

Viii. to John Kennedy, on His Deliverance From Shipwreck

by Samuel Rutherford

Samuel Rutherford's sermon emphasizes the importance of gratitude, spiritual readiness, and enduring suffering as part of God's sovereign plan for believers.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:39, 1 Samuel 2:6, Hebrews 12:7, Revelation 1:18, Revelation 3:19

Topics: "Faith And Trials", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Samuel Rutherford preaches a heartfelt letter to a brother in Christ, expressing joy at his deliverance from a perilous sea journey and encouraging him to be steadfast in the face of trials. Rutherford reminds the brother of the constant spiritual battle against Satan's schemes and the need to cling to the Rock, Jesus Christ, for stability. He emphasizes the brevity of life and the importance of being prepared for the inevitable journey through death, urging the brother to fulfill his purpose with joy and a clear conscience. Rutherford encourages unwavering faith in Christ, who disciplines His children for their growth and eventual inheritance in heaven.

Transcript

John Stuart, Provost of Aye, another correspondent of Rutherford (Letter XXIX), was told that a ship of his, bound from Rochelle to Aye, had been captured by the Turks. The rumour proved incorrect, for at length it arrived in the roads. Kennedy, an intimate friend of Stuart, was so overjoyed that he went out to it in a small boat. But a violent storm suddenly arose and he was driven out to sea and given up for drowned. But three days later Kennedy, who had managed to land safely on another part of the coast, returned home. Kennedy was member for Aye of the Scottish Parliament from 1664 to 1666, and was then Provost of

the town. He was also a member of the General Assembly of the Church

for some years.

MY LOVING AND MOST AFFECTIONATE BROTHER IN CHRIST, -- I salute you with grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. I promised to write to you, and although late enough, yet I now make it good. I heard with grief of your great danger of perishing by the sea, and of your merciful deliverance with joy. Sure I am, brother, that Satan will leave no stone unrolled, as the proverb is, to roll you off your Rock, or at least to shake and unsettle you: for at that same time the mouths of wicked men were opened in hard speeches against you, by land, and the prince of the power of the air was angry with you by sea.

See then how much ye are obliged to that malicious murderer, who would beat you with two rods at one time; but, blessed be God, his arm is short; if the sea and wind would have obeyed him, ye had never come to land. Thank your God, who saith, 'I have the keys of hell and death (Rev 1.18); 'I kill, and I make alive' (Deut.. 32.39): 'The Lord bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up' (I Sam. 2.6). Ye were knocking at these black gates, and ye found the doors shut; and we do all welcome you back again.

I trust that ye know that it is not for nothing that ye are sent to us again. The Lord knew that ye had forgotten something that was necessary for your journey; that your armour was not as yet thick enough against the stroke of death. Now, in the strength of Jesus dispatch your business; that debt is not forgiven, but fristed: death has not bidden you farewell, but has only left you for a short season. End your journey ere the night come upon you. Have all in readiness against the time that ye must sail through that black and impetuous Jordan; and Jesus, Jesus, who knoweth both those depths and the rocks, and all the coasts, be your pilot.

The last tide will not wait you for one moment. If ye forget anything, when your sea is full, and your foot in that ship, there is no returning again to fetch it. What ye do amiss in your life to-day, ye may amend it to-morrow; for as many suns as God maketh to arise upon you, ye have as many new lives; but ye can die but once, and if ye mar or spill that business, ye cannot come back to mend that piece of work again. No man sinneth twice in dying ill; as we die but once, so we die but ill or well once.

You see how the number of your months is written in God's book; and as one of the Lord's hirelings, ye must work till the shadow of the evening come upon you, and ye shall run out your glass even to the last pickle of sand. Fulfill your course with joy, for we take nothing to the grave with us, but a good or evil conscience. And, although the sky clear after this storm, yet clouds will engender another. Ye contracted with Christ, I hope, when first ye began to follow Him, that ye would bear His cross.

Fulfill your part of the contract with patience, and break not to Jesus Christ. Be honest, brother, in your bargaining with Him; for who knoweth better how to bring up children than our God? For (to lay aside His knowledge, of the which there is no finding out) He has been practiced in bringing up His heirs these five thousand years; and His bairns are all well brought up, and many of them are honest men now at home, up in their own house in heaven, and are entered heirs to their Father's inheritance.

Now, the form of His bringing up was by chastisements, scourging, correcting, nurturing; and see if He maketh exception of any of His bairns; no, His eldest Son and His Heir, Jesus, is not excepted (Rev. 3.19; Heb. 12.7-8; 2.10). Suffer we must; ere we were born God decreed it, and it is easier to complain of His decree than to change it. Forward then, dear brother, and lose not your grips. Now I commend you, your

whole soul, and body, and spirit, to Jesus Christ and His keeping, hoping that ye will live and die, stand and fall, with the cause of our Master, Jesus. The Lord Jesus Himself be with your spirit. Your loving brother in our Lord Jesus.

ANWOTH, Feb. 2, 1632

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