

ANNE DUTTAN'S LETTERS ON SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS

by Anne Dutton

A collection of spiritual letters by Anne Dutton, the 18th-century English Baptist writer whose extensive correspondence provided counsel, encouragement, and theological instruction to believers including George Whitefield.

81 Chapters

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01 - This Monster, Pride - This Hellish Sin

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir, As pride is a sin that abides and works in all Christians in this world, let us all then, as the servants of Christ, trusting in Him—our victorious, sin-pardoning, sin-subduing and grace-giving Master—watch and oppose the enemy whenever attacked fiercely.

1. The sin of pride is the child of unbelief. Pride springs from a disbelief of God to be what He is, in His immense and essential glory, in His infinite, underived, all-comprehending, incomprehensible self-sufficiency; and from a vain conceit of the creature's being that which indeed it is not—that the creature is something independent of God. Whereas, without His all-supporting and all-supplying hand, it would soon sink into its first nothing, and be, as in and of itself it is, a mere vacuity, less than nothing, and vanity.

2. This sin of pride which turned myriads of angels of light into legions of black devils, and that for this they were hurled down from heaven to the bottomless pit of hell.

3. Pride was the sin which cast down Adam, and in him all his posterity, even to the last, from the height of created, natural, and princely excellency, into an unsearchable depth of spiritual slavery, and the just desert of eternal misery.

4. Pride is a sin by which the whole law of God, in each of its ten commandments, is broken.

5. This sin of pride, as it springs from gospel-unbelief, is directly opposite to the gospel of Christ. Pride rejects the Savior, in whole or in part, and would rival it, in extreme vanity, with the Lord of glory. Pride would rob the Savior of His invaluable crown, who died in the sinner's room, to raise him from death to that eternal life of a seat with Him of His high and everlasting throne. Yes, pride is directly contrary to the great design of God the Father in the gospel, which is, to make Himself an everlasting name, to display the exceeding riches of His free grace, in the whole and in every part of a sinner's salvation and bliss, to the eternal praise of His own glory. But pride—horrid pride—will not endure that the Lord should have the entire glory of His saving grace, of His free, rich, boundless grace, but sets up wretched self in Jehovah's place, to nullify, as much as in it lies, the sinner-saving, the God-glorifying, project of eternity! Pride sets up the creature as a co-partner with the Creator; a creature of time, a mere nothing, upon a level with the eternal I AM! Yes, pride excludes God—the everlasting God—and takes to a man, Jehovah's essential, eternal throne, and in the height of insolence, says, "I AM! And there is none besides me."

6. Pride renders the creature, man, though new-created in Christ, after the image of His purity, and as such, bearing upon him a fresh impress of divine glory, the most unlike to the Holy Jesus, who, by way of eminence, and to an all-surpassing excellence, was meek and lowly!

7. Pride makes a member of Christ to bear upon him the horrid image of the devil! Nothing gives such a hellish visage to a spirit of heavenly extraction as the sin of pride, the spawn of the old serpent, the infernal abomination.

8. This sin of pride, the first-born of unbelief, as springing from it, and living in it as a branch from and in the life of the root, is a pregnant monster that contains in itself, and is fertile to bring forth, a fullness of all sin.

9. Nothing like the sin of pride unfits us for divine service. It renders us incapable, so far as it prevails, of any acceptable service either to God or man.

10. That this sin of Pride, dragon-like, stands ready with open mouth to devour every heavenly birth as soon as it is brought forth. And it would destroy effectively all the saints' fruits which they by faith bring forth unto God by Christ, as soon as they appear, were they not caught up instantly by as Almighty hand unto God upon the throne of grace for security to His and His people's joy and glory.

11. Pride is that vile abomination which the Lord hates, and which He will not allow in those whom He loves. This sin of pride, if the heart is not humbled for it deeply, and if not repented sincerely, will bring down upon the children of God His fatherly chastisements severely.

12. This sin of pride is a master-thief, as it robs God of that honor which would be given Him by His people if humble, and of that joy which He takes in their humility. Pride also robs believers of their present joy and comfort.

13. Pride is a sin that militates directly against the whole of divine glory as displayed and ascribed. It turns away its lofty eye from that illustrious display of the glory of God the Father in election, of God the Son in redemption, and of God the Holy Spirit in effectual calling, and thwarts thereby, as far as it may, the great design of the God of glory, which in and by this bright display is to make us meek and lowly that we might be happy here and hereafter in being holy. Pride will not allow us to give unto the Lord in any of these respects the glory due unto His name. It robs God as well as His people, and in robbing them it aims at Him. This horrid sin of pride will make the Lord's friends to behave as his enemies, yes, to fight against Him with His own mercies, and even with His freest, richest mercies, to act the greatest hostilities. This monster, pride—this hellish sin—will excite a man to render hatred to God for His greatest love, to wound His honor, to pierce His heart, to stab to death His infinite life, by those choicest favors which it turns into the keenest daggers, which, in his immense bounty, he bestows upon the most unworthy, and with which he crowns, unto life and immortal glory, the most rebellious subjects, who, for renewed acts of enmity, deserve to die continually, and eternally.

14. Pride is such an abominable sin that no tongue or pen can express a thousandth part of its aggravated guilt. None but the Lord Jehovah, in His understanding infinity, can search the immense depth of this great iniquity.

Then, if pride is so great a sin, and has in it such a fullness of malignity against God and man, no wonder that the people of God are tempted to it by Satan, who hates God, who hates us. Hence we may learn to admire the infinite wisdom and love of God, which devised and provided a way, by and through the death of His only Son, to save His people from this abominable sin—to save them from its dominion here, by grace—and from its very being hereafter in glory.

We hence admire the invincible strength of Jehovah's favor, in that He casts not away His chosen servants from their appointed services, though God-provoking pride makes its appearance in their

best performances. We are forever amazed at that immeasurable grace which forgives this great iniquity, and continues to love us freely, notwithstanding for the Lord's choicest mercy we return enmity!

Hence we learn the infinite merit of the Redeemer's blood which atoned for this sin of an infinite guilt, and reconciled such 'children of pride', to an infinitely holy God, and which cleanses us continually from the filthy stains of this deep-dyed iniquity. And let endless wonder strike our hearts unto rising praises, and eternal ages, at and for the omnipotent grace of the Holy Spirit—Who has begun in us pride's destruction, and will perform it to our soul's perfection, and full and everlasting joy and glory.

If pride is such a great iniquity, let us . . . bewail it bitterly; humble ourselves before God, on account of it, deeply; wash in the fountain set open, instantly; and entreat forgiving and subduing grace constantly.

Again, if pride is such an abominable sin, let us set ourselves against it with all our might, or rather, to oppose and destroy it, let us be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. And since we cannot serve God as we would and should in this world, while this subtle, potent sin works within us, let us long for the nobler joys of the saints in glory; where by pride, nor by any other sin, we shall dishonor, wound, nor grieve our great and good God, the God of grace and love, no more forever. The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush be with you, and prosper you exceedingly, until time fades into eternal glory.

02 - His Sovereign Love

His sovereign love!

Dear Sir,

I rejoice that the Lord has often refreshed your soul with that great word (Jeremiah 31:3), "Yes! I have loved you with an everlasting love! therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you."

These words were spoken by the Lord to His Church and people of old, are spoken by Him unto His people now, and unto all who shall be called by grace unto the end of time. And concerning them all, even all His chosen who have been, are, or shall be gathered in to Christ from the beginning of the world to the end of it, as a collective body, and unto every one of them individually, the Lord says, "Yes! I have loved you with an everlasting love! therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." When the Lord (Jeremiah 31:2) had put His people in mind of the grace which they found in the wilderness, when, though chastised they were not utterly destroyed, as their sins had deserved—the Church, taken with that wonderful grace which was displayed in the wilderness in sparing and preserving such a God-provoking people, who deserved to have been cut off utterly, and not to have had the promise fulfilled gloriously in the land of Canaan, she begins, and says (Jeremiah 31:3), "The Lord has appeared of old unto me," that is, in the wilderness. "Oh," as if she should say, "what miracles of grace did the Lord work for me in the wilderness!"

Upon which the Lord speaks, and leads her to the origin, source, and fountain of grace in His own heart, from whence that glorious flow sprang through His hand which so greatly took her mind—"Yes," says the Lord, "you say truly, I did appear unto you of old gloriously—but behold, my love to you was older than that date! I have loved you with an everlasting love—with a love of eternity, that had its being in my heart towards you before time commenced—and therefore it was that I drew you thus with loving-kindness in the wilderness, and have drawn you likewise into the land of rest."

"Yes," says the Lord, "look forward also unto all that future bliss which I will cause you to possess—not for a day or a time only, but through all time—and unto all eternity. And behold it all secured for you, to flow down upon you in my heart-love to you—for I have loved you with an everlasting love—with a love that will last towards you through all the successive ages of time, and to a never-ending eternity. I have loved you, and therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you—I do love you, and I will love you, and with loving-kindness will I draw you. The infinite fountain, the immense ocean of My love, shall still flow down upon you in copious streams of loving-kindness, by which I will still allure you and draw you, until I have drawn you up to and into Myself, for a full enjoyment of infinite love unto bliss unknown and ages without end—unto the heights of glory—in and to a vast eternity!"

If God's love to His people was an everlasting love as it respects eternity past, it must needs be a free love, in that it was fixed upon His chosen in Christ before they had done good or evil—yes,

even before in God's eternal mind they were beheld as having any goodness in them, for there could be no goodness in any creature but what God resolved to give it from Himself—the infinite ocean of goodness. And His resolving to bestow goodness, special goodness, or special grace, upon one creature and not another, was from His sovereign love to one creature—when He passed by, or did not so love another, according to the good pleasure of His will; not because God's people were better than others, did the Lord set His love upon them and choose them, but because the Lord loved them. He loved them because He would love them, because He would be gracious unto whom He would be gracious, and show mercy on whom He would show mercy.

Oh, how silent would all flesh be before infinite Sovereignty, and how should they adore sovereign free love that are the happy objects of it! And as God's love to His people was free, so it was also distinguishing—I have loved you, says the Lord—and not others—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," though Esau was Jacob's brother. Oh, the distinguishing nature of God's everlasting love when He chose a remnant in His dear Son unto eternal life and glory with Him—and left the rest in a state of fallen creatureship—to enjoy a perfection of natural life for a short time only in Eden's bliss, in their first father Adam; when He appointed His chosen to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ as fore-viewed sinners, and appointed the rest unto wrath righteously for their sins.

Oh, who shall reply against the sovereign Lord of all? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And what manner of love is this, that resolved to display the riches of its glory upon thousands of people—an innumerable company though a determinate number—in raising them to eternal glory, when all were equally sunk in the fall of Adam, and by their own sins into the desert of death, in eternal misery? Sovereign love, indeed! And as great as it was sovereign—it was great love that God loved His chosen with, even when dead in sins. And how is its greatness displayed in the great gift of His Son to death for their life, and the gift of the Spirit to them for their quickening!

Again, as God's love is an everlasting love with respect to eternity to come—it appears in this to be an unchangeable love. What is eternal must, with respect to that infinite duration, be unchangeable. And through the whole unbounded space, from eternity through time and to eternity—God's love to His people is immutable according to its own infinity and undiminishable glory—from the immutability of His nature whose name is, I AM THAT I AM!—who is the Lord that changes not.

Oh, dear Sir, God's everlasting love is a free, sovereign, distinguishing, great, and unchangeable love!

It is an inseparable love. The happy objects of it can never, never be separated from it! Neither death nor life, heights nor depths, things present nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate those it fixed upon from the love of God! The love of God to His people is a bottomless, boundless, endless ocean, that swallows up their innumerable and mountainous sins in its infinite depths—that overflows all their great provocations, their vilest ingratitude, their utmost unworthiness—and that ever flows in its triumphant strength, and according to its infinite riches, to the full supply of all their necessities, until it has loved its beloved objects into its own image according to their creature-measure; until it has loved all sin out of them, and all grace into them; until it has freed from all death and misery, and raised them into itself as the element of their life; and then it will be to them, as vessels of mercy, an infinite ocean of joy and glory, where they shall

live, and bathe, and dive to the praise of the glory of infinite love to the endless ages of a blessed eternity! But oh, neither the tongues of men nor angels can express, much less the lisping of a babe set forth, the half—the thousandth part—of the infinite glories of God's everlasting love! Happy, thrice happy, for time and for eternity, are those blessed souls who are savingly interested in this everlasting love of God; who do and shall enjoy it to their ineffable and endless bliss, although a thousandth part of the glories of infinite love can never be expressed. But who, O! who are those who are the OBJECTS of God's love—the darlings of God's heart, whom He has loved and will delight to love, and to love as God from henceforth and forever? They are all those who are enabled to believe in Jesus— who look, who come, who bow to Christ as the anointed Savior for their own salvation; who desire Christ above all things for their portion, and to give up themselves to the Lord, to be saved in Him with an everlasting salvation, to the praise of the glory of His grace forever. For this everlasting love of God, this free, distinguishing, great, unchangeable and inseparable love of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him it was fixed upon the happy objects of it, and in Him it is and shall be enjoyed by them. Not a single one, who is in Christ by faith, who runs in Him, the city of refuge, for its deliverance from the wrath to come—but is an object of God's love, but has an entire and eternal saving interest in God's everlasting love, and shall have the present and everlasting enjoyment thereof, to his present spiritual life in grace, and to his eternal life in glory. And are you, brother, one of them that believe in Jesus? Are you one of those who desire Him above all things for your portion? Do you run into Christ for refuge from the wrath to come? And do you desire to be saved in the Lord to His present and eternal praise? It is you, you individually, who is an object of God's love. It is you as really as if He had loved none but you! It is you who has an entire and eternal interest in God's everlasting love! Would you give a thousand worlds if you had them, to be assured of your interest in God's unchangeable love? Are you thus athirst for that river, that fountain, that ocean of the water of life? Though you have not a thousand worlds, no, nor one mite of worthiness to give for the manifestation of God's love—Christ Jesus the Lord will give you of this fountain of the water of life freely. Oh, freely! though you may see yourself to be the most unworthy—though your sins and fears are innumerable—though you have done as evil things as you could against the Lord—and though you have dealt treacherously, and are bent to backsliding from Him daily—the Lord, your infinite Lover, will give you His love freely! He will satisfy your soul abundantly in this life with joy—and then—eternal glory! You who are athirst for the love of God, you shall not die for lack of it. No, brother, your soul is formed for love, and made thirsty in order to be filled, and with all the fullness of God, in love, shall you be delighted and eternally satisfied! In love, then, to the God of love, doubt His love no more. Believe His love, and give up yourself to Him in love, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

03 - We Live in a World of Changes!

We live in a world of changes!

Dear Sir,

We live in a world of changes! The dispensations of God toward us alter—the manifestations of His love vary—the kindness of friends ebbs and flows—and our love to God and to each other varies like the changing light. But this, oh this, is our unspeakable privilege—and the spring of our bliss ineffable and eternal—the love of God to us changes not! The love of God's heart towards us is as unchangeable as His great Being, whose name is I AM—and is as invariable as that glorious Person through whom it flows, who is yesterday, today, and forever the same. The designs of Jehovah's kindness, the thoughts of His heart concerning us, stand fast unto all generations; and by all our earthly-changes He ushers in upon us some new fruit of His eternal unchanging love—to refresh our pilgrim-souls in this desert land, and to prepare us for our promised rest in the unchanging bliss of blessed eternity.

Darkness and distance attend the sons of God in the present state, but our approaching inheritance lies in light, in the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb—where unfading joys will be new and full unto endless days! O blessed state, when we shall be as happy, as holy—as we desire to be! A few more trials—and we shall be as gold that is seven times refined! A little more faith—and patience, and our race will be run and the crown won! And, glory to our three-one God! all needful grace to enable us to hold out unto endless glory is, and shall be given us. Ah, were our graces left to their own strength, and to our management, they would soon fly in pieces and be no more. But blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord, and whose new-created soul is under Jehovah's care, who works in saints both to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and will perfect that which concerns them, and not forsake the work of His own hands.

I commit you to Him on whom you have believed, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy!

04 - No Step in Your Thorny Path

No step of your thorny path

Dear Sir,

I rejoice to see your faith in the unchangeable love of our three-one God, and your humility under its bright display. But why, my dear Sir, should you say, "I am discouraged because of the difficulty of the way?" You know the Lord led Israel of old "by a right way" through the wilderness, in all their forward and backward traces—"to a city of habitation." And thus He leads you through this world's wilderness, by a right way, to your eternal rest—by that very way which infinite wisdom devised, which infinite goodness ordained to be the path in which you were to walk, as your direct way to eternal glory—as that which should be most for God's praise and your salvation-bliss. And when once you reach the land of promise, and have the advantage of that higher ground, you shall remember all the way by which the Lord led you through the wilderness, and see it to have been a right way, and that no step of your thorny path could have been better than it was. You shall then see, to your endless joy, what wonders of infinite grace have been wrought for you—in preserving and increasing your spiritual life amid innumerable deaths—and forever adore the conduct of wise grace that brought you safe to the heights of glory—through such a dark and intricate maze—from the depths of earthly encumbrance. And until you are blessed with sight, you must live by faith. No reason is there for discouragement, since through the wilderness you have such a glorious Guide! Your dear Lord Jesus is given to be your companion through the world's tribulation—you have His arm to lean on—and His bosom to rest in, under all your weakness, and in all your disconsolation. If your way be rough—your shoes should be iron or brass; if you are surrounded with dangers—the eternal God is your refuge; if you are ready to faint under pressing weights—underneath are the everlasting arms for your support. And He who has been the God of your youth will not forsake you in old age. You know what He says, "And unto your old age, I am He; and unto grey hairs will I carry you—I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Then, Sir, you shall never quite tire, because you travel in omnipotent strength. So long as the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary—who gives power to the faint, and increases strength unto those who have no might—so long shall you renew your strength, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint—until He has brought you unto Himself! You may set up your Ebenezer, and say, "hitherto has the Lord helped." And you know His faithful promise, "I will never, never, never leave you, nor forsake you!" When all creatures and things fail you, yes, when your own strength and heart fail you—"God is the strength of your heart, and your portion forever." And what can you desire more? Therefore, yield not to discouragement, but lean on a God all-sufficient. For He says, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you; neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you." And in His kindness, in the covenant of His peace, you have all that your soul can want or wish. Behave, then, in faith as an heir of God, and leave it to them to be discouraged, who have no interest in His infinitely free, rich, and super-abounding grace—in immutable, eternal grace! For this grace is and will be the source of all

your earthly-felicity and immortal glory.

I wish you the rich consolations of the Holy Spirit while you abide in any distress, until you are called to "enter into the joy of your Lord," where sin and sorrow shall have no place!

05 - The Furnace of Affliction

The furnace of affliction My Dear Sister in Christ, As it is the pleasure of your heavenly Father still to continue you in the furnace of affliction, do not think the time long; this momentary affliction is to prepare you for glory of an endless duration. Therefore, "let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing," in the exercise of your graces to the completion of your filial obedience, which will be to God's eternal praise and your eternal bliss. Suffering is the last work of a Christian. Our dear Lord, after a life of complete active obedience, was to drink the deep cup of His sufferings and to be obedient even unto death, and this was His direct way to His all-transcendent glory. And the members must be conformed to their Head in sufferings as well as glory, and in sufferings for the advance of their glory. And "if we suffer with Him (in a meek, patient, Christ-like spirit), we shall also be glorified together."

Remember your afflictions as dreams which pass away—that are here one moment and gone the next; and while they last, oh, the sweet, the strong supports of the everlasting arms! What can we not do and endure through Christ, who strengthens us! Your Beloved with you in everything, you need fear nothing. Glory in Him, and in His promised grace—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you"—for it is made in infinite faithfulness, and will be productive of earthly-supplies in your greatest necessities, of full joys, of eternal glories. Your afflictions are all measured out—in kind, degree, and duration—by infinite grace—and not one more shall you taste than what shall be for God's praise and your bliss! Therefore, give up yourself with the sweetest resignation to your all-wise, all-gracious Father's dealings—for all shall work to your salvation. Endure the cross—and look to the crown! The former is light and short, the latter an ineffable, eternal weight. Who would not die to see the Lord in His eternal glory? Who would not die to be free from sin's misery? Who would not die that mortality might put on immortality? And oh, my dear sister, when death dissolves the union between soul and body, your union to Christ in both your constituent parts shall remain unbroken to a blessed eternity. Your body shall sweetly sleep in Jesus until He shall swallow up death in victory, and fashion it like unto His glorious body. And your spirit, as soon as ever separate, being made perfect, shall be admitted instantly into glory, into a perfect love-union and communion with your infinite Lover—to unknown felicity forever! "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed you—and lead you unto living fountains of waters—and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes." No more sorrow, pain, nor death then—these, as former things, will be all passed away, when once you are blessed with that fullness of joy, that perfect ease, that immortal life which awaits you in eternal glory. And then a reflection on all your grieving thorny way through the wilderness will make your pleasures rise in endless praise on the flowery plain of Immanuel's land—the Canaan of full and eternal bliss!

Meantime, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." I commit you to His heart and arms!

06 - A Sweet Soft Bosom to Rest Our Weary Heads

A sweet soft bosom to rest our weary heads

Dear Sir,

It gave me pleasure to hear from you, but I am sensibly touched with grief for your ill state of health. May the Lord support you under the trial, increase your graces in the furnace, and bring you thence with advantage.

It is our unspeakable privilege—that in all our afflictions our dear Lord Jesus is afflicted. Our best Friend, our sympathizing Friend at God's right hand—has an inexpressible fellow-feeling with us in all our miseries of soul and body. When His members on earth are sick, the Head in heaven accounts the sickness His own—"I was sick." What wondrous grace is this! It is a bright display—of the Savior's goodness—of His tender mercy—of His love which passes knowledge. We have in the love of Christ a sweet soft bosom to rest our weary heads—an open ear to all our requests—a flowing heart to relieve us in straits—and an almighty hand to supply all our needs. No indulgent father—no compassionate mother—nor countless numbers of them, were all their affections united in one person, has or could have a thousandth part of that sympathy with a beloved child, when sick—which Jesus has with us, His sick children. Yes, with us—though rebellious children. For we are unto Him dear, ineffably dear children—from an infinity of tender mercy—from an all-endearing love—that has in it neither bottom, bound, nor end! And what a joy in grief may it be to us, that all our afflictions—for kind and degree—are measured out to us and continued upon us, by our infinite Lover's hand! Wise is our compassionate Father's love—and His medicine, to promote our health, when He sees it best for us Himself will give unto us. Not an ingredient in our bitterest potion, but is put into it by wise love—to make it just fit to work for our salvation. Our Father, as our physician, not only prepares and gives our medicine—but His own hand also has the whole direction of its operation, to answer effectually all His wise and gracious ends designed thereby. And as He who afflicts us is afflicted with us—measures our afflictions to us—and over-rules them for us—so His love-sympathy with us in the best time and way will bring all salvation to us. He will say of us, "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my affections are troubled of him; I will surely have mercy upon him." Be free then, dear Sir, with the bosom of your heavenly Father; you shall be no more bold than welcome. The grace of your sympathizing Lord is boundless! You can never come too often to His bosom, which is always open—yes, the oftener you there flee the more welcome shall you be! Jesus loves you as His own, and will embrace you in love unknown! His sympathy with you in sorrow shall give you joy—His supports under pressures make heaviest burdens light—His management of your crosses bring greatest advantages—and His gracious designs gloriously ends in your salvation—by a light and momentary affliction, unto a weight of glory of eternal duration.

Great grace be with you.

07 - Your Father's Love-Tokens!

Your Father's love-tokens!

Dear Madam,

Though the Lord has tried you for many months of afflictions, think it not strange, since you are put among God's children, that you have had and must have your own part of afflictions—they are, they shall be, your Father's love-tokens! Satan and unbelief often misrepresent God to His tried children. "If God was your Friend, your Father," say they, "if He loved you, He would not allow such grievous things to befall you—He takes no notice of you—He turns a deaf ear to your prayers—and who among God's children are so greatly afflicted as you are? Do not these things show that you have been deceived—that you are not among the number of God's children—that you have no saving interest in His special favor—but He lays these heavy strokes upon you in wrathful displeasure." And especially do they urge these things upon God's tried children from that sin which they sadly find to work in them under trying dispensations. And if they can but get God's children to hearken to them, these enemies gain their end upon them—to weaken their faith, to dampen their love, to slay their meekness and patience, and to cause them to murmur and fret at afflicting providence.

It is wisdom, then, in God's children, instantly to cry unto Him for wisdom and strength to discern and resist these enemies in their lying voice, upon the first hearing of it; for this we may be very certain of, "that whatever comes from God leads to Him—and whatever excites us to depart from Him as the God of all grace—is from unbelief and Satan." Nothing like faith in God's love to us, as His dear children in Christ—strengthens our spirits to endure afflictions patiently to His glory and our joy. And therefore, says the apostle Paul, "whom the Lord loves, He chastens." He proposes the 'love of God in chastening' as the ground of a believer's faith, for his strength in patient suffering. And says James, "The trying of your faith works patience." If faith has got a thwart in the fight, God will come in with His auxiliary aid for the help of His child, and give his faith renewed strength; and then, instantly, his tried faith being made to stand upright in God and for Him, after its thwarting and in its trial, the child of faith is patience. Says faith—"God's love is in the sharpest stroke!" Then says patience—"I will endure it until love shall bring joyous fruit out of present grief." And lest patience should faint when trials are great and of long continuance, the apostle adds, "Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." It is as if he should say—You are to be made perfect in very grace, and every perfected grace to redound to your eternal glory—therefore patiently endure the greatest, the longest trial here, that is to fit you for your immortal crown hereafter—that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing—nothing lacking in the exercise of grace—and lacking nothing in your crown of glory!

08 - A Love-Stroke

A love-stroke

Dear Madam,

You thought right that I should pity you, when I knew the cause of the lameness of your hands. For who that loves can forbear the greatest pity to a worthy friend who was used most cruelly? Cruel treatment was this from the creature—but a love-stroke of God your Father! You have hereby seen the wonders of His infinite goodness which He has wrought for you in that support under and deliverance from those many and great distresses which at present are to your wonder, joy and praise, and shall be to the advance of your felicity in eternal glory and to God's honor, unto endless ages!

I think my afflictions are nothing if compared with those which you have passed through. Afflicted in body, from head to foot severely—terrified in soul so exceedingly—brought to the very brink of death and the grave in the former, and, as it were, into the belly of hell in the latter; and yet, everlasting arms underneath you in all this, the consolations of God given to your heart, and great deliverance to your body from its sore distress as an answer to social prayer—how great, how wondrous was the grace! And when a little raised up yourself, to be so soon plunged into distress by the awful affliction of your dear sister, and ever since to be exercised with such various scenes of distresses through which you have been called to pass, and yet maintained in life—in the life of nature and in the life of grace, and favored with the use of your natural and spiritual senses, how bright towards you have been the displays of the Lord's excellent loving-kindness! You may well say, "in deaths often; troubled on every side." But when you shall have come up at last out of all great tribulations—having washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are presented faultless before the throne of God—how sweet, how ineffably sweet, will be your eternal glory-rest! Then you will reflect with the highest pleasure upon all your past sorrows, and in unknown transports of joy and praise forever adore that wise grace which conducted you safely and advantageously through all the terrors and dangers of the wilderness. Most surely, your joy and glory, and God's joy and glory in yours, is to be exceeding great, or you would not have met with such great miseries and griefs in the present state.

I am glad that you long, dear Madam, to devote yourself and your all unto God, and to be of special service to His praise, who has shown towards you such wonders of grace. And let the Lord's past appearances for you, in your great and sore troubles, encourage you to trust in Him for delivering grace, even to the last of your distresses. For He who said unto you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God"—is still the same. And so He will be through all your earthly-necessities, and to an endless eternity. It is His covenant with you to "work marvels." And think, O woman of sorrows, think, and think again—Christ, the tree of life, is cast into all your deaths, and will not He well sweeten these bitter waters. Oh, what is Christ, your Christ? "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily!" He is God in your nature, a Father, a Brother, a Husband, a Friend, that ever lives, and ever loves! For love, in all relations, His is immense and

endless; for life, He is the Lord of it—an immensity, an eternity of life dwells in Him for you, to perpetuate and perfect your life of grace, and to ripen it into the life of glory! Yes, to maintain your unknown felicity to a boundless eternity. And having Him, who is love, who is life, your love and life with you in all your deaths—will not He make every bitter sweet, and swallow up all your deaths in the infinity of His love and life? Yes, verily, He will for you, both in soul and body, swallow up death in victory, instate and maintain you in a glorious immortality to a blessed eternity. And so wondrously will He work for you, that He will bring life, and an increase of it, out of every death that passes over you. Is it not better, infinitely better to have Christ with you as your own Lord Jesus, amid ten thousand deaths, for this small moment of time, who will swallow them all up in perfect victory and eternal glory in the world to come—than to be surrounded with all the outward felicity of the present state, with all the splendors of a worldling's honors and pleasures—those 'glow-worm glories' which will suddenly be no more—and sent away from Christ at last, with a "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire?" May you be enabled to rejoice then in your portion, your soul-sustaining, your soul-satisfying, your life-giving portion, and walk worthy of your portion, by a constant dependence on Him, and a joyful expectance from Him, until you are fully blessed with the complete possession of Him who fills all in all, and will fill you brimful of light and life, of joy and glory, endless and unknown!

Oh, dear Madam, you are straitened in me, a little babe, a little child, who cannot speak; but you are not straitened for immense and eternal bliss in your Jesus. The tongues of angels and archangels, in all their innumerable armies, can never, never tell a thousandth part of His infinite fullness, beauties, and glories! What then can an earth-worm, the least, think or speak of that infinitely glorious Lord? When all is said that can be uttered by the greatest of men, it may be fitly said of their most comprehensive speeches concerning Him, "There was the hiding of His glory!" Yes, when the Lord Himself is set forth in the bright display of His power, it is said, "And there was the hiding of His glory!" What, in the display of it? Yes, with regard to the infinity of it in His own immense and unsearchable essence! But it is enough, Madam, to make you inconceivably blessed, that in Him, this infinite Him, you have an entire and eternal interest. God grant you the joy of this ineffable felicity. I mourn that I can say no more of this vast and endless storehouse of blessings. Confusion covers me that I have thus veiled Him, when I would gladly have given you a glimpse of His glory. God grant you "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" to your unspeakable joy!

09 - Weeping May Endure for a Night

Weeping may endure for a night

Dear Madam,

It is with much pleasure that I read your last, and I was engage to give thanks and praise to the God of all grace for His making my poor letters of any use to your dear soul. Yes, Madam, your benighted soul shall be favored with the light of God's countenance, only wait for it in faith and patience. Your sins are forgiven you; wait awhile, and the Lord will tell you so. He who now in wise love hides His face, will shortly, to your unspeakable joy, break out upon you afresh with superior rays of His infinite and eternal kindness. "Weeping may endure for a night—but joy will comes in the morning. His anger endures for a moment—but in His favor is light." An immensity—an eternity of light remains for you in God's infinite favor—that all-comprehending source of all the various flows of your felicity for time's and eternity's forever! And give your Father leave to choose what channels He please to convey to your beloved soul His inexhaustible, immutable, and eternal kindness—for if for a while His love runs under-ground, out of your sight, it is but in order to its breaking up again, to your more joyful surprise, in a richer exuberance. And beware of thinking, when you do not see love in its flows; that love is not upon the flow towards you; for when love is most hid from your view, that hiding is one of love's flows. That is one of the appointed channels in which love swiftly and gloriously moves; indeed, it is 'veiled love'—but love in a veil is the same love still. And "what you know not now—you shall know hereafter." When the veil is taken off from love's face, you shall see as great a glory in 'hiding love' as in its most smiling countenance—and that both alternately were ordered most wisely for God's highest glory and your greatest felicity.

Oh, could you now believe this and say thus, "Well, the Lord hides His face, but this, even this, is in boundless, endless love to me," how full would be your joy, how abundant your praise, if faith was thus in exercise! Whereas sense, when love veils, loses sight of love in all; it sees no love in the veil, and inclines the heart to fear that love's past shinings were not real, and thereby shuts the mouth of praise awfully, and sinks the soul into grief exceedingly. And were not faith upheld by an omnipotent arm to look and wait for God the Savior, when as such He hides His face from the house of Jacob, through depressions from sense it would fail quite. But, glory to omnipotent grace! faith is and shall be maintained in its principles, and in some degree of exercise, amid ten thousand contraries.

"Blessed (says our Lord) are those who have believed—and have not seen." Thomas saw, and believed; but believing without sight upon the promise-word of the faithful God has an eminency, a transcendency of blessedness in it. "His arm is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear." "My soul, hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, for the light of His countenance," according to His promised grace. This exercise of 'faith in the dark' has a blessedness in it of transcendency. Little do you think how much glory this gives to God. Little do you think how much pleasure He takes when He thus hears your voice. And can you think, dear Madam, that this your faith is God shall be in vain? No! the Lord will say shortly, "You have

ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will." And then you shall praise Him with joy. Meantime, though in sorrow, praise the God of promise by trusting in Him who will be the God of performance, and you will give Him double glory, which will be to your eternal joy.

I am glad, dear Madam, that the Lord made the burning bush a fit emblem of your case, and that you desire greenness and fruitfulness. Your desire after greenness and fruitfulness is from your having these, and it is a greater measure that you desire. And be not dismayed at your apparent lack of greenness and growth in grace. It is one thing to be green and fruitful—and another to discern that we are so. God, and other of His children, may see our greenness and fruitfulness, when for wise and gracious ends these may be hidden much from ourselves. Only let this be your chief care, to "glorify God in the fires," and fear not greenness and fruitfulness—to His praise and your bliss, amid fiery trials.

