

Jesus, the poor sinner could not persevere. When he first starts he feels well able to run; but a stiffness seizes his joints, his knees become feeble, his hands hang down with weakness, his head is sick, and his heart faint. But the Lord graciously strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees, gives the wine of his love to him that is of a heavy heart, and the strong drink of his covenant grace to those who are ready to perish. Herein the mystery of the lame taking the prey, or obtaining the prize is explained. For the Lord gives strength only to those who have *no might!* O ye weak and feeble, who are ready to perish, and often despair of obtaining the inheritance, what think you of this? Does it not revive your desponding hearts, to hear that he gives strength to those that have *no might?* Your legality often teaches you to say, “I shall faint by the way; he will not give strength to me, to such an one as I am!” But hear, it is to him that hath no might – none at all; and he will give them to feel that they have no might. Now, is not this a sweet cordial for your poor cast down minds?

No might nor power to oppose your enemies, to run, to walk, or even to stand – this I feel more than ever, and I am persuaded many of you feel it too. O blessed Jehovah! Glory to thy name for this gracious declaration! O strengthen thy poor worm who now writes, with thy spirit’s might in his inner man! O strengthen thy dear people who assemble in Ebenezer Chapel; and when the time, the happy time arrives, that he shall return unto them, let his labors be abundantly more blessed – let our enemies be turned back and put to shame; and O may it be the joy and triumph of each heart, victoriously to exclaim, ‘The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.’” Such has been the petition of my highly favored soul this morning, to him who heareth prayer; and O may he cause you to be like minded with me, that our joint supplications, indicted upon our souls by the blessed Spirit of all grace, and offered up before the throne of our gracious Father, through the sweet incense of the Redeemer’s obedience, may powerfully prevail!

In addition to this, I would observe, that those who are raised from the dead, set on their legs, and enabled to pursue the spiritual race, are encumbered and hindered by a certain burden, or weight, which only a view of Jesus can remove from their depressed minds. He himself calls them burdened sinners, before they come to him for rest and relief; and an inspired writer, animated with a view of his dear Lord, gives this heroic exhortation, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” – Looking unto his precious bleeding heart, we lose the weight of our sins, and, looking unto him the fountain of love and grace, we lay aside all our slavish fears, and then, raised by his hand, cheered by his love, and emboldened by faith in his promises, we mount up with wings as eagles, run and are not weary - - but, whenever we lose sight of him, like Peter, upon the mighty waves, we begin to sink! But sink we cannot; saving grace will never fail a sensibly lost sinner! He will give more grace – and, to refresh and replenish the weary soul, he gives the spirit of prayer; and then we come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and grace to help us in our time of need. The time of prayer is the time of need – The place of access to God is the throne of **grace**, not of wrath and anger. The manner of coming is boldly – The sinner is emboldened by that love and grace in Jesus, exhibited to his view; and what he receives

is mercy and grace, which are an effectual and sufficient help to him in pursuing the inheritance. To all such poor dependants upon grace and mercy in Christ, what saith the word of God? It speaks in accents sweeter than angels use; -- ‘God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Those appointed unto wrath are blind to the charms of Jesus; deafened to the sweet music of mercy. If the Lord had intended our destruction he would not have shown us these things.

Hence it is evident who shall possess this inheritance, and, if the Lord will, my next shall contain a description of the inheritance itself, and the manner in which the people of God possess it. Till then may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abide with you all.

I remain, yours, etc.
W.W. H.

Letter VI

To the Church of Christ, meeting at Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester.

June 6, 1804.

My Dear People,

Having, in the two preceding Letters, on Eph. 1:11, shown in whom the inheritance there spoken of is obtained, and the persons who obtain it; I shall now consider the inheritance itself, and the manner in which the saints of God take possession of it.

This is not an earthly inheritance – the people of God, in the general, being the poor of this world. But they have riches of a different and superior nature to the rich and great of the earth: treasure which neither moth nor rust can corrupt – an inheritance of which they can never be dispossessed!

This inheritance lies in that most delightful situation, which David speaks of in divine raptures, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north.” His soul being in the enjoyment of Christ, he saw prefigured in literal Zion, that spiritual inheritance into which the spirit of God had led him. It is situated in that place where the Lord reveals himself unto his people, and showeth unto them his covenant, which is called his sheepfold; and it is said to be one fold, as well as one Shepherd; for there is no other place where he feeds his sheep. By this fold we are not to understand any particular place appropriated to divine worship, or any particular congregation. But *Christ* himself, the fullness of all covenant love and grace, the grand and eternal repository of every peculiar blessing, is the portion and inheritance of his people: and, inheriting him they possess all thing. This is the identical spot (if I may be allowed the term) where the Lord first saw, and loved his church; where he made choice of her, and in which he continually preserves her. Till Christ thus becomes all and every thing to us, we never can inherit the covenant blessings with solid comfort, so as to assert

our right to them. Looking unto Jesus is the situation of a truly spiritual, and a truly happy man. Looking to one's self, or, depending upon sweet and lively sensations of mind, thinking at such seasons we are more particularly interested in the divine favor, is not the road to solid comfort. For though it is very desirable to feel my soul in such a lively state, alas! it is so rarely the case, that I should seldom rejoice in *Jesus*. But he, being made in covenant love over unto me (as my inheritance) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, I am sure I greatly err if I look for these things to any other object whatever. My inheritance is Christ. I am poor to the extreme without him. I have nothing I can claim of my own, but sin and wretchedness. What do I see, if I look into my own nature, but a combination of diabolic passions, engaged and enraged against the Lord, and against his Anointed! But all my corruptions and pollutions make no alteration in the infinitely holy and altogether lovely Jesus. Though sin hath abounded in me, grace superabounds in him!

This may be called **antinomianism**; but was not Paul of similar sentiments? Does he not say of himself plainly, "In me is nothing good" – *nothing* – no good thing whatever? – he had examined well too – And why does he say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of *all things*, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him!" I know not my friends what effect this precious scripture may have upon your minds – but to me it is a word fitly spoken; I am glad to find such a sentence in the book of God upon which hangs my everlasting all – yes, and it hangs safely upon this precious nail, which is fastened in a sure place! Thanks be unto our God for this unspeakable gift – Christ is all – I am nothing – This, this glorious truth, which I know to be a truth, is a refreshing cordial to my soul! And shall we sin, because Christ is made every thing to us! What say you my friends? Methinks the question moves you with an holy indignation against that tyrannic monster, sin; which you are ready to express in similar terms to these:

"It was sin which caused my dear Redeemer to bleed and suffer on Calvary – It was sin and its consequences (not of his own but mine) which caused him to sweat drops of blood, falling down to the ground – sin, imputed to his holy soul, brought upon him the Father's wrath – he was wounded for our transgressions – and it was sin, which has so repeatedly wounded my conscience, and brought death and misery into my soul! It was sin that proved a separating wall between this loving lovely Saviour and me! I have felt so repeatedly the melancholy consequences of the tyrannizing monster sin which dwelleth in me, that my cry is, Lord, keep me from this worst of evils, that it may not grieve me!"

My dear sirs, have we not, times innumerable, through the odious rising of our hateful corruptions, defiled a good conscience, and contracted that guilt, which caused us to go with shame and confusion before the Lord, at the throne of grace! Robbed of our sweet liberty, and of every spiritual enjoyment! And can we love this infernal foe! Let those talk of indulging themselves in sin, from a consideration of a complete salvation by Christ, who never felt the plague of sin. – But the language of the children of God is,

“We would be slaves no more,
Since Christ hath made us free;
Hath nail’d this tyrant to his cross,
And bought our liberty.” – Watts.

I have sufficiently proved that the Lord, who dwelleth in Zion, is the portion of his people, and shall attempt, with as much brevity as possible, to show the manner in which they take possession of it. When the Lord appeared unto Paul, to furnish him with heavenly credentials, and to give him the great commission to preach the gospel to the gentiles, he declared that he would make him an instrument in his hand, in bringing his people home to the possession of this their inheritance; and in this animating language promises to be with him, to preserve him from evil, and to bless his glorious message. “Delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me:” Acts 26:18. Here we are plainly taught what must take place before the heir of God can possess his inheritance. And when all this is accomplished there is nothing to prevent him from the enjoyment of his rightful portion. His eyes are open; he sees the glory of God in the face of Christ – how full and free his love – how boundless his grace! He has received in his heart and conscience, from the God of love, forgiveness of his sins – his innumerable sins are gone, and his soul made white and purified! Jehovah – Father, Son and Spirit, communes with him, and acknowledges him as a son – no more a servant in bondage, but a son, who belongs to the family, and must abide in the house forever! He clings to the bleeding cross, kisses the feet of Jesus, adores divine love, and rejoices in his inheritance. This is his boast and triumph, “The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him!”

Christ, the hope set before him, whom he sought sorrowing, with many fears, doubts, and violent temptations; and with strong cries unto him who was able to save, is now become the safe refuge and asylum of his weary soul!

Christ, the sweet rest that remaineth for the children of God, who travail in spiritual birth, has received him in the arms of his love, laid open to him his whole heart of affection, and he now ceases from his own works, and entereth into rest.

Christ, the good shepherd and bishop of his soul, to whom he is now returned, feedeth him in a good pasture, upon the high mountains of Israel: Ezek. 34:14, where he possesses all spiritual favors, and can say with Paul, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places.” He finds that Ezekiel’s high mountains and Paul’s (high or) heavenly places, to be one and the same, where he dwells on high, above the law, sin, death and the devil, and his place of defence, against all his enemies, and every thing that can hurt or destroy, is, Christ, the munition of rocks, and with David he can say, “The Lord liveth, and blessed by my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

This is the glorious inheritance of which, my dear friends, we are heirs; which some of us sensibly and comfortably possess, and which others have an experimental

right and title to, being the characters which Christ comfortably speaks to in his word. May he bring you within Zion's walls, and enable us to rejoice together, that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ: being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things, after the counsel of his own will – and then, when a few more fleeting days are expired, we shall enter into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

Entreating the Lord to keep you together in the bonds of brotherly love, and to teach you to assembly, unitedly, before his throne, in fervent prayer,

I remain, with unfeigned affection,

Your brother in Christ,

W.W.H.

Letter VII.

To the Church of Christ, meeting at Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester.

June 24, 1804.

Dear friends,

When I reflect upon the state of some of you, I am ready with ardent and insatiate wishes to lament with the prophet, “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

It is certainly a calamitous time with the church of God; and I consider it, after all my affliction and discouragement of soul, an amazing favor to be able to see its real circumstances. Truth is fallen in our streets, and the time is come that they will not endure sound doctrine. And this we need not wonder at: the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1).

