

Most heartily I desire for you a spiritual birthday in the fulfillment of that precious promise—"A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Then will you say, "My Father, you are the guide of my youth;" and only then will you find true happiness, for

"Fading is the worldling's treasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting pleasure,
None but Zion's pilgrims know!"

Though not with you, I am bearing you on my heart before the Lord. May He guide you every step in life, and grant you the blessings of the upper and the nether-springs. Forgive the intrusion of these poor lines from one who watches for your never-dying soul; and, with tender love, remains your affectionate friend,
Ruth Bryan

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalms 90:12

Encouragements to one afar off, to come unto Jesus

To Miss F., May 12, 1860.

My beloved,

You do not know how much I have thought of you since you have been ill, and how I have hoped this cough might be as the rough messenger, by which the Lord would effectually touch your heart, making you feel yourself a lost, helpless sinner--and bringing you to plea for mercy at the foot of the Cross, where no needy sinner ever perished yet. No, my beloved young friend, there is no perishing at the footstool of mercy. You cannot be too sinful, too hard, too cold, too powerless--for Jesus to save.

If you feel your need of Him--it is His gift. Oh that it may be so! My heart yearns after your soul, travails in birth until Christ is formed "in you the hope of glory," and I grudge every year and month that you and your dear brother and sister continue far off from God, and strangers to "the peace that is made by His blood."

"Oh that the time of love may come!
When you shall surely see,
Not only that He shed His blood,
But each shall say--for me!"

For you, dear one, I have been thinking of this word, "I have refined you—but not with silver, I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." And if it be so, you will say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," for "before I was afflicted I went astray." I sometimes long for a peep into your heart, for I cannot think your thoughts and desires are all after the empty things of this world. I think there is under all a longing to be "found" by the Good Shepherd, and marked for His own.

Perhaps you sometimes think, "If I am not chosen, it is of no use desiring and praying." So I thought once, and it lay like a stone on my heart, choking and chilling each little sigh for mercy, when the cry would have risen, "Lord, save me!" But I have found it was one of Satan's devices to keep me from prayer—and so it is with you, if such are your feelings. Even as it was with the young man whom Satan attacked when they were bringing him to Jesus. But he could not hinder the blessing, and that

is comfort. "As the boy came forward, the demon knocked him to the ground and threw him into a violent convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy." (Luke 9:42)

The question with you should be, not whether you are chosen—but what are the characters whom Jesus came to save, and invites to come to Him? "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I am not come to call the righteous—but sinners to repentance." "This man receives sinners and eats with them." "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus is a great Savior, and you are a great sinner, therefore you are the very case for Him.

It is true, with all your endeavors you cannot repent—but "Him has God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins." Neither can you pray—but He gives the spirit of grace and supplication. You cannot mourn for sin—but He makes the "heart soft." "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." You cannot believe but He is the Author and Finisher of faith. So all these are things not to keep you away—but just to bring you to Him, even though you do not know assuredly that He has chosen you. He says, "Him that comes to me I will never cast out." The Spirit says, "Come!" The Bride says, "Come!" And "whoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" May you, dear friend, come, and come again, you will not be cast out.

But perhaps in this very furnace the Lord will say to you, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you. I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people. And they shall say, The Lord is my God." Amen, so let it be with you, my dearest friend.

I have been writing mentally all the week—but was too ill to pen my thoughts. I am rather better today, and so have done it freely. Perhaps my thoughts may not have touched yours; all depends upon the Spirit of power. Oh breathe, celestial Dove, in that dear heart the breath of life divine. Move upon the dark waters of that soul, and say, "Let there be light," and the light of life shall burst forth. Be in that loved one the spirit of supplication, that she may pray and not faint. The Lord preserve you in journeying, restore your health, and bless your soul, that you may heartily say—

"Gladly the world's poor toys I leave
For those who know not Thee."

I know you will excuse the many imperfections of these poor lines, written from the bed of pain and weakness.

With much love, I remain your affectionate friend,
Ruth Bryan

Pleadings with a soul

"The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction." Lamentations 3:22

To Miss F., my dear friend,

It grieves me to hear you are so ill. How gladly would I see you and try to soothe and comfort you; but though I cannot come to see you, as I am very weak, and fast going down to the last valley, yet I am with you in spirit, and can speak to the King for you as the blessed Spirit enables me. For what would you make request? Is it for life and health? He can give them, for "He brings down to the grave, and brings up again." So do not be too much cast down. But do you cling more to life than you would wish? Ah! it is only salvation applied, and Christ enjoyed, that can loosen our hold of things seen, and of those earthly attractions which have long entwined themselves around the heart, for then we have found something infinitely better. But is it your chief desire to find that salvation, and hear that blessed Savior say, "Fear not, I have redeemed you, you are mine"? Oh, then, my heart will rejoice, for such desires will surely be granted. "Your heart shall live that seek the Lord."

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek."

I do hope and trust the Lord has a purpose of love to you, and that He has put these rough cords of affliction around you, to draw you to Himself. Oh, blessed Spirit, convince that dear soul of sin, and then say to her, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Break her heart, and then bind it up with the love and blood of Jesus. O Jesus, manifest Yourself to her as her own precious Savior. O my covenant God, save her for Your mercy's sake, and if it be Your holy will, spare her to show forth Your praise. Amen, amen.

The Lord bless you, and turn the water of affliction into the wine of consolation.
With tenderest love and ardent longings, your warmly affectionate,
Ruth Bryan

A counsel of love

To Miss F.,

I hope a little line of love will not fatigue or excite you. A line from the blessed book to encourage you in looking for manifested pardon and love, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son CLEANSSES us from all sin." "He will turn again: He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities, and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." The sea of Immanuel's blood! Oh! what love to poor sinners, to pour out His precious blood for their cleansing. He is a precious Savior, a loving Savior, a free Savior. He saves without money or price, without merit on our part or even one good thought to plead, and He waits to be gracious; nor will He let one poor sinner perish who is crying to Him from the heart for mercy and pardon. No, not you, my loved one. "He will be very gracious to you at the voice of your cry."

With tender love, your affectionate,
Ruth Bryan

The power of the precious blood of Christ

To Mrs. B., 1849.

My dear sister in our precious Lord Jesus,

Many, many times have I thought of you since you so tenderly leaned over my sinking frame, almost thinking to see me no more in the flesh, unless it were to pay the last kind attention to my sleeping dust. But, beloved, we parted with a bright prospect beyond, and a sweet assurance that we should meet again to never, never part! Since then I have gone near, indeed, to the gates of the grave, and the shadows of death seemed closing thickly around me; but there was no harm, dear sister. Jesus has been through death and through the grave, and He has left them stingless, to those for whom He died. "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. May He bless you, and give you many heart-burnings while He talks to you by the way, and opens to you in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, which will make you for a season forget the things concerning yourself; and while you are lost and Jesus found--you nothing and Jesus all--you will step on lightly, even with a heavy load in the flesh.

I hope Mr. B— is anxiously seeking the Pearl of great price. Perhaps his sun is near setting--and then comes a never-ending eternity! Oh, that he may not enter it without the blood of Jesus; that is the only way by which a poor sinner can enter into heaven itself. Coming with that precious blood, the vilest shall not be shut out, for it "CLEANSES from all sin." Secret sin, open sin, old sin, long-continued sin, sins against light and knowledge, sins against judgment and mercy, known sin, unknown sin—every kind and manner of sin which a poor trembling, Spirit-convinced sinner feels--does this powerful blood take away.

To this, many now before the Throne, and many also on earth, can bear honest witness, and I for one would lift up my feeble voice to encourage every sin-burdened soul to put their whole confidence in that blood of which I have felt the benefit. My sins were as scarlet, my guilt of crimson dye—but blood of a richer hue which flowed out from the veins of my precious Savior has made me white as snow, and I long for poor fellow-sinners thus to be brought near to God, for "now in Christ Jesus (we) who sometime were far off are made near by the blood of Christ."

I know not how Mr. B— is feeling, or where he is looking for salvation—but I have much concern for his soul, and a desire that he may "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." One sight of Him by faith would be as powerful to his soul as looking at the brazen serpent was to the body of the bitten Israelites; for as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of Man been lifted up, that "whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." So Jesus says Himself, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will never cast out." Oh that this precious "shall come" may draw your earthly husband to your heavenly One; for they shall come who are ready to perish, who have no eye to pity, no hand to save or help them; who feel hopeless and helpless--they shall come. Oh that the Lord may find him, then will my soul rejoice to know that he is one of those lost sheep, whom the Good Shepherd came on purpose to seek and find.

Now, my dear sister in Jesus--may the God of love and peace be with you; bruise Satan under your feet shortly; cause you to triumph in Christ; and make you exceeding joyful in all your tribulations, through the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, whom is given unto you.

Accept affectionate love in Jesus, from yours very sincerely,
R. Bryan.

The tenderness of the Good Shepherd

To Miss M., January 19, 1850.

A stranger takes the liberty of sending greeting in that dear Name of Jesus, that Name so precious to the believing soul, precious to the seeking soul, precious to the wounded spirit and to the broken heart, precious to the lame and the lost, to the bound and the bruised, to the leprous and the filthy! Yes, to every spirit-touched soul does this beloved Name sound sweetly, either as that which is known to be precious by enjoyment, or that which is estimated precious as being just what is needed. His name was called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins; and those seeking, trembling souls, who dare not yet say they are of His people--do feel painfully that they need saving from their sins, that such a Savior would suit them well, and to be able, under Divine anointing honestly and lovingly to add the little word "my," would be more to them than possessing mines of gold and crowns of earthly glory. The very thought of saying and feeling "my Savior," sets their hearts longing; and the glow of a little hope that it will come, almost makes their lame feet leap and their dumb tongue to sing.

There is a blessed, holy attraction in this altogether lovely Jesus which acts powerfully upon all quickened souls, drawing them out in desire, and drawing them on in pursuit, until the set time comes to favor them more manifestly. Then the meeting between a sin-sick soul and a sin-bearing Savior has in it such secrets of love and sweetness, that it seems as if a thousand years of the most painful waiting, would be richly repaid by one moment of such bliss. But oh, it is not for a moment and then away; the Savior and the saved shall never really part. He "hates divorce," and though darkness obscures, and clouds seem to intervene after the first meeting--yet union remains, communion shall return, and a glorious eternity consummate the bliss. Of every sheep and every lamb, the Good Shepherd will take care, and fold them all safely above. They shall surely pass under the hand of Him who counts them, and not one be missing. However faint, or feeble, or fearing, or unworthy any one may be, they are all bought and paid for, and the flock must be as complete as the price was satisfactory. The wolf may howl, the dog may bark, the way may be dreary, and the poor heart may often tremble—but the Good Shepherd will not be out of hearing, even if He seem to be out of sight. He will rescue even out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.

Perhaps Miss M—'s heart is saying, "I know all this—but fear I am not one of His flock." Is sin hated, self loathed, the world forsaken, Jesus longed for, His people loved, His ordinances and Word prized and sought unto--to find Him in them, and the good old way inquired after with a desire to walk therein? If so, these surely seem like the breathings and bleatings of the sheep; and let Miss M— be encouraged into the assurance that the Good Shepherd's heart is so loving and tender, it is as easily touched by the half-uttered "baa" of the weakling lamb as by the full-toned "Abba" of the sheep that knows its fold and its owner.

It may be, He is now saying to this fearing one, "I have refined you—but not with silver, I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." It may be, He is trying, and will before long bring forth as gold; and if He has fixed upon the furnace as a meeting-place between you and Himself, it will be worth enduring a seven times heated flame. It may be, at present you have not seen Him—but He sees you, and is regulating all the fiery process. It may be, that as yet you have but fallen down bound into the midst of

the fire. Well, so did some before you, who afterwards, in glorious company with the Son of God, walked loose and unharmed in the flames. Think it not strange concerning this fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you—but consider that as a father chastens his son, so your God chastens you; and though at present it seems not joyous but grievous, yet afterwards may it yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, through the divine "exercising" of the Holy Spirit thereby.

Your case is too hard for yourself—but bring it to Jesus, and He will hear it. Surely mine was harder, yes, the hardest of all—so helpless, so hopeless, so sinful, so unbelieving, so hard, so cold, so ignorant, yes, so everything I should not be—but Jesus undertook, and to the uttermost He saved. I was a five hundred pence debtor—but every farthing He paid, and now by Him made free, I live to praise Him, and to encourage all poor, convicted sinners to trust Him with the worst of their bad case. He will not send such empty away. He will in no wise cast them out. None need despair, since He has saved such a worthless, hell-deserving one as myself. May the Holy Spirit enable you to make the venture of faith, and it shall not be in vain. (Esther 4:16, and v. 2)

The Lord bless you, sanctify your affliction, grant you manifest forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among all those who are sanctified through faith that is in Jesus. You are seeking Him, perhaps sometimes sorrowing—but "those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." My heart desires He may soon be found of you, and though entirely strangers in the flesh, yet for His dear sake, I venture to subscribe myself yours very sincerely,
Ruth Bryan

1 Pet. 5:10.

The wounds of sin and the healing
power of the good Samaritan

"This man receives sinners and eats with them."

To Miss M., February 27, 1850.

Dear Miss M.,

Do not be alarmed at again seeing the handwriting of an unworthy stranger, thinking you will be constantly subject to these intrusions. Indeed, I do not intend it; and you need not have one anxious feeling in the thought that you must reply. I shall not think it the least breach of politeness, or the least lack of Christian courtesy, for you to be entirely silent. I well know what weakness and nervousness is, and it would much grieve me to add to that burden; therefore please to read these lines in perfect ease and freedom from all such feelings.

On reading your note my spirit was strongly impelled to commune with you again, and the contents of it touched my heart to tears, for in your dark picture I find the very counterpart of myself. Yes, indeed! though now enjoying the sweets of union, (Song 6:3) and the love of my beloved. (Song 2:3, 4) Yet for years I walked where you now walk, and felt as you now feel. Though preserved in outward morality and propriety, yet I was often horrified at my own inward vileness, and loathed my corrupt self more than words can express. I also sinned against light, and knowledge, and privilege. Thoroughly do I know what you mean by secret sin, and depths of iniquity--such as, if known to your

dearest friends, would make them abhor you forever. I have felt it, and under the awful power of hateful temptation, have been sure that if the workings of my vile heart could be seen, the dear saints who then noticed me would spurn me, and cast me out of their society. Yet I did not wish to deceive them; I could tell no one what I felt—but always declared myself the vilest of the vile; and when they tried to encourage me by saying that my spots were the spots of God's children, I just thought it was only because I could not make them know how really black and bad I was.

You describe me to the life, when you speak of short periods of reviving, then relapsing into apathy, and only being aroused by some fierce temptation. I had gleams of light and tastes of sweetness, and then I could hope. But these soon passed away, and general carelessness and indifference gradually followed, with conscience-reprovings and heart-smittings. I had no power, or even hearty will against this state, until some new form of abomination startled me, or some old easily besetting sin made headway. This roused me to bitter groans and cries for mercy, with deepest shame and remorse, and I thought surely the Lord would be at length provoked to cast me off for such seeming mockery, in thus crying out against sin, and yet being so much the subject of its awful activity. Ah, indeed! I felt there never was such a wretch, such a living mass of putrefying sores and corruption. Others might be worse outside—but I felt the sin was not less my own, or less polluting, because it worked chiefly within; and I thought if the Lord ever saved me, I would be the greatest wonder in heaven, and that there never could be such another trophy of redeeming love. I think so still, and am in nowise disposed to yield that point even to you, bad as you think yourself, for my guilt has many aggravations which I cannot enumerate. I used to say that nothing less than sovereign power and irresistible grace would ever be sufficient for such a hell-deserving one as myself. That has been granted—power which broke down my will, and grace which melted my heart; and I, even unworthiest I, can sing of "Sovereign grace over sin abounding."

I would again draw near to you, beloved, in that wilderness of fear and sin where you are traveling heavily, and which I trod with sorrowful steps before you. I would encourage your heart in God, "who regards the cry of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer." You are not expecting too much in desiring to lose the spirit of bondage, and to have the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father; to go on from the convincing of the Spirit to the comforting of the Spirit—from His leading through the chambers of imagery and increasing abominations, to His testimony of the altogether lovely Jesus as your Savior.

I used to say, I want individuality put into all that Jesus did and suffered—to have it just made my own; and I believe no Spirit-touched soul can be satisfied without it. The Spirit-convicted must be Spirit-comforted; the Spirit-wounded must be Spirit-healed—and that will always be with precious blood. "I wound, and I heal; I kill, and I make alive." "Not by might, nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." Like you, I sighed for this sure testimony, and all the voices of all the saints, I knew, could not persuade me that I was a child of God, until the Spirit revealed relationship, and then, though some thought me presumptuous, they could not stop the cry, "Abba, Father, my Lord and my God, my Beloved and my Friend."

Thus it was with me. It seemed too good to be true, that I, who deserved the lowest hell, and had felt so long as though I were hanging over it—should be delivered forever from it. "Deliver her from going down to the pit—I have found a ransom!"

May the Lord cheer you, dear Miss M—, or I am sure my poor words will not; but as the first features

of our case are so truly similar, I doubt not that before long we shall come to a fuller recognition of family likeness. I doubt not that you also having sown in tears shall reap in joy, though you do not now to your own apprehension seem to be bearing precious seed. Well, I do firmly believe that the same good Samaritan who found me after I had fallen among thieves—sin, Satan, the world, and cursed unbelief—found me stripped, wounded, and half dead—I believe this same compassionate One will before long purposely pass by where you are, and do as He did for me—bind up your wounds, pour into them oil and wine to cleanse and heal.

Perhaps you say, "Lord, I would believe, help mine unbelief." So be it. I know from woeful experience what a subtle, mischief-working foe unbelief is; and that we are prone to listen to it, and parley with it too. None can have been more unbelieving than I. But He whose love was stronger than death would not be turned aside. May your heart be encouraged, and your eye turned from yourself to Him, then, like the serpent-bitten Israelites, you would be healed and live. May the Spirit of the Lord give the look of faith, the touch of faith, that your sighs may be turned to songs.

I long after your soul in the affections of Jesus Christ. To Him I commend you. Having myself obtained mercy, I can assure you, for your encouragement, that your case cannot be too hard or too bad, and I have no doubt He has already undertaken it. "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And He pleads according to law, for He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. Adieu, dear Miss M—. May the Lord, whom you seek, come speedily to His temple, even your heart.

Accept affectionate regards for Jesus' sake, from yours very sincerely,
Ruth Bryan

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

Christ able to save to the uttermost

"Peace be unto you. Fear not--you shall not die."

To Miss M., April 1850.

My dear miss M.,

Grace and peace be with you, and may the God of consolation shortly fill you with joy and peace in believing. May He turn your eyes away from the mystery of iniquity within--to the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, stretched upon the cross for you, redeeming you from the deserved curse of the law by being made a curse for you, bearing your very sins (which seem to you greater than any other) in His own body on the tree. This is the only sight which can heal your wounded heart and bring rest to your weary, laboring spirit. You are bowed down with the burden of sin, even as the poor woman was with the infirmity wherewith Satan had bound her for eighteen years, and, like her, you are unable to lift up yourself. It must be a power outside of yourself that shall loose you from your heavy burden and bitter bondage.

Poor heart! you are hopeless and helpless unless "the Deliverer" appears on your behalf; and He will do it, for He never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek me in vain." You are seeking Him and His favor, and you think you shall never find it; but "His thoughts are not as your thoughts," for "as the heavens

are higher than the earth," so are His thoughts and ways above yours. You look at your own deservings, and judge by things seen and felt. He judges righteous judgment, and has found a wondrous way in which He can honorably deal with you according to the deservings of another.

O my beloved friend, how will your heart leap and your tongue sing when this secret is opened to you in power! How will your burden fall off when you get a faith view of the cross and of the precious Sufferer there! These words, perhaps, seem now to you like idle tales as regards your personal experience, and you believe them not with any comforting application. "Power belongs unto God," but truly I can believe on your behalf, and have no doubt you will be as a brand plucked from the burning, a trophy of redeeming love, a jewel in my Savior's crown, and that as chief sinners we shall before long sing together, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!"

You may perhaps say, "You cannot know how bad I am, or you would not feel so sure." And you do not know how bad I am, or you would not think yourself worse. The arm that reached me (low indeed in the pit of corruption) can reach you! The blood that cleansed me can cleanse you! The love that sealed my pardon can seal yours. Notwithstanding all you can say concerning your bad case, I fully expect that in the Lord's time you will send me an Ebenezer stone inscribed with pardon free and full. Thereon we will sit down together, and, taking the harp from the willow, sing, "It is the Lord's doing, and marvelous in our eyes." "Grace, grace unto it."

What! do you think you have out sinned the blood, the love, the power, or the will of Him who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him; and who said, "Him who comes to me I will never cast out?" Nay, do not so wrong your own soul and the sinner-receiving Savior. His invitation, His promise is to you, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden--and I will give you rest."

I was thankful to hear you had some alleviation of bodily affliction, and sincerely hope it will prove permanent, if that will be for your good. It must be distressing to suffer acutely in body and soul too. You kindly mention my health. Through mercy it is considerably established, so that I can engage again in the activities of life. Perhaps you know that this was very contrary to my wish. I was very tired of my wilderness-school, and longed for my glory-home, having such bright views thereof as bedimmed earth and all in it. Yes! I, who once lay trembling at the mouth of the bottomless pit, and felt that by my own corruptions I was preparing for those everlasting burnings, have, by sovereign grace, been taken thence into Beulah's happy land. I have been in the very suburbs of celestial bliss, have felt joys unutterable, and desired to drop this fettering clay, and to be forever with my Lord. But He denied my pressing suit, and sent me back to tell His wondrous love to sister sinners. Oh, would that it might reach your heart, and that mercy-drops of precious blood might take your guilt and grief away!

It seems your affliction came upon you contrary to human probability, and when you were on a pinnacle of worldly ease and honor, and perhaps of fleshly pride. So did Nebuchadnezzar's. He was suddenly brought down from his greatness, lost his mental powers, so that he might well say, "I was as a beast before You." Yet I verily believe the Lord had a favor towards him, to do him good in his latter end; for at the end of the days "he lifted up his eyes to heaven," and spoke like one chastened—but not killed; as one judged in himself that he should not be condemned of the world. Read his humble praise and confession in Daniel 4:34—and pick up a crumb of encouragement, if the great Master will let it fall thus from His table for you. You know it is not a new or strange thing He is

doing with you; for He has said, "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

It is one thing to read this in words—but quite another to come under the discipline of it, to find all our ornaments taken away, and truly discover, instead of our imagined beauty—the loathsomeness of our corruption; instead of a belt keeping all in order—a rip; instead of well-set hair to please ourselves and others—baldness; and burning in the conscience—instead of beauty. (Isaiah 3:17, etc.; compare Revelation 3:17, 18) Ah, to go through all this is fearful indeed! I have known it, you now know it, and the poor heart fears that such an abased, polluted creature must only be "a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." But this is only the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, praying the daughters of Zion that the branch of the Lord may be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth excellent and lovely; and these very poor creatures shall be called holy, and found written among the living in Jerusalem.

You speak of the rising of your heart in independence against the Lord's dealings to make you dependent. This is exactly His way. Just where we would not have the cross, it shall be laid on; and where nature is the most sensitive, it shall least be spared. The reason is plain—the deeply-rooted evil needs the knife. Your independence might have passed with you for a virtue, had not close dealing with it by a skillful hand brought out its hidden hideousness, and now you stand aghast at the discovery. But remember, you do not now begin to be so vile, you always were so in God's sight—but the calm surface hid it from your own eyes! He has broken up the fountain of this great deep, and is discovering your iniquity to turn away your captivity, in which you have willingly been held by the very evil you now deplore. "Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with man" to "withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." He will give you a humble, thankful spirit, affectionately willing to be dependent, if it will glorify Him.

You speak of being thought obstinate in rejecting comfort. The very same thing was said to me, while truly my heart groaned for it—but I had no power either to believe or receive. However, when the day of His power came, I was made willing enough. This day is what you are waiting for, and you shall not wait in vain, as the mouth of the Lord has spoken it—Isaiah 30:18; Lamentations 3:25, 26. You speak of some sweet words and promises coming to your mind with comfort, and that afterwards you think it was presumption to take them as yours. This is the enemy trying to snatch the morsel from your hungry soul. He would have you reject everything because you do not get a full deliverance—but I pray you receive without fear those little hints of the Lord's kindness to you, lest you grieve His Holy Spirit, who thus helps you with a little help.

And now I commit you to Him who is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all I can ask or think; who will perfect that which concerns you, and it shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. May the Holy Spirit witness it in your soul.

With deep interest, believe me, though very unworthy, affectionately yours,
Ruth Bryan

Balm in Gilead

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound

of my people?" Jeremiah 8:22

"I myself said, 'How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me." Jeremiah 3:19

To Miss M., June 3, 1850.

My beloved sister in Jesus,

These "shalls" and "shall nots" reach even your hard case, for, wayward though you may be, you have not power to get away from them.

Spiritual life in the first quickening by the Holy Spirit is as real and as sure of consummation, as it is in the ripest growth thereof--though it is not always as easily discernible. Surely my spirit feels union with yours in the bonds of the Covenant; yes, I feel one with you in the indissoluble ties of love Divine, most truly believing you to be part of the travail of my precious Redeemer's soul. For you, with worthless me, He agonized in sweat of blood and pangs to us unknown, and He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. All your sins shall not be sufficient to prevent it; and, unworthy though I be, I do look in your case to be partaker of His joy, and bid you welcome into the land flowing with milk and honey. For as surely as you are by the quickening Spirit passing under the rod in conviction, felt bondage, and heavy groanings which cannot be uttered, so surely shall you "pass again under the hand of Him who counts them," into the sweet bond of the Covenant, which is everlasting love—a bond which cannot be broken by all the combined powers of earth and hell. Take courage, then; "faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it." Ah indeed, or it would never be done at all; for one step you cannot take, one thought you cannot think, one word you cannot speak to forward your own salvation. Poor hopeless, helpless one, you just lie entirely at the disposal of holy sovereignty; and if He saves you not by His own power for His own holy name's sake, perish you must and will. But He has given commandment to save you, and before long He will pluck your feet out of the net which now entangles your steps, will bring your soul out of prison, and you shall praise His name who has indeed dealt wondrously with you.

You think my case was not half so desperate as yours, and yet again and again you depict to the life the vile workings of my abominably deceitful heart. These workings I would never mention to glory in my shame—but only "for the lifting of Jesus on high," and for the encouragement of those poor souls who are groaning in the pit of corruption, and who feel that by every effort they only sink deeper into the mire. Too well do I know what you describe when you speak of yielding to temptation, feelingly crying out against iniquity, and yet at the same time conscious of, in some sort, regarding it in my heart. Besetting sins I had, and did really loathe them, yet I fell into them again and again, partly in consequence of indulging them. Yet the outward surface was fair, although I thought none on earth could conceive what a monster of iniquity I was. The testimony of sin was at times deeply stamped upon everything I did, said, thought, or looked, so that I was a burden and terror to myself, and would most gladly have exchanged with any of the brute creation to get rid of my polluted but never-dying soul, which trembled at the remembrance of the holiness of Him before whom I must appear. I detested hypocrisy—but feared it, because of being always kept outwardly moral and nurtured among Christian friends and privileges. I trembled at a name to live, while I was dead, and felt that I could make none really believe what a sink of iniquity was working within. This made the feelings and

expressions of my more favored moments seem to me like hypocrisy; for if they were really spiritual, how could I return to my filthiness, like the "sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire?" True, I did hate the evil I was the subject of, and yet I felt it had power over me, and also that there was something in me which had a secret liking for it. These things greatly cast me down, and made me think my spots could not be the spots of God's children.

But how often since my deliverance have I seen cause to bless the Lord that I learned war in my spiritual youth—that He brought me into His temple by the north gate—that I felt so keenly the cutting blasts of a long dreary winter, before basking in the beams of the blessed Sun of righteousness—that the fountains of the great deep of iniquity in my heart were broken up, and the flood of evil burst upon me, before I was brought so blissfully into the banqueting-house, and reclined under the banner of love. All the Lord's ways are right ways; but I do now esteem it a favor to have been thus dealt with, because I observe those who have made more slight discoveries of their own corruption before their pardon is sealed, do appear often so astounded to find the enemy still in the land, and are ready to die with fear when the trumpet sounds them from the banquet to the battle. But, O thoroughly vile creatures, such as I have felt myself to be, do know that the moment the sun goes down the beasts of the forest will again creep forth, that the richest feast is only just to strengthen for more conflict or tribulation, and that there can be no long cessation of arms while we carry about this body of death. It may be, my beloved, you cannot yet take any comfort from these thoughts, because you are so severely feeling the painfulness of the discipline—but the end of a thing is better than the beginning. Those "who sow in tears shall reap in joy." Those who feel the heaviest load will prize deliverance most; those who are most beaten off from confidence in themselves will be the least moved as they discover their own weakness; and those who have the sentence of death most deeply inscribed in their hearts will be most constrained to live outside of themselves, and trust wholly in another.

May the Lord cheer your heart, for in the midst of all your casting down He is drawing near you, and giving you cause to sing of mercy as well as judgment. What are all those little bedewings upon your spirit, and beamings of light through the gloom—but drops of mercy betokening a shower of blessings to come. Oh, seek to give the Lord the glory due unto His name! give not place to the devil, who would have you "lie against your right," and say your wound is incurable. There is balm in Gilead which can heal it. There is a Physician there who can reach it; He can cure your body, He can bless your soul; and though the lion has roared so frightfully, yet out of this eater He can bring meat, and out of this strong one He can bring sweetness. You are just fitting for a marvelous display of invincible power and omnipotent grace.

Shall Satan have you? No! you are none of his, though so long disguised in black livery. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered, not for price or reward on your part. You shall come forth free by a royal grant, without any demand made upon you; but mind it is because another has paid the full cost of your release. And on whom then will your admiring eyes be fastened? Oh, on Him who not merely said He would give—but really has given His own life for your ransom! Eternal praises to this dear Deliverer who was anointed "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;" yes, bound in affliction and irons, like you and me, the iron bonds of our nature's corruption and evil, and the iron grasp of the law revealing iniquity, and saying, "Pay me that you owe!" Oh, this does bring down the heart, indeed, with labor and sorrow! we fall down, and there seems none to help; then we cry unto the Lord in our trouble, and He brings us out of our distresses. (Read the 107th Psalm, which has been precious to me.) He has brought me out, though encompassed with every improbability. I am

free to praise Him and to encourage you, and I would have you know that His prisoners are as safe as His freed ones. He is judging and chastening you now, that you should not be condemned with the world.

As for writing to me "to give you up as a hypocrite," I should just have answered, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim?" "My affections are troubled for you)" and if I should speak or think against you, I should "earnestly remember you still." I can only say of our correspondence,

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

Your letters touch a most sensitive chord in my heart, and I weep tears of sympathy with you, and wondering thankfulness, that the Lord should in the least refresh you by my unworthy means. It is condescension indeed! I know not that any one ever so fully described my former self and feelings. You say you write selfishly; so you must and will while the case of your soul is, to your apprehension, pending in uncertainty: it is the sphere where self is all-important and all-absorbing; and it will often tend to produce an unkind fretfulness towards all around, which you deplore, while feeling and manifesting it. But you do not say enough about self. Do tell me about your health. I long to know of any improvement, and how far you are an invalid. The Lord blend your will into His! Your letters are very precious to me—but never write to increase your suffering in mind or body. It is more pleasure and privilege to me to write to you than I can describe, and the freedom of spirit therein is wonderful as a stranger in the flesh—but not strangers now. I feel to know and love you, though I often think you would never love me if you knew me in person; it is all for Jesus' sake, and that is most sweet.

I am quite ashamed to write again so quickly to you—but the Lord our God seemed to bring the portion, and though I have had many misgivings, I felt such a flow of soul, that I feared to grieve or quench the Spirit if I withheld it.

And now, my dear Miss M—, I commend you to that tender Shepherd, who knows all your case and will meet it; and, with much love and sympathy, I am your truly affectionate,
Ruth

A harassed soul pointed to the Blood

To Miss M., December 2, 1850.

Very dear Miss M—,

I do rejoice that He who comforts those who are cast down has comforted you by the coming of His dear servant. The savor of his visit, I trust, still remains upon your spirit. Jesus "must needs go through Samaria" to meet with a great sinner, and astonish her by the discovery that "He knew all things that she ever did." How would she listen and wonder as He turned the black heart inside out, and set her secret and her open sins in "the light of His countenance;" but this was the prelude to His giving her the "living water." Many a "needs be" has there been since then, that He should go through certain places to meet with certain sinners, either to wound or heal. Methinks Mr. D— must needs go through your town to meet with my poor sorrowful friend, and refresh her weary soul by the way, by giving her a cup of cold water in the name of the Lord. It seems at that time that all the water was spent in your vessel, and you felt ready to die with thirst in the place where you were. May you not

then, with one of old, call the name of Him who thus spoke unto you, "You God see me!" If these helps do not bring you out of bondage, they revive you in it, and strengthen you still to wait and to hope, however appearances may seem against you.

From the tenor of your two notes last received, I fear you have some return of your illness; will you tell me more particulars when you write again? My heart sympathizes with you affectionately; but at the same time, if this painful dispensation be a net the Lord has cast upon you, to draw you out of the world into His living family circle, can I wish it otherwise? Can you? If now you might have restored health, associations, and all worldly ease and delight, without Jesus, would you accept them on such terms? If with an interest in Jesus you must have bodily suffering, outward disappointment, frustrated hopes, and broken purposes, would you forego Him to get rid of them? I think not! Satan provokes you sorely to make you fret. He gets you to look at this undesired affliction, instead of waiting for the end of the Lord in it, and then you find it "hard to kick against the goads." You smart under sin and under trial, and all these things seem against you; but the Lord is overruling all to give you an expected end of peace, and not of evil. He is by these means bringing down your proud heart with labor and sorrow—but He will deliver you from your destructions. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself—but in me is your help."

