

## LETTERS OF WILLIAM TIPTAFT (1838 - 1842)

March 2nd, 1838

My dear Brother,

I feel very dead, sinful, and unfit for a pulpit; and it seems a great mercy indeed that my preaching does not altogether fall to the ground. I know not, at times, what use my preaching is; but the Lord can bless by whom He will bless; and if His presence and power are with me, all my enemies within and without cannot prevent good being done in the name of the holy child Jesus. It is the Lord's blessing I want, both in and out of the pulpit; for what is this world, and all things in it, if a man does not have God for his friend? All things around us remind us that we are nothing better than grass, and are like a fleeting shadow. And if we are void of saving grace, awful is our state, whether we feel it so or not. But we find that the Lord must make us view things in their true colors. And if He favors us with a few breathings after the 'heavenly manna', it will stop us from so earnestly seeking that 'bread which perishes'.

The world is a great enemy! It contains so many snares and baits so suitable to our carnal appetite. We are surrounded with everything that is trying to fasten our hearts to earthly things; and if we were to have no crosses, and no enjoyment and comfort in spiritual things, we would be endeavoring, still more than we are, to find our happiness in earthly things. A tender conscience and godly fear in the heart are great mercies; and if the Lord does bless our souls with a sense of His pardoning love, it is a wonderful favor. For we know our vileness sufficiently to be sure that there is no hope for us but through His rich, unmerited love and mercy. It is a very narrow path, and the Lord must guide and direct us in it.

I am glad you set an example in being liberal to the poor. If you stand by the poor, God will stand by you.

Yours very affectionately and sincerely,  
William Tiptaft.

March 29th, 1838

My dear Brother,

I preached at Worcester on the 9th on my way to Wolverhampton; and as I found it a fine large city full of ministers—and darkness. I made a few plain

remarks that seemed to stir up some of the people in favor of me and some against me. Some having heard me satisfactorily, and being very anxious for me to preach again, I consented to preach again on my return, which I did on the 26th. I understand that one minister who heard me the first time was made so ill with my sermon that he had to be in bed for three days. Some mocked, and others desired to hear me again.

Yours very affectionately,  
William Tiptaft.

April 18th, 1838

My dear Brother,

I was glad to receive the kind letter which you and your better half sent me; and I wish you would write more upon spiritual things; but we find that **our hearts cleave so close to the dust that we cannot enter with any life and power into heavenly subjects.** It seems a great mercy that we do not deny them, for hope will spring up, in the midst of all our halting and hobbling, that we are among the 'little children'; for the Lord does bless the small as well as the great.

I am often led to wonder how I ever have got on to this time, and particularly in the ministry; but all past mercies, favors, and encouragements do not make me believe, when I am in a dark state, that I shall continue. Last Friday evening the Lord seemed to be with me, and the friends here expressed themselves to have been favored in hearing. **I find that nothing but true religion will satisfy me,** although my mind seems inclined to everything else, and all manner of deadness and evil possess me, in such a way that I cannot trace the work of grace in my heart. I sometimes think that I shall never be lively in my soul without a hot furnace—which I dread. Nevertheless, **anything seems better than carnality and sensuality.** But it will ever be "uneasy when I feel my load, uneasy when I feel it not."

I am afraid of having my heart "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." **The world in such various ways is our enemy, that we have more to fear from smiles than frowns;** for when the flesh prospers there will be but little watching, praying, seeking, crying, groaning, and talking about the sufferings of Jesus. It seems to me much harder work to **continue** than to **begin;** but the church in all ages has been worn down with harassments and perplexities, or the promises would never have been so numerous for the faint and weary. That religion which brings no difficulties will not lead to any

cry for help—and if we could get along without God, we would not seek Him.

Free-will, self-sufficiency, and independence, are three strongholds in our hearts, and they only fall before the winds of adversity and soul-trials, which make us to know that Christ is a refuge from the storm and tempest which arise, again and again, in every quickened soul. I get exercised in such various ways. I am sometimes in such places, in which I wish to act right, and yet I do not know what to do. Things may be more smooth for me after a while, for I am sensible to sinking daily, and at times I seem not to have a grain of faith or strength, and could not trust God for anything. **If the Bible is true, the only good investment is giving money to the poor.** That is safe; it is money put out on the best security, as being lent to the Lord; and what a good thing it is to make a good use of money, while so many spend nearly all they have on their selfish desires, fancies, and lusts. I believe **we all love the world more than we think; and "Spare yourself!" is written very deeply in our hearts.** I think we love the poor children of God less than we think; for deeds, not words, come closest to the heart, and it is easier to preach than to practice.

