

SERMON 37**SOME ACCOUNT OF THE CHOICE EXPERIENCE OF MRS. ANNE BRINE,
AS WRITTEN BY HERSELF, AND COLLECTED OUT OF HER LETTERS**

PERCEIVING, that you are desirous to have an Account of the Dealings of God with my Soul, and being willing to gratify you therein; I shall give you a few short Hints thereof,: Though the Badness of my Memory, and the Sense of Things being too much wore off, will not admit me to give a particular Relation, how I was carried on, Step by Step. When I was young, I was very much taken with. the Vanities and Follies of Youth. My greatest Concern was, that I was hindered by my Parents, of taking my full Swing, in that, in which, I so much delighted: For they would sometimes be talking to me about the State of my immortal Soul, and asking what I thought would become of me, if I should die without an Interest in Christ: But, I in disregardful Manner used to turn my Back upon them, and laugh at them; thinking myself as good as they, only I could not talk so finely about religious Matters, For, thought I, I am not guilty of any very heinous Sins, all that I desire, is only to play and be merry, as most of my Years are willing to do. What, thinks I, would they have me be mopish, and lay aside all Pleasure thus soon, it will be Time enough for me to betake myself to a melancholy Life when I attain to their Age; should I do it now, I shall be laughed at by all my Companions. I heartily wished that my Parents were like the Parents of some of my Playfellows, that I might have the same Liberty, which they enjoyed. I accounted myself to be in a worse Case than any Body, because I was deprived in some measure of the Liberty, I would have had. When I was at the Meeting, my Thoughts were wholly employed about my vain Delights and Pleasures, instead of being attentive in hearing the Word of God preached.

Sabbaths were very burdensome to me, and I did, as often as I could, make Excuses to stay at Home, under Pretense of Illness. Thus I went on till I was near fifteen Years of Age, about which Time, it pleased God to awaken me, and bring me to consider, what a State I was in. One Night being in my usual manner, at Play with my Companions, and hearing them swear at a sad Rate, and taking the Lord's Name in vain, in almost every Sentence they spoke, having met with something that vexed them, which provoked them, as they said, so to do. This, I thought, was not right in them; though I myself had much ado to keep from bad Expressions, thinking I looked foolish amongst them, because I did not do as they did: But I was kept from it, though the Temptation lay very hard upon me. This terrified me very much, not only for that, I was so much put to it, to keep from bad Words myself; but to think, that I should delight in such wicked Company, contrary to the Mind of my Parents, and certainly displeasing to God, against whom, thought I, I have sinned to a great

Degree. I went home that Night with a sad and heavy Heart, concluding, that I should certainly be damned. And fully expected every Night when I went to Bed, for about a Fortnight, that I should never awake any more in this World, but should be in everlasting Punishment before Daylight appeared.

I resolved to amend my Life, and to pray to God for Forgiveness of past Sins. After this Resolution was taken, my Terror began to abate: And glad I was, thinking that God was pleased with me, but I soon began to break my Resolutions; for no sooner was the Terror I had felt, a little over, but I had a hankering Mind to return to former Pleasures. And *Satan* let in with this Temptation very strongly, that I was too young to mind Religion, and that if betook myself therefore to all Pleasure would be at an End with me. And likewise, these Thoughts were suggested to my Mind, that the Lord was merciful, and so if I did but repent, and pray earnestly to him to forgive my Sins, when I should be past taking Pleasure, in those Things, in which most of my Years delighted, I need not fear Acceptance with him.

After these Thoughts, with many others, which I cannot now remember, had passed through my Mind, I came to this Conclusion, to go amongst my old Companions once more; and accordingly, when Evening came, out I went to them. They seemed glad of my Company, and told me, they wondered at the Change they perceived in my Countenance towards them, and that they were afraid they had done, or said something displeasing to me, tho' they knew it not; but if it was so, they were very sorry, for they would not do any Thing to anger me if they could help it. This Speech of theirs knit my Love to them, and made me resolve not to forsake them again whatever came on it; but before the Night was spent, I was again seized with sad Terror of Conscience, so that I could not be brisk amongst my Companions.

I went home, and betook myself to my former Resolutions, not to offend God on this wise and that I would read and pray, in order to merit his Favor. For, thought I, I must not expect to find Mercy any other Way. With these Promises, I contented myself, in a great measure, tho' I was not able to perform them. For, no sooner than the pleasant Evenings drew my Companions together; but my Mind was with them, and I allowed myself to go one Night after another, thinking every Time it should be the last, and I neglected Reading and Praying, with these Thoughts, I will omit but this Time, and go to my Play-fellows but once more.

Thus I went on for some Time; but could not take that Pleasure, in Vanity and Folly, as formerly I did. At last, it pleased the Lord, to work such strong Convictions in me, as I hope ended in saving Conversion. One Day, these Thoughts darted into my Mind, that it was, as likely, I might die that Day, as live to another, and then what Good would all my Resolution to reform do me, since I was never found in the Practice of known Duties. These Thoughts set me all in a Tremble, and I concluded myself to be in a miserable Condition, for that I was *deeply* guilty of Sins of Omission and Commission, and that too, after I had been called to forsake them, and

therefore, they could no longer be termed Sins of Ignorance. So I began to conclude the Day of Grace was now past, for I did not hearken to God's Voice when he called, and, therefore, he would now turn a deaf Ear unto me. Then were my Sins, as it were, *set in Order before me*. Things that I had done in my Childhood, which had been long forgotten by me, came fresh to my Remembrance: Upon which, I thought, that I was undone to Eternity. At the same Time, I was made sensible of my Incapacity, to do any Thing that is good. I saw there was a Want of Power, as well as of Will, in me.

About this Time, my Father preached from those Words: *Nevertheless, the Foundation of God, standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth them, that are his, and let everyone, that nameth the Name of Christ depart from Iniquity*. From these Words he took Occasion to talk of Election, and of God's Foreknowledge from Eternity. Well, thought I, is it so, that the Lord, did before this Choice, well know what Rebels we should prove, then I may be well assured, that I shall be damned, for he would not fix his Love unalterably upon so vile, so sinful a Creature, as I am. When my Father came to speak from the latter Part of the Text, he spoke how it was the Duty of Believers to be pressing after Holiness. This made me begin to think of working for Life again, though I doubt not, but my dear Father made a Distinction between working for Life and from Life; but so ignorant was I, that I could not take it in aright. So I attempted to pray, and in so doing, found something of a secret Hope, that the Lord would pardon my Sins, tho' they were very great, if I could but keep to this Duty: But the Lord did not suffer me long to rest here.

For that Scripture came into my Mind: *Not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done; but of his Mercy hath he saved us*. And these Words followed: *Not of Works, left any, Man should boast*. Now was I quite brought off from having any Dependence upon my own Doings, and was at once quite stript of all Hopes: For I thought these Words came only to convince me, that my Righteousness would avail me nothing in Point of Salvation: For it is not said, according to his Mercy hath he saved thee, but us, and, therefore, no Encouragement to me. Thus I went on for some Time in a distressed, disconsolate manner.

One Day, as I was going about some Business, that Word fell upon my Thoughts: Thou art *chosen of God and precious*, I was not for taking any Notice of them. They ran in my Mind very much all Day, at last, I began to wonder at the Reason of their following me so much. I chosen of God, and precious thought I, that can never be, the Words do not belong to me, I dare not take Comfort from them. However, I looked into a Concordance; but could find none nearer than those in 1 *Peter* 1:4. This concerned me very much, for now, I thought it was plain, that *Satan* was endeavoring to deceive me. I was in sad Distress, and knew not what to do: Look which Way I would, I could see nothing but Ruin and Destruction before my Eyes.