I am grieved, dear Madam, that your outward affairs are so much declined and perplexed—but if it was not best, it would not be thus. May you be enabled most humbly and earnestly to make a fresh solemn surrender of yourself, and all that you have, unto God, and say, "Lord, here I am—I give myself up to You—to be Yours entirely—I give up everything that You have given me into Your all-wise, all-gracious, and almighty hands. O Lord, the difficulties I am encompassed with are too great for my wisdom and strength to rid myself of—but You know no difficulty. I cast them all upon You. I am oppressed, O Lord, undertake for me. And, were everything else gone, give me grace to glorify You, and to count myself happy—fully, ineffably happy—in Your great Self as my earthly-portion and eternal all. I call nothing my own but You, my great God—do with me, and all things that concern me, just as You desire."

After this manner, dear Madam, resign all unto God, and there leave all, without anxious care for anything. Let a 'prudent care' for everything, as your duty in the use of all means, be your concern. But take no 'anxious care' for any events—for most surely, in this respect, "every man disquiets himself in vain." And if you thus resign all unto God, and put and leave everything in His hands, I do assure you that God will undertake for you. I, did I say? A poor assurance this. He, Himself therefore excites you to duty, and gives you His own assurance thus—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble—I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." As you had that promise, Madam, when you entered into that change of life, "My presence shall go with you—and I will give you rest," and yet you had not those measures of His comforting presence which your soul wished—learn hence to distinguish between God's gracious, supporting, and sanctifying presence—and His soul-filling, heart-rejoicing presence. The former you had, have, and shall have always; and the latter, when He sees it best. And remember, rest is in the promise—all that earthly-rest which your God of love sees best—and eternal rest, unto full and endless delight! And let this bear up your spirit while your troubles last—"Unto you who are troubled, rest with us." When the Lord Jesus shall make His glorious appearance, then we shall all rest together and forever!

I bear you on my heart before the God of all grace in your every case. To His love, power, and care—I commit you.

10 - Live, and Bathe, and Dive, to a Blessed Eternity!

Live, and bathe, and dive, to a blessed eternity!

Sir, My work on earth is almost done, glory be to God! A nobler work in heaven will soon come on. Now I would serve the Lord—but then I shall serve Him perfectly, incessantly, and eternally; serve Him without sin, interruption, weakness, and weariness—which attend our present services; serve Him under the full and immediate vision of His glorious face—to His perfect and endless praise—and to my ineffable and eternal bliss.

Oh, dear Sir, what grace is this, that the Lord has formed and shaped our hearts for His service, else for the perfect and eternal service of God in Christ in future bliss we would have no taste; whereas to a soul that loves the Lord fervently, the perfect, endless service of God in Christ is esteemed by him an essential part of heaven's bliss; nor shall any one soul that is thus prepared by grace for divine service here, lack the ineffable bliss of perfect, endless service hereafter. Alas! what would an unholy soul do in heaven? Heaven would be no heaven to him—he has nothing in him suited to heaven's enjoyment and employment. A soul that cannot make a life out of God, or rather that cannot live joyfully in God as His life, and find his unspeakable bliss in an entire dedication to Jehovah's praise, is quite unfit for the glories of the heavenly state; as there is not the least agreeableness between the object and the subject, so there can be no enjoyment. What thanks then shall we give "unto the Father, who has made us (initially, and will make us perfectly) fit for the great inheritance of the saints in light"—in light without darkness; in the light of His immediate Presence, without the least darkness of distance; and in the light of perfect holiness, without the least spot of sin to darken our perfect, endless praises!

Oh, how great and vast is our Jehovah's infinite essence—who with the simple vision of His glorious face can satisfy and solace myriads of glorious angels, and an innumerable multitude of saved men, when most capacious—and excite in all thereby perfect, ceaseless, endless praises to His eternal glory and their eternal joy! Well may it be said, "Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, O God, besides You, what You have prepared for him who waits for You!" For no line short of an infinite understanding can search the immense glories of an infinite Being. None but the Lord Jehovah has seen, or can see, those immense glories which He has prepared in His infinite self as the boundless ocean of our soul-filling and eternal enjoyment!

We shall be cast, when all-enlarged, into the God of glory for an eternal fill of all felicity, and there live, and bathe, and dive, to a blessed eternity! And though the communications of divine glory will not be infinite, because of our incapacity, as we shall ever be but finite recipients, yet it is an infinite sea of glory we shall live, and swim, and play in—to a blessed eternity just as the God of nature has prepared an immense ocean of water for the fish of the sea to live, and dive, and sport in—although they can never comprehend that which comprehends them.

Thus, Sir, I humbly think, as the apostle says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him;" and

then adds, "but God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit;" and elsewhere says, "we know in part" that we are to understand the revelation of them which is now made unto spiritual men, to be that which is partial and suited to our present condition; and though to the knowledge had in the present state he opposes that knowledge we shall have in the future state, and says, "but then shall I know, even as also I am known;" yet we are to understand the difference to lie only in this—our present imperfect and our future perfect knowledge of God, according to our creature-measure; because, as creatures, we can never have an adequate knowledge of an infinite essence. And as that revelation of God and His things which is here made to spiritual men, is denied by the apostle to natural man, "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them," and as, in the text which he refers to, it is said, "Eye has not seen, besides You, O God," I think, Sir, we may justly form these distinctions:

First, That no natural man has seen, nor can see, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, because he lacks a spiritual capacity to discern the spiritual nature and kind of eternal glory.

Secondly, that spiritual men, in the revelation now made of spiritual things unto them, have seen them but partially, and will hereafter see them but finitely.

Thirdly, That none but God Himself has seen, nor can see them, infinitely; as the glories prepared for our enjoyment in His immense Being can be searched by no line short of His own infinite understanding.

Thus, Sir, all the texts will harmonize; and how vast, in Jehovah's infinite essence, is our prepared bliss! That the Spirit of the Lord, in His sevenfold gifts and graces, may rest upon you, dear Sir, unto all assistance and success in divine service, and that you may at last be blessed with a massive crown of righteousness, is my earnest desire.

11 - That Eternal Feast!

That eternal feast!

Dear Madam, Your most acceptable favor with your most kind present I received, and return my most humble and utmost thanks. My soul prays most heartily for your rich reward in and from the God of grace and glory, in time and to eternity. But who, or what am I, that the God of my mercy should raise up such dear friends to care for me so greatly, at such a vast distance, who never saw my face in the flesh? It is amazing kindness, and a pregnant proof of His covenant-engaged and infinite all-sufficiency. Oh, for a heart, lip, and life, to render Him adequate praise! I bewail my impotence, nothingness and vileness. I rejoice to live under the shine of infinite grace, which forgives all my sins, accepts my desires, and will call that praise, in God-like condescension, which with respect to Him is not worthy the name. I esteem it an exceeding great privilege that my low, imperfect praises, ascend for acceptance before God Most High in the perfect praises of the great Mediator, who is with His Father co-equal in glory and majesty. There the God of all grace to us finds, to His heart's complacency, His full and adequate praise; and there He accepts with infinite delight our every little mite, without debasing His infinite majesty to the brightest display of His infinite glory. And as you, dear Madam, not only supply me freely, but esteem yourself also favored and honored of God highly in your being made an instrument in His hand of relieving the least of His people in necessity, and of sending them again with high praises to His throne; this is an evidence that you love the Lord supremely and ardently, which love to God in Christ, thus blazing in your heart and life, with your earnest desires after the total destruction of all sin, and the absolute perfection of all grace, and that in the midst of much worldly business and affluence, are such eminent instances of the Lord's special distinguishing favor towards you as are very seldom cast upon others of His own dear children in affluent circumstances. See that for these you give Him due praise. A soul kept alive in God, and for Him, amid sin's, Satan's, and the world's heart-killing influence—is a miracle of omnipotent grace; and such a soul can say, when grace is in exercise, "Nothing but glory can suffice The appetite of grace;

I long for Christ, with restless eyes, I languish for His face."

Since you long, dear Madam, that the whole of what you are and have may be holiness unto the Lord, this is an evidence that Christ, your great High Priest, presents you before His Father's face continually, with all your services, unto the highest acceptance, in His own all-perfect and flaming purity. And, here likewise, upon your desires after perfect holiness, He engraves holiness unto Jehovah. If you were not to God perfect holiness, in Christ, and your services presented to Him and by Him as such, you would not have felt that inherent holy impress on your heart. And because you are now holiness unto God in Christ, representatively and perfectly—this secures your perfect, personal holiness, in yourself shortly; for, "As we have borne the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," which should excite us eagerly to press forward after increasing holiness daily until that which is in part—or the imperfection of our present personal holiness—shall be done away by the coming of that which is perfect.

It delights me much, dear Madam, to see that, under the Lord's most kind, enriching providence, He gives you to see your duty, to use your God-given abundance unto His praise and the poor saints' bliss, and that therewith he gives you a hearty compliance. It is doubtless the duty of rich brethren to serve the Lord's interest, and to minister to the necessity of their poor brethren with their riches, and to count that money best employed which is given to Christ and His people; and, therefore, the apostle exhorts thus—"Charge those who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to share." And how wondrous are the motives which he presents before them to excite them to, and enforce upon them, these duties—"laying up in store for themselves a good foundation (of reward) against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life!" Strange, that rich saints when they cast away their treasures upon Christ's needy interest and His poor children, should be herein but laying up in store for themselves, but laying a good foundation upon which, of infinite grace, the promised reward shall be raised, and that so great that while they thus, according to the promise, lay hold on or possess it, they shall inherit eternal life!

None but the infinite and eternal God could or would confer such a great and eternal reward upon His favorite servants, according to their works, their little, their very little and imperfect earthly-services. We may well warble out His praise with "Who is a God like unto You?" This I write not, dear Madam, to excite you to do more for my unworthy self. I am full, having received what you freely sent, which to the Lord and to myself is most acceptable; but my desire herein is to promote your fruitfulness to His praise and other brethren's bliss, and that you yourself at the great rewarding day may find a rich account of your earthly-services to your ineffable joy and eternal glory. The information you gave me, dear Madam, of the Lord's blessing my last poor letters, refreshes my heart greatly, and excites my praises to the God of all mercy, for as I seek His glory and His children's joy, when I find these, oh, how great is my soul's solace!

I am, dear Madam, a partaker of your joy in your victory over bosom idols. It is the direct way for the destruction of our sins to bring these, our Lord's foes, unto Him, to be slain before Him. Nothing separates between God and us like sin; nothing provokes the eyes of His glory like heart-idolatry—"Therefore," says He, "have I forsaken my people, because they are replenished from the East." And how pathetically does the Lord argue the case with His idolatrous people Israel, in order to their conviction and return to Him—"Has a nation changed their Gods—which yet are not Gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit." And again, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten Me days without number." And as soon as ever, under His almighty agency, His backsliding Ephraim is brought to repentance for his sin, and to bemoan himself for it thus before Him, "You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord my God"—His heart yearns towards Him, and thus breaks out upon Him, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still—therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord." And of this great grace, dear Madam, you are made a partaker of your increasing bliss, and this your felicity enhances my joy. So great is, and ought to be, our sympathy as members of Christ's body, as to interest ourselves mutually and entirely in each others' griefs and joys. How else can we love one another as our dear Lord has loved and does love us; yes,

how else could we love Him in each other? And is your Lord returned, dear Madam? Now see in this, His unchanging grace, His infinite faithfulness; now learn to say, as He, that His forsakings are but for a moment; and now learn to trust in Him for time to come, for lo! His kindness towards you has upon it the date of everlasting, past and to come. And time, with all its changes, nor could, nor can, nor ever shall, make the least variation in His love—whose name is I AM!—in the love of His heart, I mean, which is one infinite, eternal flame! The manifestations of it vary; but His invariable love, according to the infinity of His wisdom, makes its displays, or eclipses its glories, just as is most for His highest praise and for our greatest happiness. And though, dear Madam, you cannot say that you now have the enjoyment of your Beloved so fully as you could wish, remember that the present state is to be a life of faith; that eternal state to come, will be of sight—of immediate, full, and endless sight! And then we shall have as much of Christ as our souls can wish—or capacities contain, without the least fear of His withdrawing again. Meanwhile, ‘transient glances’ and ‘short foretastes’ shall whet our appetites for that eternal feast!

Great grace be with you!

12 - Our Captian-Leader, the Lord Our Lover

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

There may be obstacles and hindrances in the building and beauty of the spiritual temple, in the edification and glory of the gospel church. But the work is of God, and it shall prosper in the hands of our Zerubbabel. His hands, which have laid the foundation—even His hands shall finish it—and He shall bring forth the top-stone thereof with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." Nor shall any impediments ever stand in the way of the Savior's rising interest, but what shall serve as a foil to illustrate the brightness of that omnipotent power, infinite grace, truth, and faithfulness, which soon, very soon, will redound to His and the Church's glory, in spite of all opposition from the powers of darkness. Not the least breathing of your enlarged heart, not a desire of your capacious soul, nor the least attempt you ever made for the advancement of the Redeemer's interest, but is recorded by Him in the book of His remembrance, and shall be rewarded of Him at His appearance. And, lo, this Lord and King of Glory will Himself will be your exceeding great reward! And can you fathom the measure of your glory in your immeasurable Lord? No! heaven's bliss, is immense. But think, O think with pleasure, on those sweet foretastes of God with which your happy soul has been favored in times past! What peace and rest, what refreshing joy, has been given to your spirit when Jesus drew near! Was not your bliss in those happy moments ineffable—your joy full of glory unspeakable—and your reward abundantly great and full? And yet think, O think with rising joy, that the whole of your heart-ravishing bliss, of your soul-satisfying reward hitherto, if compared with that which is to come in the immediate presence, and full eternal enjoyment of God and of the Lamb, is no more than a drop in an immense ocean! Joy enters into you now; but then, you shall enter into joy, even the joy of your Lord. God puts a glory upon you now; but then, your God will be your glory! Rejoice, therefore, as an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ! And until you come to your eternal inheritance, give your Father leave to choose your time-portion of trials, which are to prepare you for your eternal lot of glory. And think it not strange, if so dear a favorite of heaven should meet with a variety and perpetuity of griefs on the earth, nor yet if your greatest trials should be reserved for the last. Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? Shall we walk joyfully in the light, and not patiently in darkness? Especially since we have so sweet a companion in tribulation as our Lord Jesus, who loves us immensely, and will speak to us comfortably. God our Father has given Christ to be our Leader—to be the Captian of our Salvation—and, as such, he is continually with us, and goes before us. Through all the wilderness-way, even to the last step of it, he will never leave nor forsake us. He will tread down the briars and thorns before us, to make the way passable for us, and easy for our tender feet. And no grief will He ever allow to touch us but what He sees to be absolutely necessary for us, and what He Himself, by an infinite sympathy, will bear together with us. The most tender pity of the nearest and dearest relative is not worth a thought, if compared with the infinite affection of Christ, our Immanuel, our Husband, Brother, Friend, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. In our Jehovah-Jesus there is a fullness of tender mercy, whence

He can be, and is, inwardly touched with the feeling of our misery. And in Him also there is a fullness of power to relieve and deliver, which from an infinity of love, grace, and faithfulness, He does and will exert to save us to the uttermost. Our Captain-Leader, the Lord our Lover, goes before us as a mighty conqueror, to vanquish all our enemies, to make our distress subserve our bliss, to swallow up death in victory, and to raise us up with Him to reign in life and immortal glory.

Let us, then, in faith, and without having fear, commit ourselves entirely to our Lord's all-wise and all-gracious conduct, and cheerfully come up from the wilderness leaning upon our Beloved. For lo, we shall be fully persuaded "that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Hallelujah! And again let us say, "Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" That His rich, reigning grace may be with your spirit, and upon you in your work, until you rest from your labors and are received up to glory, in my hearty desire.

13 - Indwelling Sin

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam,

It is indeed a very great privilege to be favored with a religious parentage and education, but if this were our greatest felicity, we would sink, nevertheless, into eternal misery! But the vessels of mercy— of God's free, rich, sovereign mercy— in order to their time-preparation for eternal glory, are blessed by Him, with His Holy Spirit sent down into their hearts, as the spirit of regeneration, conviction, and conversion. And this blessed spirit, in His saving work on the heart, when He first begins it, finds the sinner dead in sin, and under total darkness, as to spiritual things, in his understanding— in an entire alienation from them, and aversion to them, in his will and affections; and so, afar off from God in Christ, without any apparent right to the covenant of promise, and without any good hope through grace. And at such a time as this, He is pleased, by His almighty and all-gracious energy, to produce a new and holy principle of spiritual life in that soul which lay under the power of spiritual death entirely. This principle, which is instantaneously given, and as to the exact moment of it to us unknown, contains in it all graces, which are afterwards drawn out into their various exercises, under the Spirit's influence, unto the regenerate soul's various privileges. And this gracious work of the Holy Spirit of the heart discovers itself to the soul that is the subject of it, and to others, so far as it is related, by a supernatural light set up in the understanding, whence the soul sees itself to be utterly lost and undone by sin, by heart and life-sin, under the curse of God's law, and in danger of the wrath which is to come— that it neither has, nor can, by self-power, attain a perfect righteousness of its own for justification. And also, in the soul's discerning, upon the Spirit's revealing, the infinite glory and transcendent excellency of Christ as the great Savior, in His Person and offices, blood and righteousness, and in all the fullness of His grace— as God's great provision for the salvation of the chief of sinners— and as in the gospel held forth to be received of them by faith. And further, the Spirit's saving work, on the will and affections, discovers itself by that soul's approbation of the Savior beheld, its desires after Him, its approaches to Him, its laying hold of Him, and casting itself, under the Spirit's sweet and strong attraction, with the whole weight of its everlasting salvation upon Christ alone for all holiness and all happiness, to the present and eternal praise of the God of all grace, and to the soul's present and eternal bliss; upon which, that soul becomes declaratively and apparently a child and heir of God, through Christ, as the God of grace and glory— and is more or less sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. And now, dear Madam, if you are blessed with a precious experience of this happy work on your heart, you are most certainly a new creature in Christ, and a true believer in Him, and "shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation," notwithstanding the greatest inward or outward opposition. You are forever safe in the hands of Jesus, and none of the powers of darkness, with all their subtlety and force, shall ever be able to pluck you thence. "Your refuge is the eternal God, and underneath, for your support, are the everlasting arms!" And as an inhabitant of the Rock— the Rock of Ages, who is your strong defense— you may sing and shout salvation from the top of the mountains! But you complain, dear Madam, "that notwithstanding your

approach by faith unto Christ, to touch the hem of His garment, and to lay hold of His royal robe of righteousness, the root of sin is not dried up within you— the plague of your heart is not healed— but that your heart is like a painted sepulcher, full of rottenness and putrefaction; yes, that your heart grows worse and worse." To these things I answer: The root of sin in your heart may be considered in a twofold respect, as (1), In its principle; and (2), In its act; or, your misery may be distinguished into 'heart' and 'life-defiling' iniquity; and this, again, into the guilt and filth of both. With respect to the guilt of both, your root of sin was fully dried up and gone, upon your first act of faith on Christ's blood and righteousness, for your justification. As God, then, by the gracious declarations of His unchanging word, did not impute unto you your sin, but the perfect righteousness of His own Son, whose nature, being without a spot of sin, His heart, lip, and life-obedience, even unto death, was without blemish, so from thenceforth, you were, are, and ever shall be, in God's sight, as you appear before Him in His son— perfectly clean from the guilt of all sin, and righteous before Him as to your state of justification. And as to the filth of your heart and life-sin, that also is dried up and gone as you appear before God for His acceptance and complacency, in His Holy Son, who has for you who stand in Christ, as perfectly holy heart, to remove out of the Father's sight all your unholiness. You are now presented before God, by Christ, "holy and unblameable, and unproveable in His sight," though you still have the running outcome of sin— so much unholiness— in yourself. And in this respect, you are called to wash daily, by faith, in that fountain set open for sin, both in its guilt and filth.

"The plague of your heart," you say, Madam, "is not healed." but you ought to distinguish between your heart and your heart, or between your heart, as renewed by grace, in which dwells a principle of holiness, and from whence proceeds internal and external acts of holiness; and your heart as unrenewed, or the unrenewed part of your heart, in which dwells a whole body of sin and death, with all its members, and from whence flows internal and external acts of wickedness. For though the Holy Spirit's work on the heart is perfect, as to kind, and in respect of parts, as it extends to all the parts, powers, and faculties of the soul, so that there is no power or faculty in it but what is sanctified; yet this— His sanctifying work, is still imperfect in degree, and is to be increased by His almighty influence, unto a perfection of holiness; and having experienced the Spirit's sanctifying work on your heart as a begun-work in it, the plague of your heart, so far as it is renewed, is healed. And if the plague of your heart were not, in this respect, healed, you would not, you could not, desire so earnestly a clean heart universally, for like loves its like. It is from holiness in your heart begun, that you long after perfection, and until that time comes, there remains in your corrupt heart all sin, which is as contrary to holiness as darkness is to light. And this is your great grief and burden and matter of your complaint, "that the plague of your heart is not healed." And indeed it is not, in the unregenerate part of it, but it is in the regenerate part of it. When I speak of the heart, understand it as of all the powers of your soul, each of which is in part renewed and in part unrenewed; but that same almighty power which begun in you this holy work, in conformity to Christ, the Father's first-born Son, will carry it on unto absolute perfection, and then you will feel no more of heart, lip and life-abominations; but shall shout the triumphs of that mighty grace, to its endless praise, which has wrought your deliverance from all misery, and brought you up unto perfect purity, fullness of joy, and eternal glory. But you tell me, Madam, "that your heart grows worse and worse." To this I reply: The unrenewed part of your heart, in which resides the principle of sin, has in it such a fullness of evil, such heights and depths of wickedness, such putrefaction and rottenness, that it cannot admit of greater degree. "It is deceitful above all things, and so

desperately wicked" that none but the Lord Himself can find it out, or search the amazing depths of this bottomless gulf! But though sin as a principle, in the unregenerate part of your heart, cannot grow worse— the ebullitions, or boilings up of corruptions, may be more or less, as they have more or less advantage to show their rage against the God of grace and holiness, and against us as bearing His image. The workings of corruptions have less advantage when we are under present divine influence; but when this is in measure withdrawn from us, they instantly boil over with rage against the principle of grace, and by their subtlety and force, under Satan's influence— entice or hurry us away with rapidity into sinful acts, to God's dishonor and our soul's distress. But all the rage of hell and sin within and without us, with all those hellish waters which they cast forth as a flood to swallow us up, shall never quench that spark of heavenly fire, that little grace which is wrought in our hearts by the hand of Omnipotence! No! this, by the same almighty power which enkindled it, shall be maintained and increased amid and by the greatest opposition, until it is raised into a full and eternal flame! The triumphant Captain of our salvation has vanquished all the powers of hell and sin. He has led captivity captive, and dragged all the legions of devils at His chariot wheels, when He went up to glory with a shout— with the sound of a trumpet, amid thousands and tens of thousands of His holy angels, who saw His triumphs and sung His victories. And as for sin, our worst enemy— the old man— the whole body of sin— it was crucified with Him, and thence, by omnipotent grace— by sin-pardoning and sin-subduing grace— it shall be shortly, totally, and finally destroyed in us! And therefore, by faith in Jehovah's almighty and covenant-engaged power, let us stand to our arms as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and wax valiant in fight against all His and our enemies; for out of weakness we shall be made strong, and brought from the field victorious through His love and blood as more than conquerors. And meanwhile, as our begun holiness increases, we shall see corruptions in their horrid ebullitions, under advancing displays of reigning grace, which gives them greater aggravations— to be worse and worse— and our new hearts shall be to all sin more and more averse— until a complete victory is won, and we are blessed with an immortal crown.

You well say, dear Madam, that "unbelief in the promises and faithfulness of God is the productive root of numerous evils," and therefore we should not indulge it, but fight against it in Jehovah's might, while we stand fast by faith in that full, glorious, and eternal liberty with which Christ, by and irreversible promise-grant, upon our first act of faith, has made us free. By standing fast by faith in that glorious liberty in which upon our first believing we were instated, I intend those after-acts of faith which respect persuasion of that saving interest in Christ and all His benefits which was then given us by promise, and so to hold fast our confidence, or persuasion of salvation, in the face of all inward or outward opposition made against it; for this is not only for God's praise, in His infinite grace and faithfulness to His promise, but will be also of great advantage for the mortification of sin in us. As our faith in our saving interest rises, our love and gratitude to God increases; but faith of our saving interest is depressed, love and gratitude sink with it; we depart from God, the Fountain of all good, the whole of our life, as if for us in Him there were no help, and are carried away by deceitful evil— by numerous evils— as by a mighty torrent, into comfort's death. Let us beware, therefore, of an evil heart of unbelief, for faith in God, as the God of love unto us in Christ, will yield us a sweet relief, under Satan's temptations and the strong workings of inward corruptions, and edge our spirits keenly against all the Lord's and our enemies. As to our heart-idolatry, it is a very great iniquity of which the Lord's own people are deeply guilty. But since this is the promise of His rich, free grace, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" let us plead it before

His throne, and bring our every idol unto Him to be entirely slain, so shall our hearts be disjoined from them, and our admiration of, and sinful affection to, all 'glittering glow-worm glories' sink and die before the rising attracting display of His all-transcendent and infinite excellences. And permit me, Madam, to give you a caution— Not to keep company, familiarly, with any but those whom you judge to be truly godly; for the ungodly, by their carnality, will bring you into great danger, and impair in your own spirituality. And if your intimate acquaintances are truly gracious and richly blessed with an inward experience, continue your intimacy, and labor to improve it to a mutual increase of your soul's joint-felicity, your growth in grace and furtherance in the knowledge of God in Christ.

All company has in it either the nature of fire or of air— it either heats or cools— it either excites our love of God, or upon that holy fervor casts the benumbing cold of a dreadful winter. Therefore it is a piece of spiritual wisdom, in spiritual people, to choose such alone for their intimate companions. And if your intimates, dear Madam, excel in spiritual gifts, admire not them— but admire God in them, so shall you be conducted by the brightness of a 'beam' to the all-comprehending and all-reflecting glories of Him who is the infinite and eternal Sun. Be assured, dear Madam, that that work of God upon the heart which brings the soul to an entire dependence on Christ— a whole Christ, is no illusion, but shall end in a full and eternal salvation. And as to the 'hope of the hypocrite', which shall perish, that is always founded upon self-worthiness; but that hope which has for its foundation God's free grace, in and through what Christ has done and suffered for us, and is made of God unto us, is good hope that shall not make ashamed, but shall be, in its glorious fruits, to the righteous, gladness unto endless ages. As to those precious promises (Ezekiel 36:25), etc., which you so earnestly desire to experience, they are fulfilled in you already, partially and initially, and shall be, shortly, completely and eternally!

I wish you a rich increase of all grace unto all joy, peace, and holiness, and a massive crown of immortal bliss!

14 - Worth Infinitely More Than Millions of Worlds!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister in Christ, Your Beloved is yours and you are His, and what can you want or desire more? Your one Lord Jesus is worth infinitely more than millions of worlds, were there so many! Oh, what little, uncertain, dying things, are all creature-enjoyments! Not a drop of refreshment can we find in them, unless the Creator fills them, and communicates of His own fullness through those pipes of conveyance; and yet, how prone are we to seek after creatures as if our happiness were in them! Ah, foolish we, to "forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns—broken cisterns—that can hold no water!" Were every pipe broken and every cistern dry, the Lord—the full fountain, the overflowing ocean of our life and bliss—would never fail. There is a river of love, life, and glory in God, the streams whereof, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall make glad the hearts of the citizens of Zion. My dear sister, God, our kind Father, takes away the creatures from us that we may learn to live upon Himself as our present and eternal All; and not a soul that has Him for a well, while passing through the valley of Baca, of tears, shall ever lack supply of life and joy. A believer can never lack anything, languish and die in his spirit for lack of any good thing, unless he goes out of the bosom of Christ, where he has all things—to hunt for supplies among the creatures where there is nothing. Blessed is that soul that seeks God in the creatures it desires, that lives upon God in the creatures it enjoys, and that makes life a peaceful, joyous, glorious life out of God—or rather, that lives peacefully, joyfully, gloriously in Him when the creatures fail—for surpassingly excellent, sweet and soul-satisfying is God in all—is God in Himself.

O for more faith to live upon Him, and to Him, in all things that He gives us, and in what He withholds or takes from us; for our God will supply all our needs, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

Don't you see, then, my dear sister, how well you are provided for? Oh, live joyfully, as a child of God—and heir of God—for no good thing will He allow you to lack—and soon He will bring you to His great, His glorious, His eternal Self! Your God, your all-supplying God, will be with you in every strait, to the last moment of your stay on earth, and then He will bring you home, to be forever with Him in heaven, where, in His immediate presence, and seated at His right hand, He will bless you with fullness of joy, and make you drink of the river of His pleasures for evermore!

15 - Then Farewell Forever!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear Sister in our precious Lord,

I rejoice to hear of your soul's prosperity under those afflictions which have attended your body. I have again been visited with illness, and am weak. The hand—the heart of our own God—our God of love—is in everything to us. In all, let us love, bless, and adore His name, for honorable and glorious are all His works, and most worthy is He of praise from us in all. Under the sweet, enlarging influence of God's free love, we love Him and as much when He frowns as when He smiles. A believing, loving, adoring spirit, under divine chastisement, is an excellent spirit—a God-glorifying frame of soul. Our afflictions, light as they are, as being laid upon us and we supported under them by the Lord's all-gracious and almighty hand, are made blessings to us. They may well be borne by us, not only as they are designed for, and shall end in, our soul's present and eternal advantage, but also, and chiefly, in that our God is and will be glorified thereby His displaying the glory of His infinite love, grace, mercy, wisdom, power, faithfulness, and fatherly goodness towards us in them—and by our ascribing all honor in filial duty unto Him. Our God is infinitely concerned for our good in every affliction. So let us be earnestly, yes only, concerned about His glory as to our duty therein, casting all our care upon Him who cares for us.

We shall bless God, when we come to heaven, for every kind and degree of affliction that we passed through on earth—for every trial, and for every circumstance attending it, wherein we are enabled to glorify God.

After this heavenly temper, and an increase therein, let us labor while pilgrims on this earth. A submissive, patient, cheerful, thankful frame of spirit, under the afflicting hand of God, is that honor, that reverence which we owe to Him as a Father—and ineffably sweet, and exceedingly profitable is this unto us as His children. In a little, little while, sin and sorrow shall be no more. A fullness, an eternity of joy and glory in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb awaits us. Our afflictions are given to us as a fruit of the Father's grace, of the Son's purchase and intercession, and as a season of the Spirit's preparing us below for that glory which is prepared for us above. Oh, my dear sister, all things are ours, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come. Time with all its changes, its comforts and crosses, and eternity with all its great and unchangeable glories, are ours! Christ is ours, and all things in and with Him, and we are His, and shall shortly be with Him where He is, to behold His glory! We shall be like Him, perfectly so—for we shall see Him as He is! We shall not be long absent from, but shall shortly be forever with the Lord—to see, to love, to praise Him perfectly and eternally. Oh, blessed day! It hastens upon us. A day without clouds, without decline, without end! A magnificent, bright day, that will spread its glories over all, when the Lord will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory!

Then farewell forever! Farewell trials! Farewell sin! Farewell sorrow! Farewell death! Farewell darkness! Farewell pain! Farewell weakness! Mortality shall be swallowed in life! And in the meantime, my dear sister, let us go on in faith and hope of that eternal life which God, who cannot lie, has promised; and loving and adoring the Lord in all things, let us follow the Lamb, even

wherever He goes, until we reach immortal glory with Him. And now, my dear child, unto the tender care of your everlasting Father I commit you. May His presence be with you, and His blessing be upon you continually.

16 - The Love of Christ to You

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Beloved Brother in the Lord,

I am a partaker of your joy in those rich love-feasts in our Lord's banqueting-house with which you have been favored. O happy soul, how does Jesus love you! And yet I must tell you He has but begun to love you. The love of Christ to you will pass on in brighter displays from glory to glory, glancing upon you through time as it passes by in its own everlasting round, in the state, in the majesty of a God, of the Lord Jehovah. O, my brother, I would be undone if the love of Christ were not just as it is, an infinite, strong, free, all-surpassing, unchangeable, and eternal love; if it were not the love of the Lord to an adulteress-bride, who by heart-idolatry looks to other gods, and loves sacred raisin cakes. But O, amazing wonder, our Lord's love-language is, "The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes!" Hosea 3:1 The love of Christ being the love of the Lord, that has all the immense fullness, glories, and perfections of the Godhead in it, will always have a "yet" for us—a yet of continuance of infinite favor, a yet of increasing display—notwithstanding all our unworthiness and provocations. And O, surpassing wonder! Our Lord will say of us, as washed in His blood, clothed with His righteousness, anointed with His Spirit, and adorned with His graces, "How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are like doves!" What, say of an adulteress-bride, who looks to other gods, even after redeemed by and acquainted with the love of the Lord-Redeemer, "You have dove's eyes!" Oh, none could say this but He who is the Lord, the God of love! It is His language whose love has in it heights and depths, breadths and lengths, which are infinite, passing knowledge. And of His bride, black as she is in herself, by the workings of sin in her corrupt nature, this Bridegroom will say, "How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful my love!" My love! Oh, there it is! She is the object of Emanuel's love—of His heart-love, of His dying, living love, of His time-love, of His eternal love—His soul is fixed upon her; He loves her from Himself, He loves her in His own beauties cast upon her; He loves her as Himself—as His own flesh—as nearly, as inseparably related to Him. He will love her into love, into a full and glorious conformity to His own bright image. He had the pattern of all her glory given Him of old by His Father, when she was presented to Him in the mirror of decree. She ravished His heart then; He took her in the everlasting covenant, to love her ever; yes, though He must die for her, to bring her up to her decreed life of glory. He has wrought her up unto all her perfect beauty, her designed brightness in Himself. He is now working her up by His Spirit in herself to that pattern-glory. Her future brightness is present in His eye; and in all respects, from an infinity of grace and love, of flowing delights, this Bridegroom says to His bride, "How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are like doves!" which shows how fitly the eyes of Christ are set to look with delight upon His own dove.

