

## **The Trial & Triumph of Faith**

**By Rev. Samuel Rutherford**

To The Right Honourable,  
The Lady Jane Campbell,  
Viscountess of Kenmure;  
Sister to The Right Noble and Potent,  
The Marquis of Argyle,

Grace and Peace.

Madam,

I SHOULD complain of these much-disputing and over-writing times, if I were not thought to be as deep in the fault as those whom I accuse: but the truth is, while we endeavour to gain a grain-weight of truth, it is much if we lose not a talent-weight of goodness and Christian love. But, I am sure, though so much knowledge and light may conduce for our safe walking, in discerning the certain borders of divine truths from every false way; and suppose that searching into questions of the time were a useful and necessary evil only; yet the declining temper of the world's worst time, the old age of time, eternity now so near approaching, calleth for more necessary good things at our hands. It is unhappy, if, in the nick of the first breaking of the morning sky, the night-watch fall fast asleep, when he hath watched all the night. It is now near the morning-dawning of the resurrection. Oh, how blessed are we, if we shall care for our one necessary thing!

It is worthy our thoughts, that an angel, (never created, as I conceive) standing in his own land, "his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth," hath determined by oath, a controversy moved by scoffers, (2 Peter 3:3) "yea, and with his hand lifted up to heaven, sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that are therein, and the earth, and things that therein are, and the sea, and things that are therein, that there should be time no longer." (Rev 10:5-6) If eternity be concluded judicially by the oath of God, as a thing near to us, at the door, now about sixteen hundred years ago, it is high time to think of it; what we shall do, when the clay house of this tabernacle, which is but our summer house, that can have us but the fourth part of a year, shall be dissolved. Time is but a short trance [a narrow covered passage]; we are carried quickly through it: our rose withereth, ere it come to its vigour: our piece of this short-breathing shadow, the inch, the half-cubit, the poor span-length of time, fleeth away as swiftly as a weaver's shuttle, (Job 7:6) which leapeth over a

thousand threads in a moment. How many hundred hours in one summer doth our breathing clay-post skip over, passing away as “the ships of desire, and as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.” (Job 9:25-26) If death were as far from our knowledge, as graves and coffins (which to our eyes preach death) are near to our senses, even casting the smell of death upon our breath, so as we cannot but rub skins with corruption; we should not believe either prophets or apostles, when they say, “All flesh is grass,” and, “It is appointed for all to die.” Eternity is a great word, but the thing itself is greater: death, the point of our short line, teacheth us what we are, and what we shall be.

Should Christ, the condition of affairs we are now in, the excellency of free grace, be seen in all their own lustre and dye, we should learn much wisdom from these three. Christ speedeth little in conquering of lovers: because we have not “seen his shape at any time,” we look not upon Christ, but upon the accidents that are beside Christ; and therefore, few esteem Christ a rich pennyworth. But there is not a rose out of heaven, but there is a blot and thorn growing out of it, except that one only rose of Sharon, which blossometh out glory. Every leaf of the rose is a heaven, and serveth “for the healing of the nations;” every white and red in it, is incomparable glory; every act of breathing out its smell, from everlasting to everlasting, is spotless and unmixed happiness. Christ is the outset, the master-flower, the uncreated garland of heaven, the love and joy of men and angels. But the fountain-love, the fountain-delight, the fountain-joy of men and angels is more; for out of it floweth all the seas, springs, rivers, and floods of love, delight, and joy. Imagine all the rain and dew, seas, fountains, and floods, since the creation, were in one cloud, and these multiplied in measures, for number to many millions of millions, and then divided in drops of showers to an answerable number of men and angels;—this should be a created shower, and end in a certain period of time; and this huge cloud of so many rivers and drops, should dry up, and rain no more. But we cannot conceive so of Christ: for if we should imagine millions of men and angels to have a coeternal dependent existence with Christ, and they eternally in the act of “receiving grace for grace out of his fullness,” the flux and issue of grace should be eternal, as Christ is. For Christ cannot tire or weary from eternity to be Christ; and so, he must not, he cannot but be an infinite and eternal flowing sea, to diffuse and let out streams and floods of boundless grace. Say that the rose were eternal; the sweet smell, the loveliness of greenness and colour must be eternal.

