

## The Trial & Triumph of Faith

### SERMON 17

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

*“And she said Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master’s table.”—VERSE 27.*

OBSERVE, 1. The woman’s witty answer. By retortion in great quickness, by concession of the conclusion, and granting she was a dog, she borroweth the argument, and taketh it from Christ’s mouth to prove her question. She argueth from the temptation: Let me be a dog, so I be a dog under Christ’s feet at his table. Wisdom’s scholars are not fools: Grace is a witty and understanding spirit, ripe and sharp; so it is said of Christ, (Isa. 11:3). Grace has a sagacity to smell things excellently; so Prov. 1:4; the wisdom of God in the Proverbs, giveth subtlety to the simple; to such as may easily be milked, and flattered, and persuaded. In young ones, reason sleepeth, affection ruleth all: and grace furnisheth the soul with quick, sharp, deep thoughts, to know a devil and an angel, heaven and hell, and that “stolen waters are not sweet,” (Heb. 5:14). Their spiritual senses are as wrestlers experienced, or as learned scholars in universities, acquainted with the knowledge of good and ill.

2. Faith is thus pregnant, as to draw saving conclusions from hard principles, and to extract the spirit of the promises. Christ came to save sinners; then, saith Paul, to save me, for “I am the chief of these sinners.” (1 Tim. 1:15.) And though a temptation’s language be the language of hell and unbelief, as thus, “Thou art a sinner, a lost and condemned one, and therefore hast nothing to do with Christ:” Faith argueth the language of heaven and the gospel from this, “I am a sinner, and a lost one; but one of Christ’s sinners, and one of Christ’s lost ones, and for that very same cause I belong to Christ.”

3. Faith doth here contradict the temptation, and modestly refute Christ. (1.) If Christ say, ‘Thou art a transgressor, from the womb;’ Answer. ‘I confess, Lord, but Christ died for transgressors.’ (2.) If he say, ‘Thou art under a curse;’ Answer. ‘With a distinction; it is too true, Lord: so I am by nature, but Christ was made a curse for me.’ (3.) If he say, ‘Thou hast holden me at the door;’ Answer. ‘I confess, Lord, it is so.’ But if Christ say, ‘I came not for thee, thou art a dog; to such belongeth not Christ, the bread of children:’ You may then answer, ‘O Lord, with all reverence to thy holy Majesty, it is not so; I am thine, thou didst come for me, the bread belongeth to me.’ When a sinner dare not dispute his actions with

Christ, yet he may dispute his estate: the state of sonship is not sin; and therefore, we must adhere to this, as Christ did when he was tempted; 'If thou be the Son of God.' He refused to yield that. If then Christ himself should say, 'Thou art a reprobate,' expound it as a temptation; far more, if Satan, if conscience, if the world say it, you are not to acknowledge these to be heralds sent to proclaim God's secrets. Job would not believe his friends in this. Then to be tempted to deny your sonship and claim in Christ, may be your temptation, not your sin; injections of coals to try, may come immediately from God, as well as from Satan. It is good (say Antinomians) to lay the saints under a covenant of works, because it doth this good, to make us make sure our evidences, that Christ is ours. Yea, some desire a wakened conscience, that the terrors of God may chase them to Christ. But, (1.) That is a murmuring against God's dispensation: let Christ tutor me as he thinketh good, he hath seven eyes, I have but one, and that too, dim. (2.) We are not to make sad whom God hath not made sad, (Ezek. 13:22,) nor to make a lie of grace; Nor, (3.) To usurp the devil's office, to accuse a brother, far less yourself.

