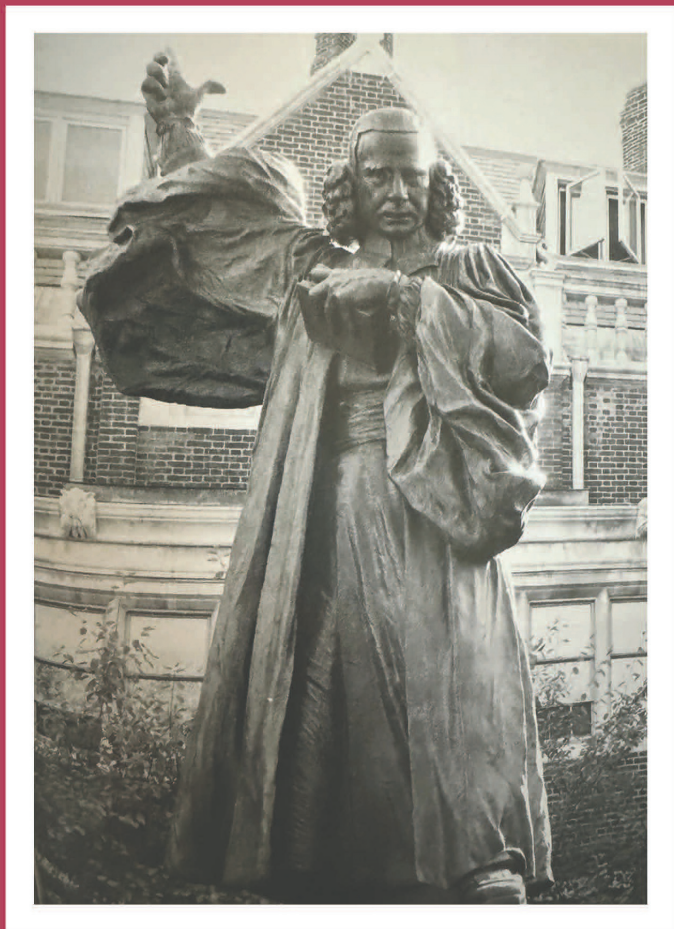


GEORGE WHITEFIELD

18 SERMONS



**FOREWORD BY WHITEFIELD SCHOLAR
E. A. JOHNSTON, Ph.D., D.B.S.**

**COMPILED BY
DR. E. A. JOHNSTON**

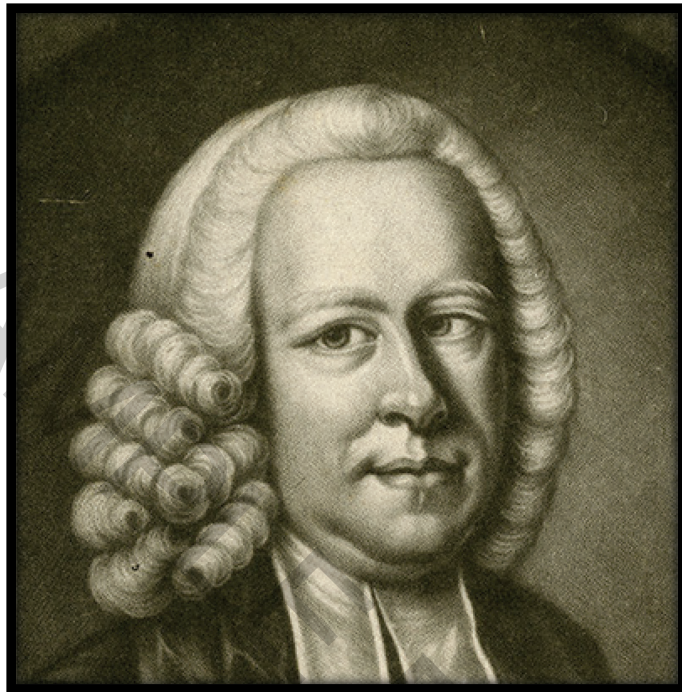
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Foreword by Whitefield Scholar

Dr. E. A. Johnston

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George Whitefield, dated 1783

Picture from the George Whitefield Documents and Images at Bridwell Library - SMU Libraries.

