

PETITION FOR CLEMENCY

James Stanley (1607–1651), Earl of Derby

to Sir William Lenthall (1591–1662), Speaker of the House of Commons (1640–1655, 1659–1660)

11 October 1651

Being now, by the will of God, for aught I know, brought to the last minutes of my life, I once more most humbly pray the Parliament will be pleased to hear me before my death.

I plead nothing in vindication of my offences, but humbly cast myself down at the Parliament's feet, begging their mercy. I have several times addressed my humble petitions for life, and now again crave leave to submit myself to their mercy, with assurances that the Isle of Man shall be given up to such hands as the Parliament entrust to receive it; with this further engagement (which I shall confirm by sureties), that I shall never act or endeavor anything against the established power of this nation, but end my days in prison or banishment, as the House shall think fit.

Sir, it is a greater affliction to me than death itself that I am sentenced to die at Bolton, so that the nation will look upon me as a sacrifice for that blood which some have unjustly cast upon me, and from which I hope I am acquitted in your opinions, and the judgment of good men, having cleared myself by undeniable evidence.

Indeed, at my trial it was never mentioned against me, and yet they adjudge me to suffer at Bolton as if indeed I had been guilty. I beg a respite for my life upon that issue, that if I do not acquit myself from that imputation, let me die without mercy.

But, Sir, if the Parliament have not this mercy for me, I humbly pray the place appointed for my death may be altered; and that if the Parliament think it not fit to give me time to live, they will be pleased to give me time to die, in respiting my life for some time whilst I may fit myself for death; since thus long I have been persuaded by Colonel Duckenfield the Parliament would give me my life.

Sir, I submit myself, my family, wife, and children to the mercy of Parliament; and shall live or die, Sir, your contented and humble servant.

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:388–390.