May the Lord give you true resignation of spirit, and a submissive will, which would greatly lessen the weight of your burden; and may He be please to rebuke Satan, who strengthens the unbelief of your heart, resists you at the throne of grace, and accuses you of presumption for every movement of faith towards the promise or the pardon. This I learn from some remarks in your note; for, after some little taking hold and encouragement, you directly start back affrighted as if you had laid your hand upon a portion that did not belong to you, and the Lord would certainly come forth against you for it. This is the false insinuation of unbelief and Satan to keep your soul from peace. Beware you do not nourish it, because in so doing you dishonor Him who is the Author and Finisher of faith. He gives the "heirs of promise" faith to lay hold of the promise, and He is never more honored than when they plead it against apparent rebukes, against the threats and taunts of the enemy, and against their felt discouragement and unworthiness. This is confidence in royal clemency, through royal blood; and thus the Majesty of heaven is honored by vile sinners on earth, for this is the work of His own Spirit in them.

Therefore, my beloved, "grieve not the Spirit," "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." It is he who tries to choke prayer, hinder faith, and feed unbelief. Your only successful resistance is by the "blood of the Lamb;" against that, Satan cannot stand, for it cleanses from all sin. He can bring plenty of accusations against us, and just ones; but when faith can venture them on blood divine, each fiery dart is quenched by that blood; and the self-condemned, hell-deserving sinner is "more than conqueror through Him who loved us." No wonder, then, that subtle foe strives so hard against the first buddings of faith, and will, if possible, nip the least putting forth thereof, to affright the poor soul from the only Stronghold when he cannot reach it. He shall not prevail ultimately; he shall not rob Emmanuel of one blood-bought jewel, not even of my dear hunted, harassed, desponding friend, for whom, I believe, He has paid the full price of ransom. He has said to law and justice long ago, "If she has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on mine account; I have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it." (Philem. 18, 19) Having bought you, and paid for you, He will not lose you. And yet, though Satan shall not rob God of His right to you, he may rob your soul of present comfort; and by giving place to him, you will suffer loss experimentally.

Therefore write I thus, that by the Divine blessing your weak hands which hang down may be lifted up, your feeble knees strengthened, and you, though so lame, may not be turned out of the way of faith; but rather have the sore of unbelief healed, and be enabled to say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." "What time I am afraid, I will trust in You." May you be encouraged to look towards Jesus, if you cannot look at Him—to hope in His salvation, if at present you cannot enjoy it, or triumph in it; and though your sins rise mountains high, presenting a new mountain every day; seek faith, more faith, in that precious blood, which, as a mighty ocean, will overtop them all. I humbly pray my precious Emmanuel to show Himself to you through the lattice, to let you see that you are graven on the palms of His hands; yes, that as the great High Priest He bears you on His heart, and on His shoulders, in the holiest place, not made with hands. And now I commend you unto Him who will "perfect that which concerns you," for He will have a desire unto the work of His own hands. I cease not to pray for you, and am looking out for the loosing of the prisoner. Adieu, my dear Miss M—.

With affectionate love, believe me, yours very sincerely,
Ruth

Submission to the Lord's will under bereavement

"But Aaron remained silent." Leviticus 10:3

To Miss M., December 31, 1850.

My beloved friend,

It is with much hesitation and considerable delicacy of feeling that I now address you, fearing to add to the grief of an already wounded heart. But yet I know not how to be silent towards you, now that your troubled spirit is the subject of new sorrow from the loss of one much beloved. I know that sometimes anguish is too deep to bear the touch of human sympathy, and that there are cases which only He can reach who gave to the heart its sensibilities, and who can quell its most violent throbbings, or speak peace to its most agitated and distracted emotions. This I once very sensibly experienced under a most painful bereavement. It was the death of a half-brother whom I loved, and that death occasioned or accelerated, it was feared, by his own imprudence. My feelings were harrowed because of the state of my poor brother's soul, and my heart was agonized with self-accusation for not being sufficiently faithful to him, though I had used my poor powers in the way of warning. But now he was gone without hope, I felt all was distraction; and nothing that was said could remove or soothe my anguish, until, with power never to be forgotten, these words were sounded in my soul, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" With them came a great calm and a solemn submission to the Divine sovereignty. It was something like Aaron's silence, when his two sons had been cut off by immediate judgment from the Lord. There seemed no alleviation to his natural feelings—but everything to aggravate grief; yet grace prevailed above nature, and, absorbed in the Divine will, his soul seemed to anchor on the Rock while wave and billow went over him. The Lord's wonders are seen in the deep, and He can do as great miracles by supporting under, as by preserving from, peculiar trials.

Excuse me for speaking thus. These things may be very inapplicable to your sorrow; but of whatever nature are the circumstances of our trial, nothing is so truly quieting as being enabled to bow to our Father's will, and take the cup immediately from His hand. No events take Him by surprise. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" When useful, amiable, and valued lives are

unexpectedly cut off we marvel; but though deep the mysteries of Jehovah's permissive will--far too deep for us to fathom--yet these things do not happen by chance. We see this in the case of Job, whose children were all cut off by Satan's agency—but not without Divine permission. He, recognizing as in a Father's hand the sword which had slain his earthly comforts, said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." While most puzzled by the Lord's providential movements, and writhing under the smart of bereavement, it is most soothing and blessed to be enabled by the Spirit to feel, "Father, Your will be done." "Father, glorify Your name." Oh that our precious Jesus may draw near and bind up your bleeding heart, yes, all your hearts; and may He administer His strong consolations and cordials, as He is accustomed to do in times of special need!

To yourself, my beloved friend, may He be very gracious, giving you even this "valley of Achor for a door of hope." May He keep Satan from gaining advantage, and you from giving place to him. He will provoke to fretfulness—but may the Lord rebuke him, and give you to feel and say, "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me." (Ps. 119:75) Very sweet is Heb. 12:5-9. Finally, may the Lord sanctify this stroke, and "honey" yet "be found in the end of the rod;" and though the grape seems very, very sour, yet may there be "a blessing in it."

I would commit you to Him who can make all grace to abound towards you in support, comfort, and deliverance.

Kindly excuse this, and believe me, with tenderest sympathy, yours very affectionately,
R. Bryan

The immutability of God's purposes in grace

To Miss M., February 21, 1851.

My dear afflicted friend,

I am sorry to hear that you are too ill to write. The Lord has indeed spread His net over you, and laid affliction upon you. He has added grief to your sorrow, and broken you with breach upon breach, until you feel but as a wreck, and as one "ready to perish." But "they shall come, who were ready to perish." However lame, however lost, they "shall come;" however vile and base, however far off by wicked works, and further still by unbelief, they "shall come." Nothing shall hinder the accomplishment of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; for "whom He did foreknow, those He also did predestinate;" and "whom He did predestinate, those He also called; and whom He called, those He also justified; and whom He justified, those He also glorified." It is all done in God's account, and nothing in earth or hell can undo it. What has been done above on the sinner's account, shall be done below in the sinner's experience. Effectual calling, irresistible power, omnipotent grace, combine to accomplish the "shall come." They "shall come" to Mount Sinai, and amidst the thunders of the righteous law learn their own unrighteousness, by nature and practice. They "shall come" to judgment here, be made to plead guilty, feel condemned in heart and conscience; and wait with fear and trembling, expecting execution, until the great trumpet is blown. The jubilee sound tells of release; it chiefly affects those in debt, distress, and difficulties. Then, to their own astonishment, those prisoners which were ready to perish "shall come" out of a strait place--into a large place; from just condemnation--to free pardon for all offences, past, present, and to come. They "shall come" to be washed in the fountain of blood; they "shall come" from wearing sackcloth and ashes, to be covered

with the robe of righteousness, and clothed with the garments of salvation; they "shall come" from the spirit of heaviness to have the garment of praise, the ring of love, the crown of loving-kindness and tender mercy; they "shall come" from the mount of terrors to the mount of peace, and to all the blessings and blessed company there, of which you may read in Heb. 12:22-24. They "shall come" there by faith, while dwellers in mortality. And, moreover, when their wilderness days are ended, they "shall come" to Mount Zion above; and the Shepherd will rejoice over the sheep which was lost; and the sheep will tell, to the Shepherd's praise, how it wandered as far as it could, how it destroyed itself, how it was "ready to perish," how it was so lost and so helpless, that when it desired to return it could not; and then how the Shepherd found it, and through floods of guilt, mountains of fears, and hosts of foes, had brought it safe home to glory. Oh, then will not they all again sing Hallelujah! worthy is the Lamb which was slain! And the much sinning and much forgiven one, will strive to be loudest in the song.

"Ah," say you, "what has this to do with me? I am more fit for the depths of hell than the heights of heaven!" Why, it has to do with you, my beloved; it is strong consolation that your vile sin, stubborn will, proud spirit, desperate unbelief, and cruel, powerful foe shall not prevail against God. His "shall come" will be stronger than all these; and I do solidly believe this "shall come" includes you, and that you "shall come," and are coming, as it is written, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." Are you not weeping over your sins? Are you not supplicating pardon for them, and power against them? And do you not often feel as if none were like you, none could know how bad you are, and none help you but the crucified Savior? And do you not mourn for a sight of Him crucified for you? It is said, "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him." Surely this "shall come" will bring you to that sacred place, even the cross, where, gazing by faith upon the wondrous Sufferer, your burden will fall off into His sepulcher, never to appear before God again, for "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Who is a pardoning God like unto You? "A just God, and a Savior." Your hard case, my beloved friend, does not go beyond His "uttermost," to which He is able to save. What you are, cannot help your salvation; what you are, shall not hinder it. All is of free grace from first to last! Help is laid upon One that is mighty, whose own arm brought salvation, who trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with Him. He finished the transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Wander no longer, then, upon the dark mountains of your own doings—but lift up your eyes unto the hills of salvation, from whence comes your help. Your help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth—and who says, "Come now, and let us reason together: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I will pardon them whom I reserve." Surely you are a reserved one, and a preserved one too, that you may be a pardoned one. The indwelling of sin will be felt, and the plague of sin mourned—but the curse and condemnation are forever removed from them whom He reserves; for "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." For "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." So that "if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins."

Oh that it would please the Holy Spirit to pour this spiced wine, this strong consolation into your trembling soul; that out of weakness you may be made strong, may wax valiant in the fight, and by

faith turn to flight those armies of the aliens, which so proudly threaten you with destruction! "Now I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." He "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." To Him be glory, both now and ever, Amen.

I trust you have been restored to some degree of calmness concerning your heavy loss. The Lord's "judgments are a great deep;" we must not attempt to fathom them. "His ways are past finding out;" we must not expect to trace them. Quiet submission befits sinful worms. The Lord give it you, and all your trials will be much lightened. "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

The Lord "guide you by His counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory."

So desires, with kindest love and sympathy, your affectionate friend,
Ruth

Mercy for the chief of sinners

To Miss M., April 23, 1854.

My dear Miss M—,

Grace be with you, my beloved, and mercy and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I write again to you as a companion in wilderness-tribulation, to inquire how you are getting on in your travels from the City of Destruction towards the Mount Zion above. Are you still compassing the mount which burns with blackness and darkness; from whence issues a fiery law which makes the convinced sinner tremble, and cry out, "I am vile!" For "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Have you still the burden on your back? and are your eyes still blinded, so that you cannot see Jesus; but only see mountains of guilt rising darkly before you? Are your transgressions still increasing and accumulating? and the arrows of the Almighty still sticking fast in you? and does "hope deferred" often make the poor heart sick? Ah then, surely, you are the tossed with tempest, and not comforted; whose stones shall be laid with fair colors, and your foundations with sapphires; (Isa. 54:11) for blessed are they whom the Lord chastens, and teaches them out of His law. He will in due time have mercy upon these His desolate, and will comfort His afflicted. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever; but will receive graciously, love freely, and heal through the stripes of His dear Son. (1 Pet. 2:24)

"He who has begun the good work in you," by the north wind of conviction, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ, when the south wind of His love shall blow softly, and you be filled with joy and peace in believing. Surely He will bring you on from the terrible Mount of Condemnation—to the place of the cross; and when looking up, by faith, you see "One hanging crucified for you," then will your soul dissolve in love; and you will feelingly understand how the holy Jehovah can be just and yet justify ungodly you; having had full satisfaction for all your sins in the person of His Son.

Why, my dear friend, the Prince of Life, the Lord of glory did not come from heaven to save little sinners—but chief sinners, lost sinners, helpless sinners, the vilest of sinners--such sinners as poor Ruth and her trembling friend. He did not come to cleanse from only moderate guilt—but sins as red as scarlet and crimson; yes, sins as black as hell does His blood take away. Oh, dishonor Him not by saying you are too bad, or your case too hard! There are now before the throne, and on the way to it,

those as bad, as hard, as unlikely as ever you can be. What can resist Omnipotence? He who died for sinners has an omnipotent arm to pluck them from the burning, and bring them up from the pit, however low they may be sunk in the mire! This I have proved many a time. May the Holy Spirit testify of Jesus in your soul, and may that faith spring up which is the gift of God, so that with another unbelieving one you may cry out, "My Lord and my God!" Is anything too hard for the Lord? No, verily, He is able from Gentile sinners, as hard as stones—to raise up children to Abraham. The more unlikely the material, the greater glory to His name in forming thereof a vessel fit for His use. Oh that your heart may be encouraged, and that you may see what honor He will have in forgiving and saving you and I—who owe Him, not fifty, or five hundred pence—but ten thousand talents! Oh, think what joy is in heaven over such sinners as we are, when our repentings are kindled by Him who is exalted to give repentance unto His Israel, and remission of sins; and think, when we reach the heavenly shores, how those bright angels who never sinned, will adore Him, while we recount to them the mighty sum He cancelled for us. Surely, with new ardor, they will cry, "Worthy is the Lamb!" And we respond, "For He has redeemed us unto God by His blood!"

Come, my friend, take courage; hate sin and loathe it as much as you will—but never magnify it above the efficacy and merits of the death and blood of Jesus. Forget not how great will be his glory in our salvation, in bringing those who were so very far off "near by the blood" of His cross. It may be your outward path is rough, and you are still the subject of thorny trials. Well, be not cast down on this account, for we know that it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. This world is not the pilgrim's rest; it is the place of his passage through which he must journey to a better country; but Divine love will make all things work together for good. The loftiness of man must be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man made low, that the Lord alone may be exalted. Seek a resigned, submissive will; it is the Lord's own gift, and a great lightening of the outward cross. Murmuring thoughts ill become worms who deserve the lowest hell; everything on this side hell is more than we deserve. The Lord grant that mercies may melt us as well as meet us. Oh, for a grateful spirit! I long to dissolve in thankfulness for the Lord's great benefits to such an unworthy creature; and I wish you, my dear friend, the same blessing. Your afflictions are heavy—but you must sing of mercy as well as judgment, and may your experience be as Psalm 119:50, 67.

Fare you well. To Israel's Shepherd I do not fail to commend you; though He needs not my poor reminding, for Himself loves you. Delays are not denials.

With sympathetic love, affectionately I remain your unworthy friend,
Ruth

Submission to the ways of God

To Miss M., June 12, 1851.

My beloved afflicted one,

There will be no true peace in your bosom until you are reconciled in the submission of faith to the Lord's righteous and providential dealings. (1 Samuel 3:18; Job 2:10) "It is hard for you to kick against the goads," as your wounded soul and bleeding heart evince. Oh, judge not Him who is infinite in wisdom, all His ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is He. It is presumption in vain man so to do. Seek reconciliation to His will and His way; and though He blights your choicest flower and withers your most cherished gourd, say, say, my beloved--do you well to be

angry? Does it alter anything? Does it alleviate anything? Nay, verily—but it brings death in your feelings and darkness in your soul; and if there were a beam of hope arising it is thus beclouded again. The enemy knows this, and therefore he provokes you to murmur against the God of your mercies. "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan—is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Oh, my dear friend, "give no place to the devil!" "Whom resist steadfast in the faith." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "Taking the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one". He works upon your weak frame, enfeebled mind, and painful circumstances; and from or by these leads you to draw wrong conclusions and unjust inferences, and thus tighten the cords of your bondage. But oh, fly for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel; fly to the shadow of the Cross, the shelter of the Rock! There is pardon for the guiltiest, cleansing for the filthiest, safety for the weakest, and conquest for the most faint-hearted. "Not by might, nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." "For when I am weak, then am I strong," said a captain in Emmanuel's army, who, like you, wanted the thorn to be taken out of the flesh; but his King knew better, the proud flesh needed the piercing thorn, and the buffeted soldier was brought to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." See what the grace of God can do, and presume not to think your case is beyond its power, while the same witness declares, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." It abounds "to pardon crimson sins," to break the rebellious will, to stop the murmuring tongue, and take the guilt away; and He who has all fullness of grace received gifts for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

My heart sympathizes with you in your afflictive bereavement. There is a veil of mystery thrown over some of the Lord's proceedings, and over the destinies of some we love. If we attempt to lift the veil, we add grief to our sorrow, and get sharp rebukes; for "secret things belong unto the Lord our God," and "He gives no account of any of His matters." Seek for absorption in His will. He sees not as man sees—but always judges righteous judgment. When the enemy comes into your soul like a flood, with temptations and insinuations, may the Spirit of God lift up a standard against him. And I must again repeat that striking word, "Give no place to the devil." Parley not, listen not; for, O my beloved, he is insulting your best Friend, your pardoning, long-suffering God, who has borne with your rebellion in the wilderness, and who still forbears; to whom still belong forgiveness, though you have so rebelled against Him. True, He has, in the exercise of His royal prerogative of sovereignty, permitted that which confounds your reason and pierces your heart—but presume not to think Him "cruel." Wait the light of eternity, when you will see clearly that He has dealt unjustly with none. And surely, my dear one, He has not been cruel to you, for you are in the land of hope, and your trembling lips can yet cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Oh, may mercy dissolve that wounded heart into thankfulness and love! Truly, my soul is grieved for you, well knowing the dark, cold region you are cheerlessly traversing. Oh that the good Shepherd would take you to "the sunny side of the hill," that in His light you might look more at your mercies and less at your miseries!

How should I rejoice to know that you were feeling it—
"Tis sweet to lie passive in His arms,
And know no will but His."

Your natural hopes and prospects are a wreck; but how short would have been your enjoyment, if they had had the brightest accomplishment! Our life is but a vapor, and all that concerns us is shadowy and fleeting. The brightness might have beguiled you, the shadow deceived you; and your

heart have centered its delights in creature good, instead of being set "on things above." Then cease regrets, my beloved, for that which is not. Remember Lot's wife; she looked back, and went forward no more. Oh, may a gracious God, by the power of His Spirit, say to your distracting reminiscences and forebodings, "Peace, be still," that there may be a great calm, and your soul be "quieted as a weaned child." You have long been as a weaning one—fractious and fretful. Forgive me; I do not speak unkindly, my heart is pained for you; but I see where you suffer loss, and your cruel foe is gaining great advantage, and love makes me speak. I myself am of a thoughtful, anxious mind, and the Lord has rebuked me sharply, and made me feel what a puny being I am. I cannot make one hair white or black, or by one corroding care avert what I most dread, or insure what I most desire. Why then waste time and energies in these fruitless and weakening anxieties which alter nothing? Moreover, my Divine Teacher shows me the blessedness of committing all to Him, (Psalm 37:5) and being still; and then He often does wondrously, while we look wondering on. I am very slow to learn, and slower to practice—but I see the privilege of the lesson, and have felt a little of it in sharp trial, and I want you also to have the benefit of the instruction; and may the Lord bless you, and give you understanding in all things.

I have been staying at Great Malvern, in Worcestershire. I wonder if you know it? It is a beautiful place, very romantic; the air peculiarly pure and renovating; the water possessing excellent qualities, and flowing from many springs; the hills very majestic, and the valleys as lovely—all fresh and fertile, in the beauties of spring; and the sweet love of Jesus enlivening the whole. Oh for deep-felt gratitude for preservation in traveling, the privilege of beholding the beautiful creation, and many other mercies!

"I bless His name for lower things,
But they are not my God."

And now, farewell. May the Holy Spirit work in your heart the work of faith with power!

To know which, would much rejoice your very affectionate,
Ruth

Faith the gift of God

To Miss M., January 12, 1852.

My beloved friend,

Permit me to greet you affectionately this new year in the name of our glorious Emmanuel, of whom it was truly said, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." I know you feel yourself the chief of sinners; be encouraged then, for He is Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." Sinners He still receives graciously, loves freely, pardons fully, and justifies from all things past, present, or to come. Oh! that this might be the year of meeting between your soul and your Surety; then would you find the glad release from all those heavy debts which you feel to be hourly increasing. "The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish." You know when the jubilee blast was sounded every Israelite was free. They might not only have wasted their inheritance—but have sold even themselves, yet it mattered not, in either case they became free in the glorious year of release. Mortgaged lands, burdensome debts, and toilsome servitude, all came to an end on that happy morn. The spiritual Israel have their jubilee too—the general one, when the Archangel's trumpet shall awake their sleeping dust, and the purchased possession shall return in glory to Him

who redeemed it with blood; and the inward personal one, when each soul hears for itself, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you! I have called you by your name, you are mine!" Ah! then the mountains of guilt are cast into the depths of the sea—that red sea of blood, whose waves overtop them all. Then the mighty debt is known to be cancelled, so that the poor debtor can sing of "sovereign grace over sin abounding," for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Who knows but this very year may be the one of jubilee in your experience, my beloved? There is a set time to favor Zion individually as well as Zion collectively, and when the time of the promise arrives, nothing shall prevent its accomplishment. Sin, Satan, unbelief, shall all give way; those gates of brass shall open, the fetters fall off, and the imprisoned soul come forth to the light of day, scarcely believing for joy and wondering.

The Lord lift up your head, and may your manifested redemption draw near, which all your sense of poverty and misery will make doubly welcome. My poor namesake had lost all, and was in great destitution; but she found a near kinsman who owned the relationship, and was willing to redeem, though first she had somewhat boldly to make her suit for his kindness. "Spread your skirt over your handmaid, for you are a near kinsman." This looks like the plea of faith and necessity; when the poor soul feels its poverty and nakedness, and entreats the heavenly Boaz to cover it with His skirt—that justifying righteousness which alone can hide its shame. He is never offended with such apparent presuming; and never rejects such a forsaken and desolate one. As surely as Boaz did redeem and marry the Moabitish damsel, so surely Jesus has redeemed and will acknowledge every coming sinner. (John 6:37) "Ah!" say you, "this matter of faith is one thing which troubles me; the blessings of salvation are enjoyed by faith—but I cannot get at it. I seem shut up in unbelief, and I cannot come forth."

"Oh! could I but believe,
Then all would easy be!
I would—but cannot; Lord, you know
My help must come from Thee."

Well, my loved friend, I feel most incompetent to speak to you upon the important but dear subject of precious faith; and when I read your question upon Eph. 1:13, a sense of inability to answer almost deterred me from writing at all. But, however, I can speak from experience, that I once felt exactly as I have described; seeing the importance of faith, and that without it I could not be saved, and yet finding it impossible to believe to the saving of my soul, so that I said with deep feeling, "I thought that I could as soon make a world as believe." But, say you, "Is it thus still?" Nay, truly. I was then shut up—but not unto despair; it was unto the faith which has since been revealed. Christ as the object of faith was yet to be revealed in His glorious person, finished work, and amazing love; and power put into the soul to receive, take hold of, and enjoy Him and His benefits as its personal portion. Living faith is, indeed, as you say, something more than a "declaration of belief," or mere "assent to the truth of the written Word," or belief in the divinity of the Savior. All this I had many times when painfully feeling I had not the faith which enters into rest, (Heb. 4:10, 11) and is accompanied with joy and peace, (Rom. 15:13) or I had it not so in exercise as to be followed by those blessed effects: for I humbly conceive all the graces of the Spirit (of which faith is one) are communicated in regeneration; but, like the powers of an infant, they must have growth and development before they come to strong exercise. Moreover, when living faith is implanted it must have an object; and the effects in the soul will be correspondent to that object.

Often, at the first, faith has to do with the law, justice, and holiness of Jehovah, and His threatenings against sin. These it may fully believe with personal application; and as the soul falls down condemned before Him, not only in the judgment—but also in feeling, believing its own vileness, and that He will be righteous in casting it out of His sight, faith justifies the Lord, and ascribes righteousness to its Maker, while the soul is filled with compunction, and abhors itself in dust and ashes. Here is repentance towards God, and here is faith—but not that faith in Jesus which has the sealing of the Spirit. No living soul is, however, left here. Faith is caused to grow, in hearing (Rom. 10:17)—in hearing that there is a way of escape, that God can still be just, and yet justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus. Faith, receiving this report of the great salvation through a great Savior, and of the exact suitability thereof to the soul's case, there is a growing confidence that if He will He can pardon the sin, heal the leper, loose the prisoner, and forgive the arrested debtor who has "nothing to pay."

Now the soul begins to feel a love and tenderness towards this Friend of sinners, and says, "Oh, that He were my friend! Oh, that He would save and speak comfortably to me! Oh, that I could know He loves me! This would be heaven below! There is now full faith in His ability and His suitability; but there is not the spirit of adoption, or the sealing of the Spirit. There is not the venture of faith, casting the whole weight of soul and sins upon Him or believing in Him for the personal benefit of His blood and righteousness, His life, death, and resurrection, or, as Hart so expressively calls it in his 79th hymn, "Believing into Him." This is the "work of faith with power;" and they who thus believe are manifestly saved (1 John 4:13)—do know that they have eternal life, and by the renewings of the Holy Spirit are kept believing, for they live by the faith of the Son of God. The justified shall live by faith, and they are sealed by the Spirit of promise unto the day of redemption; which redemption plainly refers to the resurrection of the body, see also Rom. 8:23.

By this sealing they have manifestly to their own consciences God's mark upon them as His property, and thereby they are assured of a glorious resurrection to life eternal. Though now they carry this body as a body of sin and death, and often groan under its burden, and though soon it shall be laid in the grave as a body of corruption, yet it is a "purchased possession." They are sealed unto the day of redemption. God has wrought them for the self-same thing. (2 Cor. 5:4, 5) The Spirit witnesses to it with or in their spirits, and they joyfully look for their Redeemer, who is mighty, and "who shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Truly, this sealed state is an immense privilege, and a free one—the gift of Heaven—the work of God—a royal grant of grace and love, as all will most joyfully acknowledge who do truly possess it. True, the Spirit seals the soul (Eph. 1:13) after believing, (Gal. 3:14) but not for it. By the appointment of Heaven the seal is annexed to the faith—but in no wise conditionally, for both are a free gift—both the work of God. Faith honors God by its seal, and God honors faith by His. John 3:33; 2 Cor. 1:22.

Let this make the poor heart cry more importunately, "Lord, increase my faith," for He who is its Author is its Finisher, and He will have respect to the work of His own hands. It is also true that the Spirit (1 John 5:10; Rom. 8:16) witnesses to the soul's adoption in believing, and thus we are manifestly children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:26) This is not because faith is a creature work, and the witnessing of the Spirit a rewarding the creature for that work; but is because it is the pleasure of our heavenly Father that His children, while in the body, shall walk in the way of faith, not by sight and sense. He is much honored in every believing soul who is brought by His Spirit, not only to felt need—but felt nothingness, and enabled to glory in His Son as the "Lord our righteousness;"

and therefore He has in the written Word very abundantly set forth the spiritual blessings which are experimentally enjoyed (Gal. 3:9) in this way of faith, (Rom. 1:16, 17) and in no other way, that His people may be the more encouraged to seek for this good old path, and inquire for it.

Also, He has given abundance of "wills" and "shalls" to insure their finding it, and all are most needful, for it is a way most contrary to our fallen nature and legal minds. Everything that is in us by nature opposes it; and, when quickened by the Spirit, how do unbelief, self, and Satan, strive to hold us back. We might say, in the words of Job, "There is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye has not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." Ah! indeed, in the pathway of faith all nature's keenness, swiftness, and strength are in vain; but those ransomed of the Lord, who feel themselves as "fools," shall find it, and shall not err therein. (Isa. 35:8, 10) The promise is sure to all the seed—"He that believes shall be saved;" "for by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Therefore, be not discouraged, dearest, because you cannot work faith out of your own barren heart; it was never intended you should. Jesus gives it freely, and He will increase it. You cannot say you have not the buddings of it as first described: you have faith in a holy sin-avenging God; and you have faith in a holy sin-atoning Savior, as able to save you, and just the Savior you need. Do you want to believe in Him more fully and firmly, venturing the weight of all upon His obedience and sacrifice? What can you do better than ask Him to reveal Himself more clearly in your soul, like him of old, who said, "Who is the Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Harken to the gracious answer: "You have both seen Him, and it is He who talks with you;" and he said, "Lord, I believe; and he worshiped Him." Now I think this is just your case. Jesus has been talking to you, and you know Him not, just as He talked to the woman of Samaria, and told her all things that ever she did. May He open your eyes and your heart that you may receive Him, believe on His name, (John 1:12) and have privilege to know that you are a child of God. Faith is the very outgoing of heart and soul upon the person and work, blood and righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, and that under a deep sense of unworthiness, guiltiness, and hell-deserving. Unbelief would put these things as obstacles and barriers in the way—but faith will not have it so, seeing such richness and efficacy in the blood and obedience of Him who is mighty to save, that it says, "Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost—all who come unto God by Him. And now farewell; I trust the Lord will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

With much affection, I remain your unworthy friend,
Ruth

"And in view of this, we always pray for you that our God will consider you worthy of His calling, and will, by His power, fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Faith overcomes impossibilities

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

To Miss. M., March 21, 1852.
My beloved friend,

I am often thinking about you, and wondering how you are traveling. But wherever you are, the Lord is saying, "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten by me." You are safe in His keeping, whether the "door of faith has been opened unto you," or you are yet crying, "Bring my soul out of prison!" Jesus knows all about you. He will not allow you to pass the bounds He has appointed—but in the favored moment will say, "Loose her and let her go!" He is anointed to preach liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; not for price nor reward. He wants nothing at your hands. You are to receive all from Him, not bring anything to Him. He bestows His gifts freely upon the empty, the needy, the destitute, and freely forgives those His debtors who have "nothing to pay." Those who have spent all their living, "wasted their substance," and are "discontented" also; these shall come to the spiritual David, in the cave of Adullam, and He will receive them; neither their debt nor discontent shall hinder. (1 Sam. 22:1, 2) "All who the Father gives me shall come to me, and him who comes to me I will never cast out." "He is exalted to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins."

These are precious gifts to such as know their own sore, and the plague of their own hard heart. They do even feel it a privilege to sit and weep at Jesus's feet, under a sense of "much forgiven," having proved, too, that without power from on high they "could not repent, though they endeavored oft," nor exercise that faith by which the soul has experimental access into a justified state. (Rom. 5:1, 2) "For by Him all who believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." "He that believes is not condemned."

O you tossed with tempest, and not comforted! He will keep you; He will enable you to cast your soul and your sins upon the sin-bearing Surety, who will, with His own blood, blot out all guilt from your conscience, and with His own righteousness robe your naked soul. Believing in Him you shall not be made ashamed—but shall by faith "inherit substance," even "durable riches and righteousness." What a possession for a poor, feelingly unrighteous, law-condemned bankrupt—inherit righteousness! This is good news, indeed, to one whose best righteousness is as filthy rags. Oh that faith might come in the hearing of it, and she who has dwelt in the dust awake by the Spirit's power to her privilege, and put on her beautiful garments! Ah! indeed, "faith is a precious gift," which seems to apprehend and take hold of all that God has to bestow upon us in the wilderness. Unbelief puts the blessing away for lack of creature worthiness—but faith pleads on in the face of unworthiness. "True, Lord! yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." Do not our hearts say, "Lord, increase my faith?"

But, perhaps, my beloved is traveling heavily, and though I talk of these good things, can hardly listen to me "for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage." Well, I once was there, and in my Bible, Exodus 6:9, is marked—and it was done feelingly, in bitter moments—"But though we believe not, he abides faithful, he cannot deny himself." The children of Israel were brought out of bondage according to promise, although their spirit was too heavy to receive the glad tidings; and I, though so unworthy, have also been brought from under the galling yoke; though at the time named I could not lay hold of, or hearken to, the hope set before me in the gospel. And deliverance will come to dear Miss M—, even if she also be as weak in faith, and as grieved in spirit. But oh! would that she might be able to receive the consolation, and not dishonor the Lord by unbelief, as I did; but in the face of all improbabilities, and human impossibilities, just say, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to your word."

May you, my dear one, look expectingly to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think—and not look into yourself for encouragement. "David encouraged himself in the Lord

his God." May the Holy Spirit so testify to your soul of the glorious person and finished work of Emmanuel, that you may be encouraged there too. "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him."

We had an encouraging sermon last week from Psalm 106:7-8, "Our fathers in Egypt did not grasp the significance of Your wonderful works or remember Your many acts of faithful love; instead, they rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them because of His name, to make His power known." Mr. H— said, "We could not understand the sweetness of that word 'nevertheless,' unless we painfully knew the experience of the seventh verse." You will know the truth of this, and with all your crooked ways and crooked things, within and without, there is a precious nevertheless attached to you; such an one as verse forty-four, and the end will be, nevertheless He saved her for His mercy's sake, His name's sake, His love's sake, and we will unite to sing, "Grace, grace, unto it."

