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James B. Finley Letters

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1835

## Letter from Robert W. Finley to James B. Finley

Robert W. Finley

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June 17. 1835

1835  
The Holy Spirit

Psalm 116. 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. A Short Meditation on the passage  
The great liberty of the saints consists in a happy freedom from the tyranny of sin & Satan. The world & the flesh are dead weights on the mind in its possession & enjoyment of his happy liberty. Therefore it struggles to obtain it, & must be kept down, bearing like the devil, & devils nothing about them but chains & fetters to bind & imprison on the soul. Many are the afflictions of the right ear, but the Lord turneth them all for the Lord hears the afflictions & the sickness of his people. Mat. 23. 13. Sickness is indeed a dismal scourge to the wicked, & a painful scourge to the pious, to one it is the harbinger of sorrow or joy, to the other a solemn remembrance, both of the vanity of all earthly things & of a nearer approach of a happy eternity. When sickness & grace meet, what a just representation do the affords us of the poor human, cares, riches & pleasures of this fading world. How unimportant all the struggles, power, splendor & titles of pre-eminence which hath engaged the hasty & present eyes appear on a sick bed. How trifling these objects held before a sick person, for which many have laughed away their time & thrown away their ~~time~~ souls for no other purpose than a little fleeting vanity with a rapid descent to lasting oblivion & ruin. Thus the pious soul is quickened by affliction to see the passing affairs of earth & time when the soul is rapt in solemn contemplation of God & eternity appears in full view, & thus grace seeds an answer of peace on the heart. If we cannot think of these things through affliction, what a happiness to be assured that Christ thinks constantly for us, for he makes our bed in our sickness. And when through my disorder, I cannot act faith, O then take my drooping spirit as one of thine, upon ~~me~~ lambs in thy bosom, enfold me in thine arms, & let my soul itself commit itself & give up its all in death in quiet resignation into thy hand, that it may be for the manifestation of thy love among men. If I am taken out of this world by my present disorder, Lord Jesus the life of grace before the great assembly of angels & saints in thy Kingdom of ever lasting glory. It is a solemn & awful thing to die, & am often amazed at myself, that seeing it is not only unavoidable but that I can be so void of reflection or recollection, as I frequently am concerning it. Some in- deed talk boldly of death & with what great natural courage they will meet & conquer, or upon philo- sophical principles pass through his dark domains. They indeed may die or meet the thing, but can neither soften or take it away, for to ready death, with no spiritual preparation to his own triumph, as the act of a rawling fool who laughs at a possible precipice before he rushes on headlong to his own destruction. O Eternity, Eternity! it is fearful indeed to burst the bands of life, & to break forth into the bound- less & unchangeable regions of eternity, nature herself must shudder cannot bear the dreadful shocking reflection which death affords, of being an everlasting nothing as theists talk, or of entering ever lasting misery as sinners do, suffering the vengeance of God's eternal displeasure. His grace & grace only that can inspire the heart full of hope & immortality that this fleeting life past the soul shall possess an ever- lasting peace to the soul through ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> death. The last enemy death is no more the King of terrors, he gives up his feelings of that Christian, who dying in body feels himself just beginning to live for ever, & knows that he is not sick unto death, but unto life with satisfaction & tranquillity of mind, quits his cares, his sorrows, his infirmities, & all that could oppress his soul here, & looks with pleasure into the world before him, where he can meet with nothing, but cannot die in the society of his redeemed eternity without end. He is weaned from the earth & can part with easily, he is fitted for heaven & longs earnestly for it, he cannot help but desire that which is so congenial ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> his nature, & nothing of that sort can touch & perfectly be parted out of the regions of immortal felicity. They who afflict themselves about the loss of life, are like infants unborn, who if they shed a tear lament their ex- -clusion from the womb at the approaching time of their birth, not considering yet, not as the means, but as the end of being. Thus in their natural state may deplore their removal from this world for which they only desire to live, but the vocal Christian is in possession of a more glorious hope of life everlastingly pure like God's & of a habitation wide & beautiful as the temple of heaven. Lord when shall I drop this burden of clay I know not nor do I want to know, only give me pre- -sent grace to sustain me in my present pilgrimage, but let me be perfectly assured, that I shall be for ever with thee in the world to come, that the prospect of this joy may in due time be my strength in the world to come, when I lie down the bed of death waiting from moment to moment for my own final dismissal hence, to be with thee for ever.



Ms. A. 9. 2. 11  
1835

Rev. James W. Smith

In my present comfortable situation

1. John 4. 19 I love God because he first loved me.  
 In my present comfortable situation, I concluded to spend  
 some part of my time in reading, prayer & meditation & especially as  
 it respected the state of my own soul. The passage mentioned was  
 deeply impressed on my mind in a dream & rested on my mind by night  
 & day, at last concluded to set apart three hours either by night or in  
 the day to examine myself, whether I could say in truth, O I love the  
 Lord because he first loved me, after a time appointed I commenced with  
 prayer for the aid of divine assistance in a personal application  
 John 10 O I love God because he first loved me.

