

Letter to Agnes Livingstone 1, [1838-1839]

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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Ongar, Essex _____

My Dear Mother

I ought to have written you long ere this, but as most of the letters I have sent have been general & not particularly for personal ~~personal~~, and nothing having occurred which seemed to demand an immediate private attention to you in this respect. I have deferred it from time to time & even attended to, I believe, all the others before you, not in consequence I assure you, of want of affection to you, or superior regard to any other, but simply from a feeling that I had discharged that duty when I wrote a ~~joint~~ letter to both parents. Now, however, as I am sorry to learn your health and strength are declining, and ^ as we are separated for some time, who knows but it is for ever, as regards this worlds for we well know that our time here is both short and uncertain, I now take the liberty to draw your mind and direct my own to that subject which of all others, concerns us most, viz that of eternity, it is the only one worth bestowing a thought upon, other subjects appear important this alone is really so; our characters, comfort, businesses hardships and many other things appear something, and, to our minds ought to keep eternity & its concerns in the background, while the fact is they are nothing , less than nothing and vanity. Every situation in life has its own temptations - each has his own reasons for considering this subject as of little moment and if they look not upon it so yet particular reasons

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occurs to the mind of each why it should not it should not have immediate attention. O my dear mother, may the Lord grant us wisdom to give it all that attention which its importance so well demands — You have had many trials in passing through life, I believe it has been to you one continued struggle with poverty for many years, perhaps this may be still be your lot, this may have been your temptation, you may have felt that it was impossible you could bestow[...] much attention on the concerns of the soul, but this is Just exactly what you should certainly have felt in any or in every situation in the wide world, had you had it in your power to have made trial of them all; Here is the difficulty, if others deceived us on this subject we might with care detect it, but, to be

deceived by our own hearts is truly perplexing. the Lord alone can undeceive us, we feel conscious that we are right, till he in mercy shews that we are wrong, utterly wrong. O let us cry daily for more complete deliverance from our deceitful and deceiving hearts, then alone can we be prepared for our change — When I said above that perhaps poverty might still be your lot, I by no means wished it be so - most gladly if it were in my power, should I place you in more comfort[-] -able circumstance, but I know that whatever may be your condition in life you must have trials, even though we are christians we must have sorrows & troubles all the

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the way through life, if we escape from them in one situation, we are certain to meet them in another, if we avoid them in one form they come upon us in another; they are difficult to bear but we must meet them, every one has to meet them - every heart has its own bitterness - Oh How much depends on the spirit in which we do receive them, God designs them to produce an important effect - do they wean us from the world? or do they make us cling more closely to it? if the latter effect is produced we are not sensible of it, we only think more of our difficulties and imagine that our duties in relation to them render it impossible for us to attend to both worlds, thus duties which in themselves are proper are made the instruments of deluding us But though we are to have trials, we are called upon to rejoice [...] [in] the life of a christian is a strange compound of Joy & sorrow and the one is not at all incompatible with the others, they dwell together even in the same heart, when christianity enters into our hearts it must produce Joy, to think that we miserable outcasts are received into the fold of the good shepherd, to go no more out must produce happiness, nothing is more anomalous than a desponding christian, but then, when we look at our sins, our forgetful[-] -ness - our departures from duty & the tendency to neglect the calls of our kindest friend, our inconsistencies &c no wonder there is sorrow - It should not grieve us that we have trials but that we do not meet them in a proper spirit - these trials if we are indeed of the right sort, are the trials of our

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faith, to bring out our true characters to the light - and will soon pass away, giving place to endless bliss & Joy — My prayers for you my Dear mother is that the trial of your faith may end in glory honour and immortality at the appearance of Jesus Christ our Lord – You have been a most affectionate parent to me, May the Lord Jesus who himself took care of his mother, according to the flesh, even when hanging on the harmful

cross return all the kindness you have shewn me, ^ a hundred fold back into
your own bosom, with best wishes and prayers for your
and my beloved father's temporal & spiritual welfare
together with that of all who are dear to us, I subscribe
myself your affectionate son D. Livingston —
this world is not our home we may not meet again Oh shall we
recognize one another with pleasure at last?