I fear you are much afflicted, as I have not heard from you. The Lord support and comfort you, and bring you to be passive and quieted as a weaned child; there is "a needs be," though unseen by us. May it be truly with you as Heb. 12:6-11. And now farewell; peace be with you.

Accept affectionate love from your attached but unworthy,
Ruth

Strength equal to the hour of weakness

"Look unto Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other." Isaiah 45:22

"Those who look to Him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces." Psalm 34:5

To Miss M., May 8, 1852.

My much-endear'd friend,

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and may the God of patience and consolation make all grace abound towards you amidst your varied trials, and the cruel efforts of your unwearied foe, who, finding that the Shepherd of Israel is taking you out of his mouth, a poor maimed thing, like Amos 3:12, does rage against you, and roar upon you, to frighten you from Christ the stronghold, your only place of help. He points to your filthy garments, and resists the outgoings of your faith upon Him who alone can cleanse you; he tries to strengthen unbelief and carnal reason, that your eye may be turned inward instead of upward; he tries to magnify unduly creature comforts in your esteem, that they may steal your heart from Christ, and rob your soul of peace. But "the Lord rebuke you, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" May the Holy Spirit, my beloved, strengthen your faith and hope in God.

"If all created streams were dried,
His love remains the same;
May we with this be satisfied,
And glory in His name.

"There naught is in the creature found,
But may be found in Thee;
I must have all things, and abound,
While Christ is all to me."

I myself have found in Jesus and His precious love more than I ever lost in the creature. May we through grace be enabled to enjoy thankfully what He lends, and resign it lovingly and submissively, though not unfeelingly, when He recalls. You have been, and are, tried on the most tender points. Your nearest and dearest on earth seem to droop and wither; but the dearer than all will never fade away from your embrace. It has been well said, "He lends all lesser things—but He gives Himself." May your sorrowful heart be comforted in this "unspeakable gift," and while you are trembling at the future, may the Lord graciously encourage you, as He did me. I had long been dreading the death of my precious mother, when our minister one day read Romans 8, and spoke upon the 38th verse, especially upon those words, "Nor things to come." Oh, what a cordial this was to my soul, that the "things to come," which I so much feared, should not separate from the love of God, which would support me through all! Those things have taken place, the thing which I feared has come upon me; but has the Lord proved unfaithful, or have His arm or His promise failed? Ah no! I live His humble, unworthy witness of the truth of Isaiah 43:2. "You are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God." (Isaiah 43:12)

I was thankful to find, in your last letter, an earnest desire to be resigned to all the will of God. You know those sweet lines—

"Subdue my will from day to day,
Blend it with Yours, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say—
Your will be done."

The Lord fulfill these in your experience; it is in this sense "hard for you to kick against the goads;" piercing and smarting must be the result. You have painfully felt it: you have known the fretfulness of a weaning child, may you be brought to the quietness of a "weaned one." Whatever your heavenly Father calls you to, He will support you under; but He will not give the manna for tomorrow, or strengthen you for the next trial, while you have it only in anticipation. "Give us this day our daily bread." "As your days, so shall your strength be." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." And herein I read my own foolishness; often wearing out present strength with fears and forebodings of future trials; thus far disregarding present mercies, and rebelling against the Lord's will, because unlawfully anticipating it. A minister once said, "The Lord gives each of His children a bundle of rods to carry, one for every day, with strength apportioned; but they will strive to lift all at once, and thus are overburdened, because they have only strength given for the present one." Being naturally of an anxious mind, I must say that thus foolish and ignorant have I often been, and surprised when brought to discover how much I was dragging into the present hour, what did not belong to it. Have you ever been caught in this snare?

I am truly rejoiced that you discover your proneness to look within for encouragement, instead of encouraging yourself in the Lord your God. This is one great bane of your peace, and springs much from unbelief and carnal reason, which rise no higher than feelings; making all their calculations from thence. True faith, on the contrary, looks only at Christ, expecting all the soul needs in Him, and for

His sake. If worthiness is the question, "Worthy is the Lamb;" and to make His worthiness our plea, is well-pleasing to the Father who gave Him, to the Spirit who testifies of Him, and to Him who gave Himself an all-sufficient ransom. The Holy Three are honored when faith holds up Christ, His merits, and His blood; but dishonored, greatly dishonored, when the soul seeks or wishes for anything besides, when we look within for any improved feelings or experience to ground our hope upon, or to increase our confidence before Him. We want to be something—but our Father has determined to make and keep us nothing—so that Christ may be experimentally our all. And every plea, every expectation, every hope center in Him—His glorious person, His law-magnifying obedience, His justice-satisfying atonement. This is the God-glorifying way of faith.

Ah, my dear friend, how welcome, under a sense of guilt and condemnation to find—"His blood a full atonement made, and cries aloud, Forgive!" How safe to—Venture on Him, venture wholly, let no other trust intrude!"

But say you sin is so active and unsubdued that this seems like presumption? True; but if sin were conquered and subdued, then there would not be a venturing on Him. Jesus is honored by such presuming of misery upon mercy, of a real sinner upon a real Savior. But, say you again, faith is not in the power of the creature? Certainly not. But this is no discouragement, because it is the free gift of Him who, while He says, "Look unto me, and be saved," causes the blind to see; and while he says, "Believe, and you shall be saved," causes faith to come by hearing, and so enables the soul to venture itself and its sins upon Him. "Stretch forth your hand," He said, not because there was innate power in the withered hand, for it was dead—but power was with His word: the hand was stretched out in the obedience of faith, and made whole as the other. So, dearest friend, though your soul be impotent as that withered hand, your poor friend must set before you the way of faith, and the object of faith, even Jesus, the sin-bearing, sin-removing, sin-pardoning Savior, whose name was so called, because He will save His people from their sins. (1 Pet. 2:24; Zech. 3:9; Matt. 9:6) And she does this, not because there is power in her, or power in you—but because there is power in Him, and because "there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

To Him I affectionately commend you, that by the power of the Holy Spirit it may be unto you as John 11:25—"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live."

Accept warm love and best wishes from one who longs much after you in the affections of Jesus Christ, and remains most affectionately yours,
R. Bryan

Superabounding grace

To Miss M., August 24, 1852.

My beloved friend,

I most sincerely wish you a blessed evidence of your own election of God. To others this evidence is already open, in many marks and tokens of the work of grace, although to you it is at present sealed. (Jer. 32:11) Nor can you get at this comfortable assurance until the Divine Witness (Rom. 8:16) of the evidence opens and reads it to the joy of your heart. May He be pleased soon to come forth in your soul as the Comforter, the Spirit of adoption, and the Testifier of Jesus. His witnessing all your unbelief shall not be able to gainsay or resist; for it is with demonstration and power; and though

feeling vile, and utterly black in yourself, that will not invalidate His testimony at all, nor in the least way alter that adoption, which does not originate in the merit of the creature—but in the sovereign will of the Creator. "Of His own will He begat us," (Jas. 1:18) irrespective of anything in ourselves. Though all our blackness is fully known to Him, yet it has no influence upon His determination to put us among the children. Yes, He will cause even this our vileness to turn to His own glory. We may feel the very worst of all, and say, "I am not worthy to be called your child;" but the relationship remains unaltered, and our Father will not make us as one of His hired servants. The Prodigal must be brought in, and prove the affections of a Father's tenderness, (Jer. 31:20) though there be a time in experience when the child differs nothing from a servant, "but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father." During this time he is instructed and chastened (Psalm 94:12) out of the law, which "is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." Its deep spirituality discovers, by the light of the Spirit, our nature's deformity; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It judges also our thoughts, words, and actions, and pronounces condemnation upon them all. Meanwhile, the conscience is enlightened to see things as they really are; it fully joins with what the law says, and in the discovery of so much evil the poor soul judges itself unworthy of eternal life. Instead of finding proof that it belongs to the royal family of heaven, it feels much more like the servant of sin, like one who is led captive by Satan at his will; and yet all this time it is a child of God, though not as yet realizing this by faith in Christ Jesus. But when faith takes hold of Christ by the Spirit's power, there will be the witness within (1 John 5:10) of adoption, of sonship, and then it will be, "Knowing, beloved, your election of God;" and then you will stand astonished, both in time and eternity, at the riches of that grace which put you in the number of the Savior's family.

On recurring to your letter, I am reminded of North Wales, which you mention. I must not say much about it, lest I revive in you a pining for what you have not; but I may just say, I did exceedingly enjoy that lovely locality so new to me, combining mountain and marine scenery, both which were constantly before our windows—but not always visible, for the majestic mountains were obscured days together, being enveloped in a dense fog, something like that darkening unbelief which hides from the soul those hills whence alone our help comes. But as with renewed delight we hailed a returning view of the Welsh mountains, so does the poor soul welcome a glimpse of those "lasting hills," which contain the "precious things" just suited to its case. But we not only enjoyed nature's loveliness and grandeur; we also found some gems of grace, such as the Lord will own when He makes up His jewels: dear Welsh sisters, with whom we could take sweet counsel; sweetly proving that whatever be the country, or natural language—the new heart beats the same in all. Though I do almost extravagantly enjoy the wonders of creation, yet the wonders of Redemption are to me the cream of all; and to find one dear saint, though poor and mean, and despised of men, is treasure to this heart. Such was our privilege in North Wales, and amidst its many fascinations, this is the endearment of the remembrance.

Forgive me, dearest friend, for hinting above about your pining for what you have not; you will retrace from your own note whence the thought originated, in your extreme disquiet for want of country air. I do indeed think this is one point where your foe is gaining advantage, and adding much to your torture, in setting your eyes and heart upon something pleasing and in prospect, that you may fret for it; or upon something displeasing and present, that you may fret against it; and thus between the two you are kept too much kicking against the goads, and severe smarting is the consequence. I know your case is deeply trying, and I do affectionately feel for you, and long that it may be with you as Psalm 131:2, believing such a state of passive resignation would much reduce the bitterness of your suffering. I speak only in love, and hope you will not be pained. Tell me if you are. I like to know how

you feel, and would not therefrom sharpen words to wound you; but I am thoroughly convinced it is as you say in another part of your letter, that "we often magnify our trials by fretting, and striving to resist them;" and anxiously do I desire that you may be brought to bow your shoulder to bear, and yield your flesh a servant to that tribute which the Lord sees fit to lay upon it.

I have lately been thinking that there is a great difference in experience between being compelled to bear the daily cross, as Simon was the literal one, (Matt. 27:32) and taking it up as our Lord exhorts. (Luke 9:23) Oh, let us importunately seek grace from Him, that we may come to this daily self-denial. He only exhorts us to hard things in order to bring us to Himself for strength to do them, for "He gives more grace," and, when brought to entire resignation, the thing which did most distress us becomes much more endurable. Naturally, I have a very strong will, and therefore, as you may suppose, it has been much crossed. Too well I know the misery of fretting, and a little the mercy of being brought down, and saying feelingly, with the thorn at my bosom, "Your will be done." "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." Now do not say this is out of your reach: it is not, because "power belongs unto God," and all who are brought to sweet submission under trials are brought to it by Him. Seek it at His hands, that you may glorify Him in the fires.

The thing I am now seeking in my daily walk is a subdued will. Will you not join me? I do painfully feel that I have a stubborn will; but the acknowledgment of it will not do. I want it conquered, and for this, look to Him who has all power in heaven and earth. You speak of thinking yourself so much worse than I am. Oh, my dear friend, there is not under the canopy of heaven—there is not in the pit of despair—a viler sinner than I. This is a true confession. I may have been kept under more restraints than yourself; but if not open to such temptations, what merit in not falling into them? Besides, there needs not the outward act to constitute me guilty of any sin. When tried by heart-evil, I am indeed unclean, unclean, and this not only as knowing the seeds of all evil to be there—but as having felt the abominations—having sunk in the pit of corruption, and become "a burden to myself." You cannot go lower than I in guiltiness; but I have lately felt that if I had a thousand such guilty souls I could trust them all with my precious Savior, so great is the efficacy of His blood, so rich the merit of His justifying righteousness; and He loves to get glory by such desperate cases. Indeed, I believe He allows His redeemed to know so much of their nature's evil to magnify the riches of His exceeding grace in their esteem. I deeply loathe my evil—but do not regret that I have so deeply felt it; and I often thank the Lord for it, because those who have felt the heaviest load, "do prize forgiveness most." "I looked for hell"—I knew I deserved it, and felt almost there—but "He gave me heaven." Oh! should I not praise Him? And should not you be encouraged to hope? And now, farewell. The God of peace give you peace by the blood of the Cross. Excuse my defects.

With affectionate love, your much attached,
R. B.

"May the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion." Psalm 134:3

"The Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love." Psalm 147:11

Entering into rest by believing

"Mighty to save."

To Miss M., December 27, 1852.

My beloved friend,

It is said of Anna that after she had seen the Lord's Christ, she spoke of Him to all them who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. You, in experience, are looking for redemption, personal and powerful. What can I do better than speak to you of Him with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption; who is made of God unto poor bankrupt sinners "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption;" who is the Redeemer of such, and will thoroughly plead their cause; who is exalted "a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." And since, without shedding of blood there could be no remission, He Himself became a fountain from whence poured forth the crimson tide—the cleansing flood:

"When justice called for sinners' blood,
The Savior gave His own."

And since, too, the way of salvation is not by works but by faith, He gives that also, for He is the Author and Finisher of it, and thus He gives rest to those who labor—to those who are heavy laden with their sins, and weary with toiling in vain. When He sees their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left, He puts forth His power and enables them to believe. Believing, they enter into rest, and entering into rest, they cease from their own works, bad and good, and Christ alone is their all. Does not this suit you? All a free gift. "You, Lord, have wrought all our works in us," and "this is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent," which work He has wrought in whoever it is found. All such will freely acknowledge it, being saved by grace through faith, and this not of themselves, for it is the gift of God, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

I can tell you that this precious repentance-giving, pardon-giving, faith-giving, rest-giving Savior just suited me, when I said most feelingly, "I want not only a Savior full of grace, and truth, and love to those who believe in Him—but also a Savior full of power to those who long to believe and cannot." Such a Savior have I found, and this because He first found me. His name is Jesus, and He is so called because He saves His people from their sins. He has received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among us. Faith is one of His precious gifts: He puts it into the heart, and sweetly manifests Himself as the object of it; so that the helpless soul which is fearing it may perish for lack of faith finds itself made a believer, and wonderingly cries, "My Lord and my God!" Its mountain of guilt is thus removed out of the way, being cast into the red sea of a Savior's blood. It is no longer of doubtful mind—but, by the faith of the Son of God, can say--He loved me, and gave Himself for me. These are some of the wondrous works of Him who is "mighty to save;" and I trust, my dear friend, that, with unworthy me, you will be made a witness of what He can do in hard cases, whenever the heart is brought down with labor—when they fall down and there is none to help.

You say you have no power to believe. If you had, you would not be a fit subject for this glorious One of whom I am telling you, for it is to the faint He gives power, and it is to those who have no might He increases strength. He once saw a poor creature who had an infirmity, and had long lain in sight of a cure but could not get at it; "but when he knew he had been a long time in that case," He did not upbraid him for lack of effort—but brought him the blessing he could not fetch, and that in an unexpected and hopeless moment, as we learn from his own plaintive account of his state, John 5:7. Now you have not been thirty and eight years groaning with your malady, and learning your lack of power; therefore, I pray you, do not despair: you know not how near the moment is when He shall put

strength into you and say, "Arise and walk"—I mean in a spiritual sense. "Then shall the lame take the prey," and "leap as a deer! Yes, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

Remember, the time you have waited and the misery you have suffered is all as nothing in comparison with the greatness of the blessing you are waiting for. One moment's enjoyment of salvation will make amends for all. Oh, then, "though the vision tarries, wait for it;" "they shall not be ashamed who wait for Him." He will regard the cry of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

I will answer your question about Hart's Hymns. I have an old edition I much prize, containing his experience. How striking it is, and how he was favored with fellowship in the Savior's sufferings. "Erskine's Sonnets" I much enjoy, and have also an old edition of them. You know my dear parents loved savory meat, and I reap the benefit; though I am now brought to read little beside the "standard book," as my loved father used to call it. While I was in bondage I was much harassed with temptation while reading it, and could often get more from authors; but when Christ was revealed in my soul, the Bible became a new book and my blessed companion, of course not always enjoyed alike. I quite think as you do about "Nothing to Pay." I, too, have read it with a melted heart. Adieu, with kind love.

Your ever affectionate,
Ruth

The power of temptation and the arm of deliverance

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner." Proverbs 25:4

"I will put this third through the fire; I will refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say: They are My people, and they will say: The Lord is our God." Zechariah 13:9

"Behold I have refined you—but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

To Miss M., May 23, 1853.

My very dear friend,

How much I regret that my silence should have given you uneasiness, and that the enemy should have prevailed to afflict you thereby. As usual, his suggestions are entirely false. It has not been my heart—but merely my hand, that has been closed towards you, and the Lord has not shut me up from praying for you; therefore take encouragement to resist Satan, unbelief, and carnal reason, and do not so easily yield to their disquieting suggestions. You are often in great fear where no cause of fear is, and I believe God has despised those enemies which have encamped against you, and they shall be put to shame. (Psalm 53:5) You are ready to say, I cannot resist, I am so weak, I have no power or might against this great company that comes against me, and often know not what to do. Well, my beloved, you cannot do better than tell the Lord all that, and instead of holding parley with the foe, cry to Him to fight for you. Read in the wars of the Lord, 2 Chron. 19:12, 24, &c.; 18:31; 14:11-13; 1 Chron. 5:20-22, with many other places, and see what He has done for those who were too weak for their enemies, all which literal things are typical of the spiritual; and the Lord has, over and over

again, done the same in the soul's experience at the cry of faith, yes, even of "little faith." It matters not at all how weak you are—the weaker the better; that shall in no way hinder your possessing the "good land," for "they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them."

And so it is still; but the difficulty is, you, like the rest of us, are so proud, you cannot submit to be "nothing at all," but will be making calculations and drawing conclusions from what you are, what you do, what you leave undone, and what you deserve. Why, my dear friend, there is nothing of the gospel in all this; it is all muddy water from your own corrupt fountain, and your heavenly Father never intends you to get refreshment there—but only from the living water which flows from the throne of God, through the pierced heart of your crucified Surety. Oh! may that precious Surety say to you with power, "Come unto Me and drink;" thus will self be blessedly put out of the question, and you will experimentally prove that this strength, His doing, His dying, His deserving, are sufficient without any puny productions of yours.

I have been interested in observing that when I walk with my face toward the sun, my own black shadow is cast behind me; but when my back is toward the sun, this black resemblance of myself marches on before me—in full view. This "I considered, and received instruction." So that I was made to cry, "Turn me again, O Lord God Almighty; cause your face to shine, and I shall be saved." Ah! we do indeed need turning by Divine power towards the Sun of righteousness, that self may be out of view. For no precious fruits of humility, love, joy, peace, meekness, long-suffering, faith, will flow by looking at our own black self—but the hardness will grow harder, and the darkness more horrible, and pride will fret and grumble, because self can get nothing to glory in. All must be found in Jesus: "In Him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

How many years was I unwittingly going about to establish my own righteousness. (Rom. 10) I was truly loathing myself, and ever seeing "greater abominations," but mourning and fretting daily because I could get no better. I wanted to be spiritual, and holy, and humble, to be melted into contrition and repentance—but was looking to the wrong place for it, and never thought that the cursed leaven of pride was working in it all, and that I was dishonoring my precious Savior by not being willing to come to Him, empty, needy, naked, and filthy too! But how plainly I see it now, and therefore do I write freely in love to you, thinking you are tainted with the same malady. The Lord hasten the day of power in your soul, when you shall look unto Him and be lightened, and your face no longer be ashamed. (Psalm 34:5)

"In that day you will say--I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isa. 12:1-3)

I did quite understand your feeling of distress when Mr. D— spoke so confidently of your state, well remembering how a friend frequently grieved me in the same way, because I feared I had deceived her, though I tried much to make her know what a vile, black creature I was. However, I have lived to know that she judged rightly, and that I am indeed a vessel of mercy, though then I thought it so unlikely. "Grace, grace, unto Him."

I was thankful to hear from your last that you are a little better. The Lord perfect that which concerns

you. The spirit of prayer granted you after the severe buffeting of the enemy rejoiced my heart, and is surely a pledge of greater things to come. What a word is that, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him." And then, again, "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The Word is full of encouragement to tempted souls, and God is faithful. I believe He will arise for your help, and set you in safety from him that puffs at you. "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so that you are able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13)

I myself have had some sharp spiritual exercise, and have been often on the battlefield, and had to cry for help to One who is mighty; for my enemies were too strong for me—but the Lord was my stay, or indeed they had swallowed me up. "He delivered me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me. They attacked me at a moment when I was weakest, but the Lord upheld me. (Psalm 18:17-18) "He has not given me for a prey to their teeth—but has at times sweetly brought me into the banqueting-house to strengthen me for further conflict. I have indeed afresh proved what I am in my fallen nature. "Tekel" (that is--you have been weighed in the balance and found deficient. Dan. 5:27) is written upon it all; but "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" and it is a rich mercy to be driven from confidence in the flesh, though by roughest measures.

And now, may the Lord be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry: when He hears may He answer it.

Accept love and best wishes from your unworthy but affectionate friend,
Ruth

Jesus the Brother born for adversity

To Miss M., December 7, 1853.

My beloved friend,

I was pleased to receive a few lines from you, though you do not say much about yourself, and I fear from some remarks that your health is not materially improving.

From the views you sent me, I should think the place of your residence very lovely—but well know that no beauties of creation can satisfy a soul breathing after Jesus, who is the peerless Pearl, the matchless perfection of beauty and love. Every lovely feature in creation is but to shadow Him forth, and every sweet endearment in relationship just the same; all that is lovely and loving He comprises in Himself as He stands related to His Church. It is for her He is Emmanuel, and to her, as such, the chief among ten thousand, yes, the altogether lovely One! He stoops so low that she can lean upon Him in these lowlands of sorrow and sin, and He is so exalted that He can bear her up in spirit even above all heavens where Himself is ascended. He is so condescending that He communes with her in her pilgrimage dress, though all dusty and disordered with the weary way. He is so princely in His love that He has provided for her a court-dress, with all the accompaniments suited to His own

dignity. Moreover, the beauty she now faintly sees, and will one day fully see, in Him--the same beauty He will yet see in her, for when He shall appear we shall be like Him. And if now she feels too full of sorrow, and grief, and sin, to look so high--she may behold Him "in another form," even in "the likeness of sinful flesh," "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," in temptation, in poverty, in reproach. She may behold Him even not having a place where to lay His precious head. She may see Him weep, hear Him sigh, and hear Him groan, if she would know whether He can sympathize with her.

Yes, further, in the days of felt evil, when the iniquity of her life does compass her about, she may hear how He was touched with the very feeling of her infirmity in those memorable words, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me." But, you will say, He was holy and did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. Ah, true; but it was her sin that took hold upon Him—that very iniquity which is now pressing her down, it pressed Him until His precious blood was forced through His pores with agony intense. Here then is a companion in tribulation! On this Beloved the feeblest, faintest, vilest may venture to lean and to come up from the wilderness. His arm is power, His heart is love and tenderness. It has been a bruised, broken heart; it has felt the shafts of hell, the flames of wrath, and the bitter anguish of desertion amidst it all.

Look, O tempted, sin-burdened one! Look and love, adore and wonder, for there has been sorrow like unto your sorrow, and heavier too, and from the very same cause. Your Lord is so one with you that He calls your iniquities His own, and He was dealt with as if He were the transgressor. He was not a sinner—but He was made to be sin that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Though a sinner in yourself or in the first Adam nature, He took all your guilt with Him to the Cross. Go there and learn that God will by no means clear the guilty. Your Surety was accounted guilty for your sake, and therefore you are viewed as guiltless; and that same God who showed Him no mercy; is to you merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. All praise to a sin-bearing Savior—a sin-pardoning God, who can honorably blot out atoned iniquity with atoning blood. May the Spirit give application, and then your heart will rejoice, even yours. Then what a keeping of Christmas it would be in company with the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, born for you, obeying for you, bruised for you, bleeding for you, dying, rising, ascending--all for you; and pleading all on your behalf. It is thus to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and we find it glad tidings of great joy, which brings peace to our souls and reveals to us the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the burning bush. The Lord hasten in your experience the fullness of time when to you personally He will send forth His Son, and thus visit you with His salvation, that your liberated soul may say, Now, Lord, let You your handmaid depart in peace, for my eyes have seen and my heart has felt Your salvation! Once get a sight of the King in His beauty, and I know you would long to be with Him. You are now waiting for that sight, and He says, "They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me."

Your letter contains pleasing instances of the Lord's dealings. "I will work, and who shall hinder it?" Like you, I long to have His sensible presence when called to cross over the Jordan of death. Many an invitation have I sent up to my dear Lord to meet me on the banks of that river and "let me breathe my life out in the arms of His Divine embrace." You speak of your lovely retreat as being spiritually barren—but I trust you have some with whom you can take sweet counsel as you journey on; it is a privilege—"How dear to my heart is communion with saints." I shall be happy to hear from you soon, and wish you every blessing, and power to look up and see Jesus appearing in the presence of God for you. Adieu, my dear friend.

With kindest love in that precious Jesus who is our bond of union, I remain your very affectionate,
Ruth

Jesus, Jehovah Rophi

To Miss M., November 17, 1854.

My beloved friend,

I must first thank you for your last kind note, which was very sweet and refreshing. It is a privilege to hear of the triumph of faith, when flesh and sense would say, "All these things are against me." I do not know the lady you mention—but rejoice to hear of her testimony for the Lord, and am also thankful that it proved encouraging to you.

All the ways of the Lord are right ways, and we lose much sweetness for lack of resignation to His will in all things. While we fret against the Cross, it is felt the heavier. I believe, too, that we are losers by not receiving all events as from Him. By looking at second causes we come into great perplexity; and whatever creatures may intend against us, our Heavenly Father has some high purpose of grace in all that He allows to befall us. He could prevent every apparent wrong, and He would, were not each bitter in our cup essential for His own glory and our real profit. The assurance of this has been very healing to my spirit many times under blights and losses, and also under mental wounds from those dear to me. I feel there is some personal lesson in all these things; and often, when I would have felt ready to censure the instrument, I have discovered some pride or other lurking evil in myself, which the Lord aimed at by the troubling circumstance, intending by His Spirit to bring it to light and rebuke it. Thus has my mouth been stopped, and brought to kiss the hand which held the rod, however inexcusable in itself that rod might be.

Also, when the heart is thus humbled, the wrong of others against us seems but secondary to our own, albeit ours may be against the Lord only. Oh, let us seek to be so instructed of the Lord that the rod and reproof may give wisdom. Let us aim at confiding love in Him, for He is infinite wisdom, and needs none of our interference.

If, too, the Lord severely tries our faith, it is only to manifest Himself afresh as Jehovah Jireh (Jehovah will provide), or Jehovah Rophi (Jehovah our healer), or Jehovah Tsidkenu (Jehovah our righteousness), or under some other blessed covenant name, which is to be seen more brightly in the dark place. Moreover, if He takes away our Isaacs, it is only to make more room for Himself; and if He lessens our earthly store, it is only that we may live more immediately upon Himself. I want grace and faith to walk with Him when He walks against my flesh, not for destruction—but for salvation.

"Whoever is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." I am very fond of the word "understand" in that verse, because I am very sure we often misconceive the Lord's loving-kindness; and, judging by sense and carnal reason, think it is unkindness, when in truth He is in love drawing us nearer to Himself. And oh! is it not worth everything to be near Him, and to hear Him say, "You are ever with me, and all that I have is yours!" His heart of love, His life of obedience, His death and sufferings, His triumphant resurrection and ascension, His intercession, His glory--all are ours! And, what is best of all, He Himself is ours! For the glory of His person outmatches all that He has done, and to know for myself that "my beloved is mine" is a taste of the fullness of bliss!

Well, my beloved friend, the dark steps we were noticing above are just the way by which the Lord often leads His children on to this blessedness. They do not generally reach it all at once, though some receive the white stone much sooner than others—but many have to travel the barren land of deserts and of pits, to wander in a solitary way, to have their hearts made desolate and their earthly substance blighted, before Christ is revealed in them as their all—as the hope and the foretaste of glory. Well, it matters not how, if we do but come to know Him as ours in power and preciousness; and to this I doubt not you shall be brought, though often the way may seem long and your steps be weary.

The cost and consequences of the journey rest not with you. All the weight of it is upon Him who has said to His Father, "I will be surety for them, of my hand shall you require them: if I bring them not unto You, and set them before You, then let me bear the blame forever." Ever precious Jesus, so able, so willing to bear all the burden of all who come unto Him! If you have nothing in yourself to encourage you, which I am sure you have not, there is plenty in Him, for with Him is mercy and plenteous redemption. May the Spirit enable you to be coming, coming, ever coming unto Him; so will your faith grow, and your great enemy, unbelief, be trodden down. (See Micah 7:19) Fear not, the Lord will help you, He will strengthen you, He will deliver you. "God shall help her, and that right early." (Psalm 46:5)

I had not thought of writing so much without mentioning dear Mr. D—but have been unexpectedly led on. I gave your remembrance to him, and his kind heart was grieved at your disappointment. He said how much he wished to see you—but could not; and he often trembled when made useful to anyone, lest they should look to him, and then he knew something would come to disappoint and pain them. This is much what you express. The Lord seal the instruction, and teach us how to look through, and not to, the dearest instruments, that they may never come between our souls and Him! I much enjoy what I have read of the ancient philosopher who declined the riches and honors offered to him by the emperor, saying, he "desired nothing so much of him as that he would stand out of the sunshine." And so would I say to every creature and everything, "Pray stand from between me and the sun; eclipse not the glory of my Beloved, hide Him not in the least from my view, and let Him give or withhold what He pleases, so I may but enjoy Himself." This is the language of the new heart. The old heart is a very treacherous dealer, and when conferred with, brings on the doleful cry, "My leanness, my leanness;" but "the elder shall serve the younger," this is the cheering promise.

We have had Mr. H— here also. His testimony was clear, faithful, and savory. I think you would have enjoyed much the Sabbath morning from "I am the Lord that heals you." Mr. H— spoke of the leprosy and its cure, as a striking type of our soul malady; also of diseases we are subject to after a sense of pardon and healing. Faith is subject to paralysis; it gets weak and shaky, the soul looking more at self than Jesus—but of this disease "I am the Lord that heals you;" our love sometimes takes cold, no warmth or fervor felt; a sense of His love is the healing of ours, "who heals all your diseases."

But I must close this long note. Like you, I feel more anxious for health of soul than of body, that the life I live in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God, and that I may not live upon evidences and feelings—but upon Him alone by faith. Thus will evidences and feelings be kept fresh and lively; whereas while we seek to rest in them they must be withheld, that so we may trust in Jesus only.

In Him and His precious love I am ever yours affectionately,

Ruth

The Sin-bearer and the sinner

To Miss M., February 9, 1855.

My beloved friend,

I hope you are a little more looking unto Jesus—a little more leaning upon Him amid your many weaknesses. He can bear all your weight, for He has borne all your sins, which are the worst part of your burden. Oh, that by the Spirit you may get a faith's view of a crucified Redeemer!

"With your name upon His bosom,
In the garden bleeding, stooping,
To the ground with horror pressed."

"Heaviness in the heart makes it stoop," and that precious Sin-bearer had heaviness indeed when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The sins of His people, the curse of the law, the hidings of His father's face, all pressed His righteous soul as a cart is pressed under sheaves. His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and bore them away from us forever; and when we get the seal of it by the blessed Spirit in our conscience then we can say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to me!" "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died." Here, in Christ's obedience unto death, is satisfaction for law, justice, and conscience. Here is that which has satisfied Jehovah himself. Here then rest your weary soul, my beloved, and you shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. "They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Never was a sin-convinced, sin-wearied sinner cast off or cast out. This refuge is open for all such, and why, my friend, why not for you?

Who says you may not come? Only your own fears, and unbelief, and Satan; but these are evil counselors, and, like Ahithophel, they shall be frustrated. Our God will bring their counsel to naught. He will make the many devices of these crafty ones of none effect, for He has counseled to save you. He has devised means whereby you, His banished one, shall not be always expelled from His presence. "By the blood of the covenant" shall you be brought near, and by the Spirit's power. There is a cleft in the rock for you, and as in purpose you have been there from all eternity, so in your own experience shall you also be there in the appointed season. O that I might rejoice with you and know that the Lord had taken off your sackcloth, and clothed you with gladness, giving you "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Dearly beloved, you need not turn into yourself and say, "How unlikely." You are not in worse condition than the spendthrift prodigal. He was starving, helpless, and destitute when the gracious word was given—"Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! So they began to celebrate! (Luke 15:22-24) His own wilfulness and wickedness brought the misery upon himself, and yet that hindered not the flow of mercy and love, which comes all free to poor bankrupt prodigals. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself—but in me is your help." Our Father has "laid help upon one that

is mighty," even upon Him who was red in His apparel, who traveled in the greatness of His strength for the salvation of His people, and who speaks of Himself as "mighty to save." May the blessed Spirit testify of your interest in these things, and so be to you the Comforter.

With affectionate love, I remain your unworthy friend,
Ruth

The tried and convinced sinner encouraged

To Miss M., June 25, 1855.