O! His eyes are as the eyes of doves (pure, piercing, mild, loving), by the rivers of water (by the flows of infinite grace), washed with milk (bathed in those milky streams), and fitly set to look upon His spouse, His love, His dove, under all her miseries and mournings, with boundless compassion,

ardent desires, infinite delights, and almighty influence, to look her into communion unto her full salvation by and eternal glory with Him. Happy, thrice happy then, is that soul who can say of Christ, that fairer than the sons of men, that altogether lovely Bridegroom, who can love a black bride in and into His own beauty and brightness—this is my beloved, and this is my friend!

Such a sweet visit my Lord lately made me, such a glance, such a taste, such a shine of His love He favored me with that broke, melted, and overcame my heart; that made me long to serve Him here, yes, to be with Him, to behold, to enjoy, to adore Him in the glory of His love, which, with an heart-ravishing majesty, a soul-overcoming glory, so brightly beamed upon me in this land of distance. And before that time, my Lord has frequently of late applied many of His precious promises to my heart, which foretell great things that He will yet do, in His infinite grace, for His most unworthy worm. Praise Him for His amazing kindness to me, and pray that His love may change me into its own image.

17 - A Cup of Bitters?

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister in our precious Lord,

I sympathize with you in your trials. Do not think them strange. Your kind Father well prepared you for these exercises by that abundant love which He long manifested towards you. He let you rest long in His bosom; will you not be willing to work for Him now—yes, to suffer whatever He shall call you to? Oh, remember what obligation His boundless love lays you under to be entirely His! Remember but His love, in which He has given you Himself, and you will freely give up yourself to His whole will, and count nothing too much, either to do or suffer, that so you may glorify Him. Has your kind Father given you a cup of bitters? Drink it freely! It is well sweetened with His love! The curse is taken out of it by Christ being made a curse for you; and lo! It is no other but a cup of blessing! Infinite love ordained it and infinite wisdom prepared it, and infinite power will work with and by it unto your present and eternal advantage. All your graces are to be tried, and by the trial of them to be increased here, and found unto praise and honor and glory at Christ's appearing.

You will not think any of the labors and sorrows of the wilderness too much when once you reach Canaan's land. You will bless God when you get to heaven for every step of the way He led you, and see it was all right. And will you not begin the work of heaven now, and go, not only patiently and cheerfully, but thankfully also, through all the trials of the wilderness into your everlasting rest? Your tender, faithful Shepherd, who gave His life for you, will not allow you to lack any good thing. Into His arms I commit you; His grace be with your spirit.

18 - Who Makes You Differ from Thousands?

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam,

Permit me to ask, my dear sister—who told you that you were miserable, wretched, blind, and naked, sin-ruined, and law-condemned, and must perish forever without a saving interest in precious Jesus? Who showed you the worth of your immortal soul, that if your soul was safe for eternity, it did not much matter how things were as to your body, during this momentary state of your little inch of time? Who gave you such a high esteem of Christ, the Friend of sinners? Have you always had such a living sensation of these things? If not, how did you come by this? Who gave it to you? Who makes you differ from thousands, on your right hand and on your left, who, insensible of their own misery as sinners, and of the excellency of Christ as the Savior, seek no higher happiness than the empty enjoyments of this perishing life?

Oh, dear Madam, have not you cause to adore the rich, free, distinguishing grace of God to you—which opened your eyes, while numbers round about you are blinded by sin and Satan? You have seen your unspeakable misery without Christ, and His immense and eternal excellency to make you incomparably happy unto endless glory!

You have been drawn by His all-conquering love, and changed in some measure into His image, and have given yourself up to Him, to be entirely and forever His. The altogether lovely Jesus is your beloved, and He is your friend—and in Him you have, and shall have, a well of life, and ocean of inexhaustible and eternal bliss!

19 - Our Extremity

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects It is a great thing to know ourselves in our nothingness and vileness--and to know Christ as ours in His all-sufficient fullness. Our extremity is God's opportunity to display His glory as the God of all grace, and our very present help in times of trouble, and the more to endear His delivering kindness to our souls.

20 - There is a Snake in the Grass

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Honored Sir, The little things which we are apt to desire and to lay out for ourselves as a path to heaven in, let us refer them wholly to the will and wisdom of our heavenly Father. It is our privilege that, as His children, we may lay them before Him and pray Him to bestow them if for His glory and our good; but in nowise let us choose for ourselves, but continually give up ourselves and all things which concern us into the hands of the Lord, and say, "Choose our inheritance for us."

Alas! we would make a foolish choice if left to our own will, our own wisdom! We would soon be undone if left to our own conduct. Let us not attempt it. There is a snake in the grass of those pleasing things which we desire to lie down in, which the Lord denies us of, that we do not see, which would soon destroy the health and comfort of our souls.

We naturally love smooth things, but alas, we have so much roughness in us that we must have rough things to smooth us. It is well we have a Father that loves us infinitely—who is infinitely wise and well knows how to make us as glorious as He designs us—who will not spare for our crying, but will pare off our knots and blemishes, and hew and carve us into gracious pieces of His workmanship—whatever labor it costs Him—whatever sharp things are needful to be used on us—or whatever blows are requisite to be given us.

Come, my brother, let us give up ourselves into our all-wise, all-gracious, and almighty Father's hands! He will work us into the image, the glorious image, of Jesus! And what does it matter which way He does it? If this blessed work is done we shall rejoice and praise Him forever; aye, and let me say, we shall admire and praise all the ways that He took to do it in, when we see, with the veil cast off, all those exceeding riches of His infinite grace, wisdom, and prudence, which have been expended and laid out upon us therein. Oh, we shall admire and adore all the Lord's ways with us, which are mercy and truth. We shall see and say, they were like God—worthy of God—of His great Being—of His glorious art!

Until then, let us live by faith, and in the obedience thereof shroud ourselves under the shadow of Jehovah's wings, and cry unto Him continually, under a deep sense of our utter insufficiency—and of His all-sufficiency to guide us by a right way all through this valley of misery, until He has brought us unto Himself in glory!

21 - Glad for Crumbs of Mercy

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Brother,

Never was a poor sinner more unworthy of favor from God or His people than myself. I deserve not a name and a place among the children, but am as vile as a dog, and would be glad for crumbs of mercy that fall from the children's table. But such is the free grace of God towards me, through the slain Lamb, that He deals with me as a child, a dear child, and feasts me as a prince with Him according to the royalty, the dignity of His own infinite state. If salvation in all its parts were not all of grace, it would not suit such a wretched, miserable sinner as I am. But oh, blessed be God, there is salvation enough for me in Christ to be had of the freest grace—of grace in which there is no scantiness, but an immense and eternal fullness to fill my needy soul, through all time and to eternity! And glad am I, under all my sins, miseries and needs, to live under the reign of grace—of this grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ my Lord!

22 - As if We Had Never Seen Him

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects Dear Sister in our Precious Jesus,

We have had many sweet feasts with our Beloved in the 'wilderness'; but the richest provisions and the best wine are reserved until the last, and the Marriage Supper hastens.

Oh, how little have we seen of His transcendent beauty!

We have beheld so much of His glory as to make Him the chief of ten thousand in our esteem. But there is enough in Him to fill men and angels with new wonder to all eternity!

Christ's riches are absolutely unsearchable; a mine that we can never bottom to eternity! We shall see more and more of His glory as we pass on towards perfection. And oh, the wonderful grace that is to be brought unto us at our Lord's next appearing, which will be the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The views of His glory, which we have had here, though true and real, yet are so small that if compared with what we shall have then, it will be as if we had never seen Him, and as if He was but then revealed to us.

We shall be so ravished with the views of His glory that we shall never be able to look off His bright face forever!

23 - O Proud Worms!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Honored Sir,

It is well the Lord loves you, for His love is unchangeable and infinite, and in it you have Himself, who has all things, yes, is all things, abundantly and eternally! Ten thousand changes may pass over you with respect to yourself, and the people and things you are concerned with. And how miserable would you be if your happiness lay in these changing, failing, dying things? But blessed with the Lord Jehovah for your portion, your bliss in Him is full, unchanging, and everlasting. Rejoice, brother, in your wondrous lot! Oh, how goodly is your heritage! It is enough that the Lord is your portion! What can you more desire? Can you desire any good that is not to be found in God? Can you desire any joy that He, even Himself alone, cannot afford you? Let your soul from henceforth embosom itself in infinite fullness. Say to creature-vanities and vexations, "Get away! Do not disturb my repose in God. I have a sweet, soft, full bosom to rest in, from which I will not be enticed, nor driven by you."

Oh, how blessed would we be amid all changes, if we always delighted ourselves in our unchangeable God! It is our going out of the eternal I AM that occasions all our fears and griefs and heart-faintings. Our wretched hearts, deceived by the serpent, desire something else besides God to make up a 'fancied happiness' for them. And thence, after this and that creature and thing they go. And when 'catching at shadows' we find them no substance, and that pursuing them they flee from us—this gives us disquietude. And oh, how well is it for us that every creature and thing concerning soul-rest says, "It is not in me!"

This, as being fore-appointed by the Lord our Lover, is by Him sanctified—to teach our silly hearts at times a little wisdom—to turn the mouth of faith to the 'breasts of divine consolations'—to God in Christ, the full fountain, the inexhaustible ocean of solid, endless bliss of all our life and joy! And as our full and unchangeable God, in his great and glorious self, is our exceeding joy—and by 'creature-emptiness' and 'changes' is pleased at times to bring us to his blissful bosom, so this also may be the matter of our rejoicing—that all our time-changes respecting creatures and things are overruled by our eternal and unchangeable God, for his own endless praise, and for our everlasting salvation. And if these great ends are, and shall be, the effects of all the changes which pass over us, why need we be much distressed by the most grieving changes? Yes, why should we not rejoice in tribulation, amid a thousand losses and crosses, griefs and disappointments, which attend us in this valley of tears? What ails our silly hearts to be so displeased or distressed, when things go not to our wish? What would we have? "Oh," we say, "the Lord's glory, and our advantage in this and that." If this is our desire, this we have always, even by the greatest crosses and disappointments we meet with. "Aye," replies our silly mind, "but I wanted the Lord's glory in this or that which I desired." And must not God, then, glorify Himself in that way which He likes best? O proud worms! Can we teach the only wise God wisdom? Shall 'creature-darkness and ignorance' dictate to, dispute with, or reprove infinite understanding? Be

astonished, O Heavens, at this! What—can we, foolish, blind, weak creatures—govern the world, or anything in it, better than the almighty, all-wise Creator, preserver, and disposer of all things? Shall we, who will not allow God His sovereign right of ruling His earth, and all the creatures and things of His forming and appointing, without a rebellious sigh when our desires are crossed—be thought capable of wielding the scepter of the world? Was ever such pride, such rebellion, as that is found in us, when we will not allow our Savior to glorify Himself, and save us by such ways and things that He, in His infinite wisdom, sees best?

Adoring, let us bow down; and loving, let us bless the Lord for everything He gives, or withholds, or takes from us, if we would behave as obedient children to the Lord our Father, as the God of love and peace, who, according to the exceeding riches of His grace, has abounded towards us in all things in all wisdom and prudence. To whom be dominion and glory forever. Amen.

24 - I May Lose All Created Sweets

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sister,

Blessed be God, He has done me much good by my last year's trial. The Lord has humbled me under His mighty hand, melted down my will into His, purified my desires, exercised my faith, hope, and patience, and brought me in some good measure to live upon Himself as my present and eternal all. I have been more concerned about my duty to 'glorify God in the fires', than merely to be delivered from the trial. And blessed be my tender Father, He set bounds to my trial in His own dear time, which is every way the best. He who enabled me to 'trust Him in the dark', and to stay myself upon my God, has again brought me forth to the light, and I have beheld His righteousness. Oh how blessed is that man who has the God of Jacob for his help!—for his help in trouble and deliverance out of it!

Most miserable is that soul who has no special saving interest in God. A time will come when all the creatures will fail him; when every spring of comfort will be dry, and nothing remain to him but an ocean of endless misery to surround him on every side; but, "say to the righteous, It shall be well with him." O how well is it with a righteous man in all changes, in the greatest evils which pass over him! The face of providence may change, friends may fail, and his own heart and flesh too; but God, the unchangeable God, who is the strength of his heart, and his portion forever, will never fail him, nor forsake him.

O this is my strong consolation—that Christ is mine, and I have enough. I may lose all created sweets; but, since I cannot lose my God in Him I have an ocean of delights, of ever-springing pleasures, which will be new and full unto ages without end! The times look very dark. Our Lord has His fan in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. A mercy of mercies will it be for those who shall be found inward court-worshipers when the outward court shall be trodden down, when the Lord will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men who are settled upon their lees. We have reason to fear the Lord's judgments, which hang over us for the sins of His people, and the sins of the nation. O that there was a spirit of prayer poured out upon praying men; then might we hope that the Lord would turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him. But, alas! we are asleep; and the day of the Lord may come upon us as a thief in the night. Happy are those who are kept watching; who foresee the danger of carnal security, and flee for refuge to the shadow of Jehovah's wings. For surely in the Lord, at the worst of times, his children shall have a place of refuge.

Great grace be with you.

25 - Why Was Not Our Lot With Devils and Damned Spirits?

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

I am glad that the Lord has made my poor letters and books acceptable, and of any use to your precious soul. May the God of all grace have all the glory. Oh, my dear friend, if the Lord will please to make anything I have written a means of helping your faith in Christ, and of drawing out your love to Him, it will be grace unknown to me, the chief of sinners, and the matter of my joy both now and in the day of Christ. Whoever be the instrument, it is the Lord's own hand that does the work, whenever any growth is added to our spiritual stature; and unto Him alone the whole glory is therefore due. But oh, that ever the God of all grace, through Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit, should work upon such hell-deserving sinners as we to prepare us for glory, for the glory which He has prepared for us in heaven, and also use us as instruments in His hand for spiritual and eternal advantage unto each other on earth! Oh, what are we, or what is our Father's house, that the Lord should save us? Why was not our lot with devils and damned spirits, unto whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever? Ah! not because we have not deserved it, but because the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, is gracious to whom He will be gracious, and shows mercy on whom He will show mercy. Nothing less than free, infinite, sovereign grace and mercy can save a sinner from the depths of endless misery--to the heights of eternal glory. And blessed be God forever, His grace alone is infinitely sufficient to save the chief of sinners to the utmost; for "where sin has abounded (as the Lord knows it has woefully done in our hearts and lives), grace has much more abounded. That as sin has reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Oh blessed be God for Jesus! the Savior, who was born, and lived, and died to save sinners—for Him as Christ, the anointed of the Father, to this great work; and for Christ, as our Lord, who is and who will be our King, to subdue us to Himself, and all His and our enemies under His and our feet. The boundless, inexhaustible grace of the Godhead—that vast, that endless ocean—flows gloriously to us sinners in streams of pardon and life spiritual unto life eternal, through the channel of Christ's obedience; through the active obedience of His life, and the passive obedience of His death. Oh, here it is that grace reigns! It is through righteousness. Through the righteousness of the life and death of Jesus. And here, to save sinners, grace reigns righteously, in such a way as is perfectly agreeable to the righteousness of Jehovah's nature, and to the righteousness of His holy law, both in its demands and threatenings.

Oh, here, through God's obedient Son, through His spotless slain Lamb, God can be just in justifying disobedient, polluted, all-over guilty, filthy, hell-deserving sinners—even every one that believes in Jesus! And not a soul shall die that casts up an eye of faith unto the God of all grace in Christ—that looks for life through the once dying Savior. No, Jesus died to save that soul on the cross, to save him meritoriously by His death, and now sits on the throne to save him influentially by His life. And well able is He to save to the uttermost, even all those that come unto God by Him,

seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

It was hence that the Holy Spirit was sent down into our hearts to quicken us when dead in sin, to work faith and every grace in our souls, to show us our misery, and to reveal Christ the glorious remedy, the great Savior which God has provided for lost sinners; and to enable us to look unto Jesus for our salvation, and to receive the glad tidings thereof through the free promise unto all joy and peace in believing, and all gracious influence unto all holy obedience. It is because Christ lives for us in heaven that we live a begun spiritual life on earth. And hence it is that the life of grace in us shall be maintained and increased, until it is perfected in the life of glory, or ripened into the fullness of spiritual and the glory of eternal life. Grace is a preparation for glory, and the very beginning of it in our souls; and the more the work of grace does flourish in our hearts while on the earth, the greater is our preparation for, and the nearer our approach to, the perfection and glory of the heavenly state. And whereas the Lord is pleased to give us more grace, to increase our graces in the use of means, how diligent should we be in every duty to wait upon the God of mercy, that He thereby will increase us with all the increases of God?

Oh, my dear friend, the way to glory in all the appointed paths of duty is up hill. To be religious in truth and sincerity, and unto any growth and maturity, we are called to striving, running, fighting, wrestling, to strive against sin, to run with patience the race that is set before us, to fight the good fight of faith, and to wrestle, not only against flesh and blood (against wicked men and all their wicked ways to draw us off from God), but also against principalities and powers, against the powers of darkness, the armies of hell, who with all their might will oppose us in every step we take heavenward, in all our approaches to God and appearances for Him. And therefore, we had need take unto us the whole armor of God, and especially the shield of faith (to hold up Christ by faith), with which we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one—of Satan, that wicked one, on whatever side he casts them at us. And a very necessary piece of a Christian's armor is that of all-prayer.

Thus, dear Sir, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and labor to walk by faith in Him and love to Him, every day, as if it was your last duty. You have no time given you to mis-spend. The Lord's redeemed are to glorify the Redeemer in the whole of their time, until they are glorified with Him in blessed eternity. Those happy souls who are the Lord's ought not to live unto themselves, but unto Him. And whatever we do in things natural, civil, or religious, in the common affairs of natural life, or in things that concern our spiritual life, we are to do all to the glory of God, as under His eye, His forgiving love and abundant goodness, to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light; and in the views of that blessed day when our Lord of the freest grace will give rewards unto His servants according to their works. For unto those who, under the enkindling influence of His infinite love, have loved Him much and been abundant in labors for His glory in the present time, will He give and abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom—that desirable state, where, as you said, "we shall serve the Lord without interruption, weariness, or distraction, and when we shall never again grieve Him with the least sinful thought, word, or action," but blessed with the vision of His face, and crowned with immortal glory with Christ, His saints and angels, in joy and praise unknown, we shall live to a blessed eternity!

26 - It is a Sweet Thing to Suffer With Christ

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother, The present state is a state of trial to all God's people. Troubles of various kinds, from within and without, like rolling waves, come thick, one as it were upon the neck of another. But yet, though in the world we have, we shall have trouble, as our Lord has said—how great is the peace we have in Him!—A quiet harbor amid distress! And now and then, blessed be His name, the 'Lord of winds and waves' is pleased to give a pleasant calm, by His commanding word, "Peace, be still!" Oh that, by the wisdom of faith and prayer, we might prepare in the calm times, for a storm!

"Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is polluted—it is ruined beyond all remedy." Micah 2:10. Sin has entered, and sorrows must be expected from indwelling corruptions, Satan's temptations, the world's snares, dark dispensations, the hidings of God's face, the seeming denial of our prayers, and the delay of promised mercies; various afflictions in soul, in body, in name, in circumstances, in relations and friends, in employments for God—in the Church and in the world. These things must be expected from God, from men, from friends, from enemies, throughout our mortal life, with death itself at last—in our passage through this world to Immanuel's land And yet, all things wisely mixed and graciously overruled, do and shall work together for our good, and turn unto our salvation; yes, are so many preparations by grace for our eternal glory—"for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and, "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified together." As the sufferings of Christ were penal, the desert of our sin and the fruit of the law's curse for the satisfaction of divine justice, and for our redemption and salvation, so, Christians, do not suffer with Christ. No! our Jesus trod the wine-press of the wrath of God, when He was trodden in it, alone, and of the people there was none with Him. We poor sinners, no, nor angels—those sinless creatures—had all their innumerable hosts interposed, would have been able to endure and conquer those sufferings which were requisite to make reparation to the injured honor of God, and satisfaction to the avenging justice of God, for the sins of men, which were objectively infinite and required an infinite atonement. And therefore, such was the boundless grace of God to us that He laid the iniquity of us all upon His own Son—upon the Son of His own nature—clad with ours, thundered out all the curses of His holy law upon Christ, as standing in our room, and required of Him our substitute—who was an infinite Person—an infinite satisfaction for our guilt—that we might go free from those unutterable torments which our sins deserved, which would have sunk us beneath divine wrath, and made us inconceivably miserable forever. And such was the boundless grace of the Son of God, that rather than we should suffer—He would endure. I give Myself to suffer freely and fully for all My people—take Me, the surety, and let them, the debtors, go free. God the Father called the sword of justice to awake against the Man that was His fellow, with an "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd; smite the Shepherd!" The hand of God's avenging justice was upon Christ, that we might escape the killing blow—and be saved eternally from all misery—unto all glory—by the hand of His infinite grace. And the Lord our Savior, in his knowledge-passing love, "endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the joy (of His and His

Father's glory in our salvation) that was set before Him." Thus, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," and we, the saved ones, have no share in those penal sufferings of the Savior which He endured according to covenant-contract, and which, from His being an infinite Person, made an infinite Atonement for our guilt, and had in them an infinite merit for our salvation. No! "His arm alone brought salvation, and of all the people there was none with Him." And unto Him alone be the glory, by men and angels, forever and ever! Amen.

But, though Christians do not suffer with Christ in those sufferings of His, as they were penal, yet they do, they must suffer with Christ, as His sufferings were filial; for "though he were a Son, yet (in His assumed human nature), He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," which "He suffered for us, leaving us an example (of meekness and patience, of zeal and courage, of all filial duty, to the Father's glory), that we should follow in His steps." And if we suffer with Him, as His sufferings were filial, we shall also be glorified together. And in this filial respect Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, or to have a community with Him in sufferings—

1. In that the fountain cause of sufferings, both to Christ and Christians, was and is the love of God the Father, "the cup," said our Lord, "which my Father, from the love of a Father to me, gives me to drink in those sufferings which he now calls me to endure as the surety of sinners, from Him, as a judge, shall I not drink it?" and, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens," says the apostle, "and what son is he whom the Father chastens not?"

2. In that sufferings, both to Christ the first-born Son and to Christians, the junior brethren, were and are the means appointed of God for the exercise of all graces, and to go before and prepare for all glory. Christ first suffered and then entered into His glory—and so must Christians. Sufferings by Christ, the Head, were first endured, and then glory followed, and thus it fares with all the members—Christians must first suffer with Christ, and then with Him be glorified together. There was a necessity by divine appointment that the sufferings of Christ should precede His glory and prepare Him for it, as He said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and then enter into His glory?" And, says the apostle, "If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together"—which words, though they give us the fullest assurance that we shall also be glorified together, do likewise denote that close connection which there is between sufferings and glory, and that the former are to precede and prepare for the latter, as it is clear from the manner of expression, "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

3. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that sufferings, both by Christ and Christians, were and are endured under the influence of the same spirit. The Spirit of the Lord in an immeasurable fullness rested upon Christ the Head, and made Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, to discern His Father's hand, and to submit to His will in love to Him in all His sufferings, with all holy confidence in Him, and earnest supplication to Him for deliverance, and with meekness and patience until the full time of it. And thus upon Christians, in their measure as the members of Christ's body, to enable them to endure their sufferings in like manner, after the example which their Lord has given them, the Spirit of God and of glory rests.

4. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that their sufferings are said to be the afflictions of Christ, that is, of the Head, in the members, which He interests Himself in, and is inwardly and inexpressibly touched with. "I rejoice in my sufferings for you," says the apostle, "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh," which is also true of every believer, the

sufferings which they endure in their flesh are the afflictions of Christ.

5. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that both He and they had, and have, the same chief end in view, that is, the glory of God in all their sufferings. "Father, glorify your name!" says our Lord, when He resigned up Himself into His hands to endure His greatest sufferings. And "none of us," says the apostle, "lives to himself, and no man dies to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die we die unto the Lord (that is, in all our sufferings, which are metaphorical deaths, as well as in our last suffering of natural death, we aim at the Lord's glory); whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" dedicated to His honor.

6. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that both He and they had and have an eye, in all their sufferings, to the glory that shall follow. "Christ endured the cross, for the joy (of the crown) that was set before Him," and Christians, as Moses, "endure affliction (the afflictions of God's people), as having respect unto the recompense of the reward."

7. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that both His sufferings and theirs had, and shall have, the same event, in a full deliverance from the deepest misery, and advancement to the highest glory. Sufferings, both to Christ and Christians, neither were, are, nor shall be, eternal. It was impossible that the suffering Head, by reason of the dignity of His Person and the merit of His obedience, should be held always by the bands of death; and impossible it is that the suffering members, who are the fullness of the Head, and who, as being savingly interested in His merits, are to share with Him in glory, should be held always by the cords of affliction, for "because Christ lives, Christians shall live also." "His dead men (under metaphorical as well as natural death) shall live, together with His dead body (as being mystically in Him, and by influence from Him), they shall arise (from under the deepest depression to the highest exaltation); for His dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead; awake, and sing together with Him, shall those who dwell in dust;" for, if we suffer with Him, from the same fountain cause, the love of God, for the exercise of the same graces, and to precede and prepare for the same glory according to the distinct proportion of Head and members; if we suffer under the influence of the same Spirit; if our sufferings are the afflictions of Christ; if Christ and His people have the same chief end in view—the glory of God—in all their afflictions; if both Christ and Christians have an eye in all their sufferings to the glory that shall follow; and if the sufferings of Christ and Christians have the same outcome in a full deliverance from all misery and advancement unto all glory—we may be well assured, with the apostle, that we shall also with Christ be glorified together, "For we are now partakers of the sufferings of Christ, that when His glory shall be revealed we may be glad also with exceeding joy;" and, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us (as we by grace are wrought upon by it, and prepared for) a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

Hence, then, my dear brother, let us expect trouble while in this world. Let us bless God that we do not suffer with Christ as His sufferings were penal—and that we do suffer with Him as His sufferings were filial. Let us earnestly pray for an eminent measure of the Spirit of Christ, that we, in like manner, may endure sufferings to the glory of God. Let us labor under the direction of the word and Spirit of Christ to tread in His steps, to take Him, our great Pattern, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience, and to be the "followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Let us beware that we do not lose the precious opportunities given us by affliction for the exercise of all our graces. Let us rejoice in that our sufferings are the

afflictions of Christ in our flesh, in that we have a dear, sympathizing Head, who inwardly and inexpressibly feels the sorrows of every member, accounts them His own, and is well able to support us in them, and save us from them.

Let us remember, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1:6-7. And let us expect, with all holy confidence, a like happy outcome of our troubles as Christ had of his, for we that now suffer with Him, shall hereafter be glorified together; and what the greatness of that glory will be—eye has not seen nor heart conceived—it is ineffable, and will be eternal!

O, my dear brother, it is a sweet thing to suffer with Christ—to have such a sweet companion in tribulation! Surely a believing thought of it must sweeten our bitterest potions. If Christ, the Tree of Life, is cast into the bitter waters of affliction, will He not sweeten them so well that our hearts shall freely drink them? To suffer with Christ, methinks it should make our hearts leap for joy! for if He is with us we shall not sink in sorrow; everlasting arms underneath us, will raise us from deepest sinkings. The Lord is risen, saints must rise, sorrows shall hold us not a moment beyond the appointed time, nor exceed their appointed degree. Soon our momentary light cross shall be turned into a weighty eternal crown. If we suffer with Christ we shall reign with Him, we shall be glorified together.

O this sweet word, together! Methinks it puts a glory upon glory itself—a sweetness into those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand. Our glory would not be so ineffably glorious if it were not to be enjoyed with Christ, nor the joys of heaven so ineffably sweet, if we were not to rejoice together with Christ. The once-suffering Head and the once-suffering members glorified together! O how will it enhance each other's joy in glory! The sorrows both of Christ and Christians will then be turned into perfect joy, and their eternal joy and glory so much the greater for all the time-sorrows which they endured and the deaths which they survived, to reign in life together unto ages without end.

Sorrows will not hurt us, brother, if we are enabled to live unto God under them. Nothing but sin will be bitter upon reflection; and the sorrows that we meet with, even from sin itself, through God's forgiving and subduing grace, shall be turned into the joy of victory, to His eternal praise. But oh, this killing thing, sin! It dishonors God our Father, wounds our Lord-Redeemer, and grieves the Lord our Comforter; it puts death into our comforts and a sting into our crosses. Let us beware of yielding to sin, and then we need not, with a slavish fear, dread sufferings; let us be humbled before God for all our unbelief and impatience under afflictions, and press forward most earnestly after a greater measure of faith and love—of humility, meekness, and patience—of an enduring, Christ-like spirit, under all the trials we are exercised with, for "if we (thus) suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified together."

Great grace be with you. Farewell, in the Lord.

27 - Remaining Enmity, Sin, and Ungodliness

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

It is well for us that Jesus, our elder Brother, now appears in the presence of God for us—of God our Father, who loves us—that God's first-born Son—His holy, His beloved Son, exalted at the right-hand of the Majesty in heaven—is not ashamed to call us brethren, who are so much unlike Him on the earth! How great is the wonder that He, who is surrounded with myriads of angels and archangels—those 'bright flames of love to Him' who incessantly warble out His praises—should ever cast one kind thought upon such dull, cold, lifeless pieces of earth as we sometimes feel ourselves to be! But our Lord loves us—loves us freely. Loves us infinitely— notwithstanding all our unloveliness, and ingratitude, and evil requitings of Him, for all His manifest kindness! And love binds His heart to us, and fixes His kind thoughts upon us. Loved by Him—freely, greatly, unchangeably, and eternally—we shall be remembered by Him perpetually in an infinity of flowing compassions, under all our sicknesses, our griefs, our miseries—from which by an infinite, an all-producing resolve, He will save us unto full and endless glory with Him hereafter! That love of Christ, which was strong enough to engage Him to die for us when enemies, as sinners, as ungodly—will never fail towards us, because of that remaining enmity, sin, and ungodliness, which abides and works to our grief—in the corrupt, unregenerate part of our souls, and sadly at times produces backslidings in our lives. The love of Christ will go on with its great design—to save us from all sin and misery—unto all grace and glory—with Him, unto ages without end! His love to us is infinitely great for the accomplishment of His great design—to bring us all up to be with Him where He is, to behold His glory, to be one in Him and in the Father, as He and the Father are one, by love-union and glory-communion—unto our full joy and ineffable and endless bliss!

Let us lift up our heads in faith—and with stretched-out necks in hope, let us look and long for the glory of that day. I wish you rich times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, who, having loved His own who are in the world, loves them unto the end!

28 - Lie Down in the Bosom of Christ

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in Christ—our Life, our Love, our All, You desire a line from me. What shall I write? Methinks you want to hear of your Beloved; and if His Spirit, sent from the Father and the Son, will please to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you by so weak, so unworthy a worm, it will be to our mutual joy, and the Lord shall have all the glory. It is grace unknown, my dear brother—free, rich, superabounding grace, that gave you a saving acquaintance with Christ in love—in that infinite love which is in His heart toward poor lost sinners who are enabled to look unto Him for all salvation.

Christ is a fountain of all supplies. You cannot need more than Christ has to give, is willing to bestow, and will enrich you with in your every time of need. It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. All fullness dwells in Christ, to supply us in all our emptiness. Do you see your nakedness? Christ's name is, "The Lord our Righteousness." Do you groan under your unholiness of heart and life? Christ is made of God unto us sanctification, to present such defiled worms as us, perfectly holy before God in His own personal purity now, and to maintain, increase, and perfect that purity of heart which is begun in us by His Holy Spirit, until we are perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, our holy Head. Does your folly, your inability to know the things of God in their greatness and glory, grieve you? Christ of God is made unto us wisdom. It is His office, as our prophet, to teach the most ignorant souls who come to Him. He will teach the meek his way. It is His joy to teach us, and His teachings are efficacious to those who humbly wait upon Him for the same. Does your spiritual poverty distress, and your spiritual enemies afflict you? Christ is made of God unto us redemption. Our Redeemer is great and strong. His redemption by price and power is and shall be perfect. Your Redeemer has paid all your debts; He has bought you and your inheritance. Your whole person, made perfect, shall be taken by Him into His own embrace to enjoy the most intimate communion with Him and His Father—in love, life, and glory—to a blessed eternity! And can your heart conceive, my dear brother, the one-half, the thousandth part of that bliss, that vast inheritance of God, of which, by Christ, as a believer in Him, you are now made an heir, and of which, by Him, you shall shortly be a possessor? I tell you no! Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, in a mortal state, to conceive of those great things, according to their greatness, which God has prepared for those who love Him, to be enjoyed by them in immortal glory!

Come then, my dear brother, come by faith, and lie down in the bosom of Christ, in His Person and fullness, as made yours by infinite love. For, this, this Jesus, is the rest, and this the refreshing with which the weary soul may rest. The love of Christ to you, and your salvation in Him, are unchangeable amid all the changes of your frames. The good work of God, begun in your soul, shall be performed until the day of Christ. Abide in Him by faith, and cleave unto him by love. In every path of duty follow on to know the Lord, and you shall know Him to your full and endless joy and glory!

29 - Our Light and Momentary Troubles

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sister, Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

It is the pleasure of our dear Father to exercise you in a very particular manner, and to continue it long upon you. But be not cast down thereat, as if some strange thing had happened, for as many as the Lord loves He rebukes and chastens. But it may be you will say, "My affliction is very uncommon, has lasted a great while, and it is likely to endure so long as I am in this world."