George Whitefield preached these carefully selected 18 Sermons to his London congregations before his last departure to America, where he died in the town of Newburyport, MA in 1770 at age 55. They are extemporaneous sermons taken in short-hand, and faithfully transcribed by Joseph Gurney.

George Whitefield, 18 Sermons
Compiled by Dr. E. A. Johnston
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COVER PHOTO:

The cover photo, courtesy of Dr. Digby James, England, is the only statue of Whitefield in the world. It is in the quadrangle of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia which he had a hand in founding. Access to the quadrangle is restricted and permission must be granted in advance.

SAMPLE PAGES

DEDICATION

This book of sermons is hereby dedicated to my friend and colleague: Richard Owen Roberts, whose massive “*Whitefield In Print*” was a great research source to my writing on Whitefield.

E. A. Johnston
October 2025

SAMPLE PAGES

FOREWORD

It has been said of the British evangelist, George Whitefield, that he was the greatest preacher who ever spoke the English language, yet few are familiar with him today. His friend and colleague, John Wesley, is known but Whitefield lies in obscurity. But in his own day he was used of God to shake two continents in revival and spiritual awakening. As was said of his first public sermon “it drove fifteen mad,” it seems every time Whitefield preached he made “a stir”. Reading a printed sermon of the great British evangelist leaves much of the man absent from the page, one had to hear him preach in person to receive the full effect of his amazing voice and hypnotic power as a preacher. J. I. Packer (in his Foreword to my biography on Whitefield) commented that “Whitefield had a voice like organ music.” When it was heard that George Whitefield was coming to town, the whole region was stirred in a raw, animal-like fervor (see Nathan Cole’s eyewitness account of Whitefield preaching in Middletown, Connecticut in 1740). Whitefield could get 4,000 to 10,000 assembled at a moments notice to hear him, and crowds of 20,000 (on Boston Common) and 30,000 (in Kennington Park in England) were normal although Whitefield in his Journals often records crowds of 50,000 to 60,000 attending him—this was probably exaggerated.

Ben Franklin (Whitefield’s good friend) listened to Whitefield preach from the Court House steps in Philadelphia, and walking through the immense crowd with pen and notebook in hand, estimated that the evangelist could be easily heard by 30,000 people up to a distance of a mile! Even his last public sermon, the day before he died, drew a vast assembly of 4,000 hearers at short notice to a

field in Exeter, New Hampshire (a memorial stone still marks the very spot).

At any rate, be it a young Whitefield or a dying Whitefield, hearing him was an unforgettable event! He could hold his hearers at any time of day in any kind of weather, whether it was 5am in the bitter cold or 5pm in the pouring rain. As his biographer and having personally visited the majority of the locations where George Whitefield preached in both Great Britain and America, one soon realizes the scope of his ministry was just mind boggling!

Listening to Whitefield was *jarring*. You could not remain unaffected though you remained indifferent. His words fell like heavy hammers breaking up false foundations of self- righteousness and carnal security; they hung like unwanted specters in the night, haunting you—allowing very little sleep. You were either so overcome and melted down by the Spirit of God in conviction of sin, that you could resist Christ no longer; or you left the sermon and the preacher more hardened than ever in your sins and immune to any gospel hope. His original, quaint sayings drew smiles from his hearers: “you would have better opportunity to put a dress on the moon”; or, “a false faith is like climbing to heaven on a rope of sand.” The combination of his oratory, artistic stage movement, and emotional outbursts, where he cried real tears and became so overcome that he had to pause to regather himself before proceeding with his appeals that seemed to be addressed personally to you, were so captivating that they carried you along with every action the speaker made. Whitefield was always the stage actor putting on a show, whether he grabbed a chunk of his black gown to bring it up to hide his face in shame—or he put on a black cap of the judge to pronounce judgment—you simply could not take your eyes off of him for a moment!

FOREWORD

George Whitefield, phenomenon, was an unforgettable sight to behold and one you had never seen or heard before. He would always approach his pulpit with great solemnity whether it was a grand ascending pulpit of old or his wooden folding field pulpit that he carried with him, but when he began to preach he soon became *combustible*: for Whitefield preaching was like Mount Sinai “*altogether on a smoke*”.