The matter of the greatest importance is the spending and distributing of money. An ungodly man may have much, but he cannot consider the cause of the poor, if the Lord does not bless him with the mind to do so. So an ungodly man's money is either spent on his lust, or brings him under a curse—"Woe be to him that is laden with thick clay." **What a dreadful thing it is to have the curse of a covetous heart!** "The love of money is the root of all evil," and sticks to one's heart like the flesh to the skin, and if any one at all despises money, the devil and the world are in such a fight with him that they are ready to knock him on the head or throw him into the fire, and will abuse him for being a fool, or a madman!

Yours very sincerely and affectionately,  
William Tiptaft.

June 8th, 1838

My dear Brother,

Through mercy I arrived here safely from Brighton, and felt myself better for two or three weeks after illness; but on the 1st of this month, I was seized again with colic, but not so painful as at Brighton. Nevertheless, I have not been out of doors since, except for a short walk this morning. **I find this**

sickness profitable to my soul. It has, I trust, meekened and humbled my spirit, and I have been brought down to lie passive in the Lord's hands. I deserve many such, and much more severe, chastisements for my daily sins and iniquities; and it is through God's mercy that I am spared to write to you. I feel this sickness to be a rod that I needed. If we escaped such trials, we would wander farther from God after idols and the vain delights of our wicked hearts. This sickness has made me feel and think more of poor people who cannot get comforts and even necessaries in their daily ailments, while I have abundance. But gratitude must come from God.

The mayor and some of the leading people of Abingdon have applied to me today to give them something towards making a feast on the Coronation day. I told them that such feasts led to drunkenness, etc., and I could not conscientiously give them anything towards it, for I considered them among the "revellings"; but if they would establish a sick fund, or benefit the poor in any other way, I would contribute. The mayor is a dissenter, and there were several dissenters with him; but they did not know that "Fear God" stands before "Honor the Queen." It will be a very great day of wickedness in England. My opinions seem to differ from other people's, and they cannot make out what kind of man I am.

Yours very affectionately and sincerely,  
William Tiptaft.

July 18th, 1838

My dear Brother,  
I feel myself a very poor preacher. The work tries my mind and body; and the last two Lord's days, when I said, after the morning sermon, that Mr. Kay would preach the other time, I felt as a horse would, that had his harness taken off after a journey. I find that religion is uphill work; and the more I try to rise, the more I sink. I scarcely know how to make my religion out. I am not satisfied with those who get on so well and so fast, and yet any religion appears better than mine. How trying it is to preach to people alive in their souls, while so dead and carnal myself. Well might Paul say to the Corinthians, "So then death works in us, but life in you." "Faint, yet pursuing," is an experience not to be despised in the present day, for nearly all are zealous with 'false fire', and those who seem to have any real religion consider themselves dead and carnal.

Yours affectionately and sincerely,  
William Tiptaft.

August 19th, 1839

My dear Brother,

Through mercy, I arrived safely here on Wednesday evening, the 7th. I had, upon the whole, a favorable journey, and felt myself but little fatigued by it. I preached once on Lord's day, the 11th. Very many came to hear; so also yesterday; and some professed to hear with much profit. It has been reported several times, far and wide, that I was dead; and also that during my absence, that I have been confined in a madhouse. Some seemed pleased to see me again; but many, who had hoped never to see such a 'troublers of Israel' in these parts any more, are disappointed.

We live in times which need a searching ministry; but ministers must be searched themselves, before they can search others. Searching work is trying work, for it takes away false confidence, and keeps a man from boasting of an untried faith. It makes hypocrites manifest, and separates the poor, tried, and humble souls, from the mere professors with a name to live while dead. But the work is in the Lord's hands, and if He does not cause the 'chill north wind' to awaken, and the 'warm south wind' to blow, ministers will labor in vain. He has, however, promised that "His word shall not return to Him void, but that it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it."

How much preparation of heart is needed to receive the word! **What trials, afflictions, and sorrows are required to separate us from the world;** and very seldom is it that afflictions are without profit to God's people. **How hard, carnal, and selfish does a man become who has nothing to soften him!** We need daily crosses and daily trials to keep us in any way alive to eternal things, and to maintain a spirit of prayer and watchfulness.

I trust I can say that my sickness has proved profitable to me; but I am a very dull scholar in Christ's school, and need line upon line and precept upon precept. I have to lament a heart full of wickedness, vanity, and folly; and I feel a strong inclination to avoid every cross. But I am sure, nevertheless, that crosses are daily needful. How we cleave to the world! What pride, vanity, flesh-pleasing, and worldly conformity are manifest in us, especially to those who are spiritually minded, and can discern our state.

Yours affectionately and sincerely,  
William Tiptaft.

November 13th, 1839

My dear Brother,

Since I wrote to friend P., I have not suffered from any further attacks; and, through mercy, I may say that I have but little pain, and take my walks as usual. I find the exertion of preaching earnestly, a little trying; so I still continue to speak but once on a Lord's day.

J. Kay was absent nearly ten weeks, and I spent the time very quietly, and, I trust, not altogether unprofitably; for I was favored with an inclination to read the word of God. I find it good to lead a retired life, even if it is not pleasant to the flesh.

