

Lix. to the Honorable, Reverend, and Well-Beloved Professors of Christ

by Samuel Rutherford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of true faith, self-denial, and a full commitment to Christ, even in the face of suffering and trial.

Scripture: John 14:6, Philippians 1:29, 2 Timothy 2:12, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 1:6

Topics: "Perseverance Of Faith", "Trials And Temptation"

Description

Samuel Rutherford delivers a letter of encouragement to the Presbyterian Church of Ireland during a time of great distress, urging them to remain steadfast in their faith despite persecutions and the loss of their ministers. He emphasizes the importance of staying true to the cause for which they are suffering, reminding them that the way they are enduring reproach for is the only saving way to heaven. Rutherford encourages them to hold fast to Christ, even in the face of trials and temptations, and assures them that Christ will ultimately be victorious.

Transcript

At the time of this letter the Presbyterian Church of Ireland was in a very depressed condition. In 1632, as we have seen, Robert Blair and other ministers were deposed for nonconformity. In the autumn of 1636 the same thing happened to five more. All were obliged to leave the country. In consequence the Church was deprived of many of its best ministers. Rutherford's letter was intended to confirm them in adherence to the cause for which they and their ministers were suffering.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD, AND PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING.- Grace, mercy, and peace be to you, from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. I always, but most of all now in my bonds (most sweet bonds for Christ my Lord) rejoice to hear of your faith and love; and that

persecutions and dockings of sinners have not chased away the Wooer from the house. I persuade you in the Lord that the men of God, now scattered and driven from you, put you upon the right scent and pursuit of Christ; and my salvation on it (if ten heavens were mine) if this way, this way that I now suffer for, this way that the world nicknameth and reproacheth, and no other way, be not the King's gate to heaven.

And I shall never see God's face (and, alas, I were a beguiled wretch if it were so!) if this be not the only saving way to heaven. Oh that you would take a prisoner for Christ's word for it (nay, I know you have the greatest King's word for it), that it shall not be your wisdom to speer out another Christ, or another way of worshipping Him, than is now savingly revealed to you. Therefore, though I never saw your faces, let me be pardoned to write to you, if possibly I could, by any weak experience, confirm and strengthen you in this good way, everywhere spoken against.

I can with the greatest assurance (to the honor of our highest, and greatest, and dearest Lord, let it be spoken!) assert (though I be but a child in Christ, and scarce able to walk but by a hold, and the meanest, and less than the least of saints), that we do not come nigh, by twenty degrees, to the due love and estimation of that fairest among the sons of men. Therefore, faint not in your sufferings and hazards for Him. Where can we find a match to Christ, or an equal, or a better than He, among created things?

Oh this world is out of all conceit, and all love, with our Well-beloved. Oh that I could sell my laughter, joy, ease, and all for Him, and be content with a straw bed, and bread by weight, and water by measure, in the camp of our weeping Christ! I know that His sackcloth and ashes are better than the fool's laughter, which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. But, alas! we do not harden our faces against the cold north storms which blow upon Christ's fair face. We love well summer-religion, and to be that which sin has made us, even as thin-skinned as if we were made of white paper; and would fain be carried to heaven in a close-covered chariot, wishing from our hearts that Christ would give us surety, and His handwrite, and His seal, or nothing but a fair summer until we be landed in at heaven's gates!

How many of us have been here deceived, and have fainted in the day of trial! Amongst you there are some of this stamp. I shall be sorry if my acquaintance A.T. has left you: I will not believe that he dare to stay away from Christ's side. I desire that ye show him this from me; for I loved him once in Christ, neither can I change my mind suddenly of him. But the truth is, that many of you, and too many also of your neighbor Church of Scotland, have been like a tenant that sitteth mail-free and knoweth not his holding whill his rights be questioned.

And now I am persuaded, that it will be asked at every one of us, on what terms we brook Christ; for we have sitten long mail-free. Many take but half a grip of Christ, and the wind bloweth them and Christ asunder. Indeed, when the mast is broken and blown into the sea, it is an art then to swim upon Christ to dry land. It is even possible that the children of God, in a hard trial, lay themselves down as hidden in the lee-side of a bush whill Christ their Master be taken, as Peter did; and lurk there, whill the storm be over-past.