My beloved friend,

I am sorry to hear you have been so much out of health and spirits; the latter is far the worst, for "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Satan seems to have gained sad advantage over you in causing you almost to give up communion and correspondence with the living in Jerusalem. Ah! how hard he strives to get us for himself, and to hinder us from anything which would tend to weaken his devices; and how we too often give place to him, and forsake our own mercies. But the Lord will not leave us in his hands. He may, when permitted, sift us as wheat—but our dear Redeemer says, "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Faith indeed often seems to fail us as to the exercise of it—but the precious grace itself shall never fail from the living soul until sight and full possession, make it no longer needful. Oh, that the Lord may be pleased to increase your faith, that you may resist the devil. He who has delivered you out of his kingdom of darkness can deliver you from the power of his cruel and cunning suggestions. He can teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight, and make you strong in faith giving glory to God. Oh, may He bruise him under your feet shortly, enabling you to overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.

You speak as though you had been under heavy trials. I can feel for you, having many crooks in my lot, and a sadly too susceptible and anxious heart which feels everything so much. But yet I can say with David, "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me." I do not find bodily affliction the most painful part of tribulation; many other things distress me much more; but the Lord knows best what to send; and a great mercy it is when He enables us quietly to take up the cross as it occurs, for everything is doubly bitter when our heart frets against the Lord, or even against our fellow-worms. They could not afflict us without His permission, and though that does not lessen their wrong, it may stop our murmuring, and humble us before Him, like David, who looked away from Shimei and said, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him;" and again, "So let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Therefore have you done so?" Oh, my beloved friend, whatever be the nature of your trials, whether they arise from self, Satan, or any other creature; there is but one refuge, one place of safe retreat, and that is Jesus—He who is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and from this cruel foe that has been striving hard to overcome you.

But, my dear friend, happy you who are brought now to judgment, that you should not be condemned with the world. Happy they who are now brought in guilty before God, and their mouths stopped. Their Redeemer is mighty; He will thoroughly plead their cause. By the scars in His own precious body He will show that their sins have been punished in Him, and that therefore they cannot be condemned; the sentence having been executed upon Him in their stead. Therefore it is written, "Cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the Lord's hand

double for all her sins." But am I, says my friend, among those thus described? Well, have you not been made feelingly to plead guilty? And if you have not yet sensibly received the full release by the "double," are you not waiting at that door, even the door of mercy? And is not your only hope in the death of the Redeemer, the King's Son? And are you not desiring that before long you may by faith find that you are really engraved on the palms of His pierced hands? Well then, if that be your position, I can answer for Him that you shall not wait in vain.

I do know enough of Him for that, and fear not to aver that in the pit of darkness, there is not one who perished hoping in His mercy, through His own blood, and waiting for His salvation. He is faithful, and what He says He means, and will perform, though earth and hell rise up against it. "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will never cast out." "Seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." "Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." The precious lips that spoke those words "were never known to lie;" but "your enemies shall be found liars unto you;" and "as the shepherd takes out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear," (Amos 3:12) (a poor mutilated thing;) so shall you be delivered, and stand upon the mount Zion above, with the harp of God in your hand.

Do not be alarmed, beloved, at my confidence: it is not grounded on you—but on Him who came into this dreary wilderness on purpose to seek and to save those who are lost. I wonderfully like those words of David, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant; for I do not forget your commandments." He felt that he had got into a labyrinth, and cried to his Good Shepherd to come and seek him, for he felt quite lost, and the answer is as above, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." So you see, if you are so sadly off that you cannot come to Him, He will come to you, and find you, and bring you home on His strong shoulder with rejoicing.

You speak of fearing that what you have felt is a delusion, and your convictions only the workings of your human nature. If it is so, something from nature will quiet them and satisfy you—but if they are from Jehovah the Spirit, nothing but reconciliation to Jehovah the Father by Jehovah the Son will bring peace—nothing but Christ will satisfy your soul. Judge now, I pray you, and do not give place to the devil—but give the Lord the glory due unto His name, and praise Him for opening your blind eyes, even if you think you only see men as trees walking, for He will most surely perfect that which concerns you.

He says, "Whoever offers praise glorifies me. Jeremiah 33:14, has just been brought home with sweetness to me. May the day of performing the promise draw near in your experience. I trust your health is again improving, and your mind more calm. In the winter there was every reason to think that I was about to go "home," but in Divine sovereignty the Lord has rebuked the disease for the present, and I may have long to sojourn in Mesech. Moreover, since "home" has looked more in the distance, many other storms have arisen, and trials crossed the path, that patience may have her perfect work, and faith plenty to do at the "court of requests." But though we are at times like Hannah, who was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet the end is to see more wonders from Him who has given that sweet bill of promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." O that I could honor Him more in the sunshine and in the storm, for He is worthy; but shame and confusion of face do indeed belong unto unworthiest me at all times. The Lord bless you, comfort you, set your feet upon the rock, and establish your goings there.

With kindest love, believe me, your ever affectionate,
Ruth

The snare broken

"Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?" Isaiah 2:22

To Miss M., January 19, 1856.

My beloved friend,

I am ashamed of my long silence. I think of you and grieve that your mind is still tried and perplexed by the inconsistencies of others, as I learned from your last pensive note. But, perhaps, before now that cloud has been dispersed. I earnestly hope that it is so, for, indeed, my beloved friend, there is so much crookedness, even in the living family, that we need to remember constantly the words of the Lord which head this page, and which were made powerful to my own soul a few days since. But how slow we are to obey this divine injunction. Even in this sense we may well say, "My soul cleaves to the dust," while we should pray for grace to cease from creatures, neither confiding in them too much for comfort, nor too much expecting to find all consistency within. Frail and imperfect are the best, and this is nothing new, for one of old says, "The most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge," and another, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

Oh! that your tried, tempest-tossed heart may be led to find refuge in the perfect One--the Friend who loves at all times, and sticks closer than a brother, for this precious "neighbor who is near, is better than a brother who is afar off." A brother may look on our wound and pass by on the other side—but this good Samaritan attends to our case from whatever cause be our sorrow, and whatever the hand that may have wounded. His oil and wine heal, and His sweet words soothe the troubled heart, for He has got the tongue of the learned, and knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He is merciful, and He can have compassion on the ignorant. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Him, so that He is anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and bring deliverance to the captives, and to open the prison to those who are bound, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Did I tell you how much I had been profited sometime since by Mark 1:18? The Spirit showed me how many things are as "nets" to entangle us, and to keep us back from following Jesus, and also in how many ways we may be using "nets" to catch some desire of our carnal hearts; but then how blessed when brought to that, "straightway they forsook their nets and followed him." You know, dear friend, that too much poring over the inconsistencies of others may become as a "net" to catch our own feet, and hinder us from looking to Jesus. A friend of mine was once grievously annoyed by what was God-dishonoring in another person. It fretted him much, though he had no power to prevent it; but at length he heard the Shepherd's voice, saying, "What is that to you? follow me," which broke the snare. It is vain to dwell upon that which hinders our own souls and helps no one.

How is your health now, and how is the health of your soul? Have you been brought to the venture of faith, even as one dear to me lately said in the view of the all-sufficient Savior, "I felt that I could venture the whole weight of my soul upon Him, though vilest of the vile I felt I was." This was my maid, who has been with us eleven years, and the Lord has just sweetly sealed her for His own, which has made me rejoice with exceeding great joy, for I have long been watching for her soul. Oh,

my dear friend, may the blessed Spirit bring you to this.

All your weight of sins, sorrows, and cares the Burden-Bearer can sustain. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." And it is no honor to Him to be carrying it yourself; it must sink you into gloom and dejection. A minister once said, "The Lord tells us to carry our cross and cast our care—but we try to cast our cross and carry our care." I felt much self-conviction from the remark—but must say with the Psalmist, "Nevertheless, he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not." S

o that, notwithstanding my willfulness and sin in many ways, I am still "the living, the living" to praise Him, as I desire to do this day, and to encourage you to put your trust under the shadow of His wings, for there is healing there. (Mal. 4:2) Do excuse this sad scrawl, I hope you will write soon, if able; and, warmly wishing you every covenant favor, I remain, with much love in our precious Jesus, your affectionate friend,
Ruth.

"The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down." Psalms 145:14

Tribulation works patience

"He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

"The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down." Psalms 145:14

To Miss M., April 21, 1856.

My beloved friend,

I have been much longing to respond to your last welcome and cheering note. I do indeed rejoice that you had such a comfortable visit from the Lord's dear servant, Mr. D—, and trust it was a lasting lift from the Lord Himself, and that you may not again sink so low as you did before, nor give place to unbelief and Satan—for these giant foes will raise questionings about the brightest manifestations and sweetest enjoyments. May the Lord rebuke them, and enable you to go forward trusting in Him, who will show you greater things than these.

I admire the Lord's work in the sweet effects you mention of being afraid to act to free yourself from trial, while you are kept waiting upon the Lord to see Him work and go before you in all things. This is very blessed and safe. One has well said, "When we follow the Lord and keep His company, He always bears our expenses; if we run before Him or go alone, He may leave us to bear our own." The Lord may lead us round—but he will lead us right. Oh! may you, my dear friend, be kept in a waiting frame of spirit; it is most blessed, though very contrary to our flesh. You know our time here is so short that if things of an outward kind be ever so disagreeable, it will soon, very soon, be over; and all that now annoys our flesh will, in the light of eternity, appear a very nothing. This thought reminds me of a dear young friend, who has only been married three or four years—but in that time has had a sea of tribulation to wade through. This has arisen from the sin of her husband, who should have been her comfort, instead of which his attentions have been bestowed elsewhere, and she has had to bear neglect, contempt, personal unkindness; and now for more than a year she, with her two children, has been deserted. But the Lord has sanctified the sorrow and drawn her to Himself; and most moving it

is to see her humbled, softened spirit—I mean spiritually softened, for she is naturally kind and amiable—and to hear her say she feels every step has been permitted by God, for if her path had been smooth, she might have rested in outward comforts—but now the world looks nothing to her, and things she once enjoyed have no charm. In speaking of probable future trial she said, "Oh, we have such a short time to stay here, it seems comparatively of little importance in what outward circumstances we are—just as long as the soul is right." This is a true testimony from a young disciple in deep trial. Oh! may we live in the spirit of it, and our daily cry be, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon me." In company with Jesus, the heaviest trials are borne as among covenant blessings, even the sure mercies of David.

We call ourselves "pilgrims and strangers," but surely if we were quite satisfied with being so, we would not be so disconcerted by the annoyances of the road and of the inn—for what is any place here but an inn—just a lodging-place for a little season until our Father sends for us home. If our fellow-travelers are unkind, unreasonable, or anything beside, yet we shall soon part. And perhaps after all we may find how much self-love has been prevailing in us, and how often we are murmuring about the mote in their eye and neglecting the beam in our own. Oh! my beloved one, may the Lord give us a meek, quiet, and patient spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price—though very contrary to our flesh. That has been a striking word to me, "We count them happy who endure." That word "endure" is worthy to be written in letters of gold. May the blessed Spirit set it in our hearts, and set our hearts steadfastly unto it in all the real or imaginary ills of life. To endure for Christ's sake breaks much of their force.

"He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness." (Malachi 3:3) Well, dear friend, we are both in the furnace! Much, very much vile dross has in my case risen up—but my blessed and patient Refiner sits watching the process. Nor does all this dross, hateful as it is, make Him forsake the work of His hands. He will have me know a little of what is in my heart, that I may know more of what is in His heart—even love, most invincible, unalterable, unquenchable love! Love that endures to the end, amidst all my wickedness, and wandering, and ingratitude. It is indeed marvelous! Into the blessed depths of this love I desire to be daily sinking, in all the fresh discoveries of my utter worthlessness and vileness—that thus I may praise Him more who has redeemed me from it all!

The Lord does not show us how bad we are to cause despair—but to show forth the riches of His grace in saving us, and to call forth new songs of praise to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!

Oh, my dear friend, Jesus is worthy to be praised in the depths as well as in the heights. He is near, and dear, and precious in the hour of affliction, and in the path of tribulation, where He gives some of His choicest fruits and wines to revive those who are faint and weary in the wilderness. I am most thankful He gave you such a seasonable refreshment; and, like Manoah, you will be saying, "O my Lord, let the man of God whom you did send come again to us." But I mean especially the Lord Himself, for it was His visitation that refreshed your spirit, and He sent His servant where He himself meant to come. Where He has been once He is quite sure to come again. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice!" Meanwhile it will be your mercy to be seeking for that excellent life of faith which is so strengthening to the soul, so glorifying to the Lord. Oh! may you be helped, yes enabled, "to trust in the Lord at all times;" not when you feel His love and have the shine of His

countenance—but also in the dark and wintry day when clouds veil your sky, and sorrow invades your soul. "When I am afraid, I will trust in You."

With kindest love and best wishes, I remain yours in Jesus most affectionately,
Ruth.

The plausibility of unbelief

"The Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought." Isaiah 58:11

To Miss M., June 10, 1856.

My beloved friend,

It has been a pleasure to hear from you and of the Lord's dealings with you, for I cannot but hope that the gloom around you is not quite so dense as in days gone by. The rainbow of safety and peace seems to be more discernible in your cloud. Surely we will praise the Lord for any tokens for good, knowing He is so faithful, that where He gives the least item of covenant favor, it may be safely taken as a pledge of the whole. It is well when faith is watching for any kind word from Him, and does immediately take hold of it and echo it back again, as did the messengers of the king of Syria to Ahab. (1 Kings 20:30-33) But ah! is it not true that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light?" They quickly take advantage for their own benefit in earthly things—but we are slow of heart in spiritual things—slow to believe what the Lord has done for us—slow to trust Him who has given us such exceeding great and precious promises; and ever ready to listen to Satan, unbelief, and carnal reason, instead of receiving His word with all readiness. What reason have we to cry, "Lord, increase our faith;" for really unbelief works at times so insidiously, it puts on the garb of humility and strives to make us consider it more humble and suitable for such great sinners as we are, to be doubting and holding back from the free promises of the gospel, instead of looking to Him, and expecting to receive of Christ's fullness. Oh! hateful dishonor to that able, willing Savior who "receives sinners, and eats with them."

Many in this day who in their judgment reject all idea of creature merit are yet really stooping under this infirmity wherewith Satan binds them, and which is, in truth, looking at self instead of Jesus—looking for something in the creature, instead of all in Him. I was held so long in this specious snare, and do now see it to be so derogatory to my precious Lord, that my soul burns with indignation against this most hateful sin. I rejoice to hear Bunyan call it "the white devil," and say, " Oftentimes in its mischievous doings in the soul it shows as if it were an angel of light; yes, it acts like a counselor of heaven, for it is that sin which of all others has some show of reason in its attempts, keeping the soul from Jesus Christ by pretending its present unfitness and unpreparedness, pleading a lack of more sense of sin, more humility, more repentance, and more of a broken heart.

It is the sin which most suits with the conscience. The conscience of the coming sinner tells him that he has nothing good, that he stands indictable for a thousand talents, that he is very blind, ignorant, and hard hearted; and will you, says unbelief, in such a case as you now are, presume to come to Jesus Christ?

It is the sin which most suits with our sense of feeling: the coming sinner feels the workings of sin and wretchedness in his flesh, and the wrath and judgment of God due to sin, and often staggers under it.

Now, says unbelief, you may see you have no grace, for that which works in you is corruption; you may also perceive that God does not love you, because the sense of His wrath abides upon you; therefore, how can you have the face to come to Jesus Christ?

It is that sin above all others that most suits the wisdom of the flesh. The wisdom of the flesh thinks it prudent to question awhile, to hearken to both sides awhile, to stand back awhile, and not to be too rash or unadvised in a too bold presuming upon Jesus Christ.

It is that sin above all others that weakens our prayers, our faith, our love, our hope, our diligence, and our expectations; it even takes away the heart from God in duty.

This sin, as I have said before, appears in the soul with so many sweet pretenses to safety and security, that it is as it were counsel sent from heaven, bidding the soul to be wise, wary, and considerate, and to take heed of too rash a venture upon believing. Be sure first that God loves you; be not sure of your salvation—but doubt it still, though the testimony of the Lord has been confirmed in you; live not by faith but by sense, and when you can neither see nor feel, then fear and mistrust, then doubt and question all. This is the counsel of unbelief, which is so covered over with specious pretenses that the wisest Christian can hardly shake off these reasonings." So says Bunyan; and these sayings have been very profitable to my soul.

May the Holy Spirit make them so to yours, my dear friend. I do greatly long that the sly workings of this vile sin of unbelief should be discovered, and that we should do with it as Esther did with Haman—bring it into the presence of the King to plead against it, and get its schemes against us broken by His power. I was rejoiced to hear that the Lord has guided you to the house of your Master's brethren, and that you are located in a pilgrim lodge. May the Lord grant you sweet communion, and bless the change to the benefit of your health. You mention our meeting face to face; it does not look likely—but we know not what is before us. I feel sure and certain you would be disappointed; you think much too highly of me. I am reserved, have not conversational powers, and am altogether a very poor creature—but just fit for Jesus to save; and by the grace of God I am what I am. The Lord bless you, and enlarge you abundantly in Christ.

With affectionate love, ever yours warmly in Him,
Ruth.

Excuse the many defects.

The bosom of Jesus

To Miss M., March 10, 1857.

My beloved friend,

I hope you are finding comfort in being with your dear sister, though there is no nest below without a thorn; this you well know, and therefore will not expect it. But there is a bosom without a thorn, even where John leaned, and where, by faith, unworthy I often lean, and find sweet rest and refreshing. And in that dear bosom and in that dear heart "yet there is room," room even for you, O weary one! There you shall find no rebuke, no spurning, no upbraiding. The invitation to the laboring and the weary is, "Come unto me," "and I will give you rest." Nor did those precious lips ever utter one

unmeaning word. He means it all, and His ear and heart are open to all the sorrowful agitations of those poor and needy ones whom He invites to His rest. How many a long sad tale has He privileged me to breathe out to Him; oh! such as none else would have had patience to listen to, or cared to remedy.

Others would have called it imaginary trouble; but He bore with it all, and either delivered out of it, or delivered in it—either made a way of escape, or gave strength to endure, through finding in Him enough to fill and satisfy under it all. Then at other times He has discovered the illusion of the enemy, kindly shown me that I really was fretting under imaginary evil, and, without upbraiding, has set me on high from him that was puffing at me. (Psalm 12:5) When under deep and sore trials, His heart, and arm, and counsel have been for my all-sufficient support. Oh! what a friend is Christ to me! And not less to you, my beloved. Oh! come then and magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. Do not let us be murmuring in these tents of flesh, (Psalm 106:25) but by faith going forth to Jesus. Our Father has not appointed us any portion in self—but He has given Christ, the true Manna, to be our portion for time and eternity; and the more we are brought to feed upon Him by faith, the less we shall need or desire anything besides. Oh! may the blessed Spirit bring us to this dear privilege, that so we may grow up into Him our living Head in all things.

Mr. W— preached two Sabbaths. The last was one of great power and blessedness to my soul. I do love to hear of those eternal verities upon which he so constantly dwells, even love in its fountain and source, far back before the worlds were made—the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Spirit fixed upon the Church, well knowing all that would come to her in the Adam fall—but determining to bring her safe up to glory through and notwithstanding all. Oh! it is good old wine of the kingdom, which strengthens my faith far more than endlessly dwelling on the changes in self and feeling. Those changes we must have while below, for the decree has gone forth that while earth lasts, day and night, summer and winter, shall not cease; but the way to be strengthened under them is to consider Him who changes not—but rests in His love, and ever beholds His people all fair in His own loveliness. May you be brought to rest in Him, my dear friend, for it is blessed indeed so to do.

I much enjoyed converse with the dear Margate friends. Jesus was our theme, and we were of one heart in desiring that He should be all and in all, and we have had an abiding blessing from it. . . . I hear Mr. D— is coming to England. I hope he may visit you, and that you may have as sweet a blessing as you did last time. The Lord sends His disciples where He Himself will come, and it is most sweet to converse of Him and with Him, and how the heart does burn while He opens in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. That is it, beloved friend, which is food to the soul, even the living Bread who came down from heaven; and as we feed on Him we forget our poverty in the first Adam, because we have found such superlative riches in the second. Oh! yes indeed, He is full of fullness just suited to our needs, and He says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." The more we receive, the more we are yet enlarged to receive; and the more we know and enjoy of Him the more we see yet to be known and enjoyed. What our Father has bestowed upon us in giving Christ is indeed astonishing, and will be unfolding to all eternity. May we be learning more and more of His unsearchable riches now; thus shall we be less affrighted at our own poverty, which we must also learn—but only to bring us to know more of the depths of His matchless love, and that we may rejoice and glory in Him alone. Ever praise Him, O my soul, who has remembered and visited you in your low estate, for His mercy endures forever!

Oh, my dear friend, this lovely Savior makes me so happy in Himself and with Himself that I

sometimes think I must be going home, though perhaps it is rather a preparative for some trial; but all, however, shall be well; through the fire and through the water He will bring us safely to the wealthy place. I have had a precious baptism of love the last three weeks—a sweet foretaste of the fullness of joy, and of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore. I am most unworthy; but worthy, ever worthy, is the precious Lamb; and our Father has blessed us in Him; therefore our own unworthiness is no barrier to the flowing of these heavenly streams; it has nothing to do with it. These streams rise in God, flow in Christ, and bear down before them all that is of the creature; yes in the ocean of His love and blood both self and sins get lost. For "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Do you know anything of the Orphan House at Bristol? I am deeply interested in it; it is so encouraging to faith. I am going to send you a report, hoping you may find it profitable, as I and many have done.

Your affectionate friend,
Ruth

The power of faith

To Miss M., June 3, 1858.

My beloved friend,

It is a mercy when we are enabled to deal openly with the Lord, and in child-like simplicity, to carry to Him every fresh perplexity, whether great or small. Nothing is too minute for His notice and counsel, nothing too mighty for Him to overrule and bring deliverance. Sometimes He brings deliverance in the trouble by blessed support and communion; sometimes deliverance out of the trouble by making a way of escape. But in whatever way He is pleased to work, He will answer those who call upon Him, for He has said, "Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you know not." "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." May the grace of wrestling prayer be given, that you may put Him to the test of His own words, and may you look to His promises and not to your own feelings for encouragement to plead. Our ever prevailing plea is, the blood and righteousness of Jesus, in whom all the promises of God are yes and amen; and sometimes warm feelings are withheld that we may trust alone in Him and not to them. Faith can venture before the throne with "Jesus only," but sense wants the honey of sweet feelings to offer (Lev. 2:11) with the Lamb, and thus to have more hope of acceptance; but we are accepted only in the Beloved, and our confidence before the Lord is to be by His blood alone through faith. (Heb. 10:19; Eph. 3:12)

Oh, my dear friend, may you meditate on these things, for I feel sure that the living Church is, in the present day, much held in bondage by seeking to live more by feeling than by faith. The life of faith is not an unfeeling life, a cold life, a half-hearted life, a life of worldly conformity; it is faith that follows Christ fully, and forsakes all for Him, as Joshua and Caleb did when all the people talked of stoning them. They well knew their own weakness and the strength of the enemy—but rested all their trust in the love and faithfulness of the Lord, while those who walked by sight and sense looked only at the giant foes, and at their own weakness. Thus it is with us spiritually; when poring only upon what we are, we grow more and more discouraged; and seeking water from the creature cistern, our tongue fails for thirst, for there is none there! But it is in the fountain of living waters, even our precious Jesus,

in whom all fullness dwells for poor and needy souls; and when we are brought to this extremity, He kindly says, "I the Lord will hear them: I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

How feelingly can my heart renew the cry, "Lord, increase my faith," for, alas! I often stagger through unbelief, not upon the subject of personal interest in Christ—but upon many others of less importance, yes and upon that also should I stagger if the Lord left me to the carnal reasonings of the flesh, "so foolish am I and ignorant." Well, may it please Him to bring us to say with the apostle, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith humbly presses on through the tribulation path, looking unto Jesus, and fully understands that excellent saying of Hewitson, "The soul will be staggered even by loose stones in the way--if we look manward; if we look Godward--faith will not be staggered even by inaccessible mountains stretching and obstructing apparently our outward progress." Perhaps I shall weary you; but this subject of faith is dear to my heart, and I do long for your furtherance and joy of faith. Let not that which is lame be turned out of the way—but let it rather be healed. "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you!" Yes, the feeble and the fearing He will save. Oh! may the feet and ankle bones of faith receive strength to enter into Christ the true temple, leaping and walking and praising God. I wish you every blessing, and all needful grace, for He is able to make all grace abound towards you.

With kind love, ever yours affectionately,
Ruth

Counsels to a young man entering the ministry

(To Mr. Macdonald. June 1855. Written by request, after a long conversation.)

Dear brother in the Lord,

You have set me a task in again requesting me to write the substance of our conversation. You are surrounded with many deep streams in books and in experienced servants of the Lord, and you have at hand "the well-spring of wisdom, which is a flowing brook;" also you have within the well of living water (John 4:14) springing up, and the anointing to teach; (1 John 2:27) but as you have again expressed the desire, I must try, in humble dependence upon the blessed Spirit, of whom our Lord said, "He shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you."

I think we first spoke of preaching to dead sinners—that they should be told of their guilty, lost condition, and entire corruption, their sin set before them; (Acts 2:23; and 3:13-15) also the only way of escape, and that continuing in sin, they must perish. (Psalm 9:17) Their responsibility must be appealed to, (Acts 17:28-31; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11) and that not on the ground of their capability—but of God's rightful sovereignty, He not having lost His right to command, though they have lost all power to obey. Their complete helplessness must be stated, not leading them to think there is any power in the creature, and yet showing how they are responsible to the Divine law, and that because of transgression the wrath of God comes upon the transgressor. We did not speak of the law—but surely its holy requirements should be set forth in their spirituality, in reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, in order to show out transgression; (Rom. 3:20) not because any can meet its demands, yet all are under it until released by the glad tidings of the gospel, coming by the Spirit's

power. The law is for "the disobedient," (1 Tim. 1:9) and what it says is to them who are under it, to stop every mouth, and prove all guilty before God. (Rom. 3:19)

Also it is needful to set forth what must be fulfilled before any can be justified. Then comes in the great Law Fulfiler, who could lay His hand on both parties, giving to the Lawgiver rich satisfaction, and to the lawbreaker honorable salvation. Here is "a door of hope," and "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," and when the Spirit opens the eyes, the sin-bitten look and live! Thus while the law shows out man's utter deformity, (Rom. 7:8, 13) it shows the Savior's beauty, for He was fully conformed to its pattern. (Matt. 5:17; John 17:4) By faith in Him the soul experiences full benefit of all He did and suffered, which is the only way of salvation, (Acts 13:38, 39; John 3:36) and this faith is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8)

As to direct addresses to dead sinners, it has been said, "You might as well stand in a churchyard and call to a corpse to come out of the grave," which is most true as regards the state of a sinner, and the power of a merely human call. But God told Ezekiel to prophesy to dead and dry bones, (Ezek. 37:2-4) which was like preaching to dead sinners. The Lord's ministers speak to all dead in sin, warning and teaching every man, being at the same time quite sure that the word will only be used to gather out those who are chosen, (Acts 13:48, and 15:14) and equally sure that this can only be done by the power of the Spirit. They, feeling much for perishing sinners, "preach the word," and warn with great earnestness, yet place no dependence upon their feeling or their earnestness or their use of the letter of Scripture—but entirely on the Spirit, without whose power there will be no signs following, neither the quickening of the dead, nor the comforting, reproof, and edifying of the living. Therefore, while warning and teaching in season and out of season, as Col. 1:28, 2 Tim. 4:2, they continually recognize that God must give the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6, 7; 2 Cor. 4:4-7)

We spoke of exhorting dead sinners to pray. Prov. 28:9, and Prov. 15:8, seem to be against this, the sacrifice of the wicked being there said to be "an abomination to the Lord;" but it is evident that Peter did so exhort Simon Magus, (Acts 8:22, 23) for he told him to repent and pray for forgiveness, even while plainly perceiving that he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Also, he exhorts the Jerusalem sinners to repent, (Acts 3:19) yet not with any view to creature power either in them or himself, for, in Acts 5:31, he clearly states that repentance is the gift of Christ; but while he so exhorted them, the Lord blessed the Word, for we read that many which heard it believed. (Acts 4:4) Ministers should so use the Word as the sower does the seed, knowing that the Spirit alone can prepare the heart and give it entrance as well as cause it to spring up.

We spoke of the invitations of the gospel as being given to character. Are not the hungry invited to the bread? the thirsty to the waters? and the weary and heavy laden to Christ for rest? And while the character is described, many poor and needy ones will find their token. But, then, we saw they are not to rest in being the character—but seek relief and rest alone in the Savior, as He says, "Look unto me and be saved;" and it is written, "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." The Spirit does not direct to His own work in them—but to the work of Jesus, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." The Spirit says, "come," and the bride echoes His word "come;" and why? "Come," because the fountain is so full and free—the blood so life-giving and strengthening—the rest so refreshing! "Come," because the blood is so efficacious to cleanse, the righteousness to justify. Come to Jesus as sinners, His benefits are for sinners. This encourages seekers who do not know their "election" of God, which is a glorious truth—but not the first step on the ladder—they have to do with "calling," and that is to sinners. (1 Tim. 1:15) The Spirit

makes them feel that they are sinners, and the Spirit directs them to the Savior as crucified for sinners, and He often does both by the preaching of the word. And as the soul is enabled to come to Jesus, and to look away from self to Jesus, the Father is honored who gave Jesus, (2 Cor. 9:15) and draws sinners to Jesus, (John 6:44) and accepts them in Him. (Eph. 1:6) The Spirit is honored who testified of Jesus, (1 Pet. 1:11) and Jesus is honored in what He has done and suffered. (1 Pet. 2:24) Thus the Triune Jehovah is glorified, and the soul strengthened to "walk up and down in the name of the Lord." (Zech. 10:12)

We spoke a little of preaching personal experience. Experience must not be put in the place of Christ, (2 Cor. 4:5) nor encouragement from experience used instead of encouragement in the Lord our God; (1 Sam. 30:6) yet to tell somewhat, at times, of personal deliverances may more reach the case of tried and tempted souls, than only stating the Lord's power and willingness to deliver. To describe the malady and tell the skill of the physician may be the principal thing; yet for the minister to mention occasionally some feature in his own case, and how the efficacy was personally proved, may tell home on the heart of those who are in soul-distress.

Paul did not scruple to tell what he had experienced when cited before the rulers of his people, (Acts 22, 26) though this may not be considered as an example of preaching. But may not 2 Cor. 1:4-6 bear favorably upon some use of personal experience? You know we fully saw that some of the Lord's ministers are more used for comforting and edifying His people, and others for the calling of His dead—the Spirit working in each individually as He will.

On personal experience we remarked, that while it is good to live in a constant sense of dependence, feeling that without divine power we cannot think, speak, or do anything to the divine glory--yet that it is making a wrong use of this, if therefrom we draw excuse for an inactive or unexercised state of soul, which rather betokens unhealthiness than true dependence.

The Lord having given us natural life, we look for Him to give power for the exercise of that life (when we are in health) in eating, drinking, walking, and working. And so being made spiritually alive in Christ Jesus, it is our privilege to look for divine power to exercise the spiritual faculties and the graces of the Spirit; not only to recognize that we have life—but that we may be feeding on Christ, rooting in Him and growing up into Him; so that while deeply feeling the truth of His words, "Without me you can do nothing," we may also come to the experience of His servant, who said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Not only acknowledging that "in Him all fullness dwells," but seeking, by the Spirit's power, to have the exercise of faith thereupon, and be receiving of that fullness grace for grace. By exercise, faith is strengthened.

These were the points of our converse, and both our ideas are embodied, though many fresh scriptures have flowed in writing.

You must be sure to send me word wherever you differ, as it may tend to edification. Further search into truth is not labor in vain, and most sweet is the promise, John 16:13. The Lord ever bless you and set you apart for Himself by the Spirit's anointing. "Meditate upon these things, give yourself wholly to them."

Ever yours in Jesus,
R. B.

Counsels to a young man entering the ministry

"Is it well with you?" 2 Kings 4:26

To Mr. Macdonald, September 1855.

My dear friend,

What will you have thought of me for being so long in answering your most welcome letter? Perhaps you will consider it a fresh proof of human fickleness, and imagine that I am forgetting you. Well, I am sure, it is peculiarly needful for you ever to remember the Divine injunction, "Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" I am sure a heart so sensitive as yours has often smarted, often bled, from wounds given by those you love; but it is all permitted in order to bring you to rest on His dear bosom, on which the favored disciple leaned—for Him you can never love too much. I know, too, that my poor friendship would not be worth one regret; but I am far from forgetting you, and desire ever to plead for you before our Father who is in heaven. He knows your temperament, your situation, your conflicts, and all about you. His eye is upon you; His heart is toward you in all your wanderings; and because you are not walking closely enough with Him, He will sometimes send disappointing and trying providences to bring you nearer to Him.

I long after you in the Lord, that you may know experimentally the full privilege and blessedness of union to Jesus, that you may dwell in divine love and drink deeply of the waters of salvation, for so you will be best qualified to commend them to others. For this you have need to be much in the closet, pleading much with the Lord to fill you with the Spirit, who shall teach you all things, and lead you into all truth.

Some people hold up one part of truth; but all the truth of God is precious. May you reject none—but prize all, and be led by the Spirit to receive it and search into it, and never be warped by any part of it or by creature opinion, that your faith may "not stand in the wisdom of men—but in the power of God." "Sanctify the Lord Almighty Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." Oh, may He make you a clear witness for His truth, and may that truth make you free from every error and false way. May the blessed Spirit correct all error in each of us, and grant that in His light we may see light.