How we find that there are two principles within us continually at war, and how they ever wrestle for mastery! But whatever suits and pleases the flesh will surely make the soul lean, and bring on deadness and barrenness. The more we taste of the pleasures of sin, the more we get blinded and intoxicated by them, and the more anxious to enjoy them in this time-state, whether we go to heaven or not. Right hands and right eyes are dear to us, and self-denial is a continual cross. When we are tried, tempted, and harassed, we want ease and comfort. Yet we daily learn that without ballast we should not sail in any way safely on the seas of temptation. We need chastisements, rods, and crosses, to bring us to a throne of grace; and we need a daily sense of our vileness and our sins to constrain us to fly to the only true refuge for poor helpless sinners, who is a Friend in need and a Brother born for adversity.

But I find that my unbelief would strike at the root of all my hopes, so that I scarcely know what to make of my religion, and think it will be a wonderful mercy if I ever enter into that rest which remains for the people of God. Very often, through the various exercises of my soul, my religion is obliged to go into a very small compass, and I am compelled to confess to my hearers what straits I get into. But the more confounded I become in my soul-exercises, the better they seem to bear with me, and to hear me, and tell me they find that my sickness is made profitable to them. And yet I am often tried what right I have to be in a pulpit.

The more, however, I am tried about my own evidences, the more I am tried about the evidences of other people, and the more convinced I am that very

many are deceived who are calling themselves 'experimental Calvinists'. Sin, in one way or other, reigns and rules in the heart, and is but little opposed, except, at times, by a little honesty of conscience. Grace will reign in the called elect, although sin may break out and struggle for victory, and make the poor sinner feel that he is a hell-deserving wretch; and, at times, the tempted saint feels the vilest and unworthiest of all around him.

I imagine that the poor old people never liked your soup better than they do this year, as provisions are so scanty. "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." Proverbs 22:9. What you give to the poor you cannot spend upon your lusts; and although flesh cleaves very fast to the 'thick clay', in your right mind you will never be sorry that you have refreshed the affections of the poor. What you give to the poor you lend to the Lord; and if that be not a good investment, there never was a good one. But I dare say you find that you have a vile, sinful, wretched mind, craving after other sorts of investments. It is well if you feel it and groan on account of it. If none are to go to heaven but those who are free from covetousness, few indeed will be saved. Nevertheless, it stands among the black marks of the dead in sin. What a hard sin it is to pray against with the heart, while there are a dozen speculating plans in the head!

It is a mercy to be made sensible of our besetting sins and lusts, that we may feel our need of the atoning blood of Christ, and to be fully satisfied that if we depend upon anything short of the blood and righteousness of Christ we must perish eternally, for all other hopes are cut off. Such a sense of sin and vileness cuts up Arminianism by the roots, and prepares us to hear the gospel, and to know that it brings glad tidings to poor, lost, and helpless sinners.

Yours very affectionately,  
William Tiptaft.

February 5th, 1840

My dear Brother,  
I hope and trust I am rather better than when I last wrote. I find that my walks are beneficial to my health, and I now generally take two or three daily, according to your opinion and advice. I scarcely ever take anything to drink except tea, and water; and I think very little good is done by

fermented liquors, although some so strongly recommend me to take them in moderation.

We live in a day of great profession; but I believe there are very few true living souls, and even in those who have life, it is scarcely manifested. Nearly all the quickened children of God feel this and mourn over it, more or less. We may wish for a revival, and great spiritual blessings; but great trials and troubles would come therewith, for grace must be tried. **Our flesh shrinks from the least cross, and we do not like to lose a little finger, much less a right eye, or a right hand.** The flesh will be consulted, or it will rage and storm, and present such 'mountains' in the path to heaven, as will make the poor child of God tremble. Carnal security, fleshly gratifications, the friendship of the world, and a smooth path will appear so very desirable; that if we are not led to buy a little faith tried in the fire, so that we might have a glimmering view of the King in His beauty and of the land afar off, we would feel determined to go along By-path meadow, let the consequences be what they might. We would become deserters of Christ's banner, and resolve never to fight valiantly, endure hardness, or suffer any difficulties for the elect's sake, or in the Lord's cause.

**Oh! how we need daily renewing and strengthening to enable us to take up the cross, and to contend against the sins that so easily beset us!** For we have to say with David, "Our souls cleave to the dust; quicken us, according to Your word."

I shall be glad to hear how you are going on, whether you see more "the sin of grasping after an empty shadow", which promises much and performs nothing, and worse than nothing, for it causes vexation of spirit. I shall rejoice if the Lord draws up your mind more to heavenly things, so that you may be kept from minding earthly things in that way which caused Paul to weep. I wish I had more of that blessed concern, which Paul manifested, respecting the godly and upright walk of the children of God.

Yours affectionately and sincerely,  
William Tiptaft.