

The Letters of Jane Child to James Tristram, 1843-44

Bury House, 9 December 1843

With delight I take up my pen to communicate to my dear friend, and shall I say Father? in Christ Jesus, the goodness of the Lord to me since we parted. Blessed Jesus! I find him still precious to my soul, but oh! what poor returns I make for such unmerited love, to me the vilest of the vile. When I take a survey of my past life I am lost in wonder at his long suffering patience to such a daring rebel. I have enjoyed sweet seasons of prayer and His word is sweeter to me than honey or the honeycomb, I feel that I enjoy the light of his countenance all the day long. Thank God I feel very covetous, hungering and thirsting after righteous, I want more of the living water in my soul, Jesus has invited me to go and drink and so I will that my soul may be refreshed.

The morning after my return home a conversation was held at the breakfast-table, which ended in my having my Bible thrown at my head and threatened to be turned out of doors and many other things were said, but I will not repeat them, for I love them all most dearly and feel my heart yearning after their salvation, I do not mind their conduct to me, for I am not worthy to be reproached for my dear Redeemer sake, but oh! to see them slight the loving invitations of such a Friend but I do feel our prayers will be answered in a great work being wrought in his (my father's) soul, though to outward appearance it seems to be almost hoping against hope. He says I may do almost anything, except joining such a set of hypocrites as you Methodists are, so that I shall not be able to attend Chapel at Leintwardine only at class meetings, but the clergyman there is I think a lovely evangelical preacher, indeed he is often called Ranter, a prayer meeting is commenced in Wigmore on Thursday evenings, but I fear I shall not be permitted to attend.

I have this day written on account of the Lord's dealing with me to my dear Father and Sister, which I intend putting into their hands, tomorrow - O how I long to have done with the world and sin forever, I desire to be set free from all iniquity and to experience more of God in my soul. I feel I want more perfect confidence, that unbelief is not wholly rooted out, I feel myself a poor helpless creature, yet I want to feel it yet more and more; and my faith in Christ Jesus increasing mightily, oh how unworthy am to be numbered amongst His children. I feel a restless longing in my soul, that nothing less than God Himself can satisfy — I want to know in what way I can best promote His glory, and win souls to Christ, which I must seek by prayer.

I have seen Mary Yapp, she is grieved she cannot get the place she hoped to. I shall look forward to receiving a letter from you with pleasure, please write freely, tell me all you think wrong in me and I shall be glad to answer any questions you may put to me, as it will be a good exercise in self examination. "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name". May his choicest blessings rest on you and yours — still pray for an unworthy sister in the bonds of Christian love,

Jane Childs

Please do not say anything about my father's conduct to me for he has since been kinder.

The Bury House, 2 January (1844?)

My Dearest father and friend in Gospel bonds,

Oh how dear to me, do frowns and angry words at home, make the communications and friendship of my participator in joys and sorrows, and very sweet to my often sorrowful heart is the voice of kindness and love and render the affection I feel towards you and all who love the Lord Jesus, stronger and stronger. I long to be a stranger to all that does not lead me to set my affections on things above. But dear brother, my heart is so treacherous, sure no Peter was ever so faithless, what longsuffering patience does the Lord exercise towards me. So far do I wander from the sheepfold that it is of infinite mercy I am not left to myself, to perish in my own devices "help I every moment need".

There was an increased number at the prayer meeting last night, and indeed it was very good to be there. I trust the Lord will look with regard on this portion of His vineyard, and that the labourers' hearts may be cheered by seeing much fruit produced to the glory of God. Praise the Lord for this unmerited goodness to me. I feel a greater dread of the smiles, than the frowns of the world and trust I shall be able to say with the apostle "none of these things move me — "to know Him and the power of His resurrection".

O how your letter raised my affections from earth to Heaven and I trust it will not pass as a morning cloud but daily be holding the crown before, may I fight boldly under the great Captain of our salvation against the world, flesh and devil. He is a good Captain is He not and the hope of salvation is a good helmet, is it not dear father. Glory be to God it is no cunningly devised fable.