Pray I durst not, that Word ran so in my Mind, *the Prayer of the Wicked is an Abomination unto the Lord.*

At length *Satan* began to come in again with this Temptation; that I was but young, and, therefore, need not be thoughtful about Eternity; and that if I was elected I should be brought home at last, tho' I lived ever so carelessly the mean while; but if not, my Thoughtfulness would never save me. But it pleased the Lord to give me to see, that this was from the Devil, because it did not lead to Christ, but to Carelessness; and that Scripture came with some Power: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near:* Whereupon, I desired, that I might so seek him as to find him, so call, that he might answer, so knock, that he might open unto me: For, I thought there was nothing in the World so desirable. That Word was given in for my Comfort: *Tho' your Sins be like Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho' they be red as Crimson, they shall be as Wool.*

I was then helped to admire at the distinguishing, unparalleled, super abounding Love of God. Oh! that he should come over all my Sins and Rebellions, and also manifest and discover it to me. Then I could cry out, *why me, why me*, indeed! Why should I, that am viler than the vilest Sinner that lives, be thus favored, thus honored! 'Tis Cause of Wonder and Astonishment! But, alas! this abode not long. I soon began to be under Fears and Questionings, whether ever the Lord had been at work upon my Soul, or not, and whether the Things I met with, might not be only Delusions. And, At length, *Satan* came in with his Temptations and Assaults upon me, and tempted me to question the Being of a God, and of the Truth of the Scriptures: Many Thoughts I was distressed and perplexed with, which are not fit to be spoken, which brought me at last into such a Frame, that I knew not what to think of any Persons or Things. But one Day, as I was standing at the Garret Window, and looking out into the Garden, I began to consider how the Trees did grow; sure, thought I, it can be no natural Power that produced them: Then those Words came to my Mind, *lift up your Eyes on high, and behold who hath created these Things;* from which I was made to believe, that there is a God: And those Words followed; *hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the Ends of the Earth?* Then was I strongly persuaded, that there is an all-seeing, an all-knowing God, and wonder-working God, who is infinite in Power.

But now the Thoughts and Conceptions which I before had, were like Arrows piercing me: For now I concluded, that if there was a God, I could have no Hopes of ever finding any Favour or Mercy from him; for I had found myself out of Hopes, by questioning his Being. Nay, I thought, that I had committed the unpardonable Sin, and, therefore, I could not be saved. In this Distress I continued some Hours, 'till it pleased the Lord to come in with these Words; *Is my Arm shortened at all, that I cannot save? Or have I no Power to redeem?* Which for the present a little supported

me, for I was persuaded, that his Power is not limited, but that he could fare the *worst* of Sinners. But then I began to doubt of his Willingness to save me.

I was by this Trial made more sensible of the Wickedness of my Heart, and of the natural Propensity that is in me to commit Evil, than ever before I was. It was a Means of discovering to me the Sin and Corruption that dwells within me. I then saw myself to be nothing but a *Mass* of Sin, and *Heap* of Uncleanness. I saw myself to be full of Ignorance and Darkness, which made me question the more, whether there was any Thing of a Work of Grace upon me or no: For I thought if I have Grace, why do I not grow; I find myself ignorant, and that is a Sign that I have no Grace.

I used often to wish that I had died in my Infancy, and then I should not have committed so many, and so heinous Sins against my dear Lord; tho' I was sensible, that if I had died when but one Day old, and had not the Application of Christ's Righteousness, I had even then been miserable; for I was convinced of original Sin before this Time, from those Words, *I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me*: Tho' it was a strange Doctrine to me at first; but after a strict Enquiry, I found by the Scripture, the first Sin which caused the Fall, was Pride and Unbelief. It was Pride in that, Man aimed to be *as God, knowing Good and Evil*; and Unbelief appeared in that he hearkened unto the Voice of *Satan*, and did not obey God: And upon a little Search, I found that these Sins were very predominant in my Nature. By which I found, that I was tainted with original Contamination. Those Words likewise were often in my Thoughts; *who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean? Not one*. By these, I was convinced of original Sin, and was made to see, that from thence all actual Sins did flow.

But to return. After some Time, the Lord was pleased to break in with Discoveries of Love to my Soul afresh, with these Words, *As the Father hath loved me; so have I loved you, continue ye in my Love*. This was a sweet Cordial indeed, to my drooping Spirits. And soon after these Words were made very sweet to my Soul: *As the Bridegroom rejoiceth over his Bride; so shall thy God rejoice over thee*. Oh! how did I then admire the distinguishing Grace of God, that was thus largely displayed and revealed to vile, sinful, and unworthy me. Then was my Heart knit and united to the Lord Jesus; so that I could say, *whom have I in Heaven, but thee? And there is none in the Earth, that I desire besides thee*. I then counted all earthly Things, but as *empty Vanities*, in Comparison with that Comfort I had in the Enjoyment of the Presence of my dear Lord. Then could I freely commit myself, my all into his Hand, believing him to be my Head, my Husband, my Saviour, my Redeemer, and my Advocate. I was for some Time wholly taken up in the Contemplation of the divine Perfections of him, *who is fairer than the Children of Men*: And in adoring the Love of the divine Persons in the glorious Trinity. I saw that the Love of the Father was great, in making Choice of such a rebellious Creature, as he well knew I should prove. The Love of the Son was no less, in accepting of us at his Father's Hand,

freely, willingly, and voluntarily undertaking to satisfy divine Justice, and to answer all the Demands of the Law.

The Love of the Spirit may be seen, in discovering this, so matchless and marvelous Love and Grace unto us. Now, I thought, I could be content to be any Thing, or nothing; so that God might be glorified in me. I was fearful of acting, or speaking any Thing, that was in the least contrary to the Mind of my God. I then hated everything that looked like Lightness, or was in the leastwise sinful, and was as much afraid of sinning, as knowing it was offensive to the holy and pure Nature of Deity, as of being damned for it. And desired as much to be holy here, as happy hereafter. Then Sabbaths were a Delight instead of Burdens. For as soon as the Sabbath was ended, I longed for the Return of another. Then were God's Ways, *Ways of pleasantness, and all his Paths, were Paths of Peace* unto me. Those Words were pleasant to me: *Thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name: And thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel; the God of the whole Earth shall be he called.* Many other sweet and precious Promises were made very comfortable to my Soul, which I need not mention here.

I was for a considerable Time, at it were dandled on the Knee of Love. I seldom was a Day without fresh and repeated Discoveries of pardoning Love and Grace; which so melted my Heart, and so raised my Affections, that at sometimes I was in such Transports of Joy, as cannot be expressed. I was so settled in the Belief and Persuasion of my Instatement in an everlasting inviolable Covenant, that I thought with *David, my Mountain stood so strong, it could never be moved.* I was ready to say with *Paul*; nothing shall separate me from the Love of God, nor interpose, nor hinder my Enjoyment. I could then go to God in Duties, as to my own God and Father, and claim a Right to, and Propriety in the Promises of the Gospel. At that Time, I had an earnest Desire after the Welfare of those, who had formerly been my Companions: I mean the Welfare of their immortal Souls. O! thought I, did they but know what I feel, and could they but conceive what Satisfaction, Comfort, and Joy, there is in the Enjoyment of, Nearness to, and Communion with a reconciled God, and, did they but see what a Beauty, Loveliness, and Glory there is in him, they would freely forsake all their foolish Pleasures, and vain Delights for an Interest in Christ. I thought I would not have returned back to my former Course of Sin and Vanity, might I thereby gain a thousand Worlds. For there is more true Peace, and solid Comfort, in one Moment's Communion with God, than in an hundred Years, in Sin and Folly. Some Time after this, the Lord was pleased to withdraw *the Light of his Countenance*, and to leave me in the Dark: Whereupon, I presently began to question my Interest in him, and to fear, that what I felt, was only a Delusion from *Satan*, or else the Fancy of a distressed Mind, or some Notion, that I had got, by giving more Attention in Hearing the Word preached, than I was wont to do.

