

LETTERS OF WILLIAM TIPTAFT (1843 - 1864)

January 30th, 1843

My dear Sister,

I was glad to hear that you are about to follow the Lord Jesus Christ through the ordinance of believer's baptism. May your soul be much blessed in it. Many find it only a shell; but I believe some are so favored as to find a kernel within the shell, in the Lord's presence being manifested on the occasion. Whoever may slight and despise it, we have on record how blessedly the Trinity bore testimony to it, when Jesus Christ was baptized (Matt. 3:16, 17). "Whoever shall do the will of God, shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." I dare say you are anxious to know the proceedings here yesterday respecting it. There was a very large concourse of people both times, and many children of God scattered through this neighborhood were gathered together, distant and near. There were many from mere curiosity, and many could not get even standing room, particularly in the afternoon. I went through a regular service, and then baptized seven women and five men, and after the afternoon service I baptized six women and five men. It seems a great number to be baptized in one day by a minister called so narrow-minded.

This, however, is the first time of baptizing with us, and it is nearly fourteen years since I came into this neighborhood, and more than eleven years since I left the Church of England. In the morning I felt rather shut up in speaking, but in the afternoon I was blessed with a little power and liberty, and I trust and believe that the Lord was with us, and several, I understand, found it good to be there. What a different feeling I had in going down from the pulpit to baptize those of whom I had a good hope that they were partakers of grace, according to the mode so clearly stated in the word of God, from what I used to experience when I had to descend from the pulpit in the Church of England to 'sprinkle infants', and to give a flat contradiction to what I stated in the pulpit respecting regeneration, at the same time encouraging the blind and ignorant 'godfathers' and 'godmothers' in their sin and mocking of God, who came forward so boldly and carelessly to make such dreadful vows and promises! I am satisfied many things may be bought too dear—even gold; but one thing cannot—which is a good conscience.

I have now something to relate, in which, I trust, you and the other friends at Oakham will feel interested, and will be glad to hear; and may the Lord make it a blessing, and may He have all the praise! It is a new strain for me to begin with—"My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things

which I have made touching the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

After talking over the proceedings of the day with four friends, I retired (on Lord's day evening) to bed in a comfortable state of mind, feeling thankful that the Lord had brought me through a trying day, concerning which I had been much exercised, and trusting the Lord had blessed the word to some that day through such a worm as I felt myself to be, as well as owning His own ordinance, to which we had been attending. When I knelt down to offer up a few words by the bedside, I felt my soul drawn out to God, and humbled low before Him with a sense of my sins; but as soon as I was in bed I began to feel a melting of heart, and a sweet sense of God's love to my soul, which immediately made my tears flow; and the Lord sweetly began to apply precious promises to my soul with unction and power, and to such an extent as I have never been blessed with before. In fact I have never experienced any such blessed manifestation and sweet deliverance, though I have been blessed at different times that I can mention; but they were far short of this sweet blessing to my soul; and the savor of it sweetly abides with me still, but I am afraid of losing it, or of being robbed of it.

When the promises began to flow into my soul, these words came with as great power, and as often as any—"Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs;" and again and again—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins—return unto Me; for I have redeemed you!" "I will honor those who honor Me." "He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me—and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." I did sweetly experience this manifestation of love to my soul; and I said to the blessed Lord, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His mouth is most sweet." The promises flowed into my soul, and my tears flowed so fast that I soon began to water my couch with tears of joy, and not of sorrow.

I lay until between twelve and one o'clock in this blessed state, and then fell asleep, for about two hours, and awoke in a delightful frame, the Lord blessing my soul again, until I had to restrain myself from crying aloud. I did not go to sleep again, but lay awake, blessing and praising God for His goodness and mercy to my soul, with debasing views of myself, and with exalted views of the blessed Jesus, having communion and fellowship with Him in His agony and sufferings. But during my soul-enjoyment I kept saying at times, "Is it real, Lord? Is it real, Lord?" I wanted to know whether it was real. I asked myself whether I was willing to die, and I felt I was; and if it were the Lord's will, I was willing to die, without telling anyone of His great goodness to my soul; for the Lord's will was my will. I asked myself

whether I would rather have a large bag of gold, or this blessing—and I felt a large bag of gold was no more to me than a large bag of pebbles, compared to the Lord's rich blessing. These words came to my mind sweetly again and again—

"Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found."