All of us know the way to a whole skin; and the singlest heart that is has a by-purse that will contain the denial of Christ, and a fearful backsliding. Oh, how rare a thing it is to be loyal and honest to Christ, when He has a controversy with the shields of the earth! I wish all of you would consider, that this trial is from Christ; it is come upon you unbought. Do not now joule, or bow, or yield to your adversaries in a hair-breadth. Christ and His truth will not divide; and His truth has not latitude and breadth, that ye may take some of it and leave other some of it.

It is not possible to twist and compound a matter betwixt Christ and Antichrist; and, therefore, ye must either be for Christ, or ye must be against Him. I know and am persuaded that Christ shall again be high and great in this poor, withered and sun-burnt Kirk of Scotland; and that the sparks of our fire shall fly over the sea and round about to warm you and other sister churches; and that this tabernacle of David's house, that is fallen, even the Son of David's waste places, shall be built again.

And I know the prison, crosses, persecutions and trials of the two slain witnesses that are now dead and buried (Rev. 11.9) and of the faithful professors, have a back-door and back-entry of escape; and that death and hell and the world and the tortures shall all cleave and split in twain, and give us free passage and liberty to go through toll-free: and we shall bring all God's good metal out of the furnace again, and leave behind us but our dross and scum. We may then beforehand proclaim Christ to be victorious.

He is crowned King of Mount Zion: God did put the crown upon His head (Ps. 2.6; 21.3) and who dare take it off again? Two special things ye are to mind: First, try and make sure your profession; that ye carry not empty lamps. Alas! security, security is the bane and wrack of the most part of the world. Oh how many professors go with a golden lustre, and are gold-like before men (who are but witnesses to our white skin) and yet are but bastard and base metal! False under water, not seen, is dangerous, and that is a leak and rift in the bottom of an enlightened conscience; often failing and sinning against light.

Woe is me that the holy profession of Christ is made a stage garment by many, to bring home a vain fame, and Christ is made to serve men's ends. Know, secondly, except men martyr and slay the body of sin in sanctified self-denial, they shall never be Christ's martyrs and faithful witnesses. Oh if I could be master of that house-idol myself, my own mind, my own will, wit, credit, and ease, how blessed were I! Oh, but we have need to be redeemed from ourselves, rather than from the devil and the world!

O wretched idol, myself! when shall I see thee wholly decourted, and Christ wholly put in thy room? Oh, if Christ, Christ had the full place and room of myself, that all my aims, purposes, thoughts, and desires would coast and land upon Christ, and not upon myself! And howbeit we cannot attain to this denial of me and mine, that we can say, 'I am not myself, myself is not myself, mine own is no longer mine own', yet our aiming at this in all we do shall be accepted: for alas!

I think I shall die but minting and aiming to be a Christian. Is it not our comfort, that Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant, is come betwixt us and God in the business, so that green and young heirs, the like of sinners, have now a Tutor that is God! And now, God be thanked, our salvation is bottomed on Christ. Sure I am, the bottom shall never fall out of heaven and happiness to us. I would give over the bargain a thousand times, were it not that Christ's free grace has taken our salvation in hand.

Pray, pray and contend with the Lord, for your sister church; for it would appear that the Lord is about to speer for His scattered sheep, in the dark and cloudy day. Oh that it would please our Lord to set up again David's old wasted and fallen tabernacle in Scotland, that we might see the glory of the second temple in this land! And, howbeit He has caused the blossom to fall off my one poor joy, that was on this side of heaven, even my liberty to preach Christ to His people, yet I am dead to that now, so that He would hew and carve glory, glory for evermore, to my royal King out of my silence and sufferings.

I entreat you earnestly for the aid of your prayers, for I forget not you; and I salute, with my soul in Christ, the faithful pastors, and honorable and worthy professors in that land. Now the God of peace, that brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in

His sight. Grace, grace be with you.

ABERDEEN, Feb. 4, 1638

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