

# Difficulties in Providence

by Samuel Rutherford

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's providence, overcoming heart-atheism, and relying on the power of grace and Christ's love in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 42:1, Psalm 63:1, Isaiah 55:8, Romans 1:21, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:37, Ephesians 3:17, Revelation 5:12

**Topics:** "God's Providence", "Christian Obedience"

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## Description

Samuel Rutherford preaches about the unworthiness of following Christ, the mysterious ways of God's providence, the struggle against heart-atheism, and the necessity of obedience to have sound light in our souls. He emphasizes the need to protest against the dominion of sin, condemn it, and rely on the grace and mercy of Jesus for salvation. Rutherford encourages believers to sing praises to Jesus both on earth and in heaven, to learn the song of the Lamb, and to be filled with the surpassing love of Christ.

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## Transcript

Worthy and Much Honoured in our Lord,--

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you,

1. I am glad of our more than paper acquaintance. Seeing we have one Father, it is less significant if we should never see one another's face. I profess myself most unworthy to follow the camp of such a worthy and renowned Captain as Christ. Oh, alas! I have cause to be grieved, that men expect anything of such a wretched man as I am.\*\* It is a wonder to me, if Christ can make anything of my good-for-nothing, short, and narrow love to Him; surely it is not worth the effort to try to understand it.

2. As for our lovely and beloved church in Ireland, my heart bleeds for her desolation; but I believe that our Lord is only lopping the vine-trees, not intending to cut them down, or root them out.\*\* It is true (seeing we are heart-atheists by nature, and cannot take providence aright, because we falter and deal crookedly ever since we fell), we dream of a faltering providence; as if God's yard, whereby He measures joy and sorrow to the sons of men, were crooked and unjust, because servants ride on horseback, and princes go on foot.\*\* But our Lord deals out good and evil, and some one portion or other to both, by ounce-weights, and measures them in a just and even balance. It is but folly to measure the Gospel by summer or winter weather: the summer-sun of the saints shines not on them in this life. How would we have complained, if the Lord had turned the same providence that we now complain about upside down? What if He had

ordered matters thus, that first the saints should have enjoyed heaven, glory, and ease, and then Methuselah's days of sorrow and daily miseries? We would think a short heaven no heaven. Certainly His ways pass finding out.

3. You complain of the evil of heart-atheism: but it is to a greater atheist than any man can be, that you write of that. Oh, light finds not that reverence and fear which a plant of God's setting should find in our soul! How do we by nature, as others, detain and hold captive the truth of God in unrighteousness, and so make God's light a bound prisoner? And even when the prisoner breaks the jail, and comes out in belief of a Godhead, and in some practice of holy obedience, how often do we, so often, lay hands on the prisoner, and put our light again in fetters? Certainly great mists and clouds come from the lower part of our souls, our earthly affections, to the higher part, which is our conscience, either natural or renewed: as smoke in a lower house breaks up, and pollutes the house above.

If we had more practice of obedience, we should have more sound light. I think, laying aside all other guiltiness, that this one, the violence done to God's candle in our soul, were a sufficient indictment against us. There is no helping of this but by striving to stand in awe of God's light. Past light tells tales of us we desire little to hear; but since our conversion that light sits next door to our will (a lawless lord), it is no marvel that such a neighbour should leaven our judgment, and darken our light. I see there is a necessity that we protest against the doings of the Old Man, and raise up a party against our worst half, to accuse, condemn, sentence, and with sorrow bemoan, the dominion of sin's kingdom; and withal make law, in the New Covenant, against our guiltiness. For Christ once condemned sin in the flesh, and we are to condemn it over again. And if there had not been such a thing as the grace of Jesus, I should have long since given up with heaven, and with the expectation to see God. But grace, grace, free grace, the merits of Christ for nothing, white and fair, and large Saviour-mercy (which is another sort of thing than creature-mercy, or Law-mercy, yea, a thousand degrees above angel-mercy), have been, and must be, the rock that we drowned souls must swim to. New washing, renewed application of purchased redemption, by that sacred blood that seals the free Covenant, is a thing of daily and hourly use to a poor sinner. Till we be in heaven, our issue of blood shall not be quite dried up; and, therefore, we must resolve to apply peace to our souls from the new and living way, and Jesus, who cleanses and cures the leprous soul. Lovely Jesus, must be our song on this side of heaven's gates. And even when we have arrived within the castle, then must we eternally sing, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb, who has saved us, and washed us in His own blood."

I would counsel all the ransomed ones to learn this song, and to drink and be drunk with the love of Jesus. O fairest, O highest, O loveliest One, open the well! Oh, water the burnt and withered travellers with this love of Yours! I think it is possible on earth to build a young New Jerusalem, a little new heaven, of this surpassing love. God either send me more of this love, or take me quickly over the water, where I may be filled with His love. My softness cannot bear this poverty. I profess I bear not hunger of Christ's love well. I know not if I deal unfairly with Christ, but I would have a link of that chain of His providence mended, in my anguish at his delay in satisfying my hunger. For myself, I could wish that Christ would let out upon me more of that love. Yet to say Christ is stingy to me, I dare not; and if I say I have abundance of His love, I should lie. I am constrained to complain, and cry, "Lord Jesus, hold Thy hand no longer."

Worthy Sir, let me have your prayers, in my bonds. Grace be with you,

Yours, in his sweet Lord Jesus,

S.R.

Aberdeen, Sept. 7, 1637

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