I trust you have still contrived to meet me at the throne in behalf of him who is so dear to me. I pray God, open his eyes speedily, may the strong man armed be turned and do Thou take full possession of his soul. I can but pray for him, for if I speak never so mildly, he tells me he is not going to listen to my Methodist preaching — it is a great trial to me that I am the cause of the distress which he seems often to feel on my account. He says I am not to turn his house upside down and if it does not please the Lord to answer out prayers soon, I imagine I shall have some day to choose, whether I will give up attending meetings or seek my bread by my own labour, but oh, how gladly will I take up the cross (the Lord strengthening me) and follow Him, I feel I should rejoice at the offer and so come out wholly from the society of the world.

I hope you enjoy Whitfield's Journal — I am reading Bunyan's Holy War — I pray we may have a feast of love tomorrow. We do indeed want to feed more upon the love of God. I really think sometimes I do not love at all, my affections are so earthly, so casual minded. I long to be wholly swallowed up in love to God. Oh to have every desire every affection going out towards Him who was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities — He has loved us and loves us still and we will strive to love Him more. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds — Jesus, the sinners' friend. We will cast our crowns at His feet and ascribe to Him all glory, honour, praise and dominion for ever and ever.

I have just heard that Mr. Tudor, of whom you heard us speaking when at Mrs Plant's, passed last Thursday into an eternal world, but where is his soul? Oh eternity, eternity, what a word is that — may his death be blessed to my soul. How terrible are the reflections of days gone by, when under our roof he drank deep of that which I fear has been the means of losing his soul, oh that we considered the value of souls more, and the heinousness of sin. Great Lord! That salvation may

speedily come to this house and village for every sin, awful thought, which we continue to commit in an impenitent state is a link in that tremendous chain, which will bind such souls in hell. God be merciful to me, a sinner! Thank God that we are still in the land of prayer, tho' deserving to have been in hell years ago. Alas my father I grieve the spirit so often. I think no one else is like me. I am sometimes filled with fear that I shall come short at last. I desire that my will may become entirely subdued so that I may always walk in the spirit. I think of our three great enemies, the flesh is the greatest, don't you? I have been reading the 15th and 16th chapters of 1 Corinthians — how mighty is the subject of the 15th and again the 22nd verse of 16 "accursed whom the Lord comes to Judgment." I feel at present very sensibly that without Christ I was lost and oh for more faith. How I long to be near you no one can tell, my soul has, as it were, become one with yours may our friendship be blessed to each other, here as we travel onwards in the wilderness, and never, never end. Precious thought if yet but in Heaven, Jesus will never turn us out, no parting, no sin to grieve us, but all love, all joy, no discordant notes, and this to all eternity — still pray, pray for your child and your child will say a prayer for you. I have found it sweet to do so and often I imagine you with me, kneeling with me and it does me good, indeed I may say I never go to the throne of grace without taking you with me. I feel as if you were leading me by the hand and pointing me to the dear Saviour of sinners.

I am almost ashamed to send you this ill written letter but I have been interrupted so many times. O praise the Lord for all His service to me a rebellious sinner — and may He bless you and yours and bring us safe to Heaven with all whom I ought to pray. I must conclude for want of more room but feign would my pen still linger on the paper, unwilling to close. I must contrive by some means to see your face soon — and now farewell — write again soon

— and Believe me dear Father,

Your affectionate but unworthy daughter

Jane Childs

Love to your dear wife.

Wigmore, Saturday Evening

Your last letter, my dear Brother in the Lord, proved indeed a spur to my soul to quicken me in running with renewed activity the race which is set before me. Oh my father, I have been praising God in some feeble manner for His goodness in giving me such a friend. He has indeed been unspeakably good to us, and in spite of devils and men we will shout his praise. Glory be to his Holy name forever.

You remember on last Lords Day how dull and stupid I was as though I had neither heaven to seek, my soul save, and how little of His presence and love I felt in my soul, and he hid as it were His face from me, and I did not rejoice in the privilege of His sanctuary, but before I returned to rest that night the cause was plain to my mind. Was it His presence and blessing alone I went to seek? Ah! no, my heart was dwelling too much on the happiness I anticipated in spending the day with those whom I love as fellow travellers to Zion, and looked not solely to Him who is the centre of all good, and can alone impart true joy. Was it not love in Him then which caused me to feel

disappointed? I feel that it was, and painful though it was at the time, I bless His name, it did me good and makes me look more to Him alone.