We reintroduce these eighteen sermons of the great British evangelist, George Whitefield at a time when they are needed most. A time of famine. As the prophet declared:

“Behold the days come, saith the LORD GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, not a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11).

Is this not our current dilemma? We have few preachers today but many teachers. And of the few preachers we have, fewer still preach the full counsel of God in the anointing of the Spirit of God by searching sermons to awaken the lost to their perilous condition. Oh, how we need a George Whitefield in our day!

The following eighteen sermons of George Whitefield are scant examples of his sermonic material. First, they were taken in short hand by Joseph Gurney a member of his London congregation, and much of what the preacher said was not caught entirely or recorded accurately. We are thankful for what he did record and eventually publish. Secondly, they were delivered near the end of the evangelist’s life and at the end of the day, when fatigue got the best of a physically unwell and worn-out man. Of Whitefield’s preaching at this time we have the account of

Cornelius Winter who was the evangelist's travelling aide and personal assistant toward the end of his life. He writes:

“Perhaps Mr. Whitefield never preached greater sermons than at six in the morning, for at that hour he did preach winter and summer, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays...His style was colloquial, with little use of motion; pertinent expositions, with suitable remarks; and all comprehended within the hour. Christian experience principally made the subject of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evening lectures...But though I have lost much of the letter of his sermons, the savour of them yet remains. The peculiar talents he possessed, subservient to great usefulness, can be but faintly guessed from his sermons in print; though, as formerly God has made the reading of them useful, I have no doubt but in future they will have their use. The eighteen taken in short hand, and faithfully transcribed by Mr. Gurney, have been supposed to do discredit to his memory, and therefore they were suppressed. But they who have been accustomed to hear him, may collect from them much of his genuine preaching. They were far from being the best specimens that might have been produced. He preached many of them when, in fact, he was almost incapable of preaching at all. His constitution,

FOREWORD

long before they were taken, had received its material shock.”¹

As his biographer and one deeply familiar with the life and ministry of the saintly George Whitefield (see my two volume, 1,200 page definitive biography of the great evangelist), I can honestly say, that although these last eighteen sermons are somewhat lacking in syntax and connective thought, they are not lacking in the spiritual force and power whereby they were delivered.

If you want the best sense of Whitefield as a preacher then read these eighteen sermons. If you want to receive a great spiritual blessing then study his last two sermons carefully. These eighteen sermons were delivered to his much-loved, London congregations, comprised of many who were brought to salvation under Whitefield’s preaching. There are few scenes on earth transpired that gain the attention of heaven: angels looked on in startlement at the remarkable sight of a suffering, bleeding Son of God wrestling beneath the weight of sin as He gave Himself as a sin substitute on Calvary’s bloody cross. Not as majestic but emotionally pathetic was the sight of a worn- out George Whitefield preaching his Farewell Sermons to his beloved London congregations at Tottenham Court Chapel and the Tabernacle at Moorfields.

As the soon-to-die itinerant addressed his London hearers he gave them his swan song in eighteen messages to them: his eyes full of tears, his chest heaving with asthma, and his heart breaking with compassion to take a bleeding

¹ E. A. Johnston, *George Whitefield A Definitive Biography, Volumes One & Two Combined* (Old Paths Publications, 2024), pp 665-666.

Christ offered for forgiveness of sin. But it is the last two sermons which hold our attention the most: Sermon Seventeen: “Jacob’s Ladder” (preached to his Tottenham Court Chapel hearers; and Sermon Eighteen: “The Good Shepherd” (preached to his Tabernacle congregation at Moorfields at the north end of town), although Sermon Eighteen is disjointed in thought, (Whitefield himself hated it when it was presented to him aboard ship saying, “It makes me speak nonsense”) yet its flashing radiance far outshine its clouds and defects. These eighteen sermons best represent his extemporary style of preaching. One can always tell when the preacher is ready to take flight and soar with the oratory of a Greek philosopher when he begins: “Methinks, I see a bloodstained Christ yonder on a hill at Calvary!” and Whitefield not only takes you there in your mind emotionally, but brings you there physically at the foot of the Cross as a guilty rebel facing his only remedy for sin.