I gather plainly from the Scriptures that all the wicked are to be warned, the thirsty to be invited to the waters, the hungry to the feast, those who have no money to the wine and milk, and, then, the large, broad, sweet word in Revelation is "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Beyond this I think you could not go, because all would not be willing. "It is God who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." You cannot enlarge your invitations too much to those who are willing, and you cannot err on the other side by keeping within the limit of Scripture warrant. Do not press this or any other point slightly; many, by so doing, have "daubed the wall with untempered mortar." Do not go for counsel to human authority, even the highest—but seek on your knees, to have these things made plain to you. It is a solemn thing to stand as a watchman between the living and the dead. As you have written freely, I do so too. We have no thought of contention—but write affectionately in search of the truth; I, in prospect of eternity, you (if spared,) with the prospect of telling to dying fellow-sinners

the way of salvation. Surely each of us has peculiar need to be sober and watch unto prayer; and, perhaps, you sometimes feel "who is sufficient for these things?" But your sufficiency is of God, by whom alone the stripling David delivered the lamb out of the paw of the lion and the bear. May that same God send you to proclaim deliverance to many a lamb of the Savior's flock whom the roaring lion is seeking to devour.

Ah, my brother, the Canaanite will to the end be still in the land, and we shall often groan, being burdened; but we must seek that these Canaanites may be more and more put under tribute (Joshua 17:13) by the power of the cross, and the blood of Jesus received by faith. You know the original inhabitants of Canaan are taken for a type of the evils of our nature, and the great sin of Israel was being too friendly with them. Does not this tell home upon our experience? Is there not at times a parleying with besetting sins and inward evils, which have often cast us down wounded? The indwelling of sin will remain while we are in the body; but if our souls are lively and healthy, we shall be seeking for its power to be more and more subdued; not by our own efforts—but by faith in Jesus.

If we feed this serpent, it will bite us in return; if we give liberty to these Canaanites, they shall be pricks and thorns to us. Numb. 33:55, Josh. 23:12, 13, with some other like passages, have been in this sense very instructive to me. Oh! I am an evil creature, I have been overcome by inward evil again and again, and have often been too friendly with the natives of my old heart. This makes me now fear anything that ministers to them; this makes me shun even "the doubtful territory," because I am sure that there they may get encouragement to lift up their head. In fact, my dear brother, I am so weak, so sinful, that I am never safe away from the cross of Christ. There we not only learn the crucifixion of the world—but the crucifixion of self! And as the evil that is in us stirs and strives, we can only have victory by His cross and by His blood, which CLEANSSES from all sin. I think none can have been more tried with inward evil than I have; but, even after a defeat, the Captain of the Lord's host has shown me that all my victory is in Him and by Him; so that, while abased in my own eyes, and loathing myself in the dust; I have understood, to His praise, that in the highest sense "her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned, for she has received of the Lord's hands double for all her sins." Cheer up, therefore, press on towards the prize, tarry not in all the plain; your Lord has promised that "sin shall not have dominion over you," but He has also said, "he who sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption," and "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Of both these I know the bitterness, and their best remedy is living by faith on Jesus, who has put away all our sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Lord strengthen you in the conflict. The beloved apostle says, "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." And Paul says, "Young men exhort to be sober-minded." . . .

This is a land of clouds and of storms—but they send us afresh to the hiding-place.

"Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
'Til the storms of life are past;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh receive my soul at last."

Sweet to the weary one will be that message, "The Master has come, and calls for you." And, now, farewell; "the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." May we do so too; there is a spring in the rock which flows sweetly for all the inhabitants. May you drink thereof and

afresh lift up your head with joy. The Lord enrich you with covenant favor, and grant you such revelations of a precious Jesus as shall eclipse all beside.

Believe me yours,
R. B.

The exercise of faith

To Mrs. Turner, November 27, 1855.

My beloved friend in Jesus,

"Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you," but be comforted in knowing that the Lord's gold is always tried with fire, and that the trial often comes in a time and way least expected; like him of old who said, "When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, then came darkness. I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation." And thus it seems to have been with you in the change of your minister, which must have been very trying; but

"God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Still wait on Him in wrestling prayer, and before long the dark cloud will burst in blessings on your head. The Lord often puts a death upon means and ministers, because we are so prone to "look to them, instead of through them." "Power belongs unto God;" and the most suitable and efficient ministry is only a blessing as He makes it so. In order that we may learn this experimentally, and be taught to live in simple dependence upon Himself, He will sometimes cause the Brook of Ordinances to dry up for a season, by which I mean we shall feel no power in them, and the minister whom we have found most profitable shall bring no message from the Lord to our souls. I have been in this case, my dear friend, and have had to bless the Lord for it afterwards; for although very painful, yet the blessed Spirit does thereby teach us to profit, and bring us to say with David, "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

I am grieved to hear that you are suffering serious bodily affliction; but if in it you find Jesus, it will indeed be to you a cup of blessing, as I have fully proved; for as the bitter waters of Marah were made sweet by the healing tree which Moses cast into them, even so the most bitter affliction is healed of its bitterness when by faith we apprehend a precious Jesus as the Tree of Life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. I think I told you how much I have enjoyed these words, "who heals all your diseases," as regards myself; not that my body is healed of the disease, or is ever likely to be—but the disease itself is healed of all that would savor of wrath, curse, or bitterness; it is all sent in love, though disagreeable to the flesh; and the spirit seeing so much, so very much mercy in it, can feelingly and joyfully say, "It is well."

This, however, is only "by the working of his mighty power," for when I was first fully confirmed as to the nature of the malady, gloom overhung my mind, and I could not for some time feel as I desired. I have sometimes thought it was like the first day—evening and morning—not the brightness first—but the shade. My soul did groan unto the Lord for a blessing in it—but I could not for some time spread out my case before Him, or "fill my mouth with arguments." Yet He hears "the voice of our weeping,"

and our groaning is not hidden from Him; yes, it "enters into his ears." He knows what it means, and that we would say and feel if we could, "Your will, not mine, be done."

We may groan and sigh, and think we cannot pray—but that groan and that sigh are prayer in His account, and He often answers them, as this unworthy heart can testify; for though in one part of this affliction my mind was enveloped in cloud, yet before long the blessed Sun of Righteousness did arise with healing in His wings. Then was sorrow turned into joy before Him, and gloom and darkness fled away at His presence. O beloved, He can take off the keen edge from everything to which our frame is subject, and turn the curse into a blessing, yes, turn the water of affliction into the wine of consolation. I have been led quite unintentionally to speak thus of myself; but perhaps those things flow most freely which we have ourselves tasted and handled; and as you are now a "companion in tribulation," may the blessed Spirit breathe into your soul some word of comfort or encouragement, that by His power you may be strengthened with might in the inner man unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.

May I be allowed to say that whatever be the nature of your affliction you will find it weakening to look at it; but, looking unto Jesus, you will have, moment by moment, incomings of strength and support—not a stock in hand—but just as you need it. When Peter looked at the waves, he soon began to fear and to sink—but while he looked at his Master, though they were still boisterous, yet all was well. So I find it, and so will you. When looking at this or that painful thing it is quite too much for us—but when looking unto Jesus, and leaving all to Him, we are borne through the trial, and the very mountains become a plain; yes, and the floods which we thought would overwhelm us are made to divide that we may pass safely through.

May the Lord increase our faith, and cause us to live in the fullest privilege of those deep words, "You are not your own;" and may He be pleased so to nourish your faith by His word and Spirit that you shall find how sweet it is,

"To lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

Then you will say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Whatever your present state may be, my heart would say to you, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Nothing! He can support and deliver; He can make you joyful in the affliction, and then bring you with joy out of it. If it be His holy will, may He soon command deliverance for you, saying, "I am the Lord who heals you."

I trust your soul is more at rest in Jesus. Oh! may He bring you fully into that liberty wherewith He makes His people free, which is such a liberty as the debtor has when his surety has paid all he owed; such a liberty as the prisoner has when he is told that the law has now nothing against him. "Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us." (Rom. 8:33, 34)

But, say you, am I the character here spoken of? Read Rom. 7. There the character is described to whom belongs the "no condemnation" of Rom. 8, and I do think yours is there described; but as long as we look to our evidences for comfort we shall be full of disquiet, for we discover such weakness in our faith, such wavering in our hope, such coldness in our love, yes, such shortcoming in everything,

that we cannot find here any rest for the sole of our foot as regards spiritual confidence. It must be all in Christ! "He is the rock, and his work is perfect," while our works are all broken and faulty. Oh! may the blessed Spirit set your feet upon this Rock, and establish your goings there. May He enable you to make the venture of faith, just as you are, with wants and woes, sins and fears.

"Venture on Him, venture wholly!
Let no other trust intrude."

And it is not only one venture—but many. The life of faith is continued venturing afresh, finding no more in self to encourage us at the last than at the first, remembering in the midst of all discouragements how "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." And that is just what faith does. By reason of the flood of corruptions within and tribulation without, the poor soul can find no place of rest—but, by faith, she flies to the Ark, and the Lord pulls her in. I commend you to that precious Jesus who still "receives sinners, and eats with them."

And, wishing you every covenant blessing, remain in His warm love your unworthy but affectionate friend,
Ruth Bryan.

Healing leaves for the sorrows of the way

They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put Him." John 20:13

To Mrs. Turner, May 5, 1856.

My beloved friend,

The above was the sorrowful lament of one who had known the presence of Jesus, and now felt His absence; who had enjoyed His company, and now mourned the loss of it. All the world was nothing to her without the Lord; she came to indulge her love and grief by adding "sweet spices" to the myrrh and aloes which were already wrapped with His precious body—but even that body was gone, this last solace was denied her. And, oh! what a sinking, saddened heart she had, when, weeping and wondering, she looked again into the sepulcher. Methinks it was a hopeless look; she had already seen that the holy body was not there—but she would look once more at the very spot where it was laid. And what was her joy when she was greeted by His living voice calling her by name! She expected not to hear that voice again, she had no thought of beholding a risen Redeemer; but He had said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice," and His words were now sweetly fulfilled in this seeking soul, who, having much forgiven, loved Him much.

But perhaps you will wonder what all this has to do with you. Why, my beloved, I have heard from our dear Mrs. N— that you are depressed, and so I have been thinking that, perhaps, like poor Mary, you are feeling as if you had lost your Lord. Then, when He stands afar off--all looks gloomy, afflictions are more painful, trials more perplexing, and even mercies look less cheering. The poet has truly said—

"I can do all things, and can bear
All sufferings, if my Lord be there;

Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While His left hand my head sustains.

"But if my Lord be once withdrawn,
And I attempt to work alone;
When new temptations spring and rise,
I prove how great my weakness is."

We are so prone to commit these two great evils—departing from the Fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. And our wise and gracious Lord will let us, for a season, reap the fruit of our doings, in order to make our folly hateful to us. But He will not always chide nor cast off forever. He will return unto us with mercies, and with healing in His wings. He is the good Samaritan, and if we have spiritually fallen among thieves, who have stripped us of our garments of praise, and robbed us of the joys of His salvation, and wounded us until we feel half dead; though He may first let us prove that all "self-helps" and creature helps are vain, yet at length He will be sure "to come that way," and minister to our needy case, saying, "I am the Lord who heals you."

But if this be not your case, and that rather in sovereignty He has been pleased to withdraw His blessed presence, saying, "It is expedient for you that I go away," and you, like Mary, are sorrowing; yet, dear friend, you do not sorrow without hope. He has not only said, "I go away," but also, "I come again unto you;" and by the absence of sensible enjoyments for a season, He means you to learn more of that life of faith which is honoring to Him and strengthening to the soul. He says by the prophet, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light, (or bright shining)? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." So whatever be your case, there is a remedy in Jesus, which the blessed Spirit will bring home and apply, causing you to sing that dear wilderness song, "He restores my soul!"

Have you wandered? The good Shepherd will seek you out, and bring you back. (Ezek. 34:11, 12) Have you sought help from creatures? He will disappoint you there, and give you all in Himself. (Hosea 2:7, 14, 15) Have you sinned? Your advocate pleads for you, and His precious blood cleanses you from all sin. (1 John 1:7, 2:1) Has your Beloved withdrawn Himself? Arise, and seek Him in the Word, in the ordinances of His house, and in your closet; then before long He will be found of you, and you shall joyfully say, "I found Him whom my soul loves." It is not in vain to seek Him, to wait on Him, and to wait for Him; all of which the blessed Spirit will enable you to do. But should you be tried with an increase of bodily affliction, your blessed Lord is the Physician of value who can reach and touch that case also, therefore do not pore over it—but take it to Him with whom all things are possible; yes, He can even bring you a step higher than all that has been said, enabling you to rejoice in His will, when most contrary to the flesh, and to live daily in the spirit of that profound sentence, "Your will be done." Oh, that is a blessed state! then is the mind kept in perfect peace, being stayed on Him. May the Lord bring us to it, by His own power, and for His own glory!

I have been very weak and ill—but am just reviving again for a season. "My times are in Your hands," and whether it be health or sickness, if Jesus be but glorified, it shall be well. We are His dear-bought purchase. Oh, what a price has He paid for us! And will He allow sin, or Satan, or any circumstances of body or mind, to separate us from Him, and rob Him of His right? No, never, never! He loves us too well; in all things we shall eventually be more than conquerors through Him who loves us. Cheer up,

beloved friend; He may allow us to wade deep in our own corruptions; He may bring us through fire and through water of temptation and tribulation—but He will bring us out into the wealthy place, and we shall see His face with joy. "Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it." We have you often in remembrance; and I shall be happy if, before this reaches you, the gloom you have felt be past, and you are filled with praise and thanksgiving to Him who alone is worthy. Seek for close walking and much communion; and may you daily "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." May every covenant blessing be with you.

Kind love from your poor unworthy friend and fellow-pilgrim,
Ruth Bryan

Comfortable words for a sorrowing spirit

"Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" John 20:15

To Mrs. Turner, August 13, 1856.

My dear Mrs. Turner,

Once again I take up my pen to greet you in the dear name of Him who was anointed to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty those who are bruised, and to comfort those who mourn—that those who mourn may be exalted to safety. I understand that at this time your harp is on the willows, that you are a woman of a sorrowful spirit, and one of those who mourn. I know not what is the cause of your being at present cast down—but your heavenly Father knows, and He has promised that He will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear, and that, with every temptation, He will make a way to escape. "Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it."

You know David said, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path," implying that He did not know it Himself. And Job said, "But He knows the way which I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." And when was this? Why, it was just when he went forward and backward, to the right hand and to the left, in search of Him—but he could not find Him; yet he believed that the Lord knew all, and would bring him out of that hot furnace even as gold. Ah, say you, "but I am not gold." Well, beloved, that may be so to your view, because the dross is rising up, and you can see and feel nothing else. But the great Refiner sees differently, and I quite believe that it will be proved that "better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

Many of the Lord's people have come into very dark and intricate paths of experience—but never were they left or forsaken, although many have often feared it, saying, as David, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." But did he perish? No! Neither shall you; the Lord would not have showed you such things if He had meant to destroy you. It is to humble you and prove you, that He may do you good in your latter end; and when He has shown you a little of what is in your heart, He will show you something of what is in His heart—even "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." He will then reveal the everlasting love which has been fixed upon you from all eternity, and is now drawing you to Himself. Yes, you shall see such love flowing from your Father's heart in the precious gift of His beloved Son, whom He delivered up to the sword of justice and to the curse of the law for your sake—that though you find nothing within but abomination, and nothing without but sin and shortcoming, though you feel yourself full of wounds and bruises and putrefying

sores--yet shall you experience that with His stripes you are healed, in His blood you are cleansed, and in His righteousness you are justified.

Hear what He says, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in me is your help." You may be now learning something of the depths of your malady—but it will only enhance the blessing of the cure. "The deep of your misery calls unto the deep of His mercy," and it shall not call in vain. Satan, the devouring lion, may be roaring against you, he may open his mouth at you—but the Lord will not leave you in his power; the good Shepherd will deliver you even though you feel broken and wounded. (Amos 3:12) Whatever the enemy touches, he shall not touch your life, for that is "hidden with Christ in God." O my dear friend, I know his fearful power! there was a time when I felt as if I was in his mouth—but he was not permitted to close it upon me; the Lord graciously delivered me, and I live to encourage others to hope in His mercy.

I have also known what it is to travel through the wretched wilderness of my own heart, and learn something of its corruptions—feeling hard, cold, barren, prayerless--and everything else that is hateful. It was like that dreary land mentioned in Jer. 2:6, and it felt as solitary as if none else could be there—"they wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way." But One eye was watching, though unseen; One arm was supporting, though unfelt; and at length the Sun of righteousness arose upon my sorrowful soul, and, "turned the shadow of death into the morning." Then I wanted to fly away from these lowlands of sorrow, and be at rest in His bosom forever—but He said, "Go back and tell your friends and neighbors how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion upon you." Many years have passed since then—but I have not yet spoken half enough of His wondrous love; and so I now say to you, He has delivered, He does deliver, and in Him we trust that He will yet deliver.

You cannot be more gloomy, helpless, hopeless, and unbelieving than I was, and "He who has delivered me from so great a death" will deliver you also. "His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear!" And if your iniquities have separated between you and your God, the precious blood of Jesus cleanses them all away, who Himself says, "Look unto me, and be saved." The bitten Israelites were not healed by looking at their wounds—but at the brazen serpent, which was a type of Christ; and so while you are poring over your sins and yourself you will only sink lower. "Looking unto Jesus" is the way of deliverance. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." Perhaps you say, "But I cannot, He is hidden from my view." Well, my beloved, if you cannot look at Jesus yet, seek to be looking towards Him, as Jonah 2:4, and it shall not be in vain.

Whatever be your case, this is the way of relief, and from this way Satan will mightily struggle to keep you, knowing that thereby he will be overcome. The cross and blood of Jesus are more than a match for him; and when the vilest or weakest sinner shelters there, his fiery darts are quenched, and the prey is delivered. May the blessed Spirit enable you to look forth with the eye of faith to the Lamb slain, and to come away from self and all besides--to Jesus. "Unto whom coming as unto a living stone." Oh, come away, come, come to Jesus! "He will never cast you out." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come," and by the Father's drawings you shall have power so to do; for "He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might He increases strength."

Oh that I could so speak of the worthy Lamb as to set your heart on fire with love to Him and longing after Him, that you might keep following Him like those blind men, who, when told to be quiet, cried

out the more a great deal, "Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on us!" He granted their request, and He will grant yours! His delays are not denials. It has been well said, "If Christ seems to keep His door closed against you, it is not to shut you out—but only to make you knock the louder." Oh, we do our precious Jesus great wrong in our hard thoughts of Him, because He does not answer immediately! "Lord, increase our faith." Adieu, dear friend. The Lord bless you, and in His own time strengthen, establish, and settle you.

With kind love in our adorable Emmanuel, I remain, though most unworthy, yours affectionately,
Ruth Bryan.

"I have seen violence done to the helpless, and I have heard the groans of the poor. Now I will rise up to rescue them, as they have longed for me to do." Psalm 12:5

A foretaste of the glory which excels

To Miss C., May 24, 1838.

My dearest Anne,

Join me, I beseech you, in praising and adoring that precious Jesus, who has done so much for such an unworthy worm as I am. The language of my heart is, "What shall I render to God?" for again have I been favored with draughts of heavenly joy and unutterable bliss. Again has the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity revealed Himself to me in the person of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit. Oh yes, the bright beams of uncreated glory have again shone upon my soul in the face of my Beloved, in whose life-giving countenance their radiant effulgence is so softened that mortals may in spirit behold, admire, and love. O my dear friend, I cannot tell you the holy joy with which I have again tasted, nay, drunk of the cup of salvation, being washed in blood, robed in righteousness, and crowned with love; so that I have basked in the sunshine of my Redeemer's presence, and bathed in the ocean of unutterable bliss, finding all human language inadequate to sound forth His praise. I have exultingly called upon the glorified spirits (in whose society I felt myself) to aid my feeble strains, and teach me nobler sounds; and with triumph I have solicited the angelic hosts to strike their immortal lyres, and louder sound His praise whose name is love, for mercy revealed to vile ungrateful me!

Oh for more gratitude to my precious Savior, my Lord, my life, my all, through whose streaming veins these blessings come to me! I am lost in astonishment at His amazing condescension; and view with adoring wonder the heights, lengths, breadths, and depths of His love--which passes knowledge. When I ask why I should be thus loved and blessed, I am confounded. The cause is beyond my reach—but the effects blessedly flow into my soul. I know you will--you do rejoice with me. Oh to remember that we have an eternity to spend together in the full-orbed presence of God, our own God, where sin will never interrupt—but we shall unceasingly serve and love Him as we ought, and sing, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!" To the Lord God and the Lamb--be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hallelujah! May the Lord vouchsafe to each of us more and more foretastes of the glory which is to be revealed, until we hear the soul-thrilling words, "Arise, my love, my beautiful one--and come away." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

I meant this to have been a note of thanks for your kindness—but that must be another time, for Jesus's fragrant name, full of sweetness, has absorbed my soul--and now none, none but Jesus! O

adorable Prince of Life, draw us closer and closer to Yourself, fill us more and more with Your undeserved and overwhelming love, until it shall please You to grant us in one long everlasting embrace--to lose our sorrow and our sins.

I write with a trembling hand—but an overflowing heart. I know you understand my language, and therefore I speak freely, though unable to utter a thousandth part of my Redeemer's grace and my happiness! Adieu, my much-loved friend.

Accept the sincere love of your unworthy,
Ruth

Christ the Author and Finisher of faith

To Miss C., May 1845.

My dear Anne,

I am truly grieved to see you so cast down, and wonder why it is; but your heavenly Father knows all. May He glorify Himself, and comfort you. He has delivered, He does deliver, and we trust in Him that He will yet deliver. May He increase your faith, and keep it in constant exercise; for "this is the victory which overcomes the world--even our faith," (1 John 5:4.) Taking the shield of faith, all the fiery darts of the wicked one are quenched. Through faith, the ancient worthies did wonders, and even weak women have been gloriously triumphant. Faith says, "Has He said it--and shall He not do it?" (Num. 23:19) Though all be dark and contrary, I will trust and not be afraid. May this be your feeling; and whether it be a bear or a lion, or an uncircumcised Philistine--which has come out against you, meeting them in the name of the Lord Almighty, they must be overcome, and you will have to sing of Jesus. He has slain His tens of thousands!

Perhaps you will think I am too much indulged just now to be able to write suitably to one bound in affliction and iron. I freely confess my inability, and just write to sympathize. The path of life is ever above to the wise, to save from the snares of hell beneath--and therefore I point upward. Christ is the way of life, light, and liberty. Power still belongs unto God; but when in a low place myself, I did even then love to hear of the way of faith, though I could not get at it; and, now that the Lord has given me faith as a grain of mustard seed, I am doubly fond of that way, and if I had a thousand souls as black as hell I would trust them all to the love, blood, and righteousness of Emmanuel, yes, trust them to His honor too, for He says, "Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out." (John 6:37) If but the most weak or wicked that ever came were to be rejected, what would He do unto His great name, "faithful and true?" Oh, it shall never have such a stain upon it, let unbelief say what it may! "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer," (Psalm 102:17) though He may not seem to reply when they expect it. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Psalm 27:14)

Dear Anne, I know not your present malady—but I know Christ is the remedy for it! O all-healing, all-loving, all-absorbing Christ--be revealed in manifested power, or give faith to trust You in apparent absence and distance, for You are worthy to be trusted through the very worst. I wish you a speedy and blessed deliverance, and power from the Lord to rejoice, not in it—but in the Deliverer, to whom be endless praises evermore. Amen.

I did not mean to write so much—but I have gone to that cruse and barrel which never empties, so no ink or paper can suffice. There is more in Christ for empty souls, than pen or tongue of men or angels can count! May you have free access, and eat and drink, and forget your poverty, being taken up with His riches, fullness, and glory, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The Lord comfort you, and establish your heart with grace. Adieu.

Yours affectionately, in our Beloved One,
His gleaner, Ruth

The precious trial of faith

To Miss C., January 1, 1848.

Beloved friend,

I wish you joy in the Lord, peace in believing, and, as we commonly say—a happy new year. I was sorry, my dear Anne, to hear you had been so poorly, and your sister also. You will be glad to nurse her, and she will do the same for you, so the benefit will be mutual. I trust you will both soon recover. Through mercy we are much as usual—but sickness abounds on all sides, and many saints have fallen asleep. We seem to be in a great hospital, so many loved ones are sick; but Jesus walks the wards where His own loved ones lie, and whether He wills that they die or live, He says unto the righteous—it shall be well with you.

Though there are times when we have no sensible feeling of enjoyment, yet, if really hanging upon Christ, there must be safety. The more simple faith is, the less will it be shaken by the removal of comfortable feelings or apparent absence of effects and fruits; and I humbly believe the Lord is pleased at times to let us feel the lack of these things—to discover to us that we were taking somewhat of our satisfaction from the fruits of faith, instead of wholly from the object of faith. Well may it be said to us—herein you have done foolishly. For since all the fruits of righteousness are by Christ Jesus, the more we would abound in them the more we must have to do with Him by faith, and be the more cleared from everything else. This clearing process, as effected by the Lord, is very painful to us. But it is good to be emptied, and thereby prove whether Christ is all our salvation and all our desire.

Though this trial should convince us that our eye is not single, we need not fear—but, however humbling, be thankful for the discovery, and make use of it as a plea to the Lord to go forward, even though further abasement should follow. We must abide the fire, and be more anxious for purification, than for relief from pain. For what is the perfection of refining? Not only to have the gold pure—but for the refiner to see himself in it; and you know, for one face to be fully seen in another, more than brightness is needed to reflect it, there must be a direct position of feature to feature, and the least turning aside to another object will prevent the full development of the countenance. So you see, when the fire has produced the intended effect, the subject of it is not to be taken up with the purity produced—but rather to be absorbed with Him who managed the process, and, beholding Him with open face, be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

May we come experimentally to know these mysteries, and have faith to trust our best Beloved, not through our frames and feelings—but with them seeking more and more that He may be glorified. Oh, this is a conquering point! for when His honor is our object, our selfish aims are scattered, and we

glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, willing to die with Him that He may be our only life. Therefore, though there may seem to be a death on our prospects and joys and feelings, as well as on our fruits, the word is, "Fear not, only believe. I am the resurrection and the life." Being one with Him, we may safely follow Him wherever He leads; and, looking unto Him alone, we shall do so triumphantly.

Yours ever,
His gleaner, Ruth

Glowing anticipations of the joy of heaven

To Miss C., August 21, 1849.

Dear friend,

I am at school. Yet I am very dull, but happy scholar, with such love upon love and line upon line from such a blessed Teacher, who says, "I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way that you should go." Oh, this is a sacred place! I am receiving many private lessons bearing immediately upon my own experience, conflicts, and mistakes--in which the Lord my God faints not, neither is weary. I listen for Him, I listen to Him, and marvel greatly, concluding most certainly that there never was such an unworthy creature, who was so favored. I think one result of every new lesson is, "Behold, I am vile!" "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" I see much wrong in all the past, and desiring afresh to forsake all and follow Jesus only.

My earnest cry now is for guidance--to have any home where the Lord will bless me, and I may not be corroded with worldly care. The most humble place, with a quiet mind and the Lord's presence, seems just what I want--to serve Him in lowliness on earth until the welcome hour when He shall say, "Enter into the joy of your Lord!" Indeed it must be without a "Well done, good and faithful servant." It is with me--all mercy and no merit.

May the Lord give us still to commune freely in that love which passes knowledge, and changes not. Oh, the blissful heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths which are ever here to be enjoyed. Love is the dear element in which I delight to live. I long to be unloosed from mortality, and get absorbingly into its pleasurable abyss and fullness of joy—but until then must seek above all things to live in love—I mean in that sense in which it is said, "God is love; and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16) All that would interrupt or interfere with this must I cast away, counting all things but dross that I may win Christ and wear Christ, and be found in Him, and find Him in me. He is the manifestation that God is love; He is the love of God in living power and revelation. Oh that saints would leave the many things which are behind, and press on towards simplicity and love.

"Tis love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move."

"Love is the grace that lives and sings
When faith and hope shall cease;
'Tis this shall strike our joyful strings

In the sweet realms of bliss."

Oh to breathe only and ever in the pure, sweet element of holiness and love! That will be congenial with the inner man, which will then no longer be the hidden man; for we shall be all outside. I mean there will be nothing in us or about us obscure or concealed. Body and spirit will be pure transparent light, as you know I once saw in a glorious dream such as mortal words can never fully describe. That glory is brighter than the noonday sun, fairer than the moon--and quite too dazzling for mortal sight. Oh that we could disperse these mists of flesh and sense, and our freed spirits range those fields of light of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the brightness and glory. Oh to see as we are seen, to know as we are known, to understand each other fully, without needing the dull imperfect medium of words. That would indeed be living all on fire, and glowing as we would wish.

What you say of loving the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles reminded me of 1 John 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Truly, love will flow to all the members of the living family if we are begotten of God in a new life; and methinks the most so to those who have most of love, because there will be most of Him. Oh, indeed, a glorious throng of glorified ones await the consummation, and are saying, "Your kingdom come." How they welcome each dear pilgrim who puts off the traveling dress, and comes to rest with them, until that morning without clouds--when all the redeemed shall at once put on the full court robes! What high company awaits us! It is almost past belief for poor unlovely me. I need enlarging to take in the wonder more thoroughly.

Ah, my beloved friend, all will end well at last, though the conflict is now often severe. After a toilsome night, and nothing caught, the morning often brings deliverance—a net full of fish, and a meal prepared. (John 21:6, 17) Oh, turn in, Beloved, and tarry with us, for the evening shadows draw on. Come, risen Lord, and sup with us, and we with You. Stay until the night of this world's woe be past, then take us up where suns never rise and set—but You are endless day. Quite spoilt for earth, we must have much of You, until we shall come where You are all in all. I would have dear saints on fire with His love, vying who can love Him most whom none can love enough.

To Him I affectionately commend you for keeping and teaching, and am in Him yours warmly,
Ruth.

"And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God." Ephesians 3:17-19

The fresh venture upon Christ of a doubting soul

To Miss C.

My dearest Anne,

My heart yearns over you, and much do I long that you may be comforted. Jesus can and will relieve your aching heart. What is it, my beloved friend, which distresses you? Is it the absence of Jesus? Ah! that is a sorrowful condition; but He loves you just as much as when you leaned on His bosom,

and He will come again and embrace you, making you ashamed of the jealousies you now feel; for surely it is not knowing a friend to trust him only so far as we can see him. Oh, then, may the Spirit enable you even in the dark to trust in the Lord and stay upon our God.

Is it sin which breaks your heart? The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin (I am a living witness of it); from heart and life sin, indulged and repeated—sins of ingratitude and carelessness, sins against light and knowledge, and a thousand others. Do not, therefore, be cast down. Since I have found mercy—none need despair. Venture with all your guilt upon Christ; you know He has borne the curse due to it, and He will restore peace to your conscience.

But, perhaps, you have been looking over your evidences, and by reason of the mist which now envelops you they appear so dim that you question whether they are genuine. I have found it sometimes well to give Satan a little ground here: throw evidences away, and suppose what he says is true, that we have been deceived. And then fly to Christ just as we are, without one plea, hanging simply upon His blood and righteousness as a helpless sinner, determined, that if we perish, it shall be in venturing upon Him. Thus shall we prove whether it is true that He can and will save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. You cannot think what relief I have had in this way.

But, whatever be your case, the remedy is in Christ. May it soon be feelingly applied. I feel ashamed to give you these lispings, for you were in the way of believing long before I was—but we both remember the child who said to its mother, when she wept for her husband, "Is Jesus Christ dead?" Whereby her inordinate grief was reproved. So may my simple strains, by the Spirit's power, touch the discordant note in your soul, and if not, you must pardon and accept the attempt in proof of the love and sympathy of your unworthy but attached,
Ruth

The efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus

To Miss C., September 25, 1857.

Dearest Anne,

I must greet you once more in the name of Jesus. I hope you are recovering, and are having all afflictions sweetened by the love of the "Man of sorrows," who was so well acquainted with grief. I have felt some sweetness in praying for your brother. May the Lord manifest Himself to his soul. If he is a blood-bought jewel, he shall not be missing in the day of account. The great salvation is not of merit but of mercy; so none need despair because of crimson sins—the rich blood of my precious Savior makes them white as snow. This I can well witness, for none could be worse.

What a glorious company will there be on the Mount Zion above, of blood-washed sinners—once so black, then so white; once so far off, then so near; once so full of fear and trembling, then so safe forever and ever. How shall we praise the worthy Lamb who brought us there at the cost of His own heart's blood! Oh, that poor doubting souls had more conception of the virtue and efficacy of that blood which has cleansed and will cleanse millions and millions of black sinners, and make them fit company for God and the Lamb. How it would encourage them to come to that fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, which is free to every longing soul who is crying, "Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

Would that I had more conceptions of the freeness and fullness of the finished salvation, and that this

contracted heart were enlarged to apprehend more of the love of the Savior to poor needy sinners. What an amazing object our Father has given us to behold by faith, even His crucified Son, who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. Yet for poor sinners was His visage marred more than any man's. His food and drink was to do the will and work of His Father; yet "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him," and thus marred, and bruised, and crucified, He says to bruised reeds, "Look unto Me, and be saved!"—unto Me, bleeding, agonizing, made a curse for your sin. Look unto Me on the Cross, to be healed of your diseases, and forgiven your iniquity; none ever looked in vain.

Oh that our eyes and hearts may be fixed here; then shall we be constrained to sing and give thanks. "Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious." (1 Pet. 2:7) Not which have believed—but in the present tense. Oh, to live believing by the power of the blessed Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the soul, drawing it out towards this adorable Man, who is more precious than the gold of Ophir. Soon will clouds and veils be done away, and we shall see Him as He is with open face!