Well, be it so. Yet remember that God's special love to you ordained this particular trial, and His everlasting kindness keeps it still upon you. This was the means Infinite Wisdom pitched on for the display of boundless love to you. By this you are to be made conformable to Christ in sufferings and fitted for a conformity to Him in glory. Since free grace has saved you—give it leave to carry on your salvation in its own way. What though you pass through much tribulation, the Kingdom is at the end. I doubt not but the Lord at times has opened much of His love to your soul in the present afflictions, but the brightest discoveries are ahead. The great opening of God's heart, in the gift of every trial, is reserved for us until we get over Jordan, on the other side of death, into the land of promise. Then we shall remember all the way the Lord led us through the wilderness, and see it was the right way to the city of God.

Then the mysteries of Divine Providence shall be unfolded, the cloud taken off every dark dispensation, and the veil from our understandings. There the secret springs of boundless love, infinite wisdom, and Almighty power which ordained, managed, and overruled every scene of providence, for the glory of God and our advantage, shall be laid open, for we shall see as we are seen. We shall bless God when we come to heaven for every trial, even the bitterest, sharpest, longest affliction that attended our mortal life; because we shall see how the Lord uninterruptedly carried on the designs of His own glory and our salvation by every change that passed over us.

Meanwhile, we must live by faith, and labor after an increasing submission to the Divine Will under the sorest rebukes; and bless God for every stroke, until grace is swallowed up in glory, when our wills, with the highest complacency, shall everlastingly flow into the will of God. And even now we have reason not only to be patient, but also to rejoice and glory in tribulation. And were the eye of our faith, strong enough to pierce the cloud of afflictive providences, and discern the love of our Father's heart, which, as an infinite deep, couches beneath, and is the spring of every dispensation, we would sing in sorrow, take pleasure in distresses, and glorify God in the fires!

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (2 Corinthians 4:17) There are three things comprised in these words, which I desire you may be enabled frequently to meditate upon.

First, the lightness of the saints' affliction.

Secondly, the shortness of it.

Thirdly, the advantage of all their present trials.

First, the lightness of the saints' affliction. "Our light affliction." It is not said the afflictions of the world are light; but OUR affliction is light. And it is so, if compared with what we have deserved, and the damned in hell endure. Light, if compared with what Christ once bore, when for us he was the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Light, because by virtue of Christ's suffering for us in our room and stead, the curse is taken out of all our afflictions. Again, they are light, because Omnipotent strength is engaged to support us under them; underneath are the everlasting arms.

We have not, are not, shall not be left to go through any trial alone. The God of Jacob is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Lord Jesus is our sweet companion in tribulation. He is with us, to sympathize with us in our sorrows, to sustain us under our burdens, to pardon all our unbelief and impatience when in the furnace, and at last completely and gloriously to deliver us and bring us forth as gold seven times refined. No affliction, indeed, for the present is joyous, but grievous to our frail flesh. It is so in itself, but much more so to us; because we live so much by sense, and so little by faith. Every trial that passes over us has a light as well as a dark side. And we should look upon every affliction with a double view; as it is oppressing and grieving to weak nature, it is, in itself, evil; and calls for submission to the Divine will. But then, as the same affliction is viewed as flowing from God's love, and effectually managed for His glory and our advantage, so it is good, and ought to be a matter of our joy and thanksgiving.

Let us leave it then to those who have no interest in the God of all Grace to think afflictions heavy; for woe to them that are alone. But as for us, that are savingly interested in God (in all His Persons and in all His perfections as engaged in covenant for our good), let us go on rejoicing in tribulation, esteeming all our afflictions, as indeed they are, light.

Secondly, the shortness of the saints' affliction is matter of great consolation; it is but for a moment. A moment is but a short space—the smallest division of time; and unto this of a moment are our longest afflictions compared. Suppose they should last as long as we are in this world; yet, even our whole life if compared with a vast eternity is but like a moment; and as Mr. Dod well says, "What can be great to him that counts the world nothing? or long, to him that counts his life but a span?"

Oh! were we more frequent in our converse with eternity, it would make the afflictions of this present time appear short. Did we live more in the views of approaching glory, we would remember our afflictions as waters that pass away; that are here one moment and gone the next. But alas! such is our folly, that we are taking thought for a great while to come, and so make our 'imagined future trials' present distresses; whereas, were we under the most pressing weights, and did take thought for no more than the day (and sufficient to it is the evil thereof), living by faith on the borders of glory, as just entering into the mansions of rest, it would alleviate our sorrows, and make the longest trial appear short. Could we thus reason with ourselves every day, "Well, I have got one day nearer home; the afflictions of the past day I shall never go through any more, and perhaps before I see another day in this world I may see glory's day—a morning that will have no clouds nor evening to succeed it, no sorrows, sin, nor death to darken its luster!" Oh, what a means would this be to increase our patience, and make us of an enduring spirit! And what matter

of comfort is it that while our short-lived afflictions last, Christ will be with us in them! He is with us when we pass through the waters, that the rivers do not overflow us, that the swelling waves of affliction do not overwhelm us; and when we walk through the fires, that the flames kindle not upon us, that fiery trials do not consume us. The priest's feet were to stand in Jordan until all Israel were fully passed over. So our dear Lord Jesus will stand among the distresses, dividing the waters before us, until all His children are fully passed through them. His presence with us in affliction will make it light; and His delivering-kindness out of it will make it short.

Thirdly, the advantage of the saints' affliction is also an encouragement to faith and patience—it works for us. But what does it work? Why, no less than glory! And it works glory for us as it prepares us for it. Glory was prepared for us, and settled upon us, in God's everlasting covenant with His Son, before the world was. And affliction is a means Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Grace makes use of to prepare us for glory; that glory which was prepared for us before time, and will last to an eternal space beyond it. And who would think it much to endure affliction, who sees it is but for the trial and perfecting of his graces, and that the exercise of each might be found unto praise, honor, and glory at Christ's appearing.

Now then, let us bring things to the balance of the Sanctuary, and learn to judge of them aright. Let us amass together all the afflictions of a believer's life, and put them in one scale, and glory in the other, and see if that does not infinitely outweigh them, especially, if we cast in the additional weights that are on glory's side! Here is affliction on the one side, but glory on the other; light affliction, for a moment, but a weight of glory, yes, an exceeding, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Well might the Apostle say, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

30 - The Bosom of His Eternal Love!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister in Christ,

Oh, what heart can conceive or tongue express a thousandth part of that joy and glory which He has reserved for His people in the world to come, when He will bid them enter into His own joy, and Himself will be their everlasting light, and as their God, their glory! Oh, then we shall have the light of life, of glory-life, in such manner and measure as far surpasses all our present thought!

Come, lie down by faith, in the bosom of His eternal Love! It is a sweet, soft bed, that will delight and refresh you exceedingly. Here is a basin of heavenly wine, or rather a sea of boundless bliss! Drink your fill, bathe your soul in pleasures, and shout the glories, the fullness, the praises of the strong Jehovah amid all your felt emptiness, weakness, and imperfections! So shall you be exceeding joyful and fruitful, and your obedience highly pleasing to your God and Father in the Son of His love. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

31 - My Ingratitude, Unkindness, and Unfruitfulness

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother,

Oh, the sweet whispers of God's free distinguishing kindness which I hear at times melt my soul down. Sometimes the Lord draws near to my spirit and talks with me about His love, and of the great things He has done and will do for me. And then I fall down in the dust before Him, acknowledge my iniquity, bewail my subtlety, and loath myself in my own sight for all my abominations, when I see that He is pacified towards me for all that I have done. Oh, it is well for me that not only the salvation of my soul, but all the work the Lord has designed me to do for Him in this world, stands alone upon His free sovereign grace! Oh, not an inch of service would ever have been laid out for me, if rich, free grace had not cast the lot! I wonder that the Lord should do anything for me, above all His children, because I am so vile, so unfit and unworthy! But the grace of God is His own; like Himself, infinite; and a sovereign right He has to bestow it where he pleases; He may do what He will with His own! But oh, my ingratitude, unkindness, and unfruitfulness breaks my heart; and often I groan under an insensibility of divine kindness. And glad am I that, when rid of a body of sin and death, I shall give free grace all the glory, and never sin against it to the days of eternity! Meantime, pray for me, my brother, that I may love God greatly, increasingly, and serve Him much in the little I have aimed to do for him, and in that very little which yet may remain to be done before I enter into everlasting rest. That the grace of Christ may be with your spirit, and His hand with you in your work, to the glory of His name, the good of His people, and your own present joy and future crown, is my hearty desire.

32 - When We Are in the Furnace

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sister, Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied, from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, by the blessed Comforter.

I understand that you are exercised both with affliction of body and darkness of soul, and I sympathize with you herein. But think it not strange, my dear sister, concerning the fiery trials you meet with, as if some strange thing had happened unto you. Remember the Lord has His fire in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem (Isaiah 31:9), to refine, not to destroy His people. God sends afflictions upon His children for their good. Sin and Satan indeed aim at our destruction herein, but God bounds their rage and overrules their malice to issue in His own glory and our salvation. The design of Sin and Satan is the destruction of our graces as well as of our persons, and therefore they blow up the fire of affliction to the utmost, and would continue it until we are consumed. But "Hold," says the Lord, "My children are my gold, precious in my esteem, and they must pass through the fire to be refined, but not lie there until they suffer loss." And therefore, when we are in the furnace our God sits by to see that the fire be not too hot, nor continued too long upon us, as the refiner watches his gold, manages it while in the furnace, and takes it out thence when it is fully purified. "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver." Malachi 3:3

Well, then, my dear sister, since you are one of those who are precious in the sight of the Lord you must pass through the fire of affliction, but since it is the Lord's fire, which He has appointed, which He manages, and which he will restrain at His pleasure, trust yourself in the hands of your infinitely wise and gracious Refiner and you shall come out of it both with present and eternal advantage. This affliction, as an instrument in the hand of God the Almighty agent, is at work upon you, and for you, to exercise and increase your graces here, and to prepare you for your future crown. Therefore, endure the trial, for, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." James 1:12 But it may be you will say, "Aye, if I was sure I was one that loved God, I would patiently wait for and expect a happy outcome, but I am afraid lest I should deceive myself, deceive others, and at last come short of that rest which remains for the people of God." As for these your fears, and ten thousand more of a like nature which may arise in your heart in a time of darkness, they are altogether groundless, and though they may rob you of your comfort they cannot rob you of your safety in Christ, nor of that inheritance which is reserved for you in Heaven. No, blessed be God, you are still just where free grace set you; God has fixed you in His Son, and laid you, by faith, upon Him, the Rock of Ages; and now your salvation stands as immovable as the rock on which it is founded. The rain may descend, the floods come, and the winds blow, all kinds of afflictions and temptations together may beat vehemently against your faith of safety in Christ, but your security in Him shall never fall, because founded upon a rock which is able to bear the greatest weights which are laid upon it, and to secure the building from all danger in the

greatest stress of weather which can possibly befall it. The rock of immutability is still beneath you, and unless Christ could sink, the salvation of your soul—that leans upon Him can never fall. You may fall as to your frames, but you can never sustain one shake as to your state. No, "The foundation God has laid in Zion is a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, and he who believes on Him shall not be confounded" (Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6). And now, let all the objections be brought out that all the legions of devils and armies of corruptions combined can raise against the salvation of that sinner that looks unto Christ for life, and down they must fall before the grace of this promise—God's word shall stand, to the eternal salvation of that soul and the confusion of all its enemies!

Into His arms I commit you, earnestly desiring that happy morning of Divine favor which shall arise upon your soul when the short night of your present weeping is over; Christ will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and "your joy shall no man take from you." And meanwhile, though clouds and darkness cover you, commotions and tempests shake your mind, yet all is clear as to your state in the upper region of Christ's love!

33 - We Are Almost Home!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear Sister in the Lord,

We are almost home! A few more trials, and then farewell, trials, forever! The bosom of Christ, the glory of the heavenly state is ready for us. In a little while, we shall be fully made fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Do not grieve that you are left alone, and have few friends that you can open your heart to, for your dear Lord Jesus will never leave nor forsake you; and He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. You have had sweet experience of Christ's friendship ever since you were first acquainted with Him; and His love towards you, His care for you, and His power to save you are still as great as ever.

Time has not altered Christ's heart; no, nor all the weaknesses and provocations He has seen in you, but having loved you anciently, freely, and fully, He will love you eternally. Your Jesus, your best Friend, who has cared for you all along, will never cast you off. He has engraved you upon the palms of His hands, and your walls are continually before Him. Creatures may forget—the tenderest mother may forget her nursing child—but your Jesus, in His boundless compassions, will not, cannot forget you. He will know your soul in adversity, when all other refuges fail you, and no man cares for your soul. As birds flying to support and defend their young, so will the Lord make haste to help you, for His care for you is infinite, and He will keep you as the apple of His eye. You are one of Christ's jewels, and His heart is the cabinet in which He will keep you; and from His heart-care of you, His providential care for you shall be shown. And as to the power of Christ, He is the Lord Almighty, and His everlasting arms will never grow weary of bearing you and all your burdens. The Lord well knew that His people would need to be dandled by Him and carried by Him for a long while—that they would at times be subject to fears, from their own weakness and unworthiness, and from the occurrence of new difficulties; and from hence that they would be anxious how they would get the rest of their way through the wilderness. And therefore he says, "Listen to me, all you who are left in Israel. I created you and have cared for you since before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." (Isaiah 46:3, 4).

Oh, my dear sister, there is grace enough in this promise to carry you safely and comfortably through all your remaining trials, even down to death and up to glory. Therefore, trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. He is your ever-living and ever-loving Friend. Live upon Him for all in all, and as your all, and in all things labor to live to Him; so shall the name of our Lord Jesus be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the Will of God and our Father. Our dear Lord is exceedingly kind to unworthy me. He heaps favors upon me, and surrounds me with mercies, because He will be gracious—even to me, a poor, vile, hell-deserving sinner. Oh, it is well for us that grace reigns through the righteousness of Jesus, and that we, receiving abundance of grace, shall reign with Him. Oh, bless the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together for all His great goodness, and His wonderful works for poor, sinful me. And pray for me, that I may be made holiness unto the Lord, very fruitful to the glory of His name, and

very useful to His dear and tender lambs. All glory to my dear Lord! Oh, how great and many have been the precious thoughts of God's kindness towards me of old, which daily open in new wonders to my view!

I wish you a rich increase of all grace and peace, through the once slain, now reigning Lamb!

34 - These Cross-Providences

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

I am sometimes apt to be grieved at how things happen; but when I think that God fulfills His sure purposes for His glory and His people's good, by things which to us seem contingencies, and that He who shuts up our way in one place opens it in another—my spirit is at rest.

You will like these cross-providences well, when you see them overruled by infinite wisdom and grace to meet in their designed center—the glory of God, and your greatest advantage. We must believe now; we shall see before long. Meanwhile, O for a meek and humble, a patient, Christ-like spirit!

Trials do us no harm, nor will they much afflict us, if we are enabled to behave well under them. But if we foolishly look off from the 'supreme hand of God' therein, unto 'creatures', and our spirits fret and chafe at instruments—that wounds us instantly, and weakens our hands exceedingly. In patience let us possess our souls, and we shall see that our all-wise and all-gracious Lord has done, does, and will do, all things well. Most surely every man disquiets himself in vain—God's counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. Would we have things go otherwise than well—any better than best of all? And thus all things always go well for us in Christ—for us who are the delight, the care, and charge of Prince Emanuel—upon those mighty shoulders the whole weight of government is devolved by His and our Father!

35 - We Live in a World of Snares and Sin

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Honored Sir,

We live in a world of snares and sins, with which our feet are often entangled and defiled. Have you been caught in any evil net? Jesus, who loved and died for you, will set you free. Have you gotten defiled? Your Savior, in sympathizing love, in condescending grace, with a joyful readiness, will wash your feet. And are you under present rebuke? As many as He loves He chastens. Since the rod is in your Father's hand, to answer all the ends of His most gracious heart towards you, there will be glorious deliverance from it, in the best way and time. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, as He delivered just Lot out of Sodom, whose righteous soul was vexed with seeing and hearing of their wicked deeds.

36 - Bottomless, Boundless, Endless Love!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister in our precious Lord,

What was there in us that God should set His heart upon us? Were we better than those that perish under His wrath? No, in no way! For myself, I must say that I am the most vile and ungrateful of all, and not worthy to be put among the children. And yet, how goodly has been my portion—how pleasant my heritage—because grace reigns, and Jehovah's love is free! Help me, my dear sister, to praise the Lord for His free grace, which has been so exceeding abundant towards me, and also to mourn before Him for all my poor returns to my kind Father, my dear Lord Jesus, and the blessed Comforter. No man, no angel, no finite being could bear with my provocations, but they would have cast me from off all favor as an object of their just hatred. But oh, behold, though I am a lump of sin, a mass of uncleanness, a hell of iniquity—though my neck is an iron sinew and my brow brass—though I am bent to backsliding from God and have done evil things, yet Jehovah has not, will not cast me off, no, not for all that I have done! Yes, so far is He from casting me out of His favor as an object of His wrath, which I have justly deserved, that He still rest in His love towards me, rejoicing over me with singing; and all this, through a crucified Jesus, consistent with His strict justice and flaming holiness. Oh, infinite love!—bottomless, boundless, endless love!

Oh, love passing knowledge, the knowledge of men and angels in both worlds, through all time and unto all eternity! It has the heights, depths, lengths and breadths of the Godhead in it; and into this vast sea of glory shall all the vessels of mercy be cast when unclothed of mortal, sinful flesh, and there we shall take our fill of new delights unto ages without end, but shall never be able to comprehend incomprehensible love! The gift of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, is a pledge of that eternal love-communion we shall have with Him when sin, sorrow and time shall flee away. And all those sweet emanations of divine love which are poured out through Christ upon our souls here, unto joy unspeakable and full of glory, are so many sweet foretastes of that fullness of joy—those rivers of pleasure—we shall have in His presence at His right hand for evermore!

37 - In Every Crumb of Blessing

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Brother,

God is the God of His people collectively, and yet He is the God of every one of them individually, as entirely as if there was never another that shared the same privilege, when yet there is an innumerable multitude as equally and entirely interested in His great Being! And as every saint, even to the least, has a God, and all in God for his own, so in every mercy cast upon him, to the very least, he has God's great Self. He says to every one of His children, I am your God; and in every favor He bestows upon us we have Himself as such. Oh, I see with pleasure, I feel to soul-satisfaction, that the least favors are exceedingly great and weighty as our great God is in them. In every crumb of blessing, if we saw the God of mercy, and all the fullness of God therein, oh, how full, rich, and glorious would every mercy appear to be; and how abundantly thankful would we be for the very least!

38 - Oh, the Heights, Depths, Lengths, and Breadths of Grace!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in Christ,

Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied. May the God of all grace reward you with the more abundant displays of His love—His free, undeserved, rich and endless love!

Oh, my brother, I am surely the most unworthy of love from God, of any that ever found grace in His sight. Hell, the hottest hell, is my desert! Oh, what a sinner am I! The sin of my nature, that deluge of filth and guilt which overspread all my parts and powers as soon as quickened in the womb, and in which I was born—together with my actual sins, my going astray from the womb, when I did nothing else but sin—until mighty grace laid hold of me! These sins of mine I saw, when the Lord opened my eyes, did deserve the damnation of hell—and I wondered at the infinite forbearance of God in allowing me to live so long out of hell, when I was such fit fuel for everlasting burnings! And I could have justified Him if He had sent me down to the pit the next moment. But oh, behold, I was a vessel of mercy; and therefore the Lord made known unto me the riches of His glory, not only in sparing, but in pardoning mercy also. He not only spared me from hell, but forever delivered me from going down to the pit by the ransom which He had found—by His own Son, to bear my sin, to be made a curse, and to die for me! By this mighty ransom—this infinite price of the life of the Son of God laid down for my redemption, did the God of all grace let me go free. And oh, the riches, the exceeding riches of His grace, which He then displayed, in the forgiveness of all my sins through the Lamb's blood! Where sin had abounded grace did much more abound!

Oh, how freely did my heavenly Father receive me, a poor prodigal, when under His own drawings I came to Him by Jesus Christ! He did not upbraid me with my vile transgressions, nor deal with me in wrath according to my sins—but graciously opened His arms and let me into His bosom—His heart's love—no more to be separated from His love, nor to fall out of love's arms forever! No! having loved me with an everlasting love, and thus manifested His love through the slain Lamb, He resolved to love me forever—that He would never cast me off, nor cast me out of His free love for all that I had done.

Oh, astonishing! That abundant pardon which my heavenly Father then granted, and I received, carried in the bosom of it not only the forgiveness of my past and present sins, but of my future sins also—of all my transgressions, even to my life's end. He forgave me all trespasses—resolved to be merciful to my unrighteousness and to remember my sins no more. He took away my filthy garments and clothed me with change of clothing—put a ring on my hand and shoes on my feet—set me with Him at His table—made a feast for me of the flesh and blood of His own Son—and rejoiced over me with singing! Oh, the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of grace! And with this wondrous love of God He melted my hard heart, revived my dying soul, put a new song of joy and praise into my mouth, and drew me to give up myself unto Him, to be entirely His forever. Oh, then I said I would not transgress, when He had thus broken my yoke and burst my bonds, and brought me into liberty—the glorious liberty of the sons of God! But ah! I have not

rendered to the Lord according to all the great things which He has done for me, but have ill-requited Him for all His kindness. I am indeed bent to backsliding from God, and have dealt very treacherously with my gracious Father. I see, to my shame and grief, the seeds of all sin in my vile heart—a hell of iniquity there! I feel that my carnal mind is enmity, entire and irreconcilable enmity, against God—and such are the ebullitions of this unsearchable deep, this horrid fountain, that I am frequently struck with amazement that I am not sent down to hell—that my life is not among the unclean—that so vile a sinner has not a portion among the damned, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone!

Ah, not because I do not deserve a place there am I spared—but because Jehovah will be gracious unto whom He will be gracious, and show mercy on whom He will show mercy. Oh, if the love of God was not free, sovereign, and independent of my goodness—which as the morning cloud and the early dew quickly passes away—I would perish still, and sink into the pit with the additional weight of 'abused kindness'.

Oh, my sins, since the Lord manifested His love to me, I see to be of a greater guilt, a deeper dye, than all that I was guilty of before I knew the Lord, or rather was known of Him. And these, in a special manner, break my heart and humble me before the Lord, when He breaks in upon my soul with the displays of His infinite favor. For lo! the love of God and the blood of Christ are depths that infinitely surpass and swallow up all my sin! Oh, what are my vast, numberless, aggravated transgressions, to the boundless depth of Jehovah's love—to the infinite merit of the blood of the Son of God? Here, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, grace reigns and triumphs gloriously over all my abounding sin. It not only began to reign thus in the first glorious displays thereof made to my poor soul when just ready to perish, but it reigns still—and will reign on in its infinite, majestic state, until all my sins, which are now pardoned, shall be fully subdued and utterly destroyed out of my nature—until all sin and death are swallowed up in the victory of eternal life to the praise of its own glory. Oh, glorious grace!

Thus, my dear brother, according to this grace has my God hitherto dealt with me. He has followed me with His kindness, His rich, free, everlasting kindness. And thus He will deal with you. According to His own heart has He done, will He do, great things for you; and not according to 'your worthiness'. Your God did not wait for your goodness before He fixed His love on you, nor seek it as a motive thereof—but from His own free heart took all His motives from within Himself to love you. And therefore they must needs be strong and invariable like Himself, who is the Lord that changes not. And this great, free, and invariable love of God was fixed upon you in the Beloved of His Soul, who is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. So that, as long as God's love abides, which is as permanent as His being; as long as Christ endures, who is the same, and whose years fail not; and as long as Christ stands in the love of God for you, and you stand in the love of God in Him—so long will Jehovah love you!

39 - The New Birth

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Friend, Grace unto you and peace be multiplied. . . .

I hear you say, "I greatly want to know whether I am one of those who are born again." There are two ways whereby a soul comes to know that it is born again. The first is by the revelation of the Spirit bearing witness to the soul in some word or other where this truth is declared. The second is by His enabling the soul to discern its own acts in Divine light, and to draw conclusions from its discerned acts of grace that it has the principle; and in both these ways the Lord can give you satisfaction in an instant if it pleases Him. But, generally speaking, it is some time before a child of God can draw steady conclusions of its being new-born from its own feelings of the new life; and therefore you may be new-born though you do not know it! A living infant, you know, when first born into the world has life, but it does not know it. It had a secret life from its first quickening in the womb, and from thence a secret motion; but as soon as it is born it begins to live visibly to others, but yet the child itself knows nothing of the matter. It cries, desires the breast, tastes the milk, and is satisfied, sees the light and feels the heat with pleasure, all of which are visible demonstrations of its life to bystanders, but the child knows nothing of it, because it is not capable of self-reflection. And thus it is with a newborn soul; there is a secret work of God upon all the heart, a principle of life given, and from thence some secret motions and faint stirrings now and then, under begun convictions, before it is brought forth into the visible life of grace, which discovers itself as soon as ever the soul is born again, in the breath or cry of the new creature, its desires, its discernings, and its enjoyments, which, when communicated to grown Christians, they know such a soul is one of Christ's new-born babes, although this child itself is not yet capable so to reflect upon its own acts as to conclude its life from thence. And if this be your case, that you can not pass a judgment from what you have experienced that you have the life of grace, or are newborn, then tell me, as a rational creature, how it is with you, for as such you can tell what the feelings of the soul have been, although as a new creature you may not yet be come to such an exercise of your spiritual senses as to know those feelings to be feelings of grace, and a certain demonstration of your being born again.

Well, a living child sees. What have you seen? Have you seen yourself to be a sinner by nature as well as by practice, in heart as well as life, and that you are utterly undone, and must perish forever without a saving interest in Jesus Christ, as being utterly unable to do anything to deliver yourself from the wrath to come? Have you seen your own righteousness to be but filthy rags, and your own strength to do any good but weakness? Again, have you seen as excellency in Christ, as a complete Savior, that is exceedingly suitable to your case as a lost sinner? And have you any discernings of the glory of God's free grace and mercy in Christ? You have then the new creature's eye, discerning faith, even the faith of God's elect. And from these discernings have you been made to cry unto the Lord, to lament your sinfulness before Him, and to supplicate His Throne for mercy, praying Him to give you Christ whatever He denies you of? You have then the

new creature's breath, which flows from none but those that have the new creature's life.

Again, what are your desires? Are the longings of your soul after the free grace and mercy of God in Christ, as held forth in the Promises, those breasts of consolation? You have then the new creature's appetite, and are certainly born of the Word and Spirit of God.

Once more, What are your enjoyments? What satisfies and pleases your soul best? Has the free grace of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ been sweet and savory to you in a promise or in an ordinance, to the refreshing and satisfying of your soul for some moments, just so long as you have had the breast in your mouth, the grace of the promise milked out to you? Then you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and are one of Christ's new-born babes. And have you ever felt any refreshing warmth and comfort in the love of God, which, like fire, has warmed and heated your cold soul? You have then that sensation which is proper to a new creature, and it is evident in these respects that you are certainly born again, and as such you shall see, that is, enjoy the kingdom of God as a kingdom of grace here, which is a kingdom of power, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; and you shall enter into the kingdom of glory hereafter, as being made fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; for he who is your God has prepared for you a city, and wrought your soul for this self-same thing, there being never a soul in the world that is thus wrought upon but is a vessel of mercy prepared unto glory, by a saving work of the Holy Spirit upon it, as well as in the purpose of God concerning it.

Go on, therefore, as a new-born babe, to desire the sincere milk of the Word—the unmixed grace of the Gospel—that you may grow thereby, for it is on purpose for you to maintain and increase the begun life of grace in your soul, until it is perfected in the life of glory. Rejoice, then, you lamb of Christ, for you are exceedingly safe under your kind Shepherd's care. He will gather you with His arm, and carry you in His bosom; He will lead you into green pastures, beside the still waters, and make you to lie down safely.

40 - Infant Grace & Giant Sin

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam, Do not fear because you see so little grace in you that you have not the truth of grace; and because you see so much sin that you are all sin. For consider, grace is yet but in its infant state; and corruption, that makes against it such great opposition, is like an enraged, mighty giant. And is it any wonder to see an infant knocked down frequently, and laid for dead sensibly, by the wrathful hand of a giant, and especially by a giant, an irreconcilable enemy, that dwells with the infant, and seeks its destruction continually? No! A marvelous wonder it is that the power of sin, influenced by Satan, has not long since utterly slain the life of grace in you, in me, in all the called of God, and left it neither root nor branch! And whence is this? Oh, it is because that little spark of the life of grace in us is in an inseparable union to an immense fullness of ever-flaming grace—life in Christ! So that, until sin and Satan can pluck Christ down from His high Throne in Heaven, they can never totally destroy the life of grace which is His life in us! Attempt it they will, and prevail against us in part, and for a time they may; but we, like Gad, though overcome by a troop, will be overcomers at last, and made more than conquerors through the love and blood of our incarnate God, our all-triumphant Head!

Therefore, dear Madam, in the Lord's name let us set up our banner against sin and Satan, and go forth to the fight as those that are already blessed with a complete victory in Christ. And to cheer our spirits, let us consider that stronger is the Lord who is in us than all the force of the enemy that can possibly be against us; that 'infant grace' is and shall be maintained in life, and raised to its perfection by an Almighty arm; and that by the omnipotence of an Infinite God, the 'giant sin' shall have a full and eternal destruction! And then to Him we will forever shout Salvation! Mercy and peace be with you.

41 - Transcendent, Soul-Attracting Glories

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

I sympathize with you in your trials and trust the Lord will do you good by all, while He makes them a means to exercise your graces and to prepare you for your crown. Oh, that glory reserved for us in heaven! That incorruptible, undefiled, and unfadeable inheritance of which we are now heirs and shall before long be possessors! How delightfully shall our capacious souls drink their fill of these rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. We shall be done then with all our bitter things, sin and the effects of it, and be filled with the heavenly sweets of that everlasting feast prepared for us in the immediate vision of God and the Lamb to eternity. My longing soul oftentimes stretches forth the wings of its desires after this glory, and is greatly comforted in believing views of that life and immortality which I shall enter into when this earthly tabernacle is taken down, which, through diseases and weakness is often, in my own apprehension, just ready to crumble into its original dust.

Oh, the transcendent, soul-attracting glories of that house, that building of God, eternal in the heavens, which I know through grace is prepared for me! I groan, being burdened in this tabernacle by reason of the sinfulness of my soul and the weakness of my body, both which hinder me from loving and serving my God as I would; and I long for immortality, not merely that I would be unclothed, but clothed with the glory prepared for me there. The thoughts of death, as it will be to me an entering into life, have been very pleasant to me of late; and if a distant glimpse of that glory be so sweet, even while our views of it are so clouded with unbelief and darkness, what a ravishing prospect shall we have when taken home to be forever with the Lord, and shall see with the veil cast off!

42 - The Lord Can Work by Whom He Will

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

I am glad that you see your own exceeding vileness. The exceeding riches of God's free grace in using you will be thereby the more abundantly displayed in your sight. We are indeed, Sir, in what the Lord does by us, "like the tools that the workman takes into his hand, by which he does his work as pleases him;" only there is this difference—the workman chooses tools that are fit for his work, and not such as will be troublesome and offensive to him therein. But the Lord chooses the worst, the basest, the vilest things to work with, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of us, and the exceeding riches of His grace displayed—while our unworthiness and vileness serve as a foil to commend and reflect His infinite glory!

I am sure of this—that the Lord takes the worst, else He had never taken vile, provoking me, to do the least service by. But so it is, because grace reigns, and forever shall free grace have all the glory, while I, humbled before the majesty thereof and happy under its glorious shine, do loath myself in my own sight for all my abominations. The Lord can work by whom He will. And to show His power and grace, He takes the most unworthy and unfit, and makes them fit for His work. He puts a value upon worthless worms as if they were well deserving, and upon their work as if it was well done, whereas, all the good that was done was from Himself, and all the evil that attended us in doing of it He casts into the depths of the sea—into the infinite depths of His pardoning grace and the merit of the Redeemer's blood. This is the Lord! This is our God!

Truly, we are like knotty, cross-grained wood, which requires much skill, labor, and patience in the workman that works it, and a variety of instruments to be used upon it to bring it to that order, beauty and usefulness which other wood is easily wrought unto. But the Lord, our glorious worker, will not give over working upon such knotty, cross-grained pieces as we, nor will He ever become weary of His work, because, in His infinite, free, unchangeable love, He has taken us into His own hand to work us for Himself, and is firmly resolved that He will off with all our knots and ruggedness, whatever it cost Him, whatever ways and means to effect it, and put such a beauty, usefulness, and glory upon us, even upon us, the worst pieces that could be found, as therein and thereby to show His art, power, and patience as God, and the exceeding riches of His grace, upon us the vessels of mercy, whom in His eternal counsels and designs, He had afore prepared unto endless glory.

He is resolved to bring us up to that pattern of glory which He had in His eye; to make us perfectly conformed to the image of His Son in holiness and glory; and for this great good, all things, as so many instruments in His hand, the great, the Almighty Agent does jointly, harmoniously and continually work together.

43 - Does the Lion of Hell Roar at You?