About the same Time I heard, that one of my Companions should say, that it was only Pride, that made me forsake them, that I did not think them rich enough to play with me, and so they reflected upon me very much. The Parents of this Girl were Professors, and they spoke as bad of me, as the Girl herself could do. This troubled me greatly, for now I thought the Lord was about to discover what I was, and that I certainly was, as they said; tho' my Heart was so deceitful, that I did not discern it before: Or else he would not have suffered his own Children to have had such Thoughts of me. In this Distress, I remained some considerable Time: One Day, I happened to fall into the Company of this Girl, and one, who was a Friend to me being present, she began to tell me what the other had said of me. The Girl at first denied it: Upon that, I talked to her pretty sharply, for telling of Lyes to excuse herself, then she owned, that she had said so, to one, or two, and what then? Its true, said she.

I told her, that I thought I might truly, say, it was false. Then those Words were given in: *If ye were of the World, the World would love its own; but because I have chosen you out of the World, therefore, the World hateth you.* But thought I, it is not only the World, but Professors likewise, who cast these Reflections upon me. Then those Words came to my Mind: *In the World, ye shall have Tribulation; but in me, ye shall have Peace: Be of good Cheer, for I have overcome the World.* Then I considered, that it is not said, from the World, or from the Persons of the World, but in the World; and inferred from thence, that Persons may meet with Trouble, and Trials, even from the Men of their own House. Then was I helped from these Promises, to admire Grace, that the Lord should so condescend to such a poor unbelieving Creature as I. Soon after this, I began to examine myself, whether, or no, I could freely, and willingly part with all Creature-Comforts for the Sake of Christ: Or whether, if I was put to my Choice, either to have great Things in the World, and all the Pleasure, that Heart could wish, or to have Christ and the Cross, which of the two, I should choose? I thought my Heart replied, I should rather choose Christ and the Cross, than all the Riches and Pleasures of this World. But I again reflected, that my Heart was deceitful, and it might be, if I was put to the Trial, and should have Riches, Honors, and Pleasures set before me, I should choose them, rather than Christ with the Cross, and so this could be no Evidence of my being right.

Whereupon I was greatly troubled, and desired of the Lord, that if I was his, he would by a more than ordinary Power let me know it. Then was I for chalking out a Way for God to walk in. Thinking, that if this, and the other Thing might be according to my Wish, then I could believe. After this Desire had passed, I began to be much troubled to think what I was now about. Must I direct the Almighty? Could not I take him at his Word, without desiring he should take such a Way to raise up my Faith. Yet for all this I could not help still having the same Desire, till those Words were brought to my Mind:

My Ways are not as your Ways, nor my Thoughts, as your Thoughts: For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts, than your Thoughts. Soon after this, those Words were impressed upon my Thoughts: *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the Right Hand of Righteousness.* It was a good Word indeed to my Soul, for many Days. About this Time, my Father was preaching from these Words: *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* My Memory is too bad to give any particular Account of what was then delivered. But this I can remember that I had sweet Times under hearing. One Sabbath-Day in the Morning I was very ill, so that I was forced to stay at Home. But no sooner was the Family gone to the Meeting; but I began to reflect upon myself, for letting a little Illness detain me from going. If I had a right Value for Hearing the Gospel of Christ, thought I, I should have gone: Or had I any right Esteem for the Comfort, and Refreshment of my Soul, I should readily, have gone, that I might have met with it; but now I thought it was plain, that I was nothing but a painted Hypocrite. I had at that Time such a Sight of the Darkness of my Understanding, the Hardness of my Heart, and of the Perverseness of my Will, that I thought there were none like me. For thinks I, such as are indeed Christians, take more Delight in the Means of Grace, and in discoursing of the Things of God. They can speak of a new Birth, and of Faith in Christ, and this I thought myself a Stranger to. So, I then judged, there was nothing right in me: But if there is not yet, it is high Time there should, thought I; and I am well assured, that if I return back to my former Course of Sin and Folly, I shall perish. If I have any Dependence on any Thing in myself, that is too short: There is no other Way, whereby we can be saved, but in, and thro' Christ, thro' his Righteousness alone, without any of our own to be joined therewith: Therefore, I will now, as helped, venture my Soul upon him, *if I perish, I perish.*

Then that Word was given in to me with an irresistible Power, so that I could not withstand it: *I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy, Transgressions, for my own Sake, and I will not remember thy Sins.* Then was I again helped to admire the free, rich, and distinguishing Love of God: That he of his good Will and Pleasure. and for his *own Sake*, not for any Worth, or Worthiness in me; no, for I deserve *not the least of his Mercies*, should thus freely pardon the *most vile* of Sinners. Then I desired, that since Grace is thus free, I might never be suffered to do any Thing to offend, so kind, so merciful a God: For, thought I, is it so, that Grace, Love, and Mercy, is so abundant, and super-abounding, then am I under the highest Obligation in the World, to be found in Acts of Obedience to all God's Commands, so far, as capable, not for Life, but from Life: Not expecting to merit Salvation; but being chosen of God, redeemed by Christ from the Curse of the Law, he having answered all the Demands thereof, and given a full and plenary Satisfaction to divine Justice on my Account

therefore, I ought to endeavor to promote his Honor and Glory, in all Holiness, and godly Conversation.

I had at that Time a deep Sense of the *odious* Nature of Sin, that it was of so *heinous* a Nature, that nothing less than the Blood of the *spotless* righteous Lamb of God could satisfy for it. That the Son of God must: take upon him our Nature, stand in our Room and Stead, *be made Sin for us, who himself knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.* O Matchless Grace, unparalleled Love, that ever the *Lord of Life and Glory*, should leave his Father's Bosom, to die so shameful, so ignominious a Death, even the Death of the Cross, for poor rebellious Creatures, and that he should endure such Sufferings, and undergo his Father's Wrath and Displeasure, to that Degree, that he cried out: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* And all this for, and on Account of poor sinful Mankind. The Consideration of this, made me abhor Sin, and loath myself on Account of my Transgressions, I desired, that I might never be suffered to sin against God, in Heart, Lip, nor Life. Nay, I thought, that if I was sure to be damned, yet I desired, that whilst I remained here, I might live to the Praise and Glory of God.

I had a comfortable Time all that Week, and the Week following. Many sweet, and precious Promises were given in, which I cannot now remember: So that I was filled with such Transports of Joy, as I cannot express, nor could I willingly admit of any Discourse, or Company, that might interrupt my Enjoyments. And to the End, that nothing of that might hinder my Meditations, I commonly sat in my Lodging Room, where I enjoyed many pleasant Hours, as well as some distressing ones. I had now an endeared Love for any, that I hoped were the Children of God. And, if I heard of any young ones, being under Convictions, I soon found my Affections strongly engaged to them, who before I had no Esteem of, and an earnest Desire after their Welfare.

After this, hearing some, in telling their Experience, speak of the dreadful Temptations they had met with, and also reading Mr. *Barry's* Account of the Dealings of God with him, what sharp Conflicts he met with, and how long he was under *the Spirit of Bondage*, and upon his receiving *the Spirit of Adoption*, what glorious Effects ensued; I began to fear again, that I was not in a converted State. For, I thought, I was never loaded with the Guilt of Sin, as some be: Neither was I ever assaulted with such dreadful Temptations from *Satan*, as many are; nor yet have I ever enjoyed such wonderful and glorious Revelations of Christ, as some express, therefore, I fear that I am still *in the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity.* My Trouble thro' these Fears, increased daily for some Time. Whereupon, I acquainted one of my intimate Friends therewith: Who directed me to a Passage in Mr. *Bunyan's Come and Welcome to the Chief of Sinners*, which just answered those very Objections. The reading whereof little removed my Doubts. And also reading Mr. *Barry's Postscript*, to caution such doubting tempted Believers, that might be ready

to draw sad Conclusions against themselves, from hearing of the wonderful Dealings of God with him, in handling him so sharply by *the Spirit of Bondage*; as also his bountiful Dealing with him, in making his Soul the Receptacle of such Joy and Consolation, upon believing. Saith he, *Some pass thro' greater Horror, and are brought, as it were, to the Gates of Hell, and Desperation, as I was: Others are dealt more easily, and gently with, being sweetly allured, and as it were insensibly transplanted into Christ, they not well knowing what is done to them.* The reading of these Things, I say, together with those Words, following of me very much: *He leadeth thee by the still Waters*, did give me some Hopes, that I was one of those, that the Lord was pleased thus by the gentle Drawings of his Spirit to bring to close with Christ. Then those Words were very pleasant to me: *I taught Ephraim to go, leading them by the Hand; but they, knew not, that I healed them. I drew them with the Cords of a Man, with Bands of Love. I was to them, as they that take off the Yoke on their Jaws, and laid Meat unto them.*