And Deer's hymn, "Blessed Spirit of truth, eternal God," was sweet to my soul.

I went up and told J. K. early in the morning, and could not refrain from crying, and could scarcely shave myself through shedding tears so fast. I shed more tears last night than I have shed for years, for my tears do not flow so easily as many people's do. These words came with power—"Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it," and also—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This has been to my soul "a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined;" for "the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie—though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

You, as well as others, know I have had to wait, and have been much tried, because the Lord has not blessed me more with His presence and manifestations of His love, though He has given me a 'few sips' by the way, both in preaching and at a throne of grace, and in times of need and temptation. But I have known to my sorrow what it is to sit in the dust, almost without hope whether the Lord would ever put a new song in my mouth. These words were brought again and again—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits—who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies!"

I have gone on in the ministry ready to halt, with sorrow before me, with my soul much discouraged because of the way; and had not the Lord given me seals to my ministry and testimonies now and then to my soul, surely I would have fainted by the way. If the blessing had come twelve hours sooner, someone else must have preached and baptized, for I could have done neither, through blessing, praising, and crying for joy. Very many of my hearers would have said, it was not enthusiasm in the bud, but in the flower, for they are strangers to such feelings. "The heart knows his own bitterness; and a stranger does not intermeddle with his joy."

And how clearly did I see David's wisdom in saying, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." David well knew, that if they did not know a "secret" in religion, they would not be able to understand a work of grace upon the soul. I have been long kept upon short commons, and I have had great murmurings and rebellion respecting it, and now the Lord is pleased to lead my soul into green pastures; but how long I am to be favored, I know not, but this I know, I feel grateful for what the Lord has granted me, and I love Him, and can bless His holy name. "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

I have been led to know my vileness, and to feel much of the depravity of my heart, so as to be sensibly a poor, lost, ruined sinner. Sometimes I have envied the brute creation, and at times I have thought God would strike me dead, being sensible of so much sin in my heart. I felt sure I had but little grace, if I had any at all; and my mind has been much tried respecting the formation of a church here, seeing it a grievous thing that the ordinances of God's house should be slighted and neglected year after year by those who, I believe, were the proper people to attend to them. I could, therefore, see the need of church order and government much better than I could see in any way 'my fitness' to be a pastor. So I was in great straits, and looked forward to the ordinance next Lord's day with much exercise and trial of mind, having to administer it in my darkness of soul, and knowing also that there is such a thing as eating and drinking unworthily, and that such "eat and drink damnation (or condemnation) to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body."

On Friday evening I was with two friends who were speaking of the Lord's manifestations to their souls; but I was silent, and could say nothing, and felt as if I could not possibly stand in the position I was placed in, being so dark, shut up, and tried.

On Saturday, too, I felt much darkness and trial of mind, but I little thought that God's great goodness and mercy were so soon to be manifested to my soul. I have had 'sips', but now my 'cup is full', and even runs over. In the days of adversity I have considered how the scene would end, but now in the day of prosperity my soul is joyful. "I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities, and have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large room." "The blessing of the Lord, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."

The Lord continues to bless my soul with His love, and Christ is precious; and I am sure the Lord's spiritual blessings to my soul do not lead to

worldliness and licentiousness—but to deadness to the world and to separation in spirit from it. Real faith works by love, and Christ is truly precious, and there is no true victory over the world but through this blessed experience, known and felt in the soul. And love to Jesus is accompanied with love to the brethren, and with earnest and sincere prayers for the children of God. "They shall prosper, who love Zion." Before this blessing I looked forward to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as a man would who had a great payment to make, and had nothing with which to pay; he wishes that there was no such engagement, or that the time was rather distant; and now I can look upon it as the man would upon the payment, if any one had given him all, or more than all the money.

Tuesday Morning.—The Lord's goodness still follows me, but this night was not like the previous; that will be a night to be much remembered by me. I have had these words brought to my mind very sweetly, "You are fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever."

I never went out of doors yesterday, but J. K. was among the friends, and I am glad to say that he brought in good tidings, for he had heard that the ordinance of baptism was much blessed on Lord's day; and I hope the Lord's blessing may specially rest upon the friends at Oakham on the 19th. What a little cross it is to bear, for those who have any sense of the crosses, sufferings, and afflictions and agonies that the Lord Jesus Christ, who was harmless, had to endure for the vilest and basest sinners! I believe many are not tried so much about 'the cross' of it, as they are about their fitness to be baptized. It has been a profitable time for the Lord's people here during the formation of the Church, through having to give in their experience, and the hearing of the experience of others has revived their souls.