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear Brother in our precious Lord, The Lamb who died for us is worthy to reign over us. What a glory then must it be to mortal, sinful worms, to be the servants of Zion's King! My dear, dear brother, you are married unto the Lord, and nothing must separate between you and Him. The nearest relations must not do it. A house and home must not do it. A trade and business in the world must not do it. No, nor your own life neither, if called to lay it down for the honor of Christ, who bought you with His blood. The Lamb's bride, forsaking all others, must cleave unto Him in life and in death, and follow Him, if called to it, through tribulation and distress, famine and nakedness, peril and sword. And well she may, since none of these shall be able to separate her from the Lamb's love. Oh, my brother, Jesus is yours, forever yours. And in Him you have all, if you were stripped of everything else. As having nothing, by faith you may possess all things in Christ, your goodly heritage, your present and eternal lot, your full, soul-satisfying and everlasting portion! Never fear any need, while Christ has all and is your all. Put Him for a well while passing through Baca's valley, a world of sorrows, and you can lack nothing. This everlasting spring of bliss will flow out upon you in rich streams of supply, to your full joy, and you shall sing unto it. Never fear fainting under the cross while Christ has cordials enough to support your spirits, and while His love and word bind Him to give them. Does the lion of hell roar at you? flee as a tender lamb to Judah's Lion, who is stronger than he—King Jesus will defend you well. In a word, fear neither man nor devils, things present nor things to come, but follow on to know, love, and serve the Lord, and your joy shall be full here, and your glory great hereafter. Oh, my brother, think nothing too dear to part with for Christ, who parted with His all for you! He left his Father's house, His crown and throne above for you, to endure pain, sorrow, and shame below! And shall your little house and home, and comforts you enjoy therein, if called to leave it for Him, be an insuperable mountain in your way to ascend where Jesus is? The way to heaven is up-hill; but our Lord is with us every step of it. And when He pleases He gives us the feet of hinds to skip over mountains, or down they shall flow at His presence. Difficulties shall not be insuperable to the Lamb's followers, since He goes before them to prepare their way for them, and brings up the feeble of the flock by His omnipotent grace, to inherit with Him eternal glory. In the spirit of Jesus then, and for His honor, endure the cross, and soon our Lord will turn it into a bright and endless crown!

44 - Heart-Ravishing and Soul-Attracting

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in our most precious Jesus, Your last kind letter I most thankfully received; the Lord made it sweet and savory to my taste. I rejoice before God, and give thanks to Him for the rich display of His kindness towards you, for the bright manifestations of His everlasting love, through the bleeding Lamb with which you have been so highly favored. It is sweet indeed, heart-ravishing and soul-attracting, to be with Christ on the Mount for a few moments, to behold His glory by faith. It is no wonder that when we are blessed with a glance of His infinite beauty, who has the fairest face in both worlds, that we are winged with a desire to see Him as He is, without a veil or intervening cloud, to a blessed eternity. It is spiritually natural to the newborn, when they have a glimpse of the glory of Christ, to long for the full and immediate vision of that infinitely bright and glorious object, in whom all glories meet and forever shine with transforming rays. The language of such souls at such times is—

"Nothing but glory can suffice The appetite of grace, I long for Christ with restless eyes, I languish for His face." And with the full enjoyment of His blessed self, and with the endless vision of His infinite glory, shall every such longing soul be satisfied.

I rejoice, my dear brother, that the Lord was pleased to bless what I wrote to excite you to take up and endure the cross of Christ, and that you have found it under the rich supplies of the Spirit of grace to be exceeding sweet, light, and easy. Marvelously has the Lord made bare His arm in causing mountains, which stood in our way and seemed insuperable, to flow down at His presence. Do you see how good it is to follow the Lord fully? how mighty He is to save? and how faithful He is to His promise? And will you not learn hence to cleave unto Him in time to come whenever He calls you to follow Him through difficulties? Will you not henceforth put your trust in Him who with a word can break gates of brass and cut bars of iron asunder? that with His word, "Peace, be still," can silence winds and waves when most tempestuous? The calm you now enjoy is the effect of your Lord's love and power; prize and praise Him for it accordingly, and learn to trust in Him continually. You see, my dear brother, how easily the Lion of the tribe of Judah could stop the roar of the lion of hell where you were most apt to fear it; and how false the father of lies has proved in that suggestion which he cast your way. Learn hence to cleave unto, and trust in, Christ, and not to listen to Satan. And does this enemy roar at you still from a greater distance? Remember your Lord, the Almighty God, has him in chains! Roar he may, but he shall not hurt you, while you keep on the King's highway, nor would the Prince of peace allow the rage of hell in any sort to vent itself against you if His design were not to overrule it for His own glory and your advantage.

Keep close to Christ, love, honor, and obey Him in all things, and then fear nothing. Be valiant for the truth, for the doctrines, the appointments of Jesus, and with all humility, and a single eye to His glory, bear a becoming testimony for the same in word and practice, adorning the doctrine of Christ with a good conversation in Him, and then fear not what either men or devils can do unto you, for "Who is he who shall harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?" What if a

thousand reproaches are cast upon you? the Lord will plead your cause, and make your glory so much the greater. Reproaches, meekly borne for Christ's sake, are the honors which free grace puts upon you here, and will be as so many gems to enrich your crown of glory hereafter. With Moses then, "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

I humbly think, my dear brother, from the rich enjoyments which our Lord gives you of Himself, from the great trials which He calls you to endure for Him, and from the angry roars of the enemy against you, that He designs to honor you with some eminent service for Him, and usefulness to His in the present world, in order to a weighty crown of glory in the world to come. Oh, walk humbly with God, and wait to see how His rich, free grace will exalt you. Perhaps all the bright displays of amazing favor which your blessed eyes have hitherto seen are but, as it were, the first opening beams of more refulgent rays of infinite grace and glory which are yet to be cast upon you.

O, my brother, does God love you? He will love you like Himself! God who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved you, even when you were dead in sins, has quickened you together with Christ (both mystically and influentially) that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards you through Christ Jesus! The Lord who loved you from eternity past; who loves you freely, infinitely, and unchangeably; will love you forever, and forever rejoice over you to show new wonders of infinite kindness towards you; therefore, wait on your God continually. A few hints next as to the things you desire me to write to you of.

1. You say, my dear brother, "That the thoughts and contemplations of the flowings of God's love towards you through the blood of Jesus do so little affect your soul that you are sometimes ready to doubt whether it be not all a mere delusion." And can it be that a soul who has seen, felt, and tasted the love of God through Christ in its ineffable sweetness, in its all-conquering power and soul-transforming glory, should, after this, be ready to doubt, if all be not a mere delusion? Ah! yes; when the efficacious influence of love's sweetness, power, and glory is withdrawn, a believer, in times of temptation, through the strength of unbelief, may be ready to doubt, yes, even yield to doubt, if the reality of his own experience be not all a mere delusion, so unsteady in faith is a believer himself, though set upon a rock of ages, until his goings are established; until the Lord, taking him by the arms, has taught him to go—to go by faith, without the prop of spiritual sense—until he is eminently sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and has a steeled assurance of faith given him. And yet I am persuaded that, if at the same time of such inward hesitations a believer were set upon by outward enemies, who should say but the same things to him which Satan indiscernibly suggests to his mind, his soul would rise up in arms against them, and boldly stand on God's side as a witness for Him and His infinite love, and the truth and reality of his own experience thereof; but the enemy being within, the soul often discerns him not until it is wounded by him; it yields to hold a parley with Satan, supposing it to be only the reasoning of its own mind. But such parleys are exceedingly dangerous; the soul thereby enters into temptation, disbelieves God, and credits the father of lies; dishonors infinite love, truth, and faithfulness; weakens his own faith and every grace; joins with God's enemy to reproach and deny His work—a work in which His brightest glory shines; yes, gives the enemy vast advantages over him. Then let such souls beware, and whenever put upon this kind of doubting, let them be assured that the enemy is just before them, set in battle-array against them, and, instantly asking support of the Captain of salvation, let them gird on their armor, stand to their arms, and as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,

resist the devil, steadfast in faith, and away he shall flee from them, to God's honor and to their joy, both present and eternal. But perhaps, my brother, you will ask, "What must I say to Satan when he tempts me?" Tell him, God, the God of infinite purity, through His sacrificed Son, loves sinners; that He can, does, and will love them freely, notwithstanding all their unloveliness and ingratitude and evil requiting of His for the infinite kindness of His manifested love; that as a sinner, the very chief, you will go hide yourself in the Lamb's wounds and blood, and that there you shall now and forever find God to be unto you the God of love and peace. Tell him, you will confess and bewail your ingratitude before God, and that He will forgive the iniquity of your sin; but you will not doubt His love, or think the shine of it on your soul to be a delusion, because the father of lies suggests it. And if Satan finds you take this course, and answer him thus, you will soon find him depart from you. And if he returns again, as he thinks, at a more convenient season, as often as he appears resist him, steadfast in the faith, and you shall find that he flees before you. And for your own satisfaction concerning this doubt, which is raised from the greatness of God's love and the littleness of your love to Him, or the small influence it has on your heart, whence you are put upon thinking that if the manifestation of so great a love was real it would have greater effect upon your soul, consider that this great love is not always greatly manifested. There are times wherein it is, and times wherein it is not manifested, wherein it shines, and wherein it does not shine on the soul. And when love's bright and burning beams do not directly beat upon your heart, wonder not that you are lamentably unaffected therewith and unenkindled thereby.

It is our duty to meditate on the love of God, and He often meets us therein, casts upon us its piercing rays, and kindles up our hearts to a holy flame. But in this, as in all His dealings with us, He acts as a sovereign, and casts His influence as pleases Him, the suspension whereof at one time is designed by him to command and set off the glorious flow of it at another. And at such times of 'suspended influence', we may think of the great love of God, and to our sorrow find that it has but little effect upon our hearts. But when God Himself casts abroad the glory of His love upon our souls, our hearts are instantly set on fire. Love's light never breaks in upon our hearts without love's heat; love's shine, as the cause, is never without love's flame as the effect—God's love enkindles ours. But then, there are different degrees in love's manifestation, and as different degrees of the effects thereof upon us—the degree of love's shine upon us and the degree of love's flame within us, or of our love, enkindled by the shine of God's love—do always hold a strict proportion with and exactly answer to each other. Do not think, then, my dear brother, that the flowing of God's love to you through Christ are a mere delusion, because the thoughts and contemplations thereof do so little affect your soul, for when you are unaffected therewith, and unattracted thereby, you are not under the immediate flows of all-affecting, all-attracting love. And learn to look for the blessed effects you desire, from their proper causes, and at the proper times of their existence; to look for the powers of your soul being enkindled with the love of God, when it shines upon your heart, and according to the degree of its influence on your soul. Learn, also, from your unaffectedness herewith at other seasons, what a cold, icy mountain your heart is, when the bright sun of infinite love does not cast upon it, its penetrating rays, its melting beams—and humble yourself before God for the hardness of your heart. Learn also, hence, to seek most earnestly communion with God in love—to pray for the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in your heart—to prize His influence—and to give thanks for the same when you experience it. And no more think that the flowings of God's love towards you through Christ are delusion because the thoughts thereof affect you so little when you are not under love's immediate influence, its bright,

its powerful manifestation. But,

2. You say, my dear brother, "Satan often robs me of my comfort by telling me that I carry faith above reason."

Tell Satan, my brother, "That is right. That as revelation is above nature, faith ought to be above reason." Faith is not, ought not, to be without or contrary to reason; but it is, it ought to be above it. There was no ground in nature, no natural reason, for Abraham and Sarah to believe that he should beget and she should bear a son when Abraham's body was dead and Sarah past age. But because God had revealed it, it was fit that their faith should receive it. There was good spiritual reason, though there was no natural reason, that they should credit what God had spoken; because He had revealed it who could not lie, or deceive, who was the God of truth, and infinitely able and faithful to perform what He had promised. And thus Abraham's children, in like manner, are called to act faith as he the father of the faithful was. They are called to set faith above reason, to believe in hope even against hope—to believe that as God has wrought faith in their hearts, to look, to come to His dear Son for all salvation, and as such has given them the promise of eternal life in Christ, so there shall certainly be a performance thereof, notwithstanding a thousand improbabilities and seeming contradictions in themselves, because God, who cannot lie has promised it, who is also able and faithful to do that which He has spoken. And as they are thus to believe the promise of life in general—that they shall be saved at last—because God has said it, so, likewise, are they to believe all the manifestations of His love to them which He is pleased to make through the application of particular promises of life and grace, for their consolation in the present time, that things are and shall be as God has spoken, because He has said it, who cannot lie; and this they are to hold fast by faith, notwithstanding a thousand seeming contraries in themselves, and gainsayings which may arise from carnal reason. Abraham considered not his own body now dead as a sufficient obstacle in the way of the promise, nor should his children so consider the deadness of their own souls as to think it a sufficient hindrance and bar in the way of what God has spoken, as if the manifestations of His love to them, through the promise of life, were not true and real, or would not, could not stand, because of their own deadness. Reason is a good handmaid to faith, but a bad mistress. Reason is good when spiritualized and subservient to faith, but bad when merely natural, and domineers over faith. But once more, 3. You say, my dear brother, "I am amazed to find my heart so prone to a covenant of works."

Bless God that you find it so; not that it is so, but that you find it so to your grief. That same grief which you feel when you find any motions in your heart which gender to bondage, is an evidence that you are one of the free children, or the children of promise. Remember that you have a renewed and an unrenewed part in the same soul—that so far as you are renewed by grace, your heart submits to the reign of grace, or cleaves to the covenant of grace; and so far as in this respect your soul is unrenewed, in so far your heart, your old heart, is for cleaving to the law as a covenant of works. But be of good cheer; for if you were not a child of the new covenant, those motions which you find in your heart of cleaving to the old covenant would be no trouble to you. It is evident from hence that grace has the throne in your heart, that you are under its dominion, that you submit to, like, and approve of its reign, that you choose to be under it as a subject under his lawful prince, whose dominion over him is no burden but a pleasure to him. And be not surprised or amazed that a rebel party still remain in your soul, which rise up in arms at times to set the law again upon the throne in your heart, for they shall never effect their enterprise. And their very

attempts being afflicting and grieving to you, it is evident that you do not submit to the law, that, as a new creature in Christ, you do not join with legal motions, but esteem them as rebels against your Prince, and their very appearance in your heart as an usurpation upon your Prince's dominions. And the trouble and afflictions which legal motions give you make you cry to your Prince for help against them as His and your enemies. The appearance of these rebels makes you prize your Prince the more, and cleave the closer to the glorious reign of His grace. But the case is far otherwise with an unregenerate soul, with a man who is under the law. He likes and approves of its dominion. He is all of one piece. Legal motions are not disagreeable to him, but treated by him as we treat natives and fellow-subjects. But if the motions of the law appear in a regenerate man, they are disagreeable and terrible to him, he belonging to another Prince, and being under the dominion of grace.

Great grace be with you.

45 - The Soft Embraces of Those Sweet Arms

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear and much Honored Parents,

Oh, my dear parents, your dear Lord Jesus will be with you in all your pains and afflictions through the infirmities of an advanced age. The Lord will make all your bed for you when sick. And when death comes, and no creature can help you, then, then will the Lord be your helper. He will never leave you nor forsake you; no, not in death's waters. Jesus, your high priest, will go before you, make a way for you, and bring you safely over Jordan into the promised land. The eternal God is your refuge; and underneath you, in your last trial, will be the everlasting arms.

These almighty arms will keep your spirits from sinking, when your bodies must fall by the stroke of death. The soft embraces of those sweet arms will refresh your souls, and ease the bitterest pains that your body may feel. And not the least pain, not the least sickness, that you endure to bring down your mortal frame, but will serve as a foil to set off that immortal glory you shall enter upon in Emanuel's land, where the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick." There I shall shortly meet you. And let us remember that death comes to us as a blessing. Death to us will be an entrance into life! We shall never be free from sin, perfectly holy, nor fully happy—we shall never be as we would be, nor should be, until we see Jesus as He is!

46 - The Cup of Damnation and Salvation

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

If God was to deal with me according to my deserts, if He was to send me as accursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels, He would be a most holy and righteous God therein. But such was the infinite love of the Father to us, that He put the cup of damnation, of curse and wrath, into Christ's hand, and through His drinking it up for us, He puts the cup of salvation into ours!

47 - Jehovah's Grace

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear brother,

Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire; and we, sinners, can no more stand before Him than dry stubble before a devouring flame. But in Christ all the glories of the Godhead shine in the bright form of love!

God is the God of peace to every poor sinner who draws near to Him through the Lamb's blood. Fury is not in Him unto such souls. Oh, how rich, free, and sovereign is Jehovah's grace unto us, that the Lord should thus save us, while thousands round about us sit in darkness and the shadow of death! We must say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

Indeed it is a very great blessing to see the plague of our own hearts, to have a living and painful sensation of the being and working of indwelling sin, and earnest longings and inexpressible groanings wrought in our souls after a full and eternal freedom from it.

48 - Oh, Why Me, the Chief of Sinners

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear Sister in our precious Jesus,

I thank you for your last letter, it has been blessed to me. I have read it again and again, with tears of joyful wonder at the infinite grace of God to vile, unworthy me, in making my poor books of such blessed use to you, to bring you to Jesus and to build you up in Him.

Truly, according to the exceeding riches of infinite grace our God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. "He is wise in counsel and excellent in working." And we shall adore Him forever, both in counsel and work, when we see, with the veil cast off, those infinite depths of wisdom and grace in which the whole and every part of our salvation was laid in contrivance of old, before the world began, according to which He all along wrought through time, to the praise of His glory, by men and angels, to a vast and endless eternity.

O how ravishing is the least beam of this glory when it breaks out upon us now! But oh, what tongue can tell, or heart conceive, a thousandth part of that joy which shall enter into us, or rather into which we shall enter, when as vessels of mercy, all-enlarged, we shall be cast into God for a full and everlasting enjoyment of Him, that ocean of bliss and glory—when we shall live forever under all the bright, the burning, he enkindling beams of His infinite glory, or rather, dwell in the Sun, in the Lord our everlasting light, in our God, as our glory? As you encourage me to go on in the Lord's work, and tell me "my reward will be great," my heart said beforehand what you add, even before I read it, "No, it is reward enough if it was but that great use which your books have been of to me in times past, and are still." Oh, my dear sister, this I acknowledge from the very bottom of my heart, from my inmost soul. Well in this regard has my royal princely Master, in the infinity of His grace, rewarded the poor feeble attempts of His vile worm to serve Him. According to His own heart, and not according to my worthiness, has He done this great thing to make His worm know it. I bless Him for your salvation, for your faith and joy, wrought by His own hand through the means of my poor books. I bless Him for the knowledge thereof which He has given me. He might have wrought this wonder and yet have hid it from me until the day of His appearing. But oh, infinite grace! to cheer me in this service, and draw me further on in His delightful work, He has blessed me with the knowledge of it now, as a part of my present reward, and the first-fruit of that glory which awaits me at His coming. Let you and I praise Him, let men and angels praise Him, for this wondrous grace, both now and evermore. Oh, why me, the chief of sinners, why has the Lord, chosen vile me for this service? I resolve it into the bottomless, boundless ocean of His rich, free, sovereign love and grace, and let Him have the glory of it unto endless ages! And let it in the present time be hung up in Zion as a trophy of victorious grace, of the grace of Zion's King to the least and last, and worst and vilest, of all His subjects. And as an ensign, a banner of His love, let it be lifted up upon His land, to His endless praise, by all that love Him! Amen. Hallelujah!

I am glad, my dear sister, that you love the slain Lamb, and long to see the crown flourish upon His royal head. In this my soul closely joins with yours. Let us mourn for the dishonor done to our Savior-King, and His glorious gospel, the rod, the scepter of His strength, by many that profess to

be His subjects and servants. Let us rejoice in that the Father has advanced Him high, has bid Him sit at His right hand until He makes His enemies His footstool. In a little while, we shall see the Lord alone exalted, and all idols abolished, the King of Zion seated upon His royal throne in His personal and relative glory, as Lord of all, and head of His body the Church, in the glory of His universal reign; and Zion made glorious, the perfection of beauty, by the brightness of His rays cast upon her, to the praise of the Savior-God by saints and angels forever and ever. "He who testifies these things says, I come quickly. Even so come, Lord Jesus! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory!" Amen, and Amen. The grace of Christ be with your spirit. Pray for the same blessing upon me.

49 - We Are Cold and Frozen

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister in the Lord,

All our times of refreshing, my dear sister, come from the presence of the Lord. If God is present with our souls, by the special gracious influence of His Holy Spirit, we are refreshed; if God is absent, as to His sensible influence, we find no refreshment in reading, hearing, or praying. We are dry and barren if the Lord does not sensibly water us. We are cold and frozen if His sun-like face does not shine to thaw, warm, and comfort us. All the refreshment that new-born souls enjoy, does and must come down from heaven. Nothing that this earth affords can refresh and solace the spiritual part of a heaven-born soul. No, such a soul is prepared for a higher glory, than any that is to be seen and enjoyed among the creatures and things of this lower world. Such a soul opens its mouth wide after God, and His gracious influence, to refresh and comfort it, as the earth in a time of drought opens its mouth for the dew and rain to descend for its refreshment. "Give me Christ," says the new-born soul, "or I die. God is my life, my exceeding joy, and without His gracious, comforting presence, my spirit dies, and I sink in sorrow." When the Sun of righteousness withdraws His glorious rays, and it is night with our souls, then, in an especial manner, the corruptions of the heart, and Satan with his temptations, like the devouring beasts of prey, creep forth from their dens, and with their hideous roars, afflict and terrify us. But our compassionate Jesus, whose eyes are as the eyes of doves—pure, piercing, mild, loving towards his own mate—clearly sees, with infinite delight, the dove-like nature of His spouse, and looks upon her with boundless compassion under her present affliction by the serpentine poison and gall of every sin which remains in her, and the cunning and power of every temptation that besets her; and from these her enemies—from these grieving thorns which scratch and tear His beloved lily—He does and will, in His own way and time, deliver her.

Again, beware of thinking—from what I have said of the nature of new-born souls to thirst after God, to see His power and His glory as they have seen Him, when He withdraws the brightness of His face—that if at such seasons you do not always find such a thirst in you, you are not therefore a regenerate person, or that you do not love the Lord above all; for when Christ withdraws from His spouse, as she loses sight of His glory, which drew her graces into exercise, these shutting up, like the flowers at the sun's withdrawal, the corruptions of her unrenewed part, excited by diverse temptations from Satan and the world, begin to exert themselves, and after foolish vanities and vile iniquities the heart for a time may run, and even the spouse of Christ may play the harlot with other, with many lovers—and, thoughtless as it were of her Beloved, lie down in sinful ease on her bed of carnal security without Him; yes, she may sink so low as to be unwilling to be raised up by repeated intimations of His mind unto her duty of seeking Him in good earnest, as (Jeremiah 3:1; Song of Solomon 3:1, with Song of Solomon 5:2-3), Until her beloved puts His hand in by the hole of the door, until His power afresh touches her heart, renews her grace, and gives her a quick remembrance of His glory, and of her great misery without Him, and then straight away her affections move for Him, she arises to every duty, and inquires of His friends, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" And rest she cannot until she finds Him, in whom all her joy and life is, and

from whose presence all her refreshment flows.

Thus, my dear sister, when I speak of what souls are and do as creatures, it is to be understood of them as when enabled to act according to the new creature life in their hearts. That you may walk in the comforts of the Holy Spirit and be edified, is my hearty desire.

50 - Oh, Come, Poor, Weak Thing

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in Christ,

What! Do you fear because you have so little strength? You have forgotten where your great strength lies. Not in yourself, but in the Lord; in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength; even in Him who, as the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary. Jehovah-Jesus is your strength! Can you spend those vast treasures that are in Him? Can you draw the well of salvation dry with your thousands needs? Millions of needy souls, with innumerable needs, have been supplied from thence, and still the well of life is as full as ever! Christ is as full for you, my brother, as He was for the first needy soul who ever came unto Him.

Oh, come, poor, weak thing, and lie down by faith in the bosom of your own Lord Jesus, in the bosom of that infinite fullness, that everlasting strength which is in Him, and take a holy ease from all anxious thought and perplexing fear because of the little strength which is in you.

Oh, come, cast your care upon Christ!

51 - While He Seems to Slay You

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

Surely our good God does all well, and governs the world and all things in it aright, and for the special advantage of His own people. You know how long my trial lasted. But sweetly the Lord enabled me to bow to His dear will, to hope in His mercy, to patiently to wait for His delivering kindness, and to think the many months of my trial, but a few days, for the love I had to His glory. Nature thought the time long, but grace said it was short. I was ashamed to think the trial long, as I had brought so little glory to God under it, and nothing I desire so much as to glorify God while it lasted, for I was persuaded that His affections would soon yearn upon me and turn my night into day. The Lord enabled me, in His strength, to trust in the infinite grace of His heart and His faithfulness, when a frown was on His face, and His customary loving-kindness was veiled with the darkness of providence. And for yourself, continue to trust in the Lord while He seems to slay you, and covet to give Him glory in dark dispensations, as you will not have an opportunity to do when He brings you forth to the light. We have but a little time allotted us to glorify God in the dark; our night of weeping will soon be turned into a joyous morning, since the anger of our heavenly Father, in the frowns of providence, endures for a moment, but in His favor is life!

52 - My Dear Husband's Death

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

I have received the news of my dear husband's death, as the ship in which he sailed for England had sunk at sea. This stroke is so great that it almost overcomes my weak nature, and at times I am ready to sink in deep waters. But, glory to my God, I feel the everlasting arms underneath me, and, when ready to faint, my dear Lord gives me a cordial. He tells me this is among the all things that work together for my good, that none (no person or thing) shall pluck me out of His and His Father's hands. And oh, how sweetly did that word reconcile me to receive this affliction at the Lord's hand, patiently, yes, thankfully.

53 - Really a Work of Grace or Not?

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in the Lord, The account you gave me of the Lord's work upon your soul refreshes my spirit, and that He was pleased to make my printed account of His gracious dealings with me a comfort unto you, as you found so great a part of it to answer to your own experience, for which I rejoice, and bless the Lord. And in answer to your request, "to give you my thoughts if the work of God upon your soul be really a work of grace or not?" I can with gladness assure you that I am fully satisfied that it is, and it appears clear to me from the following particulars, in that—

1. The Lord has hedged up your way with thorns, and weaned you from all sinful delights.
2. In that you have been convinced of your lost and perishing condition as a sinner, both by nature and practice.
3. Of the spirituality of the law as in force against you, and that flaming justice barred up mercy from you that way.
4. In that you have been brought off from dependence upon the perishing sands of your own duties.
5. In that God has revealed His Son in you, as your only and all-sufficient help—in the glory of His perfect righteousness and all-atoning blood, and in the glory of His infinite fullness—to save you to the uttermost, and to satisfy all your desires through time and to eternity.
6. In that hence, seeing Jesus to be such a suitable Savior to your case as a lost sinner, you have embraced Him as your Savior, and fled unto Him for refuge as the only, the glorious hope set before you in the gospel. Wherever these things are experienced, my brother, the work of God on that soul is saving—a special work of supernatural grace—by which the man is brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, or made a new creature in Christ Jesus. As a believer in the Son of God, that soul is passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation. As to what you further mention, of your being drawn of late closer unto blessed Jesus than ever; that He is now become your spiritual rock, whence all your consolation flows; that as you said (which was sweet to me), "Take away Christ, and you take away all the comfort of my soul"; that if you had all the treasures that this world can afford, you would count all but loss and rubbish for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, your Lord; that you desire so to be with Christ, which is far better, that if you had heaven for your portion, and all the joy and happiness it could afford, yet, if you had not the presence of precious Jesus there the desires of your soul would never be satisfied; that your desire not to be saved, not just barely for happiness' sake, but that God and the Lamb might be thereby glorified; and that now, all the delight you have on earth is in the delightful service of blessed Jesus, so that it would be a hell to you to go back to your natural state, and your desire is to praise free grace, victorious grace, in life and death, and to reign in its triumphant praises to all eternity. These things, my brother, are further evidences that the work of God upon your soul is saving. But I take these to belong rather to some good degree of growth in grace than

to the truth, or first being of it in your heart.

I would next attempt a short answer to those objections which arise in your mind and make you fear that the Lord's work on your soul is not saving, or whether it be any more than the fruit of a religious education. But before I consider your objections in particular, let me say, a religious education is a great privilege, as a means to restrain from vice and immorality, and to train up youth in a doctrinal knowledge of the truths of the gospel; and is often blessed for conviction, and may be for conversion. But the most religious education that ever any person was favored with, as in and of itself, never did nor can give such a spiritual conviction of sin, of heart-sin, as to make the soul cry out in the views of the uncleanness of its nature, in the light of the law's spirituality, and of its own inability to help or save itself, Woe is me, for I am undone! Nor yet did the most religious education, as in and of itself, ever make Christ precious as the only and all-sufficient Savior unto any one soul.

No! these are, as I may say, the two main hinges upon which the soul turns from a state of nature to a state of grace. They are the two great characters whereby a new creature, a man that is in Christ, may be known, and the undeniable evidences of a real spiritual gracious change upon the heart, or of the soul's being brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous light. Such a man is new-made, has true, precious faith, the faith of God's elect, wrought in his heart, unto which the everlasting salvation of the soul is annexed. And the power that produced it was not the natural force of a religious education, but the supernatural power and almighty energy of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The most religious education is a tree of too low a nature to bear such high and precious fruits as a sight of a sin-ruined, law-pursuing, and perishing state, and a flight unto Christ for refuge, as beheld Mighty to save and altogether lovely. It is impossible it should be found on any soul before it is engrafted into Christ and partakes of the spirit of grace from Him, or of His fullness as the root of grace and fatness, as the glorious olive-tree to His Church. But I must come to your objections. And you fear the work of God upon your soul is not saving, and say:

Objection 1. Because I have not felt those terrors of conscience for sin that others have.

Answer. The same degree of terror is not necessary to be felt by every soul that is truly convinced of sin; nor is it usual for those who have had a pious education, and been restrained from outward immoralities, to feel the same degree of terror as those who have run great lengths in wicked courses. If a moralized person, who has been religiously educated, has had so much terror for sin, for his heart and life-sin, that he dare not trust in himself or in his own doings for life, but being warned of God by His holy law of the wrath which is to come, and by His gospel of fleeing unto Christ as the only hiding place from it, and being moved with fear (of being found out of Christ) runs unto Him for safety—it is sufficient to prove a saving conviction of sin. And as great a display of the power of the Holy Spirit in His work of convincing of sin is this, where the soul has less terror, as where the same work in other souls, that have been openly immoral, is attended with great terrors. I humbly think that the display of power in the former is the greatest. But, however, the glories of Omnipotence in various rays shine in both. The soul that has passed under the greatest terrors, which have been over-ruled to bring him to Christ, has cause to bless God forever for His kind dealings with him, in that, though He led him by a rough way, He brought him to such a glorious place of rest and safety. And the soul that has had less terror, that is not left to rest short of Christ, is equally safe with the other, and has reason in a particular manner to bless God that He

gave him such an easy passage from his soul-pursuers into Christ, the city of refuge, and brought him through the straits of the new-birth without those pangs and throes which some souls feel. Which way however the Lord deals with us in conviction of sin, He leads us by a right way, that is and shall be most for His glory and our joy if we are brought thereby unto Christ, that city of habitation. But again, you fear the reality of the work, and say, Objection 2. Because I have not experienced those overflowing joys in believing which other saints have.

Answer. The Holy Spirit, as the Comforter of believers, is a Sovereign, and divides unto every new-born soul individually as He will. The least comfort, the least beam of infinite favor, upon fleeing unto Christ for refuge, is an unspeakable blessing, a ray of light that is the dawn of eternal day. What though as to some souls who have been covered with the thick darkness of amazing terror, the light of God's salvation unto ravishing joy has arisen upon their spirits, and presently made day, yes, high noon, as it were, at once with them; perhaps they may be called hereafter to walk by faith in darkness, and as seeing no light, to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay themselves upon their God. And you, whose night has not been so dark, and upon whom the light has gradually arisen, may shortly have the clear shine of the Sun of righteousness, and walk in the light of God's countenance all the day long. Those earnest desires which are wrought in your soul, after the clear witness of the Spirit and the full sealing of the Holy Spirit, foretell a morning of joy unspeakable and full of glory at hand. Wait awhile, and you shall have joy enough to fill every corner of your soul to the brimful. The joy of faith, the joy of spiritual sense, the joy of the Holy Spirit in His witness to your interest in the three-one God, your exceeding joy, shall enter into you here; and hereafter you shall enter into joy, into your Master's joy, and be immersed in pleasures for evermore, while as a vessel of mercy you are cast into Him, the ocean of joy and glory, to take your fill of God in Christ unto bliss unknown, to the days of eternity. But further, you fear the work of God upon your soul is not saving, and say, Objection 3. Because I have not those inward troubles and temptations from Satan which other Christians have.

Answer. You may have much of these hereafter; and let your present freedom be esteemed by you as your great privilege, and be the matter of your thanksgiving. It was well you said that you "have not been wholly free from inward temptations," for among the rest, I must tell you that this is an inward temptation, in that you are put upon questioning the work of grace on your soul because you have no more inward troubles. Oh, my brother, do not covet temptations, but go on to pray that you may not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil. Once more, you fear, and say, Objection 4. Because the work of God has been so gradual upon my soul.

Answer. The gradation of the work is no argument against the truth of it, but is rather an evidence of the same. The kingdom of God, or the work of grace in the souls of His people, is progressive. The word of the gospel, as a living seed, being cast into the heart, and received by faith of the operation of God in its blessed effects upon the soul, springs up, first in a small, tender blade, then advances to the ear, and last of all, to the full ripe corn in the ear, as grace ripens for and hastens apace unto glory. This is true concerning the good work of God, begun in the souls of all the saints. But yet it must be confessed that in some the first work, as well as its after-progress, is much more speedy than in others. The Lord acts herein, as I hinted under another head, as a Sovereign; and in His various dealings with all His children abounds towards them according to the exceeding riches of His grace and the infinity of His wisdom. And as far greater display of the glory of divine grace is it to that there is such a vast variety in the particular experiences of particular

souls, while the same blessed work in the general is carried on in all, than if every one in particular did particularly experience the same thing at the same time and in the same degree. Our God is a great Being! Great in His love, grace, and mercy, great in His wisdom and power, and in all His immense perfections; and He delights to act like Himself, to cast abroad His infinite glory in a thousand various rays, in a thousand various ways of working, upon the vessels of mercy, in His time—preparing them for glory, for that glory He ordained them to and prepared for them before time began, which shall be to His exalted praise in a thousand various notes among the saved of the Lord, while they all join the song, "Salvation unto God and to the Lamb!" unto ages without end. As to these objections, my brother, which arise in your mind, and many more of a like nature which at times perplex the hearts of God's people, there is no just ground for them, inasmuch as the things objected as lacking in some particular souls, which are to be found in others truly gracious, belong not to the essentials of a state of grace, but to the 'circumstantials' which with much difference in different persons attend gracious souls. If we would judge of our state of grace by comparing our experience with that of others whom we look upon to be truly gracious, let us do it in those generals wherein all agree, and not in particulars, in which there is so much difference. See the two I mentioned before I came particularly to answer your objections.