Then was I helped to see, that tho' I had not been so strongly beset with Temptations as some are, yet that was not an Indication, that the Work of Grace was not right, in, and upon me; for the Lord can work in what way he pleases. And surely, I have great Cause of Thankfulness, on this very Account, that I was not left to the Buffetings of *Satan*, nor to be so long under that sad Horror and Bondage of Conscience, as some be, and tho' I had not such great Revelations of Christ, nor such ravishing Joy and Comfort as some have; yet I had such Views of him, as a suitable, and sufficient Saviour, that I would not part with my Hopes of an Interest in him, for the World: And also had received such Joy and Comfort from him, as did far surpass all the Comfort, that can flow from the belt, and greater Enjoyments of this World's Things: Yea, for one Moment's Communion with God, is far preferable to all the Riches, Honors, and Pleasures of this World; for it yields more Satisfaction, and Peace, than can be met with in the highest Station of worldly Grandeur.

Thus was I helped to meditate on these Things, and to stand and admire, that I should be so highly favored, as to have any Discovery of pardoning Grace, any Manifestation of redeeming Love. It had been a great Mercy, if the Lord had fixed his Love upon me, and had not made it known to me: But O it is matchless and unparalleled Grace indeed, that he should send his Spirit to reveal this his altogether unmerited, and inconceivable Love to my Soul! I can never enough admire this great, this inexpressible Love. Neither am I able — Something is here wanting, by Injury her Writing hath suffered, thro' one means or other. She proceeds thus. Then was the Language of my Heart, O that I might never commit one Sin more! How can I bear to think of offending so kind, so loving a God. What Sin against such Love and Mercy, that hath been discovered to sinful unworthy me? How can I bear it Wretch that I am, are there yet the Remainders of Sin in me; I hate it, I loath it. O! that I

might be wholly and entirely freed therefrom. This, I say, was the constant Language of my Heart for some Time.

Unwilling was I, as I have before said, to leave my Lodging Room, so much as to eat a little Victuals, for fear of having my Thoughts diverted from Things that are heavenly and divine. And, when I was in Company, I was restless till I got by myself again. One Time I well remember, having been in Company, when I got to my Chamber again, I was thinking over something that passed, till on a sudden, those Words came with such Power: *My Son, give me thy Heart*; I answered, Lord, do thou take it, thou alone art worthy — here also some Injury hath happened to her Lines.

I admired, that the eternally glorious God should stoop so low, as to desire a Place, in the Hearts of such poor, Nothing-Creatures, as we are, who is glorified and adored above, by the blessed Angel, and hath no need of the Adoration, and Services of such *poor Dust and Ashes* as we are. O wonderful and matchless Grace!

I had that Afternoon, such Views of the Glories of Heaven, of the Bliss and Happiness, that the Angels, and glorified. Saints are possessed of, that made me even long to be *dissolved, to be with Christ, which is far better*. Some little Time after this, one Sabbath-Day, as I was going to the Meeting, this Thought darted into my Mind, that I was all this while, but a deceiving myself, and building my Hopes on a sandy Foundation, and not on Christ, who is the only Way of Salvation. This Thought set me on a Tremble, and sad Distress was I in, till those Words came in: *I will deliver thee from going down to the Pit, for I have found a Ransom*, which a little supported me, tho' I could not tell whether there was a Scripture, or not; but when I came home, I looked into a *Concordance*, and found it. In the Afternoon, when I was in the Meeting, my Fear seized me again that all I had met with, was only a Delusion, that *Satan* was endeavoring to deceive me, and so took this Method, which he thought was the likeliest to keep me quiet, persuading me, that I was in a safe State; when alas! it was no such Thing. I thought he could *transform himself into an Angel of Light*, and can bring Scriptures, to those that he brought to trust in, and depend on something short of Christ. This I fully thought was nay Case, for about Half an Hour; then those Words were brought to my Mind: *I am not a Man, that I should lye, nor the Son of Man, that I should repent*.

Here the Narrative she gives is broke off, and left unfinished. I shall present the Reader with some farther Account of her Experience, and of the carrying on of the good Work upon her soul, out of some of her Letters, which she wrote to Relations, Friends, and Acquaintance. I shall begin this Account with some Lines taken out of a Letter to her Mother, whom she much honored and tenderly loved. She writes thus: *Dear Mother*, I AM very glad to hear of your being in such a comfortable Frame, whilst under your late Affliction. The Presence of God is very comfortable and

delightful at all Times; but in a special Manner in a Time of Affliction; it makes Affliction seem very light and easy.

Thro' Grace I know something of it. I also know something how dismal and distressing it is to be on a sick Bed; and to my own Apprehension, to be ear the Time of Dissolution, and to be wholly deprived of his comforting Presence, to have not one Glimpse of Love, no sealing Evidence of an Interest in his Favor; but quite on the contrary, writing the most bitter Things against myself: Lying for some Time under the dreadful Apprehensions of approaching Wrath and endless Misery. This is a very sad Case; but as I before hinted, this is not always, nor indeed not often mine; but it has been the Pleasure of my dear Lord, most Times, when attended with bodily Illness, to favor me with Visits of Love, to give me repeated Discoveries of my Interest in him, and to let me see, that it is *in very Faithfulness*, that he afflicts, that it is for my *real* Good and Advantage; tho' I at present may not discern how, or which Way. For *what he doth, we know not now; but we shall know hereafter*. I have been filled with Admiration and Astonishment, that my Afflictions are not the Rebukes of an *angry* God; but his fatherly Chastisements for my Profit, that they come not in vindictive Wrath; but are as the Rod in the Hand of a loving and tender-hearted Father. That he will lay no more upon me, than he will enable me to bear. That they are Part of my Portion: Yea, that they are really Part of the Blessing designed for me in the eternal Covenant. That they are mine, in the Sense the *Apostle* speaks of, when he enumerates the many Benefits that are the Saints' Property: *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or Things present, or Things to come, or Life, or Death all are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ, is God's*. But I must conclude for Want of Time, *etc.*

To the same she thus expresses herself on a very mournful Occasion, *viz.* the Death of an only Child, who was not five Years old.

Dear Mother,

YOU desire to know how we are in our Minds. Indeed I have often thought to write to you on that Subject; but it being a *melancholy* one, I omitted it: Tho' I may say, that for my own Part, I am mostly better reconciled to that *mournful* Providence, than I could have expected. Not that my *dear Babe* is much out of my Mind, for that she is not, Day, or Night; but at some Times I am pretty much resigned to the Will of God, in what he has done; and can believe, that he doth all Things well. And *that his Thoughts towards me, in that Respect were Thoughts of Peace, and not of Evil*. I at sometimes hope, that these Words, which so much ran in my Mind, in my *dear Babe's* Illness, have in some Measure been made good, *viz.*

This is the Will of God, even your Sanctification. Now, what is Sanctification, but to have our Will wholly resigned to and swallowed up in the Will of God? And I think, if I know anything of my own Heart, I can say, that at Times, I have been helped

quietly to acquiesce in the Will of God, In the Removal of one of the most engaging Babes, merely because it was the Will of my heavenly Father. The sweet Frames that I have at sometimes been in, since her Departure, I cannot otherwise express, than that it was, as if my Will was indeed wholly swallowed up in the Will of God. But alas! This is not always the Case: I meet with some Intervals, and such too, that at those Seasons, I can hardly tell how to bear up under my Loss, which I don't find, that length of Time has any Tendency to abate the Sense of.

