

# Xxix. to John Stuart, Provost of Aye

by Samuel Rutherford

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*The speaker struggles with faith and doubt, feeling isolated and lonely, and desires Christ's presence and forgiveness.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:18, Psalm 73:26, Romans 8:18, Philippians 3:8, 1 Peter 4:16

**Topics:** "Persecution And Faith", "Christian Sanctification"

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## Description

Samuel Rutherford, in a letter to a friend, reflects on his suffering for the truth and his unwavering commitment to serving God, even in the face of persecution and loss. He expresses his deep longing to be fully devoted to Christ, despite feeling inadequate and sinful. Rutherford finds comfort in the midst of his trials, recognizing that Christ is refining his love and breaking down his idols. He acknowledges his struggles with guilt, the state of the church, and his yearning for Christ's glory to be revealed. Despite feeling abandoned at times, Rutherford's faith remains steadfast, desiring to love Christ above all else.

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## Transcript

Inheriting considerable property from his father, Stuart was lavishly generous in support of those suffering persecution for conscience' sake. Later, owing to the ravages of plague he lost much of his money. He joined with Blair (Letter XVI) in the frustrated attempt to emigrate to America, which is referred to in the next letter. See also Letter XLIX.

MUCH HONORED AND DEAREST IN CHRIST, -- Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, be upon you. I expected the comfort of a letter to a prisoner from you, see now. I am here, Sir, putting off a part of my inch of time; and when I awake first in the morning (which is always with great heaviness and sadness), this question is brought to my mind, 'Am I serving God or not?' Not that I doubt of the truth of this honorable cause wherein I am engaged; I dare venture into eternity, and before my Judge, that I now suffer for the truth -- because that I cannot endure that my Master, who is a freeborn King, should pay tribute to any of the shields or potsherd of the earth.

Oh that I could hold the crown upon my princely King's head with my sinful arm, howbeit it should be struck from me in that service, from the shoulder-blade. But my closed mouth, my dumb Sabbaths, the memory of my communion with Christ, in many fair, fair days in Anwoth, whereas now my Master getteth no service of my tongue as then, has almost broken my faith in two halves. Yet in my deepest apprehensions of His anger, I see through a cloud that I am wrong. And beside, He has visited my soul and watered it with His comforts.

The great men, my friends that did for me, are dried up like winter-brooks of water. All say, 'No dealing for that man; his best will be to be gone out of the kingdom.' So I see they tire of me. But, believe me, I am most gladly content that Christ breaketh all my idols in pieces. It has put a new edge upon my blunted love to Christ; I see that He is jealous of my love, and will have all to Himself. In a word, these six things are my burden: 1. I am not in the vineyard as others are; it may be, because Christ thinketh me a withered tree, not worth its room.

But God forbid! 2. Woe, woe is coming upon my harlot-mother, this apostate kirk! The time is coming when we shall wish for doves' wings to flee and hide us. Oh, for the desolation of this land! 3. I see my dear Master Christ going His lone (as it were) mourning in sackcloth. His fainting friends fear that King Jesus shall lose the field. But He must carry the day. 4. My guiltiness and the sins of youth are come up against me, and they would come into the plea in my sufferings, as deserving causes in God's justice; but I pray God, for Christ's sake, that He may never give them that room. 5.

Woe is me, that I cannot get my royal, dreadful, mighty, and glorious Prince of the kings of the earth set on high. Sir, ye may help me and pity me in this; and bow your knee, and bless His name, and desire others to do it, that He has been pleased, in my sufferings, to make Atheists, Papists, and enemies about me say, 'It is like that God is with this prisoner.' Let hell and the powers of hell (I care not) be let loose against me to do their worst, so being that Christ, and my Father, and His Father, be magnified in my sufferings. 6.

Christ's love has pained me: for howbeit His presence has shamed me, and drowned me in debt, yet He often goes away when my love to Him is burning. He seemeth to look like a proud wooer, who will not look upon a poor match that is dying of love. I will not say He is lordly. But I know He is wise in hiding Himself from a child and a fool, who maketh an idol and a god of one of Christ's kisses, which is idolatry. I fear that I adore His comforts more than Himself, and that I love the apples of life better than the tree of life. Sir, write to me. Commend me to your wife. Mercy be her portion. Grace be with you. Yours, in his dearest Lord Jesus.

ABERDEEN, 1637

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