

Samuel Rutherford

by J.C. Philpot

Rutherford's letters were characterized by their warmth, energy, and godly admonitions, showcasing his love for the Lord Jesus and his views on time and eternity.

Scripture: Psalm 39:3, Proverbs 25:11, Proverbs 27:6, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

J.C. Philpot reflects on Samuel Rutherford's letters, highlighting the amazing warmth and energy that emanated from his soul, the profound views on time and eternity expressed with force, his deep love for the Lord Jesus and longing for His presence, the practical and experiential admonitions filled with power and tenderness, and the pith and originality of expression that have preserved Rutherford's writings for generations.

Transcript

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We wish to drop a few remarks on the leading features of Rutherford's letters.

1. The amazing warmth and energy which seem to flash through them as an electric flame must strike every gracious reader. His heart and soul were all on fire, and his pen was as if the electric conductor to transmit the sparks to paper and thence to the heart of his correspondent. It was not with him as sometimes with us, "What shall I say next?" or, "What have I to write about?" but, "How shall I soonest pour my soul into the soul of my friend?"

2. The views and feelings which he had of time and eternity are expressed in them with amazing force. What weight and energy, for instance, are there in the following lines--"O thrice-blinded souls, whose hearts are charmed and bewitched with dreams, shadows, night vanities, and night fancies, of a miserable life of sin! Poor fools! who are beguiled with painted things, and this world's fair weather, and smooth promises, and rotten hopes. May not the devil laugh, to see us give away our souls for the corrupt and counterfeit pleasures of sin? O for a sight of eternity's glory, and a little tasting of the Lamb's marriage supper! How far are we bereft of wit, to chase, and hunt, and run, until our souls be out of breath, after a condemned happiness of our own making! O that we were out of ourselves, and dead to this world, and

this world dead and crucified to us!"

3. His love to the Lord Jesus, and the breathings and longings of his soul after his manifested presence, shine forth very conspicuously in his Letters. He had such transporting views of his Person, blood, righteousness, grace, and glory, that to those who never had any powerful manifestation of the Lord Jesus, some of his expressions may seem strained. Thus he wishes that the ocean were a sea of ink, and the expanded sky a scroll on which he could write the praises of Jesus. These may seem exaggerated expressions; but if millions of saints will find eternity too short to see his beauty, behold his glory, and sing his praise, why should a redeemed sinner on earth be grudged anticipating a foretaste of heaven? What is a sea of ink to eternity, or the blue skies to the realms of endless day?

4. The godly, practical, and yet thoroughly experimental admonitions that dropped from his pen, stamp Rutherford's Letters with singular power and force. They carry a sharp edge, and yet are so blended with tenderness and affection that the wound and the balm come together. He is like one who sees a friend lying asleep on the edge of a precipice. He roughly awakens him, and yet at the same moment catches him in his arms, and bears him away from the danger with the affectionate chiding, "Dear friend, how could you go to sleep on the top of the cliff?"

5. The pith and originality of expression in these Letters are a marked feature in them, and have embalmed them from decay. No writer will survive his own generation whose thoughts and expressions are not stamped with that force and originality which mark them as peculiarly his own. It is a man's own mint which stamps his coins and gives them currency. Here Rutherford peculiarly shines; and by engrafting on his own stock of original thoughts the forcible though homely Scotticisms to which we have before alluded, he has, without intending it, become one of the most forcible and original writers that has ever edified the church of God.

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