

May 2nd and 3rd

THE SANDS OF TIME ARE SINKING

*“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” ROMANS 8:18, 28*

The greatest words ever written on a page have always come from places of exile. Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians from prison. John Bunyan wrote “Pilgrim’s Progress” from a jail cell. Samuel Rutherford, a pastor from Anwoth, Scotland, wrote letters to his congregation while he was exiled in Aberdeen, Scotland, over 240 miles away from his church. Why was he exiled? He challenged the weak theology of the Scottish church. The ruling authorities banished him and ordered him to never preach in Scotland again. His “Letters of Samuel Rutherford” were written by him to encourage God’s people to stay the course. Most probably haven’t heard of these letters or ever heard of Samuel Rutherford. But a classic hymn written by Anne Cousin called “Immanuel’s Land” or “The Sands of Time are Sinking” are inspired by the words that Rutherford wrote in his letters. Men, how can these letters help us this weekend as we focus on the Lord’s work over our lives?

As we’ve been reading and studying Joseph’s life, we see how God paints His story on the canvas. Joseph is quick to credit God for all the suffering that he has endured in his life. Similarly, even as Samuel Rutherford dealt with different situations than Joseph, he was faced with God’s sovereignty over his life. He believed that God had planted him to pastor the small rural church of Anwoth. Even as his preaching reached London, no one could convince him to take another church that had more members. Instead, he saw little conversions and spiritual fruit. Weirsbe quotes Rutherford’s love for the people at Anwoth: “I see exceedingly small fruit of my ministry...I would be glad of one soul, to be a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ.” In her hymn, Cousins quotes Rutherford in the tenth verse (there are 19 total verses): “Oh! if one soul from Anwoth meet me at God’s right hand, my heaven will be two heavens, in Immanuel’s land!” Rutherford loved the people that God had given him!

Rutherford looked at his world just like Joseph looked at his. Cousins writes in verse 13: “With mercy and with judgment, my web of time He wove, and the dews of sorrow were given with His love. I’ll bless the hand that guided, I’ll bless the heart that planned...”. Sounds awfully similar to the words of Joseph as he encounters his sinful brothers. Rutherford and Joseph both see God’s hand in giving them their lives. They both were exiled from the people that they loved. They both suffered unjustly. But God. God never wastes anything. And God doesn’t deal with us any different from these heroes of our faith. Men, God has uniquely purposed you to be made more like Him. The thorns of life are often what God uses to shape us to be men of granite that are sold out for His cause. May we be encouraged that God has purpose for us and gives us a way to impact His kingdom—which will last for eternity!

Spend some time thanking God for His perfect plan over your life. Ask Him for strength to be submissive to that plan.

For Further Reading: Romans 8:18-39

