

Setting" the Mind On" Eternity - Part 1

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Robert Murray M'Cheyne's sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a focus on eternity and the dangers of fleeting spiritual impressions in the lives of natural men.

Scripture: Psalm 90:12, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Matthew 6:19-21, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Philippians 3:20, Colossians 3:2, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:8, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "Spiritual Vigilance", "Eternal Perspective"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the importance of living with an eternal perspective, urging believers to draw near to God so that earthly concerns diminish in light of eternal realities. He reflects on the fleeting impressions of natural men, illustrating how initial awakenings often fade away, leaving hearts hardened and unresponsive. M'Cheyne's journal excerpts reveal his deep longing for personal holiness and a commitment to bringing souls to Christ, highlighting the necessity of cultivating one's spirit and remaining vigilant against worldly distractions. He warns against the dangers of allowing spiritual impressions to slip away, encouraging listeners to seize the moment and seek God earnestly.

Transcript

"Live near to God, and so all things will appear to you little In comparison to eternal realities."

compiled by greg gordon

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Introduction

"Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart; and so there will be no room for folly, or the world, or Satan, or the flesh." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

As a young believer in the Lord Jesus Christ running across the book: Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne was life-changing. His life only lived for 30 years had such an impact on many

contemporary ministers in this day. My young searching heart was overwhelmed with the eternal mindset and considerations of M'Cheyne. He lived with his heart in eternity. Reading his writings yearly was always a reminder of this for me. I remember distinctly reading his Memoirs in a bus and feeling the overwhelming sense of eternity over me. The sky even seemed small. He made God real and close.

Andrew Bonar the author who compiled his Memoirs also had an impact on me, reading his own journals were very challenging. M'Cheyne designed a widely used system for reading through the Bible in one year of which I used for many years (The plan entails reading the New Testament and the Psalms through twice a year, and the Old Testament through once). This bible schedule is free online in many places and very Christ centred and wonderful.

M'Cheyne says: "I think I can say, I have never risen a morning without thinking how I could bring more souls to Christ." In his diary we find records like this:- "As I was walking in the fields, the thought came over me with almost overwhelming power, that every one of my flock must soon be in heaven or hell."

"Above all things, cultivate your own spirit," he wrote to a fellow-minister. "Your own soul is your first and greatest care. Seek advance of personal holiness."

May the compiled writings in this book help to this end. Amen.

Chapter One

The Impressions of Natural Men

"If nothing else will do to sever me from my sins, Lord, send me such sore and trying calamities as shall awake me from earthly slumbers. It must always be best to be alive to Thee, whatever be the quickening instrument." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Hosea -vi., 4.

Doctrine. -The impressions of natural men are fading

In these words, God complains that he did not know what to do with Israel, their impressions were so fading. He says, verse 5, that he had hewed them by the prophets, and slain them by the words of his mouth: and their judgments were as the light that goeth forth. At one time he sent them severe awakening messages of coming wrath; then messages of love and grace, as bright and as many as the beams of the sun. They were a little impressed by them; the cloud of distress began to gather on their brow, the dew of grief seemed to start to their cheek, but it soon dried up. It was like the morning cloud and early dew that goeth away. So it is with all the unconverted persons in this congregation, who will finally perish. God has sent them awakening messages, hewed them by the prophets, and slain them by the words of his mouth. He has sent them also sweet encouraging messages; his judgments have been like the light that goeth forth. They think, and are impressed for a little, but it soon dies away. "O Ephraim, what shall I do," &c.

The fact that the impressions of natural men fade away

The Scriptures abound with examples of it.

1st, Lot's wife. -She was a good deal awakened. The anxious faces of the two angelic men, their awful words, and merciful hands, made a deep impression on her. The anxiety of her husband, too, and his

words to his sons-on-law, sunk into her heart. She fled with anxious steps; Lot as the morning brightened, her anxious thoughts began to wear away. She looked back, and became a pillar of salt.

2nd, Israel at the Red Sea. -When Israel had been led through the deep water in safety, and when they saw their enemies drowned, then they sang God's praise. Their hearts were much affected by this deliverance. They sang, "The Lord is my strength and song, he is also become my salvation." They sang his praise, but soon forgot his works. In three days they were murmuring against God because of the bitter waters.

3rd, Once a young man came running to Jesus, and he kneeled down, saying, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" A flash of conviction had passed over his conscience; he was now kneeling at the feet of Christ, but he never kneeled there any more; he went away sorrowful. His goodness was like a morning cloud.

4th, Once Paul preached before Felix, the Roman Governor; and as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. The preaching of the gospel made the proud Roman tremble on his throne, but did it save his soul? Ah, no! "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." His goodness was like the morning cloud.

5th, Again, Paul preached before King Agrippa and his beautiful Bernice, with all the captains and chief men of the City. The word troubled Agrippa's heart, the tear started into his royal eye, for a moment he thought of leaving all for Christ. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." But ah! his goodness was like a morning cloud and early dew. In all these the cloud gathered over them, for a moment the dew glistened in their eye, but soon it passed away, and left the hard rocky heart behind.

Most men under a preached gospel have their times of awakening If the impressions of natural men were permanent, then most would be saved, but we know that this is not the case. Few there be that find it. Perhaps I would not go far wrong if I were to say, that there may not be ten grown up men in this congregation who have never experienced any concern for their soul, and yet I fear there may be hundreds who will finally perish. 1st, How many have had a time of awakening in childhood, when they were prayed over by a believing mother, or warned by a believing father, or taught by a faithful Sabbath-school teacher?

How many have had deep impressions made at the Sabbath-school? But they have passed away like the morning cloud and early dew. 2nd, At their first communion, when they first spoke to a minister about their soul, and heard his piercing questions and faithful warnings, when they got their token from his hand, when they first received the bread and wine, and sat at the table of the Lord, they trembled, the tear dimmed their eye, they went home to pray. But soon it wore away. The world, pleasure, cares, involved the mind, and all was gone like the cloud and the dew. 3rd, A first sickness.

