

The Trial & Triumph of Faith

SERMON 5

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

“VEXED with a devil;”—She is devilled, that is, fully possessed.

The malice of the devil is a natural agent, and worketh as intently and bently as he can. As the fire putteth forth all its strength in burning; the sun heateth and enlighteneth as vehemently as it can; a millstone fallen from the sphere of the moon down to the earth, useth no moderation or abatement in its motion, the malice of hell being let loose, it worketh mischief by nature, not by will. Satan’s possession is full: Peter saith to Ananias, “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost?” (Acts 5:3.) As there is a fullness of God, (Eph. 3:19,) so there is a fullness of the devil, “being filled with all unrighteousness.” (Rom. 1:29.) It is no wonder that cavaliers and malignants work as their father: the nature of the father is in the son; the manner of working is suitable to the nature of the worker; hell works like hell. “Behold thou hast spoken, and done evil as thou couldst.” (Jer. 3:5.) “They drew sin and iniquity, not with a rush or a thread, but with cords of vanity and with a cart rope.” (Isa. 5:18.) “They do evil with both hands earnestly.” (Mic. 7:3.) All that malice and hell could do of cruelty to young and old, to women and sucking infants, hath been done in Ireland and England: the devil in his element is twice a devil; he is in his own when he formeth and actuateth bloody instruments, and he aboundeth in his own sphere. Satan’s malice, by itself, is great, and a sinner’s wrath is heavier than stones and sand; but when they are conjoined (as united force is stronger) who can stand before them? Christ’s lambs have been preserved amidst devils and men since the creation, amongst wolves, by no human power and strength.

Observe, that all that came to Christ, have been forced through some one necessity or other; either a leprous body, blind eyes, a palsy, a bloody issue, a withered arm, or a dying son; and that some have been brought to Christ, at least, their parents or friends have come to Christ, through reason of bodily possession by the devil: but we read of none who came through reason of the devil’s spiritual possessing of them, either by themselves or others. (1.) There is much flesh and much nature in us, and so much sense and little spirit, and little of God: a blind eye will chase thee to Christ, a soul under the prince of darkness will not. (2.) We are all body, and life, and time; but we are not all soul, and spirit, and eternity: heaven is far from being the master element in us. (3.) Misplaced love is much. “Ye are of your father the devil,” saith Christ to the Jews, (John 8:44.) Every child loveth the father. Why? And men love not the devil: doth not

every wretch through nature's instinct abhor the devil? Is not this the mother-devotion of any wretch that knoweth nothing of God from the womb? "God save me from the devil and all his works; I have nothing to do with that foul spirit." It is true, there is a physical hatred of the devil, as he is a spirit, an angel, and a pursuivant of divine justice, inflicting evil of punishment on all men naturally; but there is in all men an inbred moral love of the devil, as he is a fallen spirit, tempting to sin: here every prisoner loveth this keeper; like loveth like; broken men and bankrupts flee together to woods and mountains; an outlaw loveth an outlaw; fowls of a feather flock together. The devil and sinful men are both broken men, and outlaws of heaven, and of one blood; wicked men are the "children of the devil," (1 John 3:10); they have that natural relation of father and son; there is of the devil's seed in sinners. There is a spiritual concupiscence in devils to lust against God's image and glory; and Satan findeth his own seed in us by nature, to wit, concupiscence, a stem, a sprouting and child of the house of hell. It were good we knew our own misery: the man resolveth a prisoner has a sweet life, who loveth his own chains, because made of gold, and hateth them not because chains; and falleth to paint the walls of his dungeon, and to put up hangings in his prison, and will but over-gild with gold his iron fetters. Oh! are we not in love with our own dungeon of sin? And do we not bear a kind love to our father, the devil? We bring in provision for the flesh, and nourish the old man, as old as since Adam first sinned. Alas! we never saw our father in the face: we love the devil, as the devil fallen in sin; but we see him not as a devil, but only under the embroideries of golden and silken temptations: we sow to the flesh; we bring in our crop to the devil, but we know not our landlord; and because sense and flesh are nearer to us than God, we desire more the liberties of state, free commerce, and peace with the king, than Christ's liberties, the power and purity of the gospel, that we may negotiate with Heaven and have peace with God.

