

# Xxxii to John Gordon of Cardoness, the Elder

by Samuel Rutherford

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*The preacher urges John Gordon to love heaven and to take immediate action to secure his salvation, warning him of the consequences of procrastination and encouraging him to follow the doctrine of Christ.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 12:3, Ecclesiastes 12:1, Luke 12:48, 1 Timothy 6:12, Jude 1:21

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Samuel Rutherford addresses a difficult parishioner, urging him to focus on his salvation and not be distracted by earthly matters. He emphasizes the importance of casting burdens upon Christ, living righteously, and not oppressing others to ease his own debts. Rutherford shares his own experiences of suffering and imprisonment, highlighting the comfort found in Christ's love and the need to be crucified to the world. He encourages the parishioner to seek the Lord, especially in youth, and to hold fast to the teachings of Jesus for eternal life.

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## Transcript

John Gordon, the elder, laird of Cardoness, was a very difficult parishioner, and a man of strong passions. His estate was heavily burdened by debt. Part of the purpose of this letter is a protest against the attempt to meet his debts by an inequitable raising of the rents of the farms and cottages on the estate. And there was a son (to whom a later letter is addressed, letter XXXIV), who was following the example of his father's wild youth. See also Letters XXXVI and XLVI.

MUCH HONORED SIR, -- I long to hear how your soul prospereth. I wonder that ye write not to me; for the Holy Ghost beareth me witness, that I cannot, I dare not, I do not, forget you, nor the souls of those with you, who are redeemed by the blood of the great Shepherd. Ye are in my heart in the night-watches; ye are my joy and crown in the day of Christ. O Lord, bear me witness, if my soul thirsteth for anything out of heaven, more than for your salvation. Love heaven; let your heart be on it.

It were time that your soul cast itself, and all your burdens, upon Christ. I beseech you by the wounds of your Redeemer, and by your compearance before Him, and by the salvation of your soul, lose no more time; run fast, for it is late. Ye are now upon the very border of the other life. Your Lord cannot be blamed for not giving you warning. I have taught the truth of Christ to you, and delivered unto you the whole counsel of God, and I have stood before the Lord for you, and I will yet still stand.

Awake, awake to do righteously. Think not to be eased of the burdens and debts that are on your house by oppressing any, or being rigorous to those that are under you. Remember how I endeavored to walk before you in this matter, as an example. 'Behold, here am I, witness against me, before the Lord and His Anointed: whose ox or whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed?' (1 Sam. 12.3). Who knoweth how my soul feedeth upon a good conscience, when I remember how I spent this body in feeding the lambs of Christ?

The Lord is my witness above that I write my heart to you. I never knew by my nine years' preaching so much of Christ's love as He has taught me in Aberdeen by six months' imprisonment. I charge you in Christ's name to help me to praise; and show that people and country the loving kindness of the Lord to my soul, that so my sufferings may someday preach to them when I am silent. He has made me to know now better than before what it is to be crucified to the world. I would not exchange my sighs for the laughing of my adversaries, for He has sealed my sufferings with the comforts of His Spirit on my soul.

Now, Sir, I have no earthly comfort, but to know I have espoused, and shall present a bride to Christ in that congregation. The Lord has given you much, and therefore He will require much of you again; number your talents, and see what you have to render back again; you cannot be enough persuaded of the shortness of your time. I charge you to write to me, and in the fear of God, be plain with me, whether or not you have made your salvation sure: I am confident, and hope the best; but I know, your reckonings with your Judge are many and deep.

Sir, be not beguiled, neglect not the one thing, your one necessary thing, 'the good part that shall not be taken from you'; look beyond time; things here are but moonshine; they have but children's wit, who are delighted with shadows, and deluded with feathers flying in the air. Desire your children in the morning of their life, to begin and seek the Lord, and 'to remember their Creator in the days of their youth', to 'cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto, according to God's word'.

Youth is a glassy age. Satan too often finds a 'swept chamber', and a 'garnished lodging' for himself and his train, in youthhood. Let the Lord have the flower of their age; the best sacrifice is due to Him; instruct them in this, that they have a soul, and that this life is nothing in comparison of eternity; they will have much need of God's conduct in this world, to guide them by those rocks upon which most men split; but far more need when it cometh to the hour of death, and their compearance before Christ.

Oh that there were such an heart in them, to fear the name of the great and dreadful God, who has laid up great things for those that love and fear Him! I pray that God may be their portion. Show others of my parishioners, that I write to them my best wishes, and the blessings of their lawful pastor. Say to them from me, that I beseech them, by the bowels of Christ, to keep in mind the doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which I taught them; so that they may lay hold on eternal life, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and making sure salvation to themselves.

Walk in love, and do righteousness: seek peace; love one another. Wait for the coming of our Master and Judge. Receive no doctrine contrary to that which I delivered to you. If ye fall away, and forget it, and that

Catechism which I taught you, and so forsake your own mercy, the Lord be Judge betwixt you and me. I take heaven and earth to witness, that such shall eternally perish. But if they serve the Lord, great will their reward be when they and I shall stand before our Judge.

Set forward up the mountain, to meet with God; climb up, for your Savior calleth on you. It may be that God will call you to your rest, when I am far from you; but ye have my love, and the desires of my heart for your soul's welfare. He that is holy, keep you from falling, and establish you, till His own glorious appearance. Your affectionate and lawful pastor.

ABERDEEN, 1637

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