How many, laid down on a bed of sickness, are made to look over the verge of the grave? They tremble as they think how unprepared they are to die; and now they begin to vow and resolve, if the Lord spare me, I will avoid evil companions, I will pray and read my Bible, &c.; but no sooner are they better than the resolutions are forgotten, like the cloud and dew. 4th. First death in a family. What a deep impression this makes on a feeling heart. That lovely circle is broken round the fire, and never will be whole again.

Now they begin to pray, to turn to him that smites. Perhaps kneeling beside the cold body, they vow no longer to go back to sin and folly. Or, following the body to the grave, while the big tear stands in the eye,

they promise to bury all their sins and follies in the grave of their beloved one. But soon a change comes over them, the tears dry up, and the prayer is forgotten. The world takes its place again and reigns. Their goodness is as the morning cloud. 5th, In a time of awakening, many receive deep impressions.

Some are alarmed to see others alarmed that are no worse than they. Many have their feelings stirred, their affections moved. Many are brought to desire conversion, to weep and to pray. Mr. Edwards mentions that there was scarcely an individual in the whole town unconcerned; there were tokens of God's promise in every house. So here; and yet, when the time is past, how soon they sink back into former indifference. Their goodness is as the morning cloud. Dear friends, ye are my witnesses.

I do not know, but I believe I am not wrong in stating, that by far the greater number of you have been under remorse at some time or another, and yet God and your own consciences know how fading these impressions have been. Just as the morning cloud passes off the mountain's brow, and the dew is dried up from the rock, and leaves it a rock still, so your impressions have passed away, and left you a rocky heart still. So it is in those that perish. The way to hell is paved with good intentions, and hell is peopled with those who once wept and prayed for their souls. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?"

Let us show the steps of impressions fading away

When a natural man is under concern, he begins to make a very diligent use of the means of grace.

1st, Prayer. -When a man is under the fear of hell, he begins to pray, and often he has very melting and sweet affections in prayer. As long as his impressions last, he may be very constant in his duty. But will he always call upon God? When his concern ceases, his praying in secret gradually ceases also. Not all at once, but by degrees he gives up secret prayer. Once he has been out in company, another time kept long at business, another time he is sleeping, and so by degrees he gives it up altogether. "O Ephraim," &c.

2d, Hearing the word. -When a man is first awakened, he comes well out to the preaching of the word. He knows that God blesses especially the preaching of the word that it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. He is an arrested hearer; he drinks in the words of the minister; he is lively in his attendance on the word; if there be preaching in the week evening, he puts by his work in order to be there. But, when his concern wears away, he begins to weary first of the week-day service, then of the Sabbath, then perhaps he seeks a more careless ministry, where he may slumber on till death and judgment. Ah, this has been the course of thousands in this place. "O Ephraim," &c.

3d, Asking counsel of ministers. -When souls are under remorse, they often ask counsel of the under shepherds of Christ. "Going and weeping, they come to seek the Lord their God; they ask the way to Zion." They go to the watchman, saying. Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? This is one of the duties of the faithful pastor, for "the priest's lips should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." But when concern dies away, this dies away. Many come once that never come again. "O Ephraim," &c.

4th, Avoiding sin. -When a man is under convictions, he always avoids open sin, flees from it with all his might. He reforms his life; his soul is swept and garnished. But when his concern dies away, his lusts revive, and he goes back like a dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire. If there was anything saving in the impressions of natural men, they would turn holier: but, on the contrary, they turn worse and worse. Seven devils enter into that man, and the latter end is worse than the beginning. "O Ephraim," &c.

Reasons why the impressions of natural men die away

1. They never are brought to feel truly lost. -The wounds of natural men are generally skin deep. Sometimes it is just a flash of terror that has alarmed them. Often it is the sense of some one great sin they have committed. Sometimes it is only sympathy with others fleeing because others flee. They are often brought to say, I am a great sinner; I fear there is no mercy for me. Still they are not brought to feel undone, their mouth is not stopped, they do not cover the lip like the leper. They think a little prayer, sorrow, repentance, amendment, will do. If they would only change their way. They are not brought to see that all they do just signifies nothing toward justifying them. If they were brought to feel their utterly lost state, and their need of another's righteousness, they never could rest in the world again.

2. They never saw the beauty of Christ. -A flash of terror may bring a man to his knees, but will not bring him to Christ. Ah! no; love must draw. A natural man, under concern, sees no beauty nor desirableness in Christ. He is not brought to look to him whom he pierced, and to mourn. When once a man gets a sight of the supreme excellence and sweetness of Christ; when he sees his fulness for pardon, peace, holiness, he will never draw back. He may be in distress and in darkness, but he will rise and go about the city to seek him whom his soul loveth. The heart that has once seen Christ is smit with the love of him, and never can rest nor take up with others short of him.

3. He never had heart-hatred of sin. -The impressions of natural men are generally of terror. They feel the danger of sin, not the filthiness of it. They feel that God is just and true, that the law must be avenged, that the wrath of God will come. They see that there is hell in their sins; but they do not feel their sins to be a hell. They love sin; they have no change of nature. The Spirit of God does not dwell in them; and therefore the impression wears easily away, like as on sand. Those that are brought to Christ are brought to see the turpitude of sin. They cry not, Behold I am undone, but, behold I am vile. As long as sin is in their breast, they are kept fleeing to the cross of Christ.

4. They have no promises to keep their impressions. -Those who are in Christ have sweet promises. "I will put my fear in their hearts." -Jer. xxxii., 40. "Being confident that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it." -Phil, i., 6. But natural men have no interest in these promises; and so, in the time of temptation, their anxieties easily wear away.