With difficulty I the next day went to hear Mr. Leech, he spoke from 2nd (chapter) of Revelation 17th verse and a good meeting indeed we had, it was a very antepast of Heaven, as you may imagine from the text. On my return to the Grange, I was bid by the servants to retire quietly to my bedroom, or I have no doubt I should have been turned out of the house, as my brother had that evening been threatening to discharge one of the men servants for having frequently attended the Chapel; thus quietly and contentedly did I partake of my solitary supper and breakfast, joy and gladness filling my heart. That day (or night I should say) was to be spent in dancing and card playing, to join which I was intreated to remain, but steadily refusing and plainly declaring my reasons, I was scorned and reproached, and not only me, but the whole denomination, and the most debasing crimes laid to their charge. I am to remember that my presence there will never be welcomed. On leaving the house I met the servant above mentioned, and was delighted to find him so little daunted by angry words, and I gave him all the encouragement I could, but my brother coming up at the time I was again loaded with vile names — “Jesus my Saviour forgive him, and may we meet around Thy eternal throne, and praise Thee in never ending songs and hallelujahs for ever and ever”.

On my return home Father, surprised at my not having joined the party, said “Jane I cannot make you out, what is your fort?” “Why, Heaven father I hope” was my reply, and we afterwards had a pleasant evening together. He seldom reads any book but of a religious tendency — the Lord will not despise the day of small things, will He? Last Thursday we had a good prayer meeting, oh how sweet it was and how despicable did the employment of those whom I had left, appear — which was no other than playing with cards — and when I returned and was engaged in family prayer with the servants, how truly agonizing to my ear were the bursts of empty laughter which proceeded from the parlor, but why my dear Father was not I amongst them? Oh grace, grace rich and free.

All this week I may say I have been on the mount of joy, and from morning to night my heart seemed to dance with delight. Now if you were here, how we would unite and sing of Christ’s redeeming love. Oh hallelujah to the Lamb for ever and ever and ever, and all of grace, what mysterious love. I long to know no other will than His, but alas I find my own fear fully predominates. To what a high and noble state we are called, and I know we may attain in this life by giving ourselves up and laying our hearts bare to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Now my Brother to this state I mean to press onward, tho’ my numerous infirmities are often presented to me as mountains of immense height. A source of trouble, and a drag to my spiritual advancement is my constant folly in silly talking and jesting: having been a pet I have been continually encouraged in making witty remarks, to which I have been so sadly addicted. Ah my friend, it is hard, very hard to live in the world, and not be of the world. Such frequent contact with its votaries deadens spirituality. Had I wings how often should I be an inmate of your peaceful cottage. In the book I am reading, which I wish you could enjoy with me, speaking of souls, entirely sanctified, and bearing the impress of the spirit of God, says “the devil is afraid of such souls; he is terrified at the sign which hangs before the door; he sees clearly that another Master is in the house, and that he dare not come a hair’s breadth too near them, without divine permission. ‘That’s good is not it?

I fear we shall not be able to have a society formed here, but if it should be accomplished, unwilling tho' I am to withdraw my name from your book, yet on much consideration I think it will be perhaps more my duty. But rest assured I shall not do anything until I have seen you again. I fear I very often grieve the Holy Spirit — still continue to pray for your child, and be free in correcting whatever you see wrong. Give my love to your dear wife whom I love affectionately with yourself and little ones. May the Lord be with us all, and that is better than all the treasures of the world. Farewell,

Your child, Jane

Please send me word when Mr. Leach preaches at Ludlow next. My sister wishes to hear him.

