

## John Winthrop to His Wife Margaret

**T**o John Winthrop and his fellow Puritans, England in the 1620s was an increasingly ominous place to live. Economic depression threatened even wealthy landowners like Winthrop, and the ascension of King Charles I, who was sympathetic to Roman Catholicism and impatient with Puritan reformers, did not bode well. In April 1630 Winthrop and one thousand other English men and women sailed to the New World, where they made their home in Massachusetts with Winthrop as governor. On September 9, 1630, eleven weeks after his arrival, Winthrop sent his wife Margaret, in England, the following letter describing the great challenges they faced and his hopes for their future well-being. (The Winthrops agreed, in their correspondence, to seek spiritual communion with one another on Mondays and Fridays.)

My dear wife,

The blessing of God all-sufficient be upon thee and all my dear ones with thee forever.

I praise the good Lord, though we see much morality, sickness, and trouble, yet (such is His mercy) myself and children with most of my family, are yet living, and in health, and enjoy prosperity enough, if the afflictions of our brethren did not hold under the comfort of it. The Lady Arbella is dead, and good Mr. Higginson, my servant, old Waters of Neyland, and many others. Thus the Lord is pleased still to humble us; yet he mixes so many mercies with His corrections, as we are persuaded He will not cast us off, but, in His due time, will do us good, according to the measure of our afflictions. He stays but till He hath purged our corruptions, and healed the hardness and error of our hearts, and stripped us of our vain confidence in this arm of flesh, that He may have us rely wholly upon Himself.

The French ship, so long expected, and given for lost, is now come safe to us, about a fortnight since, having been twelve weeks at sea; and yet her passengers (being but a few) all safe and well

but one, and her goats but six living of eighteen. So as now we are somewhat refreshed with such goods and provisions as she brought, though much thereof hath received damage by wet. I praise God, we have many occasions of comfort here, and do hope, that our days of affliction will soon have an end, and that the Lord will abundantly recompense for all the troubles we have endured. Yet we may not look at great things here. It is enough that we shall have Heaven, though we should pass through Hell to it. We here enjoy God and Jesus Christ. Is not this enough? What would we have more? I thank God; I like so well to be here, as I do not repent my coming, and if I were to come again, I would not have altered my course, though I had foreseen all these afflictions. I never fared better in my life, never slept better, never had more content of mind, which comes merely of the Lord's good hand; for we have not the like means of these comforts here, which we had in England. But the Lord is all-sufficient, blessed be His holy name. If He please, He can still uphold us in this estate; but if He shall see good to make us partakers with others in more affliction, His will be done. He is our God, and may dispose of us as He sees good.

I am sorry to part with thee so soon, seeing we meet so seldom, and my much business hath made me too oft forget Mondays and Fridays. I long for the time, when I may see thy sweet face again, and the faces of my dear children. But I must break off, and desire to thee to commend me kindly to all my good friends, and excuse my not writing at this time. If God please once to settle me, I shall make amends. I will name now but such as are nearest to thee: my brother and sister Gostlin, Mr Leigh, etc., Castleins, my neighbor Cole and his good wife, with the rest of my good neighbors, tenants, and servants. The good Lord bless thee, and all our children and family. So I kiss my sweet wife and my dear children, and rest.

Thy faithful husband  
Jo: Winthrop