Sadness of their case 1. God mourns over their case. -"O Ephraim." It must be a truly sad case that God mourns over. When Christ wept over Jerusalem, it showed it was in a desperate case, because that eye that wept saw plainly what was coming; and accordingly, in a few years, that lovely city was a ruined heap, and multitudes of those then living were in hell, and their children vagabonds. When Christ looked round on the Pharisees with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts, it showed a desperate case; he would not grieve for nothing.

So here you may be sure the case of natural men who lose their impressions is very desperate, from these words of God, "O Ephraim." 2. God hath no new method of awakening. -God speaks as even at a loss what to do, to show you that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. You have heard all the awakening truths in the Bible, and all the winning, comforting truths. You have been at Sinai, and at Gethsemane, and at Calvary: what more can I do unto thee? These have been pressed home upon you by Divine providences, in affliction, by the bed of death, and in a time of wide awakening.

You have passed through a season when it was tenfold more likely that you would be truly converted than at any other time. You are sunk back. Ah! the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not

saved. God has no more arrows in his quiver, no new arguments, no other hell, no other Christ. 3. No good by your past impressions. -When the cloud is dried up off the mountain's brow, and the dew off the rock, the mountain is as great as before, and the rock as hard; but when convictions fade away from the heart of a natural man, they leave the mountain of his sins much greater, and his rocky heart much harder.

It is less likely that that man will ever be saved. Just as iron is hardened by being melted and cooled again; just as a person recovering from fever relapses, and is worse than before. 1st, You are now older, and every day less likely to be saved ; your heart gets used to its old ways of thinking and feeling; the old knee cannot easily learn to bend. 2nd, You have offended the Spirit; you have missed your opportunity; you have vexed the Holy Spirit; convictions are not in your own power; the Spirit hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. 3rd, You have got into the way of putting aside convictions.

The eyelid naturally closes when any object is coming against it, so does the heart of a practised worldling close and shut out convictions. 4th, When you come to hell, you will wish you never had had convictions, they will make your punishment so much the greater. I would now entreat all who have any impressions, not to let them slip. It is a great mercy to live under a gospel ministry; still greater to live in a time of revival; still greater to have God pouring the Spirit into your heart, awakening your soul. Do not neglect it, do not turn back, remember Lot's wife. Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; tarry not in all the plain. Escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed.

Chapter two

Journal Excerpts - Part 1

"Ah! believers, you are a tempted people. You are always poor and needy. And God intends it should be so, to give you constant errands to go to Jesus." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

[These journal excerpts are taken from the Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne by Andrew Bonar. All comments past the quotes of the actual journal are made by Andrew Bonar a godly minister. This book had a significant impact on my walk with the Lord. His journal writings show his heart of an eternal perspective and mindset.] "On this morning last year came the first overwhelming blow to my worldliness; how blessed to me, Thou, O God, only knowest, who hast made it so."

"This day eleven years ago, my holy brother David entered into his rest, aged 26." And on that same day, writing a note to one of his flock in Dundee (who had asked him to furnish a preface to a work printed 1740, Letters on Spiritual Subjects), he commends the book, and adds: "Pray for me, that I may be made holier and wiser--less like myself, and more like my heavenly Master; that I may not regard my life, if so be I may finish my course with joy. This day eleven years ago, I lost my loved and loving brother, and began to seek a Brother who cannot die."

At first light dawned slowly; so slowly, that for a considerable time he still relished an occasional plunge into scenes of gaiety. Even after entering the Divinity Hall, he could be persuaded to indulge in lighter pursuits, at least during the two first years of his attendance; but it was with growing alarm. When hurried away by such worldly joys, I find him writing thus:--"Sept. 14.--May there be few such records as this in my biography." Then, "Dec. 9.--A thorn in my side--much torment."

As the unholiness of his pleasures became more apparent, he writes:--"March 10, 1832.--I hope never to play cards again." "March 25.--Never visit on a Sunday evening again." "April 10.--Absented myself from

the dance; upbraidings ill to bear. But I must try to bear the cross." It seems to be in reference to the receding tide, which thus for a season repeatedly drew him back to the world, that on July 8, 1836, he records: "This morning five years ago, my dear brother David died, and my heart for the first time knew true bereavement.

Truly it was all well. Let me be dumb, for Thou didst it: and it was good for me that I was afflicted. I know not that any providence was ever more abused by man than that was by me; and yet, Lord, what mountains Thou comest over! none was ever more blessed to me." To us who can look at the results, it appears probable that the Lord permitted him thus to try many broken cisterns, and to taste the wormwood of many earthly streams, in order that in after days, by the side of the fountain of living waters, he might point to the world he had forever left, and testify the surpassing preciousness of what he had now found.

He thought himself much profited, at this period, by investigating the subject of Election and the Free Grace of God. But it was the reading of The Sum of Saving Knowledge, generally appended to our Confession of Faith, that brought him to a clear understanding of the way of acceptance with God. Those who are acquainted with its admirable statements of truth, will see how well fitted it was to direct an inquiring soul. I find him some years afterwards recording:--"March 11, 1834.--Read in the Sum of Saving Knowledge, the work which I think first of all wrought a saving change in me.

How gladly would I renew the reading of it, if that change might be carried on to perfection!" It will be observed that he never reckoned his soul saved, notwithstanding all his convictions and views of sins, until he really went into the Holiest of all on the warrant of the Redeemer's work; for assuredly a sinner is still under wrath, until he has actually availed himself of the way to the Father opened up by Jesus. All his knowledge of his sinfulness, and all his sad feeling of his own need and danger, cannot place him one step farther off from the lake of fire. It is "he that comes to Christ" that is saved.

