

When the beloved disciple took
The Little Book
John Newton, 1779,
from Olney Hymns, vol. 1, hymn 141

When the beloved disciple took
The angels' little open book,
Which by the Lord's command he eat,
It tasted bitter after sweet.

2. Thus when the gospel is embraced,
At first 'tis sweeter to the taste
Than honey, or the honey-comb,
But there's a bitterness to come.

3. What sweetness does the promise yield,
When by the Spirit's power sealed?
The longing soul is filled with good,
Nor feels a wish for other food.

4. By these inviting tastes allured,
We pass to what must be endured;
For soon we find it is decreed,
That bitter must to sweet succeed.

5. When sin revives and shows its pow'r.
When Satan threatens to devour,
When God afflicts and men revile,
We drag our steps with pain and toil.

6. When thus deserted, tempest-tossed,
The sense of former sweetness lost;
We tremble lest we were deceived
In thinking that we once believed.

7. The Lord first makes the sweetness known,
To win and fix us far his own;
And though we now some bitter meet,
We hope for everlasting sweet.