Oh, what a happiness, for a soul to lose its excellency in His transcendent glory! What a blessedness for the creature, to cast in his little all, in Christ’s matchless all-sufficiency! Could all the streams retire into the fountain and first spring, they should be kept in a more sweet and firm possession of their being, in the bosom of their first cause, than in their borrowed channels that they now move in. Our neighbourhood, and retiring in, to dwell forever and ever in the fountain-blessedness, Jesus Christ, with our borrowed goodness, is the firm and solid fruition of our eternal happy being. Christ is the sphere, the connatural first spring and element of borrowed drops, and small pieces of created grace. The rose is

surest in being, in beauty, on its own stalk and root: let life and sap be eternally in the stalk and root, and the rose keep its first union with the root, and it shall never wither, never cast its blossom nor greenness of beauty. It is violence for a gracious soul to be out of his stalk and root; union here is life and happiness; therefore the Church's last prayer in canonic Scripture is for union, (Rev. 22:20) "Amen: Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It shall not be well till the Father, and Christ the prime heir, and all the weeping children, be under one roof in the palace royal. It is a sort of mystical lameness, that the head wanteth an arm or a finger; and it is a violent and forced condition, for arm and finger to be separated from the head. The saints are little pieces of mystical Christ, sick of love for union. The wife of youth, that wants her husband some years, and expects he shall return to her from oversea lands, is often on the shore; every ship coming near shore is her new joy; her heart loves the wind that shall bring him home. She asks at every passenger news: "Oh! saw ye my husband? What is he doing? When shall he come? Is he shipped for a return?" Every ship that carrieth not her husband, is the breaking of her heart. What desires hath the Spirit and Bride to hear, when the husband Christ shall say to the mighty angels, "Make you ready for the journey; let us go down and divide the skies, and bow the heaven: I will gather my prisoners of hope unto me; I can want my Rachel and her weeping children no longer. Behold, I come quickly to judge the nations." The bride, the Lamb's wife, blesseth the feet of the messengers that preach such tidings, "Rejoice, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments; thy King is coming." Yea, she loveth that quarter of the sky, that being rent asunder and cloven, shall yield to her Husband, when he shall put through his glorious hand, and shall come riding on the rainbow and clouds to receive her to himself.

The condition of the people of God in the three kingdoms calleth for this, that we now wisely consider what the Lord is doing. There is a language of the Lord's "fire in Zion," and "his furnace in Jerusalem," if we could understand the voice of the crying rod. The arrows of God flee beyond us, and beside us, but we see little of God in them: we sail, but we see not shore; we fight, but we have no victory. The efficacy of second causes is the whole burden of the business, and this burden we lay upon creatures, (and it is more than they can bear,) and not upon the Lord. God is crying lameness on creatures and multitude, that his eminency of working may be more seen. (2.) Many are friends to the success of reformation, not to reformation. Men's faith goes along with the promises, until providence seem to them to belie the promise. Through light at a key-hole many see God in these confusions in the three kingdoms; but they fall away, because their joining with the cause, was violent kindness to Christ. It is not a friend's visit, to be driven to a friend's house to be dry in a shower, and then occasionally to visit wife and children. Christ hath too many occasional friends; but the ground of all is this, "I love Jesus Christ, but I have not the gift of burning quick for Christ." Oh, how securely should faith land us out of the gun-shot of the prevailing power of a black hour of darkness! Faith can make us able to be willing, for Christ, to go through a quarter of hell's pain. Lord, give us not leave to be mad with worldly wisdom. (3.) When the temptation sleepeth, the madman is wise, the harlot is

chaste; but when the vessel is pierced, out cometh that which is within, either wine or water: yet, if we should attentively lay our ears to hypocrites, we should hear, that their lute-strings do miserably jar; for hypocrisy is intelligible, and may be found out.

Would Parliaments begin at Christ, we should not fear that which certainly we have cause to fear; "One woe is past, and another woe cometh." The prophets in the three kingdoms have not repented of the superstition, will-worship, idolatry, persecution, profanity, formality, which made them "vile before the people;" and the judges and princes, who "turned judgment into gall and wormwood," are not humbled, because they were "a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." No man repenteth, and "turneth from his evil way;" no man "smiteth on his thigh, saying, what have I done?" It is but black Popery (the name being changed, not the thing), to think the bypast sins of the land are bypast, and a sort of reformation for time to come is satisfactory to God *ex opere operato* [by the deed done.] Yea, the divisions in the church are a heavier plague than the raging sword. These same sins against the first and second Table; the reconciling of us and Babylon, pride, bribing, extortion, filthiness and intemperance unpunished, blood touching blood and not revenged, vanity of apparel, the professed way of salvation by all kinds of religions whatsoever; are now acted in another stage, by other persons, but they are the same sins. If that Headship that flattering prelates took from Jesus Christ, and gave to the king, be yet taken from Christ, and given to men;—if Christ's crown be pulled off his head, no matter whose head it warm; it is taken from Christ both ways. I shall pray, that the fatness of the "flesh of Jacob, for this, do not wax lean," (Isa. 17:4) and that the warfare of Britain be accomplished. But if the faithful watchmen know what hour of the night it is now, there is but small appearance, that it is near to the dawning of Britain's deliverance, or that our sky shall clear in haste. Would God the year 1645 were with child, to bring forth the salvation of Britain! It was once as incredible that the enemy should have entered "within the gates of Jerusalem." (Lam. 4:12) as it is now, that they can enter within the ports of London, Edinburgh, Dublin. I speak not this to encourage Cavaliers [Royalists, who persecuted the Presbyterians], for certainly, God watcheth over them for vengeance; but that we go not on further to break with Christ. The weakness of new heads, devising new religions, and multiplying gods: (for two sundry and contrary religions, argue interpretatively two sundry gods,) "according to the number of our cities," must come from rottenness of our hearts. Oh, if we could be instructed "before the decree," that is with child, of plagues to the sinners in "Zion, bring forth a man-child; and before the long shadows of the evening be stretched out on us!"