The blessed Spirit of truth leadeth his people into the truth, which maketh them free from those abounding errors that now infest the professed church of God. And this is clearly exhibited in the scriptures, as a very distinguishing characteristic of the child of God – “A stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger.” Your firm and unshaken attachment to the truth has much endeared you to my soul. Nevertheless, I am sorely discouraged, almost to a degree of negligence; for “Who hath believed my report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed.” The disconsolate state of soul which many of you complain of, I have been taught to lay before the Lord, at the throne of grace, and to request that I might be so favored as to speak; or write a word in season, to those who were thus weary. I have been favored with some happy seasons in writing, not only these public letters, but one or two of a more private nature, and have, with an anxiety peculiar to spiritual concern, watched and waited for the effect: but to my great discouragement, I have been ready to conclude that my exertions have been fruitless, and my attempts to comfort you rendered abortive!

We are certainly exhorted to weep with those that weep, and there is a sweet luxury in sympathetic tears; but not to hear of any good effect produced by our affectionate attempts to alleviate the distressed, is certainly very discouraging! In this discouragement you will find I am not alone – Jeremiah said, “I will speak no more in the name of the Lord;” and no doubt for this reason, because he did not see the divine power accompany his message.

But admitting that my epistolary addresses to you have been fruitless to the present, I am yet encouraged to write, by that passage in Eccles. 11:6. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” And my thoughts this morning are particularly turned to the term *Gospel*, because there is much called gospel which is not so, and many things attributed to it which it knows nothing of, to the

dishonor of its glorious Author, and the discouragement of his people! It is called, “The gospel of peace” – because till the gospel reaches a poor sinner’s soul effectually, to put him into the enjoyment of Christ, the Prince of Peace, he remains a stranger to that invaluable blessing. The term *Gospel* literally signifieth Glad tidings, or rather, that is the literal and general meaning of the word in the original text, translated Gospel.

1. Glad tidings, good news; such I believe it has proved to you. The prophetic language of Isaiah, adopted by Christ as his own, beautifully describes the gospel in its glorious simplicity: Isa 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18. “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” O what a source of consolation this passage affords to God’s afflicted. Not a word of reproof or blame, or condemnation! – (no, the gospel, knows nothing of condemnation). The persons to whom it is proclaimed, are the broken-hearted, the captives, and the bound prisoner. The sound of it is liberty, an opening of the prison – The effect of it is a binding up of the sinners’ wounds.

Now, my dear friends, (even you for whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you) is not the sound of the gospel delightful to your souls? Yes, though you cannot claim the great Redeemer as your own, the sweet sound of peace by the blood of the cross, free pardon, salvation by grace, liberty of access to the God of infinite love, alone by his dear Son, is melodious to your souls! – In the multitude of your gloomy, fearful, unbelieving, and desponding thoughts, these comforts of God fill you with delight! Christ is your only hope; and his gospel is rendered a joyful sound, good tidings; because you know and feel that you are totally lost, and never can, in any respect, restore your own souls from that wretched state! In the gospel, you hear of divine blood to cleanse you from all sin. But if no sins, what need of this rich, cleansing, purifying fountain? O blessed be God that I feel myself a sinner! For the gospel speaks to none but perishing sinners: none other can be delighted with the sound of it. “They shall come that are ready to perish.” Hear, my dear friends, to whom the gospel speaks, and of what it speaks. O may the Lord enable you to bear for your comfort! It is called,

1. The gospel of salvation; (Eph 1:13) because it speaks of a salvation for those ready to perish with wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. It says nothing of the creature’s goodness – it knows nothing of duties – it is one certain sound of salvation, for those, whose hearts are black as hell by sin! – *A salvation by grace!*

2. It is the gospel of the grace of God; (Acts 20:24) for it is the sound of a gracious covenant, gracious promises, gracious displays of divine power in the salvation of God’s Israel – of God – of his providing, appointing, and his to discover and make known to the souls of poor perishing sinners!

3. It is the glorious gospel; (1 Tim. 1:11) for therein is brought to light the most glorious objects – the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. That in Christ he is glorified in our pardon, justification, and everlasting salvation!

4. It is called the gospel of the kingdom; (Matt 24:14). The news, the glad news of the mighty conquest, that Christ, the King of kings, hath made over the powers of sin and hell – that he hath led captivity captive, that his enemies shall all become his footstool,

and that he will erect his throne in the hearts of his people! A kingdom which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!

5. It is called the everlasting gospel; (Rev. 4:16) because it is the sweet sound of everlasting love, everlasting mercy, an everlasting righteousness, an everlasting pardon, an everlasting covenant. O what a sweet gospel! Glad tidings indeed! That the Lord loves freely, and receives graciously the chief of sinners: those ready to perish – broken in heart, bound in the spirit: and the comfort is, he loves them *for ever!* – No putting away.

This is a short, but very true description of the gospel in its simplicity. It is the gospel of peace, of salvation, of grace, of the kingdom, the everlasting gospel, the glad news of life, peace, pardon, and acceptance with God, alone through Christ. But the *Bible* says nothing of its being the gospel of *damnation*; that would be horrible glad tidings! “Cursed by the law, and damned by the gospel,” is a term very often in the lips of some; but if this is not calling light darkness, and sweet bitter, I know not what is. I would ask, of what the gospel in its simplicity is composed? It is composed of love, mercy, tenderness and pity, peculiar to the heart of God! Its general sound is, The Lord God, gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth; O sweet sound to a sinner like me, who is all deformity and pollution!

But if it damns the sinner that will not accept it, love must become hatred, mercy vengeance, and tenderness and pity the most unfeeling rigor! But, blessed be my covenant God, there is no such a change in his heart; the gospel is one sound, and one *certain* sound, that never deceives, or leads astray, the sinner whose ear God has opened, to know it to be a joyful sound. The altogether lovely Jesus is exhibited in the gospel, in all the fullness of grace and love – pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sins of the deepest die! And, my dear fellow sinners,

All the fitness he requireth,

Is to feel your need of him;

This he gives you –

‘Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.

Yours affectionately,

W.W.H.

Letter VIII.

To the Church of Christ, meeting at Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester.

July 1, 1804.

Dear Brethren in Tribulation,

We are in a wilderness of trouble – trouble from which we shall never be exempt while here below. The assaults of hell, the innumerable evils natural to ourselves, and the various snares of this world, through the natural gravitation of our hearts, combine against us in one general body. The many painful wounds we receive from them, excite our cowardice and timidity; while unbelief cries, “How shall we go up against this might host!” The poor trembling soul, from a view of the numerous snares and dangers surrounding it, distressed cries, “I shall one day fall by the hand of these terrible enemies!” As the Lord gives increasing light, in proportion does the enlightened soul see its weakness, and liability to fall; and I am persuaded that the Lord permits his people to have various slips, and thereby to be very much wounded, in order to show them what they are continually liable to, and what would daily govern them, without the interposition of his all-conquering grace.

But it is an infinite mercy that at the same time the Lord is leading us in a dark and dreary path, through various snares, temptations, and conflicts with sin and hell, he not only teaches us the vileness and weakness natural to us, but leads us to Christ, the rock of ages, for refuge. When we take a retrospection of our lives, when we call to remembrance the way in which the Lord has led us, we are ready to say with wonder, “How is it that I have escaped the many imminent dangers I foolishly exposed myself to?” How is it that I have thus far held on in the ways of the Lord?”

My dear friends, ungrateful as I daily feel my heart, when I am thus led to contemplate, I cannot but acknowledge, with gratitude to Jesus, that he has marvelously upheld me: and that language in Isa. 25:4 is feelingly adopted, “Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall!” And he who has delivered will yet deliver from every evil work. We have his own precious promise for it – a promise introduced with the greatest encouragement to approach him with boldness, and tell him all our trouble; which has often afforded me encouragement, and is still encouraging to my soul. I shall therefore make such observations upon it, as the Lord shall be pleased to enable me.

Psalm 1:15

“Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

I shall notice,

1. The gracious encouragement to pray. I need not observe to you, that there is much called prayer, which is not considered so by the divine Being; neither is it esteemed

prayer by one, who feeling the hardness of his heart, is constrained to acknowledge that he has often addressed the Lord with his mouth, while his heart was far from him. Such an one, sick of his own formality, can never rest easy with any thing short of the life and energy of spiritual prayer. His language is, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."

Prayer is the breath of the new creature, by which he tells God all his distress, and breathes out his desires before him. How glaringly inconsistent then to persuade and exhort a carnal unrenewed man to pray! – to persuade one entirely carnal to breathe out spiritual desires before the Lord! They that are in the flesh cannot please God: and it is a miraculous work of the Holy Ghost to spiritualize a sinner, and quicken a dead soul. The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit; and till he has received spiritual things, I would ask, how he is to pray spiritually? And can he regenerate and spiritualize his own soul? Till he has done this he cannot pray spiritually. I would therefore observe,

1. That none can pray spiritually till they are taught of God! I know they may repeat words, they may address God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, which is very easy to be done. This Israel of old did, but what does the Lord say of them? "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear:" "In vain do ye worship me." When he enters, by the power of his grace, into an elect vessel, he teaches him to know that notwithstanding the hundreds of petitions he has formally repeated before God with his lips, he never prayed in all his life. "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob," saith the Lord, Isa. 43:22.

2. That the Lord has engaged in covenant to teach all his people to pray. There is no covenant favor more largely spoken of than this of Prayer, in the Bible; for there is none more precious. It is one of our highest privileges, and the method God takes, in order to teach them to pray, is to bring them into trouble. Hear what he says in Zech. 13:8. "I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." – O ye tried souls! may this description of your case encourage you! And hear the design of your covenant Father in thus leaving you in distress: -- he adds, "They shall call upon me, and I will hear them." A praying soul is a tried soul; naturally, none will cry out till they feel [a] smart, and so it is in spiritual things; none will cry fervently unto the Lord, till they feel spiritual anguish and distress. Prayer is begging, petitioning, wrestling, striving with the Lord, crying in the extremity of want. Mark the difference between the publican and the Pharisee – The one cried for mercy, and in the anguish of his soul, he cried vehemently. The other, though he stood up, and with his lips blessed God for many things, never offered up a single petition. – This is very observable. Consequently it could not be prayer. (Dear Lord, let me be the poor sinner, at mercy's feet, never to boast, save in the Lord Jesus, and his cross!)

Those who are thus taught to pray, come before the Lord with humility. The Lord has laid his hand upon them, and brought them low. They feel what they are, and where they are. Wretched, lost, ruined in themselves. But they hear the sweet sound of mercy! That the Lord delighteth in mercy! He speaks with an inviting voice: "Call on me in the day of trouble: Seek, and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto thee." Poor

sinner! You who are overwhelmed with grief, and with a thousand discouragements in attempting to pray: who meet with so much opposition from your own carnal, dark, foolish, hard heart; in these invitations, my covenant God speaks particularly to you, and intends it as a word of encouragement. He has mercifully brought you down from all your high flights of fleshly joy and power; and laid you low in your proper place. Glory to his name for it. And having thus humbled you, he will most assuredly afford you the consolations of his grace. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (James 4:6). You now seek your dear Lord sorrowing, but he will see you again, and your joy shall be full.

God teaches his people to pray sincerely and fervently: they pour out their hearts before him (Psa. 62:8). Theirs is the cry of the poor and needy. The cry of the destitute; the sighing of the prisoner. Such characters are serious in their requests, feel what they express, and often send up a poor broken petition unto the Lord with their whole souls, when their tongue is never employed at all!