Wigley - Tuesday Evening

I find our conversation last Sabbath morning has in some measure depressed my spirit, which has disposed me to address you to relieve my mind because it has often done so; and I still feel you are my dear Father in the Lord. I confess I have thought too much of Moses. Not too highly of his conduct and character (but I own I am in a measure ignorant of him as a brother, as a member of a family, I mean his every day conduct) but too much of his regard to me, and the circumstances in which we have contemplated being placed. I fear I have indeed acted very inconsiderately, so much so that I would wish to recall my words and actions. In the first place when I saw his mind towards me shown in looks and actions I thoughtlessly displayed a weakness in being pleased with his attention and I gave him encouragement. This was the first step and was the most important because it has been the leader and cause of what has followed. Oh! My Father it is this weakness of mind in me which I condemn so much and after you had cautioned me so kindly, thus to act. In doing so I feel I have wronged Moses because I gave him to believe I loved whilst ignorant of his faults, of which ignorance perhaps he was not aware; and now if becoming more acquainted with his private conduct and temper should cause me to think differently of him he will consider me unkind and might in yielding to his wishes again I fear this foolish step has often led us to act unwisely before the world, and caused some to think religion had but little root in our hearts. Have we given cause for the enemy to blaspheme and to think lightly of the religion of Jesus? Ah Father that is what makes me mourn, I do not know that it has. I trust not, yet with fear, for I know' we have several times been seen together. Again I think I have gained no good to my own soul by it, not that there is any reason that it should do so — in itself- but I have allowed it to do so. I have been mourning over lukewarmness and a decrease of anxiety for the souls of others, and what is the cause? I have yielded, to Satan's temptations when he has brought this subject to my mind.

To tell you what my meaning is - I mentioned the Lord has put it in my mind to do something in His cause, but which I found would prove a great loss and self denial in my present circumstances. Then Satan says 'never mind doing anything now, stay till you are married then you will not have so much opposition. This has been the case in more than one instance — again in pressing after entire sanctification. 'Oh', says Satan, in an alluring way, 'you cannot obtain it, or when obtained cannot retain it whilst you have necessarily to live with those who know not the Lord; whereas if you stay till you are married you will not have much to do with your relations'. And often times in

prayer I have suffered this subject to entice my mind and distract my devotions. Marriage is a pleasing subject to human nature and I have allowed it to be in my thoughts so much.

Again the results of this inconsiderate step when known to Father will I fear hurt his mind, cause him more than ever to dislike our society; cause him to entertain a bad opinion of Moses and quite settle his opinion that the ranters are a set of notorious hypocrites, and thus I shall have acted unkindly to all who are honored with the name. I feel I have done very wrong and wish I could recall it. I do not say, nor imagine you think, it would have been wrong of me to yield to Moses' wishes in future should his mind toward me remain the same- but to yield in present circumstance — that is the fault - because as I now see I feel it will do harm. I cannot say my affection for Moses is cooler, from what you mentioned; this would be unjust for who is without faults? I value your opinion, because now I have proved that in acting contrary to it, I have erred - and I know you love me and regard my welfare, especially as we have been brought to know each other under pleasing circumstances — therefore dear Father what shall I do? How am I to act? Speak plainly — tell me exactly how to act, and as I have run my head against a post, as Father calls it — that is, run wrong till I found I was hurt — I hope I shall shew a greater regard for your kindness and faithful advice by acting accordingly. I know my rash conduct must have hurt your feelings. I see it has — but of the Lord I must ask forgiveness — speak freely—that is the fidelity of friendship.

Now dear Father you must not conclude from all this that I am going to turn my back on Moses. If you knew all I have said to him, which perhaps is more than I should have done, and in too free a manner, I cannot honestly do so. But tell me how to act. The present state of my mind is — if it is the Lord's will that we should be united, that in doing so, it will bring glory to Him, I trust I can love him thro' life and bear with his faults, taking up my cross exclaiming "Thy will be done". If not I feel I can resign him again, exclaiming "Thy will be done". The farm for which he has been trying is let — and since our conversation I have felt a secret gladness tho' Moses himself may feel disappointed in not having it. I know Father would not be so friendly with him as with anyone else — and for Moses' sake I am glad, for how miserably it is to feel that our near neighbours are not at peace with us. And I am glad on my own account for had there been nothing between Moses and me Father would always have been suspicious — Glory be to God! He doeth all things well.

I find this is the close of the page — and all about myself— forgive me dear Father — God knows how the mind is exercised in such matters. Besides you are my confidant.