It appears to me, my brother, that you were a regenerate soul when what the world calls innocent diversions became so disagreeable to you, that what was your former chief delight became your greatest burden. The cause, as I conceive, was this, the new nature was wrought in your soul, a holy, spiritual appetite, that could find no delight in natural sinful pleasures, but still sought pleasures of a higher kind, of a heavenly extraction, agreeable to itself and its heavenly descent and taste, with which alone it could be satisfied. This is evidenced to me by that pleasure which you then found in heart-mourning for sin; by that fear which you then had lest convictions should wear off without any saving effect; by your desire after deeper convictions of sin; and by your earnest prayer for grace to live a holy life here, even if you might never enjoy happiness hereafter. These things, together with what you have experienced since, make the work of God upon your soul appear to me very clear and full, that it is, indeed, a real supernatural work of divine grace, which is wrought in none but those who are prepared for glory, or "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But oh, rest not in present experiences. You are to see greater things than these. Follow hard after the sealing of the Spirit. He can open such clear, satisfying, soul-ravishing views of your interest in Christ to you in a moment as will far transcend all that the creatures by discourse or argument can give you in an age. Oh, when the Holy Spirit comes in; the great power of God to seal upon your heart your eternal interest in Jesus, unbelieving fears and carnal reasonings shall fly before Him as the shades of night or glooms of day before the rising morn, the out-breaking sun, in his clear meridian-shine. And immediately, in full assurance of faith and raptures of joyful spiritual sense, you will cry out with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God."

Oh, my brother, is this the joy you long for? This is the joy that is reserved for you. This is the joy with which you shall be satisfied. Your Beloved is yours, and you are His, and you shall know it. Enfolded in His arms, and leaning on His bosom, your love-sick soul with love shall be solaced, feasted, filled. Your Beloved shall bring you into His banqueting house, and His banner over you shall be love. He will bid you eat, as His friend, that heavenly bread, that bread of life. His body broken for you, for you in particular; and call you to drink, give you to drink as His beloved of the

wine of His love that flowed in His blood, shed for you, for you as distinctly as if it was poured out for never another in the world. "Drink," He will say, "O! beloved, O infinitely beloved soul! Come, open your thirsty mouth, open it wide, I will fill it—take your fill, you can never drink my love dry. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, be inebriated with my love, with all my immense glories as yours in love! View Me, handle Me, possess Me as your own, for I Myself, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, and yours in love—to satisfy and solace you with bliss ineffable, with pleasures new to surround you, to ravish you through time and to eternity's abounded space."

Thus familiar, my dear brother, will your lovely, loving a Lord be with you; thus gracious will He be to you in whom His soul delights. Your Maker is your husband, and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you in renewed displays of His old, everlasting love, that knows neither bound, change, nor end! Oh happy, thrice happy are you! Jesus is yours forever! Drawn then by His love-cords, do you likewise be His, and give up yourself to His service in love, to glorify Him both now and for evermore. The times look dark, the heavens are black with clouds, the Church, like a ship in a tremendous sea, may be tossed with the waves; but, since our Lord is with us in the ship, we shall not sink, we shall have blessed company in trouble, safely out-ride the storm, and be brought at last to our desired haven. Jesus being at the helm, the Church need not fear; well He will steer her through danger, and bring her soon into her promised rest and glory.

Grace be with you. In the arms of Christ I leave you.

54 - Oh, Why Was Not I Left Among the Ignorant

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

Oh, what a mercy, what a privilege is it that the Word of God is not altogether unto us a sealed book! So it is as to its internal mystery and glory, unto every unregenerate man in the world. Natural men read and read not; they read the words and understand not the sense; even men of letters, famous for human learning, are quite ignorant and unlearned if not taught of God; the veil is upon their hearts, the veil is upon the Scriptures; what our Lord says to them therein is in parables. Nothing can dissipate natural darkness but supernatural light; this is dispensed in a sovereign way to whom the Lord of light pleases; and thus, to the weakest babes the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed, while they are hidden from the wise and prudent.

Oh, why was not I left among the ignorant and unlearned who perish for lack of knowledge! It was nothing but sovereign grace that made the difference between us and others; and since grace has taken us into its own hand to teach us, it will do it freely, efficaciously, and perfectly.

55 - Oh, I Am Confounded at My On Vileness

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in our Precious Lord,

Oh, I am confounded at my own vileness while He thus displays the riches of His abundant goodness; and my heart breaks within me that God should love me so much and I love Him so little! Wonder at His grace! Praise Him for His infinite, free, distinguishing grace to such an unworthy, ungrateful, hell-deserving sinner. And you, my lethargic soul, afresh touched with divine kindness, join the praise with your feeble hallelujahs until sin and time are gone; and then with louder voice, in higher notes, you shall shout the praises of Jehovah's grace in His kindness towards you through Christ Jesus unto ages without end!

Oh, infinite condescension! That the Lord of all should speak thus to such a vile, worthless, nothing worm! Oh, free love! oh, behold, wonder and praise, the Prince of Love has said unto me, even to me, the least and last of all, 'How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse!' And this astonishing language of His grace at once humbles and exalts me, fills me with heart-melting wonder and joy in Christ, and with the deepest, sweetest mourning and self-loathing; makes me forget the things which are behind, and press forward with an eager desire. Oh, for a soul, all-enkindled and inflamed with love, to my lovely loving Jesus!

It is a great thing to know ourselves in our nothingness and vileness; and to know Christ as ours in His all-sufficient fullness!

56 - Adore the Grace Which Opens Our Eyes

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir, When we do not hear from God by sensible answers to prayer for a long season, we begin to think it very strange, to fear His displeasure, and to have many grieving thoughts arise in our hearts. But all the while our God delays sending to us by sensible kind providences, His heart is full of grace towards us, His glorious thoughts are employed about us, and He is but writing longer epistles of love to us, to make the greater display of His infinite kindness, and the more to endear our hearts to Him thereby, when He brings forth to open view what He had been long working for us in secret. Let us therefore wait for the Lord, who hides Himself from the house of Jacob, and let us look for Him; by and by He will send us packets of letters, rich and full of answers of prayer that have been long preparing by His wisdom and grace according to the are of God. The children of light see the glory of the gospel, rejoice, and live under its warming beams, its quickening shine. Unto them, though babes, the mysteries of the Kingdom shall be revealed, which are hidden from the wise and prudent—from the dark world—the children of darkness, who hate the light—and by the darkness of error, advanced by some who hold the truth in unrighteousness, are further blinded, under the all-wise and holy permission of the adorable Sovereign of heaven and earth. Let us who see, adore the grace which opens our eyes!

57 - All Our Sufferings

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear brother,

What are our little crosses, our light, momentary afflictions, to that great crown, that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, for which, by them, we are being prepared? All our sufferings, as well as our faith and joy, are gifts of our Father's love. It is given us on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for His sake. Then let us receive all our grievous things from the hand of God thankfully, and ask for grace to endure them meekly and patiently, and to improve them wisely and faithfully. For not the least evil we thus receive from God, endure from men, and improve to the glory of Christ, but shall be to our perfect and eternal advantage.

58 - Head or Heart?

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

There is a vast difference between a conviction of the doctrines of grace in the head, and an adoring the grace of those doctrines in the heart. A speculative knowledge of gospel truth, that goes no further than a mere outward notion of it, may be found in a natural man. This knowledge of truth is a cold, unaffecting, and unattracting knowledge, that leaves the will and affections just where it found them. A natural man, indeed, may have some natural pleasure in getting some new notions of truth, but he experiences no soul-attraction to the things known. A spiritual discernment of gospel truths is very different from a bare speculative knowledge of them; in that the glory of truth shines into the mind, which produces a sweet and strict adherence thereto, by all the inward powers of the soul. The understanding discerns the truth in its beauty, glory, and excellency; the judgment approves it; and the will and affections embrace and clasp about it. In a word, the whole soul unites with the truth, and is changed into the image of it.

Oh! when the least beam of Gospel truth shines in upon the mind with such a ravishing beauty and majestic glory as draws the heart to love it, and makes the soul bow down before it, this is a saving illumination, set up in the soul of a vessel of mercy, which is the very beginning of its future glory. It is God's shining into our hearts by a new creating efficacy to give the light, not only of the knowledge of God, but of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; which word imports the ravishing beauty and all-attracting efficacy of gospel grace darting in upon the mind as a supernatural revelation, which unites the soul to the things beheld, to the objects revealed. From this saving illumination the soul feels a sweet and strong attraction, by which, being drawn with cords of love, it comes unto Christ in its desires after Him, as beheld, altogether lovely.

Wherever the truths of the gospel are known, and so known in their beauty and excellency as to knit and unite the heart to them, or to draw out the soul into desires after and adoration of the glories beheld—that man is a regenerate man.

59 - The Sweet Clusters of Canaan's Grapes

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear Sister in Christ, The sweet clusters of Canaan's grapes brought to us in this wilderness, whet our appetite after the heavenly country, that exceeding good land where we, at home with Christ, shall feast upon Him, the Tree of Life, in the variety and perpetuity of His ever-new and abundant fruits, unto growing joys and endless days. Then, oh, then, "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain (inward or outward); for the former things shall be passed away." No wonder that such a soul desires to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!

Let us, then, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, rejoice now in hope of approaching glory which awaits us. Our Lord's joy will not be full, until He sees all His children brought in, converted by grace and raised unto glory. When He thus sees us, the whole election of grace and all our ineffable bliss, as the fruit of the travail of His soul, He shall be satisfied, His heart contented, and delighted forever!

Such is the boundless grace of our altogether lovely and infinitely loving Lord! And as for us, the beloved of the Lord, appointed to salvation by Jesus Christ, when we are presented faultless before the presence of His glory, it will be with exceeding joy—a joy far exceeding all our present conception and expression. So great is the hope laid up for us in heaven! And how great, then, should be our present joy in hope of future glory! But let us wait with patience our appointed time here on earth. Shall not we, so highly favored to know that for us there remains an eternal rest, be free to endure all the troubles appointed for us in this present time, since the glory of God and our good are jointly concerned under these light and momentary afflictions? Not a trouble passes over us but we are called thereby to glorify God, in doing and suffering His will. Shall we desire to shun any cross which is to prepare us for and to advance our crown? No! rather let us ask wisdom of God wisely to improve our every day's affliction, for His glory. Thus, rejoicing in, waiting for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, let us spend the little time that remains unto us, and soon our race will be run, the prize won, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord, to live with Him, and reign in life by Him, to a never-ending eternity!

60 - The Palm Tree (Afflictions)

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam,

I bless the Lord I am better. Before the affliction came on, the Lord gave me that word, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior," which made me think an affliction was at hand; and indeed the Lord has been with me greatly in this affliction; has given me many precious words for my support and comfort; has exercised my various graces thereby, and given me sweet resignation to, and acquiescence with, His good pleasure; and caused me to have no will but His. And as I was particularly drawn out in faith and confidence in God that He would help and deliver me in His own time and way, that word was brought, "O woman, great is your faith, be it unto you even as you will." Upon which my heart replied, "Lord, Your will be mine. Save and deliver me as to manner and time which shall be most for Your glory; and give me grace to endure affliction, while that is Your pleasure, unto Your honor."

Though I had not been without temptations from the enemy to think, when in extremity, my Lord took no notice of me; but blessed be God they did not get hold on me. I was enabled to resist Satan, steadfast in the faith of God's love in the stroke, and that He would do me good by it; and in His wisdom as to the time of deliverance from it, and meanwhile was helped to bless His name for it; so that the flame did not kindle upon me in walking through the fires, which made me think of the burning bush, unscorched. You will help me to praise the Lord, and to pray that henceforth I may be holiness to Himself more than ever.

Remember, dear Madam, that the promise is, "The righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree"; and naturalists observe that the palm-tree flourishes most when most oppressed. And this is certainly the case with the righteous. For what are trying providences but given opportunities for the exercise of our graces? Without them many of our graces would have little room for exercise. "They are not at present joyous (but grievous to our weak flesh); but to those who are exercised thereby they afterwards yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness." We are like heirs under age, put to the 'school of affliction' to be trained up and fitted there for the honor of a high throne.

61 - The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects Dear Brother and Sister, As to my health, blessed be God, I am no worse. I dwell in a fragile body, which I think sometimes is near its dissolution. But I rejoice in that house, that building of God, eternal in the heavens, which I know, through grace, is prepared for me. I in this tabernacle groan, being burdened by reason of that sinfulness and weakness which attends and renders me incapable either to know or serve the Lord as I would, and as perfect spirits do; and this makes me long for the time when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. We have no reason to be afraid of a separate state, for "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Nor yet should the saints be afraid to die, as if they should be forsaken and left to go through the last trial alone. No, our God will be with us when we come to the river Death; He will divide the water before us, and so marvelously appear in carrying us through it that we shall take thence a memorial of His infinite grace and faithfulness, as the children of Israel did when they passed through the literal Jordan (Joshua 4:7).

We should come up from the wilderness, even to the last step of it, leaning upon our Beloved, who has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). These words, "never leave you," reach through our whole lives, even unto death, yes, into death, through death, above and beyond death, even to an endless eternity. And unless everlasting arms could become weary, unchangeable love alter, and infinite faithfulness fail, we have no reason to be afraid. No, not in "the valley of the shadow of death". Our God will be "our refuge and strength, a very present help in that time of trouble". And as He will be the strength of our heart when heart and flesh fail us, so our portion forever, or our eternal lot. And oh! who can count up a thousandth part of those vast treasures of glory we have in His immense Being, as He has made over His great Self to us in Christ! Why should we, then, who are the King's sons, be lean from day to day? The Lord grant us true greatness of mind, that with a princely spirit we may behave as heirs of glory under all our present trials!

Wishing all prosperity, and begging a share in your prayers, I commit you to Israel's Keeper.

62 - This Frowning, Emptying Providence

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam,

I am at this time sorrowful, on account of a letter I have received, "That the ship in which my dear husband sailed for England has, in all probability, foundered at sea." This stroke, Madam, is so great that it was almost ready to overcome my weak nature. But, glory to my dear Lord, His strength has been, and is, made perfect in my weakness. Precious cordials have been given me when ready to faint, and mighty supports when ready to sink. My weak, willing spirit longs to glorify God my Father, and the Lord my Redeemer, under this sharp trial, by humble submission, patient endurance, and joyful, thankful acquiescence. Most surely the Lord, my own God, has done all things (and this) well—well for His own glory, and for my advantage—so well that it could not have been better than it is. And shall I not receive evil at the hand of the Lord, as well as good? Yes, by His grace assisting, I do and I will receive the evil of this affliction meekly and thankfully. Evil, indeed it is, as it is very grieving and trying in itself and its circumstances; but good it is for me to be thus grieved and tried, as this affliction flows from, is managed by, and shall end in the display of infinite goodness to me. This very providence, the Lord tells me, is towards me goodness; and what I know not now, I shall know hereafter. I shall shortly see, with the veil cast off, all the mysteries of providence, opened in all its windings and turnings and cross-appearances, in a consistent light and glory with the exceeding great and precious promises, as having been all subservient to their fulfillment in my salvation and bliss, even when they seemed to thwart their accomplishment, and crossed my expectation and desire. And until sight comes, it is good to live by faith. I dread casting such a dishonor upon the Son of God, by over-much heaviness for the loss of a creature, as if He, the Creator, who is God, blessed forever, and mine in the nearest relation and in an indissoluble union, was not in Himself an object sufficient to satisfy and solace me through all times, and unto all eternity. Emptied I am, indeed, of a creature-comfort, of a near relative that was dear, and a blessing to me, but God has given me Christ, in whom all fullness dwells, never to take Him from me. I am in widowhood, yet, glory unto God in the highest, I am not a widow. My Maker is my Husband and my Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is His name. Creatures die, but Jesus lives—lives as my Husband, in all the kindness and care, the tenderness and faithfulness, of that near and dear relation, and will show the same in a superlative and transcendent manner, far above the utmost that can be expected or found in the best of creatures. Yes, Jesus lives, as my life, in soul, in body, in grace, in glory, through time and to eternity. I have lost the shadow, but I have the substance—the stream, but I have the fountain, the immense ocean of all my bliss. And oh! for grace to behave under this frowning, emptying providence, as a soul thus satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord.

You see, Madam, how precarious and uncertain all things here are! Live beside the creatures while you have them—let Christ be the all of your enjoyment in them—and then, when they fail, and your own heart and flesh too, Christ will be your all in Himself—the strength of your heart, and

your portion forever—an all of bliss and glory, ineffable and eternal. Value your own Lord Jesus. Let His price (His worth in your esteem) be far above rubies, and all creatures and things, desirable and desired. The all-beauteous Godhead is in Him. He is the mighty God, as well as the Man Jesus, for you. Emanuel is His wonderful, glorious name. His personal and relative glories are, and shall be, the wonder and praise of men and angels unto ages without end. Look upon His lovely face—there is not another such a beauty in both worlds! See, Madam, this is your Beloved, and this is your Friend. This is He who has loved you, and given Himself for you; that laid aside His glory and joy, who was the adoration of angels, and the darling of the Father's bosom, to clothe Himself, His matchless Self, with your sin, shame, and sorrow, that He might raise you from the ash-heap of sinful nature to inherit with Him the joys and glories of the upper world; yes, to set you with Him upon His own throne! Oh, dear Madam, you are the Lamb's bride, even you, who come unto God, as the God of peace, only by and through the sacrificed Lamb. Admire the Lamb's love—the Lamb who was slain for you, that has wooed and won and betrothed you to Himself forever. Live upon Him, live to Him, and long to live with Him. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, is my hearty desire.

63 - Jesus Your Friend

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Very Dear Sir,

I am glad that you still rejoice in your sweet Jesus, though you have no other that you can call a friend. It is enough, beloved of the Lord, that Christ is your Friend, though all others should fail you, and no man care for your soul. There is such an infinite fullness, such an unsearchable depth of love and grace, of wisdom and knowledge, of tender care and loving faithfulness in your own Lord Jesus, that you need not go to the creature for compassion in misery, for ease in trouble, or for solace in sorrow. The Lord, your Friend, knows all your griefs, and by love-sympathy makes them His own. Lay your weary head in Christ's bosom, and pour out your troubled heart before Him. His kind hand will wipe away all your tears, and His precious lips will drop sweet-smelling myrrh for your soul's refreshment. And as Jesus your Friend will be with you in trouble, so, well will He bring you out of it. The wisdom and kindness, the power and faithfulness of the Lord your Friend, will overrule the lack of friendship in creatures, and all unkindnesses and disappointments you meet with from them. For myself, I must say, the Lord is still infinitely kind, merciful, and gracious to vile, sinful, unworthy me. It has been His dear pleasure to try me greatly by permitting the ship in which my dear husband sailed for England to founder at sea, to the loss of his life. But most surely the Son of God has been with me in this burning fiery furnace, and His sweet presence, at times, loosed my bands, and caused me to walk at liberty. Heavy was the stroke to my weak nature, but glorious has been the display of divine power in supporting me under it. I long to love, honor, and adore my chiding, smiting, loving God. I believe He does all things well, and what I know not now, I shall know hereafter. I wait for the light of glory to open the mysteries of this dark providence, and rejoice in hope of it. Oh, how fast does our dear Lord gather His lilies! We had need work while it is day—the night comes, in which we can do no more for Christ in this world.

Into the arms of Jesus—our love, our life, our all, I commit you. His grace be with your spirit.

64 - Not a Trouble Could Touch You!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam, At your request I attempt, as the Lord may afford light and assistance, to give you my thoughts on those words of Psalms 71:20-21—"Though You have showed me great and sore troubles, You shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

These words of the royal psalmist express his present mournful experience, and his strong faith in God for deliverance, to Jehovah's praise and his own bliss (as verses 22, 23); and in them, we may observe—

1. That great and sore troubles are the lot of God's dearest children.
2. That it is the Lord that brings their greatest troubles upon them.
3. That these troubles may be so great as to make them seem, in their own apprehension, like dead men, yes, as men buried deep in the earth.
4. That from the greatest death the Lord will raise His people unto a renewed life.
5. That it is God's design in the deepest dejection and humiliation of His children to raise them unto a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation.
6. That the faith of the psalmist and of all the saints was and is founded upon God's faithful promise.
7. That the faith of approaching deliverance, as beheld in the promise, is a mighty support to their sinking spirits and a reviving cordial to their fainting fits. To each of these, if the Lord pleases, a few brief hints, and we may note:

1. Great and sore troubles are the lot of God's dearest children. The royal psalmist, who spoke these words, was a man after God's own heart, an eminent saint, one of the Lord's special favorites, and yet he was a man of very great afflictions. If we read the history of his life in the afflictive part of it, what was it but a scene of very great sufferings! How was he despised and falsely accused by Eliab, his elder brother, when the Lord had spirited him up, and fired his zeal to go forth against Goliath, that proud Philistine who defiled the armies of the living God! How was he envied of Saul when the people praised him, and the Lord was with him! How did Saul hunt for his precious life continually and persecute him severely, so that poor David began to faint, even long after the Lord had promised him the kingdom and Samuel the prophet anointed him to it, when he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul!" How sorrowful was his sad case, when his son—his beloved son Absalom—rose up against him, to destroy him and take his throne! And if this psalm was composed, as it seems to have been, at the time of Absalom's rebellion, what deaths, what depths of trouble was poor David under then! How was he obliged to flee for his life from Jerusalem; driven out from the place of God's public worship, separated from the ark, and

caused by grief to go up Mount Olivet, weeping as he went, with his head covered, and bare-footed, while all the people who were with him went up in like manner! And when come to Bahurim, how bitterly did Shimei curse him; how cruelly did he cast stones at him! How did Ahithophel, his wise counselor, with a multitude of his subjects, forsake him and join with Absalom; and cruelly and jointly did they plot his destruction! From his anointing to the kingdom unto his possession of it, and from that to his exit, how many were his adversaries, how great his adversities! And if we look to CHRIST, of whom David was a type, as God's king, set upon His holy hill of Zion, in His wars against his enemies He, though the Father's first and most beloved Son, was yet in His humiliation state, "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—a man of sorrows by way of eminence from His cradle—the manger—to His painful death, the accursed cross, from the beginning of His life unto His dolorous death! His sorrows, who was the first-born Son of the Most High God, exceeded inexpressibly—inconceivably exceeded—all the sorrows of all the junior brethren, amassed together into one great heap of sorrow. Their sorrows were His, "He bore their sorrows, and carried their griefs." His sorrows had the ponderous weight of the curse in them, but from their sorrows the curse is taken out and gone. It has been well said that "God had one Son without sin, but He has no son without sorrow."

"Whom the Lord loves He chastens." And Christ, the eldest glory Son, standing first in the Father's love, must have the greatest bulk of sufferings, the most ponderous weight of sorrows—be a man of sorrows that dwelt, as it were, in sorrows; who was acquainted with grief; that was familiar with grief, as a man with his intimate. And the APOSTLES, who were set first in the gospel church, had the most ponderous weight of afflictions. "We are fools for Christ's sake," says Paul, "we are weak, we are despised; even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands; being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we entreat; we are made the filth of the world, and are the offscouring off all things unto this day, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, for we are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." And when James and John, who were our Lord's special favorites, requested to sit, the one at His right hand and the other at His left in His kingdom, He asked them, "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"—thereby signifying that suffering must precede reigning; and from the greatest even to the least of the saints, I think Dr. Goodwin's assertion will hold true, that "where free grace sets itself most to love, there it bestows the most afflictions."

Every child of God has his own part of sufferings that was allotted for him, and those who are blessed with the largest share of God's manifestative favor have had, have and shall have, the greatest troubles here. And these troubles in their every kind and degree are all appointed and brought to pass upon the children of God's infinite favor. Christ was foreordained to suffer, whence he said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And, says Paul, "God has set us forth as it were appointed unto death." And as the sufferings of all God's children are appointed for them, therefore, says Peter, "Let them which suffer according to the will of God (that is, His appointed will), commit the keeping of their souls unto Him in well doing."

2. It is the Lord who brings their greatest troubles upon them. As He appoints them for His children, so He brings them upon them, whether they be troubles in soul, in body, in family or in circumstance, in the world or in the Church, they are all brought upon them by the Lord's hand,

either by His operation or permission; and thus the psalmist saw God's hand—"Though YOU have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up." Psalms 71:20. And thus said our spiritual David, the Lord Christ, "YOU have brought me into the dust of death," for of Him and His sufferings at His crucifixion, that assertion is to be taken; and even before it, He said unto Pilate, who vaunted of His power to condemn him to it, "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above." And Paul says, "God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men," in allusion to that cruel custom of the Romans, who, when they had condemned any person to be torn to death by wild beasts, after having led him about as a spectacle, brought him upon the stage for that purpose. And thus it is with all God's children, "Not a hair of their heads falls to the ground without their Father;" not an affliction lights on them, but is brought on by His hand; and this, in their troubled minds, may cause a calm in the roughest storm, as no evil can touch them but what passes through God's hands, and especially if their faith is in exercise concerning the infinite love of His heart in the sharpest strokes of His hand; but if they speak of their present case, so far as they judge by sense, we may note:

3. That these troubles may be so great as to make them seem, in their own apprehension, like dead men, yes, as men buried deep in the earth. This is implied in what the psalmist speaks, "You shall quicken me again." It is as if he should say, "I am a dead man, as unable to help and deliver myself as a dead corpse is to raise itself again to life." Yes, further, it is as if he should say, "I am a buried man." This also is implied in what he speaks of being "brought up again from the depths of the earth." If he had not been dead in his own apprehension, he would not have needed quickening; if he had not been buried deep, in his own estimation of his present state, he could not have been "brought up from the depths of the earth."

Troubles, in the sacred Word, are styled deaths—"In deaths often." Great troubles, great deaths—"Who delivered us from so great a death." They are metaphorical deaths, for as natural death deprives the body of life and its comforts, so trouble, which is metaphorical death, deprives the soul, so far as it prevails and is indulged, of that life of joy which it had formerly in the light of God's countenance and in the bounties of providence. And when troubles are great and sore, God's dear children, judging by sense of their troubled condition, esteem themselves to be like dead and buried men. Thus Heman—"They have abandoned me to death, and I am as good as dead. I am forgotten, cut off from your care. You have thrust me down to the lowest pit, into the darkest depths." Psalms 88:5-6 And thus the Jewish Church, in the great and sore troubles of the Babylonish captivity—"Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts." Here, they seem to apprehend themselves to be, not only in such a helpless, desolate condition as dead and buried men, but even that their case was as desperate, and they as far from hope of life as is a dead corpse when its flesh is consumed in the grave, its bones cast up, dried and scattered about the grave's mouth. And with respect to their own apprehension of their desolate condition, and their utter inability to help themselves, and that of all the creatures to help them, the Lord himself thus represents them to the prophet. "He brought him in vision into the valley, which was full of bones, and caused him to pass by them round about, and behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry!" And then He said unto him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" But, nevertheless, we may note:

4. That from the greatest death the Lord will raise His people unto a renewed life. Thus, says the psalmist, "You shall quicken me again, you shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth." Here is life spoken of in quickening, and renewed life in quickening again and bringing up again. David, before this, had been blessed with past experience, in former deaths of trouble, of God's quickening influence—and thus the Lord blessed him again with life after death in the restoration of all the privileges of His kingdom after he had been driven from thence by force, which he foresaw, and, doubtless, all his future deliverances which were comprised in the promise when he spoke these words. And thus the Lord Jesus after death was raised again to life—brought again from the dead. And thus the Lord spoke by His prophet to His people of old under their dead state and hope as above, and in them speaks to all His people under their greatest deaths, whether metaphorical, or natural, unto the world's end, "Thus says the Lord God, behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord (the unchanging, the covenant-keeping, and promise-performing Jehovah) when I have opened your graves (and then, though He had said 'O my people' before, He repeats the appellation to show the infinite love and abounding affections of his heart, that source of life for them in death, and breaks out upon them again with an O), O my people, I will bring you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land; then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, says the Lord." Again, we may note—

5. That it is God's design, in the deepest dejection and humiliation of His children, to raise them thence to a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation. Thus, says the psalmist, "You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." When the Lord restored David again to his kingdom, he enjoyed it with all its privileges in an increased greatness, and with a more abundant sweetness, proportionable to the Lord's great and gracious appearance for him, as His servant, in his so great and sore distress. The Lord's design in bringing death upon His children is, not only their restoration to that life and joy which were taken from them, but also to raise them thence, from their deepest dejection and humiliation, unto a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation. Thus the Lord speaks, when His people of old were to return out of captivity, "I will do better for you than at your beginnings." "I will cause you to possess the double." "In their land they shall possess the double." The double of life and joy, of honor and glory, is God's design to confer upon His people, when He restores them from death and sorrow, from reproach and ignominy. And thus the Lord's Christ, after His deepest dejection and humiliation, was raised by His Father to the highest exaltation, and made full of joy with His countenance, or had given Him a more abundant and eternal consolation. And thus the apostles, after their deepest deaths, were raised by God unto higher honor and glory in the Church militant, and reserved for them, to their higher honor, glory, and joy, was a richer crown in the Church triumphant. And as it is the Lord's design to advance all His favorites highly, to prepare them for the enjoyment of that advancement more safely, to show His grace more gloriously in its bestowment, and the more abundantly to sweeten their enjoyment of it, He allows them, in His infinite wisdom, to sink into the deepest misery, that from thence, in His boundless grace, He might take occasion to exalt them more highly by His all-triumphant mercy and eternal truth and veracity.

Thus it was, in sin's permitted first entrance, and now is, in all its permitted after-prevalence. Thus it is in all temptations from the world, and Satan, and in trying dispensations of providence, with

which the Lord Himself is pleased to exercise His dear children. Darkness and death must be first, to set off the more that light and life with which they are to be blessed; yes, so wondrous is the Lord in His working, that He brings an increase of light and life out of the thickest darkness and deepest death; the greatest joy out of the utmost grief; the highest honor out of the deepest disgrace; the most plenteous fullness out of the most penurious circumstances; and eternal glory out of earthly misery.

Who, then, can withhold from saying, "Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord?" Who, then, of His children, would not give up himself entirely, most humbly and cheerfully, into His all-wise, all-gracious hands, in the most trying seasons? God sees a need, "that His children be in heaviness through manifold temptations, that their faith may be tried and thereby increased, and that it may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," that so, now and then, "He may increase their greatness and comfort them on every side." This He does and will do, in all our deliverances from distress, in time partially; but oh, to what a rich increase shall our tried graces rise, when time-trials are done, and a most enriched crown, in eternal glory, comes on! Then, then we shall be comforted on every side indeed. No side left open for sin and death, for sorrow and grief, for shame and reproach, for necessity of fear of poverty, but all-exalted in fullness of joy, of richest plenty, of greatest variety, and endless perpetuity, in the perfection of holiness and praise, and in the all-sufficiency of glory, we shall reign in life—in the second Adam's life—which is, "life more abundantly" than that which the first Adam lost by iniquity; and in this life we shall reign to a blessed eternity! And as thus the Lord will raise his children from the deepest dejection and humiliation unto an higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation, we may note—

6. That the faith of the psalmist, and of all the saints, for all deliverances, for their earthly happiness and eternal bliss, was and is founded upon God's faithful promise. "You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." How came David to say, 'You shall'? Was it not because God had said, 'I will'? Yes, verily. "God had made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, in which was all his salvation and all his desire!" And all the saints are savingly interested in that same everlasting covenant of free, absolute, and eternal grace, as David was, in which all their earthly deliverances and eternal joys and glories are comprised, while thus the Lord engages, for all the heirs of promise—"I will be unto them a God (an all-delivering, an all-exalting, an all-satisfying, and all-solacing, an all-justifying, an all-sanctifying, an all-glorifying, and an eternal God), and they shall be unto Me a people"—an all-delivered, an all-exalted, a fully-satisfied, a joy-filled, an all-justified, a perfectly-sanctified, and an eternally-glorified people. This covenant of promise, which was originally made with our spiritual David, is confirmed and ratified forever by the precious blood of Christ, and by the solemn oath of Jehovah, and contains in it, as in one sum total, all the promises of God, which are all yes and amen in Christ, that lie, as in distinct parcels, scattered abroad throughout the sacred pages, to suit the various necessities and wishes of all the heirs of promise. And whether David or any other saint, in confidence of deliverance, by this delivering God, said, or says, You shall—whether herein he, or they, respected, or respect, the general, all-comprehending promise of the covenant, or any promise of it in particular—this is their faith; their faith of deliverance is founded upon God's faithful promise, and "heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a jot or tittle of Jehovah's promise-word shall ever fail." And therefore, with respect to all heirs of promise, we may note—

7. That the faith of approaching deliverance, as beheld in the promise, is a mighty support to their sinking spirits, and a reviving cordial in their fainting fits. "I would have fainted," said David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And the faith of assistance and deliverance, as beheld in His Father's faithful promise, was a mighty support to our great Lord himself in His arduous redemption work. "For the Lord God will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And what a reviving cordial to Him was faith in His Father's faithful promise under His most depressing sufferings, when "He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him," the joy of His Father's highest glory—by His deepest ignominy; of His own greatest exaltation—after His lowest humiliation; and of His people's salvation from all misery—and unto all joy and glory in eternal life, by His pouring out His soul for them even unto death.

Again, what a mighty support, what a reviving cordial, was the faith of deliverance as beheld in God's faithful promise to the apostles and primitive Christians under their great sufferings. They ran their race, not at uncertainties, but in faith's assurance, from the faithful promise, for an incorruptible crown. They were patient and joyful in all their tribulations, while they "looked not at the things which are seen—which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen—which are eternal." They "reckoned that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with that eternal glory which would be revealed in them." And the faith of deliverance, as beheld in God's faithful promise, has been, is, and will be, a mighty support and a reviving cordial to all the saints through all the ages of time, past, present, and to come.