George Whitefield was well accustomed to persecution for preaching the Gospel of Christ to lost sinners; in Moorfields, preaching in the open air he was pelted with rotten eggs and had pieces of dead cats thrown at him. He was lambasted on the stage in plays where they mocked his physical defect of his squint in his eye (a medical mishap caused by a nurse in his youth) and they called him, “Doctor Squintum”! and put on profane stage plays about him. One time, while preaching the Gospel in Ireland, an angry mob stoned him, one large stone hitting his forehead and almost killing him. Years after this on a trip in America he was introduced to a minister who had just arrived from Ireland. To which, Whitefield removed his beaver cap, and leaning forward he pointed to a large scar on his forehead with the remark: “This wound Sir, I received for preaching Christ in your country!” Yet God honored Whitefield’s

FOREWORD

preaching to bring revival on two continents! George Whitefield was one of the most purest of men, who lived for God the most, and God used him more than most. His consecrated life should inspire all of us to live more for the glory of God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is therefore with great pleasure we present to you these last eighteen recorded public sermons of George Whitefield. It is our hope and prayer that as you read them you will catch some of Whitefield's *fire*, and that through them you will hear some rumbles of his thunder, see some flashes of his lightning, and experience the wonder of the rainbow that so easily emerges from his heart full of love toward lost sinners. I read them often and receive considerable blessings from them. It is my prayer you too will be blessed by the genius in them which was George Whitefield and they will inspire you to pray more fervently for revival in our day and for God to send us a man like a Whitefield for our time, a man so intoxicated with Christ and the Gospel and so entirely sold out and consecrated to God and eternity, that all that matters is to rescue the souls of the perishing. Men like Whitefield must be studied and understood if we have any desire of seeing revival in our day.

E. A. Johnston, Ph.D., D. B. S.

Fellow, Stephen Olford Institute for Biblical Preaching

Author, Evangelist

October 10, 2025

SAMPLE PAGES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	5
FOREWORD	7
TABLE OF CONTENTS	15
SERMON ONE: A FAITHFUL MINISTER'S PARTING BLESSING.....	17
A FAREWELL SERMON 1763	
REVELATIONS xxii. ver. 21.	17
SERMON TWO: CHRIST THE BELIEVER'S REFUGE.....	33
PSALM xlv. ver. 1-6.....	33
SERMON THREE: SOUL PROSPERITY	51
3 Epistle JOHN ver. ii.	51
SERMON FOUR: THE GOSPEL A DYING SAINT'S TRIUMPH.....	67
A FUNERAL SERMON.....	67
MARK xvi. ver. 15,16.	67
SERMON FIVE: REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION	87
ACTS iii. ver. 19.	87
SERMON SIX: THE BELOVED OF GOD.....	103
DEUT. xxxiii. ver 12.....	103
SERMON SEVEN: THE FURNACE OF AFFLICITON	119
ISAIAH xlviii. ver. 10.	119
SERMON EIGHT: THE LORD OUR LIGHT.....	133
ISAIAH lx. ver. 19-20.....	133
SERMON NINE: GLORIFYING GOD IN THE FIRE; OR, THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF AFFLICTION.	149
ISAIAH, xxiv. ver. 15.....	149
SERMON TEN: SELF-ENQUIRY CONCERNING THE WORK OF GOD.	163
NUMBERS xxiii. ver. 23.	163
SERMON ELEVEN: THE BURNING BUSH	179
EXODUS iii. ver. 2,3.....	179
SERMON TWELVE: SOUL DEJECTION.	193
PSALM xlii. ver. 5.	193
SERMON THIRTEEN: SPIRITUAL BAPTISM.....	207
ROMANS vi. ver. 3,4.	207
SERMON FOURTEEN: NEGLECT OF CHRIST THE KILLING SIN	223
JOHN v. ver. 40.	223
SERMON FIFTEEN: ALL MENS PLACE	241
ECCLESIASTES vi. ver. 6.	241

SERMON SIXTEEN: GOD A BELIEVER'S GLORY	259
ISAIAH lx. ver. 19.	259
SERMON SEVENTEEN: JACOB'S LADDER	275
GENESIS xxviii. ver. 12 &c.	275
SERMON EIGHTEEN: THE GOOD SHEPHERD	295
JOHN x. ver. 27, 28.	295
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	313
OTHER BOOKS BY DR. JOHNSTON	316

SERMON ONE:

A FAITHFUL MINISTER'S PARTING BLESSING

REVELATIONS xxii. ver. 21.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

It is a very remarkable that the Old Testament ends with the word curse; whereby we are taught that the law made nothing perfect: but blessed be God, the New Testament ends otherwise, even a precious blessing, that glorious grace put into the heart, and dropped by the pen of the disciple whom Jesus loved.