"Unclean spirit."—This is the quality of this devil: an unclean devil.

Now, whether he be called so, because he tempted the maid to some prodigious acts of uncleanness, or because, in general, he tempteth to uncleanness of sins; so as uncleanness is but a general epithet of all the devils, I profess my ignorance. However, all devils have this general name, "unclean spirits," because of their spiritual uncleanness. It is certain, devils are, (1.) Black now, they being fallen in a smoky hell, and kept under the power and chains of darkness, and they are but lumps of black hell and darkness; whereas they were created fair angels. Truth is the fairest thing that is; obedience to God is truth. (John 3:21.) Sin is the most ugly and deformed thing in the world; and therefore sinners can have no communion with God, until they be washed. (2.) Devils were once pure and clean spirits; their understandings were made clear to see God and his beauty; now, these fair spirits are darkened; for their fellow angels who sinned not, are yet seraphim and lamps of light; and these angels (saith Christ,) "Do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matth. 18:10.)

Then, the more grace of Christ, the more clearness of saving knowledge and sound reason; grace maketh more solid wisdom than art or learning; by this, David excelled all his teachers, and the ancient ones. In Satan's fools the right principle of wisdom is extinguished. The prophet spoke it of statesmen, or rather state-fools, "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8:9.) As there be pollutions of the flesh, so are there pollutions of the mind and spirit, (2 Tim. 3:8.) Men of corrupt minds are men of rotten minds; false opinions of God are rottenness in the understanding. "The spirit of a sound mind." (1 Tim. 1:7.) "Hold fast the form of sound words." (verse 13.) There are some words that come from a sick mind, as Titus 1:13. The apostle holdeth forth, that there be some sick of the faith, as there be some sound of the faith, (Prov. 10:7.) The Lord giveth sound wisdom its essence and being. Wisdom and the law of God is an abiding and a living thing that endureth to eternity; whereas indeed human wisdom, and false opinions of God, are passing away things; the lie liveth not a long age. Wisdom is a tree of life. "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes," (Psalm 119:80,) perfect, wanting nothing. A fool wanteth the best part of his heart. State wisdom, not lying level to Christ's ends, but commensurate with carnal projects, is but folly.

"Hearing of him."—What had she heard?

I. That Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, and could, and was willing to heal her daughter.

Two things are here observable: (1.) hearing of Christ, drew her to Christ. (2.) It is good to border with Christ, and to be near-hand to him. There is a necessity that we hear of Christ, before we come to him. This is God's way: "Faith cometh by hearing." (Rom. 10.) Christ is not in us from the womb; faith is not a flower that groweth out of such a sour and cold ground as nature; it is a stem and a birth of heaven.

II. None can come to Christ, except they hear a good report of him.

How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? Those who come aright to Christ, must have noble, high, long, deep, and broad thoughts of Jesus, and know the gospel. Now, what is the gospel? nothing but a good report of Christ. You must hear a gospel-report of Christ, ere you come to him: ill principled thoughts of Christ keep many from him. "Strangers shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand." (1 Kings 8:42.) Christ was to be heard by the deaf Gentiles: "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book." (Isa. 29:18.) We hear, and we hear not, because the Lord wakeneth not the ear, morning by morning, that we may hear as the learned. Many hear, but they have not the learned ear, nor the ear of such as have heard and learned of the Father. Many hear of Christ, a voice, and no more but a voice; they know not that prophecy, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way,

walk ye in it.” (Isa. 30:21,) There is another voice in our hearing; men do not hear, that they may hear. “Hear, ye deaf, and behold, ye blind, that ye may see:” (Isa. 42:18,) that is, hear that ye may hear, see that ye may see. The Lord giveth grace that he may give grace, and we are to receive grace that we may receive grace; grace is the only reward of grace.