A Change Appears It is in the end of the year that evidences of a change appear. From that period and ever onward his dry register of every-day incidents is varied with such passages as the following:-- "Nov. 12.--Reading H. Martyn's Memoirs. Would I could imitate him, giving up father, mother, country, house, health, life, all--for Christ. And yet, what hinders? Lord, purify me, and give me strength to dedicate myself, my all, to Thee!" "Dec. 4.--Reading Legh Richmond's Life."Deep penitence, not unmixed with tears.

I never before saw myself so vile, so useless, so poor, and, above all, so ungrateful. May these tears be the pledges of my self-dedication!" There is frequently at this period a sentence in Latin occurring like the above in the midst of other matter, apparently with the view of giving freer expression to his feelings regarding himself. "Dec. 9.--Heard a street-preacher: foreign voice. Seems really in earnest. He quoted the striking passage, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come!'

From this he seems to derive his authority. Let me learn from this man to be in earnest for the truth, and to despise the scoffing of the world." Dec. 18.--After spending an evening too lightly, he writes: "My heart must break off from all these things. What right have I to steal and abuse my Master's time? 'Redeem it,' He is crying to me." "Dec. 25.--My mind not yet calmly fixed on the Rock of Ages." "Jan. 12, 1832.--Cor non pacem habet. Quare? Peccatum apud fores manet." ["My heart has not peace.

Why? Sin lieth at my door."] "Jan. 25.--A lovely day. Eighty-four cases of cholera at Musselburgh, How it creeps nearer and nearer like a snake! Who will be the first victim here? Let thine everlasting arms be around us, and we shall be safe." "Jan. 29, Sabbath.--Afternoon heard Mr. Bruce (then minister of the New North Church, Edinburgh) on Malachi 1:1-6. It constitutes the very gravamen of the charge against the

unrenewed man, that he has affection for his earthly parent, and reverence for his earthly master, but none for God!

Most noble discourse." "Feb. 2.--Not a trait worth remembering! And yet these four-and-twenty hours must be accounted for." Feb. 5, Sabbath.--In the afternoon, having heard the late Mr. Martin of St. George's, he writes, on returning home: "O quam humilem, sed quam diligentissimum; quam dejectum, sed quam vigilem, quam die noctuque precantem, decet me esse quum tales viros aspicio. Juva, Pater, Fili, et Spiritus!" ["Oh! how humble, yet how diligent, how lowly, yet how watchful, how prayerful night and day it becomes me to be, when I see such men.

Help, Father, Son, and Spirit!"] From this date he seems to have sat, along with his friend Mr. Somerville, almost entirely under Mr. Bruce's ministry. He took copious notes of his lectures and sermons, which still remain among his papers. "Feb. 28.--Sober conversation. Fain would I turn to the most interesting of all subjects. Cowardly backwardness: 'For whosoever is ashamed of me and my words,'" etc. "March 6.--Wild wind and rain all day long. Hebrew class--Psalms. New beauty in the original every time I read.

Dr. Welsh--lecture on Pliny's letter about the Christians of Bithynia. Professor Jameson on quartz. Dr. Chalmers grappling with Hume's arguments. Evening--Notes, and little else. Mind and body dull." This is a specimen of his register of daily study. March 20.--After a few sentences in Latin, concluding with "In meam animam veni, Domine Deus omnipotens," he writes, "Leaning on a staff of my own devising, it betrayed me, and broke under me. It was not thy staff. Resolving to be a god, Thou showedst me that I was but a man.

But my own staff being broken, why may I not lay hold of thine?--Read part of the Life of Jonathan Edwards. How feeble does my spark of Christianity appear beside such a sun! But even his was a borrowed light, and the same source is still open to enlighten me." "April 8.--Have found much rest in Him who bore all our burdens for us." "April 26.--To-night I ventured to break the ice of unchristian silence. Why should not selfishness be buried beneath the Atlantic in matters so sacred?"

May 6, Saturday evening.--This was the evening previous to the Communion; and in prospect of again declaring himself the Lord's at his table, he enters into a brief review of his state. He had partaken of the ordinance in May of the year before for the first time; but he was then living at ease, and saw not the solemn nature of the step he took. He now sits down and reviews the past:-- "What a mass of corruption have I been! How great a portion of my life have I spent wholly without God in the world, given up to sense and the perishing things around me!

Naturally of a feeling and sentimental disposition, how much of my religion has been, and to this day is, tinged with these colors of earth! Restrained from open vice by educational views and the fear of man, how much ungodliness has reigned within me! How often has it broken through all restraints, and come out in the shape of lust and anger, mad ambitions, and unhallowed words! Though my vice was always refined, yet how subtle and how awfully prevalent it was! How complete a test was the Sabbath--spent in weariness, as much of it as was given to God's service!

How I polluted it by my hypocrisies, my self-conceits, my worldly thoughts, and worldly friends! How formally and unheedingly the Bible was read,--how little was read,--so little that even now I have not read it all! How unboundedly was the wild impulse of the heart obeyed! How much more was the creature loved than the Creator!--O great God, that didst suffer me to live whilst I so dishonored Thee, Thou knowest the whole; and it was thy hand alone that could awaken me from the death in which I was, and was contented

to be.

Gladly would I have escaped from the Shepherd that sought me as I strayed; but He took me up in his arms and carried me back; and yet He took me not for anything that was in me. I was no more fit for his service than the Australian, and no more worthy to be called and chosen. Yet why should I doubt? not that God is unwilling, not that He is unable--of both I am assured. But perhaps my old sins are too fearful, and my unbelief too glaring? Nay; I come to Christ, not although I am a sinner, but just because I am a sinner, even the chief."