We commonly say, in lesser things, "If it were not for hope, the heart would break." And I am sure, I may say, "If it were not for hope—that good sure hope which springs from faith in God's faithful promise, the hearts of all His people would certainly break, when pressed, as they think, above strength, under great troubles and sore distress." How sadly did David faint, when he said in unbelief, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," upon which he fled from the coasts of Israel unto Achish, king of Gath. But though poor David met with troubles from the Philistines, and was severely distressed when Ziklag was burnt with fire—and his wives and those of his men carried captive—and his own people, his soldiers, spoke of stoning him, yet then, turning the eye and laying the ear of his faith to God's faithful promise, faith had a mouth to speak comfort, by which "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." His faith in God's faithful promise was a mighty support to him at this time of his distress, and such a reviving cordial it was that kept him from fainting under sense-apparent ruin, until he saw the promise in performance, in that part of it which respected his being brought to the kingdom, which time was then near to come, although to David it was unknown. And thus the Church, when carried into captivity, in her doleful lamentations of her sad case and sore distress, while she remembered her affliction and misery, the wormwood and gall, her heart would have broken had it not been for faith and hope in God. But she called the Lord's mercies to mind, His compassions, which fail not, and His faithfulness, which is great, and says in faith, "The Lord is my portion (whence hope began to spring), therefore will I hope in Him;" that is, for delivering mercy from the depths of her misery, unto renewed joy and rising glory. And again, this was the voice of her faith in God's faithful promise, which secured her deliverance from greatest distress—"Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days, He will revive us; in the third day, He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. His going forth (for our deliverance) is prepared as the

morning (which will most certainly come in its season); and He shall come unto us as the rain, and as showers that water the earth," to newly-robe it with greenness and fruitfulness, joy, and glory. And oh, what a mighty support was this faith of the Church in her approaching deliverance, as beheld in God's faithful promise, under the pressing weights of her present distress; what a reviving cordial was this in her fainting fits; and what saint is there who has not had, more or less, some blessed experience of this? Well, then, may we say with the Church, even in greatest adversity, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy, when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord will be a light unto me; He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness." And with David, "You which have showed me great and sore troubles shall quicken me again and bring me up again from the depths of the earth; You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." With a few words I shall close. And hence, my dear, worthy Madam, are you under great and sore troubles? Remember that these are the lot of God's dearest children. And yield not to doubt of your being such because you have this mournful experience; and though the inward workings of sin at times under trying dispensations of providence is the greatest trouble of all, and puts your soul to grievous pain, this is a trouble that is peculiar to God's own, and by this grief you may know certainly that you are one of the blessed family, to your heart's joy.

Again, consider that it is the Lord that brings your greatest troubles upon you; not a trouble could touch you but by His operation or permission for the bringing it on. Say, then, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good;" and, "Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil?" And if the rod is in your all-wise, your all-gracious Father's most kind hand, it will profit your soul in the end. And are your troubles so great at times as to make you seem in your own apprehension like a dead person, yes, as one that is buried deep in the earth? Think, in faith, that when all help fails within and without, on every creature-side, then for you in your "Jehovah everlasting strength abides."

Further, consider that from the greatest death the Lord will raise you unto a renewed life. You are not always to abide under the power of death. Christ is risen, you must rise; "because He lives, you shall live also." And let your blessed experiences of past deliverances encourage your trust in God for future deliverances. Say, "God, who has delivered and does deliver, in Him I trust that He will yet deliver,"—that He will quicken me again, and bring me up again from the depth of the earth.

Yes, behold, it is God's design in the deepest of your dejection and humiliation to raise you up to a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation. The greater your death, the more abundant shall be your life; the lower your humiliation, the higher your exaltation; the deeper your dejection, the more abundant your consolation. You shall pass on by every waste to a richer increase of grace, from greatness to greatness; from joy before grief, unto a higher joy after it; from lesser gracious experience before suspended influence, unto a greater, richer, gracious experience under renewed influence. You shall thus pass from blessing to blessing here.

But, hereafter, oh, how highly will the Lord exalt you! At death, in your separate spirit, you shall enter into peace and be surrounded in and by those rivers of pleasure which flow continually at God's right hand for evermore; and at the resurrection-morn you shall enter into your Master's joy; and for grief, there will be no entrance; from the deepest of your soul-misery, from the lowest

humiliation of your body, you shall be raised up to the highest joy, to eternal glory. "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you to the living fountain of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

Again, is your faith for all deliverance, for your earthly happiness and eternal bliss, founded upon God's faithful promise? behold, this is a sure basis, for the God of promise is the God of performance. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent; has He said it, and shall He not do it; or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" And "Those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." "They shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end."

Once more, as you have had blessed experience that the faith of approaching deliverance, as beheld in God's faithful promise, has been a mighty support to your sinking spirit, and a reviving cordial in your fainting fits, let this put you upon crying to the Lord for wisdom and strength to watch against and oppose the voice of unbelief, which casts the highest dishonor upon the God of promise, and doubles the weight of your every distress. And when the Lord favors you with pleading for prospects of deliverance, by turning the eye of your faith to the great, comprehensive, general promise of His new covenant, or to any particular promise, as a branch of it, by the Holy Spirit applied to your heart, endeavor to hold fast your confidence in the face of all gainsayers, for the honor of the God of promise, and for your troubled soul's bliss; and be bold, also, to tell the enemies to their face that they are liars, and that you, in the strength of Jesus, shall tread upon their high places; for in the deepest distress, "the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." And therefore, you may say with David, "You who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." That "the peace of God, which passes all understanding, may keep your heart and mind, through Christ Jesus," is the fervent prayer of your tender friend, who loves you in the affections of Jesus Christ.

65 - The Wonder and Joy of Heaven and Earth

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects Mr. James Hervey,

I bless our dear Lord for the great things which He has done for you, and that He has enabled you to write your Meditations. They came out of His fullness, they shine with His beauties, and are truly excellent, as under His influence they sweetly and simply lead unto Him, the Most Excellent One—the wonder and joy of heaven and earth—through all time—and to all eternity. I congratulate your happiness, dear Sir, in that the Lord the Savior has given you a capacious soul to behold—and a learned tongue to express, His ineffable beauties and glories, which are cast upon, and shine through, every creature and thing in the upper and lower world. It was He who gave you the mental eye, that new-created your sin-darkened mind, and gave it a superior capacity, by faith, for converse with brighter glories than the first Adam was capable of, by the utmost stretch of his perfect reason. It was He who presented every beauty to your spiritual eye, that darted every ray of glory upon your illuminated mind, in your converse with seen and unseen things, in the visible and invisible worlds; it was the Lord your Savior, who loved every instruction and every delight into your mind, who gave the matter and form of every idea impressive and expressive of whatever your eyes beheld; yes, who loved Himself to you, and you unto, into, Him. In love to Him, then, we will join to give Him glory. In Christ there is enough to instruct, delight and fill you unto endless ages. Here, in the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified, you may expatiate, stretch your utmost capacities, swim and dive and live forever; for while you know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, you shall be filled with all the fullness of God. It is most delightful to me to see Christ the Alpha and Omega of all your thoughts, that you begin and end with Him in everything. Alas, how empty, dear Sir, would all your fine language be if Christ was not in it! It is He who fills your volumes and makes them truly valuable. I rejoice that the Lord has given this, your labor of love, such a large circuit and acceptance; I trust its usefulness will be as extensive as its progress, and that many will be blessed with the knowledge of Christ, and their hearts fired with love to Him thereby, to His glory and their endless joy. For myself, Sir, I can say, to the praise of our good God, and, I hope, unto your joy, that what you have written has been blessed to bring Christ to me, and me to Him, in further sweet communion, to endear every mercy to me, as the price of His blood, and to endear my heart to Him thereby, and engage me to give Him glory. It gladdens my heart, Sir, to see the love of Christ shed abroad in yours, and the gratitude of your soul awakened thereby, and upon the flow, as a hasty stream, by which you yourself are wafted into Him and His love's ocean. Favorite of heaven! Lover of the altogether lovely Jesus! Seek the Lord and His strength, that you may ever stand fast in His glorious gospel, and never be ashamed of any of its precious truths. Lay out your love to Him, who ineffably and infinitely loved you, in spreading the precious savor of His name as the Lord our righteousness and strength—our righteousness for justification, unto acceptance with God; our strength for sanctification, unto conformity to His image—and tell the world your joys, the triumphs of your faith, in your Savior's blood, when your interest therein is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which casts out bondage-fear and gives you filial freedom in the service of that glorious God unto whose praise and honor your happy soul

is devoted. These things, Sir, which brightly shine in the volumes you most kindly were pleased to present me with, delight me much, and most heartily I pray the Lord to increase you and your usefulness more and more.

66 - Glory is Grace Made Perfect

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Friend,

I am glad the Lord enables you to believe that all your afflictions are given in God's mercy, faithfulness and love—herein is the strength of a believer's spirit for patient suffering. It is my joy likewise, that you have the blessed experience that when nature is ready to cry out and faint under affliction's pressing weight, grace is enabled to sing and triumph. And believe this, that by all the dispensations of Providence, the Lord, your own God, as the God of love to you in Christ, is bringing you up to glory in that very way which infinite wisdom and grace devised and foreordained, that is and shall be most for God's highest praise and your highest bliss. As you long to know and love Jesus more, your longing soul shall be satisfied with an increasing knowledge of Him and love unto Him here, until that which is perfect, with respect to both, shall come hereafter. And as Christ now is altogether lovely in your view, though you get but now and then a glimpse of His glory by faith in this distant state, oh, what rapturous joy will fill your heart when blessed with sight, when in His immediate presence you shall see Him as He is!

Believers who are perfectly justified before God have but an imperfect knowledge and conscience-persuasion of that their complete justification; and their personal standing in this grace is not fully known to others, much less are the resplendent glories of Christ's righteousness—that Godlike dress with which believers are richly arrayed—comprehended by themselves, or by others with whom they converse, is our present state of shortness and darkness. The state of grace, as to sanctification, consists in a begun fitness, by inherent holiness produced in our hearts and lives by the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit of grace, for the enjoyment of Christ and of God in Him; in some glances of His glory cast upon us through the gospel-glass, in a growing conformity to His image, and in an answerable employment in His praise. Now, as glory is grace made perfect, we may hence form some true notions what glory is, in that it differs not from grace in kind but in degree. But as our present conceptions about it are very imperfect, we must needs be very far from thinking or speaking of it perfectly. The souls of the saints at the death of their bodies, by the Almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, are at once made perfect in holiness. All sin, in its being and working, which remained in them before, is then destroyed utterly, removed out of them totally and forever, and their begun holiness completed, never more to be defaced. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts at first, which was perfect as to kind and as to parts, as it extended as a principle of grace unto all the powers of their souls, each of which was in part sanctified, shall then be completed in degree, and all the powers of their souls sanctified perfectly as entire faculties. The 'infant principle of grace begun' shall then arrive to its full perfection, to the measure of the stature of the perfect new man. And this perfect holiness is, and will be, their perfect, inherent fitness for the state of glory, in the immediate vision of Christ and of God in Him to a blissful eternity.

They see God's infinite perfections and glories, and in all their various displays in nature, grace, and providence, and all in subservience to God's highest praise, and their highest bliss. They live in God, and dive continually into that boundless, bottomless, endless sea of immense felicity, to the ages of eternity! But the glory of separate spirits, at home with Christ, is, in this regard, much too great to be conceived or expressed by a mortal's thought or word. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard!" Dr. Goodwin well says, "When we are taken to heaven, we shall see God at once, with respect to the simplicity of His Being, as all that is in God, is God; but with respect to the immensity of His Being, it will be like sailing over an eternal sea, where every moment's sail we have a new horizon." The fresh displays of Jehovah's infinite glories will fill our finite capacities with rising joys, and present new wonders to our raptured eyes, through the circling ages of a blessed eternity; for when we see Christ, and God in Him, it will not be a bare speculation, an unaffecting sight, but a soul-attracting display, that sweetly, strongly, perpetually, will draw us into Him, that broad, deep, and endless ocean of glory, for a soul-filling enjoyment. "And they will see His face, and his name will be written on their foreheads." Revelation 22:4 And this beatific, facial vision of God and the Lamb, will be transforming. "When we see Christ, Christ as He is, we shall be like Him." And this transformation into His image by the vision of His face, as I humbly think, respects all those internal, innumerable, various and endless acts of our perfected graces, which shall be excited hereby to a vast eternity. And consequent hereupon, we shall be externally employed in Jehovah's praise—in ascriptions of glory and blessing, salvation and honor, wisdom and power, unto Him that sits upon the throne, and to the worthy Lamb forever and ever! And a specimen of this worship of heaven we have thus given, "And every creature which is in heaven heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever! "

All the innumerable multitude shall continually and eternally join in the worship of God and the Lamb, with the triumphant shout of, Hallelujah! to which all the glorious angels round the throne join a loud, Amen! All the glorified members of Christ's mystical body, from Him the Head, shall be filled brimful of joy and glory, ineffably and eternally, and all the streams of bliss, from Him the Fountain, shall flow down upon all, and by all, into and through each other, and waft them all, in love's endearment and joint-praises, into God, that vast ocean from whence they came, that ocean of joy and glory—to a happy eternity. For all the displays of the glory of God, which shall then be cast upon us through Christ, will be made in the bright form of love, which will attract our spirits as so many tongues of fire in continual ascension to join with His infinite and eternal flame! Our communion with God, as the God of love, will be full and immediate, uninterrupted and eternal. Yes, we shall then love God for Himself, first and principally in all His essential perfections and infinite glories, and in all their bright displays, chiefly in that God is glorified thereby. We shall love His glory in our salvation, above our own happiness therein, and rejoice in our felicity, as it redounds to Jehovah's glory—His manifestative glory. We shall interest ourselves in God's glory, and rejoice forever in His essential, immense, and eternal bliss. And passing out of our little selves into the great God, we shall live in Him, and bathe in His immense pleasures, that vast and endless ocean of felicity unknown. And full it must needs be, to fill all the vessels of mercy to the utmost of their finite capacities, with ineffable and endless joy and glory, since it is full for God Himself to a boundless eternity. We shall then, by glory-union, be "in the Son and in the Father," encompassed round with a vast ocean of bliss, immense and endless, and that not simply as single persons, but as a body collectively, unto eternal praise, in which the innumerable company

of holy angels will join with their eternal adorations and loud acclamations!

But, what the joys and glories of Christ's righteousness upon us, clearly and constantly beheld by us—of perfect holiness in principle within us; of immediate vision and full fruition of God the Lamb; of a full conformity to His image in the internal acts of perfected graces; of an eternal dedication to His eternal praise, together with a full and eternal communion with saints and angels—will be in their own vast greatness, nothing less than the state of glory itself can inform us.

This, my dear friend, is a weak essay to lisp out the ineffable felicity of happy spirits IN a separate state. But oh, how small a part of it can be told! It is a subject fit for our admiration, but far surpasses all expression. And until we also are blessed with sight, we are called to live by faith. That "your fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit," may more and more increase unto a growing conformity to the divine image, and a more constant employ in Jehovah's praise, until you are called to inherit eternal bliss, is my hearty desire.

67 - Oh, What a Heap of Empty Vanities and Cruel Vexations

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister,

How good is the Lord to us! He tries us for a while, and then He comforts us. Light and darkness—joy and sorrow—bitter and sweet—are wisely mixed and graciously overruled for the glory of God in our salvation. Oh, the infinite wisdom of our Leader, the glory of His conduct, the happiness of those under His care, and the blissful end to which He brings them! Happy is their way, and happy is their end. Happy are they in the midst of griefs—because the God of joy, God their joy, their exceeding joy, is with them there. Happy are they when delivered from grieving things—because God their deliverer is their deliverance. Jesus our Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation, marches on before His redeemed, treads down the briars and thorns of the wilderness, and gives us a comfortable passage through them to the land of rest. What need we fear, since the Lord is with us—with us when we pass through the waters and walk through the fire—that the one does not consume us, nor the other overflow us? Our happiness lies in having a saving interest in the all-sufficient God, in the enjoyment of Him as such, and in our entire dedication to His glory, in every changing providence. To have God in everything—to see God in everything—and to love, bless, and adore God in everything—will make everything sweet to us. And without this, nothing will be substantial, nothing joyous, nothing profitable, nothing savory to a new-born soul, as such.

Oh, what a heap of empty vanities and cruel vexations are all things which this world affords without God enjoyed, without God revered in everything! It may well be said, "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him, is the chief end of man," and ineffably happy is that man who eagerly pursues this great end as his chief good. That man is prepared for the enjoyment, for the employment of heaven. And the more he answers that character, the greater is his preparation for the heavenly state; yes, the more of heaven comes down into his soul while his abode is on this earth.

I wish you daily fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit the Comforter.

68 - In the Sweet Bosom, in the Kind Arms

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects Ever Dear and Honored Parents,

I long to have my love to God a pure, fervent, solid, lasting flame, that in spirit, soul, and body, I might be one continual living sacrifice to His glory. But, oh! my little grace is so pressed and annoyed with the body of sin, with the body of this death, that I groan, being burdened. I rejoice in hope of perfect holiness, of immortal glory. This was very sweet to me of late—that God has predestined me to be conformed to the image of His Son, that the work is His, that He has begun and will perfect it. This glory my faith sees afar off, my love hastens to meet it, and my hope patiently waits for it. And, in the meantime, what do I long for? What do I wait for? Surely it is this—An increasing knowledge of Christ, conformity to Him, and service for Him. Oh, pray that I may love my dear Lord greatly in every little thing I aim to do for Him, and especially now I have so little time and strength left me to serve Him in. An eternity of glory, in the enjoyment of His glorious Self, awaits me! But, oh! that I have loved and served Him so little in the days of the years of my life which He has given me—this grieves me. Yet I know my Lord pardons all my unkindness.

Oh, may His love continually delight your souls, and His honor lie near your hearts! You have a God whose love does not decay, whose mercy never fails, whose faithfulness is like the great mountains, yes, firmer than the lasting hills, "for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but God's kindness towards you shall not depart, nor the covenant of His peace be removed, says the Lord, that has mercy on you."

Oh, rest your dear souls, your weary heads, in the sweet bosom, in the kind arms, of the Lord your own God. There you will find ease in pain, peace in trouble, security in danger, fullness in need, and life in death. Through life with all its trials, and death with all its sorrows, will the Lord your life, your joy, your all, be with you!

69 - When the Veil is Taken Off

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Love, Our life here is one perpetual scene of various changes, all which, as wisely and graciously over-ruled by the sovereign Lord of all, shall effectually prepare us for our unchangeable and endless glory hereafter! The manifestative glory of God in everything that passes over us, and our present and eternal advantage, are inseparably connected with each other. Infinite love joined them both together, infinite faithfulness secures the links from breaking, and infinite power draws the unbroken chain through a continued series of diverse events in time, to the glory of God, and ours with Him to eternity. And when the whole of His providential dispensations towards us are finished, and all that glory brought to His great name by everything that was designed, and all that good brought to us by all things which was purposed, the Lord shall rejoice in His works, and pronounce concerning them, to the eternal rest of His soul, "They are all very good." And when the veil is taken off, and we see with one view all the works of God towards us, in their variety, harmony, and unity, exactly answering all the glorious ends designed, we shall rejoice with Him, and to the eternal glory of His name and rest of our hearts, shall say, "He has done all things well." And the more we see and say thus now, the more of heaven's bliss we enjoy on earth. Shall not we, who are reconciled to God by the Lamb's blood, be one in will, be one in interest with Him. If we are not, it makes us, who are the friends of God, look like enemies to Him. Oh, let not God and us be twain, since Jesus died to make us one in Himself—to whom be glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen. The dear Lord Jesus be with you.

70 - And Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Matthew 6:13

I. As to the matter of this petition, "Lead us not into temptation," we may consider, what the word temptation means; and what kind of temptation may be here intended.

1. The word temptation, taken in a large sense, signifies any kind of proof or trial that is made of any person or thing.

2. As to what kind of temptation is here intended, it may respect temptations from God, from Satan, from men, and from our own hearts, and may extend both to affliction and sin, both of which we deprecate when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

II. As to the Person to which this petition is addressed, which is God our heavenly Father, "Our Father who is in heaven—lead us not," we are hereby taught to look up in faith unto that God, who is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, for preservation from all temptation, and unto Him as our Father—as our Father who is in heaven—who loves and pities us in all as a father does his children, and who is high above all, and overrules all as He pleases.

III. As to what is implied herein—that God may righteously lead us into temptation —by "Lead us not," it is implied that He may lead us, and that righteously, into temptation. We have sinned against Him in our first father Adam, and thence have derived a sinful nature from him, which is enmity against God. And our personal transgressions in heart, lip and life, in thought, word and deed, even since we knew the Lord, or rather were known of Him, are innumerable; by which we are such a provocation of His anger that He may justly give us up in a way of rebuke unto a variety of temptations both as to afflictions and sins—and sin to a child of God is indeed the greatest affliction. I say, "give us up," but I intend it in a limited sense, that is, in part and for a time, not totally nor finally; not but that our sins deserve both—but having forgiven all our iniquities, and put us among the children of His love through faith in His dear Son, He does and will deal with us according to grace—"the exceeding riches of His grace"—and never, never leave us nor forsake us in any state or case, but overrule all things, even our very temptations, for the furtherance of our salvation.

Those righteous rebukes as to afflictions on account of the sin of our nature which flow more eminently from God's sovereign will, though they carry the face of divine displeasure in them, do yet originally spring from His paternal love, and are designed and managed by Him for the purging out of corruptions and for the exercise of our graces, and in both for the furtherance of our salvation. And even those sorer rebukes, when He leads us into temptations to sin on account of our actual transgressions and repeated provocations, when He "gives us up to our own heart's lust," lets us alone when we cleave to idols, and allows our "own wickedness to correct us, and our backslidings to reprove us,"—though they carry a more severe displeasure in the face of them, yet flowing but from Fatherly anger, and not from vindictive wrath, as they spring from, so they end in,

the great designs of infinite love—to purge out our corruption and further our salvation; while the Lord righteously leaves us to fall by temptation into sin, and thereby overrules the greatest evil for our good, in giving us to see in the bitter fruit what an evil and a bitter thing it is, "that we have forsaken the Lord our God, and that His fear has not been (the prevailing principle) in us;" by which through His forgiving and restoring grace, He sets our hearts more against sin than ever, and draws out our souls afresh to cleave to Him in a way of duty, and thus to have our fruit unto holiness, the end whereof will be everlasting life. But perhaps you will say, "I know that the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works, but how can a righteous, holy God, be said to lead us into temptation?" I answer—Of God's leading His people into temptation, with regard to affliction, I suppose you have no doubt, or that God righteously may, and often does, lay that upon us and require that of us which is very afflicting to nature, in order to the trial and exercise of our graces, for His own glory and our joy; as, when He required Abraham to offer up his son—his only son—for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which He would show him—even his Isaac, whom he loved, and in whom all the promises were to be fulfilled, by the Messiah's springing from his loins—concerning which it is said, "that God did tempt Abraham" (Genesis 22:1). And as in tribulations and persecutions for the gospel's sake, the followers of Christ are required "to deny themselves," to "take up their cross," to hate even their own lives, to love them not unto death, to "be faithful unto death," and to "resist, even unto blood (if called to it), striving against sin," etc.; in which kind of temptations, with all others that are of a like nature, though not to that degree, which Abraham's children are at any time called to endure, they are bid to rejoice, yes, to count it all joy when they fall into diverse of them (James 1:2). Of God's leading His people into temptation in these respects, I think, my dear sister, you have no doubt; but how this holy, righteous God, can be said to lead us into temptation to sin, in a way consistent with His holiness and righteousness?—this, I suppose, is your scruple. And as to this, I have already hinted that God righteously may, even thus, lead us into temptation as a sharp rebuke for our sins, in a way of Fatherly anger, which is entirely consistent with His paternal kindness, in turning us from all iniquity, and working us up more fully into the image of His purity. And I further add, that whenever God leads us into temptation to sin, as a just rebuke for our former sin, His righteousness and holiness therein is further manifest, in that He never does in the least thereby entice us, stir us up, or excite us to sin. No! His infinite purity, His flaming holiness, does absolutely, necessarily, and constantly forbid everything of this nature, for He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; He cannot (with the least approbation) look on iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13). It is impossible that an infinitely holy, righteous God, who is immutably and eternally glorious in holiness, should in any way, or at any time, excite any person unto any evil. No! "Let no man say (in this respect), when he is tempted, I am tempted of God—for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man" (James 1:13), that is, by impulsive temptation to evil.

Such active temptations to sin are to be ascribed to their proper authors—to Satan, the grand adversary, whose constant work it is to stir men up to sin against God, on which account he is called the tempter (1 Thessalonians 3:5); to wicked men who, as his instruments, excite one another to sin—whence it is said, "My son, if sinners entice you, consent not" (Proverbs 1:10); and to our own wicked hearts, as (James 1:14)—"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

But, nevertheless, the holy, righteous God, as a holy, righteous chastisement for sin, may and does at times lead us into temptation to sin; and when he does do so, far is God therein from being the author of sin or any active cause thereof, in that He does not in the least thereby actively tempt us to evil, but only passively leaves us to those temptations which He justly may and does allow to fall in our way; and as God righteously may lead us into temptation, so with propriety He may be said thus to do:

1. When He allows SATAN to tempt us, as He permitted Satan to tempt Peter (Luke 22:31-32), "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not; and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." Satan, from his malice against the Lord and against this His zealous servant, desired to have Him, or he desired leave to tempt him (as the devils desired permission to enter the swine), that he might sift out all his graces and leave nothing in him but his corruptions. But Christ, from his love to Peter, and as a rebuke for his self-confidence, to show him the weakness of inherent grace and the strength of corruption if led into temptation, was pleased to give him up, as it were, in part and for a time unto Satan's will to tempt him, or allowed Satan to try him by his hellish policy and power, the sad effect of which was the denial of his dear Lord and Master. "But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not;" as if our Lord should say, "Though I have allowed the enemy to assault you, and he will greatly prevail against you, yet I have limited the temptation, and through my intercession for you he shall not be able to sift the principles of faith out of you. And though in the shaking time your acts of faith and zeal, in and for Me, will fail you, yet, through my forgiving and renewing grace, you shall be again recovered and strengthened, and, when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

2. Again, God may be said to lead us into temptation: When He allows MEN to tempt us, as he allowed the old prophets to tempt the man of God that cried against the altar at Bethel (1 Kings 13:18).

3. And God may be said to lead us into temptation: When He allows the CORRUPTIONS OF OUR OWN HEARTS to tempt us, as (Psalms 81:11-12), "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own heart's lust, and they walked in their own counsels."

4. Once more, God may be said to lead us into temptation: WHEN HE WITHHOLDS THE INFLUENCE OF HIS GRACE FROM US, which alone can keep us from yielding to temptation, as He left Hezekiah to try him that he might know all that was in his heart (2 Chronicles 32:31). And as God righteously may allow Satan, men, and sin to tempt us, and withhold the influence of His grace from us when we grieve and vex his Holy Spirit, so, when we are thus led into temptation, the sad consequence thereof, through the strength of our soul-enemies, and our weakness, will be a wretched compliance with temptation to sin, to God's dishonor and our soul's wounding. And therefore, a hint or two:

IV. As to our duty and privilege daily to pray. If God justly may lead us into temptation with respect to affliction, which, through the weakness of our nature, will expose us to great danger of sinning against Him, and if He righteously may lead us into temptation, even unto sin itself, in both which, if He leaves us, we shall certainly fall into evil, to His dishonor and our wounding, oh, how much does it concern us daily to pray, "lead us not into temptation;" how great is our duty thus to

supplicate the divine throne, and how great is our privilege that we may thus address our Father who is in heaven, who is infinite in wisdom, and has many ways to prevent our being led into temptation; who is infinite in grace, and is always ready to hear the prayers of His dear children; and who is almighty in power, and well able to protect us from all dangers, and to defend us from all our spiritual enemies. It is an honor due to our heavenly Father, that we thus pray to Him daily, "lead us not into temptation," and a privilege unspeakable hereby is cast upon us His children, in the enjoined duty.

I shall close with a few hints from the latter part of this petition, by showing—What evil we deprecate; and what salvation we implore, when we pray, "but deliver us from evil."

1. We hereby pray against the evil of sin, that if God at any time, or in any measure, should lead us into temptation, we may be delivered from the hurt of it, that we may be seasonably supported in, and graciously delivered out of, temptation. We likewise hereby pray that we may be delivered from evil men and from the evil one, Satan, who is the principle author of all evil.

2. The salvation we implore when we pray, "but deliver us from evil," consists in this, the forgiveness of all our sins so far as by temptation we have fallen, or may be left to fall into sin; the subduing of all our iniquities, and the utter destruction of all sin, with all the effects of it, both as to soul and body, unto the complete and everlasting salvation of our whole persons through God's free grace by Jesus Christ, to the eternal praise of His glory, and to our eternal joy. And thus the conclusion of this excellent directory for prayer, which glances upon all its foregoing parts, fitly comes in upon the close of the sixth petition—"for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." By which we give unto God as our Father in Christ the glory due unto His name, and acknowledge Him to be the true and living God, and an everlasting King; that He has a right to rule over all things for his own glory; that He has prepared His own throne in the heavens, and that His kingdom rules over all; that He works all things in providence, according to the good pleasure of His eternal will; that His kingdom of right should come, and that by His power and for His glory it shall come, to the complete salvation of His people, and the utter destruction of all His and their enemies; and that we approve of and choose Him for our King, that we give up ourselves to Him to be His subjects, that we rejoice in His government, and long for the spreading of the glories of His kingdom over all, in testimony whereof, and in confidence of our prayers being heard, we say, Amen.

71 - The Spiritual Israelites

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in Christ,

I humbly think that the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, under Pharaoh and his task-masters, was typical of the cruel bondage of the people of God in a state of nature, under the tyranny of sin and Satan and a broken law of works. Their deliverance from Egypt and passage through the Red Sea were typical of our deliverance from the power of darkness, and translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son at our first conversion. Their journeys through the desolate wilderness were typical of our travels through this world of trouble. Their Land of Promise was typical of our promised rest. Their passage over Jordan into Canaan was typical of our passage through death into everlasting life, or of our passing from this world of sin and sorrow into the world of joy and glory as our everlasting rest. And that Canaan was typical of heaven, is evident, in that God, when He made promise of Canaan to Abraham, did thereby make promise of heaven to him—of heaven's glory—as the substance of that shadow in Canaan's bliss, whence his faith beheld the same afar off through the glass of the promise, as (Hebrews 11:9-10), "By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And thus those who are of faith, that have the same faith with Abraham, are said to "seek a country, and to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly—wherefore God also is not ashamed to be called their God—for He has prepared for them a city" (verse 14, 16), no less than the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the glory of the heavenly state.

Thus, this was the sum and substance of the promise, spiritual and heavenly glory, that was shadowed forth by literal Canaan with its flowing bliss, and this is what the faith of all the Old Testament saints beheld in Canaan's promise, as the ultimate of that bliss comprised in it. And this is what all the New Testament saints likewise, all that are of the faith of Abraham, and so heirs with him of the same promise, this is what they look for and expect, even the heavenly glory of which Canaan, the glory of all lands, was a sweet resemblance. And as the Israelites were to pass over Jordan, in order to possess the bliss of Canaan, so the people of God must pass over the river death before they enjoy, and in order to possess, the glory prepared for them in heaven. Death, like Jordan's river, lies between us and promised bliss, between the wilderness and Canaan. But over Jordan the Israelites went dry-shod, under the conduct of their Joshua, to possess their portion in the Land of Promise; and over death we shall go unhurt, untouched by the waters, the sorrows thereof, as a curse, while the waters divide here and there, by Omnipotent power, to make us a safe passage through the flood on foot, under the conduct of our Jesus—the Captain of our salvation—to the full possession of our inheritance in light and life, in the immediate vision and fruition of His glory unto fullness of joy and endless eternity. And the believers, the spiritual Israelites, must pass over Jordan into Canaan before they can feast in Canaan. A taste here in grace, to whet our appetites and set our souls a longing, is our unspeakable privilege, but our delicious, soul-satisfying feast, is reserved for future glory until we are made partakers of the

inheritance of the saints in light. And here what shall I say? "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, those great and glorious things which God (in His everlasting love) has prepared for them that love Him, for them that wait for Him." The best and richest wine of God's everlasting word is kept until last, reserved for a glorious eternity. And O the rich dainties, the royal wine in abundance, on which immortal saints shall feast at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! "We shall eat and drink at His table in His kingdom" (Luke 22:30), "Yes, eat as His friends" (Song of Solomon 5:1), and drink as His beloved abundantly of love, of love before time, in time, and after time, unto endless eternity; for the great opening of God's heart—of the heart of God the Father, in all the displays of His everlasting love—of the heart of God the Son, in all the displays of His everlasting love—of the heart of God the Holy Spirit, in all the displays of His everlasting love, is reserved for blessed eternity. The love of God in itself, and in all its wondrous fruits, will then be set before the quick appetites of glorified saints, and make them a joyful, eternal feast. The new and old fruits of everlasting love, and love in all its fruits, to our eternal salvation and glory, ordained, procured, and bestowed, will delight us exceedingly, and feed us substantially. And oh, what tongue can express, or heart conceive, a thousandth part of that bliss, joy, and glory we shall possess in the immediate vision and fruition of Christ, and of God in Him—of God in all His Persons, as Love, without darkness, without distance, without a veil between, without the medium of ordinances? Oh, what will it be to see, to enjoy God as love, in Himself, without intermission, to an endless duration, and without fear also of any even the least separation?