III. We hear and we hear not; we see, but we have no reflex act upon our seeing.

Many open their ears to Christ, but they hear not; they want a spiritual faculty of observing. “Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ear, but he heareth not.” (Isa. 42:22.)

IV. Many put Christ in an ear without a bottom, or in an ear with a hole in its bottom; we hear of Christ, (Heb. 2,) but we are as leaking and running out vessels.

“Who among you will give ear to this, and hear for the time to come?” (Isa. 42:23.) Physicians give their three causes of deafness. (1.) When there is carnosity on the ear-drum. This is extrinsical: the world is another lover, and the care of it; and that hindereth hearing. (2.) When the organ of hearing is hurt and distempered, as a lame hand that cannot apprehend: now, when there be false fancies, and principles contrary to the gospel in the heart, the ear cannot hear. (3.) When there is abundance of humours in the brain, and they raise a noise and tumult in the drum, and hinder sounds to be heard. When pride, and principles of sensuality and vain pleasures make a noise within, that neither Christ knocking, nor his voice without can be heard, men are deaf.

But why do we not hear and see Christ revealing himself in his ways and works? Reason would say, if hell and judgment were before our eyes, we should hear, and come to Christ. Suppose we saw with our eyes, for twenty or thirty years together, a great furnace of fire, of the quantity of the whole earth, and saw there, Cain, Judas, Ahithophel, Saul, and all the damned, as lumps of red fire, and they boiling, and leaping for pain, in a dungeon of everlasting brimstone; and the black and terrible devils, with long and sharp toothed whips of scorpions, lashing out scourges on them: and if we saw there our neighbours, brethren, sisters, yea, our dear children, wives, fathers and mothers, swimming and sinking in that black lake; and heard the yelling, shouting, crying of our young ones and fathers, blaspheming the spotless justice of God:—if we saw this, while we are living here on earth, we should not dare to offend the majesty of God; but should hear, come to Christ, and believe, and be saved. But the truth is, if we believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither should we believe for this; because we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, even while we are in this life, daily, pieces and little parcels of hell; for we see and hear daily, some tumbling in their blood, thousands cut down of our brethren, children, fathers; malefactors hanged and quartered, death in every house. These, these be little hells, and little coals and

sparkles of the great fire of hell, and certain documents to us, that there is a hell; yet we neither hear, nor come to Christ. Nay, suppose a preacher came from hell to the rich glutton's five brethren, (Luke 16,) and should bring with him all the lashes, and print of the whips of Satan's scorpions, on back and side, on thighs, arms, and legs; and though he should bring up to us, out of hell, ten thousand damned; and bring with him the fire, the red coals of the fury of God, every coal as great as a mountain, and offer them all to our eyes, and ears, and senses;—such is the power of our deafness and blindness, that we should not believe; for when many little hells work so little by length of time, this one great hell should never bring us to hear, and come to Christ. See how little we are affected with the blood of so many thousands of our own flesh in the three kingdoms! Alas! our senses are confined within time.

The other thing observable is, that it is good to be near the place where Christ is. It was an advantage, that the woman dwelt upon the borders of the land where Christ was. It is good for the poor to be a neighbour beside the rich; and for the thirsty to take up house, and dwell at the fountain; and for the sick to border with the physician. Oh! love the ground that Christ walketh on. To be born in Sion is an honour, because there the Lord dwelleth. (Psalm 87:6.) It is a blessing to hear and see Christ, (Matt. 13:16.) We do not weigh, nor duly esteem what a favour it is, that Christ walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks; that the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. It is ours, to build him a palace of silver. For the sixth article, which is, her adoring of Christ, it shall be spoken of in another place. I hasten, therefore, to her prayer.

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