

A Letter of Encouragement

Addressed to a few awakened individuals, in the prospect of danger from persecution.

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Beloved brethren in the grace of God.

Is it not stated in the covenant, which we have established with the Lord Jesus, my dearly beloved, that he shall give us the kingdom, in the same manner as his Father gave it to him? That is, that through much inward and outward tribulation, we must enter with him into the glorious, incorruptible, and eternal kingdom of God; but everything according to the all wise arrangement of our heavenly Father, without whose will, not even a hair shall fall from our heads. Ought we then to wonder, and not rather to rejoice, when that befalls us, which our Lord has previously announced to us? Yes, verily, we have now much more reason to lift up our heads, with filial confidence, that our affairs go on prosperously, and that the Lord is in the midst of us, with his blessing, because the adversary is so much enraged at us. If, at our first connection with Jesus, we have proclaimed war against the kingdom of darkness, it cannot be otherwise; we must expect from it in return, every species of hostility. Only let the eye of faith be steadily fixed upon him that hath loved us, and we shall be able to come off more than conquerors, for his sake, in all things, and boldly to say with that hero, who had all those enemies before him, with which we have at present daily to struggle, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Through divine goodness, much good seed has been for some time sown in, and amongst us. A sifting, purification, and confirmation must now take place. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew must now be experimentally expounded, in order that every one may perceive how and where he stands. For we must by no means suppose, that we are to have nothing but intellectual consolation and sweetness, in the company of Jesus. For although we feel it unspeakably blissful to be with him, yet, all that is good must be tried to prevent it from being lost or spoiled. The cross is therefore pure grace and goodness. No, my dear brethren, we have not entered the vessel with Jesus, for the purposes of diversion and amusement. A little storm already rises, and a greater one may follow. The vessel feels the gale. Let us possess our hearts, therefore, in calm and unshaken confidence in him, who is in the vessel with us, who can command both the wind and the sea, in order that he need not shame us by saying, “O, ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?”

And what is there, that should move us? If sufferings overtake us, we shall not suffer, God be praised, as evil doers. We have always shown due respect, obedience and duty towards the constituted authorities, even as we have been taught. We have not aimed at fomenting disturbances or divisions in church government; neither have we formed new sects, or intend to do

so. Our consciences are at ease both upon these, as well as upon other suspicious points, which might be falsely laid to our charge. Our assembling together has been, according to the apostle's admonition, to provoke unto love and to good works; to learn how we, who have put on Christ, might also walk in him, and be more and more established in him. These meetings of ours have not been privately held, but so that any one might have been present; gladly wishing others to enjoy those blessings, which we have found and hope to find in Jesus. In short, our only aim has been how each one ought to walk in his state and vocation, as a true Christian, and Christian citizen. He that suspects us of anything else, is either misinformed, or maliciously inclined. "Who is there that will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?" And if we suffer notwithstanding, we suffer as Christians, and need not be ashamed of it, but glorify God under these circumstances, by highly esteeming his reproach, and by a filial confidence in his faithfulness, which endureth forever. Be of good courage, therefore; the cause is the Lord's: he will bring it to pass : his is the kingdom.

Nevertheless, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. All the victory lies in a peaceful, passive, believing, and praying state of mind. The harsh and impetuous force of nature must be nailed to the cross of Christ, and be broken and mollified by a believing descent into his meek and conciliating mind of love; so that nothing be cherished, but compassionate charity, benevolence, and beneficence, even towards our adversaries. In this way, Christ triumphed over all the powers of hell. If we walk, at the same time, worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even those shall be added unto us, who now oppose us, when they behold the beauty of truth, and what blessedness we enjoy with Jesus.

Much consideration, consultation, and acting according to human prudence, is of little avail in this matter. As long as innocence remains in its native nakedness, no one can lay hold of it. All our strength, peace, and salvation must be sought in thus inwardly abiding, with a childlike spirit, in Jesus. Everything is then given us at the hour and moment when it is wanted. Let us therefore not be drawn out of our fortress, nor distract ourselves with unnecessary apprehensions, human forethought, and endless conversation on present circumstances, but continue so much the more within, with Christ, by faith and prayer, in order to wait for the enemy at our posts.

Let us likewise not weaken ourselves by an unbelieving view of and abiding with ourselves. We must venture ourselves on God; he will not desert us. He pays us the costs of all we have to do and suffer for him. We ought therefore not to take our weakness or inability into account. If we only abide with filial confidence in him, we can do; all things through him that strengthened us. And although the Lord often lets us feel our weakness in the season of trial, yet this ought not to make us afraid; it is for our good, in order that we may be no self-made heroes, but creep the more helplessly into his strength, and he be all things and alone in us.

We have only to do with the Lord. The world acts its part. Let it do so. The Lord will carry on and complete his work in our hearts, by means and in spite of everything. Be this our only care. To this every foe must secretly contribute, although they purpose the contrary. Let us then remain resigned to him, unconcerned for the future, looking solely unto him with an introverted eye, and boldly pursue our course, forsaking, more and more entirely, all created things, and all we are, that Jesus alone may possess and rule in us. O my dear brethren, let us forsake ourselves! In us, there is nothing but perdition, misery, and weakness. In Jesus there is real life and salvation. Let everyone seek and experience it for himself. We must be found actively in him. The door is opened in his

blood, and near in spirit, even to the greatest sinners. Ah if they did but know it, how would they hasten to it!

Now my brethren, receive these lines, with which I have felt induced to greet you, in the simplicity of love. Be strong in the Lord. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge! Selah.

In his grace I remain, Your humble brother and servant.