"Truth, Lord, the dogs."—Behold where humility sitteth. (1.) Christ cannot put humility lower, it sitteth in the dust: "I am not worthy to be called thy son." (Luke 15:19.) O great Paul! What is less than nothing, and less than the least of all? "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given." (Eph. 3:8.) "I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, (1 Tim. 1:13). "I am the least of the Apostles." (1 Cor. 15:9.) Humility is no daring grace; it dare scarce seek to be a door-keeper in heaven; it setteth itself in hell. (2.) Though humility be well born, and of kin to sweet Jesus, who is lowly and meek, yet Christ, and Christ only, is humility's freehold. The humble soul knoweth no landlord but Christ, and is only grace's humble tenant: there is none to him but the Lord Jesus, with his rich ransom of blood, (1 Tim. 1:16,17). So there is much humility in heaven. If it were possible that tears could be in heaven, the humble saints that are there, should not see Christ reach out a crown to set on their head, but they should weep, and hold away their head; yea, the glorified are ashamed to bear a crown of glory on their head, when they look Christ in the face, and so, cannot but cast down their crowns before the throne. (Rev. 4:10.) (3.) All the saints truly humbled cry up Christ, and down themselves; and in their own books are as far from Christ as any: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." (Matt. 8:8,9.) We may gather from Job's pleading, (chap. 14,) that humble saints think not themselves only below grace and mercy, but also below the glory of justice and wrath. "Man fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bring me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." He would say, I am not only frail by condition of nature, being a shadow of clay (verses 1,2,) but also by birth, sinful and unclean, by reason of sin original: I am therefore a party unworthy of the anger of God, as a beggar is not worthy of the wrath of the emperor, or a worm of the indignation of an angel. (4.) Any man is nearer God, than the humble soul in his own eyes. "Our fathers trusted in thee," (Psalm 22:4). "I am a worm and no man," (verse 6). Because

humility is a soul smoothed, and lying level with itself, no higher than God hath set it, "I do not exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." (Psalm 131:1.) The proud soul hath feathers broader than his nest. (5.) The humble soul is a door-neighbour to grace. Christ is near a cast-down mourner in Sion, "to give him beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," (Isa. 61:3). Christ hath a napkin for the wet face of a humbled sinner. Christ, the chirurgeon [surgeon] of souls, hath a wheel to set in joint the broken heart, (Isa. 61:1). There is a Saviour's hand in heaven, to wheel in an ill-boned soul on earth, (Psalm 51:8). Oh, what consolation! Christ doth both seek and save the self-lost soul, (Luke 19:10). The lamb, one of the lowliest and meekest creatures, hath a bed beside the heart, and in the bosom of Christ: "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom," (Isa. 40:11); yea, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper," (Psalm 72:12). The Lord giveth more grace, he resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. Grace upon grace is for the humble, (James 4:6). (6.) The humble cannot complain of God's dispensation. Humble David,— "But if the Lord say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him." (1 Sam. 15:26.) That I am not fettered with the Prince of Darkness, is the debt of grace on me: then, that you are any thing less than timber and firewood for Tophet, put it up in Christ's account, and strike sail to Christ, and stoop to him. (7.) Yet is the hope of the humble, green at the root; it shall not be as a broken tree, (Psalm 9:18), [1.] Because "God shall save the humble," (Job 22:29); [2.] "And hear his desire," (Psalm 10:17); [3.] "Revive his spirit," (Isa. 57:15); [4.] "Beautify him with salvation," (Psalm 149:4); [5.] "Honour him," (Prov. 15:33); [6.] "Satisfy him," (Psalm 22:26); [7.] "Guide him in judgment," (Psalm 25:9); [8.] "Increase his joy," (Isa. 29:19); [9.] "Bless him," (Matt. 5:5,) and give him a sure inheritance. None can extol grace as the humble soul, "Not I, but the grace of God in me," (1 Cor. 15:10). "I have written that ye be not puffed up for one against another; for who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:6,7.) Then, because thou art little in thine own eyes, put not thyself out of grace's writing, for God putteth thee in. (1 Cor. 1:27-29.) Grace is mercy given for nothing, and the promise is made to the humble. In the judgment of sense, every one is to esteem another better than himself, (Phil. 2:3). Peter is to have a deeper sense of his own sinful condition, than of the sinful condition of Judas the traitor. Though Peter, being graced of God, owes more charity to himself than to Judas, when Judas is a known traitor, yet should not humility decline to that extreme, as to weaken faith, and to say, Because I am unworthy of pardon, therefore it is presumption to believe pardon of sins.

USE 1.—Beware of pride; the elephant's neck and knees, that cannot bow, God must break. "God knoweth the proud afar off," (Psalm 138:6). The word (Gavoah) is the high man, the Scripture word, (James 4:6,) is hyperephanos; the proud man is an appearance, not a real thing, and an appearance more than enough. The phrase importeth two: (1.) It is borrowed from men, who see things near hand, before they see things afar off; and so, more of their eyes is fixed on that which is near hand, and so, it is more delighted in. We see things afar off with

less delight to the sense, and with contempt. The humble man lieth near God's eye; the proud man is farther from his eye, and seen in the by, and with contempt by God. (2.) A man seeth his enemy afar off, and loveth not to come near to him. God hath an old quarrel against pride, as one of the oldest enemies born in heaven, in the breast of the fallen angels, and thrown out of heaven, and it seeketh to be up at its own element, and country where it was born, as proud men are climbing and aspiring creatures; but God, afar off, resisteth the proud, and denieth grace, or any thing of heaven, to the proud Pharisee. When God first seeth a proud man, he saith, "Behold my enemy." The lowly man is Christ's friend.