Believe me, yours very affectionately,
Ruth

"When I had lost all hope, I turned my thoughts once more to the Lord. And my earnest prayer went out to you in your holy Temple." Jonah 2:7

The Lord's dealings of love and faithfulness

To Miss C., March 30, 1849.

Dearest Anne,

You know how sweet to my heart is the fellowship of believers; but the Lord does not forget His "sparrow alone." Again and again He comes, laying me lower in the dust, and while I behold His glory I wonder not at the inspired pen so multiplying words—"A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Mark, it is now in measure apprehended, while we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal.

How wonderful that the Lord should withdraw me from things seen, to bring near, very near, that weight of glory which you know had begun to beam upon me with such brightness and power that I verily thought I could not and would not live. I truly feel that if I do, it will be as real a coming back as Hezekiah's was, so many things seemed to portend going home. The mercies of my blessed affliction it is impossible to recount. Oh, that as the Lord is sowing bountifully, He may not reap sparingly—but Himself be the increase. You know how I have trembled at 2 Chron. 32:25: "But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So the Lord's anger came against him." We have such a Christ that we little think how far His glories and His matchless love surpass what we have ever yet conceived. We do not make half enough of Him—heaven's brightest gem, and richest treasure. Oh, that the precious Comforter may reveal Him more and more, that we may count all things else but filth and dross.

When I read your note I thought I saw one cause of your ailment in your mental conflict, which I sensitively feel but cannot relieve. I must still keep telling you of our dear, dear Lord; for though it may

seem to be in vain, I do not know through which lattice He may please to show Himself. He works variously and wondrously. Do not think, because of the howling storm and tempest, that He is not with you; the stormy wind fulfills His word, and the endangering waves obey His bidding. The keen winds of winter accomplish His will, and the apparent barrenness of that season has its use. So there may be a time too, when our souls seem to lie barren; but the Lord is doing something with the ground; and when it is prepared, He will in the right season cause greenness and growth to enliven it again. Be encouraged then, trust Him through the process. It is not needful you should understand it. Keep venturing your soul, with all its wants and woes, upon the blood and righteousness of Jehovah-Jesus. You may safely risk all here; and if the Spirit so enables you, you cannot be lost, feel what you may. Excuse all this in love from a slow learner. Adieu.

With affectionate love in Jesus, yours ever,
Ruth

"Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little." 1 Peter 5:10

The vicarious sufferings of Christ--the end of the law

To Miss C., May 22, 1849.

My dearest Anne,

Do you believe on the Son of God? Do you live believing? Is the very life and death, person and work of Jesus--the daily feast of your soul? Are you eating His flesh, and drinking His blood? For thus we shall dwell in Him, and He in us. Oh, it is healthy, lively living--to be eating and drinking Life. Christ is our life, and the blood is the life, and this is the food which our Father has wonderfully given us. Let us see to it, beloved one, that we are seeking spiritual health and strength in no other way than by the continual, daily feeding on Christ. It is a present act--"eats" and "drinks."

Truly, I am seeking for constant renewals in a life of simple faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. When thus anointed, there is to us an ever fresh, ever full, sweetness in heaven's precious Lamb; an everlasting bloom of beauty on this rich, ripe grape! And though often pressed into our cup, yet the juice remains undiminished. "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved," is His invitation who says, "I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." To accomplish this, He had death abundantly indeed; for all of the sting, the curse, and the wrath, which death and hell would have presented to His chosen--did He drink up. Oh! what a cup was this to be received in love from a Father's hand. Thus came our life.

Hearken, beloved, to these words: "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame!" (Luke 16:24) That thirst, that heat, that torment I must have endured forever, had not Jesus Himself borne it, when for me under its heat He said, "I thirst!" Oh, what scorching did that precious Lamb suffer, when water was denied Him and vinegar given. This was unutterable love! Muse and marvel, O my soul!

I like in meditation to go over the very things which our Beloved went through, not viewing them only as a whole--but seeking to the Holy Comforter to unfold and show out every act separately, what it was to Him, what it would have been to me--the very reality of it. Truly, I could not have been

plucked as a brand out of the fire, unless some other had stood the burning for me; and then clearly follows the sure escape. For if my accepted Surety, with my sin upon Him, (Isa. 53:6) stood the burning until all my sin was consumed, (which He did, for He made an end of sins,) upon what, then, in me are the fires of justice and wrath now to kindle? Their fuel is gone in the soul which believes in Jesus, for if He was made sin for me, who can or will make that sin over to me again? Jehovah will not! Others cannot!

Oh, this precious truth! it is gospel wine to my poor soul. I hope you, dear Anne, will drink it with me, and feel refreshed. I do love a thorough salvation, and my conscience has been so law-stricken that it never dare be satisfied with one who could not look at that law with open face. Here comes the experimental benefit of having much to do with Jesus; for look at Him where or how we will, He fits the law exactly. Yes, He outshines it, holy as it is, and, viewed in His transparent heart and life, it seems to gain new brilliancy and glory. What then? Why, when this Christ is ours, and we are "found in Him," then law and justice wear a continual smile, and we must smile too, when, looking right on to the end of the law, we find Jesus there--its full satisfaction and our righteousness.

Thus, too, we stop not short of perfection—but meet a holy law with a holy Jesus, rendering unto God the things that are God's. I sincerely hope, my dear friend, you will be happily constrained to smile away all your tears, finding yourself with most unworthy me in the blessed fold of this so great salvation, and in the blessed embrace of everlasting love. Are you tired of my same subject, dearest? I think I have hardly begun to learn it yet, for the Comforter still preaches in my soul. I greet you in the fresh fragrance of our Beloved, and His good ointments. To Him I commend you: may He bless and comfort you in Himself.

I am, your warmly-affectionate,
Ruth

Fainting pilgrims encouraged by
a testimony concerning Jesus

To Miss C, August 2, 1849.
Dearest Anne,

It does melt my heart, while I write, to feel that, receiving all in Him, we can say under all, "It is well." O precious Savior, what do we not possess in having You? All things are ours, for our use and benefit. Ministers, the world, life, death, things present, things to come--all are ours in You, for Your glory and our need. But You Yourself are our portion, our glory and joy. All praise to our Father, who has entailed such blessings upon us in time and eternity: neither earth nor hell can cut them off from us, or keep us out of them. We do at times get beclouded, so that all seems obscure, and we do not apprehend or enjoy our privileges; but when the fog is cleared away, we find our immovable blessedness secure as ever in our unchanging Head.

I wish you, then, beloved, abiding faith, enduring faith, and yielding faith, in whatever case you may be, though I should rejoice to hear of your health in body as well as soul. Faith is a grace ordained of God for taking possession of Christ and eternal life in Him; and you know from the Book of records, that "we who have believed enter into rest." (Heb. 4:3) Therefore, let us rejoice that by faith we may be in heaven, I had almost said before our time—but I mean before we put off this clay tabernacle.

Christ is our heaven, and He is in our souls both the hope and the foretaste of glory. This I can honestly and experimentally affirm; and since I have been permitted to tread the very threshold of eternity, and in Beulah's lovely land clearly to see the glory, and eat of the celestial fruits, surely I ought, like Joshua and Caleb, the more strenuously to encourage fainting pilgrims with the solemn assurance, that what is before us is well worth waiting for, running for, fighting for, dying for. So let us cheer each other, and seek grace cheerfully to be about our Father's business.

I thank you for your sympathy in my late disappointment of having to come back, and again put on my sandals and take up my staff. . . . There must be a ripeness for glory, as well as a ripeness in glory; therefore I would be patient, and no longer foolishly urge my Father to pluck unripe fruit. I find no better way of losing myself and my sorrows than by getting absorbed in Him who has borne them, and no surer way of sinking under them than by poring over them. To this latter work Satan is a great prompter, knowing that there he has plenty to work upon. How blessedly safe, when he points us to self, to point him to Jesus. He cannot stand that—but we can stand by it, as did those now safe landed who "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

I can never think we dishonor our blessed Surety by frequent reference to Him and His finished work. Rather do we thereby magnify the Lord and His work, which men behold. If His works of creation are to be extolled, how much more the work of redemption, which living men behold. Oh, for an enlarged heart to walk in Him who is the law's fulfilment, and thus by faith meet its demands with full weight and measure. Doubly, trebly precious does our Lord become as we thus walk in Him, in whom we find such fullness, that we need not once turn with regret to our own poverty. How blessed for self to be thus put out of the way. Do not you see that it is the law of faith which excludes boasting, except in the Lord? for in the Lord shall one say, have I righteousness and strength. That saying is in accordance with our Father's doing, for He has made Him to be unto us "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This truth received by faith is food to nourish the soul unto eternal life; and thus we become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Truly, if the second Adam fullness be not an overmatch for the first Adam emptiness, we may pine and mourn; but if it be so, which Scripture and experience prove, then let the inhabitants of the Rock sing, let them shout from the tops of the mountains, and let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Thus gospel wine is strong and reviving: it cheers my heart, and I long that many, should drink and be refreshed.

With love, yours warmly,
Ruth.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!" Psalm 34:8

Gospel wine to cheer the warrior

To Miss C., September 9, 1859.

Dearest Anne,

It seems to have been the Divine will that the children of Israel should learn war, and that those who saw it not at the entering into Canaan, should be taught it by the nations which were left unsubdued. (Judges 3:1, 2) Of course these nations would be often striving to invade the possessions and lessen the power of this favored people. Then they must fight for their privileges; and from the records of their battles we plainly see how, while trusting simply in the Lord, a mere handful of them overcame

thousands of their foes; not their own sword or their own bow—but His right hand and His holy arm brought them the victory. Doubtless all was typical of the experience of the spiritual Israel. They have nations of lusts and evils within, headed by that great and fearful captain Unbelief; and nations of snares, allurements, trials, and cares without, while Satan is the grand commander of the whole. Yet has he only a limited power, being himself under the control of the mighty Captain of Salvation, who always binds him in his attacks with this restriction, "Hitherto shall you come—but no further." However, as the spiritual as well as the literal Israel must learn war, you need not wonder that the armies of the aliens often beset you, and that the men of your own house rise up against you.

Remember those who by faith put to flight the armies of the aliens, and remember David, who said, "Although my house be not so with God, yet has he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." (2 Sam. 23:5) May you, by grace, follow the faith of these ancient worthies, "considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Heb. 13:7,8) Be in nothing terrified by your adversaries, since your Redeemer is mighty, the Lord Almighty is His name. What blessed promises are made to the overcomers; but how could these promises belong to us if we knew nothing of foes and fighting? These foes are overcome by the blood of the Lamb, "not by might, nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." (Zech. 4:6)

You mention the sinking state of my health. I am very weak—but may not be so near Home as you sometimes think. Oh, may our precious Jesus so reveal Himself that sorrow may be turned into joy by His presence, and the best wine be kept until the last, so that then both the living and the dying may lift up their eyes and see no one but Jesus only. At times I think I may not be the first of our circle to sleep in Jesus. However, it shall be well, and each shall prove, "My grace is sufficient for you." I wish that there may be much joy in the Lord, and songs of praises at my departure. He is so gracious to me, a solid rock, now that this tabernacle is trembling to the dust; a rock also that yields honey; where bread of life is given, and waters of salvation are sure. "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains." Isaiah 12. is a blessed song when put into the heart by the Divine Comforter. The Lord prepare us for life or death, and make us willing for either. Enrapt up in our precious Jesus, we are safe for both. Oh, seek, seek absorption in Him, and with Him; so shall the restless desires of the flesh be kept in silence by His power. (Heb. 2:20)

Let us finish with praise, for it becomes the redeemed to be thankful. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Luke 2:14) May the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the Bush rest upon you, dear Anne.

And with kind love in Him, believe me, your ever-affectionate,
Ruth

The difficulty of total self-surrender

"He knows the way that I take; when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10.

"The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but the Lord tries the hearts." Proverbs 17:3.

"Whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." Isaiah 31:9.

Mal. 3:3, 4. Psalm 103:9. 1 Cor. 10:13.

To Mrs. H., November 24, 1847.

Beloved in the Lord, companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, Often have I thought of writing to you, and now I seem emboldened to indulge myself a little by allowing my willing spirit to blend with yours in sympathy of joy, and sorrow, and in sweet converse of Jesus.

In Him, then, my beloved Amelia, accept my first greeting upon paper, and my sincere desire that He may still lead you on in the divine life as evidently as heretofore He has; though it must still be to the rooting up and putting down of all that is of the flesh, for He has determined that no flesh shall glory in His presence. We easily assent to this in words—but the Lord will have more than theoretical knowledge in His school, He will bring all who sit at His feet to the practical experience of the words they utter and the lessons they learn. This I have lately been discovering more than ever before; having, in times of glowing manifestation, said, in sincerity of heart, many warm things which the Lord has, by afflictive dispensations, put to the test, and I have found that it is one thing to say, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water," and then to step out firmly in faith; and it is another to walk on firmly and confidently when the wind is roaring, and the waves are raging. It is one thing to feel Jesus so precious that we in faith give up our all to Him and His service; it is another for Him to claim what we have so given, as His own right; and, according to our resignation, to take away the different parts of our earthly all, and so to prove whether Himself is indeed ALL to us—or whether we only say so.

I have found Leviticus 27:28 ("However, anything specially set apart by the Lord—whether a person, an animal, or an inherited field—must never be sold or redeemed. Anything devoted in this way has been set apart for the Lord as holy.")—very sweet and strengthening since the Lord has been putting in His claim; for I saw that I had devoted what I have and am to the Lord in love, and that now He has called upon me to pay my vows. My happiness would be in going forward in His strength in faith; and my weakness and distraction would be in conferring with flesh and blood, seeking to hold back what I had vowed. The Lord keep you, beloved, single-eyed and simple-hearted, willing to give up the "Isaac" whom you love (Gen. 22:2) (whatever that may be) at His bidding, then you shall neither suffer lack nor loss. My mouth is still further open to you, and my heart is enlarged because your spirit is so singularly in unison with my own in waiting only upon God. It is the safe and the right way, though very contrary to the flesh, which is always in a hurry for deliverance, seeking its own things by any means; but the new man seeks the things which are Jesus Christ's, and wants deliverance in Him and according to His will, and would rather honor Him by waiting—than have the flesh eased by a lighter cross or a smoother path.

Again, beloved friend, my very soul rejoices that the dear Revealer of secrets is making known to you the "blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Mark, "will not impute." These words have sounded through my soul by the Spirit's power with more melody than earth's softest, sweetest sounds could ever produce. They raise us high above the creature in its doings or misdoings, and give us to see our deliverance from condemnation, solely, in and through Him, the precious Lamb of God, our Surety. He was condemned for our vile, black sin, which He has put forever away by the sacrifice of Himself, so that when the iniquity is sought for upon us—it shall not be found! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that

condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, who is risen again."

With love in our precious Well-Beloved, I am, dear Amelia, your affectionate,
Ruth

The joy of union and communion with Christ

"Listen to me, O royal daughter; take to heart what I say. Forget your people and your homeland far away. For your royal husband delights in your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord." Psalm 45:10-11

"The king has brought me into his chambers." Song 1:4.

"Never again will you be called the Godforsaken City or the Desolate Land. Your new name will be the City of God's Delight and the Bride of God, for the Lord delights in you and will claim you as his own." Isaiah 62:4

"Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself. She was permitted to wear fine linen, bright and pure." Revelation 19:7-8

"And this is the name whereby He shall be called--the Lord our righteousness." Jer. 33:16.

"And you are complete in Him." Colossians 2:10

To Mrs. H., February 26, 1848.

All hail my precious sister,

I greet you with a sincere heart; welcome to the unspeakable delights of union with the King of kings, the most high and mighty Prince, Emmanuel, the Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory! Your song of love has made my heart as an open fountain, so that I have wept abundantly, in sincere joy, to find another love-stricken soul who, separated from all besides, shall know the blissfulness of absorption in the Beloved. Surely this Well-Beloved has "put in his hand by the hole of the door," and my affections are moved for Him and for you; so that I must respond, though in feeble strains, to love's own language, which my heart knows right well, triumphantly exclaiming, "It is the voice of my Beloved, He is "white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand," "Yes, he is altogether lovely!" (Song 5:10, 16) He has borne away my heart and my heart's affections; and, now, love and the Beloved are my most delightful theme.

I had not time, my dearest Amelia, to pour out all my heart's fullness this morning, and whether there will be a renewal of it is known to Him who opens and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens, who can turn water into wine, and poverty into plenty. This has been a blissful day to me, heaven begun, and glory antedated. At times you have been very near me, and perhaps, if I knew more of spirit blending with spirit, and soul communing with soul, we might have enjoyed it more fully. I wish to wait quietly upon the Lord for the further unfolding of His blissful secrets, and revealing of His glorious Person. And here my heart bounds with delight, for it is the Person of Christ that ravishes my soul, and has made me a willing captive to His matchless charms!

"All human beauties, all divine,

In my Beloved meet and shine."

Perfect humanity, ineffable divinity, one glorious Person, our all-lovely Emmanuel. The union between this matchless One and ourselves is double: we are joined to Him by one Spirit, so that when born of the Spirit we partake of His nature, and He for very love took a body like our own. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," and thus "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," and it is blessedly written, "They are no more two—but one flesh." "This is a great mystery—but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

This morning I had not heard your letter to dear Anne. She has this evening read it to me. It is delicious to my spiritual taste, savory meat, such as my soul loves. The Lord your God brought it unto you and me, to Him therefore be all the glory. Fear not the loss of joyous sensations, my very dear friend; your precious Husband and His love will be ever the same, and you will come in sweet reciprocal love to such devotedness to Himself, that you will, as it were, lay down His smile, and His shine, and His kiss, and His benefits at His dear feet, and seek His glory above them, and say--Honor Yourself by me, rather than please me with these. When you have thus left them for Him, you will find them most richly and continuously in Him. To take Christ for His own sake is a secret worth worlds, and has in it that other secret, "rejoicing in the Lord always." I know not whether I am clear to you—but must finish.

Accept warm love from the warmed heart of your dearly affectionate,
Ruth, the happy gleaner.

P.S.—I should tell you, my beloved Amelia, that I have had rich enjoyment in dear Madame Guyon. I do not think her views quite correct in some points; but in others I have been astonished to find her speak my very secrets, known only between the beloved and my soul. She was a kindred spirit, and drank deeply of Love's pure stream; yes, she at length lived at the Fountainhead. After going quite through, I regaled myself with delight here and there among her precious things. At times I was enraptured to find one in mortality pouring forth such pure strains of divine love, until at length one evening, while thus engaged, it was as if the Beloved of my soul gently beckoned me away from her, saying--Come to Me, and receive it first hand. You will be sure the invitation was welcome. I immediately closed the book, and have not opened it since; for "His lips are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh;" "the law of his mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver," and to hear of Himself from Himself is better than any instrumentality whatever.

Do you know, beloved friend, this is the way the Lord has ever dealt with me--He Himself has been my dear instructor; most frequently without any creature. Gal. 1:12, is my very own verse, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it—but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." He has powerfully spoken to me, too, from 2 Sam. 9:7, "You shall eat bread at my table continually." How blessed to sit at the King's table, to see Him, to hear Him, to learn of Him. Oh! indeed, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell and fare sumptuously in the tents of wickedness. My heart says, "Let your handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord."

I have thought of you in your last bereavement; you now know a little of my anguish—the lonely bed, the lonely meal, the vacant chair, etc. But Jesus makes up for all these, does He not? To His dear heart of love, and arm of power, I now commend you, and in Him rest in bonds indissoluble.

Your ever-affectionate,
Ruth

Deep draughts drawn with joy from the wells of salvation

"Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Song 5:1.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

"There is a river—its streams delight the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High." Psalm 46:4.

"You visit the earth, and water it: you greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water." Psalm 65:9.

To Mrs. H., 1849.

My dear Amelia,

And so your earth seems at this time to be watered and enriched, for "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. 4:7) And you need not fear to drink largely, for after all your tiny draughts the "river of God" will be still full of water. It is a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Neither should you fear to go forward into its blissful depths, for they are from the ankles to the knees, from the knees to the waist, and when these are gone through they are waters to swim in. (Ezek. 47:3-5) If you are a spiritual swimmer, hear the glad tidings—it is a river that cannot be passed over. Therefore fear not—but live in life and dwell in the river of God's love!

"Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isa. 12:3) In this new-creation world there is not only a flowing into the new creature, (for the new wine of the spiritual kingdom is put into the new bottles,) but there is also a flowing out, for, says He who is the beginning of this creation of God, (Rev. 3:14) "The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him!" (John 7:38)

As for your gladsome notes under love's thrilling power, they are according to the direction: "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains." (Isa. 42:11) If all on earth seems too dull to respond to your strains, methinks they will find an echo in the very rock itself. For it is said of Him who is our rock, "The Lord your God is among you, a warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will bring you quietness with His love. He will delight in you with shouts of joy!" (Zeph. 3:17) Surely we, who are the children and partakers of such mighty love, must rejoice also as its precious fullness inundates our souls with a full tide of ecstasy!

Ah, my dear Amelia, the precious love of our glorious "Well-Beloved" is indeed overpowering. I wonder not at your raptures, and do much rejoice that in this cold region there are yet a few who are glowing in that heavenly fire which God himself has kindled and will never extinguish. I attempt not to pour into your already full soul—but just pen these feeble lines lest I should appear indifferent, which indeed I am not. I delight to listen to your song of love, and rejoice in your joy, the substance of which

I well understand. It is "Christ in us the hope of glory." Ah, and the foretaste of glory too! The Lord make and keep us faithful to Himself.

You well know that I also am at school. I have been in the very suburbs of the Celestial City, and have seen the King in His beauty, and thought the everlasting doors were opening to receive my happy soul; but returning bodily strength convinces me that my wilderness work and warfare are not ended. I think the lesson now before me is, that we must be a constant sacrifice to Him who was so rich and willing a sacrifice for us, that all our wishing and willing must give place to a dissolving into the divine will, and our constant prayer be, "Father, glorify your name." Many things tend to make me feel that henceforth I must live an earthly life, not in any wise "seeking my own things—but the things which are Jesus Christ's;" doing which, the flesh must be constantly sacrificed. Having willingly laid it upon God's altar in spite of its own struggling, may He keep me from ever withdrawing it or conferring with it again, remembering that "no man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Oh, in very deed I believe I must be more than ever a stranger and pilgrim on this earth. I have deeply loved my happy home and sweet domestic endearments; but my Lord has broken up the one, and taken me from the other; and, having thus at His command left the shore, I must not wish to regain it—but ever embrace Him as my glorious "all in all," worthy of a thousand hearts and lives if I had them to give. Plead, oh, plead, that I may "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." For I must say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," "but, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark."

I can but write to you with a heart kindled in the blissful flames of love divine, having had much, very much forgiven; and feeling that I can never love half enough, for I owed millions--and the rich blood of my Beloved cancelled all the mighty sum! Now the rich love of the same dear heart flows into mine with more power and sweetness than words can tell. The Lord be with your spirit, and your spirit confidingly and rejoicingly with the Lord.

So desires, with much love, your warmly-affectionate, but unworthy,
Ruth

The Spirit's teaching

To Mrs. H., 1849.

My own sweet Amelia,

Surely your words are pleasant words to my soul, because they flow in sweet accordance with the pure law of liberty and love; which is, that "in all things Christ shall have the pre-eminence," yes, that He shall be all, and we nothing. Our Teacher must be one, the teaching is so in unison; and how blessed, my dear Amelia, that flesh and blood has not revealed this unto us—but our Father who is in heaven, whom it has pleased to reveal His Son in us, and also to give Him unto us as our precious heavenly Bridegroom. The glories of His person, and ravishments of His love are not for a carnal eye or strange bosom—but only for her of whom He says, "But I would still choose my dove, my perfect one." (Song 6:9)

My heart rejoices, that you are feeling the worth and weight of souls for whom our precious Lord travailed in sweat and blood. It may be your high privilege to be His instrument in awakening some from the dreadful sleep of death in sin. My heart longs that this be done more than words can tell, and also that living ones be aroused to a sense of their high privileges in Christ Jesus—who is too little known and too little sought after. Surely, my very dear Amelia, we, who through grace have a glimpse of these glories and taste of this blessedness, should be right earnest in telling the good tidings to those of the king's house within, (2 Kings 7:9-11) who yet believe not the joys of a present salvation. Though they listen to us with jealousy, we have the witness in ourselves, and can say honestly, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." (1 John 1:3, 4) We would testify to man when the Lord calls us—but we seek not testimony from man; it were an insult to the Divine majesty, when we have already His testimony in our conscience.

Adieu, my very dear friend; the Lord keep you all His own.

In His precious love which flowed out in richest blood, I am your warmly-affectionate,
Ruth

Christ is everything

To Mrs. H., September 1849.

My very dear Amelia,

I sit at my window, and look towards Castle Donnington, and though it is just now too hazy to discern it as I often do, yet my heart rejoices that there lives one who warmly loves my Jesus, and whose soul thrills affectionately towards unworthy me in Him and in His sweet love, and for His dear sake alone. It is this, my dear Amelia, which gives your love such a warm reception in my poor heart, as none merely for my own sake could receive. Your letter caused tears of love—to Him who is so very near and precious in all our conflicts and sorrows. Ah! my dear friend, how does our vigilant foe lie in wait to spoil us of our "Resting-place," and to cast us down from Christ, our Excellency. How does he work upon our natural sensibilities, and our present circumstances, to produce first disquiet, then discontent, and then urge us, if possible, to some carnal mode of relief! But the Lord "will keep the feet of His saints," "He does not allow our feet to be moved." Therefore, "in your patience possess you your soul." Abiding in Him, there shall not a hair of your head perish," and possessing Him, you cannot lack anything.

Remember, your life is consecrated to the Lord, and in whatever circumstances you must seek and serve Him only. Already have you proved that His reward is with Him, and a rich one too, nothing less than Himself in present possession, and delights in Him beyond expression. Ah! and His work is before Him, and He will do it, nor shall any hinder; but He will "let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

On Thursday I had the pleasure of an interview with your beloved friend, and Mr. and Mrs. J. H—. The conversation of Mr. H— was, I think, solidly edifying to the poor gleaner. When they were gone, my soul was in a most blessed state of Sabbatism, and I could only weep tears of the most serene and peaceful joy, willing to be baptized into the death, as well as crowned with the glory of my Lord, my Life, my ALL. You speak of "things new and old;" thus it was with Mr. H—, he spoke of some things new to me, and entered into others which my soul loves, and which it was taught by the Lord

alone, without the intervention of any human instrument. As usual, my heart failed a good deal at the thought of meeting a stranger, and I also thought he would be so allegorical that I would not understand him—but it was not so. I suppose he accommodated his mode to my usage and simplicity. I am quite convinced, that where there is the one true life there will be union, whatever be the difference in outward form. I fear dear Mrs. B— did not share our profit, as she had to go and see someone at the school, and such distraction of the mind lessens real benefit. I think, too, in our meetings for spiritual communion, the more there is of closeness of thought, and the less of indifferent subjects, the better. "Little foxes spoil the vines."

I expect to leave this sacred retreat next week, and return to my little Bethel Home. Genesis 35:3 seems to be the word on my mind on this subject--"We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has stayed with me wherever I have gone." May it also be as verse 9--"God appeared to Jacob once again when he arrived at Bethel after traveling from Paddan-aram. God blessed him." May the Lord bless you, my beloved, and "keep you in all your ways;" and give us both to live in sweet simplicity, "rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh." I must send you Deut. 30:20, it is so very sweet to me--"Choose to love the Lord your God and to obey him and commit yourself to him, for he is your life. Then you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Our "Christ is our life!" To Him may we cleave, that in Him, the good Lamb, we may dwell, and willingly let the flesh go to the cross and death He has appointed for it.

"I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

"As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world died long ago, and the world's interest in me is also long dead." Galatians 6:14

"And now, I commend you to God, who is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Excuse this poor letter.

Accept warm love in our best Beloved, and believe me in Him, our bond of union, your ever-affectionate,
Ruth

The inward witness

To Mrs. H., October 6, 1849.

My own dear Amelia,

"Christ has liberated us into freedom. Therefore stand firm and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1) The more liberty in Christ, the less in self and creatures; the more in them, the less in Him. They cannot exist together; one will destroy the other; and if we are really living in the liberty of love and privileges of union with Jesus, we shall hold and use all creatures, and creature good, only in the Beloved, and for His glory. In so far as Jesus is our all, selfish ends and aims will be lost. Just as the rod of Aaron swallowed up the rods of the magicians of Pharaoh, so will all those powers which were once instruments of unrighteousness in self-love, be swallowed up in Christ, by

Whose power in us they will be used as instruments of righteousness unto God.

How little, my beloved friend, is this liberty of love known in the present day, and how soon are we counted mystic if we speak of its delights; but having the precious secret within, we are in that sense independent of human opinions. We feel the love burn, we hear the Beloved speak, and we know the oil flows, because our souls are afresh and afresh anointed therewith, and because of which anointing, every yoke of bondage is destroyed. (Isa. 10:27) We are no longer the "servants of men;" but being amenable at a higher bar, to that alone we appeal for judgment in every case, and by that decision we abide, let who will condemn or cast us out as evil. Oh, it is precious that we are "free born," and not in bondage to any man. "The Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us." "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God." And we shall not trust in vain; "though faith, even the smallest, shall surely be tried." I know it, for I prove it constantly.

I have met with some circumstantial contrarities to try faith, which make me cry for more grace. Sometimes providences seem to contradict promises, that there may be a death put upon our fleshly expectations, and the blessing be enjoyed in the Lord's way and at the Lord's time. Do not our souls exclaim, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Well, dearest friend, all is well. The Lord is leading me, a poor, blind creature, by a way I knew not, according to a precious sermon I heard the last Sabbath at Ockbrook, from Isa. 42:16, which just described what I was coming into. But my Beloved has sweetly whispered, "I am with you, trust Me in the dark."

I wonder how you are traveling on. I was happy to receive your last sweet note, and to learn that you were again disentangled by Love's own power; may you be preserved by the same power with single eye, simple faith, and love pure and fervent. Fail not to write to me when you feel the prompting thereto, though this letter deserves no reply. And now, my dear Amelia, may your garments be always white, and your head lack no ointment. Keep yourself pure by abiding in Him who is your purity. To His warm love I commend you. He is our bond of union, and since He changes not it cannot be broken. Adieu in the sweet love of our heavenly Friend and best Beloved.

Ever yours affectionately, His gleaner,

Ruth

"I will lead the blind by a way they did not know; I will guide them on paths they have not known. I will turn darkness to light in front of them, and rough places into level ground. This is what I will do for them, and I will not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16

Counsels to hearken to the voice of the good Shepherd alone

To Mrs. H., February 20, 1850.

My loved one in our beloved, and for His precious sake, In His own sweet love I salute you in spirit, and in our oneness in Him desire to commune of Him, joyfully forgetting ourselves and each other, that He alone may be remembered. May He be the glow between us, His living love being the fire of our fervor. Truly we want no false fire of the flesh, for all such will go out in utter darkness; we want no sparks of our own kindling, for He says of such, "This

shall you have at my hand, you shall lie down in sorrow." God himself has kindled his own fire of love in our souls, and in the renewings of it by His Spirit we flow out to each other in His praise. Oh, blessed privilege, not to know or be known after the flesh—but "all for the lifting of Jesus on high," that He may increase and we decrease!

Very sweet is the flow of your love-strain, my dear Amelia. It is sweet for His sake who is to His bride what no earthly language can ever fully express; for when we have said all we can, the fullest and sweetest remains untold. Each bosom must know for itself the secrets of love, or they are not known at all; and where really enjoyed, they will flow from soul to soul in something more powerful than words. I feel it, beloved friend, it is inexpressible—one life, one love, one Beloved, one blissful eternity, in which we shall know as we are known, and see as we are seen. What, what shall I render that I, so unworthy, should be the object of such love? "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be scorned." (Cant. 8:6) Oh, it comes free, or I had never known it; and most freely, without creature effort, does it flow back to its source and flow out to those kindred souls who are enkindled by its sacred fire. Truly I am formed by love, for love. To the God of love, who is love, be all the praise! "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise."

O our precious Christ, surely we will welcome the fiery coals of Your jealousy, the vehement flame of which shall burn out from our hearts every name, every image—but Your own, for only then can our inner man be satisfied, "when we awake up in Your likeness." Oh, then, set us "as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm" forever.

It seems the will of our Father that you and I, dear Amelia, should walk for a season in much circumstantial contrariety, and perhaps just as we seem ready to cast the anchor or touch the shore, we are unexpectedly sent out again into a fresh storm. So it has been with me—but all is well. There is no perishing with Christ on board; "the winds and waves obey Him," and the storm blows up or blows over, precisely according to His loving will. This morning our family reading was Matt. 12, and at verse 20 my soul melted, and your spirit seemed blended in its softness and its triumph. Yes, it seemed for you: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, until He send forth judgment unto victory." "Judgment unto victory,"—it needs no comment; I could say much—but words will only impoverish. I cast this bread upon the waters of your soul and of your circumstances; if you are fed by it in all its fullness, it will not only invigorate now—but be found after many days. May He who kindled the flame of our friendship be pleased constantly to take off all that is of the creature, that it may burn free and bright to His glory alone, and that we may live in each other's hearts without leaving any the less room for Him "who fills all in all." O holy, lovely Savior, keep Your poorest, vilest worm in her true nothingness, in all her and Your beloved ones, and just make her only help them to love You more. Take this loving Amelia and consecrate the union of our hearts, in oneness with You, to Your especial service and Your glory; ever keep us clear of each other—ah, and of all others—that communion may be free and blissful in You, of You, with You, and for You. Amen.

