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## ‘A Little Fair Man’ — Samuel Rutherford

A seventeenth century Englishman heard some well-known preachers in Scotland. Later he said, ‘I came to Irvine, and heard a well-favoured, proper old man, with a long beard, and that man [David Dickson] showed me all my heart. Then I went to St Andrews, where I heard a sweet, majestic looking man [Robert Blair], and he showed me the majesty of God. After him I heard a little, fair man, and he showed me the loveliness of Christ’.



The little, fair man, so aptly characterised, was Samuel Rutherford, whose influence still lingers on today, particularly through his published Letters (for example, by The Banner of Truth Trust).

### **Trials**

Rutherford was born 400 years ago at Nisbet near Jedburgh. He was converted to Christ, probably in his early twenties, while Professor of Humanity at Edinburgh University. Very little is known about this event.

He faced the anguish of being predeceased by his first wife and all his children by her. He married again in 1640, and of the seven children from this marriage only one survived him (Agnes, who was eleven years old at his death). Rutherford’s ability to comfort others was refined in the crucible of his own trials.



To Lady Kenmure he wrote: ‘The thorn is one of the most cursed, and angry, and crabbed weeds that the earth yieldeth, and yet out of it springeth the rose, one of the sweetest-smelled flowers, and most delightful to the eye, that the earth hath. Your Lord shall make joy and gladness out of your afflictions; for all

his roses have a fragrant smell. Wait for the time when his own holy hand shall hold them to your nose; and if ye would have present comfort under the cross, be much in prayer, for at that time your faith kisseth Christ, and he kisseth the soul'.

### Ministry at Anwoth

In 1627 Samuel Rutherford began his ministry at Anwoth, in Kircudbrightshire, Scotland. Great blessing resulted. Crowds from Anwoth and the neighbouring parishes flocked to his preaching. Many were converted, including some from the nobility. His remarkable efforts to point the dying Lord Kenmure to the righteousness of Christ alone, are recorded in the Last and Heavenly Speeches and Glorious Departure of John Viscount Kenmure.



However, the times were characterised by intense unrest. Battles for the ascendancy raged between puritans and bishops, parliamentarians and royalists, and later, England and Scotland.

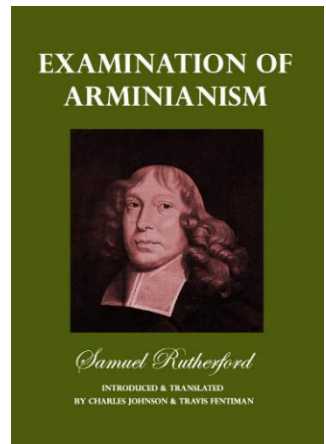
The Stuart dynasty, straddling England and Scotland, claimed a 'divine right' to rule these kingdoms and Ireland as well. Its monarchs laid claim to the headship of the church, exercised through the bishops it appointed.

Most puritans rejected such pretensions. The Scottish puritans responded with their National Covenant, in which they counter-asserted the exclusive 'Crown Rights' of Jesus Christ over his Church. Many were prepared to take up arms for this cause, and Rutherford provided a theological rationale for doing so in his treatise *Lex Rex*.

### Persecution

Rutherford, a consummate theologian, was a Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly in the early 1640s. Before that, however, he had published in 1636 a work entitled *Exercitationes de Gratia* against Arminian theology. For this and for his opposition to episcopacy, he was banished to Aberdeen in the same year.

Exile lasted only eighteen months, but it was a sore trial to Anwoth's pastor. From that lonely spot he wrote many of his most spiritual letters, encouraging individual Christians and the whole congregation at Anwoth. He gave rich, devotional counsel, warned against spiritual

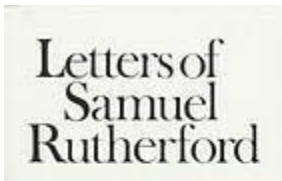


wolves, recounted his own experiences of affliction and divine grace, and exhorted the Lord's people to be fervent in Christ's cause.

A temporary change in Scottish puritan fortunes brought his release from Aberdeen in 1638, and soon afterwards he moved from Anwoth to St Andrews. It was from St Andrews that Rutherford was sent to the Westminster Assembly, and he returned there in 1644 to spend his remaining years.

### Controversy

These final years were not without controversy. In 1651 he incurred the wrath of the Laudian party by publishing *De Divina Providentia*, which included a further attack on Arminianism. Richard Baxter, who himself had Arminian leanings, later said that Rutherford's 'letters were the best piece, and this work the worst, he had ever read'!