USE 2.—Though the woman be a dog in her own eyes, and so a sinner, see, O sinner, rich mercy, that Christ should admit of dogs to his kingdom. Oh, grace! that Christ should black his fair hands (to speak so) in washing foul and defiled dogs. How unworthy sinners, and so foul sinners, that they should be under Christ's table, and eat his bread within the King's house! What a motion of free mercy, that Christ should lay his fair, spotless, and chaste love, upon so black, defiled, and whorish souls! Oh, what a favour, that Christ maketh the leopard and Ethiopian white for heaven! These two go together, "Who has loved us, and washed us." (Rev. 1:5.) Humble sinners have high thoughts of free grace; stand not afar off, come near, be washed, for free grace is not proud, when grace refuseth not dogs. Salvation must be a flower planted without hands, that groweth only out of the heart of Christ. Take humble thoughts of yourselves, and noble and high thoughts of excellent Jesus to heaven with you. A curse upon the creature's proud merits! If you make price with Christ, and compound with everlasting grace, you shame the glory of the ransom-payer. It is no shame to die in Christ's debt; all the angels, the cedars of heaven, are below Christ; angels and saints shall be Christ's debtors, for eternity of ages; and, so long as God is God, sinners shall be in grace's account-book.

USE 3. The truly humble, is the most thankful soul that is; unthankfulness is one of the sins of the age we live in. It floweth from, (1.) Contemning and despising God's instruments: The valour of Jephthah is no mercy to Israel, because the elders hate and despise a bastard, (Judges 11:1,2,6). The curing of Naaman's leprosy is not looked on as a mercy: why? washing in Jordan must do it, and there be better rivers in his own land, in Damascus. Not only God, but all his instruments that he worketh by, must be eye-sweet to us, and carry God and omnipotency on their foreheads, else the mercy is no mercy to us. (2.) Mercies cease to be mercies, when they are smoked and blackened with our apprehensions. David, (2 Sam. 18-19) receiveth a great victory, and is established on his throne, which had been reeling and staggering of late; but there is one sad circumstance in that victory; his dear son Absalom was killed, and the mercy no mercy in David's apprehension: "Would God I had died for Absalom!" So a little cross can wash away the sense of a great mercy: the want of a draught of cold water, strangles the thankful memory of God's wonders done for his people's deliverance out of Egypt, and his dividing the Red sea. What a

price would the godly in England have put on the removal of that which indeed was but a mass book, and the burdensome ceremonies, within these few years? But because this mercy is not moulded and shapen, according to the opinion of many, with such and such reformation and church-government, I am afraid there is fretting in too many, instead of the return of praise; and hating of these, for whom they did sometimes pray. God grant, that the sufferings of the land, and this unnatural bloodshed, may be near an end! Except the land be further humbled, I fear the end of evils is not yet come. This is a directing of the Spirit of the Lord, to teach God how to shape and flower his mercies toward us. Is it not fitting there be water in our wine, and a thorn in our rose? Shall God draw the lineaments and proportion of his favours after the measure of my foot? Shall the Almighty be instructed to regulate his ways of supernatural providence according to the frame of our apprehensions? Oh, he is a wise Lord, and wonderful in counsel! Every mercy cannot be overlaid with sapphires and precious stones, nor must all our deliverances drop sweet smelling myrrh. God knoweth when and how to level and smooth all his favours, and remove all their knots, in a sweet proportion, to the main and principal end, the salvation of his own. There is a crook in our best desires, and a rule cannot admit of a crook, even in relation to the creature, far less, to him who doth all things after the counsel of his own will.

“Truly, Lord, the dogs.” See and consider this woman whose faith was great, as Christ saith, and so she was justified. She confesseth and esteemeth herself a dog, and so, an unworthy and profane person.

Doctrine. A justified believer is to confess his sins, and to have a sense and sorrow for them, though they be pardoned. The word is clear for both confession and sorrow for sin; though Antinomians make it a work of the flesh in the justified person, either to confess sin, or to sorrow for it, or to crave pardon for it.