In answer to a Letter from her Mother, upon this delicate and affecting Subject, she speaks thus: I Thank you for your seasonable Advice; but alas! I am too apt to murmur at this Dispensations of Providence, and think it is a Stroke too heavy for me to bear. I am sometimes like unto *Jonah*, *think I do well to be angry*; I am ready to call Providence to an Account, in this Manner; thinks I, why was the not removed sooner, before she was so exceedingly engaging? Or why had the not continued longer, that she might have been more capable of giving an Account of herself; that so we might have had full Satisfaction about her State. I have indeed been sadly distressed about that, tho' I sometimes think I have less Reason so to be, than many others have, (the means under such a Circumstance) for it is certain, she had *uncommon* Impressions upon her Mind some Time before her Illness. For she talked much about dying and being in Heaven, she wanted to know what would be her Employ there, and if she should not see more and know more, than she did here. In the midst of her Gaiety and Briskness, she would often change her Countenance, and look as grave and solid as anybody could do; and running to me would say, Mamma, doth he that is above see me now? And is he angry with me? And many such Questions she often asked, that I many Times could not tell how to answer her. It would fill Sheets of Paper to relate her pretty Speeches, which were something remarkable.

It will likewise be too tedious to inform you here, of the various Trials and Temptations that I have labored under, and the particular Supports I have had, in *my dear Babe's* Illness and since her Death: Only this I may say, that if I had not had some Supports, I think I could not have bore up under so sore a Trial, but I purpose to see you very soon: If the Lord permits me, I think to be at *Northampton* in less than a Fortnight, tho' it will be a melancholy Journey to me now. I pleased myself very much with the Thoughts of coming with my *dear Lamb* to *Northampton*, to shew you what a fine Babe she was grown. She was so much improved in less than two Years, that she was a Wonder to all that saw her: Her Temper was so *sweet*, and her Carriage so *affable*, and *pretty*, that rendered her agreeable to all our Acquaintance. She was generally beloved, her Company was much courted, she was much admired, and the Loss of her is much lamented, She was, I believe, as desirable a Child, as ever lived, an obliging dutiful Babe indeed, and a tender one, if we were

not well; but as lovely a Creature, as she was, she was not too lovely for him, who, I would hope, has taken her to himself. But it will be of no Service to go on thus.

She thus writes to one, who acquainted her with some Matters of Complaint relating to spiritual Things.

MY Experience is the same with yours, as to Disorders in Duty, and the Workings of Corruptions out of Duty. I find my Heart, as vain, and as carnal as ever, nay, I think far worse than ever; so that I often think, surely there is none in the World like me. You complain in yours of Heart-wanderings; so that you know not how to approach unto God in Prayer many Times. But remember that Covenant, wherein you are provided for, both in this Life, and that which is to come. By Virtue of that Covenant, Believers are fed with *the finest of the Wheat, and Honey out of the Rock*: And, indeed, we stand in great need thereof, at this Day, when we are encompassed with the Waters of *Marah*, viz. *Bitterness*, when *we are troubled on every Side, yet (if we are made to act Faith in Christ) not distressed*, 2 Corinthians 4:8. It is a small Thing to be buffeted of Satan, to be reproached by Men, if we can claim an Interest in the Power of Christ our Lord, that will support us, when all Creatures fail us.

Outward Discouragements seem many and great, when Faith is weak and feeble, Unbelief stumble at many Things, which Faith steps over with ease. Oh! may we be helped to wrestle with God for more Faith; surely, a Believer is under spiritual Decays, when he, or she, under a Want of Faith can neglect the Throne of Grace. Happy are those, whose Wants make them more importunate, and earnest with the God of all Grace; such shall be supplied, *according to the Riches of his Glory. He that prepares the Heart to ask, will cause his Ear to bear*. Psalm 10:17.

When God makes us earnest Beggars, in his Son's Name, he will make us successful ones for his Son's Sake. We have great Encouragement to ask, God takes Delight in Acts of Mercy, *Micah 7:1 8. He gives liberally, and upbraideth not*; he will not always deny us, because of our former Negligence. The Pleasure he takes in manifesting his Mercy, cannot be allayed by our Unworthiness, Darkness, Deadness, or any Thing of that Nature. We must consider, the Justice of God is fully satisfied, therefore, *Fury is not in him*. God can now deal with us *sinful Dust and Ashes*, in a Way of Mercy, without any Hindrance from his Justice; he hath regard to the perfect Satisfaction made thereunto, by his Son *Jesus Christ*; and as long as that is presented at the Right Hand of God the Father, so long we have Ground to think, and believe, that no Shower of Wrath shall fall upon us: For although' Faith in the presented Obedience of Christ, makes us comfortable, yet its Christ's presenting of it for us, makes us safe. The Acting's of our Faith *ebb*, and *flow*; but the Righteousness of Christ is one, and the same forever, *it shall never be abolished*. Neither Sin, nor Satan, Time, nor Eternity, can make any Alteration in it. It is Raiment, that *waxeth not old* upon us, notwithstanding we are, in this Wilderness-

State exposed to many Storms and Tempests. Christ is *the Bread of Life*, and his Righteousness, is a Robe and *Garment of Salvation*. Oh that we might be enabled to believe in him more steadfastly, not doubting, but we shall be preferred in the midst of the Tempest, remembering, that *this Man, Christ, is a hiding Place from the Storm, a Covert from the Tempest; as Rivers of Water in a dry Place, and as the Shadow of a great Rock in a weary Land*. He is both Protection and Refreshment to us, in this howling Wilderness; but I must break off for Want of Time.

In another Letter she gives some Account of a Sermon, she heard from these Words: *Lo! the People shall dwell alone*, and of the Frame of her Mind while hearing of it: The Account she gives of the Sermon is this; that the People of God may be laid to dwell alone, as Objects of God's eternal Choice from among others: As Christ became their Surety, and by Reason of the Spirit's Work upon their Hearts. That they dwell alone in God's Love, in Christ's Love, and in the Love of the Spirit. And, that they may be said to dwell alone, in Respect of their Desires of Grace, their Aim, and End being God's Glory. All indeed, said he, may desire to be saved from Wrath and Misery; but their Desire is, that God may be glorified in, and by them, as well as that, they may partake of Happiness. Besides, they give Thanks and Praise to the Lord, in the Reception of Mercies, they are, in some measure, helped to eye from whence their Mercies flow, and so give God the Glory of all; whereas, others, if they enjoy the good Things of this Life they ascribe it to their good Endeavors, and good Management, *etc.* I was, says she, pretty much affected under hearing. I wish I had a Memory to retain what was delivered, so as to give you a particular Account thereof, and of my Frame under that Sermon, it was (some Particulars of it especially) very searching, which put me upon Self- Examination, and on the strictest Search, I thought, at least, that my Experience could witness to the Truth of what was said, and so I was in a comfortable Frame; but I have been often attended with questioning Thoughts this Week, and am now in a very discomposed Frame, unft indeed to write. I do not love Writing; but when I am in pretty lively Frames.

In another Letter to the same Person, when she was under Trouble of Soul, she thus expresses herself. I cannot see, that I have any Grounds to suppose, that I have in Truth and Reality ventured my Soul upon Christ. It is one Thing to believe the Truth of his Word, and the All-sufficiency of his Grace, and another Thing to believe in him, and receive him, and rest upon him, for Life and Salvation. Neither am I, as I think, I ought to be, concerned about it; but am indeed possessed of Carelessness, and Indifferency too often: Tho' at some Times, I am almost overdone with Distress for a few Hours; but then it wears off again without any Application of pardoning Grace, and is succeeded by a careless Frame of Spirit; which seems to be a plain Demonstration, that I am still, *in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity*.