I do not know if you have had E's present. It will give her great pleasure if you will accept it. Now, dear Father, don't imagine we think you or your dear partner desire anything of us. No, I know and have seen enough of your good sense and contented dispositions, proceeding from the principles of the Gospel being written within — far be it from you — had I have been thinking perhaps you may feel a little scrupulous in accepting it, for tho' you would not suspect us of dishonourable conduct, you may be led to think this — "well I do not know if I am acting right in accepting this for through a desire to testify their gratitude to me they may thoughtlessly act in a way which perhaps hereafter will cause them trouble". To set your mind at ease I will tell you the history of the coat: my brother in London has lately been down in the country. With him he brought several articles of wearing apparel for E. to dispose of to whom she liked. Even Father does not know she had them because George did not wish him to see that he had been rather profuse in the number and quality — therefore dear Father wear it, and may your life be prolonged, so wear it threadbare

I must conclude this at present, with all your conduct hitherto I am much pleased. I wish Moses had some of your good qualities. I do feel that I have not acted according to the dictates of one who has, since I have known him, proved a true Christian friend. I could weep when I think of past kindnesses and I must style myself a disobedient but loving child,

Jane

I long to talk with you. If you are at home please write a line before next Sabbath and say if you will be in Ludlow on Monday and if I shall write a few lines to M as expressed in the other sheet. As I know your time is precious a few lines will suffice, if you know you will not be there on Monday, you need not write before Sunday when I trust you will fill a page or two for me.

I should much like for you to have Bramwell — indeed whenever we are reading a book we enjoy and find profitable we mostly exclaim “We wish J. Tristram could have our pleasure one of these first days, as E is now returned from Newcastle. We are at present engaged with Bunyan’s “Barren Fig Tree”, and “Water of Life” — O this Living Water! How sweetly he does illustrate it this glorious river which is the grace and Spirit of God, and in it Man need not fear drowning for it has a very good bottom “By grace are ye saved”. You must have it to read, it is so precious. The “Barren Fig Tree” too is very searching — O may the Lord pour His Spirit upon us that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord. I think much which he says of such fig trees is applicable to me. After all the care and pains and patience of Blessed Kindnesses, I have brought forth but little fruit but He has not yet let me down. I do not mean by death, but I trust He has not said “let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever” for that is a calling down — send O the Executioner! The Mighty, the Eternal God — Lord save us!

We have also a small account of good Mr. Fletcher’s “Life and Death” to read. I hope you are not in haste to have Clowes(?) returned for friends next week will (alas) necessarily take up some of our time. We are become so strongly attached to each other that we dislike our intercourse being interrupted by visitors, and separation is terrible to us, tho’ in the end doubtless it makes an attachment stronger.

E is now gone to meeting. J Huff preaches. I do not know what to assign as the excuse, but opposition and prejudice seems to be giving way in many members of our family, and I hear of them saying “Jane is right, I know she is right” Praise the Lord for this, but O that I could say they were dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord. Father, pray for us lest, now persecution has in a measure ceased, we should like Noah be settled on our lees, and be as not emptied from vessel to vessel. I feel I want more of His grace in my soul. I want the mind that was in Christ. Yea, to put on Christ. I need your prayers. I feel I am so conformed to this world. I want to be transformed, entirely transformed by the renewing of my mind, that I may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. I am athirst for more grace. The desire of my heart is to experience continually the love of God burning in my soul; burning for His glory; burning to give light to all around me; burning up love of self. Again I lament to you this self-will which possesses me. This carnal mind which is at enmity with God; which wars against the spirit. Fletcher, speaking of the soul’s strong desires after God, when it feels it cannot rest without Him, says it is as a God wrestling with God — Lord fill my soul and my Father’s soul with Himself

Wednesday Morning

As I now purpose sending this by Brother Huff, I shall not expect to hear this week, but if you have time will you write on Sunday and if I should come on Monday I can have it. If not post it on Tuesday. E desires her kind love to your dear Partner, in which I beg to join, and to yourself much affection.

Your child in the Lord, Jane

I tell E I am a little widow — which amuses her much. I do not feel that earnestness in private prayer as I would wish — not that relish to be alone with God as formerly.