Now, my beloved friend, one word more. The work of grace in my soul never would be systemized, and never could I square it to any model which creatures have presented, even the very best of them. I have had just to give up all into the forming hands of my Beloved, and be willing to be what I call a "nondescript." I am too high for some, and too low for others, and exactly like none, except as we both are in Christ. I do not say it will be thus with you—but, if it should, you will not be alone; and I must say it is truly glorious to go on with Jesus only. Many would cut us off and cast us out—but He

says, "Because I live, you shall live also." Though now hidden in the deshabelle of this mortal state, yet when "He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." And though not understood by many of our "mother's children," yet do we rejoice to be naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. As for our leading in experience, when we try to keep in any line chalked out to us by others, we only get bewilderment; for one builds up, and another pulls down, and the confusion becomes more confused. So, at least, I have found.

My first real establishing, after years of tossing, came exactly as Gal. 1:12—"For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation from Jesus Christ." And I believe that in the same way only will the teaching go on. I speak not to bring you into my line of things—but just to encourage your heart, if your teaching seem not fully to conform to that of any of your fellows. It is vain to pare off or piece on, to please those we most esteem; each stone has its place in the spiritual buildings, and each member its office in the body; the preparation for which, is best understood by Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. We need not fear, if He only knows what He is doing with us, and what is to be the outcome—but love will still confide.

And now, my dear friend, methinks I have lost both you and myself in the absorbing glories of Him who is the only "altogether lovely." Ah, He has borne away my poor heart in triumph—but He has left His own in its place. Happy exchange! Heartless for earth I would henceforth remain that I may be heart-full of Him. Whatever wise ones or great ones prescribe, be it mine to live in sweet simplicity in the element of love, which truly is most congenial to my soul. Here I breathe freely, live joyfully, and not only take every cup from my Beloved's own hand—but drink it for His own sake, not because of what is or is not in it. Now, a warm adieu from the truest worm, who has, by divine light, life, and power, been made a living monument of sovereign, saving grace.

In the endearment of undecaying love, your most unworthy—but warmly affectionate,
Ruth

The unchangeableness of Christ
in the midst of a changing world

To Mrs. H., May 1850.

My much-loved Amelia,

You will have wondered at my long silence, and that I should have allowed two precious letters to remain so long unanswered. Indeed I would have written; but when He shuts none can open, and when He binds none can walk at large. "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in your sight." "Good is the will of the Lord concerning me." "Not my will—but Yours be done." Peace be unto you, my loved Amelia, and the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May the one holy Lord God of Israel dwell richly in your heart. It rejoiced me greatly to hear that the anointed One (Isa. 61:1) had proclaimed "liberty to the captive," and that your disentangled soul was again rejoicing in its best Beloved. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of (creature) bondage;" (Gal. 5:1) lest He say, "Let her alone; she has loved idols, after idols let her go." Instead of this, I the rather hope that you are still looking out of the "Dove's eyes," which are pure eyes, and do ever reject every attraction but the rightful one. Your letter upon the "Dove's eyes" was very precious, and that such a Beloved should condescend to be ravished (Song 4:9) with such a spouse is marvelous indeed; but, as you rightly observe, "it is His own loveliness reflected when she

gazes steadfastly upon Him."

O my dear Amelia, for a steady, undiverted look of our Beloved! How do the contrarities of the wilderness, working upon this corrupt flesh, seem to come between us and Him! In our experience there is an eclipse of His brightness who is our beauty; though still through all He loves, "and hates to put away." Praise Him, my poor, unstable soul, that He changes not, (Mal. 3:6) and therefore I am not consumed. Ah, no! Divine love prevents the consuming of its object in any other fire than its own—but in those fires is only a making fit to be more absorbed in its inexpressible blissfulness. This poor heart has had many a tossing lately—but it feels the security of love which, amidst all, does insure and assure that the union is eternal, and that no things of time shall dissever it.

"My everlasting song is this—
Jesus is mine, and I am His."

Many of His dealings I do not understand, and I often feel myself a poor, weary pilgrim—but His love and His bosom are the home of my new heart; and there it reposes in safety, while the tempest howls around and the storm beats upon the outer man. I do not mean you to think I have been in great trials—but I have had many little contrarities in the path, and much exercise of soul.

I am more and more convinced the way upward is one of tribulation, and the high heads and trifling hearts of most professors look as if they were not in it. But honestly we say,

"Above their highest mirth,
Our saddest hours we prize;
For though our cup seems mixed with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all."

But the worst and roughest of our heavenward path is infinitely preferable to the best a worldling knows. And how came unworthy we into the secret? Oh, love would have it so—love would have His own, and made us "willing in the day of His power." "Not unto us, not unto us—but unto Your name be the glory." So says my heart, as it freely ascribes all "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." And though my flesh wants an easy path—my spirit often feels the blessed benefit of the cross, and blesses Him who lovingly endured it with the curse for my unworthy sake.

I was thankful to find your mind so abstracted from earthly things when you last wrote, and I hope it continues by the Spirit's power to forsake all for Christ. You will find more than all in Him, the glories of whose person outmatches all beside. And now, dear Amelia, I commend you in body, soul, and circumstances to Him whose love first united us, and who will remain amid all fluctuations. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever," our Beloved, our Friend, our ALL IN ALL. His blessing be ever your enriching.

With dear love, believe me in Him your affectionate,
Ruth

The Lord refreshing His people with the river of His pleasures

To Mrs. H., June 2, 1850.

Many thanks for your precious letter, it is like Song of Songs 1:12, "While the king is on his couch, my perfume releases its fragrance."

"The time is short: it remains, that both they that have wives (or husbands) be as though they had none."

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for he is your Lord--worship him."

"I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." Oh, the wonder!

"He is the chief among ten thousand." "His mouth is most sweet; yes, he is altogether lovely." "You, (O beloved,) are (infinitely) fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into your lips." "As the apple-tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

It is marvelous, my dearest Amelia, that our beloved spiritual Bridegroom should again draw near and ravish your heart with His inexpressible love and loveliness at this especial time. Surely everything is beautiful in its season, and these visits of love are peculiarly beautiful now, sweetly intimating that your earthly bonds must be loosened and your heavenly ones drawn closer, just seeming to say, "You shall be for Me," "and you shall not be for another; so will I also be for you." The Lord knows what are His own purposes concerning you—but He is not bestowing these favors for naught. He will make us know that His spiritual gifts are neither to play with nor for display—but for the edification of His household. It may be as you think, that before long He will call you to active service; but this will not be with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect—but in your own utter weakness, that the excellency of the power may be manifestly of God, and not of the creature. May He be with you and with your mouth, causing you to utter knowledge clearly, not fouling the pure stream with anything of the flesh. Well may it be said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and joyfully may it be answered, "Our sufficiency is of God."

I could not but write to you today, humbly adoring Him who has made us one, not only in union—but in communion. Surely I rejoice in your joy, and with you rejoice in the Lord our righteousness. The last fortnight the Lord has been pleased to favor me with endearing communion. He has come down on my soul like rain on the mown grass, and granted me such glimpses of His all loveliness as have ravished my heart, and made the new song of praise burst forth with fresh ardor from my enraptured soul. Oh, He is so worthy, so worthy, that the highest, sweetest strains we reach disappoint us, and we feel that we would praise Him but cannot! The 12th chapter of Isaiah has been one of my melodies, and with joy indeed have I drawn and drunk water "out of the wells of salvation." Bless the Lord, O our souls. It is very marvelous; I feel it so; and, while longing for more, I wonder I have so much; but He has blessed, and none can reverse it. "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." He has brought us to dwell in that mountain where He has "commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." "Because I live, you shall live also." Not I—but Christ lives in me." What ease, what release it is when Jesus is our all!

To Him I commend you in love. "Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Adieu.

In tender love ever yours in our best Beloved,
Ruth

Christ worthy of the soul's highest love

To Mrs. H., January 12, 1851.

My very dear Amelia,

"Where are you?" and what are you doing? Are you a widow indeed trusting in God, and continuing in supplication and prayers, serving Him with fastings and prayers night and day in Christ, the true temple? 1 Tim. 5:5; Luke 2:37.

Released from the creature yoke, is Jesus the heavenly Bridegroom now your all? As says the prophet, "Your Maker is your husband. The Lord Almighty is his name." Say, my beloved, is His name as ointment poured forth to your soul? Are you satisfied with Him, happy in Him, restless without Him? Are creatures and things without Christ in them, like the empty sepulcher to mourning Mary, who had lost her Lord, and would accept no substitute? It was His love united us, and made communion sweet; it is in that love I now inquire; "Is it well with you?" How are the fruits of the valley? Does the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear, and the pomegranate bud forth? Is it seed-time or harvest with you? Are you reaping the precious fruits, or watching for the early and for the latter rain?

I am myself, just an empty sinner, living in and on a full Savior, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me." I am crucified with Him. He lives in me; "the life I live in the flesh is by the faith in the Son of God." I find His service perfect freedom, and sweetly prove that "the way of the Lord is strength to the upright." "Unto you who believe He is precious." Ah, indeed no words can express how precious our glorious Emmanuel is to the gleaner's heart. "I am poor and needy—but the Lord thinks upon me;" and He has said in my soul for this new year 1851, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." It felt very, very solemn; and then a short time after that word followed, "You are mine," which was very sweet and melting. Oh, to glorify Him in body and spirit, which are His—"bought and paid for," the price His own rich blood! Amazing! Was ever love like this? Ah, never! He is the Prince of lovers, the best of all beloveds; worthy, worthy is our lovely Lord the Lamb! Of all on earth I surely am most indebted to Him, and owe Him an eternity of praise. "I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love." Isaiah 63:7

Now, my loved one, I affectionately commend you to "Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

And, in our precious Jesus, remain yours very lovingly,
Ruth

The blind led by a way they know not

To Mrs. H., July 16, 1852.

"I will lead the blind by a way they did not know; I will guide them on paths they have not known. I will turn darkness to light in front of them, and rough places into level ground. This is what I will do for them, and I will not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16

"And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town," and when away from all, He gave him sight in a most gradual and sovereign manner, see Mark 8:23-25. The blind man could not see where Jesus was leading him; he must confide entirely in Him; neither could he know why He should lead him along in darkness, when he had asked to be restored to sight. If he reasoned, the thought would be, "Why not give it me at once?" But "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord." Deliverance seldom comes in the way we look for it; for "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand or marked off the heavens with the span of his hand? Who has gathered the dust of the earth in a measure or weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in scales? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or who gave Him His counsel? Who did He consult with? Who gave Him understanding and taught Him the paths of justice? Who taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding?" Isaiah 40:12-14

Ah, my dear Amelia, has not the Lord frustrated our purposes over and over again? I cannot tell you with what majesty that last-quoted passage has often come to my mind, with v. 14, "Who gave Him His counsel?" Not with puny, sinful worms. He will counsel for them—but not with them: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Yet "fear not, worm Jacob, I will help you,"—help you to stand still and see My salvation, or help you to walk on in the dark in a rough and unknown path, just as My wisdom sees fit. Spiritual eyesight is not given to look at the outward path—but to look at our Guide; not to look before us at the way we are going to travel—but to look only at Him who will guide us safely through all, who will Himself be our way in the way—but not our way out of it. Oh, to be kept abiding in Him, and constantly looking unto Him! It is most safe and blessed—but very contrary to flesh and blood.

"This is what the Lord says--Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans and turn their hearts away from the Lord. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, on the salty flats where no one lives. But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit. The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives." Jeremiah 17:5-10

How I do like this passage--it is so descriptive of the blessedness of trusting in the Lord alone, and the sterility and disappointment of all creature confidence. I know not your present difficulties, nor need I know them, for I could not bring you out of them. But I do bless the Lord He has brought you into the very best posture of soul—looking to Him alone. Tell your sorrows and secrets to this your Friend, watch His eye, obey His bidding, and go not to carnal and lower means for relief.

You will find it turn to good account, if you are helped to wait it out and watch it out, not as carnal

Saul, to wait until a set time, and then if relief tarries--to endeavor to extricate yourself. (1 Sam. 13:8, 15) I write the things that I do know, my loved Amelia, having at some times smarted for the haste of the flesh, and at others inherited great blessing by waiting for the Lord, even in very trying circumstances and amidst many counter voices; but "in keeping of His commandments there is great reward."

Adieu in our heavenly Bridegroom, and in His undying love,
Ruth

Deliverance granted IN, not FROM affliction

To Mrs. H., July 14, 1853.

My beloved Amelia,

Again the Lord is proving to me the blessedness of taking up the cross--and also how much I shrink from it. I seek deliverance from the cross—but find my Lord has put deliverance in it; and if I could writhe myself away from it, I would miss the blessing! But when by His enablings it is fairly taken up, there is indeed a new song put into my mouth, even praise to His name. The soul at such times seems to triumph in Christ, something like Paul when reconciled to the thorn in the flesh. Indeed, I feel it good to be laid low, and kept low at the feet of my precious Lord, though He is bringing it about in ways most unexpected and undesired. I am much longing for humility, and He is laying open to me my pride by the painfulness I feel--in being made nothing. Truly His ways and His thoughts are astonishing--far above mine! His doings towards me are very wise and awesome--and worthy of a God who gives no account of His matters—but works all things after the counsel of His own will, and all things for good to those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose.

May the Lord preserve all your goings, and hold you in His paths, that your footsteps slip not. To Him I commend you; may He fulfill in you all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power. Farewell in our Beloved.

Ever yours with much affection,
Ruth

The happiness of those who endure

To Mrs. H., October 17, 1855.

My own dearest Amelia,

I cannot refrain from saying how very welcome and suitable were some things in your letter this morning. I was deeply writhing under a sense of my useless, worthless, unprofitable life. Think, then, what balm to hear afresh that the savor of His good ointments had been caused to flow through my heart and pen to those hearts dear to Him. And by other seasonable passages in the letters, I was afresh strengthened to endure in things which were then pressing. Oh that word "endure," what has it been to me by the Spirit's power! I have often said, it is worthy to be written in letters of gold. But it is written in better than gold, even in living characters, by the finger of God, in the fleshy table of the heart. And the blessing is richly found at the end of it, "He who endures to the end, shall be saved." This was one of my winter lessons when in the furnace. Not alluding only to eternal salvation—but

also the many salvations we need in the pathway to glory; in most dispensations there is a time to endure; it may be while sowing in tears, or it may be while suffering with patience; but as we are enabled to abide in the trial with God--the reaping in joy and the crown of rejoicing does certainly follow.

My heart rejoices with you in the Lord. Oh, what wonders of His love have I been proving, though many a rough wind from the wilderness has been blowing; but in wilderness dispensations He causes rivers to flow forth, and streams in the desert.

Hoping soon to speak face to face, I remain, with tender love, your ever-affectionate,
Ruth

Divine guidance

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Psalms 32:8

To Mrs. H., November 29, 1855.

My ever dear Amelia,

How truly have we both proved that when "the Lord shuts none can open; and when he opens none can shut." I trust the present opening in your case will eventually prove of real benefit to your bodily health, and also that you may have as manifestly the Lord's presence and instructions as (to His glory I am constrained to confess) I have had, in going from my own home, quite as unexpectedly as you. He leads us about to instruct us, as it is written, "He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."

Truly, "the way of the Lord is strength to the upright;" "his voice is full of majesty;" it overcomes the soul, and gives to its timid questions an answer of assurance which none can gainsay or resist. "Where the word of a king is there is power;" and when I was wondering "why accept this and refuse the other?" He said, "My people shall be willing in the day of my power."

I have felt the power of Satan striving against me. Whom resist steadfast in the faith; and truly in the conflict the Spirit did strengthen my soul with that invaluable word "ENDURE," and enduring (by His power) to the end, there was salvation. "Yes, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Thus in my bodily weakness I have been called out when I had thought to retire, and spend my few remaining days in a quiet pavilion with my Beloved; but, however, to his honor I must say, "He has done all things well," and "His paths drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness," and then we, His "little hills, rejoice on every side."

I am now very poorly, and also much bowed under a deep relative trial, in which I am anxiously watching for the guiding cloud, and listening for the directing voice. I seldom sail long on a smooth sea—but often do I see the Lord's wonders in the deep, and bring up many a pearl from thence. I am a poor weak creature, and often fear when I enter into the cloud, and cry in the storm, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul." Then He does deliver the poor and the needy when he cries. He has delivered, He does deliver, and we trust that He will yet deliver. I am weak and tried—but one of those feeble folk whose dwelling is in the rock. (Prov. 30:26)

Dear love, from your warmly-affectionate,
Ruth

The triumphant security of God's people

November 10, 1857.

My ever dear friend,

Where are you? On the battlefield, or on the watchtower, or compassed about with songs of deliverance? You are in daily remembrance, and your precious child also, though your letters have remained so long unanswered. I cannot tell you how much they have been enjoyed and prized by myself and others. While affectionately feeling for your painful position, I cannot but rejoice at the divine teachings vouchsafed therein. As we are not our own, we have no right of choice how we shall be led, or by what means instructed. "He found him in a desolate land, in a barren, howling wilderness; He surrounded him, cared for him, and guarded him as the pupil of His eye." (Deut. 32:10)

We are "kept" by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and "kept" in most wonderful cases and places; "kept" in the flood and in the flame; "kept" in the light and in the dark; "kept" in plenty and in poverty; "kept" in the seven-times-heated furnace and in the den of lions; and "kept" safely through all; "kept" also when the Divine Keeper seems to give advantage to our enemies—"You lured us into a trap; You placed burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water;" but "You brought us out into a wealthy place." Oh! this is precious leading and keeping, to bring us out from self and creatures into Christ our wealthy place, for in Him we shall be safe from fear of evil, shall be satisfied in the days of famine, and shall not be afraid in the year of drought.

Abiding in Him, all the schemes of our foes shall be disappointed. Haman may plot and erect a gallows too—but his wicked device shall fall upon his own head. He shall be constrained to proclaim the honor of the Lord's servant, and then die by the very means he had prepared for him. Balak may hire Balaam to curse Israel—but he shall be compelled to bless them, for there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. God has blessed them, and Balaam cannot reverse it. The blessing will flow through Him, and to them, against Balaam's will; he can neither share it nor stop it.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies," or, You make them prepare a table, and then flee away and leave their plenty for Your starving people. So did the Syrians for Israel, and the poor outcast lepers were honored to discover it, and get the first of the feast. When this meat from the eater was brought into the city, then was unbelief trodden down in the gate, and the Lord alone exalted in that day; His promise being fulfilled, and His people delivered, when to sense and reason there seemed no way of escape, (2 Kings 7.)

Oh! my dear, happy is he or she that has the God of Jacob for their refuge, and whose hope the Lord is. "He is the Rock; His work is perfect." "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing; let them shout from the top of the mountains," for there is both protection and supply. "His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure;"—sure indeed, for they drink of that spiritual rock which follows them, which rock is Christ; and "they thirsted not when He led them through the deserts." Though Amalek came out against them, he could not prevail. "No weapon

formed against you will succeed, and you will refute any accusation raised against you in court. This is the heritage of the Lord's servants, and their righteousness is from Me." "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

I do indeed rejoice with you on account of your beloved daughter, whom the Lord has graciously given you, in a dearer tie than that of nature; I hope to write her a line or two, though I feel very incompetent to do so. The Lord has been most gracious to me. He keeps me feeling my poverty, weakness, and inability; but makes His grace sufficient for me in a wonderful way, endearing a precious Christ more and more. My heart overflows with adoring gratitude for such a portion. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup, and he is a daily portion, as the manna was to Israel. "Give us this day our daily bread." "I am the bread of life." "He who eats me, even he shall live by me"—and so feeding on Him, we shall grow up into Him in all things, and grow out of all besides. "The Lord bless you and keep you," and make a plain path, because of your enemies.

With tender love, yours ever most affectionately in the Beloved,
Ruth

The Lord's service perfect freedom

To Mrs. H., 1857.

My own dear Amelia,

It was sweet to meet in His name, whose love is our bond of union, and who is Himself the sweetness of our communion. How stately have been His steps towards each of us! how has He drawn us away from all others, to reveal Himself more fully and gloriously! But, oh, that He should have looked upon so vile a one as myself with love and favor! Oh, that He should have brought me "under the rod, into the bond of the new covenant;" this is a marvel in my eyes! How well do the provisions of that new covenant suit my soul: "I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts that they shall not depart from me." Blessed Redeemer, let me ever be set as a seal upon Your arm, as a seal upon Your heart, for love is strong as death, and jealousy is cruel as the grave; and be daily sealed anew in my warmest love, that our delights may be ever new and mutual.

I must now thank you for the precious epistle so full of heavenly teaching. You have indeed repaid my long silence with a rich outpouring, which must have cost much time; but I believe as it is refreshing and instructive in reading, so it would be also in writing, and that you would prove the Lord's service perfect freedom. His reward is with Him whether in doing or suffering, according to His will. With me you have no doubt proved that it is better to labor and endure in His will, than to rest in our own, and thus I doubt not your long epistle was more enriching than exhausting. I rejoice in its Divine lessons, hoping to ponder them in my heart.

That the Lord sent you living truth through me, to nourish His own life in you, is a favor of which I am most unworthy: "Not unto us, not unto us—but unto Your name, give glory." Where there is a pot of oil in the house, (2 Kings 4:2-4) it will be poured out into empty vessels at the command of our great prophet—but, like the poor widow's cruse, there shall be no wasting by such using. (1 Kings 17:16)

I rejoice that you have been having communion with our Beloved, and feeding on the Tree of Life;

nothing else can nourish the inner man or satisfy living faith. This is the true bread, of which if a man eats, he shall live forever. "He who comes to me shall never hunger; and he who believes on me shall never thirst." I love to mark the present tense of Scripture which teaches the continuousness of a life of faith—it is not said, He that has come, and has believed—but comes, believes, etc., and even to the end "the just shall live by faith."

Farewell, my beloved one—every blessing be with you, and the Lord lead you in a plain path because of your enemies.

With tender love, your ever-affectionate,
Ruth

Sweet fruit gathered from a bitter root

To Mrs. H., August 1857.

My dearest Amelia,

"Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." He who sows to the wind shall reap the whirlwind. He who sows to the flesh shall reap corruption. He who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Faith often sows in tears; but he that thus goes forth and weeps, "bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

In this our precious Christ has the pre-eminence. He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He sowed the seed of the kingdom in tears when He wept over Jerusalem; but before long He will joyfully see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, when He shall say, "Here am I, and the children whom You have given me." Thus also it often is with His people; they sow and water and watch with tears—but reap in joy; while the carnal man sows with laughter and reaps disappointment. These things we have both known by experience, for when our deceived heart has turned us aside to the flesh, we had to feed on ashes, as our daily sorrowful food.

May it be given you to stand still and see the salvation of God, proving that the battle is the Lord's who will in very wonderful ways fight against the flesh and its schemes, and disappoint its enterprises—but will even in all these things make the new man more than conqueror through Him that loves us. May your flesh have a new death, and your spirit enjoy more glowingly the crown of life, through this sharp exercise, and may the Lord bring out of the snare of the devil him who seems now led captive by him.

You are doubtless compassing the walls by faith through keeping silence until the day He shall bid you shout as Joshua 6:10, and "lift up your voice," to "show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin." (Isaiah 58:1) The Lord make you faithful to His word, both in silence and in utterance, and enable you to care only for His honor, leaving your own honor entirely in His hands, since He has said, "He that touches you touches the apple of his eye."

Moreover, dear friend, this dark dispensation will be "as a cloud with rain," if, by His power, it brings about a fresh lifting up of yourself from all creatures, to see no man except "Jesus only." "Was I ever a barren wilderness, to Israel a land of drought?" No, never! He is our straight way through crooked

circumstances, and our pleasant way through the vexations of self and others. He keeps us alive in time of famine, for He is our plenty in the midst of poverty.

The things which I taste and handle declare I unto you, for deep abasings and continued emptiness are my experience. When I would gather anything besides Him--most kind, most tender is it of Him to scatter it; indeed I have cause to praise Him for heights and for depths, for in both He has dealt wondrously for His holy name's sake.

I am glad to hear of your affairs, for though you be as a "lily among thorns," yet they shall not really harm you. Our Beloved was crowned with thorns, thus showing that He had gained the victory over them for His bride, and now He just teaches her with the briers and thorns of the wilderness. Many of your teachings and quotations are very sweet to me. I have had the same view of love which passes knowledge, "for knowledge puffs up—but love edifies."

I rejoice to hear that your beloved A— M— is a comfort to you, and much more that she is brought under the easy yoke and light burden of our blessed Savior. May she be whole-hearted with Him and for Him, making no reserves; then will she largely foretaste that blessedness in Him which the natural eye has not seen, or ear heard—but He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit. Kind love to her.

The Lord bless you, make His way plain before you, and grant that your cruse and barrel be daily renewed as your needs require. "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things." May your erring friend be restored. (James 5:19, 20) Power belongs unto God, and His kingdom is not in word—but in power. May a new day of power come to his soul, for Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power. Fare you well; may your place of defense be the munitions of rocks, where your bread shall be given, and your water shall be sure.

With affectionate love in our one Beloved, yours ever in Him,
Ruth

Christ the portion of His people

"I will lead the blind by a way they did not know; I will guide them on paths they have not known. I will turn darkness to light in front of them, and rough places into level ground. This is what I will do for them, and I will not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16

"The cup which my Father has given me--shall I not drink it?" John 18:11

To Mrs. H., May 20, 1858.

My ever-dear Amelia,

Yes, you shall drink it and praise the Lord. He wisely appoints and times every bitter cup--and all is given in love. Bitters are strengthening, sweets are comforting, and through all He will sustain the hidden life with the hidden manna, of which, if a man eats, he shall live forever. It was said of the Paschal Lamb, "with bitter herbs you shall eat it," which remains true to this day, as I experimentally prove—but find it truly

"Sweet to lie passive in His hands,

And know no will but His."

When I attempt to judge His dealings I get into bewilderment and confusion. When I attempt to choose my own ways I make endless mistakes, and at length fall at His feet abased at my own foolishness. The government shall be upon His shoulders, and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. Therefore "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours alone."

I have been passing through many deep trials since I last communicated with you, my dear friend, all proving that the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. My thoughts are vain, and I hate them; but "how precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" if I could reckon them up--they are more than can be numbered. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

Many thanks for dear H— M—'s letter. It is precious. It is indeed an indulgence to you both to dwell together in the Lord; but you are holding all, ready to resign at His word, knowing that He alone is your sure dwelling-place and companion forever. Oh! sweet privilege, to hold all in Him, and for Him, and so live on Him, that we shall not be impoverished if all else be withdrawn.

"There nothing is in the creature found,
But may be found in Thee;
I must have all things and abound,
While Christ is all to me."

"I am your inheritance," says our loving Lord; and as we live by faith, we find that we have a treasure in the heavens which fails not. Brooks dry up, cisterns become broken—but the all-fullness treasured in Jesus is inexhaustible; and in the greatest outward straits we may be living in plenty and rejoicing in Him, as "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty--yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!" Habakkuk 3:17-18

What need I have to cry, "Lord, increase my faith!" We are not straitened in Him but in our own affections; too often are they straitened; then we can only rejoice in His gifts: but when enlarged into Himself we can rejoice in Him whether He bestows or withholds--spiritually or temporally. He is our peaceable habitation, our own dwelling, and quiet resting place--for so far as we live in His will, we are insured from disappointment, and are not afraid of evil tidings, our heart being fixed, trusting in the Lord. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him." Faith can "be still" with such a refuge and helper.

He who has given all up to God--has nothing to lose. He who has found all in God--has nothing outside of Him to desire. Thus Mary sits still in the house until she receives the stirring message, "The Master has come, and calls for you;" and she also sits still at the feet of Jesus, feeding on Him, while busy Martha is preparing for Him. How plain that He was Mary's ALL, and that she realized that He had entertainment enough in Himself without any of her additions; she therefore leaves Martha to serve alone, while she feeds on her Lord, and He delights in her, and the satisfaction is mutual. May

Mary's place and Mary's portion be yours and mine forever; but it is only His own almighty power that can hold us to it. The flesh would ever be moving and meddling, for truly the professing Church in this day is a city full of stirrings; and many of the living family are tossing to and fro in the general tumult, while their spiritual complainings are many, and amount to this, "While I was busy here and there--He was gone." Oh! keep us, gracious Lord, abiding in You, while others go and come.

Now, my beloved friend, I have many desires towards you. Having just left off writing to take tea, I read over it Isaiah 35 with much sweetness, and if the Lord opens it to your faith as He has to mine, you will not lack this day's bread, and with tomorrow will come its portion also. "Take no thought for the morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." "As your days, so shall your strength be." "For the Lord God is your strength, and He will make your feet like hinds feet." Even upon the mountains of difficulty, He makes a way for His ransomed to pass over; yes, He is the way in which you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint; He is the straight way through crooked circumstances. "I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble."

Now, beloved, I commend you to Him who "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy." To Him alone be glory by us, and in all that befalls us, in this wilderness journey, for we are not our own—but are bought with a price, that we should be to the praise of His glory, who has made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him, our bond of union indissoluble, yours, with fervent love,
Ruth

Faith's grasp of things unseen

To Mrs. H., June 1858.

My dearest friend,

Warmest thanks for your last letter. I judge you are in straits and trials. May the Lord strengthen your faith, so that you may be reconciled to all His ways and dealings. When fully reconciled we can walk lovingly with Him, even while He walks contrary to our flesh and its idols. Oh to follow Him fully, as Joshua and Caleb did, who held fast to His faithfulness amidst all the cavilings and improbabilities of flesh and blood, and even though the people talked of stoning them. They were quite sensible of their own weakness and the strength of their enemies—but what of all this? Faith did not look to creature weapons or might—but stood on firmer ground. "If the Lord delights in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey." Surely Christ is our good land; and though unbelief and Satan rage, and carnal reason cavils--the children of the promise shall possess their possessions. "I am your inheritance, says the Lord." In Him all things are ours, not to glory in or rest in—but to seek the things of Christ in them, and His glory by them. "Let no man glory in men, for all things are yours." (1 Cor. 3:20-23)

Oh, this precious grace of faith, may the Lord nourish and sustain it. Yes, faith is strong in old age to claim the fulfillment of the promise; and, having seen many wars and wonders of the Lord, it puts in the plea for every inch of ground for which the word has gone forth. See Joshua 14:9-11, yes, read the whole chapter, for it is very rich, and also Numbers 13 and 14. Oh for more Joshuas and Calebs! for truly "no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly," which is to walk in Him, not in the flesh.

Affectionate love to your precious child. Dear girl, she bears the yoke in her youth as I also did—but have praised the Lord for it many times. His yoke is easy, and His burden light; it is the endeavor to evade it which is the misery. His cross is lined with love, however rugged and unsightly the outside may appear to carnal reason. Praise Him, O my soul, and praise Him, O you cross-bearing companions. See what your forerunner did. He, bearing His cross, went forth. (John 19:17) Fear not to follow the Lamb, wherever and however He leads. In each footprint he has left a blessing. "The Lord is with you while you are with Him," (2 Chron. 15:2) and if He is for us we need not fear what flesh can do unto us.

With much love in our lovely and loving Lord the Lamb, your own ever-affectionate,
Ruth

Sweet lessons in the valley of humiliation

To Mrs. H., June 1858.

My very dear friend,

I hope you are still kept steadily following onward in the way of faith. Oh, how sweet to live in momentary dependence upon Him, and independent of all beside; then are we satisfied with His fullness, however low creature streamlets may run. Do I not long to be more fully and always in this way of faith? Yes, verily; though, alas! I am too often turned aside by carnal reason—my old and powerful foe.

Oh, my dear Amelia, I think none of the Lord's children are so slow to learn and so easily beguiled in some things, from the simplicity which is in Christ. I cannot boast of any attainments. I am laid low in the dust, and very, very poor; yet I have a rich Beloved, who scorns not my lowliness, and only keeps me short in hand that I may not be able to do without Him, and that I may glory in nothing but Himself, in whom I can never glory too much. It is good to be in the "valley of humiliation," the air is congenial to the new man, and very beneficial, though not pleasing to this proud heart. Moreover, there we have much of the company of Prince Immanuel, who chose that spot for His earthly residence; for "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." Oh, it was a mighty stoop of love. I marvel and adore, desiring to follow the Lamb wherever He leads.

I heard a little of His wondrous ways towards you from dear Mrs. B—. It is wonderful how He sends His benefits in such a way as to cut off all glorying in the flesh. You shall not be delighting in His benefits—but absorbed in Himself. Against this, the enemy fights hard, presenting various things to divert from that safe and secret place into which he has no access. While delighting in gifts he can touch us—but, when enrapt up in the Giver, he is defeated, Psalm 91. Fare you well.

Affectionate love, from yours ever warmly,
Ruth

Suffering no interruption to the believer's joy

(Written within two months of her death)

To Mrs. H., The banks of Jordan, May 1860.

My beloved Amelia,

Many thanks for your note. The Lord bless you and reveal Himself to you, and through you, more and more.

I rejoiced in Him, my best Friend, in the love of espousals, and now prove that rejoicing was not in vain. What He is in the banqueting-house, He is in the furnace--all we need. And the low chastened praises of suffering times are dear to Him as the more gladsome songs of bridal days. He was my theme then, my glory and joy—He is so still. He was my companion then, when drinking of the spiced wine—He is so now while receiving the vinegar. He has drank the bitter cup before me, and is my brother born for adversity, and precious companion in tribulation. I would glorify Him in the fires and praise Him to the last. You shall do it, for You are my life, and You are my praise, O my Beloved!

You will take these imperfect lines in token of love in Him which decays not with withering mortality. I am feeble and sore broken in the flesh—but the spirit is untouched, "our life is hid with Christ in God," and no disease or death can find it.