Give my love to all inquiring friends, and I believe some will be glad to hear that the Lord has visited my soul with blessed promises and testimonies of His love.

Yours affectionately,
William Tiptaft.

April 20th, 1847

My dear Deborah,
. . . You have lived long enough to see that a Christian is not to be long

without trials and troubles, much less a minister. If a minister has a conscience worth having, he is sure to have trouble; and if he has not a conscience worth having, he had better be a shoe-shine. **There are no blessings like spiritual blessings; but how little do we crave them, and how little do we value them,** particularly at times. So deeply rooted is unbelief in us, and the world in various ways so opposed to vital godliness, the heart is deceitful and so wicked, that we need 'rods' and 'fires' as well as 'smiles' and 'sweet testimonies of His love', to make us in any way alive and fruitful unto God. I trust I may say that the Lord blesses my soul at times; but I do not enjoy that peace and love I wish, and have enjoyed in times past.

Your affectionate Brother,
William Tiptaft.

December 13, 1845

My dear Friend,

I like to receive letters, but I do not like writing the answers. However, we shall find through life one thing must be set over against another; there is no separating the bitters and sweets, the joys and the sorrows, and the sweetest pleasures and severest pains. All things are to work together for good for those called by grace, and surely trials, afflictions and chastisements will be experienced by the child of God, as well as the Love, Mercy and Goodness of God—all proceeding from the Loving-kindness of a merciful God. In our right minds, what could we wish to be altered in outward things? All things are right, well-ordered, and the language is, "God knows best!"

"May Your will be done" is a hard lesson to learn, and far beyond what flesh and blood can attain unto. Tribulation must work patience, and when God blesses us with that, we can hear the rod, and know who has appointed it. What have we to fear but sin, and in that we have very much to fear; although we may be blessed to have the sting taken away through a blessed deliverance, nevertheless that enemy never dies, and it has made all true Christians groan, and surely it will us. But what a mercy it is to groan on account of it—instead of committing it with delight and greediness!

I feel the power of it, and feel grateful to God that it does not reign with that power it sometimes threatens to do. And it is a great mercy that we are not left to contend with so powerful an enemy in our own strength. **I desire to bless God for 'restraining grace' as well as 'saving grace', and I am**

sure that none are well kept, except those whom the Lord keeps. How much sin we are conscious of, and how much we are ignorant of! Who is a God like unto our God, who pardons iniquity and delights in mercy?

At times Christ is precious to my soul, and I can bless God for His great mercies to such a worm as I am; and at times I feel as if grace could not possibly be in my heart, and all comfort, joy and peace are gone. I seem to have no heart to read the Bible, no heart to pray, much less to preach. Nevertheless, through mercy I continue to this day, and to the Lord be all the praise! Necessity compels us to contend for the renewings and revivings of God's Spirit, and makes us to know that all our springs are in God, and from Him all fruit comes.

It is an exercise to the mind to know what preaching invitations to accept, and what to refuse. It is well when we are not left to confer much with flesh and blood. To go where the Lord would have us go, and where He will condescend to bless His word through such worms, is the best. Last week I preached at Yatley, Hartley Row and Wallingford. The friends in Wilts were asking whether you would come down there. . . I shall be glad to hear that poor P. is in a smoother path—though smooth paths are dangerous.

Yours affectionately,
William Tiptaft.

January 8, 1856

Dear Friend,

Your kind letter was duly received bringing "good tidings." I am glad to receive such blessed testimonies of the Lord's loving-kindness; for it confirms those who have been favored in a similar manner, that the hearts of others are filled with gratitude, when the Lord appears for them, and sets their souls at liberty. You have known adversity before prosperity. "I will rejoice in Your mercy, for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities; You have not shut me up in the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large room."

