apparently armed—gathered outside and refusing to obey police orders to disperse. When he walked onto the porch, one onlooker reported, “the people let out with cheers that could be heard blocks away. With the raising of his hand they became quiet to hear what he had to say.” In his remarks, King asked the crowd to go home peacefully. Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers and Mayor W. A. Gayle addressed the crowd next, promising to investigate the bombing and to defend the King family against future attacks. King spoke to the gathering again, urging them to be calm. The crowd then broke into spontaneous song, including hymns and “My Country, ’Tis of Thee,” before finally dispersing at 10:45 P.M. The following comments by King were quoted in the Montgomery Advertiser article by Joe Azbell published the next day.

“We believe in law and order. Don’t get panicky. Don’t do anything panicky at all. Don’t get your weapons. He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. Remember that is what God said. We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies. I want you to love our enemies. Be good to them. Love them and let them know you love them. I did not start this boycott. I was asked by you to serve as your spokesman. I want it to be known the length and breadth of this land that if I am stopped this movement will not stop. If I am stopped our work will not stop. For what we are doing is right. What we are doing is just. And God is with us.” [quotations from Gayle, Sellers, and Sheriff Mac Sim Butler omitted]

The Rev. King addressed the crowd again saying “go home and sleep calm. Go home and don’t worry. Be calm as I and my family are. We are not hurt and remember that if anything happens to me, there will be others to take my place.”

PD. Montgomery Advertiser, 31 January 1956.

3. Matthew 5:44.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From Pinkie S. Franklin

31 January 1956
Birmingham, Ala.

King received scores of sympathetic letters after the bombing, from both friends and strangers. Franklin wrote this letter of solace while unable to sleep. She later became

1. Pinkie Smith Franklin (1915–) was born in Selma and graduated from Alabama State College in 1938. She taught in Alabama schools before opening a grocery store in Birmingham with her husband in 1946. She was a member of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As a participant in the Birmingham civil rights protests of 1963 she was jailed for two days.
active in the Birmingham civil rights movement. Her own church, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, was bombed in 1963, killing four young girls.

Dear Rev. King,

For years, we Negro Mothers of the Southland have prayed that God would send us a leader such as you are. Now that the Almighty has regarded our lowly estate and has raised you up among us, I am indeed grateful. Be assured that day and night without ceasing I shall be praying for your safety and that of your family’s. The Arm of God is everlastingly strong and Sufficient to keep you and yours. There shall no harm come to you, and the Comforting Spirit of God shall guide you.

A fellow Suffer
(Mrs.) Pinkie S. Franklin
of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church

From J. Pius Barbour

31 January 1956
Chester, Pa.

Barbour, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Chester, Pennsylvania, became a mentor to King when the latter studied at Crozer Theological Seminary.

From Major J. Jones

1 February 1956
Nashville, Tenn.

Jones, dean of the chapel at Fisk University, had been a close friend of King’s since they were fellow graduate students at Boston University. Several weeks before King’s scheduled lecture at Fisk, Jones conveys his concern and that of his wife, Mattie Parker Jones, about the bombing.