They pray in faith: "Let him ask in faith," says James, "nothing wavering." When bowed down under the ponderous weight of unbelief, this passage has often distressed my soul, because the Apostle says "let him ask in faith," and I found myself all over unbelief, but I had not a proper view of this excellent passage, for all the time, though I was so pestered with unbelief, I had the faith of God's elect and so have you, poor dejected sinner. – You believe what the writer to the Hebrews (2:6) so strenuously insists upon; "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." You believe that he is (or that he exists) as a God of justice and holiness; this you have powerfully felt in your conscience, and you are taught to believe that he is a God of love and grace; this has repeatedly encouraged you to pray; and you firmly believe that to the soul which is taught to make diligent search, he will reveal his love, and show his salvation, and this, I say, is an encouragement for you to seek. This inward persuasion that there is mercy with the Lord, that he may be sought after, is nothing short of those cords of love, with which he is drawing you to himself.

Farther, when the Lord gives a precious assurance of interest in his love, the sinner then addresses him, in every time of trouble, as his own God and father, and boldly pleads, upon the ground of his oath and promise. O, how sweet it is to enter into these things within the veil, and to say, "Thou, O Lord hast promised, and thou canst not deny thyself; deliver me for thy loving kindness and for thy truth! For thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. When God gives this precious faith,

*It treads on the world and on sin;
It vanquishes death and despair;
And, O let us wonder to tell,
It overcomes heaven by prayer!*

Then we come boldly to the throne of grace, and in the cleft of the rock Christ, enjoy communion with our God, while his goodness passeth before us.

May the Lord favor us with the spirit of supplication this day, for Christ's sake.
Amen.

I am your sincere friend, in gospel love,
W.W.H.

Letter IX.

**To the Church of Christ, assembled at Ebenezer Chapel,
Leicester.**

July 7, 1804.

Dear Brethren in Tribulation,

Of all creatures upon the earth, man is the most miserable. He is a thinking being, with a capacious mind, formed for reflection; and through his apostasy from that God who created him in his own image, is the miserable subject of complicated ills. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward (Job. 5:6, 7). Trouble is the common lot of all mankind, and our short lives are variegated with disagreeable changes, disappointments, and vexations of every color? Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble (Job. 14:1), and yet, it is a melancholy reflection, few as his days are, he is so wedded to the earth that he seeks happiness from it with as much eagerness as if God had intended it for his everlasting habitation? Where is the man, knowing his own heart, that does not feel the weight of this observation? O, the anxiety that the cares of this world create in our restless minds! Cares, which are so many murderers to soul-comfort! Notwithstanding, we have to bless the Lord, that when he gives us a view of his unalterable, and unavoidable will, in all our afflictions, we can sing with Watts,

*“Our lives thro’ various scenes are drawn,
And vex’d with trifling cares,
While thine eternal thought move on
Thine undisturb’d affairs.”*

But the saints of God not only participate with the rest of mankind in the common afflictions attending human life, they also have to encounter those peculiar to the Christian warfare, which are exceedingly more afflictive and insupportable. These are the

afflictions intended by David, where he says of the wicked, “They are not in trouble as other men” (Psa. 73: 3, 5). They are unacquainted with soul-trouble, but many are the afflictions of the righteous (Psa 36:19), for the Lord trieth the righteous (Psa. 11:5) and maketh them partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (2 Tim. 1:8). And when they are enabled to view them as afflictions peculiar to the children of God, painful and disagreeable as they are, they possess a secret, and satisfactory joy amidst all, that God hath counted them worthy to suffer in his cause, and given them a portion with his people. Looking up to the Redeemer for support and guidance, it is theirs to say,

*How harsh soe'er the way,
Dear Savior still lead on;
Nor leave us till we say,
“Father, thy will be done.”*

But how often is it, on the other hand, when they have forgotten their resting place, and lost every proper view of their afflictions, that they are ready to sink under their complicated pressure. The sins of their nature, the treachery of a deceitful heart, the wiles of the devil, the darkness that their souls pass through, the want of an heart to cry unto the Lord, and added to all this, a variety of outward sorrow and reproaches, is enough to sink them totally, so as to be able to rise no more! And but for an hope in mercy, and unbounded goodness, the soul never could stand in this trying contest! Never could survive this great fight of afflictions! I am led to make these observations by an interpretation, in my own soul, of Psalm 27:13.

I had fainted, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

I had fainted at a view of what I see of my own wretchedness, as a sinner. I had sunk under the burden of my innumerable sins and transgressions, but for an hope of seeing the goodness of the Lord, in my pardon and deliverance. This was David's experience, and this was mine also, when the Lord was pleased, by gradual discoveries, to show me the deceitfulness of my heart, and what an unfathomable abyss of iniquity it contains! When a poor sinner is thus cut down by the sword of divine justice, condemned by the law, lashed by conscience, with a thousand self-accusations, it is enough to make him faint! He knows what sin is, he feels what it has done, and the truth of that description given by Isaiah (ch. 1:5) of our fallen condition, is verified in him; “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.” He takes up the lamentation of Jeremiah: “The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint” (Lam. 5:15, 16).

Now, my dear fellow sinners, you, who through your ignorance of the infinite freeness of grace in Christ, have been looking inwardly for something good to recommend you to his favor; permit me to ask, have you this recommendation, for it is the only one you want: Are you feelingly acquainted with your sinful malady? For Christ

hath said, “The whole need no physician, but those that are sick.” David does not say, I had fainted unless I had found some goodness in myself, some inherent holiness – but unless I had believe, to see the goodness of the Lord! Christ was all the goodness he wanted, for he alone saveth his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). This blessed sound of salvation sometimes revives your fainting soul. You hear it with pleasure, and are elated with the heavenly news; but, ere long, you are taken with another fainting fit, occasioned by unbelief.

Your mind, for a short season, has been more peaceable and tranquil, and the Lord has blessed you with a persuasion, that you shall, notwithstanding all your sin and unworthiness, see his goodness, which he caused to pass before Moses, and which he will manifest to your soul. That he will bring you into the land of the living, the sweet land of gospel liberty, inhabited by those who are alive to God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. But now some fresh storm arises, the enemy besets you with some new temptation – your inward abominations, in a most hideous form, rise up against you, apparently more powerful than ever, and you conclude that there is not another creature under the heavens so polluted, so unholy; which is a good ground for unbelief to work upon. Now you question whether your convictions are from the spirit of God – whether you ever had a real feeling knowledge of yourself – whether you ever saw sin in its exceeding sinfulness, as it is known, and beheld by the people of God – whether you are an elect vessel of mercy, etc. These are the operations of unbelief. In this state, when you hear the glad tidings of a *risen* Jesus, who is yet alive as your Savior, the news appears too good, and your cry is, he cannot love me, surely he has no regard for such a wretch; I once thought he was my Savior, and was more comfortable in the persuasion that he would bring my soul out of trouble; but alas! all hope seems to be cut off; for he hath brought me into darkness, and not into light; surely against me is he turned!

Notwithstanding all this you possess the faith of God’s elect, and feel an inward contest between these two principles. Faith contend for Christ, and the riches of grace in him. This revives your fainting soul, and, more sick of yourself than ever, you go with greater humiliation to the mercy-seat, fall low at the feet of Jesus, and are obliged to acknowledge, that you have no hope but in him! I am certain this is the state of every sinner taught of God. “He putteth his mouth in the dust: if so there may be hope” (Lam. 29:3). And low, and dejected as you are, this is a precious hope. Christ is more dear to you than ever, for you see clearly, that he must be in all in all! You would utterly faint in unbelief, unless you believed to see his goodness.

The next fit of faintness I would notice, is that of impatience; which is naturally an enemy to our comfort. Even in providence we are not willing to wait God’s time; and it is just the same with the soul that seeks Jesus; there is an hasty impatience which wants to possess immediately the object of the soul’s supreme desire; but hope is deferred, and the heart is sick and faint. And now you are ready, impatiently to say, it is in vain that I seek God; I have no real profit in waiting upon him! This is to learn you a very necessary lesson, that the Lord himself teacheth his people to profit. No minister, no ordinances, can prove in any way, profitable, till God makes them so. But in the midst of all your impatience, faith, which ever views the divine promises, revives you repeatedly. Patience

is the effect of faith, and its language is, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

In pursuing this subject, I am led to enquire, For what the children of God are ready to faint? And, first,

They are ready to faint for the want of food. "Hungry and thirsty their souls fainted in them" (Psa. 107:5). There is an innate craving of soul for the bread of life, but reduced to a state of starvation, they are faint and ready to die. They cannot feed upon unclean food; but, like the dove, must have pure grain. The husks of an outward profession will not satisfy; they must have the kernel; the meat of the gospel; savory meat, such as their souls love! But there is a famine in the land! Thirsty, and the broken cistern of their fleshly religion affords them no water! Their souls are as the parched earth, that has been long without rain. They are God's spoor and needy, who seek water, and can find none! (Isa. 45:17)

All they want is to be brought to Jesus; to feed on him, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. They want to be invited into the marriage chamber, by the bridegroom himself, and to be welcomed to the banquet of his love, in that sweet and soul reviving language, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O, beloved!" (S.S. 5:1). This is the refreshment, my friends, that your fainting souls long for: and in this famished state your cry is, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Psa. 84:2). And you had ere now, fainted entirely, but for that precious faith which the Lord hath given you, that you shall see his goodness, and taste his love!

In this state of spiritual famine, the sinner endeavours, by various means, to obtain comfort, but finds his attempts fruitless; and after all his labor, has to lament that he is nothing better, but rather worse. You may find the unfeigned confession of such a soul, in Jer. 8:18. "When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint within me." Self-comfort will not do; the God of all comfort, himself, must give you consolation, before your weary mind will find any rest, or solid satisfaction: which he does in such a way, as evidently proves it was not on account of our diligence, but of his own abounding grace in Christ?

This sickly state of soul, is attended with that pain and anguish, which necessitates the sinner to sigh, with earnestness, before the throne of God. This, poor soul! You know to be a truth; and the most you can say of your own experience, at this time, most probably is, "My sighs are many, and my heart is faint" (Lam. 1:22). And O, how dissatisfied are you with your prayers! Except when the Lord is pleased to afford you particular enlargement of soul, you are in the general shut up in darkness, and known not how to approach God, on account of your ignorance and stupidity! And you would entirely faint were it not for that encouragement that the Lord, in his word, gives you, to believe that your supplications shall, sooner or later, be answered in your deliverance. For he hath said, for your edification, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1), and he hath not given this encouragement in vain, for the promise is, I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me; and you believe that you shall see the goodness of the Lord in your confirmation in this precious truth, which alone keeps you from fainting. I know very well you often talk of giving up all, and that it is impossible for you to persevere any

further; and can assure you the Lord intends you should give up all. All your legal strife – all your attempts to comfort your own soul: for he is now reducing you to nothing but poverty and beggary, that you may give up your whole soul into the arms of his mercy, and find in him that love and compassion, that grace and power, which shall do all for you, that you may sing of his goodness and mercy for ever!