As to the Concern, that at some Times siezeth upon my Mind, I think its only the Accusation of a wounded Conscience, against which, I do to a very great Degree Sin daily; being guilty of Sins both of Omission and Commission; the which I know to be a Duty to do, or to avoid, and which doubtless will greatly aggravate my Torments in another World, Christ, himself saith, *John 15:22. If I had not spoken unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloak for their Sin.* I have sometimes thought, that my neglecting to be found in the Ordinances of Christ, might be a Cause of my being left sometimes to careless Frames, and sometimes to unbelieving ones: And, that I had thereby given just Occasion to the holy Spirit, to withhold his gracious Influences; but I do now conclude, that I am still in an unconverted State, and, therefore, the Lord did not suffer me to deceive his Church and People: He would not permit me to be ranked amongst his dear chosen ones. And well it was, that I was kept from it. For, perhaps, I might then have brought a greater Dishonor to his Name, and a greater Reproach to his Gospel, than now I can, Tho' better it would have been, had I been wholly silent, and not acquainted any with what I, thro' a Delusion, fancied, that I met with. Surely Satan used more Subtlety in his Devices against me, than against any other. He took this Method to blind my Mind, and make me think, that I was in a safe State: Thus he hath deceived me: And now he lets me rest quietly. It is said of him, *2 Corinthians 11:14 that he transforms himself into an Angel of Light.*

I do not apprehend, that the Distress, that I am sometimes in, is from him; but as I before hinted, that it ariseth only from a Conscience wounded by Sin, which he perceiving, puts me in Mind of what I before met with, for my Relief at some Times. At other Times, brings other Things into my Mind, to take my Thoughts off from what should be the Matter of my greatest Concern. Thus is he, as I conceive, Time after Time, endeavoring this Way to deceive me, and to keep me from seeking after Salvation in a right Way. These Words have often run in my Mind, of late especially, when I have been for fetching in Comfort from former Experience, then have they darted afresh into my Mind: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked. And also there: So are the Paths of all that forget God; and the Hypocrite's Hope shall perish.* Yet how little am I concerned about it? Sometimes, as I before said, I am in sad Distress for a short Time; but certainly, if my Concern was of a right Kind, I should not rest satisfied without Discoveries of pardoning Grace.

And if ever I had savingly closed Christ, then surely, I should find more earnest Desires after the Enjoyment of Communion with him. Can a Soul, that hath tasted of his Grace, that hath enjoyed his comforting Presence, be contented to go from Day to Day, yea from Week to Week, without one View, or Token of his Love? You will doubtless say, no; then the true Reason of my so doing is, because I never tasted the Sweetness of it, and, therefore, cannot so thirst and breathe after it, as such do, who have (to the comforting of their Soul) received renewed Love-Visits from

himself. A real Child of God values, and esteems Christ above all the World; but it is evident that I do not, because my Heart is so much taken up with the vain Things of this Life, that is at most not a Moment, when compared with Eternity. How happy are they, that have a well-grounded Assurance, that they shall live, everlastingly possessed of all true joys, and Delights, such cannot be satisfied with earthly Riches, Honors, or Pleasures; but they are for the Riches and Glory of Heaven: It is a Crown of Glory, they have in their Eye, nothing but God himself will satisfy them, they count all Things but as Dross and Dung, in Comparison of Christ, and are freely willing to part with all for him, they are willing to *deny themselves, and take up their Cross, and follow him*, willing to do, or suffer any Thing; so that he may but be glorified in, and by them: His Glory is what they aim at in all they do. This I sometimes have thought I could say of myself; but now I see it is otherwise. I wish I could, with Truth, say thus. These are the Friends of Christ, and the only Favorites of Heaven: *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

They cannot by so doing purchase, or procure Christ's Love and Friendship; no, no, his Favor cannot be bought. *When they have done all, they must say we are unprofitable Servants.* Heaven is *not a Reward of Debt, but of Grace.* But Christ doth freely vouchsafe this Blessing to his chosen, who keep his Word, and its hereby they are assured of his Love: *He that hath my Commandment, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father.* Persons may have Christ's Commandments in their Heads, and in their Mouths, may know what his Commandments be, and yet not have them in their Hearts, so as to keep them, or subject to them; but a truly godly Person loves them, approves of them, and sincerely keeps them. The Saints yield a ready and hearty Obedience to the Precepts, Christ hath given forth in the Gospel. *God be thanked, that ye were the Servants of Sin; but ye have obeyed from the Heart, that Form of Doctrine, which was delivered unto you.* The divine Doctrine hath great Efficacy on their Hearts. The Word makes an Impression on their Souls; so that with Joy and Delight they obey it, and from a right Principle, from a Principle of Life, from Faith in, and Love to Christ. Holy *David* could say: *I love thy Commandments above Gold; yea above fine Gold. Psalm 119:127.* And he also says: *Therefore, I esteem all thy Precepts, concerning all Things to be right; and I hate every false Way.* But as for me, sad is my Case, I do not find that Hatred to Sin, as its an Offence to the most high God, which he speaks of. I may, perhaps, be afraid of sinning, for Fear or heightening my Torments; but I do not think I ever was made rightly sensible of the *odious* and *abominable* Nature of Sin. Nor do I find that Love to Christ, his People, and to his Ways, as I think his dear Children do.

Is it a Sign of Love to Christ, when the Heart is almost wholly taken up with the Things of this World, and the Mind is remiss, careless, and of one kind, negligent, in discharging Duties and another, which are by Christ enjoined upon us to observe?

No, no, this is no Testimony thereof; but on the contrary Hand, it is a very evident Proof, beyond all Denial, either that there is no Grace at all, in such who are thus vainly carried away, or else, that it lies dormant; but I fear the former is my Case, nay, I am almost certain of it: For those *faint* Desires I have of being saved, proceed not from a Desire that God may be glorified; but only for Fear of the Torments of Hell, nor are those Fears strong enough to make me willing to forsake the vain Things of this World, as I can perceive; notwithstanding the greatest Joy, and worldly Riches and Glory, are not to be compared to the Glory of Heaven, nor the greatest Sorrow, or Trouble here, to the Torments of Hell. Can you (now I have in a small Degree made known my Case to you) I say, can you suppose me to be a true Believer in Christ? Be not so deceived, neither pray for me, as such: But if the Lord inclines your Heart to put a Petition for me, then beg, that I may be rightly convinced of the Evil of Sin, and of my woeful and undone Condition thereby, and of the Necessity of a Mediator, or Saviour, and also, that that I may see the Excellency of that the blessed Saviour, and the great Power and Ability, he is clothed with to save, and that I may be helped to venture my Soul upon him, that I may receive him, and rest, and rely upon him alone for Salvation. I know, my Sins, tho' they be very numerous, are not too many, nor too great to be pardoned, if such a Mercy is but in Reversion for me. Christ's Arm is not shortened, his Power is not limited. He can, if he pleases, come over all the Mountains of my Rebellion.

In another Letter to the same Person, she writes thus: YOURS I received, in which are contained Intimations of the Love and Kindness of the Lord *Jesus* taking hold of your Soul; and making you a Partaker of the Grace of Life. In the Views of which you are led into the Admiration of his Excellency, and the Wonders of his Grace. That the Savour and Power, of those Soul-refreshing Truths, are in some measure experienced by you. Oh! that lovely one, how sweet are the least Glimpses of his peculiar Favor; when he is pleased to give some special Discoveries of it, in our attending upon him. But what will it be, when we shall *enter into the Joy of our Lord*, and be made to swim in that *vast unfathomable* Ocean of eternal Love and Glory? in the mean Time, it must be testified, that the blessed *Jesus* deserves the highest Seat and Entertainment in our Hearts. Where should he be let, but in the midst of our dearest and most ardent Love, to command all in us to a most willing Obedience, and to the utter abolishing of all our Idols, that *he alone may be exalted*? It is his own Power and Spirit, that only can maintain his noble Cause, or effectually plead for his Royal Prerogative in our Souls. But, Oh! what need have we to be begging of God, that there may be a reviving Time, after such a long Winter-Season, for if these withering, backsliding Days be not shortened, how will his Honor be vindicated?