He then adds, "And though sentiment and constitutional enthusiasm may have a great effect on me, still I believe that my soul is in sincerity desirous and earnest about having all its concerns at rest with God and Christ,--that his kingdom occupies the most part of all my thoughts, and even of my long-polluted affections. Not unto me, not unto me, be the shadow of praise or of merit ascribed, but let all glory be given to thy most holy name! As surely as Thou didst make the mouth with which I pray, so surely dost Thou prompt every prayer of faith which I utter.

Thou hast made me all that I am, and given me all that I have." "May 19.--Thought with more comfort than usual of being a witness for Jesus in a foreign land." "June 4.--Walking with A. Somerville by Craighleith. Conversing on missions. If I am to go to the heathen to speak of the unsearchable riches of Christ, this one thing must be given me, to be out of the reach of the baneful influence of esteem or contempt. If worldly motives go with me, I shall never convert a soul, and shall lose my own in the labor."

"June 22.--Variety of studies. Septuagint translation of Exodus and Vulgate. Bought Edwards' works. Drawing--Truly there was nothing in me that should have induced Him to choose me. I was but as the other brands upon whom the fire is already kindled, which shall burn for evermore! And as soon could the billet leap from the hearth and become a green tree, as my soul could have sprung to newness of life." "June 25.--In reference to the office of the holy ministry; "How apt are we to lose our hours in the vainest babblings, as do the world!

How can this be with those chosen for the mighty office? fellow-workers with God? heralds of His Son? evangelists? men set apart to the work, chosen out of the chosen, as it were the very pick of the flocks, who are to shine as the stars forever and ever? Alas, alas! my soul, where shall thou appear? O Lord God, I am a little child! But Thou wilt send an angel with a live coal from off the altar, and touch my unclean lips, and put a tongue within my dry mouth, so that I shall say with Isaiah, 'Here am I, send me.'" Then, after reading a little of Edwards' works: "Oh that heart and understanding may grow together, like brother and sister, leaning on one another!"

"June 27.--Life of David Brainerd. Most wonderful man! What conflicts, what depressions, desertions, strength, advancement, victories, within thy torn bosom! I cannot express what I think when I think of thee. To-night, more set upon missionary enterprise than ever." "June 28.--Oh for Brainerd's humility and sin-loathing dispositions!" "July 3.--This last bitter root of worldliness that has so often betrayed me has this night so grossly, that I cannot but regard it as God's chosen way to make me loathe and forsake it forever.

I would vow; but it is much more like a weakly worm to pray. Sit in the dust, O my soul!" I believe he was enabled to keep his resolution. Once only, in the end of this year, was he again led back to gaiety; but it was the last time. "July 7, Saturday.--After finishing my usual studies, tried to fast a little, with much prayer and earnest seeking of God's face, remembering what occurred this night last year." (Alluding to his

brother's death.) "July 22.--Had this evening a more complete understanding of that self-emptying and abasement with which it is necessary to come to Christ,--a denying of self, trampling it under foot,--a recognizing of the complete righteousness and justice of God, that could do nothing else with us but condemn us utterly, and thrust us down to lowest hell,--a feeling that, even in hell, we should rejoice in his sovereignty, and say that all was rightly done."

"Aug. 15.--Little done, and as little suffered. Awfully important question, Am I redeeming the time?" "Aug. 18.--Heard of the death of James Somerville by fever, induced by cholera. O God, thy ways and thoughts are not as ours! He had preached his first sermon. I saw him last on Friday, 27th July, at the College gate; shook hands, and little thought I was to see him no more on earth." "Sept. 2, Sabbath evening.--Reading. Too much engrossed, and too little devotional. Preparation for a fall.

Warning. We may be too engrossed with the shell even of heavenly things." "Sept. 9.--Oh for true, unfeigned humility! I know I have cause to be humble; and yet I do not know one-half of that cause. I know I am proud; and yet I do not know the half of that pride." "Sept. 30.--Somewhat straitened by loose Sabbath observance. Best way is to be explicit and manly." "Nov. 1.--More abundant longings for the work of the ministry. Oh that Christ would but count me faithful, that a dispensation of the gospel might be committed to me!"

And then he adds, "Much peace. Peaceful, because believing." Dec. 2.--Hitherto he used to spend much of the Sabbath evening in extending his notes of Mr. Bruce's sermons, but now, "Determined to be brief with these, for the sake of a more practical, meditative, resting, sabbatical evening." "Dec. 11.--Mind quite unfitted for devotion. Prayerless prayer." "Dec. 31.--God has in this past year introduced me to the preparation of the ministry,--I bless Him for that. He has helped me to give up much of my shame to name his name, and be on his side, especially before particular friends,--I bless Him for that.

He has taken conclusively away friends that might have been a snare,--must have been a stumbling-block,--I bless Him for that. He has introduced me to one Christian friend, and sealed more and more my amity with another,--I bless Him for that." Feb. 3.--Writing to a medical friend of his brother William's, he says, "I remember long ago a remark you once made to William, which has somehow or other stuck in my head, viz. that medical men ought to make a distinct study of the Bible, purely for the sake of administering conviction and consolation to their patients.

I think you also said that you had actually begun with that view. Such a determination, though formed in youth, is one which I trust riper years will not make you blush to own." "Feb. 11.--Somewhat overcome. Let me see: there is a creeping defect here. Humble purpose-like reading of the word omitted. What plant can be unwatered and not wither?" "Feb. 16.--Walk to Corstorphine Hill. Exquisite clear view,--blue water, and brown fields, and green firs. Many thoughts on the follies of my youth.

How many, O Lord, may they be? Summed up in one--ungodliness!" "Feb. 21.--Am I as willing as ever to preach to the lost heathen?" "March 8.--Biblical criticism. This must not supersede heart-work. How apt it is!" "March 12.--Oh for activity, activity, activity!" "March 29.--To-day my second session (at the Divinity Hall) ends. I am now in the middle of my career. God hold me on with a steady pace!" "March 31.--The bull tosses in the net! How should the Christian imitate the anxieties of the worldling!"