Bury House, Jan 5th (1844?)

Well, my beloved parent, united to me as such, through the free mercy of God, you see by the early appearance of another letter from me, that your child will give you no rest. I feel I must write so sweet it is to pour out my heart into your bosom, by whom I know I am loved and prayed for, tho' unworthy the least notice. Oh my dear, dear father who has a right to sing if we have not, and we will sing, and Christ shall be the theme— Glory be to His Holy Name. I trust I am not deceiving you nor myself when I say that my soul hungers and thirsts for more of His indwelling spirit. None but Christ to me be given. More than Himself we do not want; less than Himself we cannot be satisfied with. Oh that I should ever forget that I am not my own but bought by the Lord Jesus, the purchase of His blood, may I be sanctified wholly to Him, body, soul and spirit. Ah! I hear you say Amen! Be it so Lord!

I have been lamenting that I was so reserved and silent when we met last, but present enjoyment I suppose, made me drunk and caused me to forget all my wants for the future. Praise the Lord the last short visit to Ludlow proved indeed as a refreshing draught to my thirsty soul, oh for more of the life giving streams.

As to forgetting the burden of our united prayer, I do not mean to rest until the Lord answers us, oh, I cannot express to you how graciously the Lord has drawn near to me in this matter, so that I have been able to speak with Him as friend communes with friend in behalf of him over whom my soul yearns. I have heard you speak of having shouted so that you felt the effects the next day, but when the hour arrives which we are looking forward to with such anxiety I think it will take a good deal to keep one silent. We will still wait in faith and patience, then if Moses's prophecy has not been previously fulfilled I think it will be then and we will have a chapel and you shall assist in building it, and we must let Huff know in time that he may get his plough ready to run over the dry Wigmore clods.

My father having retired early to bed last night, I and part of the servants went to the Watch Night meeting, but I know not how it is I do not feel that nearness to the Lord which I want to experience on all occasions, tho' sometimes when alone, especially yesterday and the day I returned home I sipped from the streams of Zion, those streams which make glad the City of God, is it not then the enemies of our peace which keep us from beholding the face of our Beloved? Or is the hindrance in me? May the Lord strengthen my faith in the Atonement.

The first class meets at 9, the other which I attend at 10 o'clock. How my heart bounds with joy at the expectation of meeting you. I hope we shall have a glorious outpouring of the Spirit amongst us, let us pray for it. As to forgiving your freedom, I have only to say, continue it, for I should feel it a severe punishment were you to write coldly to your unworthy child and I trust the bonds which now unite us may never, never be broken, that we may both with joy behold and dwell forever with our Redeemer in Mansions of eternal day, freed from sin and all that defileth. What a mercy that the Lord ever looked upon me, He sought me when a stranger and brought me nigh by the blood of the Lamb. O Jesus sprinkle our souls and fill us full of glory and of Thee.

Write to me in your next upon the nature of our union with Christ and fill your letter with deep and close subjects on our inward dwelling with Him, and living in Him; altogether deeply spiritual I long for such communications, what would I give if you were here at my side now. I think I should reveal the depths of my soul to you.

I trust the cause in Wigmore is advancing, if there is anything comes to your mind that you think I could do to advance it tell me freely, and by the Lords help I will employ all my power, as far as I have liberty to help on the mighty work. May the Lord bless you my father and crown your labors with success, and may the Holy Spirit accompany the word spoken by you to the honor and glory of His most Holy name. In your next give me again the short but excellent definition of faith which you have often repeated to me. May Heaven's choicest blessing rest on you and your dear partner, also the little ones. How I love you all. May we all meet around the throne of glory and casting our crowns at the feet of Him who hath so dearly purchased us, sing the ever new and never ending song of Moses and the Lamb. Oh Tristram does not your soul at the thought long to soar away and be at rest? Well it will not be long Hallelujah to the Lamb for ever! Glory, honor and praise be to Jesus for ever and ever. We soon shall meet on the blissful shore.

I sometimes shed a silent tear when I think of you all and regret the distance is so great between us, but we do meet in the spirit at the hour appointed. Bless the Lord. I remain in the sweetest bonds

Your child in the Lord forever.

Jane