

John Sudlow's Testimony

(Died in childhood in 1665, exact age unknown)

John Sudlow was born of religious parents, in the county of Middlesex in England. They were careful to instill spiritual principles into him as soon as he was capable of understanding them. Those endeavors the Lord blessed with success. When he was scarce able to speak plain, he seemed to have a very great awe and reverence of God upon his spirit, and a strange sense of the things of another world. The first thing that greatly influenced him was the death of his brother. It made him endeavor to escape from the wrath to come, and to enquire what he should do to be saved. When he saw his brother without breath and not able to speak or stir; and when the body was carried out of doors and put into the ground, he was greatly concerned. He asked whether he should die too? When told that he would, it made so deep an impression on him, that from that time on, he was exceedingly serious. He was about four years old when this happened.

He was now desirous to know what he might do that he might live in heaven and what to avoid that he might not die and go to hell for ever. When his parents instructed him, he quickly labored to avoid whatever might displease God. Now the apprehensions of God, death and eternity, laid such a restraint upon him, that he would not for a world have told a lie. He was much taken with reading the book of Martyrs, and would willingly leave his dinner and go to his book. He went to his father and mother with great tenderness and compassion. He entreated them to take more care of his brothers and sisters and to take heed lest they should go to hell and be ruined for ever. The providences of God were not passed by without his careful notice. In the time of the plague he was exceedingly concerned about his everlasting state, and was often alone upon his knees praying. The following prayer was found written by his hand after his death.

"O Lord God and merciful Father, take pity upon me, a miserable sinner and strengthen me, O Lord, in your faith, and make me one of your saints in heaven. O Lord, keep me from this poisonous infection. However, not my will, but your will be done. O Lord, if you have appointed me to die by it, prepare me for death, and give me a good heart to bear up under my afflictions. O Lord God, and merciful Father, take pity on me, your child. Teach me, O Lord, your word and make me strong in faith. O Lord, I have sinned against you. Lord, pardon my sins. I would have been in hell long ago, if it had not been for your mercy. But O Lord, if you have appointed me to die, prepare me for death, that I may die with comfort. O Lord, I pray to help me to bear up under my afflictions, for Christ's sake. Amen."

He was very concerned for the whole nation. He begged that God would pardon the sins of this land and bring it nearer to himself. About the beginning of November 1665, this child was overcome by the distemper, but he behaved with admirable patience under the hand of God. These were some of his last expressions.

"The Lord shall be my physician, for he will cure both soul and

body.—Heaven is the best hospital.—It is the Lord, let him do what he seems good in his eyes.”

Again:

“It is the Lord that taketh away my health; but I will say as Job did, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21) If I should live longer, I should but sin against God.”

Looking upon his father, he said, “If the Lord will but lend me the least finger of his hand, to lead me through the dark entry of death, I will rejoice in him.” When a minister came to him, among other things, he spoke something of life. He answered, “This is a wicked world: it is better to live in heaven.” An hour and a half before his death, the same minister came again to visit him, and asked him, “John, are you not afraid to die?” He answered, “No, if the Lord will comfort me in that hour.” “But, ” said the minister, “how can you expect comfort, seeing we deserve none?” He answered, “No, if I had my just deserts, I would have been in hell long ago.” “But, ” replied the minister, “How do you expect comfort and salvation, seeing that you are a sinner?” He answered, “In Christ alone.”—In whom, about an hour and a half later, he fell asleep.