April 17.--He heard of the death of one whom many friends had esteemed much and lamented deeply. This led him to touch the strings of his harp again, in a measure somewhat irregular, yet sad and sweet. "May 20.--General Assembly. The motion regarding Chapels of Ease lost by 106 to 103. Every shock of

the ram is heavier and stronger, till all shall give way." "June 4.--Evening almost lost. Music will not sanctify, though it make feminine the heart." "June 22.--Omissions make way for commissions.

Could I but take effective warning! A world's wealth would not make up for that saying, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.' But how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" "June 30.--Self-examination. Why is a missionary life so often an object of my thoughts? Is it simply for the love I bear to souls? Then, why do I not show it more where I am? Souls are as precious here as in Burmah. Does the romance of the business not weigh anything with me?--the interest and esteem I would carry with me?--the nice journals and letters I should write and receive?

Why would I so much rather go to the East than to the West Indies? Am I wholly deceiving my own heart? and have I not a spark of true missionary zeal? Lord, give me to understand and imitate the spirit of those unearthly words of thy dear Son: 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.' 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' Gloria in excelsis Deo! "Aug. 13.--Clear conviction of sin is the only true origin of dependence on another's righteousness, and therefore (strange to say!) of the Christian's peace of mind and cheerfulness."

"Sept. 8.--Reading Adams' Private Thoughts. Oh for his heart-searching humility! Ah me! on what mountains of pride must I be wandering, when all I do is tintured with the very sins this man so deploras; yet where are my wailings, where my tears, over my love of praise?" "Nov. 14.--Composition--a pleasant kind of labor. I fear the love of applause or effect goes a great way. May God keep me from preaching myself instead of Christ crucified." "Jan. 15, 1834.--Heard of the death of J.S., off the Cape of Good Hope.

O God! how Thou breakest into families! Must not the disease be dangerous, when a tender-hearted surgeon cuts deep into the flesh? How much more when God is the operator, 'who afflicteth not from his heart ■■■■■, nor grieveth the children of men!' Lam. 3:33." "Feb. 23, Sabbath.--Rose early to seek God, and found Him whom my soul loveth. Who would not rise early to meet such company? The rains are over and gone. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Feb. 24.--He writes a letter to one who, he feared, was only sentimental, and not really under a sense of sin.

"Is it possible, think you, for a person to be conceited of his miseries? May there not be a deep leaven of pride in telling how desolate and how unfeeling we are?--in brooding over our unearthly pains?--in our being excluded from the unsympathetic world?--in our being the invalids of Christ's hospital?" He had himself been taught by the Spirit that it is more humbling for us to take what grace offers, than to bewail our wants and worthlessness. "May 9.--How kindly has God thwarted me in every instance where I sought to enlave myself!

I will learn at least to glory in disappointments." "May 10.--At the Communion. Felt less use for the minister than ever. Let the Master of the feast alone speak to my heart." He felt at such times, as many of the Lord's people have always done, that it is not the addresses of the ministers in serving the table, but the Supper itself, that ought to "satisfiate their souls with fatness." May 21.--It is affecting to us to read the following entry:--"This day I attained my twenty-first year.

Oh! how long and how worthlessly I have lived, Thou only knowest. Neff died in his thirty-first year; when shall I?" May 29.--He this day wrote very faithfully, yet very kindly, to one who seemed to him not a believer, and who nevertheless appropriated to herself the promises of God. "If you are wholly unassured of your being a believer, is it not a contradiction in terms to say, that you are sure the believers' promises belong to you? Are you an assured believer? If so, rejoice in your heirship; and yet rejoice with trembling;

for that is the very character of God's heirs.

But are you unassured--nay, wholly unassured? then what mad presumption to say to your soul, that these promises, being in the Bible, must belong indiscriminately to all! It is too gross a contradiction for you to compass, except in word." He then shows that Christ's free offer must be accepted by the sinner, and so the promises become his. "This sinner complies with the call or offer, 'Come unto me;' and thereafter, but not before, can claim the annexed promise as his: 'I will give thee rest.'" "Aug. 14.--Partial fast, and seeking God's face by prayer.

This day thirty years, my late dear brother was born. Oh for more love, and then will come more peace!" That same evening he wrote the hymn, "The Barren Fig-tree." "Oct. 17.--Private meditation exchanged for conversation. Here is the root of the evil,--forsake God, and He forsakes us." "Nov. 9.--Heard of Edward Irving's death. I look back upon him with awe, as on the saints and martyrs of old. A holy man in spite of all his delusions and errors. He is now with his God and Saviour, whom he wronged so much, yet, I am persuaded, loved so sincerely.

How should we lean for wisdom, not on ourselves, but on the God of all grace!" "Nov. 21.--If nothing else will do to sever me from my sins, Lord send me such sore and trying calamities as shall awake me from earthly slumbers. It must always be best to be alive to Thee, whatever be the quickening instrument. I tremble as I write, for oh! on every hand do I see too likely occasions for sore afflictions." "Feb. 15, 1835.--To-morrow I undergo my trials before the Presbytery. May God give me courage in the hour of need.

What should I fear? If God see meet to put me into the ministry, who shall keep me back? If I be not meet, why should I be thrust forward? To thy service I desire to dedicate myself over and over again." "March 1.--Bodily service. What change is there in the heart! Wild, earthly affections there are here; strong, coarse passions; bands both of iron and silk. But I thank Thee, O my God, that they make me cry, 'Oh wretched man!' Bodily weakness, too, depresses me." "March 29.--College finished on Friday last. My last appearance there. Life itself is vanishing fast. Make haste for eternity."

