

Emily Cox

Professor Hanley

ENGL 305

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From Calabar With Love

Dearest Susan,

I received your letter just last week, but so much has happened since then. As you read my letter, dear sister, do not think that I doubt the reality of your faith or your love for me, and likewise, do not doubt my love for you because my path leads where you cannot follow. I write this letter to explain, in the best way I know how, the urgency of the burden on my heart and the futility of the objections against the work I am compelled to undertake.

Many kind friends have lately expressed their concerns about the direction of my zeal for mission work, and others I believe would criticize me no matter what I do. On all sides, I am surrounded by objections to my desire of venturing deeper into Africa - too difficult, too dangerous, improper for a lady, etc etc etc. But I feel that I can no longer wait, for the hand of God is stronger than all the obstacles proposed to me and each day the people in the African interior remain in spiritual darkness is a day of eternal danger. If your house was on fire, would you wish that your neighbors might wait until a more convenient time to warn you? Would you prefer that they speak in polite and measured tones, or would you desire them to raise their voices as loudly as they could to wake you from sleep? In a time of such danger, you would be in such fear for your own life that you would have little time to criticize the manners or discretion

of your neighbors. Rather than faulting them for risking themselves for your sake, you could only think of their efforts with gratitude and relief. And more than this, think of the grave danger of eternal death, and all that our Savior undertook for our sakes, to rescue us from it! When I consider the danger of souls apart from Christ, and that it is in my power to help them, I cannot think of myself, but only of the duty that lies upon me.

I am only a woman, many have said in tones of gravity and concern. Now, after extending my sincere gratitude to these astute people for bringing this fact to my attention, I must respond: what is it to God that I am only a woman? Did not also Goliath of Gath think of David's weapon, it is only a sling? Did not the disciple Andrew think of the young boy's lunch, with which his Master fed five thousand people, it is only five loaves and two fishes? There are categories of possibility and impossibility from which our human minds suffer, but which do not exist in the mind of God. He is infinite and we are not. And yet in his infinity, he is pleased to use weak and despised means to effect beyond all we could ask or think.

Many have objected to my labors in Africa by saying that I am leaving comforts behind and that I will not be protected. When I have barely begun, they already seek to dissuade me by making woeful predictions about the misery that (they say) lies ahead. I do not deny that I am leaving behind many earthly comforts which I even now struggle to untangle from my heartstrings, but if I must choose between these passing things and fidelity to Christ my Captain, let them go - let them be cast into the depths of the sea. What are these fading baubles to the joy of knowing Christ and following in his footsteps? Shall his service be any less sweet for the lack of the things I leave behind? Far from it! "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is," and "his banner over me [is] love" (King James Version, Proverbs 15:17, Song of Solomon 2:4).

I do not doubt that the work will be dangerous. It is not as some seem to imagine - it is not as though I expect that a trek into the depths of Africa is an enterprise comparable to a walk in Hyde Park. I know that dangers will surround me on every side, that I may even lose my life. But I am prepared to lose it. Let me not hold back the sacrifice of my life from the One who sacrificed his life for me. As for protection, what more protection do I need than that which is provided by my mighty and faithful God? Surely the Israelites in the desert feared for their safety, when they stood with Pharaoh's army behind them and the Red Sea ahead of them, but they needed only wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is not God's arm that is weak, but our poor, doubting souls. This letter would never end were I to write all about all his greatness and goodness and steadfast love toward me. At this moment my heart is full, and things that I once viewed as of principal importance seem to fade into nothing. There is much I do not know, but I do know that as long as God has work for me to do in Africa, he will preserve my life.

Whatever news you may hear from Africa, still cling to the Rock which is Christ, and do not let your faith be shaken. God is good in all his dealings toward his children, in the sunshine and in the shade. I am content to rest inside the arms of the arms of my Heavenly Father, and I know that he will surround me with his steadfast love and faithfulness and make me a blessing whithersoever he carries me. Do not be worried on my account - only rejoice. I remain

Your loving sister,

Mary Slessor

### Works Cited.

The Holy Bible. *King James Version.*