Now, probably, some of you, my dear friends, are ready to reply, “I am sensible I cannot help myself; I know the Lord must do all for me, by the power of his mighty love; but why does he not deliver me, and reveal his loving kindness powerfully to my soul, since I look alone to him? I have sought him but I cannot find him; I have prayed, but he has given me no answer; Woe is me now! For the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; “I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest,” (Jer. 45:3).

The Lord has graciously done all this, to show you, more visibly, your own weakness, and that salvation belongeth unto him. Why did he permit Jonah to be cast in to the bowels of the great deep, but that he might say, with wonder, love, and praise, **Salvation is of the Lord!** And thus God’s people sink in deep waters, where there is no standing, that his saving arm may be made bare in their deliverance. Your fainting in distress is a proof, even to yourself, of your debility and weakness: “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Prov. 24:10), and you have found it so. Job appeared a strong man in the Lord, and doubtless he thought himself so: but it was before he was severely tried. When God lays his hand upon the soul, the strong are no more than the weak. Job had been a professed comforter of others, but now is in such darkness, temptations, and distress, that he is left comfortless himself; and his friends, in this instance, very justly said, “Behold thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands; thy words have upholden him that was fallen, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled (Job 4:3-5).

We are often constrained to say, when in a happy state, my mountain stands firm, and I shall never be moved; but if the Lord hide his face, we are immediately troubled. Alas! my dear friends, what are we, when the Lord is pleased to lead us into darkness, leave us to sink in deep waters, and permit the powers of hell to assail our feeble souls! But though he thus tries us, blessed be his name, he will give strength equal to the trying day – he will be with us in six troubles, and in the seventh he will not forsake us. I have found him faithful to his promise to the present; although, with reference to a variety of trying circumstances, I can truly say, with David, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living.”

Having noticed the fainting circumstances of the children of God; in my next, God willing, I shall treat of their support and deliverance. That the Lord may bless this, in your real edification, is the prayer of,

Yours affectionately,
W.W.H.

Letter X.

**To the Church of Christ, assembled at Ebenezer Chapel,
Leicester.**

July 14, 1804.

My Dear People,

The Lord will not suffer his tried children entirely to faint. The truth of this I can testify. For this I know, and no man shall stop me in this boasting, in all the regions of Great Britain, that the Lord has established that religion in my soul, which will stand the test of a dying hour! He has done these things for me, which never can be undone by any of Satan's temptations, the world's frowns, or the violent oppositions which I daily meet with from the flesh!

And he has, moreover, given me authority to glory in it. Thus saith the Lord, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight saith the Lord" (Jer. 9:24).

And he hath further declared, that his people shall thus rejoice, and glory in him: (Psa. 44:10). "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory." This is not glorying in self, but alone in Christ crucified. The apostolic boast was, "By the grace of God I am what I am." In myself I am the chief of sinners; and sirs, I feel what I now write – I am a sinner throughout, contaminated and defiled; but, by the grace of God, a pardoned sinner. What, though my sins be as scarlet and crimson? I feel the virtue of redeeming blood! Free grace in Christ hath cancelled them all!

In myself all unrighteousness; but, by grace can look unto Jesus, and with the sweetest familiarity call him, *The Lord my righteousness!* In myself I am a fool; I know nothing of spiritual things; but Christ is made over unto me *wisdom*, and the blessed Spirit hath made me wise in Christ! In myself I am weak beyond description, but in the Lord I have everlasting strength; and when his power resteth upon me, I am then so strong in the Lord, I can run through a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall! (Psa. 28:29); in myself I am the most unstable of all creatures, but by the grace of God in Christ, I can rejoice in the stability of his unchangeable love, and everlasting covenant! In myself I am the most miserable and unhappy creature; the corruptions of the flesh, the prevalence of carnal nature, the deceitfulness of sin, the power of unbelief, the operations of evil thoughts, all conspire to create my misery; and believe me, my dear friends, not one of you have greater reason to cry, "I abhor myself," than I have; and I believe no poor soul ever approached God's throne under a heavier burden of sin, guilt, and shame, than I have been obliged to do, a thousand times, *since* I have known Jesus! "O, wretched man that I am!" has been the lamentable language of my soul, and, such a plaintive groaning has composed the greatest part of my addresses at the mercy seat! But, by the **grace of God**, I have sweet consolation in Christ! "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;

with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin!” (Rom. 7:25)

Christ, the fairest among ten thousand, has been my comfort, my support, and my glory, ever since he first drew my soul so sweetly to himself, by the cords of love! O what did he do for me then! I will tell you, my friends, and though I make use of familiar comparisons to convey my ideas, I speak solemnly, seriously, thankfully; and what I really know for myself. He paid all my debts due to the righteous justice of God, took me out of the prison of darkness and soul distress, where I had been fed with the bread and water of affliction, where my tears were my meat, day and night. He took off my filthy rags, and clothed me with the beautiful garments of salvation, and with the robe of his righteousness; brought me into his banqueting house, spread the banner of his love over me, and made me as happy as it is possible to be this side of heaven! And, when all this is considered, you need not wonder at my glorying in **Him**. O the happy time! when he thus looked down upon me; it was, indeed, a time of love: and when he graciously smiled and said, “Live,” my souls experienced life from the dead! And now, though, in myself, I have repeatedly to lament, such a miserable distance from God, that my soul sits in darkness, and mourns as in sackcloth and ashes; yet in Christ I am continually near him, and my God continually near to my soul!

And thus I might proceed to show what there is in me, and what in Christ; but it is my particular wish to conclude in this, the subject I entered upon last week; I would only add, that till you are thus brought off every self-righteous foundation, and are firmly established upon the rock, the immoveable rock Christ, your comforts will be momentary and fading. Let the inhabitants of the rock sing; they are the people that sing the Lord’s song, in the sweet land of spiritual liberty. And, for my own part, I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

He it is who keepeth his people alive in famine, and, by an invisible and almighty power, supports their weary and tried minds in the most distressing circumstances, by a persuasion and sweet hope, that they shall be delivered. And which of you, my friends, who have known any thing of spiritual trouble, but have, in some instance, reason to say, “I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

God’s elect are a tried people, and faith is termed the faith of God’s elect; being peculiar to them, and peculiarly exercised in the time of trial.

You, who are shut up in that darkness and distress of mind, which I have represented, in the preceding epistle, are, though often tempted to give up all, encouraged and supported by a belief in the goodness of the Lord. That, dark as your state is, you shall one day see his face in righteousness. Encouraged by the declarations of his grace and love, and by the deliverances which he has wrought for others in similar circumstances, you cry unto the Good Shepherd, “Thou art good and doest good; teach me thy statutes” (Psa. 119:63). Dependent entirely upon divine goodness (for you have none of your own) through the extremity of your distress and necessity of your case, you are obliged to resign yourself up to him, to do with you as it seemeth good in his sight;

only putting in this plea, that his goodness and mercy may be magnified in your salvation!

And now, let me ask you; some of you, who probably are ready to sink in despair at certain intervals, if it is not a belief, or persuasion that he will one day cause his goodness to pass before you, which supports and keeps alive your fainting souls?

Here is faith, and faith which the wounded burdened sinner alone is acquainted with. It cleaves to the promises, and looks alone to the unmerited goodness of the Lord to an unworthy sinner!

I am persuaded that where God has given a real sense of sin, helplessness, and innate wretchedness, the soul could not support under it, were it not for a persuasion of grace and goodness in the heart of Christ; which he so freely bestows, and so conspicuously magnifies in the salvation of Israel. This encourages the soul to cry (though a feeble cry indeed) incessantly unto him who is able to save. What a striking difference between the prayer of such a poor, helpless creature, whose very soul dictates his expressions, and that of the proud, self-righteous professor, who goes to prayer under the idea of performing a duty, and thinks he is doing God service! The former is almost afraid to open his mouth before the Lord, on account of his darkness and ignorance; and nothing but real necessity excites him thus to cry: the latter, under a persuasion that he is considerably gifted in prayer, expresses often what he never felt, and thinks (whenever he gives it a thought) that he shall be heard for his much speaking.

I have sometimes heard a poor, darkened, and distressed sinner make this complaint, "I fear I am not taught of God, for I cannot pray. When I attempt it, my heart is as hard as a stone, my thoughts wandering, and my mind, upon the whole, so bewildered that I cannot get to the Lord, nor receive any soul-satisfaction." Now if this is your real state, if you are in distress on this very account, I no more doubt of your being taught of God, than I doubt the truth of God's word. Because, from this experience I learn, first, that God has taught you to be sick of those prayers which are of your own making. Secondly, that you must be indebted to him for the spirit of prayer. Thirdly, that the form and exercise of prayer will not satisfy you, except you feel your whole soul engaged in it. And, fourthly, that, broken as your petitions are, they certainly are of a right kind, or you would not meet with such interruption therein from the powers of darkness, neither would Satan tempt you to believe, as he often does, that God will not regard them. And after all your distress concerning the poverty of your prayers, you are blessed with faith to believe that you shall see the goodness of the Lord in answering and delivering you, or you would not, you could not, persevere in offering your petitions before him. Though you would tell me you have no faith, I know better. I would ask you why you still attempt to pray? And what means those secret sighs and groans which so often proceed from your burdened mind, and ascend up to God? You still continue to cry, upon a peradventure God will hear; you are persuaded, you firmly believe, he is a God who answers prayer. And though you feel yourself in a perishing state, for want of strength and comfort of soul! your life is almost gone, and you are ready to faint; yet, when it comes to a point, the Lord is pleased to give you a fresh resolution to cry once more to him, and probably your language is then something like this:

Perhaps he will admit my plea,
 Perhaps will hear my pray'r;
But if I perish, I will pray,
 And perish only there.

And at such a trying time the Lord is pleased to give you, perhaps, more enlargement of soul than you have usually experienced; you drink of the brook by the way, and experience some refreshment from the sweet thought of free and unmerited goodness in Christ; this revives your fainting mind, and you are then persuaded, from this token of good, that you shall yet praise him for the light of his countenance, and as your own God. Thus precious faith in the goodness of God supports and bears up the poor, weary soul, even before deliverance comes. And this faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Glory to him for it.

2. One who has enjoyed the love of God for himself, is equally ready to faint when troubles arise. Even at the same time that he knows the pardon of his sins in Christ, how distressing is the sin of his nature, when permitted to prevail against him; and when left of the Lord, what a poor creature he feels himself to stand in fiery contest with the powers of hell! He is then ready to faint, even though persuaded that he is a child of God. Paul is a striking example of the truth of this; when the thorn of the flesh, the messenger of Satan buffeted him. This sent him with cries and groans to the mercy seat, and, strong as he was before, when this temptation came on him, he had fainted, but for that support which the Lord afforded him, by this gracious declaration, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He was enabled to take God at his word; – he believed he should see his goodness, in the accomplishment of this promise, and it was this inward persuasion, of God's goodness, in his deliverance, which prevented him from fainting!