It is Matter of great Concern to me, at Times, to see the Decays there are amongst the Professors, in this our Age; as well as to feel the Declining in my own Soul. And I am sometimes ready to say, what will become of God's great Name? But this may be our strong Consolation, that there is no limiting of his Power, nor searching of his Understanding. He knows how to restore in a Moment the Desolation of many Generations. He can, if he pleases, revive his Children, and make them to rejoice in him, and cause them to flourish in the Courts of their God. The Lord help us to live by Faith, and to rejoice in the Hope of his Glory, knowing, that none ever trusted in him, and were confounded.

You desire to hear how it fares with me, as to the present Frame of my Soul. I have not Time to give you a particular Account thereof. I could wish that it was with me, as in Days past; but alas! it is quite otherwise. I find a great deal of Coldness and Indifferency attending me, and Abundance of Sin mixed, even with the best of my Performances. I seldom can go to God in the Duty of Prayer; but my Heart is roving after vain Things. O the Thousands of Thoughts, that will even at such Seasons crowd in, to interrupt, and disturb me in my Supplications to the most High. Neither do I find my Heart so drawn out to the Lord, nor do I enjoy that Nearness to, and Communion with him as I was wont to do. Yet I am not left to give up all Hopes. At sometimes the Thoughts and Consideration of the Frames I am too often in, is very distressing to me; at other Times, I am wholly careless, and unconcerned about it.

One Day, not long since, as I was thinking how I have been in Times past, how much of the sensible Presence of God, I then enjoyed, and how pleasant and delightful it was; I had a great Desire to participate of the same Favor once more, and to that End, I resolved to betake myself to the Duty of holy Meditation. I retired to my Room, for that Purpose; but when I came there, I found my Thoughts much confused and rambling, and could not come at one serious Thought of God, or his Works, for a considerable Time. I then thought with myself, I came here to think, and contemplate upon divine Things, and not to have my Thoughts, thus vainly carried away. I then reflected again, that if I was to watch my Thoughts, but one Hour, I might observe a Multitude of sinful ones; but find it hard to have one serious Thought of God, or for him; so that I thought I had Reason to stand and wonder, that God did not cut me off, and cast me among the damned. But whilst I was thus thinking, my Thoughts were still wandering; so that I saw I had not Power over one Thought.

Under a Sense of this I went to God, desiring that he would direct my Thoughts and assist me. He was pleased graciously to answer my Request. I was for a few Hours very comfortable, but alas! it abode not long. Oh! I long to feel more of the kindly Power of Christ in subduing my Will, and bringing every Thought in Subjection to his Law.

In another of her Letters she thus speaks.

I AM willing to embrace an Opportunity of writing to you, by which you may understand that I have you still in Remembrance; and am, as helped, in my Prayers to the Lord making Request for you, that you may be filled with all Joy and Peace in Believing, even *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*; and that you may be led more fully into the Knowledge of divine Truths, *as they are in Jesus*. It is not a bare Notion of Things in the Head; but a *real Experimental* Knowledge of Christ, and him crucified that will stand us in Stead. The great *Apostle* accounted *all Things but Loss and Dung*, in Comparison of *the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus*, rejecting all *Confidence in his own Righteousness*, and resting wholly and only on Christ and his Righteousness for Justification and Acceptance with God. Indeed, it is in the Lord Jesus only, that we have Righteousness and Strength. And this is such a Righteousness, as can answer all the Demands of Justice, and all the Requirements of the Law of God, and all the Guilt of Conscience, yea, and all the Accusations of *Satan*, and render a Person spotless and amiable in the Sight of God. We are complete in Christ. Fair and comely tho' in ourselves, we are unworthy, vile, and deformed; so that we may say with the *Apostle*, *who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect, etc.* Oh! the Wonders of divine, glorious, sovereign, distinguishing Grace, that such poor, sinful, polluted Wretches as we, should be so highly favored and dignified, brought into such Nearness of Union to, and Communion with God, by the blessed Jesus. Oh! how comfortable and pleasant is it to live in the Views of God's reconciled Face, and to taste the Sweetness of his Love, which is *better than Wine*. How should such Love and Grace engage us, to love God and live to him? Yea, and to trust in him? It is Matter of Astonishment and Admiration, that it should please the *high and lofty one*, to set his Love on such unworthy Wretches, and to draw them with the Cords of his Loving-kindness. There is nothing so sweet and excellent, as to behold the Beauty, or to be taken with Love of the most excellent Jesus. It is a sweet Life *to dwell in the Secret of his Pavilion*, to have a Place among them that stand by, and see the lovely Face, where the *divine Majesty* may be approached unto, in a Way of intimate holy Communion and Acquaintance, where we shall hear of nothing but Peace; nothing but the Law of *Kindness and Liberty* is delivered from *Mount Zion*, where God hath commanded the *Blessing, even Life for evermore*. A Liberty not of Slaves, which is Freedom from Duty; but of Sons, which is Freedom in Duty; specially to live upon, delight in, and choose him above all, who is graciously multiplying Experiences of his Grace to our Souls. What Reason have we to be praising of him with the greater Thankfulness of Heart, that ever he should cast one favorable Look upon such vile Dust, who deserved to be cast into the Dungeon of utter Darkness forever? I think, that I above all have Cause to admire the stupendous Grace and Love of God, that he should come over the Mountains of my Rebellions, and reveal pardoning Grace unto me, (who am viler than the vilest Sinner that lives) as I cannot now, but hope he hath. I

am often, yea, very often attended with Questionings and Fears, that I may be mistaken herein. I am sometimes, as it were, raising the very Foundation of all my Hope of Happiness, concluding, that the Work of Grace hath never yet passed upon me, and supposing that if the Lord had ever been at work upon my Soul in a true and saving Manner; then I should have had a deeper Sight and Sense of my own Vileness, than ever yet I have had, and *Satan* would have been busier with me, and I should have met with stronger Assaults and Temptations from him, as most of the Children of God do, when under first Workings.

These Objections, with many others rob me of my Comfort. Sometimes I think my Desire of being saved, was never from a right Principle, nor to a right End; but arose from a selfish Bottom, to the End, that I might be delivered from eternal Wrath and Misery, not aiming at God's Glory therein. Thus am I many Times writing bitter Things against myself, concluding, that I have not yet been helped to venture my Soul on Christ; for think I, I fear that I am still leaning to, and depending upon something in myself, and not resting upon the Merits of Christ, as the only Way of Salvation. Besides, think I, if there ever had been a real Change wrought in my Soul; then would my Heart, my Thoughts, and Affections, be let more upon Things that are heavenly and divine, and I should be weaned from the Things of this World, in a far greater Measure; I should find my Heart more drawn out in Love to the Lord Jesus, and should see a greater Beauty and Excellency in his Person and Righteousness, and likewise Sin would appear more hateful and odious in my View. I should not be attended with such vain Thoughts and Backslidings of Heart from the Lord, and with careless, lifeless, and indifferent Frames, as I too too often am. Are there Spots, like *the Spots of God's Children*? Surely they are not. Neither are such, who have indeed *passed from Death unto Life*, left so often to question their State. They have clearer and more certain Evidences and Testimonies of their Security, and are enabled to rely upon, and trust in the Lord, even when they do not enjoy his sensible Presence. *Job* could say, *tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him*. And the Lord, by the *Prophet Isaiah* saith, *who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darkness and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God*: Yet how prone am I at every turn to dishonor the Lord, by unbelieving Frames?