My brethren, as the providence of God calls us now to bid each other a long farewell, can I part from you better than in enlarging a little upon this short but glorious prayer; can I wish you, or you me, better in time and eternity, than that the words of our text may be fulfilled in our hearts, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* In opening which,

First it will be proper to explain what we are to understand by the word grace.

Secondly, what by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and its being with us all; and then to observe upon the word Amen; showing you why it is that everyone of us may wish, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us all.

Perhaps, there is not a word in the book of God that has a greater variety of interpretations put upon it than this little, this great word of grace: I do not intend to spin out, or waste the time by giving you all, it will be enough in general

to observe, that the word grace signifies favour, or may imply the general kindness that God bears to the world; but it signifies that here which I pray God we may all experience, I mean the grace, the special grace of the blessed God communicated to his people; not only his favour displayed to us outwardly, but the work of the blessed spirit imparted and conveyed inwardly and most powerfully to our souls, and this is what our church in the catechism calls special grace; for though Jesus Christ in one respect is the Saviour of all, and we are to offer Jesus Christ universally to all, yet he is said in a special manner to be the Saviour of them that believe; so that the word grace is a very complex word, and takes in all that the blessed Spirit of God does for a poor sinner, from the moment he first draws his breath, and brings him to Jesus Christ, till he is pleased to call him by death; and as it is begun in grace, it will be swallowed up in an endless eternity of glory hereafter; this is called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: why so? Because it is purchased for us by the Lord Jesus Christ; the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth, in the most emphatical manner, came by Jesus Christ the Son of God. If it was not for the purchase of a Mediator's blood, if it was not that Jesus Christ had bought us with a price, even with the price of his own blood, you and I should never have had, you and I could never have had the grace of God manifested at all to our souls. The covenant of works being broken, our first parents stood convicted before God: they were criminals, though they did not care to own it; condemned before God, and in themselves, so that like their children they made excuses for their sin. Man by nature had but one neck, and if God had pleased to have done it, he might justly have cut it off at one blow; but no sooner had man incurred the curse of the law, but behold a Mediator is provided under the character of the seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent's head; implying what the

Redeemer was first to do without, and afterwards to do in the hearts of all his people: well therefore are we taught in our church collects to end all our prayers with the words, *through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Moreover, brethren, this grace may be called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is not only purchased by him, but it is conveyed into our hearts through Christ; the federal head of his glorious body, is a head of influence to those for whom he shed his blood; thus his disciple said, he was full of grace and truth, and out of his fullness we, all that are true believers, receive grace for grace; grace upon grace; says Mr. Blackwall, in his sacred classics; grace for grace, that is, says Luther, every grace that is in Christ Jesus, will be by his blessed Spirit transcribed into every believer's heart, even as the warm wax receives the impress of the seal upon it; as there is line upon line upon the seal left upon the wax, so in a degree, though we come greatly short of what the law requires, the grace that is in Jesus Christ is, in a measure, implanted in our souls; but the Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be God, has our stock in his hands. God trusted man once, but never will more; he set Adam up, gave him a blessed stock, placed him in a paradise of love, and he soon became a bankrupt, some think in twenty four hours, however, all agree it was in six or seven days, and that he never had but one sabbath; but now, blessed be God, we are under a better dispensation, our stock is put into Christ's hands, he knows how to keep it, and us too; so this grace may be said to be the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, secured by his blood, and conveyed to our souls by his being the head of his church and people.

This grace has a variety of epithets put to it, and I question whether there is any kind of grace but what the Lord

Jesus Christ exercises towards his people some way or other, every hour, every moment of the day.