O Lord I wish would I have my heart filled with divine breathings after thee,  
 who art all excellency & love. But alas, I know not it is love thee with all  
 my heart, which is the highest attainment of the first born sons of light & the  
 best exercises of the brightest seraphs. I have heard & felt in my soul, some-  
 thing of warming of thy likeness in many of thy saints, & thy similitude being  
 in the hearts of thy people where it is most perfect, it gives them such a heavenly  
 appearance, that they appear like angels dwelling among men, or saints whose  
 conversation is already in heaven. My chains are heavy & my wings languid, my  
 spiritual desires faint, & my affections too earthly, yet I feel some savors of thy  
 love, some glimpses of thy love, & serenity of mind in my winter seasons. And altho  
 I cannot say I love thee as I ought, yet for some moments I feel this longing after  
 that flame of love that would burn all the outgoing of my soul & Godward, & turn the  
 world in all its bewitching vanities eternally out of doors. O that I knew where thou  
 art, in what I might love thee more, may I not love thee where thou art? at home  
 a brother, among friends & foes, among men or devils, among saints or sinners,  
 in life or death, in time or eternity. But again, how, or to what purpose may I  
 love thee? Walk before thee in thy divine prophecies, talk of thy glory & love, re-  
 count thy mercies & singest out of thy love may I praise thee at all times, from prayer to  
 sleep, & sleep with thee, depend on thee & all myself wholly over on thee, & resting  
 in what may love thee. May I love thee in thy Son & in thyself, in the unity of the Godhead &  
 in the unity of thy persons, in thy prophecies & attributes, in the extension of thy love  
 in the brightness of thy glory. May I love thee in thy angels, in thy saints, & all the other  
 creatures thy hand hath made. May I love thee in power, in thy chastity, in thy  
 beauty & in thy frowns, when thou roundest, or in thy whole, when thou  
 frowns & when thou takest away, in a word in all the dispensations of thy provid-  
 ences. May I love thee in thy law & testimonies, in the holy scriptures &  
 sacraments, in thy promises & fulfillments, in thy servants, even in my  
 own soul. O to see thee there, to know that art near & know in thy greatness &  
 glory hereafter, & in thy glorification.

My second meditation. O how ought I to be astonished at the unsearch-  
 -able condescension of Jehovah, that one under so many deformities &  
 short comings may continually be great a being in all his incomprehensi-  
 -ble excellencies. Will a thing except of the love of a subject, loaded with  
 infirmity & reproach, & used to poverty & languishing on a dying bed, & though  
 poor & miserable, in form & appearance, yet dejected not love, but vile & unworth-  
 its few expiring sparks. O my soul what a pile of love, God looking out at  
 at so in any window clouded with so many sins & surrounded with all the  
 host of heaven with endless derelictions of sinners. O how ought I to be  
 sinful worm as me, & still calling, Son give thy heart, I will give me thy  
 highest love. O what must have been the reward in the heaven? O that my soul  
 were dipped in the celestial dew & shed them be clean, I from the defilement  
 of all earthly inbredness, carnal affections, which always render the persons  
 impure, unclean & incapable of holding communion with the most high  
 God & perfectly to sing the song of Moses & the Lamb.



I sensibly feel that the Lord has kindled a spark in my breast, that  
lives in opposition to all the waters of Corruption. O my God cherish & increase  
it, till in the Day of great eternities it may break forth into spotless flames  
- assist me to anticipate that day when I shall be replenished with all the perfecti-  
- on of love, that when I find it so spotless, vigorous & divine, that only <sup>Great</sup> God, His  
unfading fountain & eternal Object shall be pleased <sup>happily</sup> with my love, when its  
quality shall be suitable to that state of consummation, its quality such as  
might replenish the most enlarged soul, & its duration without end or  
eternal in the heavens & now here is the great wonder, since thou art seen in all  
things, & cannot but be loved wherever thou art seen, why is it that I am not wholly  
taken up with love & left in amazement & to answer him a divine survey of thy  
uncreated excellencies? Can a poor soul like mine not find sufficient matter for  
for meditation & praise when a whole heaven is of perfect light & is so full enough  
for their most enlarged capacities through eternity & to praise. Now here is the wonder  
of wonders, that God is not only lovely in himself, & all things by which he reveals him-  
- self but also permits, yea, commands us to love him, make it my daily duty & my in-  
dispensable knowledge. The end of the meditation  
- meditation. When I think of the Condescension of the lofty Jeho-  
- his heart & not be

Come quickly Lord ~~and~~ my viel darkness,  
 hap a <sup>word</sup> of pardoning love  
 Before <sup>thy</sup> dear eyes,  
 And join my passion over,  
 Jehovah glorious majestic,  
 I bind my name a life.