But of this theme no more. Grace is the proposition of this following treatise. When either grace is turned into painted, but rotten nature, as Arminians do, or into wantonness, as others do, the error to me is of a far other and higher elevation, than opinions touching church government. Tenacious adhering to Antinomian errors, with an obstinate and final persistence in them, both as touching faith to, and suitable practice of them, I shall think, cannot be fathered

upon any of the regenerated; for it is an opinion not in the margin and borders, but in the page and body, and too near the centre and vital parts of the gospel. If any are offended, I desire to anger them with good will to grace; I shall strive and study the revenge only of love and compassion to their souls.

If some of these sermons came once to your Honour's ears; and now, to your eyes, it may be, with more English language, I having staid possibly till the last grapes were somewhat riper; I hope it shall be pardoned, that I am bold to borrow your name; which truly I should not have done, if I had not known of your practical knowledge of this noble and excellent theme, the Free Grace of God. I could add more of this; but I had rather commend grace, than gracious persons. I know that Jesus Christ, who perfumeth and flowereth heaven with his royal presence, and streweth the heaven of heavens to its utmost borders with glory, is commended that he was full of grace, a vessel filled to the lip. (Psalm 45:2; John 1:16) Yea, grace hath bought both our person and our service, (1 Pet. 2:24-26) even as he that buyeth a captive, gives money not only for his person, but for all the motion, toil, and labour of his body, legs, and arms. And redeeming grace is so perfect, that Satan hath power possibly to bid, but not to buy any of the redeemed, no more than a merchant can buy another man's bought goods without his consent. All our happiness that groweth here on the banks of Time, is but thin sown, as very strawberries on the sea-sands. What good parts of nature we have without grace, are like a fair lily, but there is a worm at the root of it; it withereth from the root to the top. Gifts wither apace without grace: gifts neither break nor humble; grace can do both. Grace is so much the more precious and sweet, that though it be the result of sin, in the act of pardoning and curing sinful lameness; yet it hath no spring, but the bowels of God stirred and rolled within him only by spotless and holy goodness. Grace is of the king's house from heaven only; the matter, subject, or person it dwelleth in, contributed nothing for the creation of so noble a branch. Christ, for this cause especially, left the bosom of God, and was clothed with flesh and our nature, that he might be a mass, a sea, and boundless river of visible, living, and breathing grace, swelling up to the highest banks of not only the habitable world, but the sides also of the heaven of heavens, to over-water men and angels. So that Christ was, as it were, grace speaking, (Psalm 45:2; Luke 4:22) grace sighing, weeping, crying out of horror, dying, withering for sinners, living again, (Heb. 2:9; John 3:16; Rom. 8:32-33) and is now glorified grace, dropping down, raining floods of grace on his members, (Eph. 4:11-16; John 14:7-17). Christ now interceding for us at the right hand of God, is these sixteen hundred years the great apple tree dropping down apples of life; for there hath been harvest ever since Christ's ascension to heaven, and the grapes of heaven are ripe; all that falleth from the tree, leaves, apples, shadows, smell, blossoms, are but pieces of grace fallen down from Him who is the fullness of all, and hath filled all things. We shall never be blessed perfectly, till we all sit in an immediate union under the apple tree. This is a rare piece, by way of participation, of the divine nature. Christ passed an incomparable act of rich grace on the cross; and doth now act, and advocate for grace, and the applying of the grace of propitiation, in heaven, (1 John 2:1-2); and by an act of

grace, hath all the elect and ransomed ones engraven as a seal on his heart: and Christ being the fellow of God, (Zech. 13:7) the man that standeth straight opposite to his eye, the first opening of the eye-lids of God is terminated upon the breast of Christ, and on the engraving of free grace. All the glory of the glorified is, that they are both in the lower and higher house, even when they are the Estates and Peers of heaven, the everlasting tenants and freeholders of grace; so that a soul can desire no fairer inheritance, than the patrimony, lot, and heritage of free grace. Now, to this grace commending your spirit, as an heir of grace, I rest,—Your Honour's at all obliged respectiveness in the grace of God.

S.R.

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