PURITAN REFORMATION: SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

Also in 1651, he was embroiled in a 'post-persecution' dispute amongst the Covenanters. Rutherford did not escape the bitterness of that division, in which he was ranged against even David Dickson and Robert Blair.

At the last, Samuel Rutherford only narrowly escaped martyrdom. Death from a 'lingering sickness' rescued him from the wrath of the Restoration monarch Charles II. In 1661 Charles summoned the erstwhile author of *Lex Rex* to appear before Parliament on a charge of High Treason.

Rutherford sent word to the King that 'ere your day arrive, I will be where few kings and great folks come'. His dying words were said to be: 'Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land!' Hours later, on 30 March 1661, he went to that fair land.

### Lessons

What are the lessons of Samuel Rutherford's ministry? Firstly, at a time when persecution could easily be avoided by soft-peddalling God's grace, his preaching was full of that grace.

'Christ knoweth them well whom he chooseth', he wrote. 'Grace is a rare piece of the choice and the flower of the love of heaven: there be many common stones, not many pearls, not many

THE GREAT MASTER GARDENER, THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN A WONDERFUL PROVIDENCE, WITH HIS OWN HAND, PLANTED ME HERE, WHERE BY HIS GRACE, IN THIS PART OF HIS VINEYARD, I GROW; AND HERE I WILL ABIDE TILL THE GREAT MASTER OF THE VINEYARD THINK FIT TO TRANSPLANT ME.

- SAMUEL RUTHERFORD -

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diamonds and sapphires ... thousands go to hell ... every man [has] grace if you believe himself; every man taketh heaven for his home and heritage'.

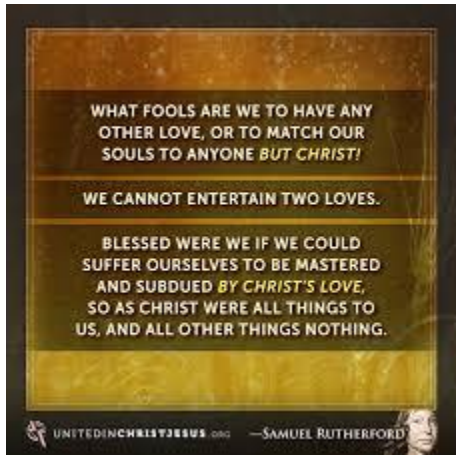
Again, an outstanding passage in one of his sermons states: 'The omnipotence of grace working powerfully overawes the soul, leading the thoughts and reason captive. And Christ works so strongly on the reasoning faculty, ravishing the understanding ... that all the witty reasonings are mastered, the mind is silenced and strongly drawn to apprehend Christ's beauty. So that, without a choice, the mind cannot but convincingly see that there is none so desirable, none so fair and lovely as Christ. The mind is brought to a spiritual drunkenness, a sweet fury of heavenly propension, and to conclude, "I cannot pass by such a Lover as Christ".'

Rutherford's doctrine must be ours too, because it is the teaching of Scripture.

## Christ

Secondly, Rutherford was utterly Christ-centred. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ and longed for communion with him. 'God save me from a draught of water without Christ! Peace and deliverance from the sword, without Christ and the gospel, are linked and chained to the curse of God ... All mercy — that is, graced mercy, is to be sought in Jesus Christ; every mercy is mercy, because it is in Christ'.

When we read Rutherford, are we not challenged by Christ's words to the Laodiceans, 'I would thou wert hot or cold' (Revelation 3:15)?



Listen to his outpouring in a letter on the prospect of the Church meeting Christ at the Second Coming: 'O when will we meet? O how long is it till the dawning of the marriage day! O sweet Jesus, take wide steps! O my Lord, come over the mountains at one stride! O my Beloved, flee as a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of separation! O, if he would fold the heavens together like an old cloak and shovel time and days out of the way and make ready in haste the Bride for her Husband! ... O heavens move fast! O time, run, run, and hasten the marriage day! For love is tormented with delays!'