This blessed persuasion of seeing God's goodness in future, has often been a wonderful support to my poor tempest-tossed soul! When, like Jacob, I have been ready to say, "all these things are against me," such precious Scripture as this has revived me, "All things work together for good to those that love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." When faith has been in exercise, I have been able to look through the gloomy cloud, and behold the Lord, who is my sun and shield, shining resplendently, in his infinite wisdom, that has seen fit to appoint all my troubles and crosses!

I have here given you a short description of the power of that faith which God giveth, that bears up, and keeps the soul from fainting in trouble. This is the like precious faith by which those ancient worthies, in Heb. 11 did so many excellent and wonderful things.

It is a sweet belief that the God of grace will do all things for me – that he will confound, and put to silence, all that rise up against me, bring me out of trouble, make darkness light before me, and guide my feet in the paths of peace and righteousness. May the Lord thus increase our faith, while in this vale of trouble, that we may pray in faith,

walk by faith, stand on the rock of ages by faith, and by faith fight and conquer, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Yours in the love of Christ,
W.W.H.

Letter XI.

To the Church of Christ, assembled at Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester.

July 21, 1804.

Dear Brethren in the Lord,

Through the captivating, and overcoming stratagems of our spiritual enemies, we are often led captive in the slavish chains of a fear, that the Lord, in anger, hath shut up his tender mercies, and is forgetful to fulfill his covenant promises. This fear prevents communion with God, burdens the gloomy mind, and corrodes every drop of spiritual consolation. If we cry unto God, it is not with the voice of praise and thanksgiving; but in the complaining tone of afflicted David, “Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?” (Psalm 10:1) The Lord’s absence, the heart’s impregnable hardness, the motions of sin in the flesh, the inactive, negligent state which the mind is now sunk into, all combine to create a persuasion that God does not deal with us as with his children. And this is a very favorable opportunity for the grand enemy to attack the soul. Though he may be strong and terrific as a lion, I am persuaded he ever acts the part of a coward, by attacking the weak, and falling upon them when they are down. You no sooner get into a dull, uncomfortable frame of mind, but he represents your state as singular, or will tell you if you were a child of God it would not be thus with you, and even without his suggestions you are ready enough to say, “All these things are against me.”

“But, beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings” (1 Pet. 4:12). He, himself, stood the fiery tests of the devil’s most violent assaults; and shall you and I think to escape them? No. Shall we expect to be Christians indeed, and remain strangers to the Christian warfare? Can we expect a smooth and easy path, when our Redeemer trod a rough one? Has he not described it in his Word, as a thorny way? He does not say, “Through much ease and pleasure,” but “Through much tribulation, we must enter into his kingdom.”

The exhortation is, “Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” What know you about contests with sin and hell? If, indeed, you ever enlisted under the Redeemer’s banner, you have had many an hard struggle with his enemies! And you are not yet to put off your armour. If you live, you will be repeatedly called into the field of battle, and sometimes will be so completely vanquished, that your enemies will leave you

bleeding upon the ground! Your faith will be shaken, your hopes cut off, your hands so feeble that you will be totally incapable of action, and your heart so dismayed within you, that your very life will appear upon the verge of departure! Talk with some of the old soldiers that have been engaged in this war, and they will give you wonderful accounts of the subtlety, dexterity, and artful maneuvers of our enemies. The strong opposition of the will of the flesh, to the divine will; the violent hostility of carnal passions, against the graces of the blessed Spirit; hard thoughts of God; slavish fears; vain thoughts; hardness of heart; with a great variety of other foes of our own household – and these, headed by the prince of the powers of darkness, have so wounded them as to bring upon them a complication of dreadful disorders! Such as unbelief, apprehensions of God’s anger, darkness of soul, lifelessness at the throne of grace, inactivity in the ways of God, carnality in his worship; and these disorders are accompanied with such mental debility, that the poor wounded creature finds himself dispossessed of all spiritual strength, and with an aching heart complains, “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.” He would peruse the scriptures, pray feelingly, spiritually, and heartily; love the people of God, delight in, and enjoy their company; love Christ, bless him, praise and adore his grace, worship him spiritually, trust him for all, cast his cares upon him, and leave soul and body, without any fear, in his hands. *But* – O, distressing *but!* – how to perform that which is good he does not find. He does not want to perform any thing upon the principle of the merit-monger. But he knows it is a good thing to draw near to God. He wants, to trample on sin and hell, by faith in the blood of the Redeemer, and triumphantly say, “This God is my God for ever and ever, he will be my guide, even unto death.” With sweet, and affectionate sensations to walk hand and heart with God, in covenant enjoyments, is the insatiate thirst and desire of his soul; and on this account, he cries and laments before the Lord. Let professors say what they please about their duties, and religious performances, I am sure of this, that the soul exercised in the way I have attempted to describe, wants nothing but the enjoyment of God, in his covenant love and grace; and the Holy Ghost hath created in him such a spiritual thirst, that every thing short of this enjoyment, however religious and excellent they may appear in the eyes of others, are only calculated to render him the more wretched!

Now, my dear friends, observe the very distinguishable difference between the formal professor, and a soul blessed with a knowledge of itself, and an insatiate thirst for the enjoyment of God. I would endeavor to contrast these two distinct characters upon the ground of their motives in attempting to pray. I have always, ever since I have been feelingly acquainted with the power of godliness, considered *prayer* as one of the most distinguishing characteristics of a child of God. A man of God is a man of much prayer! But his prayer, in the general, is secret, when no eye seeth him but the Lord. And he often, I believe, even in company with his fellow mortals, has his heart up to God, with secret and fervent cries!

The formal profession prays from a most despicable self-righteous motive, in order to please God, by the performance of what he calls his duty. I know for myself, before I felt my ruined sinful condition, that though I attempted to pray many times in a day, it was not from a sense of spiritual want; but from a persuasion that the Lord would

be pleased with me, for my diligence and piety. My cry was not then, "Save, Lord, or I perish!" but a repetition of unfelt sentences, to obtain the divine favor and approbation. But now, mark the difference, you that know the plague of your own hearts, and hear what distinguishing grace has done for you! Acquainted with the inward warfare of the real Christian, you are led to the gracious throne

1. Under a humiliating sense of your deadness. You want life and animation of soul. You feel your want of this sweet life; and sensible that it is only in Christ, and that you must derive it from him, your prayer is, "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name sake; for thy righteousness sake, deliver my soul from trouble." Now, after all your doubts, tell me, do you think nature dictates these cries, or prompts you thus, through feeling necessity, to apply to Christ for quickening grace? No, if this is your real heartfelt prayer, be assured it is the Spirit's work thus to help your infirmities, with groanings which you cannot express!

2. Your darkness and ignorance, sensibly felt and lamented, cause you to cry unto the Lord, who is the fountain of light, the sun and shield of his people, the sun of righteousness, who has promised to arise upon them with healing in his wings (or beams). You are dark and miserable without the light of this glorious sun; and therefore your prayer is, "Consider and hear me, O Lord, my God, lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psa. 13:3).

3. On account of your unbelief, infidelity, and hard thoughts of God, you go before him through real necessity. Through the prevalency of these evils your heart is overwhelmed within you, and feeling your inability to rise superior to their horrid attacks, you cry unto the Lord, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Such complaints really felt in the soul, and sincerely lamented before the mercy seat, bespeaks the almighty power of God, in giving the spirit of supplication. Thus I might proceed to show, in numerous instances, that the prayers of God's Israel are the prayers of necessity, and herein they are distinguishable from those of all the Pharisees, hypocrites, and formalists upon earth! And I would once more ask, Can it be supposed that carnal nature dictates these petitions? If so, from whence arises the opposition you inwardly feel in attempting to approach the Lord? Carnal nature is certainly an enemy to all spiritual prayer; and, therefore, will ever oppose you in it, so far as permitted. Hence it is very clear to me, that a supernatural agency dictates those cries for deliverance and comfort, in your burdened and oppressed minds.

Some of you, perhaps, at this time, are ready to say, "I fear after all, that my prayers are not dictated by the Divine Spirit. For when I attempt to pray, my mouth is almost stopped: I know not what to say. And though I am extremely uncomfortable in my mind, and feel that I am altogether destitute of life, light, love, and every thing good, I am so stupefied with my carnal hard heart, that I can scarcely utter ten words before the Lord, and those apparently to no purpose."

In reply to this complaint, I have to say, that it has been repeatedly my own experience to the present day. And I bless the Lord that he has made acquainted with the same most distressing sensations, by which we are assured that we cannot pray when we please. That we are indebted to the Lord for the spirit of supplication. Yet I would

observe that some of these poor broken petitions, that we scarcely know how to utter, are more acceptable to the Lord, and comprehend more real prayer, than those which are expressed with greater fluency of speech. Is not spiritual prayer called, “Groanings which cannot be uttered?”

I have often wished, had it been his blessed will, that the Lord would have thus stopped the mouths of some that I have heard at prayer meetings; who have spend a long time in vain repetitions, till, probably, the people assembled have been almost ready to fall asleep! Long prayers are not to edification; and our Lord hath said, “Use not vain repetitions.” In exposing the long, formal prayers of the Pharisee, he says, “They think they shall be heard for their much speaking.” A proof that Christ objects to much speaking, and decidedly expresses his disapprobation of long prayers. There may be seasons when the soul is extraordinarily led out to plead with God, but I believe, that in general, when a sinner prays fervently, knowing his wants, and feeling his expressions, his prayers are very short and comprehensive; and I may add, very prevailing with the Lord!

That the Lord delighteth in importunity is plain from the scriptures. May he say unto you this day, “Seek ye my face,” and then I know you will reply, to his soul-quickenng command, “Thy face, Lord, will we seek.” Praying souls have nothing to fear; though, in deep distress, they often fear every thing; but the Lord will hear and deliver them, that they may glorify him. He has never said to the seed of Jacob, seek my face in vain. When the poor needy soul seeks water, and finds none, and his tongue even faileth for thirst, will the Lord leave him to perish? No. His sweet promise is, ‘I the Lord will hear him, I the God of Israel will not forsake him.’ This is God’s own promise, and must be fulfilled – and observe the distinguished character to whom the promise extends. Not the rich, the virtuous, the pious, but the poor, the needy, you that have nothing, and can find no living water of comfort, but whose tongues even fail for thirst. These are your recommendations to the notice of the God of grace, if you must have recommendations! Your poverty, darkness, ignorance, filthiness, unworthiness, weakness, etc., etc., are the only recommendations that I know of; and these he himself gives you a knowledge of, or you had neither felt them nor seen them. And the Lord says positively, to such an answer to this descriptions, “I will hear them; I will not forsake them!” You may rely upon his word of grace; he never yet deceived the soul that has been enabled to trust him for all, and look to him for every thing.

That this may be your happy case, is the prayer of your affectionate friend, and willing servant, for Christ’s sake,

W.W.H.

Letter XII.

To the Church and Congregation, assembled at Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester.

July 28, 1804.

