

Being a letter to the Church of Christ by J.F. Rutherford.

To the dear Saints in Christ Jesus:

So many of you have written me and my companions in bonds, words of love, sympathy and encouragement, and our opportunity for writing is so limited, that we ask all of you to take this as an acknowledgement of your sweet messages. I know that like Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16) you are glad to "refresh us" and that you "are not ashamed of our chains" and we, beloved, count it a great privilege to suffer with Christ, Jesus our blessed Head, our Lord. Looking back I praise the Lord for all the sweet privileges I have had of serving you, and the sweet fellowship in Christ I have enjoyed with you.

How wonderfully the Lord is fulfilling his precious promises to us. He bought us with the precious blood of his beloved One. He guided us and drew us to Jesus; and there we became prespective members of the Body of Christ. Our dear Lord then made us His ambassadors to represent him in this unfriendly world, to proclaim the message of glad tidings to all who have the hearing ear. What joy has filled our hearts as we have gone forth conscious of the fact we were representing our great King. True, the world has not known us, "it is enough for the disciple to be as his master"; thankful indeed we are that we have had this privilege. Some have had the hearing ear, and some of you we have had the privilege of showing the pathway that leads to life. I am rejoicing to see you standing steadfast in the faith.

On June 2nd 1907 (1 year after my consecration) I entered the Pilgrim service; and on June 2nd 1918 I delivered the last discourse before our trial. It was 11 years of blessed service, and how I thank the dear Lord for this privilege, and if I can only see and die with Jesus how I shall delight to tell Him of my deep gratitude to and love for Him for all these blessed privileges. I have seen you in distress and have wept with you. I have seen you in joy and have rejoiced with you. I have endeavored to be faithful to my Lord; and because of my persistence in telling out the blessed message of the Kingdom and the resurrection blessings coming to mankind I am called questioned before the ecclesiastical and civil powers of the world, another blessed favor the Lord has granted to me as his willing slave.

Brother Russell had promised the 7th volume. The Scriptures show that it must be published. When without self-seeking, but by the will of God I was placed in the position of executive of the Society of the Lord's organization for the harvest work, I felt it my sacred duty and privilege from the Lord to see that the 7th vol. was published. And when the Lord through two of his faithful servants (now my fellow-prisoners) produced the manuscript, I felt that he had laid upon me the privilege and duty of seeing that this message went to his people. The book was published at a time of much opposition to the Society and its management. It was born in travail.

The adversary has always opposed the progress of the work of the Lord. We were not at all surprised to find the storm raging about us at the time. Almost night and day we labored to get the book out to you. Some of you had the opportunity helping and did so with gladness of heart. We give thanks to our Father and Saviour Christ Jesus for the privilege of having a part in publishing this, the last of the series of studies in the Scriptures, which the

2

people of the centuries to come will read with deep interest and profit and will give God the glory.

Brother Russel's last expression concerning the harvest was that it would end in the spring of 1918. We believed this, and believing it, we felt that the 7th vol. must go out before the harvest closed. My attention was directed to Jer. 51:59-64. I understood it to mean that vol. 7 must go to the people, hence the organization to distribute it and the pushing of the work.

You, beloved in the Lord, responded to the call and joyfully went forth as living stones tied to the rock and cast it in among the people -- into the waters of the Euphrates and it sank down and illustrated how Babylon shall fall. Ten million copies of 'Fall of Babylon' you distributed with willing hands. The sole thought in the minds of each of us was to do the will of the Lord of the harvest and to finish His work before the night should come on. There never was a thought in our minds of interfering with the Government or violating any law.

The spring of 1918 came, and the evidence began to increase that the harvest was closing, and the reapers were crying to each other: 'Hasten the reaping we pray. Forgetting your tired sore feet, you hurried on, and the Lord blessed you richly. Are you sorry now that you have put forth such an effort? I am persuaded from the letters I have received that you are not sorry but glad. Rejoice, now, beloved, the work of harvesting the church is done. The dark night is coming rapidly and soon we shall be home. There may be a little more work for the faithful to do in calling the world's attention to the message and the siding of the Elisha class. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and to direct you, and he will do it.

More than twenty years ago Brother Russell told us what would happen (see P 95). True to what was then foreshadowed. Herodias, being angry and long desiring to destroy us, seized the opportunity made possible by the distress of nations.

Salome danced before Herod. ~~Her~~ The demand was made and duly met. You are familiar with the story of how many of our dear faithful brethren have been arrested and thrown into prison. It was charged we were the employ of the German Government. Our books were seized and searched for evidence, but none was found, because none ever existed. We were arrested and haled into court, charged with conspiracy and sedition, the evidence being that we published the 'Finished Mystery' and aided our brethren concerning the draft. We knew what would be the result. God had foretold it long ago (Jer. 36:37,38). We knew that we were absolutely innocent. Not one of us had the thought of doing wrong.