First, His restraining grace; why, if it was not for this, God's people would be just as weak and wicked as other folks are: remember what David said when Abigail came to him; he was going to kill a neighbor for affronting him, forgot that he was a Psalmist, and was only acting as creature: blessed be God, says he, that has sent thee to meet and keep me: My brethren, we may talk what we please, and build upon our own stock; we are just like little children that will walk by themselves; well, says the father, walk alone then, they tumble down, get a broken brow, and then are glad to take hold of the father; thus Jesus Christ is always acting in a restraining way to his people; if it was not so, by the blindness of their understandings, the corruptions of their hearts and affections, together with the perverseness of their will, alas! alas! there is not a child of God that would not run away every day, if Christ did not restrain him!

Secondly, There is convicting grace, which from the Lord Jesus Christ acts every day and hour. Oh! It is a blessed thing to be under the Redeemer's convicting grace! a man may speak to the ear, but it is the Spirit of God alone can speak to the heart: I am not speaking of convicting grace that wounds before conversion, and gives a sense of our sin and misery; no, I mean convicting grace that follows the believer from time to time. If a heathen Socrates could say, that he had always a monitor with him to check him when he did amiss, and direct him when he went right, surely the Christian may say, and blessed be God for it, that he has got a Jesus that kindly shows him when he goes astray, and by his grace puts him into the way of righteousness, that his feet may not slip; this is what the shepherd does to his sheep when they have wandered; what does the shepherd do, but

sends some little cur, his dog, after them, to bring them to the fold again? What does Jesus Christ do in temptations, trials, and afflictions? he fetches his people home, and convinces them that they have done amiss.

Then, thirdly, There is the converting grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! What poor unhappy creatures are they, that think they can turn to God when they please, to which abominable principle it is owing, that they leave it till they cannot turn in their beds: Satan tells them then, it is too late, their consciences are filled with horror and they go off in a whirlwind; may this be the case of none here! That is a most excellent prayer in our Communion Office, *Turn us, O good Lord, and we shall be turned*: we can no more turn our hearts than we can turn the world upside down; it is the Redeemer, by his Spirit, must take away the heart of stone, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit gives us a heart of flesh. I might as well attempt to reach the heavens with my hand; I might as well go to some church-yard and command the dead to rise; I might as soon shake my handkerchief and bid the streams divide, and they give way, as to expect a soul to turn to God without the grace of a Mediator. Come, my dear hearers, I am of a good man's opinion, that prayed he might be converted every day. In the divine life, not to go forwards is to go backwards; and it is one great part of the work of the Spirit of God to convert the soul from something that is wrong to something that is right, every day, hour and moment of the believer's life, so that in short his life is one continued act of converting grace: there is not a day but there is something wrong; there is something we want to have taken away; we want to get rid of the old man, and to get more of the new man, and so the Spirit of God works every day: O! my brethren, God give us more of this converting grace!

Then there is establishing grace. David prays, *Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me*; in the margin, it is constant spirit; and you hear of some that are rooted and grounded in the love of God, and the apostle prays, that they may always abound in the work of the Lord: again, it is good to have the heart established with grace: there is a good many people have some religion in them, but they are not established; hence they are mere weather-cocks, turned about by every wind of doctrine; and you may as soon measure the moon for a suit of clothes, as some people that are always changing; this is for want of more grace, more of the Spirit of God; and as children grow that are got stronger and riper, so as people grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be more settled, more confirmed: on first setting out they prattle, but they will be more manly, more firm, more steady: young Christians are like little rivulets that make a large noise, and have shallow water; old Christians are like deep water that makes little noise, carries a good load, and gives not way.

What think you, my brethren, of the Redeemer's comforting grace? O! what can you do without it? *In the multitude of my thoughts within me*, says the Psalmist, *thy comforts have refreshed my soul*. I believe you will all find what lord Bolinbrooke, spite of all his fine learning, and deistical principles, found when under affliction; he sent a letter which I saw and heard read to me, at least part of it in which he says: *Now I am under this affliction, I find my philosophy fails me*. With all our philosophy and striving, it is too hard to work ourselves into a passive state: alas! it is commendable to strive, but we shall never be content, we shall never be cheerful under sufferings, but through the assistance of the Redeemer. Even now, in respect of parting from one another, what can comfort friends when