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

I have often been sensibly struck with that common, but very ignorant assertion, of many professors of Christianity, "It is of little consequence what we believe, provided we do but love and obey God." But even upon the ground of human rationality, we cannot expect that men should obey the truth, till they are taught to believe it; nor love God till they are acquainted with him. To know, believe, and obey the truth, is a matter of such essential importance, that their damnation is pronounced inevitable, who live and die ignorant of it! "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

The apostle here had been prophetically treating upon anti-christ's rise and reign, with that flood of errors which he would pour out of his mouth; and declares that the enemies of God, who had not received the love of the truth, should thereby be ensnared: and all this by the permission of God himself; nay, he boldly tells us that God shall send them strong delusions; which agrees with the declaration of the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet Micah: "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophecy unto thee of wine and of strong drink, he shall even be the prophet of this people." On the other hand, we are positively assured that God's people are led into the truth, know the truth and walk in the truth. Therefore nothing can be plainer than this, that as a total ignorance of the precious truth as it is in Jesus, demonstrates a man dead in trespasses and sins, a sweet experimental knowledge of it is an evident proof that his soul is enlightened and quickened by divine grace. Then, sirs, the enquiry is solemn and important, What is truth? And what is it to have a real experimental knowledge of its power and preciousness? I feel the importance of the subject, and my soul is animated, with its intrinsic excellency. O what a blessing to be feelingly led into the truth! What an insuperable pleasure to live in the comfortable enjoyment of it!

Not a single grain of divine truth is received by a child of God without much opposition. Carnal reason will ever raise vain disputations against it, and as you advance in a knowledge of it, Satan will dispute every inch of ground with you; and through a natural love and propensity to error, you will often feel rising with you, even an indignation against it!

Knowing his own ignorance, the consequence of error, and the importance of receiving the truth in the love of it, the soul graciously led and instructed, cannot receive any thing as genuine truth, without the broad seal of heaven upon it – a thus saith the Lord, in his word, accompanied by the confirmation of the Spirit in his own experience.

Herein the child of God evidently differs from all careless, carnal professors, with whom it is very unimportant what they believe; he makes the most earnest enquiry after truth, searches for it as for hidden treasure, and examines every part of it with the most critical disquisition. I well recollect the time, when under great soul-concern, unestablished in the truth, halting between two opinions, knowing not what or who to believe, and with a variety of different creeds proposed to my credence and reception, that my soul was sorely dejected lest I should be deceived! Truth was then of the highest import with me. But what was the result of all this? What tendency had it? Why, in this great and perplexing dilemma I was led to the poor sinner's best asylum, the mercy seat of Jehovah, who had taught my soul to make diligent search for his own truth, and there my cry was something like David's, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies" (Psa. 27:11). And from what the Lord has since done for my soul, in leading me into his precious truth, I am confident no regenerated person can sit down easy by any thing as truth, but what God himself teaches him, and he must have the plain word of God for it. The Lord gives him to feel the truth of his precious word in his very soul! And now, my beloved friends, I shall show, from the word of God, as he may give ability, what truth is, and how the man of God is led into it.

1. Christ calleth himself *the truth* (John 14:6), because he is the sum and substance of the word of truth. He is the truth of all the prophecies and promises of a covenant God. And till a sinner receiveth Christ Jesus the Lord, he cannot receive the truth. When he knows Christ, he knows the truth of election, redemption, divine pardon, etc. which he never satisfactorily knew before.

2. The blessed Spirit is the all-wise teacher of divine truth, which Christ hath promised to his people; (John 16:13), "Howbeit when he, the *Spirit of truth*, is come, he will guide you into all truth." A man may learn truth systematically from the bare letter of the word, but can never know it, in its power and excellency, without the supernatural agency of the Spirit.

Men are so fallen and depraved, that they have disputed against the very being of God! But what does the poor sinner think of this solemn truth, when his divine wrath breaks in upon his conscience, and the terrors of the Almighty make him afraid? No atheism can exist in the soul, or existing, dares not to show its monstrous head, when the hand of God is thus, day and night, heavy upon the condemned sinner! He feels that there is a God against whom he hath sinned, who is full of terrible majesty!

The fallen, ruined, helpless state of wretched sinful man, is a truth plainly revealed in the Scriptures: but who really believe it? Those, and those only, who are taught to feel it a truth, by the secret operations of the convincing Spirit. Though the word of God is very plain upon it, you cannot offend men more than to tell them, they are so carnal, unclean, averse to God; so weak, helpless, dead, and at such distance from God, that they can by no means help themselves; that the performance of their duties will do nothing toward their salvation; that they cannot come to Jesus, till Mercy takes them in hand, and powerful carries them there, in spite of their own carnal will, and proud rebellious nature. These things always did, and always will give offence, to men untaught by divine grace.

But when God gives the soul to feel all this, he cannot then deny it; though his proud nature is unwilling to acknowledge it, and wants to claim some goodness, and some little power, yet his own feelings testify against him; and clearly evince the truth of what the Bible says of his fallen condition. Herein the Word and Spirit beautifully harmonize! And on this very account the word of God is called, “A discerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). For where God has broken up the sinful recesses of the heart, the same dismal things are felt and lamented, which God’s Word declares to be in the corrupt nature of man.

The saving power, and exceeding preciousness of Christ, cannot be cordially received as truth, till the need of him is felt. And then the soul cries – I would see Jesus; for I want him to be my wisdom, my power, my righteousness, my life, my all; but I feel I have no ability to go to him, nor to receive him, as some talk, by exercising faith; I have no faith to exercise, no heart to love him, no spirit of energetic prayer to call upon him: but am a poor, dead, barren, lifeless creature! Now some of you, with these very feelings, will tell me, you fear you know nothing in reality about precious *truth*. But give me leave to tell you, that, with this experience, you are better able to explain numerous passages in the Bible, than half the preachers in Great Britain!

For instance, that sweet passage, “No man can quicken his own soul.” Have you not the truth of it in your own experience? For you have, in various ways, endeavored to quicken your own soul, but you find it fruitless labor; you are as dead and stupid as ever you were; and no wonder, for while the soul attempts to help itself, God will afford it none, but keeps at a distance, to teach it fresh lessons of human weakness. “No man, saith Jesus, can come unto me, till the Father draweth him.” A truth you and I once opposed, and despised; but which we are now glad to acknowledge, from what we daily feel; and our cry is – “Draw me, we will run after thee!” If all men knew their own hearts, there would not be a man in the world professing to believe the doctrines of free will, and human merit. It is ignorance of their own corrupt, depraved hearts, that causes men to boast of power to come to Jesus, to love God and delight in him; and, by their own exertions, to procure for themselves the presence of God and delight in him; and, by their own exertions, to procure for themselves the presence of God! Thus, with such great swelling words of vanity, they deny a fundamental truth of God’s Word, which he has mercifully taught you.

For my own part, I had rather be the poor, dark, tried, afflicted sinner, without a ray of light, or drop of comfort, than the proud Pharisee with all his boasted purity and consolation; for I know they are of a spurious kind. That purity of conscience, and sweet consolation, which alone can satisfy me, must be genuine and unadulterated, flowing alone from the fountain of a precious Jesus!

It is very evident that no one part of God’s truth can be cordially received, till the sinner feelingly knows his own heart; – till he feels his captivity, he will never look to Jesus for liberty; – till he is burdened with sin, he will never cry unto him for pardon. You could never read the Bible with understanding, till you knew the plague of your hearts. Now when you read in that blessed volume, the various striking descriptions of the vanity and baseness of the human heart, you can attest the truth of it; and at the same time, bless

the Lord that he hath, in his Word, described the stubbornness of your will, the barrenness of your mind, with all your weaknesses, darkness, ignorance, doubts, fears, and misgivings of heart! And that he has not only described your case so minutely, but speaks comfortably and mercifully, in his precious Word, to those who thus know, feel, and lament, before him, that they are all as an unclean thing, and that their iniquities, like the wind, have taken them away!

I have here particularly enlarged upon the knowledge of the truth of the fall, from a consideration that almost every error introduced into the Church of God, in any age, has sprung from ignorance of the dead, helpless, hopeless state of a sinner, till Mercy undertakes his cause.

From such ignorance, men, in our day, are preaching and contending for free will and the performance of various duties, as introductory to the favor of God. And are exhorting dead sinners to do that which nothing short of a Divine, Almighty Power can effect! Now, if such men really knew the plague of sin, they certainly would honestly tell poor souls, their fallen, helpless condition; and proclaim, instead of creature duties, covenant favors, boundless mercy, redeeming blood, and quickening grace; and with the faithfulness of a man of God, declare plainly and publicly, that “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” With an hope, that I shall be enabled to resume this subject next week,

I remain, till then, dear friends,
Yours, faithfully in the truth,
W.W.H.

Letter XIII.

To the Church and Congregation, assembled at Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester.

Aug 4, 1804.

Most Endeared Friends,

I resume the animating subject of Divine Truth, with an humble hope, under the gracious blessing of our covenant God, of promoting your real consolation, rousing your zeal and reviving your unfeigned love for that invaluable and delightful object.

When I contemplate the degenerated, ignorant, and lifeless condition of the professed churches of Christ, the lukewarm and lethargetic conduct of even those that I hope have the root of the matter in them, and the violent and almost universal opposition that sacred truth continually meets with, I am ready to cry with the weeping prophet, “*Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth*” (Jer. 7:28).

From whom do we now hear the enquiry, What is truth? How few regard the exhortation of the Lord, “Love the truth and peace” (Zech. 8:19). Nevertheless, as the Lord never speaks in vain, those who are addressed in this exhortation, have divine love

shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost; who teaches them to know the truth, in order that they may love it. It is impossible to love an object till there is a knowledge of it. When truth, in its power and preciousness, is known, then, and not till then, it is affectionately embraced. And though in this day of small things, iniquity abounds, and the love of many of God's children waxes cold, Jehovah has a seed that still serves him, a little flock to whom he is resolved to give the kingdom. These are very emphatically termed, "The righteous nation that keepeth the truth." They have received it, in the love of it, and it is from daily experience of its sterling worth, that they prize it above the richest treasure. I have already shown, in my last letter, that the Lord teaches his people the truth, by giving them to feel the power of it in their own souls; and that it is no less than an Almighty work of grace, for a sinner to be brought to a free acknowledgement of the truth of those parts of the Divine Writings, which so clearly represent the fallen, and helpless condition of man. We read in the blessed volume of truth, of a carnal and perverse will, perpetually hostile to the will of God; -- of ignorance in the extreme -- that the world, by wisdom, know not God; -- of enmity in the human heart is naturally a barren, unfeeling heart of stone. These things are plainly spoken of, and powerfully insisted upon, by the inspired writers. But the question is, Who gives a real, hearty assent to this description of the human heart? The reply is easy: -- Those who feel the truth of it. And such heartfelt humble acknowledgement of human depravity, is laid down in God's Word, as an infallible evidence, that the truth of God dwelleth in that soul. John says, positively, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us;" clearly intending, that if we are really convinced of our helpless and depraved state, by feeling, daily lamenting, and confessing, with humble contrition, and compunction of soul before God, those evils which his Word declares to be natural to man, and which cause his people to groan, being burdened with them, we have the truth of God dwelling in us. Nothing can be more plainly expressed. O ye sin-despairing souls; may the Lord enable you to take encouragement from this precious declaration, and render it effectual in removing your gloomy fears, and desponding thoughts, which prevent you from rejoicing in the truth. I shall now proceed to show, that the truth of redemption, by the blood of Christ, is only known as the powerful effects of it are felt and experienced upon the sinner's conscience. When everlasting love exhibits a bleeding Savior, the truth of that infinitely sweet passage is known, because felt and enjoyed; "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." John knew the truth of it, by a most wonderful deliverance from guilt, and alleviation from spiritual distress; -- from the sweetest sensations of spiritual comfort, and the most luxuriant enjoyment of divine love!