When the Lord delivered my soul, thirteen years ago this month, how precious was Christ to my soul! The promises came with sweetness and power, as if they were all mine, and more than I could receive. They were to me like a full bosom to a ravished babe. Those who long for a deliverance are brought to value such a wonderful mercy and favor, above all that the world calls good or great. After I was blessed how I desired that those I

know who were in bondage might have their souls delivered; and I could understand different parts of Scripture, hymns, and accounts of the enjoyments of those whose experience had been published, in a way I never could before; and I could tell that others were not in my state who had not known these secrets. I did not want to be robbed; so I did not like to go into a shop to buy a common article. **Those in much sorrow of soul, or in much enjoyment of soul, are not much fit for this world; but not many are mourning as sinners, or rejoicing as knowing themselves to be sinners saved by grace.**

I have been tried about my blessing at times very much, whether it was real—and oftentimes, as Deer says, it has encouraged me, that if it were not a revelation, it was a revolution; for it caused a great change in my soul. It was a feast of fat things. My cup ran over and I shed many tears of joy. I had a new song put into my mouth; so I could bless and praise God. How precious was Psalm 116, and many of Deer's hymns. "That special grant of heaven," I never understood until then.

Your bondage was both long and severe; so you can but rejoice now the jubilee time is come. Some will envy you, and some will be jealous; if others in their bonds are led to pray more earnestly for liberty, they will reap a benefit from your deliverance. You can never prize it too highly, nor can you ever speak too highly of the blessed Deliverer. **If you had a thousand crowns, you would put them on His head, and if you had a thousand tongues, you would be glad to sing His praises with every one of them.** It is a comfort for you to have a father to talk over these blessed realities with. His heart will be glad. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found!"

Give my love to your father and any enquiring friends. May the Lord be with you, to bless and keep you, and may you still be favored with the Lord's presence.

Yours in the Truth,
William Tiptaft.

July 12, 1864

My dear Philpot,
You will be glad to hear that my soul has been greatly blessed. It was a blessing similar to the one I enjoyed at Oakham, last October 15th. "Thus far my God has led me on, and made His truth and mercy known."

The friends were anxious that my soul should be blessed in my new house. Friend H. had been praying that my soul might be blessed on Lord's day, at chapel. Although a conveyance was sent twice for me, I was not well enough to go. About tea-time on the 10th, my soul began to enjoy the Lord's loving-kindness and goodness. I shed very many tears, and could realize my saving interest in the covenant of grace, so that I was not afraid to die. I did not want to be robbed. Friends came to see me, and were witnesses of my blessed frame of soul. I valued the blessing and do still. Anyone afflicted as I am will surely be grateful; and if their mouths were not filled with praises, they would be condemned for ingratitude. **I would not barter away my spiritual blessing for riches and honors.**

I read the March 'Gospel Standard', where the blessing is recorded of the first baptism at Abingdon. My soul was blessed at Oakham, May 22nd, in the evening; but I had a greater sense of God's loving-kindness and of His pardoning love this last time. I am near the Cemetery. **What a very great mercy to be made fit for the great change!** May the Lord cause me to pray earnestly that my last days may be my best.

What a difference there is in having a knowledge of gospel mysteries, and having the soul blessed with heart-felt experience of the various portions of Scripture setting forth the liberty of the gospel, and also sweet enjoyment of hymns exalting the riches of God's grace in saving vile sinners. **We cannot value too highly, a grain of humbling grace.** Such a religion must be bought; no cross—no crown. It is through much tribulation that we are to go to glory. Then what can we say in favor of a smooth path, or of such ministers who please their hearers by encouraging those who have only a knowledge of gospel mysteries, and a little morality? Real saints, who fear God, find that they have many trials and crosses, and that they need them. How few ministers in London preach the Spirit's work! **How little there is of that preaching that goes from heart to heart!** Those who want to be searched and tried would be a very small proportion to those who want smooth things and peace. **It is a very narrow way to heaven, and none can be rightly in the path except by God's grace; nor can they keep there, except by grace. What debtors we are to grace!**

"Come, You fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Your grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise."

It is thirty-two years this month since I first preached in the large, dark city of London. Many have died in Christ, with a blessed experience of divine things; but how very many have died who have not had a religion of the

right sort! Many great professors in town, before they die, may be brought low enough to say that it is a mercy to be well laid in the grave. God has been a kind and good God to me, in various ways, for more than sixty-one years. I wish to acknowledge His goodness to me.

"Mercies of providence and grace
Flow from Your bounteous hand;
These claim incessant songs of praise,
And fervent love demand."

How little gratitude for such great blessings in upholding, keeping and preserving us to the present moment! If we know that it is a mercy to be out of hell, we have no room for boasting. What a precious Savior Christ is to those who really need Him!

May the Lord bless your own soul in preaching, and others will be blessed also.

Yours very affectionately,
William Tiptaft.