Labors Before Ordination "Feb. 21, 1836, Sabbath.--Blessed be the Lord for another day of the Son of man. Resumed my diary, long broken off; not because I do not feel the disadvantages of it,--making you assume feelings and express rather what you wish to be than what you are,--but because the advantages seem greater. It ensures sober reflection on the events of the day as seen in God's eye. Preached twice in Larbert, on the righteousness of God, Rom. 1:16. In the morning was more engaged in preparing the head than the heart.

This has been frequently my error, and I have always felt the evil of it, especially in prayer. Reform it, then, O Lord." "Feb. 27.--Preached in Dunipace with more heart than ever I remember to have done, on Rom. 5:10, owing to the gospel nature of the subject and prayerful preparation. Audience smaller than usual! How happy and strange is the feeling when God gives the soul composure to stand and plead for Him! Oh that it were altogether for Him I plead, not for myself!" "March 5.--Preached in Larbert with very much comfort, owing chiefly to my remedying the error of 21st Feb.

Therefore the heart and the mouth were full. 'Enlarge my heart, and I shall run,' said David. 'Enlarge my heart, and I shall preach.'" On Sabbath 16, he writes: "Preached with some tenderness of heart. Oh, why should I not weep, as Jesus did over Jerusalem? Evening--Instructing two delightful Sabbath schools. Much bodily weariness. Gracious kindness of God in giving rest to the weary." "April 13.--Went to Stirling

to hear Dr. Duff once more upon his system. With greater warmth and energy than ever.

He kindles as he goes. Felt almost constrained to go the whole length of his system with him. If it were only to raise up an audience, it would be defensible; but when it is to raise up teachers, it is more than defensible. I am now made willing, if God shall open the way, to go to India. Here am I; send me!" The missionary feeling in his soul continued all his life. The Lord had really made him willing; and this preparedness to go anywhere completed his preparation for unselfish, self-denied work at home.

Must there not be somewhat of this missionary tendency in all true ministers? Is any one truly the Lord's messenger who is not quite willing to go when and where the Lord calls? Is it justifiable in any to put aside a call from the north, on the ground that he wishes one from the south? We must be found in the position of Isaiah, if we are to be really sent of God. "April 24.--Oh that this day's labor may be blessed! and not mine alone, but all thy faithful servants all over the world, till thy Sabbath come."

"April 26.--Visiting in Carron-shore. Well received everywhere. Truly a pleasant labor. Cheered me much. Preached to them afterwards from Proverbs 1." "May 8.--Communion in Larbert. Served as an elder and help to the faithful. Partook with some glimpses of faith and joy. Served by a faithful old minister (Mr. Dempster of Denny), one taught of God. This morning stood by the dying--evening, stood by the dead, poor J.F. having died last night. I laid my hand on her cold forehead, and tried to shut her eyes.

Lord, give me strength for living to Thee!--strength also for a dying hour." "May 15.--This day an annular eclipse of the sun. Kept both the services together in order to be in time. Truly a beautiful sight to see the shining edge of the sun all round the dark disc of the moon. Lord, one day thy hand shall put out those candles; for there shall be no need of the sun to lighten the happy land: the Lamb is the light thereof; a sun that cannot be eclipsed--that cannot go down."

"May 17.--Visited thirteen families, and addressed them all in the evening in the school, on Jeremiah 1:4, 'Going and weeping.' Experienced some enlargement of soul; said some plain things; and had some desire for their salvation, that God might be praised." "May 21.--Preparation for the Sabbath. My birth-day. I have lived twenty-three years. Blessed be my Rock. Though I am a child in knowledge of my Bible and of Thee, yet use me for what a child can do, or a child can suffer.

How few sufferings I have had in the year that is past, except in my own body. Oh that as my day is my strength may be! Give me strength for a suffering and for a dying hour!" "May 22.--O Lord, when Thou workest, all discouragements vanish; when Thou art away, anything is a discouragement. Blessed be God for such a day--one of a thousand! Oh! why not always this? Watch and pray." Being in Edinburgh this month, during the sitting of the General Assembly, he used the opportunity of revisiting some of his former charge in the Canongate.

"J.S., a far-off inquirer, but surely God is leading. His hand draws out these tears. Interesting visits to L., near death, and still in the same mind. I cannot but hope that some faith is here. Saw Mrs. M.; many tears: felt much, though I am still doubtful, and in the dark. Thou knowest, Lord!" "June 11.--Yesterday up in Dunipace. It would seem as if I were afraid to name the name of Christ. Saw many worldly people greatly needing a word in season, yet could not get up my heart to speak.

What I did failed almost completely. I am not worthy, Lord! To-day sought to prepare my heart for the coming Sabbath. After the example of Boston, whose life I have been reading, examined my heart with prayer and fasting. 1. Does my heart really close with the offer of salvation by Jesus? Is it my choice to be

saved in the way which gives Him all the praise, and me none? Do I not only see it to be the Bible way of salvation, but does it cordially approve itself to my heart as delightful?

Lord search me and try me, for I cannot but answer, Yes, yes. 2. Is it the desire of my heart to be made altogether holy? Is there any sin I wish to retain? Is sin a grief to me, the sudden risings and overcomings thereof especially? Lord, Thou knowest all things--Thou knowest that I hate all sin, and desire to be made altogether like Thee. It is the sweetest word in the Bible: 'Sin shall not have dominion over you.' Oh, then, that I might lie low in the dust,--the lower the better,--that Jesus' righteousness and Jesus' strength alone be admired!

Felt much deadness, and much grief that I cannot grieve for this deadness. Towards evening revived. Got a calm spirit through psalmody and prayer." "June 12, Sabbath.--To-day a sinner preached Jesus, the same Jesus who has done all things for him and that so lately! A day of much help, of some earnest looking-up of the heart to that alone quickening power, of much temptation to flattery and pride. Oh for breathing gales of spiritual life! Evening--Somewhat helped to lay Jesus before little children in his beauty and excellency.