Oh, what is Christ? What is God? What is God in Christ, the ultimate of the saints' enjoyment? He was of old prepared for us worthless creatures, for us miserable sinners! For us, sinful men—while sinning angels perish! For us, the chosen, the beloved of the Lord, while thousands of our sinful race sink down with sinning angels into endless misery! Were we better than they? No! in no way. Oh free, rich, distinguishing love! Oh, great, everlasting love! "Lord, what is man, that you are thus mindful of him? or the Son of man, that you should set your heart upon Him?" This note of joyful wonder will be echoed forth by glorified saints from their fervent love of God and zeal for His honor, in their lofty songs of praise, while they ascribe salvation and glory and blessing unto Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever, to which all their innumerable multitude and myriads of glorious angels, with joy unknown, shall join a loud amen! But oh, this feasting upon the everlasting love of God and all its glorious fruits, upon Christ Himself, and God in Him, as the old provision made for the heirs of God, to delight their hearts and sustain them to eternal life, when they possess their vast inheritance reserved for them in heaven—this, this is a bliss too great, a joy too rich, a glory too high, to be conceived or expressed by saints on this earth! This mortal must put on immortality, we must pass over Jordan into Canaan, before we can tell what delights we shall enjoy in this rich and everlasting feast! The children of Israel knew not the pleasures of eating Canaan's delights until they had got into the Land of Promise. They had manna in the wilderness, but when once they had eaten of Canaan's old corn, the manna ceased, they had it no more; they needed it no longer when brought to feed on a more substantial food. Their manna was typical of Christ, the Bread of Life; but the manna was a lighter food, suited to their wilderness-state, and to set forth those lesser discoveries and enjoyments of Christ, and of God in Him, with which the heavenly pilgrims are blessed during their travels through a world of griefs. Their manna, also, was bread given them from heaven, to show the miraculous care of God's providence for the support of those who were the objects of His love, when they were in a desolate wilderness, and to show also that Christ, and every discovery of Him made to the faith of

God's people, while in this world, for the support of their spiritual life, is from heaven, and a marvelous display of God their Father's care, to supply the needs of His beloved children while traveling through this desert land. And the Israelites' manna, likewise, which fell round about their camp, which descended with, and was wrapped up in, the dew, which, when that was gone up, was to be gathered by them daily, was to teach them diligence in the use of means, and constant dependence in a way of obedience, upon the God of their lives, and to teach us also to give all diligence, in the use of all the means of grace, of all gospel ordinances and appointments, to find, take up, and enjoy Christ for the spiritual life of our souls, and thus, in well-doing, to commit ourselves daily to the love and care of God our heavenly Father for all supplies of grace, until we are brought to glory. But when once we, as the Israelites, have passed over Jordan, and set our feet, as they, upon Canaan's blissful shore, the manna, as it ceased to them, so to us it will cease; we shall have manna no more. We shall be done with all imperfect discoveries and enjoyments of Christ, and of God in Him, when that which is perfect is come. We shall not need bread to be given us from heaven when once we are advanced unto heaven to possess that land where bread is eaten in plenty, without scarceness, nor those marvelous displays of divine love and care which were needful to supply our needs in a weary wilderness, when once we possess the land of rest, where all fullness dwells. Nor yet shall we need the use of the many means of Grace, when grace has brought us to glory; we shall not need gospel ordinances to bring us to Christ, and to God in Him by faith, when once we are blessed with the immediate vision and full fruition of God and of the Lamb, unto joy ineffable and life eternal.

No! we shall look back indeed, and remember all the way which the Lord led us through the wilderness, and adore everlasting love in every of its bright displays, in all its wise conduct by grace in bringing us to glory. The remembrance of the manna will not cease, but be preserved fresh (as the pot of manna for a memorial was, in the ark), in the memories of glorified saints to Jehovah's endless honor; but the manna itself shall cease, we shall have manna no more, we shall be above needing it, above using it, when once we partake of God's everlasting love and all its glorious fruits, as love in its eternal round runs through and shall be enjoyed in them all, unto rising praises, and endless ages. The grace of Christ be with your spirit.

72 - Overcome Us! Melt Us! Draw Us!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

Oh! the infinite love, the boundless grace of God—that though we are bent to backsliding from Him, and are every day guilty of it more or less—He will still call us His people, and, according to His promise, will heal our backslidings and love us freely—us who by nature were a sea of vileness, a hell of iniquity, a mass of black and horrid antithesis to His infinite purity—us who by practice were transgressors from the womb—and, which is most amazing, us who since the display of His infinite, all-attracting grace, in the forgiveness of our sins, and in the admission of us into all the royalties and privileges of the sons of God, have, nevertheless, slighted His love, despised His commandments, forsaken the Lord, and gone after other lovers! And yet, oh yet, God loves us! Us who are guilty of such ingratitude as is not to be found even among the damned—and this, notwithstanding He knew beforehand how treacherously we would deal with Him; how rebellious, how abominable we would be. Oh, this was free love indeed! We have tried it by innumerable provocations, by most aggravated transgressions, all of our sins, being of a deep dye, an extensive guilt, a bloody color; and yet, all glory to infinite, unchanging love—our Jehovah consumes not the sons of Jacob, but loves them freely still!

Oh, free, invincible, everlasting love! Overcome us! Melt us! Draw us! Then returning, under Your healing influence, we will say repeatedly, after all our heart, lip, and life-backslidings, "Behold, we come unto You, for You are the Lord our God." Oh, what an unspeakable privilege is it, that such poor backsliding children as we are, have such a merciful Father, that will not cause His anger to fall upon us, though we have done as many evil things as we could!

Surely it is our wisdom to come to the Savior daily, as being in ourselves poor sinners, and to abide in Him continually by faith, to receive of His fullness and grace—and all supplies of grace for multiplied pardon, abundant peace, full joy, renewed strength, and increasing holiness.

73 - The Most Weak and Unfit Instruments

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Sir,

I am glad you can say, concerning the work of the ministry, "My God would have me go, and go I must." And though you think yourself to be the weakest and vilest of all the Lord's people, and the least and most unworthy of all His ministers, and that you are not fit to preach the gospel, yet, since the Lord spoke by His blessed word to your heart, and persuaded you that it was His mind you should engage in this great work, fear not, for out of weakness you shall be made strong. Your iniquity your great High Priest has caused to pass from you, and He has clothed you with change of clothing—with the glorious robe of His righteousness—having taken off your own filthy garments; and a fair mitre will be set upon your head, or put a fresh beauty and glory upon you in your work, as you are therein made a priest unto God by the Lamb's blood.

And, remember, that the Lord is a Sovereign, and that He may take the least and last, the most unfit and unworthy of all, to send about this great work, the more to exalt the infinite freedom of His boundless grace, to display its exceeding riches, to His endless praise, by men and angels, and to exclude all creature-boasting—that no flesh should glory in His presence. Say, therefore, with your once-rejoicing Lord, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." And when God sends the most weak and unfit instruments to do great work, He does not leave them to their own weakness and unfitness, but abundantly supplies all their needs, according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ—Himself the great, all-wise, and almighty agent, takes them into His own hand, and effectually works by them to answer His great designs. The servants of Christ in the ministry do not "go to war at their own expense;" they do not, should not, go to that great work in 'their own little strength', but abide in Christ by faith for the continual supplies of His Holy Spirit, to fit them for, and carry them through, all their appointed service, to the glory of God, the good of souls, and their own present and eternal bliss. Fear not, therefore, for the Lord who sent you will certainly be with you, and you shall save Israel and smite her enemies, clad with Jehovah's might.

All supplies of sin-pardoning, sin-subduing, all-assisting, and all-persevering grace are from Him, and unto His glory. That you may be thus endued with power from on high, is my hearty desire.

74 - Soon Your Little Crosses

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Friend,

Think it not strange, my dear friend, that troubles beset you on every side. The world, since sin entered, has been a place of sorrow to the saints, from the beginning until now. Remember that our dear Lord has said of His followers, in the world they shall have tribulation, but that in Him they shall have peace. Flee, my dear child, as a poor, helpless, perishing sinner in yourself, unto Christ the mighty Savior, and commit your soul daily into His hands, to be saved by Him from all sin and misery, unto all grace and glory, and He will never cast you out, but receive and embrace you, to save you to the uttermost. In Him you shall have peace—a delightful calm, when storms and tempests beat around you. The dear Lord Jesus is "a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; and as rivers of water in a dry place" will He be to your thirsty soul.

All is peace between God and that soul which believes in Jesus, that looks unto Him for all salvation—all is peace even in the midst of trouble. All things come from the God of peace, shall end in peace, and work together for the good of that soul, to enrich it with grace here, and to enhance its crown of glory hereafter. Therefore, my dear sister, believing the love of God towards you in Christ, submitting to His dear will, and blessing His holy name under all trials, labor to glorify God upon the earth, and soon your little crosses shall be turned into a great, an immortal crown in heaven. The grace of Christ be with your spirit.

75 - Religious Parentage and Education

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam,

It is indeed a very great privilege to be favored with a religious parentage and education, but if this were our greatest felicity, we would sink, nevertheless, into eternal misery. But the vessels of mercy—of God's free, rich, sovereign mercy—in order to their preparation for eternal glory, are blessed by Him, with His Holy Spirit sent down into their hearts, as the spirit of regeneration, conviction, and conversion. And this blessed Spirit, in His saving work on the heart, when He first begins it, finds the sinner dead in sin, under total darkness, as to spiritual things, in his understanding; in an entire alienation from them, and aversion to them, in his will and affections; and so, afar off from God in Christ, without any apparent right to the covenant of promise, and without any good hope through grace. And at such a time as this, He is pleased, by His almighty and all-gracious energy, to produce a new and holy principle of spiritual life in that soul which lay entirely under the power of spiritual death. This principle, which is instantaneously given, and as to the exact moment of it to us unknown, contains in it all graces, which are afterwards drawn out into their various exercises, under the Spirit's influence, unto the regenerate soul's various privileges. And this gracious work of the Holy Spirit of the heart discovers itself to the soul that is the subject of it, and to others, by a supernatural light set up in the understanding, whence the soul sees itself to be utterly lost and undone by sin, by heart and life-sin, under the curse of God's law, and in danger of the wrath which is to come, that it neither has, nor can, by self-power, attain a perfect righteousness of its own for justification. And also, in the soul's discerning, upon the Spirit's revealing, the infinite glory and transcendent excellency of Christ as the great Savior, in His Person and offices, blood and righteousness, and in all His grace-fullness, as God's great provision for the chief of sinners' salvation, and as in the gospel held forth to be received of them by faith. And further, the Spirit's saving work on the will and affections discovers itself by that soul's approbation of the Savior beheld, its desires after Him, its approaches to Him, its laying hold of Him, and casting itself, under the Spirit's sweet and strong attraction, with the whole weight of its everlasting salvation upon Christ alone for all holiness and all happiness, to the present and eternal praise of the God of all grace, and to the soul's present and eternal bliss; upon which, that soul becomes declaratively and apparently a child of God, an heir of God, through Christ, as the God of grace and glory, and is more or less sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. And now, dear Madam, if you are blessed with a precious experience of this happy work on your heart, you are most certainly a new creature in Christ, and a true believer in Him, and "shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation," notwithstanding the greatest inward or outward opposition. You are forever safe in the hands of Jesus, and none of the powers of darkness, with all their subtlety and force, shall ever be able to pluck you thence. "Your refuge is the eternal God, and underneath, for your support, are the everlasting arms!" And as an inhabitant of the Rock—the Rock of Ages, who is your strong defense—you may sing and shout salvation from the top of the mountains.

You tell me, Madam, "that your heart grows worse and worse." To this I reply—The unrenewed part of your heart, in which resides the principle of sin, has in it such a fullness of evil, such heights and depths of wickedness, such putrefaction and rottenness, that it cannot admit of greater degree. "It is deceitful above all things, and so desperately wicked" that none but the Lord Himself can find it out, or search the amazing depths of this bottomless gulf. But though sin as a principle, in the unregenerate part of your heart, cannot grow worse, the ebullitions, or boilings up of corruptions, may be more or less, as they have more or less advantage to show their rage against the God of grace and holiness, and against us as bearing His image. The workings of corruptions have less advantage when we are under present divine influence; but when this is in measure withdrawn from us, they instantly boil over with rage against the principle of grace, and by their subtlety and force, under Satan's influence, entice or hurry us away with rapidity into sinful acts, to God's dishonor and our soul's distress. But all the rage of hell and sin within and without us, with all those hellish waters which they cast forth as a flood to swallow us up, shall never quench that spark of heavenly fire, that little grace which is wrought in our hearts by the hand of Omnipotence. No! this, by the same almighty power which enkindled it, shall be maintained and increased amid and by the greatest opposition, until it is raised into a full and eternal flame. The triumphant Captain of our salvation has vanquished all the powers of hell and sin; He has led captivity captive, and dragged all the legions of devils at His chariot wheels, when God, the Redeemer, went up to glory with a shout, the Lord, with the sound of a trumpet, amid thousands and tens of thousands of His holy angels, who saw His triumphs and sung His victories. And as for sin, our worst enemy—the old man, the whole body of sin—it was crucified with Him, and thence, by omnipotent grace—by sin-pardoning and sin-subduing grace—it shall be shortly, totally, and finally destroyed in us. And meanwhile, as our begun holiness increases, we shall see corruptions in their horrid ebullitions, under advancing displays of reigning grace, which gives them greater aggravations, to be worse and worse, and our new hearts shall be to all sin more and more averse, until a complete victory is won, and we are blessed with an immortal crown. As to our heart-idolatry, it is a very great iniquity of which the Lord's own people are deeply guilty. But since this is the promise of His rich, free grace, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" let us plead it before His throne, and bring our every idol unto Him to be entirely slain, so shall our hearts be separated from them, and our admiration of, and sinful affection to, all glittering glow-worm glories sink and die before the rising attracting display of His all-transcendent and infinite excellences. Be assured, dear Madam, that that work of God upon the heart which brings the soul to an entire dependence on Christ, a whole Christ, is no illusion, but shall end in a full and eternal salvation. And as to the 'hope of the hypocrite', which shall perish, that is always founded upon self-worthiness; but that hope which has for its foundation God's free grace, in and through what Christ has done and suffered for us, and is made of God unto us, is good hope that shall not make ashamed, but shall be, in its glorious fruits, to the righteous, gladness unto endless ages. As to those precious promises which you so earnestly desire to experience, they are fulfilled in you already, partially and initially, and shall be, shortly, completely and eternally.

I wish you a rich increase of all grace unto all joy, peace, and holiness, and a massive crown of immortal bliss.

76 - A Spiritual Appetite

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Brother in the Lord, A spiritual appetite, to relish spiritual things, is a distinguishing favor bestowed upon none but those who are Christ's own. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God—for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And spiritual men, who have an appetite, a capacity to relish spiritual things, can have no actual relish thereof, without the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit. It is He who takes of the things of Christ, and of the Father, and shows them unto us.

It is the spirit of truth, in His special operations as the Comforter, who guides His people into all truth. It is He who, enlightening our minds, guides us into the doctrinal knowledge of every truth, and enkindling our souls with the truths known, that gives us heart fellowship therewith. Without the actual presence of the Holy Spirit giving us insight, not the least spiritual truth can we know, nor the least degree of spiritual knowledge thereof can we attain. Oh, it is the actual presence of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter that, by His light and heat, irradiates our mind, and inflames our souls with the knowledge of divine truth. Let the truth shine ever so brightly or warmly round about us, unless the Holy Spirit shines into our minds, unto the knowledge of the truth in its glory and efficacy, we neither see its light, nor feel its heat.

How much are we debtors to Him, as our Guide into all truth, for every degree of our spiritual knowledge. Oh, the infinite grace of the Holy Spirit!

It is a great thing to be thoroughly sensible of the nothingness of the creature, both with respect to ourselves and others; that the creature is nothing, less than nothing, and vanity, and the Lord all, and in all; that all the excellency, comfort, and usefulness of the creature, is wholly derived from, and dependent upon, its Creator.

I shall be glad to know the frame of your soul, to hear from you when you have leisure, and to have an interest in your prayers.

77 - Oh, Free, Rich, Glorious Grace!

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear and Honored Brethren,

Great things has the Lord done for your souls, in showing you your misery by sin, your lost and undone state by nature, in revealing Christ the glorious remedy, and in drawing your hearts to cleave unto Him by faith and love, as the only Savior. And not a soul of you who look and come to Christ for life—shall ever die—shall die eternally. No, my dear brethren, you who have believed in Jesus, who have trusted your souls in the Savior's hands, have passed from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation. Your state in Christ is forever secure. No death—not the first death as a curse, as penal, nor yet the second death—shall ever light upon you who are entered by faith into Christ as your life. You who look to the once-dying Savior for all salvation, shall live by His death. You who feast upon the sacrificed Lamb, shall live and reign with Him, as the Lamb's bride, forever and ever. Thus shall it be done unto you, my brethren, whom the King of Glory delights to honor. Oh, free, rich, glorious grace!

What? did the Lord of all love us, and give Himself for us? For us creatures, for us sinners, rebels against His crown, His enemies, and haters of His ways, who deserved to be companions with devils, and were fit fuel for everlasting burnings! What, my brethren, could the King of glory see in us to attract His love? Were we not in His foreview most loathsome, abominable objects? And yet we, even we, found grace in His sight. O! He loved us freely from the infinite grace of His own heart, and the sovereign good pleasure of His will. And He so loved us, that rather than we should die, Himself would die for us—that rather than we should perish in our guilt and pollution, Himself, His righteous, holy Self, would bear our sins, be made a curse for us, and endure all that flaming wrath that we had deserved! Oh, never was there such a lover as our dear Lord Jesus.

He loved and lived, loved and died, loved and rose for us, loves and sits at God's right hand for us, to save us to the uttermost by His prevailing intercession, in the virtue of His infinite satisfaction, even all those that come unto God by Him. Oh, glorious Lover! He ever lives, He ever loves, and from His love and life He will raise us from all sin and misery, unto all grace and glory, and crown us with Him to reign in life eternal. And in all, will He rejoice over us to do good, with His whole heart and His whole soul, yes, delight to honor us, to lift us beggars from the ash-heap, to set us among princes, and make us inherit the throne of glory!

What love and honor, then, my dear brethren, are due from saved souls unto God the Savior! O for hearts all-enkindled with His love, to love and honor Him, who first, who thus has loved us! Let us forget the things that are behind, and press forward towards the mark—perfect holiness and glory—for this prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. By faith and patience, in all holy obedience, let us run the race that is set before us, and strive who shall outstrip each other, while we look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who leads on the foremost and brings up those behind, yes, has said to the weakest soul, "with the last, I am He."

Wishing all increase of grace here, and a weighty crown of glory at Christ's appearing, I commit you to Him on whom you have believed.

78 - Of Refuges for Sinners

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My Dear Sister in our precious Lord Jesus,

I compassionate you in the affections of Christ; and oh, that the Lord by me would strengthen your weak hands, and say to your fearful heart, Fear not! As to the fear which abides in you, "lest you have not true faith," consider that the Lord has convinced you of your lost state by nature, of the insufficiency of your best performances to help or save you, and has revealed His dear Son in you, as the only remedy, the city of refuge, for a perishing sinner to flee unto, where only the soul can be safe. And have you fled to Christ now, or have you not? Some refuge or other your soul certainly has, else you could have no peace from your pursuers—from the curses of God's righteous law which stand in His book against sinners, from His strict justice which is out against lawbreakers, from the devil, who has the power of death, and from that fearful storm of God's vindictive wrath which in fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest is to be rained down upon the wicked at the approaching terrible day of the Lord. There is no soul that is convinced of its danger in these respects but sees that it needs a refuge, and for conscience-peace, to a refuge the soul runs. Of refuges for sinners, there are but two—self and Christ—the man's own obedience, or the obedience of the Son of God. The refuge of self has two parts—purposed repentance and religious performance. To the first, his design to amend his ways, or to his "Lord, have mercy on me," at last the profane sinner flies, and there he hopes to be safe. To his good intentions, his prayers and alms, his knowledge and practice of God's revealed will, the pharisaical sinner runs, and there, as in his house, he rests secure and fearless of danger. But self, the man's own obedience, in both these its parts, is a refuge of lies, a deceptive, delusive refuge. And the storm of God's indignation shall overflow this hiding place, and sweep away the miserable souls that are found therein into the abyss of endless misery. There is but one refuge more for sinners, and that is Christ, the Person and obedience of the Son of God. And this is a refuge of God's providing, and of His revealing, a safe, a sure, a complete, a glorious, an everlasting refuge. And into it every sinner that sees his need of it runs. "Oh," says such a soul, "I would not be found out of Christ for a thousand worlds." And if this is your case, my dear sister, you, even you, have fled unto Christ for refuge, and are entered into Him as your hiding-place, where you are and shall be forever safe from the wrath to come. And the desire of your soul after Christ, your soul's motion unto and into Him as your resting-place, is true faith—the faith of the operation of God, the faith of His elect, precious faith, whether you are assured of this or not. It is one thing to have true faith, and another thing to know that the faith we have is true and saving. For though the soul cannot be without the knowledge of its own acts, that it does look to Christ as the only Savior, and flee to Him for all salvation, yet it may not know that these acts are true and saving acts of faith, because the trembling sinner, from the greatness of his sins and unworthiness, may fear that Christ will not receive and save him, and that the motions of his soul towards Christ are not true and saving faith. And the doubting believer may think that if his faith in Christ were right, surely his love to Him would be greater, that he should have more strength against corruptions and temptations, etc. Whereas if the soul looks, if it comes, if it flees as a lost sinner to the great Savior, He will never

cast out such a soul, but most certainly save it to the uttermost; and there can be no looking, coming, fleeing unto Christ that is wrong, whatever Satan and unbelief suggest. If the soul looks, if it comes, if it flees to Christ, the all-sufficient Savior, as a lost sinner, for all salvation in and through Him, the soul looks, comes, and flees unto Christ aright, and these its acts of faith are true and saving, whether it knows them to be such or not.

79 - Regeneration

Regeneration

Dear Sir,

What shall we say to these things? Where grace and gifts meet, and God calls to ministerial work, that person should be used by Him—whether school-educated or not.

I have, dear sir, a great veneration for learning, and think it a great advantage to the gospel minister, but not that it is essentially necessary to a person's call to the gospel ministry; for let a man have ever so perfect an understanding of the original languages in which the mysteries of God are written—if he is not blessed with a spiritual, supernatural understanding—while he knows perfectly the words, he is quite ignorant of the power of the spiritual truths. This is evident from what the apostle Paul says, "The natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And he spoke this by experience, for by the natural man he intended not only the profane, wicked man, nor yet the weak and ignorant man, that has but little natural capacity for understanding spiritual mysteries—but also the moral man, the learned man, the man of sagacity; with the utmost natural capacity—even this man, the man of great learning, while natural, receives not the things of the Spirit of God—for they are foolishness unto him—neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The apostle Paul was far from being a profane man, a weak, or unlearned man, while a natural man; he was a Pharisee, one of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, perfectly taught in, and exceedingly of, the law of the Fathers; he was perfectly learned in the law of Moses, who spoke of the things which concern the Lord Jesus; he was brought up in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel, insomuch that it was said unto him after his conversion, "Much learning has made you mad." And yet this man of sagacity, of morality, of much learning—while a natural man, or in his unconverted state—was quite ignorant of Christ—until God made him a spiritual man—and in a supernatural way revealed His Son in him—or gave him a spiritual capacity to understand spiritual mysteries—and then was he fit to preach the Lord Jesus. And God may thus call and use an unlearned man—if He pleases. And most of the apostles were such when our Lord first sent them out to preach. And on the contrary, how was it with Nicodemus—a Pharisee, a strict moralist, a learned man, a teacher of the law of Moses, a ruler in Israel, one of the Jewish Sanhedrin? Alas! yet being but a natural man, how ignorant was he of the doctrine of regeneration, when our Lord preached it to him? And how many are there, Sir, at this day, of the masters of our Israel that have not so much as a true notion of this important doctrine of regeneration, and much less a blessed experience thereof in their hearts? How many are there that think baptism is regeneration; or, at most, a wicked man's external reformation from gross immoralities, to practice the duties of morality? Is it not for this reason that they are entirely ignorant of the work of regeneration, as it is God's work upon us? They set people to amend their lives and make themselves new creatures, "which," as a worthy clergyman well says, "is preaching a way of salvation that is impracticable to fallen man." So that a person must be born again, or be a spiritual

man, and as such taught of God, whether school-educated or not, before he can spiritually know or truly preach the gospel of Christ.

But, Sir, if regeneration is thus necessary, and any should say—If we cannot make ourselves new creatures, how must we become such? And in what does regeneration consist? I answer, No man can make himself a new creature; he must be wholly beholden to the Holy Spirit for that work, in which the creature is wholly passive. It is the duty of every natural man to reform his life, and abstain from every known sin, as by every sin he commits he brings more dishonor to God, and treasures up for himself more wrath against the day of vengeance. But nothing that any natural man can do will make him a new creature. As he could not give himself a being in nature—neither can he give himself a being in grace; this is God's sole prerogative, to work by His Holy Spirit on whom He pleases; for those that are new creatures are said to be "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," to be by Him "begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." And who can create a new and spiritual nature in the heart but God? What man can beget himself unto a lively hope? And yet if he is not blessed with this work of God, he will not, cannot, be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, having no fitness in himself for that glorious enjoyment. And as all enjoyment springs from the agreeableness of the object to the subject, and a natural man is an unholy man—what enjoyment can he have of an infinitely Holy God? How can he who loves sin, delight in a perfect conformity to God's holy image, and an entire and eternal dedication to His sole praise, which are the felicities of saints in bliss while they behold Jehovah's face? And if these holy tempers are not wrought in our hearts here, in a begun-measure, which shall be completed hereafter—our souls will be miserable forever, for no unclean person or thing shall enter into the new Jerusalem. But, Sir, to the next thing, In what does regeneration consist? Permit me to answer briefly:

Regeneration consists in a universal change wrought upon our souls in all their powers and faculties by the Spirit and word of grace—or in the gift of a new nature, a spiritual nature, in the soul's being renewed after the image of God in knowledge and true holiness, which new nature contains in it faith and love, hope and every grace—and is our fitness for converse with new and spiritual objects. And this new and spiritual principle of grace has its seat in all the powers of the soul. The understanding, which before was darkness, then is made light in the Lord. The will, that was all rebellion against God's salvation in Christ, which is all of free grace, is then made willing to trust upon free grace in Christ for all salvation-bliss. The conscience, which was full of guilt and fear, is then sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and thus blessed with peace. The affections, which were staked down to an earthly, sensual propensity, are then raised to spiritual and heavenly objects. In a word, "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"—in every man, who in Christ is a new creature. That man can say in a spiritual respect, as the man who was born blind, whose eyes our Lord opened, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind—I now see." Faith is the soul's new eye, to discern sin in quite another light than what the man did before; to discern heart-sin in its hateful nature and woeful consequences; to discern God's law in its spirituality, as extending to thoughts as well as acts, in the equity of its requirement of perfect obedience, and in the righteousness of its curse for every, even the least, disobedience; and hence, to discern the insufficiency of its own obedience for the soul's justifying righteousness before a God of infinite holiness; to discern by the gospel the all-sufficiency, the all-transcendent excellency of Christ. Faith which works by love to its glorious object, the altogether lovely Jesus,

submits to His perfect righteousness, disclaims its own, esteems it but loss and rubbish, and desires to be found in Him, and in His righteousness alone; and approving of the Savior, as the soul's new Head, it receives Him in His Person and office unto all the ends of grace as God's free gift to the chief of sinners, and gives up itself to be entirely His in all holy obedience unto Jehovah's praise, and the soul's present and eternal bliss.

Faith bows the knee to Christ, and reveres the Savior in all His salvation-fullness; and faith in the affections wings the soul upwards unto all heavenly objects, unto all those superior delights which are to be enjoyed in God, partially here, and completely and eternally hereafter; with a "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none on earth that I desire besides You." The desires of that soul center in Christ, as its present and eternal portion; and delight in all things that bear His image, His word, His works, His ways and ordinances, and all His saints; and the abhorring powers of that soul resist with indignation, whatever God abhors—all sin is an abomination to that man so far as he is born again. For, Sir, the man that is a new creature in Christ is such really in all his powers and faculties, though this work as yet is but a begun-work, which is to be completed at his body's dissolution to his full salvation. The work is perfect as to kind, and perfect as to parts, extending to all his powers and faculties—but is not yet perfect as to degree—as an infant has all the parts of a man, though it is not arrived at the full stature of the perfect man. And thus it is with souls that are new-born, which made a worthy divine say, "every regenerate man is two men"—that is, he has a new nature in him, which is wholly for God, and an old nature still in part remaining, which is wholly for sin. And these two natures residing in the same soul and in all of its faculties, which are but in part sanctified—the corrupt nature, the flesh, lusts against the spirit, or holy nature in his heart—and the spirit against the flesh; and these being contrary, the one to the other, souls that are born again cannot do perfectly the things that they desire, because of sin that dwells in them. This made holy Paul say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." And how did he groan under this misery, with an "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And these groans under the remaining power of sin are peculiar to the new-born; to those who have a holy, spiritual nature in them, by virtue of regeneration. And this new and holy nature in them is their fitness for discerning spiritual things, which can be known by no natural man—for begun-communion with God in Christ, and a solemn dedication to His praise, as its completion, will fit them for the beatific vision of His face unto endless ages!

Happy, thrice happy then, are those who are born again! They are heirs of that glorious inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for them!

80 - Dreams

Dreams

Dear Sir, As to the person you wrote me of, by the hints you give, I think he is erroneous. It is possible that God may give us notice of some things by dreams, but no article of faith, nor rule of practice, ought to be founded on nor drawn from dreams; for since the canon of the Holy Scriptures is complete, and God in these last days has spoken unto us by His Son, we are to have recourse thereto in all things which relate to faith and practice. And we ought to receive no intimation given us in dreams as if it was the will of God concerning us, until we have first tried it by the sacred oracles; and if it speaks not according to this word, there is no light in it, or no light of the divine Spirit given thereby, but we must conclude that it is from the evil and delusive spirit. And if any hint should be given as in a dream that agrees with the word of God, and excites our faith in Him, and obedience to Him, yet is it not to be received as a rule of our faith and practice because it was hinted to us in a dream, but as it stands in the perfect rule of the word, which alone is sufficient, and appointed of God for our direction both as to what we are to believe and what to do. And if by any dream our minds are brought to the word of God, we ought to be thankful unto Him for it. If this man thinks "that our Lord told him in a dream he should live to see His coming," it seems to me a mere delusion, for he can form no such conclusion from the Holy Scriptures. It has no support there, and therefore ought to fall to the ground and be utterly rejected. So far as he adheres to the dream as his rule what to believe and do, so far he rejects the word of God, is drawn off from the rule which God has fixed, and has cause to suspect his dream to be from a delusive spirit. That the Lord may establish your heart in faith and holiness, preserve you blameless, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy, is my earnest desire.

81 - Oh, the Infinite Patience of Our Loving Lord

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects My very Dear Brother in our precious Lord,

It was the end of the Redeemer's love and death, to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works. What a shame is it that we love Christ no more—that we can bear to think, speak, or act for any other end than His honor! Oh, what black creatures are we! And yet our Lord calls us fair—and all-fair—His fair one! Oh, stupendous grace! Wonder at it, you blessed angels! Praise Emanuel's love, you winged flames! And let us, the objects of His heart's delight, that wound and pierce Him daily by our sins, blush and be ashamed! Let us loathe ourselves in our own sight, for all our abominations, for lo! the Lord is pacified towards us for all that we have done! Oh, let us mourn like doves in the valleys, everyone for his own iniquities, while pardoning love, through the Lamb's blood, cleanses us from all sin, and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall be done to such backsliders in heart and ways—to such as have dealt very treacherously, aye, and do still, with our Maker, our Husband; that slight His manifested love, and practically count Him not worthy of our poor, base, little selves, who gave, who gives His great, His glorious, matchless Self for us, and to us!

If our Lord were to smite us dead, yes, to the lowest hell, we have deserved it. But oh! nothing but His love can cure us; though in ourselves unlovely, loathsome creatures. Oh, the infinite grace of our Lord's heart! Rather than lose us in the fall, Himself would take our room, our nature, our law-place, yes, and our sins too, upon His holy, harmless, spotless, glorious Self! that by His great and righteous Self, sacrificed for us, He might purge us from all iniquity, make us perfect in beauty, and exalt us in and with Him, to inherit the throne of glory! and having finished this glorious work of unparalleled love in Himself for us, He will finish it by Himself upon us.

Oh, the infinite patience of our loving Lord—a patience worthy of God—a patience that flows from, is maintained by, and resolved into, an infinity of love! But, oh! if our Lord bears with us, and does not cast us off for our great provocation, if He pities and pardons us, is not that enough? Oh, this is ten thousand times more than we deserve! It is grace worthy of Himself, that none could show but the God of all grace, that is higher than the heaven, deeper than the sea, broader than the earth, longer than time, long and boundless as eternity!

But, oh! it is not enough to answer the ends of our Lord's love, for Him only to bear with, to pity, and pardon us—for to show His glory, and vent His heart, He will kiss and embrace us! He will rest in His love with infinite complacency, and rejoice over us with joy and singing, as if we were altogether lovely, and ravishingly fair! "How fair, and how pleasant are you," says the Prince of grace, the Lord of glory—to an Ethiopian, a black sinner. O love, for delights! "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." This is our God, our Maker, our Husband! This is His voice to the most vile, ungrateful worms, whom He loves and calls His bride! Oh, for melting, broken, loving hearts, under this all-penetrating, all-subduing, and all-surpassing love! Glory to the Lord our Lover! And when we are made perfect in love, then we will love Him with our whole heart, soul, and strength—without weakness, without

weariness—all love, all duty, all obedience. We will cast down our crowns at His royal feet—at His feet once pierced for us—adoring the Prince of life, and shouting the praises of His knowledge-passing love unto ages without end!

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