

## AND IF I PERISH, I PERISH! ESTHER 4:16-17

Sullivan Ballou: major in the Union Army. Written in July, 14<sup>th</sup> 1861. Never mailed. He died July 29, 1861

### Text of Sullivan Ballou's Last Letter

#### My Very Dear Wife:

Indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days, perhaps to-morrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write a few lines, that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. **Not my will, but thine, O God be done.** **If** it is necessary that I should fall on the battle-field for any country, **I am ready.** I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans upon the triumph of government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution, and I am willing, perfectly willing to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know, that with my own joys, I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with care and sorrows, when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it, as their only sustenance, to my dear little children, is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country.

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death, **and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country and thee.**

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in this hazarding the happiness of those I loved, and I could not find one. A pure love of my country, and of the principles I have often advocated before the people, and "the name of honor, that I love more than I fear death," have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

**Sarah, my love for you is deathless.** It seems to bind me with mighty cables, that nothing but Omnipotence can break; and yet, my love of country comes over me like a strong wind, and bears me irresistibly on with all those chains, to the battlefield. **The memories of all the blissful moments I have spent with you come crowding over me, and I feel most deeply grateful to God and you, that I have enjoyed them so long.** And how hard it is for me to give them up, and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our boys grow up to honorable manhood around us.

I know I have but few claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me, perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. **If I do not, my dear Sarah, never**

**forget how much I love you, nor that, when my last breath escapes me on the battle-field, it will whisper your name.**

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless, how foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears, every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm. But I cannot, I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience **till we meet to part no more.**

But, O Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth, and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you in the garish day, and the darkest night amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours always, always, and, if the soft breeze fans your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air cools your throbbing temples, it shall be my spirit passing by.

**Sarah, do not mourn me dear; think I am gone, and wait for me, for we shall meet again.**

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue-eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care, and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers, I call God's blessing upon them. **O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.**

- Sullivan

**God has a work for you to do!**

**If you don't do it, it **will** get done!**

**However, if you don't do it, you and your family will be **undone!****

## **1. Esther acted in spite of her fears!**

**Esther 4:9** And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

**Esther 4:10** Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; **Esther 4:11** **All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is **not** called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.**

**Esther 4:16** Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; **and so will I go in unto the king, which is **not** according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.**

**Mordecai:**

- I can't do that!
- It's against the Persian law!
- I'll be put to death!
- I'm not in the King's good graces...for 30 days!
- The exception won't work for me!

**Proverbs 29:25** The fear of man bringeth a snare: But whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

**Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: And the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

**Psalms 27:1** The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

**Psalms 31:13** For I have heard the slander of many: Fear was on every side: While they took counsel together against me, They devised to take away my life.

**Psalms 46:1** God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

**Psalms 46:2** Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

**Psalms 118:6** The LORD is on my side; I will **not** fear: What can man do unto me?

**2 Timothy 1:7** For God hath **not** given us the spirit of fear; **but** of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

**1 John 4:18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

John Calvin said something like: **Our hearts are idol factories!**

RLW: our hearts are excuse factories! Like making sausages – excuse sausages!

## 2. Esther acted **out of necessity!**

**Esther 4:6** So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate.

**Esther 4:7** And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. **Esther 4:8** Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people. **Esther 4:9** And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

## 3. Esther acted **because of God's will / word!**

**Esther 4:14** For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: **and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**

**Esther 4:15** Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, **Esther 4:16** Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: **and if I perish, I perish.**

**Exodus 4:10** And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am **not** eloquent, **neither** heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: **but** I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. **Exodus 4:11** And the LORD said unto him, **Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?** **Exodus 4:12** Now **therefore** go, and **I will be with thy mouth, and** teach thee what thou shalt say.

**Jeremiah 1:4** Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, **Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. **Jeremiah 1:6** Then said I, **Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.**

**Jeremiah 1:7** But the LORD said unto me, Say **not**, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. **Jeremiah 1:8** Be **not** afraid of their faces: **for** I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.