Much fatigue, yet some peace. Surely a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." "June 15.--Day of visiting (rather a happy one) in Carron-shore. Large meeting in the evening. Felt very happy after it, though mourning for bitter speaking of the gospel. Surely it is a gentle message, and should be spoken with angelic tenderness, especially by such a needy sinner." "June 19, Sabbath.--Wet morning. Preached at Dunipace to a small audience, on Parable of the Tares. I thank God for that blessed parable.--In both discourses I can look back on many hateful thoughts of pride, and self-admiration, and love of praise, stealing the heart out of the service."

"June 22.--Carron-shore. My last. Some tears; yet I fear some like the messenger, not the message; and I fear I am so vain as to love that love. Lord, let it not be so. Perish my honor, but let thine be exalted forever." "June 26.--True Sabbath-day. Golden sky. Full church, and more liveliness than sometimes. Shall I call the liveliness of this day a gale of the Spirit, or was all natural? I know that all was not of grace; the self-admiration, the vanity, the desire of honor, the bitterness--these were all breaths of earth or hell.

But was there no grace? Lord, Thou knowest. I dare not wrong Thee by saying--No! Larbert Sabbath school with the same liveliness and joy. Domestic work with the same. Praised be God! Oh that the savor of it may last through the week! By this may I test if it be all of nature, or much of grace. Alas! how I tremble for my Monday mornings--those seasons of lifelessness. Lord, bless the seeds sown this day in the hearts of my friends, by the hand of my friends, and all over the world--hasten the harvest!"

"July 3.--After a week of working and hurried preparation, a Sabbath of mingled peace and pain. Called, morning before preaching, to see Mrs. E., dying. Preached on the Jailor--discomposedly--with some glimpses of the genuine truth as it is in Jesus. Felt there was much mingling of experience. At times the congregation was lightened up from their dull flatness, and then they sunk again into lethargy. O Lord, make me hang on Thee to open their hearts, Thou opener of Lydia's heart.

I fear Thou wilt not bless my preaching, until I am brought thus to hang on Thee. Oh keep not back a blessing for my sin! Afternoon--On the Highway of the Redeemed, with more ease and comfort. Felt the truth sometimes boiling up from my heart into my words. Some glimpses of tenderness, yet much less of that spirit than the last two Sabbaths. Again saw the dying woman. Oh when will I plead, with my tears and inward yearnings, over sinners! Oh, compassionate Lord, give me to know what manner of spirit I am of!

give me thy gentle Spirit, that neither strives nor cries.

Much weariness, want of prayerfulness, and want of cleaving to Christ." Tuesday the 5th being the anniversary of his licence to preach the gospel, he writes: "Eventful week; one year I have preached Jesus, have I? or myself? I have often preached myself also, but Jesus I have preached." About this time he again felt the hand of affliction, though it did not continue long. Yet it was plain to him now that personal trouble was to be one of the ingredients of that experience which helped to give a peculiar tone to his ministry.

"July 8.--Since Tuesday have been laid up with illness. Set by once more for a season to feel my unprofitableness and cure my pride. When shall this self-choosing temper be healed? 'Lord, I will preach, run, visit, wrestle,' said I. 'No, thou shalt lie in thy bed and suffer,' said the Lord. To-day missed some fine opportunities of speaking a word for Christ. The Lord saw I would have spoken as much for my own honor as his, and therefore shut my mouth. I see a man cannot be a faithful minister, until he preaches Christ for Christ's sake--until he gives up striving to attract people to himself, and seeks only to attract them to Christ.

Lord, give me this! To-night some glimpses of humbling, and therefore some wrestling in social prayer. But my prayers are scarcely to be called prayer." Then, in the evening: "This day my brother has been five years absent from the body and present with the Lord, and knows more and loves more than all earthly saints together. Till the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved!" "July 10.--I fear I am growing more earthly in some things. To-day I felt a difficulty in bringing in spiritual conversation immediately after preaching, when my bosom should be burning.

Excused myself from dining out from other than the grand reason; though checked and corrected myself. Evening--Insensibly slid into worldly conversation. Let these things be corrected in me, O Lord, by the heart being more filled with love to Jesus, and more ejaculatory prayer." "July 17, Sabbath.--Oh that I may remember my own word this day: that the hour of communion is the hour for the foxes--the little foxes--to spoil the wine. Two things that defile this day in looking back, are love of praise running through all, and consenting to listen to worldly talk at all.

Oh that these may keep me humble and be my burden, leading me to the cross. Then, Satan, thou wilt be outwitted!" "July 19.--Died, this day, W. M'Cheyne, my cousin-german, Relief minister, Kelso. Oh how I repent of our vain controversies on Establishments when we last met, and that we spoke so little of Jesus! Oh that we had spoken more one to another! Lord, teach me to be always speaking as dying to dying." "July 24.--Dunipace Communion--Heard Mr. Purves of Jedburgh preach, 'Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

The only way to come to ordinances, and to draw from the well, is to come with the matter of acceptance settled, believing God's anger to be turned away. Truly a precious view of the freeness of the gospel very refreshing. My soul needs to be roused much to apprehend this truth." During these ten months the Lord had done much for him, but it was chiefly in the way of discipline for a future ministry. He had been taught a minister's heart; he had been tried in the furnace; he had tasted deep personal sorrow, little of which has been recorded; he had felt the fiery darts of temptation; he had been exercised in self-examination and in much prayer; he had proved how flinty is the rock, and had learned that in lifting the rod by which it was to be smitten, success lay in Him alone who enabled him to lift it up.

And thus prepared of God for the peculiar work that awaited him, he had turned his face towards Dundee, and took up his abode in the spot where the Lord was so marvelously to visit him in his ministry.

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