

# Sarah Howely's Testimony

(Died in 1670 at approximately age 14)

Miss Sarah Howely, when she was between eight and nine years old, was carried by her friends to hear a sermon, where the minister preached on (Matthew 11:30), "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light; " in the applying of which scripture, the child was mightily awakened, and made deeply sensible of the condition of her soul, and her need of Christ; she wept bitterly to think what case she was in; when home into a chamber, and upon her knees, she wept and cried to the Lord as well as she could, which might easily be perceived by her eyes and countenance. She was not contented with this, but got her little brother and sister into a chamber with her, and told them their condition by nature, and wept over them, and prayed with them. After this, she heard another sermon upon (Proverbs 29:1), "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy; " at which she was more affected than before, and was exceedingly solicitous about her soul, that she spent great part of the night in weeping and praying, and could scarcely take any rest day or night for some time together; desiring with all her soul to escape from everlasting flames, and to get an interest in the Lord Jesus: O what should she do for Christ! What should she do to be saved!

She gave herself much to attending upon the word preached, and still continued very tender under it, greatly relishing what she heard. She was very much in secret prayer, and was usually very importunate, and full of tears. She could scarcely speak of sin, or be spoke to, but her heart was ready to melt. She spent much time in reading the scripture. She was exceeding dutiful to her parents, very loath to grieve them in the least; and if she had at any time, (which was very rare) offended them, she would weep bitterly. She abhorred lying, and allowed herself in no known sin. When she was at school, she was eminent for her diligence, teachableness, meekness, and modesty, speaking a little, but when she did speak, it was usually spiritual. She continued in this course of religious duties for some years together.

When she was about fourteen years old, she broke a vein in her lungs, (as is supposed,) and often spat blood, yet did a little recover. In the beginning of January, she was taken very bad again, in which sickness she was in great distress of soul. When she was first taken, she said, "O mother, pray for me, for Satan is so busy that I cannot pray for myself: I see I am undone without Christ, and a pardon! O, I am undone to all eternity!" Her mother, knowing how serious she had been formerly, did a little wonder that she should be in such agonies; and asked her what sin it was that was so burdensome to her spirit? "O mother, said she, it is not any particular sin that sticks so close to my conscience, as the sin of my nature; without the blood of Christ, that will damn me."

Her mother asked her, what she should pray for, for her? She answered, "That I may have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; and that I may have an

assurance of God's love to my soul." Her mother asked her, why she spoke so little to the minister that came to her? She answered, "It was her duty with patience and silence to learn of him." One time when she fell into a fit, she cried out, "O I am going; I am going; but what shall I do to be saved? Lord Jesus, I will lie at thy feet; and if I perish, it shall be at the fountain of thy mercy."

She was much afraid of presumption, and dreaded a mistake in the matters of her soul, and would be often putting up ejaculations to God, to deliver her from deceiving herself. To instance in one, "Great and mighty God, " said she, "give me faith, and true faith; that I may not be a foolish virgin, having a lamp, but no oil." Her father bade her be of good cheer, because she was going to a better Father: at which she fell into a great agony, and said, "But how do I know that? I am a poor sinner, who wants assurance: O, for assurance!" This was her great, earnest, and constant request, to all that came to her, to beg assurance for her; and she would look with so much eagerness upon them, as if she desired nothing in the world so much as that they would pity her, and help her with their prayers. Never was a poor creature more earnest for any thing than she was for assurance, and the light of God's countenance: O the piteous moan that she would make! O the agonies that her soul was in!

The Lord's day before that on which she died, a kinsman of hers came to see her, and asked her whether she knew him? She answered, "Yes, I know you, and I desire you would learn to know Christ: you are young, but you know not how soon you may die! And, O, to die without Christ, is a fearful thing: O, redeem time! O, time, time, precious time!" Being requested, by him, not to spend herself, she said, "She would fain do all the good she could while she lived:" upon which account she desired that a sermon might be preached at her funeral, concerning the preciousness of time.

Some ministers who came to see her, earnestly entreated the Lord to give her some token for good, that she might die in full triumph: notes of the same nature were sent to several churches. After she had long waited for an answer to their prayers, she said, "Well, I will venture my soul upon Christ." For the pains and agonies that she was in, her patience was next to a wonder: "Lord, " said she, "Lord, give me patience, that I may not dishonour thee!"

On Thursday, after long waiting, great fears, and many prayers, when all her friends thought she had been past speaking, to the astonishment of her friends, she broke forth thus, with a very audible voice, and cheerful countenance: "Lord, thou hast promised that whosoever comes unto thee, thou wilt in no wise cast him out: Lord, I come unto thee, and surely thou wilt in no wise cast me out. O, so sweet! O, so glorious is Jesus! I have thee, sweet and glorious Jesus; he is sweet, he is sweet! O the admirable love of God in sending Christ, and free grace to a poor lost creature!"

Her soul then seemed ravished with the love of Christ. And while she was engaged in magnifying of God, her father, brethren, and sisters, with others of the family, were called, to whom she spake particularly, as her strength would

give leave. She gave her Bible as a legacy to one of her brothers, and desired him to use that well for her sake; and added, to him and the rest, "O make use of time to get Christ for your souls: spend no time in running up and down, or in playing: O get Christ for your souls, while you are young! Remember now your Creator before you come to a sick-bed: put not off this great work till then, for then you will find it hard work indeed: I know by experience, the devil will tell you it is time enough; and ye are young, and what need ye be in such haste? You will have time enough when you are old. But remember the words of a dying sister. If you knew how good Christ is! If you had but one taste of his sweetness, you had rather go to him a thousand times, than stay in this wicked world. I would not for ten thousand worlds part with my interest in Christ. O, how happy am I, that I am going to everlasting joys! I would not go back again for twenty thousand worlds; and will you not strive to get an interest in Christ?"

After this, looking upon one of her father's servants, she said, "What shall I do at the great day, when Christ shall say to me, "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee?" and shall say to the wicked, "Go, thou cursed, into the lake that burns for ever!" What a grief it is for me to think, that I shall see any of my friends that I knew upon earth, turned into that lake which burns for ever! O that word, for ever! Remember that for ever! I speak these words to you, but they are nothing, except God speaks to you too: O pray, that God would give you grace!" And then she prayed, "O Lord, finish thy work upon their souls: it will be my comfort to see you in glory; but it will be your everlasting happiness."

On Friday, after she had had such lively discoveries of God's love, she was exceedingly desirous to die, and cried out, "Come, Lord Jesus, come, quickly! Conduct me to thy tabernacle. I am a poor creature without thee: but, Lord Jesus, my soul longs to be with thee: O when shall it be? Why not now, dear Jesus? Come, Lord Jesus, come, quickly! But why do I thus speak? Thy time, dear Lord, is the best: O, give me patience."

On Saturday, she spoke but little, being very drowsy, yet now and then she dropped these words, "How long, sweet Jesus? Finish thy work, sweet Jesus: come away, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" On the Lord's-day she scarcely spoke any thing. She requested that notes of thanksgiving might be sent to those who had formerly prayed for her, that they might help her to praise the Lord for that full assurance which he had given her of his love; and seemed to be swallowed up with the thoughts of God's free love to her soul. She often commended her spirit into the hand of the Lord. The last words she was heard to utter, were these, "Lord, help, Lord Jesus, help! Dear Lord Jesus, blessed Jesus!"

Thus, on the Lord's-day, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening, she sweetly slept in Jesus, and began an everlasting Sabbath, Feb. 19, 1670.