There are some of the Fears, which I am very frequently filled with; but Oh! what a Mercy is it, the Lord *rests in his Love? He is the same towards us yesterday, and to-day, and forever*. Tho' we vary in our Frames, *yet he abideth faithful; he changeth not*. There is no *Variableness*, nor so much as a *Shadow of turning in him*. Oh! that the eternal Spirit would come down more abundantly, and persuade us of the Freeness and Fulness of eternal Grace: That we might be made to behold our living in the *Root of David*, from the utmost Bounds of Eternity, yea, also while we were in the Depths or our Rebellions, which thro' Grace, I have been at Times made to

believe; did I believe God's Love to be but of *Yesterday*, it would much damp my spiritual Comforts; but when I am brought to see the Fountain of this great Depth of electing Love to be eternal, as ancient as God himself; how am I made to rejoice sometimes, and to wish I could do more for my dearest Jesus? Surely, there is no Spring of Obedience like that of Love, yea, from that it becomes us to act under this new Testament Dispensation, in an especial Manner.

She finishes this Letter with some Account of a Sermon, which she heard from these Words: O my Dove that art in the Clefs of the Rock, in the secret Places of the Stairs; let me see thy Face, let me hear thy Voice; for sweet is thy Voice, and thy Countenance is comely. The Method in treating on which, she says, was this: To shew why the Church is compared to Doves, viz. because the Dove is a clean Fowl, hath a piercing Eye, is choice, or delicate in its Meat, and is sociable: Doves fock together and are weak Creatures, not able to defend themselves. That they are Christ's Doves, or that the Church is his by Election, Covenant-Agreement, Purchase, Conquest, and Resignation; that the Rock is Christ, who is so called, because he is strong, durable, and immoveable; that the Church's Voice may intend her Voice of Prayer, Praise, Acknowledgment, and the Voice of the Ministry. That the Voice of the Church in these Respects is sweet to Christ. That she is comely thro' the Comeliness Christ puts upon her.

She was no injudicious Hearer. In forming her Opinion of Sermons, she closely considered whether the Subject treated of, was properly attended unto. If the genuine Sense of the Text was given, and if its several Parts were distinctly considered. If there were no unnecessary Digressions. If the Scriptures brought in Confirmation of the Doctrine delivered, were pertinently applied. If such Distinctions were made, as the Points discoursed of required, for the greater Benefit and Instruction of the Hearers, which I could give Evidence of, if I thought it proper; for her Talents were truly great. It is needless to say, that she greatly valued the Gospel of Christ in its Purity, for that appears in the fullest manner. The sad Effects which she experienced in one Part of her Life, thro' the Want of it, she long retained a deep Sense of. Which appears in Part of a Letter to one, for whom she had a great Affection, then in much the same Situation, as to Hearing, that she herself, many Years before had been in. She begins thus: I pity your Case, yet dare I not so much as desire you might be easy in your present Situation. This I desire, that you may learn Good thereby, and that you may let a higher Value on the Doctrine of free, rich, sovereign Grace. 'Tis a Just Observation, that we do not prize our Mercies, as we ought, but in the Want of them. I doubt not, but you do now so much prize, in the Want of it, *i.e.* the Gospel, as to long for the Re-enjoyment thereof. I wish you may continue thus minded: And that that sort of Preaching which you chiefly hear, may not have the same Influence on you, as it hath upon too many, viz. fatten your Graces, and lull you into a lethargic

Frame, as was once my unhappy Case. For fitting under the Ministry of one, who either thro' Ignorance, or which I rather think, out of *Prudence*, as he thought, avoided preaching on those peculiar, evangelical Truths, which are the Life of a Believer: By Degrees, I became dead, dull, and lifeless; a common Round of Duties satisfied me, and Grace lay dormant, as to the Act and Exercise of it; yet here I willfully staid.

When I might have heard that Word dispensed, which I had thought had been *sweeter to me, than the Honey, or the Honeycomb*. When I came to my wonted Place, and heard the same sweet comfortable, and Soul-reviving Truths delivered, tho' by another Hand: Oh! what did I not feel? I was struck with Shame and Confusion, for having willfully deprived myself of so great a Privilege, which I ought to have *esteemed more than my necessary Food*: I thought it was just for the Spirit to withdraw his Influences and Operations. But alas! Shame for my Negligence was not the worst, for now I called in Question, whether ever I had felt the Power, and Efficacy of the Word upon my Heart, or not, and at length drew sad Conclusions against myself. This may serve for a Caution to you, not to stay longer in a Place, than you are obliged, where you cannot have spiritual Food for your Soul.

In another Letter, she expresses herself thus: MAY Grace, Mercy, and Peace, thro' the Love-Passage of our Father's Heart be multiplied to you, to your abundant filling with the first Fruits of Glory unspeakable; in the Faith-Views, and irradiating Influences of that Love, Life, and Light, which as an eternal unchangeable Flow of Favor encircles you in the Person of the Beloved. The Spirit giving us to drink of the Streams of the Waters of Life, makes us glad in the Wilderness, as the certain Earnest and Foretaste of our being hereafter swallowed up, in that Love, Life, Light, and Glory, which few thro' the Channel of Christ's Flesh, *as a River to Swim in, that can never be passed over*: When once that happy Day comes, when we shall no more drink of the Water of this River, as now we do, thro' the Conduit-Pipes of Ordinances; but shall drink of the *pure River of the Water of Life, clear as Crystal, as it riseth, out of the Throne of God, and of the Lamb*; there (if I may so say) we shall drink our Fill: Tho' this will be our Privilege, that the living Virtue of this *living Water*, will constantly maintain in us, a living Appetite, yet not such an one as will be in the least inconsistent, with our being abundantly satisfied. We shall never more know any Pain of Desire, for Want of Enjoyment: We shall drink, and *forget our Poverty, and remember our Misery no more*.

And our Appetite being always new, will only fit us for the Participation of that Glory, which will be *new* to Eternity. When that longed for Day comes, when *the Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne shall lead us to living Fountains*, and give us to eat of the *hidden Manna*, on which we shall feed with Wonder, and sweet Surprise;

as the Children of *Israel*, when they tasted the *Manna*, in a kind of Amazement at the Goodness thereof, cried out, What is it?

What is it? I had such a View of this Glory one Day last Week, and an home Application of my being entitled unto it, and having a Right to all the Benefits, which flow thro' Christ, as filled me with Astonishment. A sweet Time it was, indeed, while it lasted; but it was but for a few Hours. Such Times are very desirable, and very delightful. I was ready to cry out, as he of old did: *How is it Lord, that thou wilt manifest thyself to me, and not unto the World?* I knew then for a little Season, what it is, to take up my Rest, where my God and Father rests. I am, at Times, thro' Grace, made to believe, that I have *received the Spirit of Adoption*, not only to witness my Relation to God, and give me Faith-Views of the Inseparableness of that Union, in which I stand to the Person of Christ, as the Security of all my Happiness; but also, at Times, to give me the greatest holy Freedom, thro' the Blood of *Jesus*, to draw nigh to God, as my own Father, to un bosom my Soul to him, and tell him all my Wants; and blessed be his Name, I have not been *sent away empty*. I have found the Enjoyment of God to be Strength in Weakness, Joy in Sorrow, a reviving Cordial in Time of Trouble. And in all that I meet with in my Way homeward; I can fly he is God All-sufficient; I find him so thro' Grace. Oh! how sweet is it to enjoy this Love of Loves? *Oh! the Height, and Depth, the Length, and Breadth, of the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord*. If the Enjoyment of God be so great here, whilst in a Body of Sin, and in a World of Temptations and Snares; what will the full Enjoyment of him be, where there will be no Mixture of Sin, nor Sorrow? if the *Earnest* be so great, what will the Inheritance be? Well may it be said: *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him*. What this *dear Saint* so much longed for, the took Possession of, now some Years since. May we be enabled *to follow those, who through Faith and Patience have inherited the Promise*.