Farewell, in the undying love of our changeless Lord, yours ever most affectionately,
Ruth.

"Which things perish in the using," is strongly stamped on all below.

Lessons in the furnace

"He has done all things well."

To Mrs. H., June 7, 1860.

I was grieved to hear of your affliction, my beloved Amelia. But while with affectionate sympathy I feel for your suffering, I know most fully that it was not by chance or in vain, for

"Not a single shaft can hit,
Until the God of love sees fit;"

and each shaft shall hit the right place, and accomplish His purpose. Oh! it is so sweet and quieting to know that Divine purpose runs through every event of our lives—"let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her," not only handfuls of pleasant mercies—but also of afflictions and trials at the appointed season, while His will runs as a straight line through every crooked circumstance, and our dissolving into that will, shall be our peace amidst it all. I hope you are now restored to your usual health. Thanks for your note and Mr. H—'s, in both which I found a suitable word. I ought to have acknowledged them sooner—but I have been much worse. I am now reviving again—but very weak, having at times very deep exhaustions, at others much suffering. It is marvelous how I am kept in this state—but I know it is all right. If my gracious Lord will but be glorified thereby, I shall rejoice.

I have had the exercise of not seeing or hearing my Beloved, which was an additional trial under

increased affliction—but at length He instructed me thereby from 1 Peter 1:7, and I felt the trial had been profitable and strengthening. I am now favored with more conscious nearness, which alleviates bodily suffering.

Excuse all defects, I am very feeble. I have not written it all at once, and find it difficult to write, my arm being so contracted; but never mind, "the lame take the prey," and sit at the King's table, so all is well. Adieu, my beloved Amelia. The storms of life will soon be over, the fetters of flesh will fall off, and the freed spirit reach its own element of holiness and love.

With dear love in our lovely and loving Lord, I rest in Him, your very affectionate,
Ruth

The magnetic stone

ALAS! my God, that we should be
Such strangers to each other;
Oh, that as friends we might agree,
And walk and talk together!

You know my soul does dearly love
The place of Your abode,
No music drops so sweet a sound
As those two words, "my God."

I long not for the fruit which grows
Within these gardens here;
I find no sweetness in the rose,
When Jesus is not near.

Your gracious presence, O my Christ,
Can make a paradise;
Oh, what are all the goodly pearls
To this Pearl of great price?

May I taste that communion, Lord,
Your people have with You;
Your Spirit daily talks with them;
Oh, may He talk with me.

Like Enoch, let me walk with God,
And thus walk out my day,
Attended with the heavenly guards,
Upon the king's highway.

When will You come unto me, Lord?
Oh, come, my Lord, most dear;

Come near, come nearer, nearer still;
I'm well when You are near.

When will You come unto me, Lord?
I languish for Your sight:
Ten thousand suns, if You are strange,
Are shades instead of light.

When will You come unto me, Lord?
For until You do appear,
I count each moment for a day,
Each minute for a year.

Come, Lord, and never from me go;
This world's a darksome place:
I find no pleasure here below,
When You do hide Your face.

There's no such thing as pleasure here—
My Jesus is my all;
As You do shine or disappear,
My pleasure rise or fall.

Come, spread Your savor on my frame
(No sweetness is so sweet),
Until I get up to sing Your name,
Where all Your singers meet.

To Miss W,

It is the fullness, freeness, and unchangeableness of the love of Jesus--which alone will draw the wandering heart back again. No sense of wandering will draw the soul back; no sense of backsliding will restore it. It is Jesus, Jesus only, who is the magnetic stone to draw the far-off one again to Himself and His dear embrace. It is the inflowing of His precious love which will dissolve the heart in true contrition for its wanderings. At a distance from Him it may see its backslidings, and remain hardened—but, under His warm beams, it will feel them, and be melted in adoring wonder, because it has so much forgiven. Oh! wrestle for a fresh revelation of Jesus in your soul; and rest not again until you obtain it. However long you may have to wait for it, wait on; for to them that "look for Him, He will appear" unto salvation, even experimental salvation, when needed. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

To dear Miss W., affectionately, from an unworthy one, who has been ever bent to backsliding—but has often had to sing that dear wilderness song, "He restores my soul." Dear Miss W. will excuse this hasty line, which comes in His warm love from His gleaner who is longing for her joy in the Lord. Jer. 31:18-22.

Getting near the light

To Miss W,
September, 1857.

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner."

"The refining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold—but the Lord tries the heart."

Beloved in Jesus—Your dear line rejoiced my heart; because it shows that the blessed Refiner is dealing with you to take away the dross, and bring you forth again from all besides to Himself, and for Himself. Oh! fear not the process which may be needful; fear not to see and feel the worst of your case. Cry for faith and patience to endure, while He turns His hand upon you to purge away your dross, and take away your tin (Isaiah 1:25). You will keenly feel the smart, and be truly shocked at your own treachery and unfaithfulness. But, oh, it is worth anything to be restored to the simplicity which is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:2, 3), again to live in endearing communion and fellowship as bosom friends. Tell Him daily that nothing but this will satisfy you. He can easily do it, as He so lovingly showed you on Wednesday. It was gracious of Him so to draw near, and say to you, "Fear not." He gave you afresh the savor of His good ointments (Song 1:3, 4) to draw you on in following Him; and, although, since that, you have seemed to walk in a barren land, allow me to remind you how kindly He takes it when we follow Him "in the land not sown." He condescends to say He remembers it (Jer. 2:2); and, though He speaks this in reproof, it is a reproof in such tender love, that it has often cheered and strengthened my fainting heart to follow Him amidst all felt desolations; while it has also laid me very low, in feeling that I had "left my first love." But "faithful are the wounds of a friend." Oh! may we be enabled to open our bosoms to receive them, and yield ourselves fully to the Lord; entreating Him to separate us from all which separates between our souls and Him. The same dear hand which wounds will heal, and whatever He removes to reveal more of Himself, will be, indeed, a gainful loss. May we each be brought to the spirit of the dear apostle, who counted all things loss and rubbish (Phil. 3:8) for a precious Christ; and may we not only be brought to it—but kept to it, for we are ever prone to turn again unto folly.

You do not know how unworthy I am, dearest Miss W., and also "of low degree;" but we are one in Jesus, and that is very sweet.

I must remember you before Him: I seem to get hold of your heart, and present it to Him, that afresh He may "entomb it deeply in His," that you may know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I do so long for dear Christians to be brought to walk closely with God, and to live up to their high privileges. May I say that this will not be attained by looking at self or at each other—but by "looking unto Jesus?" When your eye is single, your whole body is full of light. The single eye has but one object—"Jesus only" (Matt. 17:8). Oh, may you, by the Spirit's power, so lift up your eyes from all but Jesus, that you will be conformed to His image (2 Cor. 3:18). I shall be most happy to hear from you. But do not expect to receive any better account of yourself—rather a worse one; for, as you get nearer the light, you will see more of your own sinfulness. I do hope, however, to hear you speak well of Him, and that, as you feelingly cry out, "Behold, I am vile," He will melt your heart by responding, "You are absolutely beautiful, my darling, with no imperfection in you." May the Spirit be richly poured out upon you, that under His holy anointing you may experience Heb: 12:1, 2; Col. 2:6, 7.

R. B.

Oh, this wondrous Savior!

To Miss W.

November 2nd, 1857.

My beloved friend—I rejoice in the token your dear letter contains of the Lord's leading, which I cannot doubt, though oftentimes you are not able to realize the teaching of the Spirit as you desire. It seems to me like that word in Hosea 11:3, 4. All this was done to them of whom it is said, "My people are bent to backsliding from me," even to poor Ephraim, who seems in the Word to be often used as a type of the backslider. In this case he had wandered so long and so far as not at first to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, or to realize that He was really "restoring his soul, and leading him again in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." But nevertheless it was so. The fact remained the same. Ephraim was a sheep, nor could all his waywardness make him a goat, although it robbed him for a time of much of the sheep's privilege, and kept him from feeding and resting in the green pastures; so that, instead of being fat and flourishing, he was lean from day to day. But now the Shepherd of Israel is seeking and searching him out from all the places where he has been scattered, "in the cloudy and dark day," and, though he has become so bewildered in judgment as not to know where he is, or who is guiding him, yet his faithful Friend will not leave him. He will bring him out from the people, and feed him in a good pasture: on the high mountains of Israel shall his fold be. "Ephraim loved idols." "Ephraim hired lovers." "Ephraim mixed himself among the people." Ephraim's goodness is "like a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away."

Now can my dear Miss W— trace any of her own features in this description of Ephraim? Is she convicted, in her own conscience, of the like evils, as she reads the charges against the backsliding one? Then, let her listen to the sequel, and, though Satan and unbelief may rob her of the comfort of many promises, by insinuating that she is not the character described, and they are not given to her, yet surely she may look for Ephraim-mercies, and plead Ephraim-promises, and hope in Ephraim's pardoning God, who says, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my affections are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord" (Hosea 11:8, 9). Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for my anger is turned away from him," even from the Surety on whom their sin was found, and punished. From Him is the Divine anger turned away, because He has endured the utmost penalty which justice could require, and therefore a holy God can love us freely (Isaiah 53:6).

Oh, my beloved and longed-for, I know your dear heart is fully convicted of backsliding; here you can painfully read your name and character. Well—the Word abounds with rich promises to such; promises of correction, of reviving, and restoration. Search them out: you will wonder at their fullness and freeness. If you dare not think any other bosom of consolation belongs to you, this is an abundant one. May you, by faith, drink it in and be satisfied, and may the blessed Spirit bring home these free-grace promises so warmly to your heart, that it shall "dissolve in wonder, love, and praise." May you, by faith, look upon Him whom you have pierced, and mourn for Him, while at the same time you rejoice in His benefits, and receive, by His precious blood, the blotting out of all transgressions. That blood has blotted them out of the Book, so that, when sought for, they shall not be found, and it

alone can blot them out of the conscience; this also shall be done (Heb. 9:13, 14). Oh, this efficacious blood! Oh, this wondrous Savior! He opens the secret of our wanderings and transgressions, only to declare how entirely He has put them all away by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hear Him speak, Isaiah 43:22-26. Thus "He receives sinners, and eats with them," having been made sin for them, that they "might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Let us join to praise Him, for, if He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us such things as these. Oh, what mercy that He did not say, "Let them alone, they have loved idols, after idols let them go." What mercy that by His light He has manifested our darkness, and searchingly said to us, "Is there any secret thing with you? Has it not been thus with you?" And has He not caused you to reply, Psalm 139:23? Christ is the Way (John 14:6). Has He not raised you from the bed of spiritual sloth, to seek your Beloved? And have you not caught some little savor of His good ointments, drawing you on in seeking Him still? Oh, yes; your letter plainly declares it in those little revivings, inflowings of the Word, and encouragements at the mercy-seat; of all which you may say, "It is the voice of my Beloved, behold He comes, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." You cannot yet say He is come so as to embrace you—but His tokens are sure, and by them He is saying, "You shall see greater things than these." More of your own vile heart--and more of His loving heart. More of your sin--and more of His great salvation. More of your deformity--and more of His beauty. The blessed Spirit discovers both (John 16:8, 14). Fear not, He will "perfect that which concerns" you; and, though you may not yet have felt the depth of your nature's evil, as some have, you will learn it more and more as you go on (Ezek. 8:13). Yet remember, this is not salvation, neither will it bring rest to your soul. But, in following Isaiah 45:22, "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other."--that will be found. It is while beholding Jesus by faith you will be changed into His image (2 Cor. 3:18). I rejoice to hear you say that you are longing above all to know Him. Go on wrestling for it, and may you fully experience Phil. 3:7-16.

I, too, have felt the sweetness of that word, Isaiah 42:8. It is a consolation that when He brought us into the banqueting house, and said, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love," even then He knew how faithless we should prove; therefore when that faithlessness came out in action, it did not diminish His love, or touch our union, though it did interrupt communion. I am glad, however, that He has so stirred you up, that you cannot rest without it, and that He has made you willing for any trial to the flesh, rather than to follow Him afar off. Do still beg for fuller revelation of Himself and His love. Do not be considering so much how you love Him, as how He loves you. Your love is but the effect; His is the cause; and the more you have to do with the cause, the more fully will the effect flow from it (1 John 4:19, and John 15:9). So with faith; if you would have it grow, it must be by looking at Him, not at it. In short, the more you "consider Him," and are continually coming unto Him, the more lively and healthy will be the graces of the Spirit in your soul, while yet you rejoice, not in your fruitfulness—but only in Him and in what He has done and suffered. If the Holy Spirit open this to you, you will find the secret of peace and power. It is all in Christ, and He says, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Away from self, away from all besides, to be absorbed in Him. Then shall your peace flow as a river, and "your righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Micah 5:5; Jer. 23:6). I am ashamed of writing so much—but know not how to leave off. Jesus is very precious, and you are dear; and I long for your eye and heart to be fixed on Him. Then will your course be steady, and you will not be greatly moved by the many changes you will ever find within. Your letter breathes with tokens of life. You could not feel His blood so precious, and long for His love, unless you were alive; and I believe He is come to you that you may have life more abundantly, and that your heart, which seemed desolate, may be again tilled sown (Ezek. 36:32 to end).

If it is for the Lord's glory that we meet again, He will bring it about. But if you expect anything from me, you must be disappointed. "He will not give His glory to another." Jesus will be all your need, and, if we ever meet, both looking to Him, it will be a warm meeting indeed.

It has pleased my dear Lord most wonderfully to renew my bodily health. Oh, for grace to spend all in His service. He has been most kind, to open the "upper springs" sweetly since my return home. Oh, press on after a life of faith in Jesus, for it is next in blessedness to a life of glory with Jesus. Beg of the blessed Spirit to draw your faith out continually upon His Person and work. Then will you find that He is a "good land, flowing with milk and honey." I long for you to be brought to rejoice in the Lord, and have sweet fellowship with Him. May He keep you pleading and waiting for it, until He shall say "Be it unto you even as you will." He loves our importunity, and waits to answer prayer.

R. B.

P.S.—You mention that sometimes all you thought you had enjoyed seems a delusion. You say, "I do not know what to do in such cases." Come to Jesus afresh, in all your emptiness, as if you never had received anything from Him, and He will not cast you out; no, never! If you fear you were deceived, and think you had false peace and comfort, come and tell Him, and ask Him to take away the wrong, and make you right. Hide nothing from Him. Thus you will get more relief from self, and victory over Satan, than by any other means. Let nothing keep you from Him.

R. B.

The trial of faith

Dear Miss W.

I am so delighted and thankful that you have been enabled to follow your Beloved in a land not sown, still pursuing after Him when He seemed to go away, and still waiting, though He answered you "never a word." I well know the painful feelings when there seems to be no access, and faith is so enfeebled that one can hardly recognize to whom one is speaking. Still it is not in vain. It is for the trial of faith, and though it seems a "fiery trial," faith shall grow thereby, so long as the soul is kept waiting on. "Add to your faith patience." See how long the worthies of old had to wait for any promised blessing. "They who thus sow in tears shall reap in joy" (James 5:7). You must not always measure success by present feelings. Seek to have your heart fixed, trusting in God, and not in what you feel (Isaiah 30:18). Wait on, wait ever. One has well said, "If the Lord seems to shut His door against you, it is not to keep you out—but only to make you knock the louder." Therefore, though the vision tarries, wait for it. Before long the dry fleece shall be wet with the dew of heaven, for the promise is, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Do not be discouraged by your own dryness and barrenness. You must realize this, that the Lord alone may be exalted, and that you may thankfully say, "All my springs are in You."

R. B.

All in Jesus

Dear Miss W.

September, 1858.

You complain of having but little of the sensible love and presence of your Beloved, and that once you enjoyed much more. I do not know sufficient of your experience, to be able to judge whether the Lord is withholding sensible enjoyments to bring you to live more by faith upon Himself than upon His benefits. If so, I am sure the more you are brought so to live upon the precious Person and work of Jesus, the more stability of soul you will experience. Your soul being brought to triumph in Him who is the "Lord our Righteousness." I know not whether it be so, or whether the Lord is saying Rev. 2:4, 5; if so, you will cry Psalm 19:12, and Psalm 51:12. But, however, though no fellow-pilgrim may exactly understand your present exercises and position in the Divine life, your dear Lord knows all about it; and, if you closely wait upon Him, He will reveal what He intends, by the change in your experience. Oh! may He cause you to come out of self continually, and find your all in Jesus. The Lord establish, strengthen, and settle you on the Rock, as David sings (Psalm 40:2). My heart longs that it may be thus with you, for this is the victory that overcomes; all faith in Jesus and in His doing and suffering. Excuse all this from one who longs that your heart may be "established with grace." To Him I commend you—may He be revealed more fully in your soul.

R. B.

We must learn our weakness

Ockbrook, May 18th, 1849.

My dear A—It had already been in my mind to write to you, and now that you have sent me a note, I will try to answer it, feeling most sensibly that the Lord must be my Teacher, or, indeed, I shall darken "counsel by words without knowledge."

You say, "My mouth is shut"—it seems to have been so with one of old (Psalm 88:8; Psalm 2:15; Psalm 142:7). And Jesus says to His Church that she was "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed," so you see this shutting up is old-fashioned work, even in the living family; therefore you must not conclude it to be a black mark against you, though it be a painful one—but rather cry more earnestly to Him "who shuts and no man opens;" but, blessed be His name, He also "opens and no man shuts." Do not, my dear boy, restrain prayer before God—if you do, I am sure your soul will suffer loss, and Satan will gain the advantage. Perhaps you will say, "My mouth is shut up in prayer—I cannot pray." Then that is just a reason for you to go to the Lord, and to be much in secret before Him, who alone can help you. If a spirit of prayer is a blessing, it is worth seeking for, and remember you will not seek in vain! You know the Lord does not expect us to bring to Him—but to receive from Him. We come empty-handed for a supply, so just bring your prayerless heart (if it should be such) to Him, to put prayer into it. Tell Him, with all simplicity, that you would pray—but cannot; and beg Him to do for you as He promises in Zech. 10:12; if you cannot utter words—stay and groan at His footstool, rather than be driven away. I can say from experience it is good to do so; even if no present answer seem to come, I am sure it is not in vain.

You say the Bible is a sealed book; do not on this account cease to search it, for where else can you

go to find so purely the words of eternal life? We are to watch daily at Wisdom's gates, and to wait at the post of her doors. They are pronounced blessed who do so, and the words "watch" and "wait" seem to imply that there is not always an obtaining wisdom's lesson. We must be exercised in patience, as well as in knowledge. Well do I know what it is to be without dew and unction, when I seem to have lost old lessons, and to have learned no new ones. Yet do I always find it best to keep close to that garden of the Word, where I so often have had the showers from heaven; and, however long the season of dryness, they have always come again, and so it will be to you.

Read straight forward, for you know not at which chapter or verse the seal will be broken. Jesus will do for you as in Luke 24:27, 45; and then you will not want my poor encouragement to "search the Scriptures." Prov. 13:4, 1 Tim. 4:15, are God's own words. You say, "I am as though forsaken," just like the Church of old (Isa. 49:14). But God contradicts her: "They may forget, yet will I not forget you." Seeming absence and distance are the times for proving our faith, and it is a mercy if we are helped to trust our God in the dark. "If we believe not, He abides faithful;" and He says, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you" (Isa. 54:7, 8). I trust, before long, your drooping soul will say, "It is the voice of my Beloved, behold, He comes;" and you will say, "Why should He regard me?" Which question can only be resolved into His own Holy Sovereignty. No sinful child of Adam can see why God should love him; each Spirit-convinced soul feels himself the most unlikely one to have been noticed, and can only say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight." The Scriptures also show us that God's choice and love was of His own will--without one desert or deserving of the creature--for His own glory. And, moreover, we see plainly that He has not taken the most excellent things—but rather those which seem most weak and base to the outward eye (1 Cor. 1:27, 29). Here, therefore, you will find no ground of exclusion, yet do not look into your little self for a cause to induce Divine love. But look up at the mighty Jehovah, and admire His majestic movements in not stooping to the creature for a motive to move His love—but coming forth in His own sovereignty to love and save freely. How does this thought exalt Him, and abase us! Oh! it is just beautiful, to lay and keep us low.

Now, having looked over all your statement, I can find nothing contrary to the common exercises of the Lord's people, and quite believe you must prepare to "endure with hardness," if you are a soldier of Jesus Christ; for it is His will that those who reign with Him shall also suffer with Him, and also that they shall have many varied exercises in the discipline of the wilderness. We must learn our weakness, as well as His strength; our emptiness, as well as His fullness; our ignorance, as well as His wisdom. We must experience that our hearts are like the fallow ground, as well as that He is like the dew unto Israel; and we must have times of shutting up, that we may afresh give Him the glory of opening again, and that we may be kept feelingly saying, "All my springs are in You." When some new exercise seems painful, it is a mercy if the Lord gives us a desire to go through, rather than to turn away from it. If we are more anxious to learn instruction, than to be relieved from the unpleasantness of it, this is a healthy state of soul, and so walking, we shall understand that the Lord does nothing in vain. But that all the humbling and emptying frames that we are brought into are for our establishment in Him, and for His glory. In short, that all is for "the lifting of Jesus on high" in our souls. This is the constant work of the Holy Spirit, to bring us to be experimentally nothing, and to make Jesus our "all in all," thereby teaching us to live by faith upon Him. Then does our experience correspond with Jer. 17:7, 8; and Psalm 97:11.

But do not be discouraged, because you are yet learning your nothingness; this is really needful to make way for the rest. Do not seek to exercise yourself on things too high for you, or be comparing

yourself with others, for this will only be an occasion of stumbling to you. But ask to be kept in simplicity, begging of the Holy Spirit to show you how the Lord may be glorified, and how you may be edified by your present state. In this way, you will often find that "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." Ah! and that the Lord can teach by a dry fleece as well as by one soaked with heavenly dew. May He bless you, and give you understanding in all things. You know that I have been very ill, and at the same time very well. Like 2 Cor. 4:16-18. Ah! truly I could tell you much of the love, power, and preciousness of my blessed Jesus. But I thought it might be more for your profit to take you upon your own ground, and to talk over your feelings rather than describe mine. But this I must say: I have proved that there is a reality in vital godliness which will stand amid the decay of all that is fleshly, and I have learned that Jesus loves at all times, and in the depths He is a solid Rock to those who put their trust in Him.

May the weakness of my words throw no confusion over your mind. But may the wind of the Spirit (Job 37:21) pass by and cleanse them. May you, by His power, have the application of the precious blood, and the imputation of the perfect righteousness, and a close walk with God.

So affectionately desires your very sincere friend,
R. B.

Spiritual Growth

My dear A—I feel quite sorry to have been so long without writing to you—but many things in mind and body have seemed a hindrance, so you must excuse it, and not think yours was uninteresting—it is far otherwise. To hear the faintest sigh after heart-acquaintance with Jesus is always deeply interesting to me, and surely it is such "smoking flax" He will not quench, and such "bruised reeds" He will not break. He is a tender Shepherd; He knows the lambs cannot travel very fast, so He will sometimes gather them in His arms, and carry them in His bosom; while, at others, He will allow even those little ones to feel the roughness of the road and their own weakness, that they may be emptied of self-confidence, and walk humbly, confiding in the Lord alone. All Divine leadings are in Divine sovereignty, and we cannot mark out any specific line, either for ourselves or others. But this we know, that all who are born of God shall be led and taught by the Spirit, and all such do feel sin hateful and holiness desirable. They hunger and thirst after righteousness—Christ and His manifested pardon is the object, either of their desire or of their enjoyment. To understand the Holy Scripture, and to find a blessing in ordinances, they also seek after, longing at the same time to realize, communion with God and with His saints; such desires are proofs of spiritual life, and where there is life there shall be growth, although, as I before said, the way and manner thereof is sovereign. Some learn war in their youth, and have all their enemies coming out against them, when as yet they scarcely know under whose banner they are fighting. This was my own case; and, though it seemed very hard, I now bless God for it, fully proving that "it is good to bear the yoke in one's youth." We must learn to fight, if we are of the living family, and those who sing and make merry in early days are often very uneasy when the trumpet calls them from the banquet to the battle; and when, after the green pastures, they have to follow their Lord "in a land not sown." However, all His ways are right ways, and in the end each will say, "He has done all things well" (Psalm. 107:7). They shall all prove that "the end of a thing is better than the beginning." Balaam might well say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" but, alas! he had never been led forth in the right way—by the footsteps of the flock; he did not hunger and thirst after righteousness—but

"loved the wages of unrighteousness," and received them (Rom. 6:23); by the sword of Israel was Balaam the soothsayer sent to his reward.

And now dear A—, there may be nothing in all this that will meet your case. I am sure there will not, unless His hand be in it, whose power steered the bow which was drawn at a venture, causing the arrow to enter just between the joints of the harness. He knows whether you need a wound or a balsam—remember, He wounds in order to heal, and kills that He may make alive. I covet His workings in your soul (as shall seem best to His godly wisdom), to keep you from false peace and false refuges, and to bring you the true light when you seem to sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to give you also knowledge of salvation by the felt remission of your sins, and to guide you into the way of peace. These things are the work of God (John 6:63). But as He condescends to use instrumentality, and that often of the weakest kind, we are encouraged to write and speak to one another, not knowing when or by what word a blessing may be given or received. On this ground, therefore, I would affectionately encourage you, dear A—, to seek for more openness on this dearest of all subjects. You are restrained in speaking and in writing, partly, perhaps, from natural reserve, and partly from the working of the enemy, who well knows how many blessings the saints got, when in simplicity they speak, "often one to another," of their fears and feelings, and of the things which belong to their everlasting peace. He remembers, also, how many of his snares have been broken and his temptations blunted, when fellow-pilgrims have taken sweet counsel together, and spread each other's hard cases before the Lord. Therefore, while he cares not how much lip-talk there is between professors, he will try hard to hinder heart-talk, especially between young Christians; he will hold them back with the fear of speaking more than they feel, and professing to be what they are not; and then he will strive to keep them from the helpful encouragements and counsels of those who have tried the road before them, and whose affections yearn over them in the Lord. Think of these things, and the Lord grant that with the heart you may believe, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation, to the glory of His name.

Do not wonder if you are assailed with unbelieving or atheistical thoughts, when reading the Scriptures, or at other times. These are all weapons formed from beneath by the master of black arts, and the iron of them has entered into many a redeemed soul, making it to cry out in great bitterness, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Satan knows he cannot destroy them, although he is permitted at times to envelope them in thick mists, making it to appear as if there were no covenant-keeping God, and no Divine authority in the Scriptures, or reality in the religion of Jesus. But he only hurls these fiery darts in order to get the Bible closed, and the footstool of mercy neglected, that the soul may sit down in hopeless gloom, with the eye turned away from the only place of refuge. Though he thus distress, he shall not destroy; and soon the poor heart shall say, as in Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy," etc. These painful things are more or less the lot of Zion's pilgrims. But in all these we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, and He will bruise Satan under the feet of everyone, weak or strong, who put their trust in Him, and who have been caused to fix their hopes upon Jesus, who is entered within the veil. For all such He will arise and rebuke the cruel foe, saying, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?"

You asked about the badgers' skins which covered the tabernacle. I am not wise enough to explain that mystic sanctuary, all of which was full of meaning. But, as both the tabernacle and the temple did prefigure Christ and His Church, and as the tabernacle was covered with rams' skins, dyed red, and with badgers' skins, those beasts must necessarily have been slain before these skins could have been so used. Methinks herein beams upon us, as through a lattice, the death of our gracious Savior,

who condescended to be slain as a sacrifice for His Church, whom also His righteousness covers. Do we not here see, in these rams' skins, dyed red, the precious blood of our glorious Surety flowing out from His scourged and pierced body with crimson hue, and also a rich covering of spotless and perfect righteousness to justify? Oh, to be under this red covering, "accepted in the Beloved," "complete in Him;" oh, to know the value—feel the efficacy of blood Divine. (Heb. 9:22.) All things in the Heavenly Tabernacle—every living vessel in the upper sanctuary has blood applied by the Holy Spirit. No knowledge, or gifts, or feelings, will do in the place of this—no living vessel is too small to experience it, and none so great as not to need it; you may not yet have felt its powerful application, though you may be in the true sanctuary, under the red covering, which betokens that full atonement has been made. But as the rams' skins were hidden by the badgers' skins (Exod. 24:14), we may learn that there must be personal revelation and application of the atonement, before we can feelingly enjoy the benefit; and for this may you be stirred up to pray. And now I commend you to "Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." And, with best wishes,

Believe me, yours very sincerely,

R. B.

It is well

(This letter was written under peculiar circumstances, when the friend to whom it is addressed had just heard that Ruth was suffering from an incurable disease.)

Bethel Cottage, December 27th, 1854.

"And she said, It is well."

My precious A—, I thank you for your affectionate note, which is very sweet to my heart, because it savors of Him, and He does not let you hang on my skirts, to hold me back from His embrace. I thank you, in His name, for all your tender expressions of love—I will not say sympathy, for you know I need none, even as the betrothed needs no sympathy when her Beloved comes to claim her for Himself. She may have to leave those who are very near and dear—but she is sure to find all more than made up in Himself; and, mark you, the closer you walk with Him, the less will you realize separation. Seek to live very closely with your Beloved, and He will give you many good things, which yet you have no conception of (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).

I much feared to tell the nature of my ailment. But, as my health was failing, it did not seem right to hide it longer from my loved ones; and, do you know, since it has been disclosed, my precious Lord has lovingly said to me, when I have felt timid, "Why should you be ashamed of what I have done?" and I answered Him, that if He will be glorified and revealed in it, I will, for His sake, forget all the rest. Oh, yes; most gladly would I glory in my infirmity, if He be thereby magnified in this body, whether by life or by death.

As for the affliction itself, I call it a bosom friend, because it tells of home, where every heart will always burn with love, and glow with praise. It seems to me like receiving a card of invitation to go to

the King's palace. Every line and every letter is love; though the flesh has suffered, the Sun has long since arisen with healing power, and I truly praise Him for it. It has been like the first day; "evening and morning"—the shade first, and afterwards the brightness. My precious Lord distinctly said to me, some months ago, Rev. 3:10, and Isaiah 43:2. Then must I not praise Him? Oh, yes; and here, in the midst of the waters of affliction, would I set up a stone of memorial in honor of His love and faithfulness, who has helped me hitherto. I do cry to Him that my precious friends may have a large rich blessing in this my mercy, and through it they may have a sweet savor of Jesus, to swallow up the ill-savor of this corrupting body, and be so taken up with Him, that, together, we may have a foretaste of that fullness of joy which is in His presence for evermore.

I see not an inch of the road before me, and have no stock of strength or ability for the journey. But I must live moment by moment on the Lord God, who will make my feet like hinds' feet, to tread upon very high places—even the God who performs all things for me. Moreover, to use another figure, I must lie in the arms of my Beloved as a helpless infant—without wisdom or power to do anything for myself—but believing that "the everlasting arms of love" will prove a safe conveyance. I have only one deep, sharp-pointed pang, which makes me daily mourn, and that is, the thought of my unfaithfulness, and the dishonor done to my dearest Lord since I have known His love. I know He has forgiven all, and that His own precious blood has paid the uttermost farthing—but such love makes me hate myself the more, and ever hide my blushing face in His dear bosom, singing, "Sovereign grace over sin abounding!" Who is a God like unto You, multiplying and manifesting pardons to those who have "nothing to pay?"

Oh! what a blessed Jesus we have—who can so soften affliction and so sweeten Marah's bitter stream, making us exceeding joyful even in tribulation, so that I lack power to praise Him as I would. Oh, that my heart were a ten-stringed instrument, and my life a living epistle, in which all might read Him. But, alas! it is so blotted over with unbelief and other sins, that it is hard to pick out His dear name in most of the pages. Oh! when I see Him face to face, and behold those love-prints in His glorious body, what shall I feel? That will be heaven—not one of harps and crowns, or of anything else—but JESUS and the open vision of His unveiled glories, the ineffable glories of Deity, and perfect beauties of humanity ever beaming with new effulgence in the person of our Bridegroom. Then shall we reflect His glory, and show forth His praise.

But I must cease; being still in the body, though sometimes at the gate of heaven.

My dear —, you are young in experience. I feel towards you as 2 Cor. 11:2, 3, fearing, lest by any means—not that Jesus would lose you—but you would lose Jesus, experimentally; lest any should take your crown of rejoicing from you, and cause you to cast away your confidence. May He keep you very close to Himself, and, whatever strange voices perplex, may He cause you to listen to what your Lord says in John 21:22. Remember also 2 Tim. 3:12. There is much which is called godliness which is not "living godly in Christ Jesus." To know nothing but Him—to delight in no other—to look nowhere else for holiness, happiness, and fruitfulness—this is the life of faith so fought against by unbelief and carnal reason, both in ourselves and others, as well as by Satan, who knows that hereby he gets more overcome than in any other way (Eph. 6:16; 1 Peter 1:13-15). May the Lord the Spirit open to you this way of faith, and keep you therein to the end of your days, as Gal. 2:19, 20; Prov. 4:18. I can now testify that it is a solid and blessed reality, notwithstanding my instability. The Lord bless and comfort you (Psalm 87:7). He says, in substance, "All my springs are for you."

Thanks, many, for all kind wishes. I am most unworthy of any love, and often wonder my Lord can bear with me, I am so unlovely in all things, so unlike His handmaids. But it is all His love which flows to me through your heart, and His love is a bottomless, shoreless ocean, in which we shall be absorbed forever and ever.

Our union is forever in indissoluble bonds.

Yours, ever in Him,
Ruth, the happy gleaner

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