And be assured, my brethren, this takes place in a way that the poor, dark, tried, doubting sinner never expected.

Some of you, probably, are expecting something miraculous to take place, if ever you rejoice in Christ. It certainly is a miracle of grace for the conscience, the wounded, burdened conscience, to be freed from that complicated load of sin with which it is afflicted. But it is not in the way that some persons would give you to expect. When God proclaims pardon by the blood of Christ, he does not speak with an audible voice, heard by the outward ears: neither does he inwardly apply the very blood shed on Calvary, as

some of his people expect. But when I speak of an application of that precious blood, I mean, (and the Scriptures intend no more) an inward knowledge given by the enlightening Spirit of God, of what that blood does for a poor sinner. It is a discovery made to the soul of the love of God in a crucified Christ. But how it is performed, he knowls not? “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” These are the Lord’s own words, which are a clear proof, that he who is born of the Spirit, knows not how the work is performed; yet he knows that it is done, by its happy and most comfortable effects! He feels his conscience easy, because his sins are gone, and the Lord, the God of love is smiling upon him with compassion, tenderness and delight. He has such sweet persuasion of God’s love to his soul, that he is comforted on every side.

I know, when the Blessed Spirit first proclaimed redemption to me, my heart was melted under a sense of his amazing love. The glad tidings of justice satisfied, sins blotted out, unrighteousness removed, and an everlasting righteousness brought in, and put upon me by imputation, -- these glad tidings, so powerfully proclaimed, won my heart to Jesus – melted me down at his feet – removed my fears, my unbelief and infidelity; and I was then most confidently assured, that my Redeemer lived, and that I had eternal life in him. This is called a receiving the atonement – knowing the love of Christ – washing in the fountain which the Lord hath opened for sin and uncleanness – a being made night to God by the blood of Christ! Where this takes place in a soul, redemption becomes a most glorious theme; and such as are thus experimentally taught to know this sweet truth, will not, cannot, say that the blood of Jesus was shed in vain! They know that his blood cleanses from all sin; hence it is plain to them, that those who are thus cleansed can never perish. – That those for whom Christ died can never come into condemnation!

This truth is no longer doubted or disputed by such a soul, because the powerful effects of it are an inward and incontestable testimony, that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

In like manner, every fundamental truth must be received with power, and demonstrated to the soul by the Holy Spirit, before a poor ignorant sinner can comprehend them, or will cordially embrace them. Men may forge a thousand arguments in defence of a carnal man’s natural ability to believe and embrace the Truth; and there will ever appear, to unrenewed men, great plausibility in their reasoning: but it is enough for me to be assured in God’s Word, and to have the truth of it confirmed by the Holy Ghost in my own experience, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

It is the work, and covenant office of the blessed Spirit of Truth, to guide his people into all truth; and as he teaches, they learn; as he guides and directs, they make advancement in the knowledge of sacred truth. And he that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true (John 3:33). While carnal professors are disgusted with plain gospel truths, experimentally opened and preached, he can lay his hand upon

his heart and say, "My own experience corroborates the truth of what I hear, which is abundantly confirmed by the Scriptures, and therefore I can bear testimony that it is the truth of God."

So far as God hath taught us, so far we can testify the truth, as it is in Jesus, and no farther. Those who are thus feelingly led into truth, differ from others who have only received it notionally, in that they never can give it up, or bear to hear it dishonored and trampled upon by heterodox and corrupt doctrines. – I defy a person experienced in the truth of God, to sit under the sound of error with any comfort; and for my own part, I cannot conceive how such an one can sit under the sound of it at all.

The truth of God is so applicable to the state of one who is brought to nothing in his own esteem, that any thing which his in the least calculated to eclipse the glory of that precious truth, immediately meets with his most decided disapprobation. His zeal and love for truth, his hatred and indignation to error, are all roused immediately, and he contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. He pleadeth for truth, against those who trust in vanity and speak lies (Isa. 49:4); while they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, he is valiant for the truth (Jer. 9:3), and is determined to know nothing for the foundation of his hope, but Christ crucified. He is determined to know none other for pardon, peace, justification, sanctification, holiness, acceptance with God, wisdom, strength, and deliverance, from the power and dominion of sin, death and hell, but Christ Jesus, in whom he stands complete.

With a determination like this, may the God of all grace send me unto you, in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace! With the comfortable expectation of thus coming to you,

I remain, dear Brethren, etc.,
Yours, very affectionately,
W.W.H.

Letter XIV.

***To the Church of Christ (now) meeting at Hepzibah Chapel,
Wood Street.***

Plymouth Dock, Nov. 22, 1808.

My Dear People,

It would be superfluous for me, in this written Address (which must necessarily be very limited) to give you any fresh assurances of my discriminating affection for you, who have been with me, and bravely stood by me, in all the complicated afflictions and persecution which have befallen me, from my first entrance in among you. I am persuaded, we know each other too well to doubt, for a moment, the sincerity and integrity attached to our mutual professions of unfeigned love to each other in the bowels of Christ: suffice it, then, for me to say, *once for all*, Let this impress your minds,

whenever my absence give you any degree of pain, that you not only still exist in my most *lively* remembrance, but that you dwell perpetually in my heart; and, dear as the people of God are to me wherever I find them, rest assured, that you have my *warmest*, my *highest* and *first* esteem, by a most decisive preference, which gives me heartfelt pleasure. I will candidly acknowledge that it would be the most censurable vanity for me to suppose that you lamented my absence, if I had not the most demonstrable evidences of the great esteem in which you hold me as a minister of Christ; and the warm affection you feel for me as a child of God – a member of the same redeemed body, and of the same family with yourselves. – Be assured, my dear people! That I most keenly feel the pain of separation; so *keenly* and *forcibly*, that nothing could reconcile me to it, but an *hope*, and pleasing prospect, that my Blessed Redeemer has providentially led me here, to execute by me, as an instrument, some of the gracious purposes of his own will, in making sinners willing to be saved alone by grace! A *great* door appears to be opened here for the preaching of God’s truth, O that it may prove an *effectual* one: if so, I am persuaded, there will be many enemies. Brethren, pray for me, that the Lord may keep me faithful, and by my ministry magnify the riches of his free grace in Christ. May the Lord bless you at *all times*; but especially when you assemble for his worship; and O may he bless our brethren who officiate for me during my absence! May their ministry be owned of God!

But while I am lamenting our painful *separation* (though a separation upon a glorious occasion), methinks I hear some of you say, the absence of our minister is painful, but what is that compared with the *absence* of the Lord? If he hide his face, we are troubled indeed! At a throne of grace, which it is your inestimable privilege to know, you often cry in the language of David (Psa. 10:1), “Why standest thou afar off, O Lord, why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?”

This, my dear friends! though a bitter complaint, implies great boldness at the throne of grace: inasmuch as it is not only a pleading with the Lord, but going with an argument founded upon his promise, and requesting to know why that promise is not fulfilled? The heaven-born soul, in the darkest seasons, has more familiarity with the Lord, than the proud professor who never knew Jesus, with all his boasted comforts. I must here correct myself, I have not fully expressed my idea, or rather, I have said too much: because the former does enjoy familiarity with God, whereas the latter never intermeddles with that heaven-descended joy: and, therefore, it will be better to say, that the heaven-born soul, in the darkest, and most trying season, has that strong confidence in his covenant God, which the unregenerate professor *never knew*.

1. The cry of “Why standest thou afar off, O Lord?” never was made by a carnal unregenerated sinner: he is afar off from God, and knows it not: and while in that state is as *incapable* of desiring the Divine Presence as a dead body is of breathing, or as a *raving maniac* is of exercising sound reason.

2. A sinner under the Law’s sentence – self-condemned, has no occasion to make the enquiry: he knows, to his distraction, why the Lord stands afar off from him. He is in a state of condemnation, and feels it.

3. But this bold expression, this powerful and energetic plea, evidently implies

1. That the Lord hath created a thirst in the soul of the complainant, which none but himself can satisfy; hence he cries – Why shouldest thou O precious Jesus! win my heart over to thyself by a display of thy charms, and not satisfy me with the joy of thy salvation? Why should my soul be deserted of one that is endeared to me by all that love, mercy, pity, and tenderness indispensably necessary for my salvation and eternal happiness? “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makes thy flock to rest at noon: For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” (Sol. Songs. 1:7)

2. That as the Lord has promised to be with his people, and to afford them his divine presence: the deserted soul has a plea upon *substantial* ground: Hast thou not said, O my God, “Fear thou not: for I am with thee” (Isa. 41:10). And shall thy promise fail for evermore! – shall my faith, hope, and confidence in thy loving kindness and almighty arm, be for ever cut off, and prove abortive, to the confusion of my soul, the dishonor of thy name, and the triumph of my enemies. – Behold my trouble, pity my complaint. Why standest thou afar off in this day of calamity? Why should the God of love thus deal with his own adopted and redeemed children, with whom he is in covenant for ever?

Various are the reasons suggested by Satan, and forged by unbelief, why God does hide his face from his people; some of which are as follows:

1. Because of some *surprising sin*, which you have *long* groaned under, or perhaps *recently* discovered in your carnal heart! But surely, O thou afflicted soul, when you give yourself time to reflect, you must see that such conclusion is totally inconsistent with the whole plan of salvation by grace: Is not mercy the Divine delight? Is it not the glory of the Lord to exalt the glory of his grace, in the pardon of sin? And does he not pardon like a God? Is it not the office of Christ to *save* sinners. He came not to call, to invite the righteous, but *sinners*; and for the comfort and encouragement of all such, Does not Paul call himself the chiefest of sinners, at the same time that he triumphs in the *love of God*, and declares himself interested in Christ?

2. The enemy operating upon the self-righteousness of your proud nature, would persuade you, that God hideth his face from you *in anger*. But I would ask, Was not his anger due to us on account of sin, entirely exhausted upon Christ, when he smote him with the rod of his wrath? How then can his wrath burn hot against you. Your refuge is Jesus, with whom the Lord is well pleased for his *righteousness* sake. – He loves you in his dear Son, and cannot know the shadow of a turn.

3. Satan and unbelief would persuade you, that you have not the enjoyment of his presence, because he has *forgotten you*. But how kindly does he answer this himself: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb: yea, they may forget, yet will I not *forget thee*, etc.”

