

# L. to Mr James Fleming

by Samuel Rutherford

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*The speaker finds sweetness in the Master's cross and desires to serve the Lord Jesus, despite his own inability to provoke many to love Him.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 4:13, 1 Peter 4:11

**Topics:** "Free Grace", "Faithful Ministry"

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## Description

Samuel Rutherford, a minister strongly opposed to the imposition of prelacy and the Prayer Book on Scotland, finds sweetness in serving the Master's cross despite his limitations. He marvels at how God can use even a sinful and unworthy vessel like himself to bring glory to His name. Rutherford acknowledges his own guiltiness but rejoices in the free grace and mercy of Christ that qualifies him for service. He encourages his fellow believers to find joy in praising and serving the Lord, knowing that Christ's love surpasses all understanding and that faithful ministry is a blessed honor.

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## Transcript

Fleming was minister of a parish in East Lothian. He was strongly opposed to the attempts of James and Charles I to impose prelacy and the Prayer Book on Scotland. His first wife, Martha, was the eldest daughter of John Knox.

REVEREND AND WELL-BELOVED IN OUR LORD, -- Grace, mercy, and peace to you. I received your letter which has refreshed me in my bonds. I cannot but testify unto you, my dear brother, what sweetness I find in our Master's cross; but alas, what can I either do or suffer for Him? I am not able, by tongue, pen, or sufferings, to provoke many to fall in love with Him: but He knoweth, whom I love to serve in the Spirit, what I would do and suffer by His own strength, so being that I might make my Lord Jesus lovely and sweet to many thousands in this land.

I think it amongst God's wonders, that He will take any praise or glory, or any testimony to His honorable cause, from such a forlorn sinner as I am. But when Christ worketh, He needeth not ask the question, by whom He will be glorious. I know (seeing His glory at the beginning did shine out of poor nothing, to set up such a fair house for men and angels, and so many glorious creatures, to proclaim His goodness, power, and wisdom) that, if I were burnt to ashes, out of the smoke and powder of my dissolved body He could

raise glory to Himself.

But, alas! Few know the guiltiness that is on my part: it is a wonder, that this good cause has not been marred and spilled in my foul hands. But I rejoice in this, that my sweet Lord Jesus has found something ado, even a ready market for His free grace and incomparable and matchless mercy, in my wants. Only my loathsome wretchedness and my wants have qualified me for Christ, and the riches of His glorious grace. Few know the unseen and private reckonings betwixt Christ and me; yet His love, His boundless love would not bide away, nor stay at home with Himself.

How joyful is my heart, that ye write that ye are desirous to join with me in praising; for it is a charity to help a devour to pay his debts. But when all have helped me, my name shall stand in His account-book under ten thousand thousands of sums unpaid. But it easeth my heart that His dear servants will but speak of my debts to such a sweet Creditor. I desire that He may lay me in His own balance and weigh me, if I would not fain have a feast of His boundless love made to my own soul, and to many others.

One thing I know, that we shall not at all be able to come near His Excellency, with eye, heart, or tongue; for He is above all created thoughts. All nations before Him are as nothing, and less than nothing: He sitteth in the circuit of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers before Him. Oh that men would praise Him! Ye complain of your private case. Alas! I am not the man to speak to such an one as ye are. Any sweet presence which I have had in this town, is, I know, for this cause, that I might express and make it known to others.

But I never find myself nearer Christ, that royal and princely One, than after a great weight and sense of deadness and gracelessness. I think that the sense of our wants, when withal we have a restlessness and a sort of spiritual impatience under them and can make a din, because we want Him whom our soul loveth, is that which maketh an open door to Christ. And when we think we are going backward, because we feel deadness, we are going forward; for the more sense, the more life; and no sense argueth no life.

And for your complaints of your ministry, I now think all I do too little. Plainness, freedom, watchfulness, fidelity, shall swell upon you, in exceeding large comforts, in your sufferings. The feeding of Christ's lambs in private visits lions and catechizing, in painful preaching, and fair, honest, and free warning of the flock, is a sufferer's garland. Oh, ten thousand times blessed are they who are honored of Christ to be faithful and painful in wooing a bride to Christ! My dear brother, I know that ye think more on this than I can write; and I rejoice that your purpose is, in the Lord's strength, to back your wronged Master; and to come out and call yourself Christ's man when so many are now denying Him. Help me with your prayers; and desire, from me, other brethren to take courage for their Master.

ABERDEEN, Aug. 15, 1637

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