## The Word

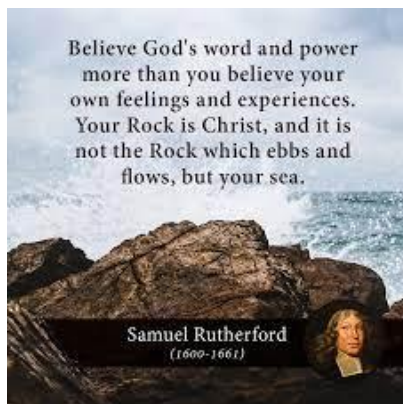
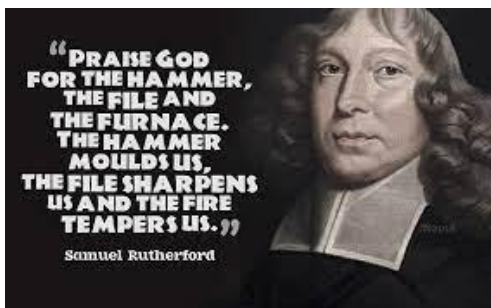
This particular quotation brings us to a third aspect of Rutherford's ministry. His sentences are rich in metaphor, and these metaphors are largely biblical. They interact with one another in a bold and daring way.

Such language, of course, reflects a poetic temperament, as well as the glory of Elizabethan English, but there is more to it than that. Samuel Rutherford was a minister of the Word of God. His preaching and pastoral ministry was essentially verbal — and no more. It consisted in prayer, preaching and writing, that is, the public and private application of the Scriptures.

Rutherford's contemporaries said of him that he was 'always praying, always preaching, always visiting the sick, always catechising, always writing and studying'. Are these our methods for spreading the gospel today? We need no other.

Rutherford had no recourse to the rampant mediaevalism of his day. He warned his hearers against 'the superstition and idolatry in kneeling in the instant of receiving the Lord's Supper, and of crossing in baptism, and of the observing of men's days, without any warrant of Christ our perfect Lawgiver'.

Putting this in today's context, the gospel does not need bands, dance, drama or visual effects to further its progress. 'Ye heard of me the whole counsel of God. Sew no clouts upon Christ's robe. Take Christ, in his rags and losses, and as persecuted by men, and be content to sigh and pant up the mountain, with Christ's cross upon your back'.



Rev Roger Fay  
Chairman, Evangelical Times

*(This article first appeared in Evangelical Times, November 2011.)*

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*Thank God for this message at the seminar, Pastor Jack. As I listened to this message, I can't help but remember the prayer of Moses in Psalm 90. Truly we are living in a fallen world and our mercies are in the hands of our almighty God whom when we put our trust & hopes will find assurance, peace & rest in the midst of calamity. Have a blessed week, Pastor.*

*Dn Tony Fraude  
Kulai BPC, Malaysia*

**(NB: The May day seminar message is available at the SHBPC website [www.sovereignhopebpc.org](http://www.sovereignhopebpc.org))**

**Message on 2 May 2021 at SHBPC Chinese Evening Service  
"Our Sacred Duties to One Another" (Rom 15:1-7)  
By Rev Jack Sin**

On May 2, 2021, I accepted Pastor Sin's invitation to participate in the online Chinese evening gathering of the Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church.

Thank God for His leading. There were 16 brothers and sisters in Christ from all over the world and Singapore. We welcomed a sister Ann from Malaysia who attended for the first time.

Bro Paul Kong led the meeting. We sang the first hymn "Only Trust Him", followed by an opening prayer to entrust the meeting to God and a second hymn "Divine Promises". Brother Paul read the Bible passage from Romans 15:1-7 which included "who are strong, should bear the weakness of the weak, and do not seek our own pleasure. ...." Then we sang the third hymn "Near the Cross".

Pastor Sin preached the Word of God to us. The following were the key thoughts I noted:

- Paul wrote the book of Romans and told the believers that he was a wicked persecutor of Christians. Because of God's grace, he was saved and justified by faith, so that he was burdened and not pleasing himself but to preach the gospel for God to the saving of souls.
- Pastor Sin shared that the reading the book of Romans can change people's lives, one of them was Martin Luther the German Reformer. However, many today no longer pursue after "being justified by faith" as taught by Paul, thinking that salvation is by works and self-centered merits, forgetting the sound teachings of the Bible. Many have also failed to persuade and support each other to seek Christ as their Lord and Saviour through faith alone and by grace alone.
- Mature Christians have the responsibility to reach out and help others; we are not to seek our own pleasure but to help the (1) physically weak ie. with sickness (2) spiritually back-slided and (3) mentally weak ie. with depression, anxiety, fears etc. We also have a duty to help other new believers to grow in the Lord.