But he has suspended its divine influence in our souls.

1. To humble us – to stab our Arminian pride, and to stop our boasting mouths, that we may acknowledge Jesus to be all in all.

2. That we may cry more earnestly unto him in prayer, and know that he hears and answers not for *our sake*, but for his *own sake*.

3. Because he loves us too well to suffer any rival in our affections, and therefore, he thus chastens us in love, that we may, by his absence, know more of his worth and value.

And, lastly, that his presence may be the sweeter, when he shall rise and shine upon our souls: and that he may so shine on you, is the fervent and daily prayer of

Your truly affectionate,
W.W.H.

Letter XV.

To the Church of Christ now assembling at Hephzibah Chapel, Wood Street.

Plymouth Dock, Nov. 29, 1808.

Dearly beloved in Christ,

It is our unspeakable happiness to know the truth for ourselves: and so to know it, as to love it, and to engage in its defence with earnestness and ardor of soul. And when the fire of that divine love, which burnt so warmly in the very bones of Jeremiah, inspires us with high and dignified views of our exalted Redeemer, who is *the Truth* as well as the way and the life, we not only step forward warmly to defend the truth, but esteem it a distinguishing privilege to be called in Divine Providence, to make the greatest sacrifices in its promotion. – In my separation from you, I have much to sacrifice, not temporally, but *spiritually*; nevertheless, as it is evidently in defence of God’s truth, in this place, I cheerfully yield, and thankfully endure the cross. You will now, most likely ask, what I have to sacrifice in this separation from you as a church. I reply, *much, very much*; and to make it evident to you, I will appeal to your own feelings for *demonstration*. I have encouraged the most unshaken persuasion, that you entertain the highest opinion of my sincerity and friendship; and hold me in the highest esteem as your minister, who prefers you above all other churches: and I hope, that my conduct toward you, will always demonstrate, that you are neither deceived in that opinion, nor *lavish* in your esteem: -- Love between us, I am persuaded is proportionately reciprocal; and will ever meet the most satisfactory return – and I do sincerely hope, that, to the *remotest years of my life*, I shall labor among you, while the blessing and presence of our altogether lovely Jesus, shall make our communion and fellowship divinely sweet and mingle our cup with *many mercy drops* from the everlasting hills of his undeclining love!

This being the case – having for a long time tasted of these heavenly sweets together – I say with confidence, that the *demonstration* of what I now sacrifice, by this separation, you can clearly read in your own *feelings*.

Have you not that esteem for my ministry, which leads you not only to consider, but to feel my absence *a loss*? – this you have *sacrificed* with an hope of my being useful in this place, to the dear children of God. And is not this sacrifice *mutual*. Have I not the

same unpleasant *sensation*, in being at a distance from you, and in being deprived of your constant attendance on my ministry. For though the people attend here in crowds, and hear with the greatest attention, they cannot be so dear to me, as my own church; with whom I am familiarly acquainted! But let us lose sight of ourselves, and enter upon a more pleasant and sublime subject – only, just permit me to say, that *I look forward with anticipated pleasure to the time*, when I hope the Lord will return me unto you, like a *giant*, refreshed with new win, in the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel of Peace. To be the plague of *Pharisees*, while I am the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts to his own redeemed children.

Brethren, we are inseparably united in our living *Head*, whose presence makes my heaven here, while it fills you with unspeakable joy at so great a distance from me. He is confined to no place; for heaven and earth are filled with the Majesty of his glory! O how sweet it is to have the Spirit's witness within that we are one with *Jesus!*

1st. By a union of *everlasting love*. Loved *in him*, and in love given to him, in the gracious covenant, before the commencement of time! This is a truth *spurned* with contempt by the advocates of *free-will*; and well it may; for how does it sap the very foundation of their hope, founded on religious duties and performances! It makes man, they will say, *nothing* but a mere *machine*. Ah! this is the bitter sting to *self-righteous pride!* It makes man *nothing*, and that they cannot bear! – But, O! how humiliating to the child of God! How consolatory to a poor helpless sinner! How encouraging to the soul who seeks Jesus! And how supporting to all the dear children of the **Most High**, who are variously and often, tried and afflicted – by sin, unbelief, coldness, and hardness of heart – spiritual desertion, persecution, and numerous outward *trials* – How peculiarly supporting and animating to them, is the glorious consideration of *their everlasting love* union to Jesus! because they know that none of their trials, however grievous, can separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Oh! how delightful to reflect upon the noble and affectionate language of a precious Savior; who, in the most pathetic address ever offered to heaven, pleads in your behalf and mine, by reminding *his* father, and *our* Father of this ancient love-union to *Him*, in the following energetic language – language clothed with authority peculiar to the *Prince of Peace*: “*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved Me.*” This is the support and rejoicing of my *unworthy*, thrice *unworthy soul*; this melts me and humbles me – This makes my heart burn within me with love to my *own Redeemer*, in whom we are at all times, and for ever complete! I have but just entered upon the delightful subject of our union to Christ — but break off through extreme pain of *the head*.

Yours, etc.

W.W.H.

Letter XVI.

To my own beloved Church..

Dock, Wednesday, Dec. 7, 1808.

Dearly beloved in Christ,

AS the time approaches for my return, I feel the greater anxiety to address you upon those substantial and interesting subjects, which are the principal comfort of my life, the foundation of my hope, and the source of my continual rejoicing: indeed all that variety of spiritual subjects, with which the word of God furnishes us, and which it is our highest pleasure, and most permanent interest to discuss, examine, and feel substantiated in our experience, is comprised in this, *the everlasting Love of our Covenant Father, by which we are everlastingly and inseparably one in Christ!* This is all my salvation and all my desire. The publication of this at Dock hath gladdened and comforted my own soul, and proved a source of consolation to many of God's dear children here; while it has made some of the *diviners mad*, and produced the clamorous and malicious vociferation against me, of "**Antinomian! Antinomian!**" But you know what it is to rejoice that the Lord has honored us with this *Christian badge*, and counted us worthy to suffer reproach for his name-sake. I am, indeed, a wonder to myself.

O how happy have I been in publicly declaring, and *insisting* upon, the **free and amazing** love of my *immutable Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts!* Last night (being Tuesday) I preached as usual to a *crowd* of the most attentive hearers I ever spoke to in the Lord's name; and though I was an hour and thirty-five minutes in my sermon, their attention was kept up to the last minute: Shall the truth be preached in vain? No, my dear Sirs! I am persuaded the Lord is doing a great work here by the instrumentality of your *own affectionate minister*; which, I am confident, must be a considerable cause for *your* rejoicing, as well as *mine*.

Last night I felt my soul amazingly drawn out with love to precious souls, and warmed with holy zeal for the glory of Christ; at the same time that I was roused with indignation against the hypocrisy, formality, false doctrines, and *pretended* outside holiness of the *parsons* and *professors* of this dark and gloomy day! O what a mercy to be kept faithful! Bless and praise the Lord on my behalf! *Who*, and *what* am I, that he should thus warm and comfort my heart: an heart that is often frozen to ice, by the nipping destructive frost of carnality, worldliness, and vanity of thought and desire! But "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us!" *It is all of grace! It is all of grace!* Surely I have more reason to extol the riches of God's *free* and *unsearchable* grace, than any other sinner, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Give him all the glory! Suffer none to rob him of the glory due, *everlastingly due* to his truly precious name; without giving them a severe reprimand, by the strongest expressions of indignation! This, in the strength of Christ, is my *resolve*: for we never can speak loud enough in the defense, and in the immortal praise of Him, who hath loved us, and redeemed us with his own blood!

I shall now resume the subject I commenced in my last, with peculiar pleasure, flowing from a persuasion that it will be truly gratifying to you; and with an encouraging hope and confidence, that the Lord will accompany it with his great and effectual blessing! Union to our glorious Covenant Head is a subject of the greatest possible sublimity, at the same time that it is clothed with that scriptural simplicity, which renders it not only intelligible, but *sweet* and *delightful*, to the well-instructed child of God. I proceed, then to show from the word of God, that this union is an everlastingly *representative union*: by which I wish you clearly to understand, for your comfort, that the Lord Jesus Christ *represented* his people from everlasting, as the Head of a complete body, given to him, in covenant, by the Father, and in due time completely *redeemed*, that is, *bought back* from the bondage of sin and Satan, by his atoning blood!

All their persons were well known, and all their names stood engraven upon his heart, before the foundation of the world: as he himself, under the character of wisdom, has expressed it (Prov. 8:22-23), “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up (or rather anointed) from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was.” Christ, the power of God and the *wisdom* of God, from everlasting, before the works of the creation, was anointed *Head* of his people: and as he is Infinite Wisdom, must be the only wise God over all, blessed for ever. The delight of the Father, and the object of his *supremest love*; and as his people were then all *in him*, were loved with the same love; as that delightful passage proves, which you have often heard me quote (John 17:23), “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” Loved in Christ, and *now represented* by him on the heavenly throne, where he represented us from everlasting! O sweet thought! Source of ecstatic triumph over *sin* and *hell*! Our salvation was determined on, and mansions of glory secured to us, without a possibility of failure, before we had a being! We have not then, my beloved friends! To enquire what we shall **do to be saved**, but to rejoice that we **are** saved, and in the council of God, being *one* with our *Royal Representative*, were saved before his works of old! All that remains now, is to receive the Spirit’s witness, that we are interested in this *ancient* salvation, and then our language will be, “What shall we render unto the Lord, for the sovereignty, *freeness*, and eternity of his love and grace, abounding to us the chief of sinners! And to rejoice in our *Great High Priest*, who bears the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of Judgment, upon his heart, in the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually (Exod. 28:29).

But some of you, who may be walking in *darkness*, and *weak in faith*, may be ready to ask, What is the *Spirit’s witness*, which he bears in the soul of a vile sinner, that he belongs to Christ? I answer, Is not this the Spirit’s *evidence* and *work*, in our hearts: That *Christ is precious*? Is not this the faith of the operation of God? For, to you that **believe** he is precious. Precious to *save*? But if you did not feel yourselves *lost*, he could not be precious in this endearing and *exalted character*: Precious in his *cleansing* blood, because we are *filthy* – precious to justify, because we are *self-condemned*: precious to quicken and give life; because, *in ourselves*, we are *dead and buried* in the ruins of the fall: *Precious* in his *person*, because he is arrayed in *human flesh*, our *near kinsman*, and

yet the *eternal God!* Precious in his promises, because they are *absolute, unconditional,* and made only to the *poor, vile, helpless sinner;* and are all *yea* and *amen* to his glory. Precious in his *word* and *worship;* because the *former* contains nothing but *free-grace* to the unworthy; and the *latter, unencumbered with duties,* is constituted with gracious *privileges,* and (when the Lord is with us) is a *service of perfect freedom!*

Thus I might go on – but I will conclude with saying, that he is **altogether precious** and lovely! May he be increasingly so to our souls! With the pleasing expectation of soon addressing you verbally.

I am, my dear friends,

Yours affectionately,

W.W.H.