We were wholly absorbed in doing what we feel the Lord gave us to do, to make known the message due to be published. Because of faithfulness to our duty I and six of my companions find ourselves in prison cells. Are we pining? NO, dear brethren; we are happy to soon make report to Him. His approval alone we desire and crave. We count not our lives dear unto us, only that we may be counted worthy to see the Lord. We feel that we have fought a good fight, and if our work is finished we await the judgment of our present Lord, whom we love and serve.

A brief history of the trial we have written. We are advised that seven that opposed the Society and its work during the past year attended upon the trial and lent aid to our prosecutors. We warn

you, beloved, against the subtle efforts of some of them to fawn upon you now, in an attempt to get hold upon the Society. Take heed of St. Paul's admonition in Rom. 17:17,18. Be gentle and kind, yet firm, with all. We have come to the end of the day. Let us take heed to what we have been taught.

In all this trying experience the Lord has repeatedly shown us that He is bearing us up in his hand. He has permitted seven of us to be sentenced together; for some reason known to Him, the eighth brother being left behind and not as yet sentenced. We spent seven days & nights in the dark cell of the Raymond Street jail in Brooklyn. Then we were removed to Long Island city jail and placed in 7 adjoining cells in the corridor. Here for 7 days we have had fellowship together, being permitted to assemble in one cell every morning for our Bethel service. We have been treated very kindly here and now in the 7th night in this prison we are informed that this is to be our last here and on the morrow we shall be taken to Atlanta penitentiary.

During our imprisonment the other prisoners have been respectful to us and have treated us with difference. The officers have been kind. We have expected to be governed by the prison rules, and have gladly obeyed them in letter and in spirit. Not a tear of regret or bitterness has been shed by one of the seven. We have wept for you, beloved, we have sorrowed because of our separation from you. We have prayed much for you, that the dear Lord will protect you from the wolves, and take you safely into His fold. We know that He loves you more than we can and that He will care for you where we cannot.

Sorrow not for us, dear saints, for we are in the Lord's hands. Thus far He has led us and He will lead us on. Your pathway may be fraught with many trying experiences. But his Word's "Fear not them that can kill the body, but fear him who may destroy the soul (new creature)," "Fear not little flock, it is you Fathers good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." I know that you are counted by ecclesiasticism as the off-scouring of the earth, and that you are a gazing stock while you are the companions of prisoners. But forget all these things. Remember that our Master made Himself of no reputation, that He endured the cruel cross, despising the shame, all that He might do the Father's will. What a blessed privilege then to be counted worthy of bearing some reproaches ~~and~~ like what fell upon Him. God has favored you and us above the ancient worthies, who endured hardships and persecutions far greater than we have endured. He has favored us above the angels of heaven, who desired to look into His plan, but were not permitted. He has favored us by calling us to the heavenly calling far above angels, powers and principalities, setting before us the greatest of all prizes. He tells us that we can have this prize only by passing through much tribulation, and that the feet members must have a goodly part in this persecution. Behold, then, the persecution and the prize; behold the cross and the crown. We can have the latter only by taking up the former. Shall we then falter or fall back? I am persuaded of you, dear brethren, that you will not falter or fall back, but but that when the fiery chariot comes near that you will gladly take it. It is the greatest privilege & ever to get into that chariot. It means a time in glory; it means a crown of life; it means to see and be like Jesus; it means to behold the face of the great Jehovah

God. Poor, blind world, drunk with the wine of Babylon; it is staggering now like a drunken man, and is about at its wits end (Ps. 107:27-29). Soon the Prince of Peace will speak to the raging waves of the surging masses, and then quietness and calmness will result.

Then will follow the desire of all honest people of all nations. If we have withstood the storms and been faithful to the Lord, we may have a part in blessing those who have used us ill because they did not know us, even as the same class did not know our Master.

The dark night is at hand; but remember it is darkest just before dawn of the bright day. Soon the Son of righteousness will fully arise with healing in his beams; and if we have proven faithful we shall experience the sweet promise of our Lord, who said: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the brightness of the sun in the kingdom of the father" (Matth. 13:43). Then will the world know us not as seditious, but true patriots, that we are not enemies but friends, anxious to do all for mankind. The Lord has promised that the world shall know who has been born in Zion (Ps. 87:35). Will you be born there? I hope I shall see you there. Then will be fully appreciated the words of dear brother Paul that "These light afflictions endure but a moment and that they are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Kor. 4:10). Now you are despised and hated of all nations, and now is the time to remember the words of our King: 'In Patience ~~xxxxxx~~ possess ye your souls. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.'

(This testimony was signed by the other six, who were sentenced with Brother Rutherford and delivered to the N.Y. Bethel family while being transferred to train en route to Atlanta Georgia State (Federal) Penitentiary.)