It is uncertain how soon this body shall turn to dust out of which it was framed  
Nothing connecting with the life of my spirit which hath no relation to Earth, which  
cannot exist by matter & form, which in all its fugitives of wither & decay is per-  
ception & love is of a kind to a brighter & better world of beings. cannot only relate to  
angels, & heavenly spirits by the very nature of my soul, but can doubtly relate to them  
& God by being born again & renewed often which is blessed in name through Jesus Christ, by this  
made architect & author of one everlasting inheritance. All that Death can do to me is  
that I am of age & to lead me forth from these chambers of darkness to celebrate my birth  
day in the palace of God's Temple. There is in this <sup>heart</sup> subject a kind of pleasure in dying  
having a desire to depart & be with Christ which is far better than 25. In such a blessed  
& animating stage of death, it might be said that he deserves quite another name; ~~of a~~  
or rather went with the prophet & apostle, O Death, where is thy sting? 2. O grave where is thy victory?  
There is a then that I often feel a <sup>heart</sup> determining reluctance at the prospect of dying. Certainly  
because my faith & hope are not so lively as they ought to be for I am in my weakness to live rejoicing  
every day. It is because I do not <sup>heart</sup> fasten in the truth of these things which my mind apprehends  
& which I <sup>heart</sup> expect to be waiting for. My mind is too much on Earth or earthly things, & dwelling too little on  
heaven & heavenly things, or I should not thus resist, yet stand trembling on the brink of the dark  
which keeps me from the full fruition of God. The struggle of my heart, ~~that~~ would not be so long &  
longer continuance here, if my spirit were as firmly persuaded as it should be of my inheritance  
in a mansion in heaven.  
O thou blessed Saviour of the fallen family of Adam, on thee & on thee alone, my eyes are fixed.  
Thou my Saviour & deliverer from my Disgrace, let my eyes of faith be yet more steadfastly & more  
ardently fixed on thee & thee alone; and thou in the most tender compassion of thy heart who  
can sympathize with the woe of all thy people look down in compassion on me in my departing  
moments & soothe the pangs of death with thy right consolation & love. Let me then see thee by faith  
enjoy the fulness of thy love, who to comfort such one is as a father, willing gladly to receive my soul, &  
let me now forth in an ecstasy of praise, with shouts of victory as in the bosom of ever lasting love.  
Blessed Redeemer, thou knowest that this would be dying, but only departing to live & be happy forever  
Blessed Redeemer & firmly thy precious word, that whosoever liveth & believeth in thee shall never die. He  
he shall never perish but has passed from death unto life & shall live forever more, so cometh to the  
Saviour of God for this invaluable promise. And I believe, help my unbelief. Having said a num-  
ber of things on the Christian character & his Saviour's expectations of heaven, suffer  
me to inform you to remember you are not yet there, but yet in the flesh, thus you are  
yet clothed with a fallen nature, therefore always inclined to favour yourself, suffer me to recom-  
mend to you frequent exhortations, certain that nothing but grace can give a faithful  
difficult of your own conviction, & a holy watchfulness over all the passions within you. As I have re-  
ceived Christ the Lord, so I know it is my interest, privilege & duty, to walk, to live & prosper in him.  
Am I grieved against spiritual sloth & security. Am I content with the gains of my mind yet with  
increasing faith & patience the race set before me, true wisdom, zeal & strength to perform every  
duty & a humble resignation of heart to leave all my success in the hands of the Redeemer. Grant me  
I beseech thee, O God, grace in days to come, that I may have thee better than my strength  
out my whole life, & thus live & die more to glorify in the dispensation of others. Let me  
from all unreasonable & foolish grief, & when thou art pleased to remove the friends of my  
heart or comforts of life, enable me to give them up without remorse, knowing that all  
things shall work together for our mutual good. Having these hopes, let me be more  
purified from all uncleanness of flesh & spirit, for I am a feeble worm in myself, can do nothing  
that is good, then work in me, that I may neither be barren nor unfruitful. Help me to bear  
wrong patiently, let my conduct with respect to others be unblameable.  
O Lord I give up myself wholly to thy protection in all respects. But all times to dispose me at  
times more than I can ask or think for the sake of my Dear Redeemer, to whom with thee, Father  
Son & Holy Spirit, three persons in one & the same Jehovah be all honour & praise ascribed, both now &  
for evermore. Amen & Amen.

and fast  
Command  
for my  
Hand