

The Trial & Triumph of Faith

SERMON 10

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

“MY daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

Children, especially to mothers, whose affections are more weak and soft, are taking lovers, especially being parts and substantial shadows of ourself; yet four things are considerable in us to them. (1.) So to hold, as we are willingly to let go; love them as creatures only: often the child is the mother’s daughter, and the mother’s god. (2.) We are to strive to have them freed from under the power of the devil, as this woman doth; for they come into the world fuel for hell. Parents make more account, all their life, to make gold, rather than grace, their children’s patrimony and legacy. (3.) Look at them as May flowers; as born to come and appear for a space in the element of death: so they sport, laugh, run, eat, drink, and glisten like comets in the air, or flying meteors in the sphere of the clouds, and often go down to the grave before their parents. (4.) Beware of selfishness, for children are ourself and their sins white and innocent sins to us. Eli honoured his sons more than God, and God put a mark of wrath on his house.

“My daughter:”—Observe the rise of this passage of providence. (1.) Christ, wearied of Judea, came to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. (2.) He went to a house to hide himself from her. (3.) She heard of Christ. (4.) The hard condition her daughter was in, tormented with a devil; upon this, God driveth her to Christ. (5.) Christ is hereby declared to be the Saviour of the Gentiles. (6.) An illustrious miracle is wrought. See a wise consociation of many acts of providence, as one cluster of passages of the art of wise omnipotency;—as many herbs and various sorts of flowers make up one pleasant and well-smelled meadow; many roses, lilies, and the like, one sweet-smelling garden. In which, these practical considerations may have our thoughts for rules:

Rule 1. Go not before God and providence, but follow him. Prescription of such and such means to God, and no other, is to stint omnipotency, and to limit the Holy One of Israel. The true God tied to a forbidden image, to receive glory, is made an idol; so to fetter God to this mean, as if not free to work by other means, is idolatrous.

2. The book of providence is full, both page and margin: God hath been adding to it sundry new editions; and like children, we are in love with the golden covering, the ribbons, filleting, and the pictures in the frontispiece, but understand little of

the argument of providence. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." (Psalm 107:43.) "I said (said Elihu) days (things of providence) shall speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." (Job 32:7.) God is worthy to be chronicled.

3. God hath not laid his God-head and omnipotency in pawn, in the power of means, so as God useth means, because they are efficacious; but because he useth them, they are efficacious. A ram's horn is as near of blood to cause the walls of Jericho to fall in God's hand, as engines of war; a straw is a spear to omnipotency.

4. His ways are often contrary to our judgment: we lie and wait the way to see God come upon the tops of the mountains; but we are deceived—he cometh the lower way through the valleys. We thought omnipotence must change the king's heart, ere such brambles as prelates be thrown over the hedge: but our king is himself, and Omnipotence taketh another way. The disciples thought that Christ would make them kings, and restore the kingdom—Christ is dead and buried, and he goeth another low way, through death's belly, to make them kings and priests to God. Christ goeth away, there be great endeavours, and running through streets, cities, walls: "O streets, saw you him? O broad ways, saw you him whom my soul loveth? O dear watchmen, where is he?" But they are all dumb; Christ taketh a lower way! "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth." (Cant. 3:4.)

5. Slander not God's ways of providence, with the reproach of confusion and disorder: to God all his works are good, very good, as were the works of creation. There is a long chain and concatenation of God's ways, counsels, decrees, actions, events, judgments, mercies; and there is white and black, good and evil, crooked and straight, interwoven in this web; and the links of this chain, partly gold, partly brass, iron, and clay, and the threads of his dispensation, go along through the patriarchs' days, Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and are spun through the ages of Moses, and the church in Egypt, and the wilderness, and come through the times of the kings of Israel and Judah, and the captivities of the church, and descend along through the generations of prophets, Christ, the apostles, persecuting emperors, and martyrdoms of the witnesses of Jesus, slain by the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, till the end of the thread and last link of the chain be tied to the very day of the marriage of the Lamb. Now, in this long contexture of divine providence you see, (1.) Not one thread broken. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," (saith Christ). Providence hath no vacancy, but causes, events, actions, ways, are all bordered one upon another, by the wisdom of providence, so that links are chained and fettered to links, not by hazard or chance. (2.) Though this web be woven of threads of divers colours, black and white, comfortable and sad passages of God's providence, yet all maketh a fair order in this long way. Jacob weepeth for his dead child Joseph; Joseph rejoiceth to come out of the prison to reign: David danceth with all his might before the ark; David weepeth sore for Absalom his son's miserable death:

Job washeth his steps with butter, and the candle of the Almighty shineth on his head; and Job defileth his horn in the dust, and lieth on ashes, and mourneth. All is beauty and order to God.

6. Put the frame of the spirit in equilibrio, in a composed, stayed, indifferent serenity of mind, looking to both sides, black and white, of God's providence. So, holy David was above his cross. "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both the ark and his habitation; but if he thus say, 'I have no delight in thee,' behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good." (2 Sam. 15:25,26.) He putteth his soul upon God's two ifs—if he save, it is good; if he destroy, it is good. Make sure this general: Christ is mine; at that anchor, in this harbour my vessel must ride. Whatever wind blow in externals, Christ died for me. If I live, it is in Christ; if I die, it is to Christ; if I ride with princes on horses, it is good; if I go on foot with servants, it is good. If Christ hide his face and frown, it is Christ, it is good; if it be full moon, and he overshadow the soul with rays and beams of love and light, it is also Christ, it is also good.

7. In all things bless Christ. Let thy desires be low. "Seekest thou great things for thyself?" (Jer. 45:5.) "Seek them not," saith Jeremiah to Baruch. It is easier to add to desires, than to subtract: better the heart ascend from a salad of herbs to wines, than compel thy spirit to descend and weep.

8. Faith's speculations to the worst and hardest, in point of resolution, are sweet. Job putteth on a conclusion of faith, from black premises. Suppose the devil and hell form the principle, faith can make a conclusion of gold and of heaven. What if God should kill me? What though it were so? Yet I will trust in God, (Job 13:15). What if he throw me into hell? It were well resolved; I would out of the pit of devils cry, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord in his justice." What if the enemy in war prevail over me? What if I were brought from scarlet, to embrace the dunghill? Faith can shape what providence possibly may never sew. What if I be brought to the wheel, to the rack, to burning quick?

9. There is a mystery of providence, that we see not; we know not what God is doing with us, when he is binding us: as the sheep hath no notion of death in its fancy, even when the knife is at its throat, so are we.

10. Providence walketh long in uncertainties; his way that ruleth the world, is in the clouds. Peace is within a step, yet cometh not full victory and deliverance near: and the enemy is well nigh subdued, and the Lord turneth the scales, and layeth us low again. Life is within the eighth part of a span to Ahab; yet God so timeth and placeth vengeance, that the arrow of God must pitch on no place, but between the joints of the harness, and Ahab is killed.

11. We are, with all silence and quietness of spirit, to submit to God's ways, not to fret. Believing can ease us, disputing cannot.

12. It is easier to see what is inflicted on us, than to see who inflicteth it. Evil cometh, and we look no higher than the creature, as if the world created itself. So is this, when we dream that the creature moveth, and is not moved of God.

13. This is to be observed, that God ascendeth in all his course, and providence never goeth down the mount. When Joseph goes down to the pit, to the prison, God in his course of providence is going up, and advancing the frame of beautiful providence; for Joseph's going down and his fall, is a higher step to God's exalting of Joseph, and saving his church. Judah's falling into captivity, is not God's falling, but his advancing of the work, to do them good in the latter end. Reformation goeth down when obstructions and lets come in the way; but God worketh on. Second causes move backward and miscarry, when omnipotency carrieth on the Lord's work.

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