- Because of the current severe coronavirus epidemic, many lives are greatly affected. There are brethren who needs prayer and tangible support from one another. It is incumbent on us to help them as the Lord burdens us. Thank God that we can help one another by the grace of God.
- We are also to be responsible is to reach out to others concerning the loss of our brethren in bereavement. We are to care and sympathize with those who have lost their loved ones, and to help those who are facing difficulties in life.
- Let us not seek only our own pleasures. Let us pray to get rid of prejudices and learn to accept people from all walks of life as they come to church.
- As we travel for work to different locations, we can also share the gospel for the Lord with our colleagues. We can also carry a gospel tract to give or invite people to church to seek God.
- We are facing a serious stage currently in the fight against the coronavirus epidemic. This is a war in which the enemy cannot be seen and we need to be vigilant and not complacent. But most of all, people need to know Christ as their Saviour for there is no other way of salvation.

After Pastor Sin shared and preached the Word, Paul shared a brief history of the Bible Presbyterian Church followed by Pastor Sin's further historical and doctrinal explanation of the BP movement.

Before Pastor Sin ended the fellowship with a closing prayer of thanksgiving, we sang the hymn "Your Love Will Never Change" in response to God's Word. We then had a brief time of fellowship and sharing especially with the brethren from country X. Amen.

<b>Romans 15:7</b> Accept others as they are	<b>Ephesians 5:19</b> Speak godly words
<b>Romans 16:16</b> Greet warmly with enthusiasm	<b>1 Thessalonians 5:11</b> Encourage
<b>Ephesians 4:32</b> Be kind and compassionate	<b>Hebrews 10:24</b> Spur others on
<b>2 Corinthians 13:11</b> Agree, live in peace	<b>1 Peter 4:10</b> minister
<b>Romans 15:7</b> Welcome, Salute, Greet, embrace	<b>Romans 14:19</b> Building up
<b>Galatians 6:2</b> help, carry, bear each others burdens	<b>1 Corinthians 12:25</b> Wait for
<b>1 Corinthians 7:5</b> Do not deprive each other	<b>Romans 15:5</b> same mind
<b>1 Peter 1:22</b> love earnestly, with a pure heart fervently	<b>1 John 1:7</b> fellowship
<b>James 5:16</b> tell, confess your sins, wrong doings	<b>Galatians 5:13</b> servants
<b>Romans 15:7</b> Receive	<b>James 5:16</b> Pray
<b>Colossians 3:9</b> Do not lie	<b>Acts 7:26</b> Don't hurt each other
<b>Romans 15:14</b> instruct	<b>1 John 3:18</b> love in word and deed
<b>John 13:14</b> Wash the feet	<b>Mark 8:16</b> Discuss and reason, confer
<b>Galatians 5:15</b> Don't bite and devour	<b>James 4:11</b> Avoid Slander
<b>Galatians 5:13</b> Serve in love	<b>Romans 12:16</b> Live in harmony
<b>Ephesians 5:21</b> Submit, subject	<b>Colossians 3:16</b> Teach and Admonish
<b>1 Peter 4:9</b> Offer Hospitality	<b>Ephesians 4:12</b> Be forbearing
<b>Romans 12:10</b> Honor others above yourself	<b>Colossians 3:13</b> Forgive one another
<b>1 Peter 5:5</b> Clothe yourself with humility	<b>Romans 14:13</b> Do not judge [condemn]

Bro Kam Weng



## Memory Verse

*Ecc 5:5* Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.

## Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Pastor Jack speaks today on “***The Management of the Tongue***” (***Ecc 5: 1-13***), continuing the quarterly sermon series on “Lessons on Godly Prudence from a Wise King – Studies in Ecclesiastes”. We will commemorate the Lord’s Supper.
3. Pastor Jack speaks next Sunday on “***The Mindless Pursuit of Wealth***” (***Ecc 6: 1-12***).
4. Sunday School classes continues in church after the worship service:
  - WCF Shorter Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
  - New Testament Survey – Dn Choo Siang
  - Studies in Numbers – Dr Kwong Leen
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The May prayer list is available from Dn Choo Siang.
7. Monthly Neighbourhood Bible Class meets on the first Friday of each month in church on the study of 2 Samuel. Do come and join us for a time of learning God’s Word.
8. The Pandemic book can be purchased through Dn Yue Kay (Hp: +65 97450311) or via email at [sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com](mailto:sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com).
9. Do kindly observe the safety measures of the church and assist with the weekly cleaning of the premises.
10. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
  - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
  - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
  - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

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