#### 1. Confession of Sin.

For confession, there is commandment, practice, promise.

(1.) “Speak unto the children of Israel, when a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty, then they shall confess their sin that they have done,” (Numbers 5:6). This is not a duty of the unconverted only, but tying all the children of Israel, men and women: “Confess your faults one to another,” (James 5:16). Now, it is not confession to men only, as if they were sins only before men, which the justified person committeth, and not sins in the court of heaven before God, as libertines teach; therefore it is added, “Confess—and pray one for another, that ye may be healed, for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Then, justified persons are to pray for pardon of sins confessed. I take it to be a precept, that as many as say, ‘Our Father,’ to God in prayer, should also say, ‘Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that sin against us.’ And so, pardon of sins, by a justified person, and a son of God, is to be asked when we pray for

daily bread, and the coming of Christ's kingdom: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity," (Hos. 14:2). This must be a confession, that a people turned to the Lord are in their iniquities.

(2.) This is set down as a commendable practice: "Ezra confessed and wept," (Ezra 10:1). "And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquity of their fathers," (Neh. 9:1,2). "I prayed unto the Lord and made my confession," (Dan. 9:4). So David: "I have sinned against the Lord," (2 Sam. 12:13). The church confesseth, "Thou art wroth, for we have sinned: But we are all as an unclean thing," (Isa. 64:5,6). "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us," (Isa. 59:12). "I have sinned against thee, O preserver of man," (Job 7:20). "My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head," (Psalm 40:12). "Our iniquities testify against us,—our backslidings are many," (Jer. 14:7). It is a vain shift to say, The church prayeth and confesseth in name of the wicked party, not in name of the justified ones; for as many as were afflicted confessed their sins for the which the hand of God was upon them. Now God's hand was upon all: Daniel and Jeremiah were carried away captive; yea the whole seed of Jacob, (Isa. 42:24,25; Isa. 64:5-7). And Jeremiah, in name of the whole captive church, saith, "The Lord is righteous, for I have sinned," (Lament. 1:16).

(3.) There is a promise made to these that confess: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh their sins, shall have mercy," (Prov. 28:13). "When I kept silence," (and confessed not) "my bones waxed old," "I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32:3,5). And this is not an Old Testament spirit only; for the same promise is, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive," (1 John 1:8,9). "If they shall confess their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob," (Lev. 26:40,42). Not to confess, is holden forth as a guiltiness: "Yet thou saidst, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me; behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest I have not sinned," (Jer. 2:35). It is a token of impenitency: "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?" (Jer. 8:6).

## 2. Sorrow for Sin.

Ephraim, God's dear child, is brought in, as commended of God, and the Lord telleth over again Ephraim's prayers and sorrowing for sin: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," (Jer. 31:18).

(1.) We have a precept for it in the New Testament; "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up." (James 4:9,10). Now, there is better reason to mourn for sin, because they did lust, war, and were contentious, than because there were afflictions on them. Nature will cause any to cry when punishment is on them; but not nature but grace, not the flesh but the Spirit causeth men sorrow for sin as sin: "If then their uncircumcised

hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob,” (Lev. 26:41,42).

(2.) To mourn for sin, is a grace promised under the New Testament: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn, as one mourneth for his only-begotten son,” (Zech. 12:10).

(3.) Those for whom the consolations of Christ are ordained, are the mourners in Zion; but the consolations of Christ are not for legal mourners, and such as are weary and laden for sin, and yet never come to Christ nor believe: there is no promise made to such mourners as Cain and Judas were. Can we say, that God promiseth grace and mercy to any acts of the flesh, or of unbelief?

(4.) It is a mark of a conscience in a right frame, to be affected with a sense of the least sin, as David was one in whose conscience there remained the character of a stripe, when he but cut the lap of Saul’s robe, (1 Sam. 24).

(5.) And when wicked men sin, their conscience is past feeling, (Eph. 4:19): and seared as with an hot iron, (1 Tim. 4:2). It is not an argument of faith, apprehending sin pardoned, not to mourn for sin, and confess it; for if this be a good argument, that if we, being justified, cannot, but out of unbelief, sorrow for a sin, that before God is no sin; as it is (Jer. 50:20,) fully removed and taken away, (John 1:29; Micah 7:19,) cast in the depths of the sea, (as libertines argue); for then (say they) we were both to believe that that sin remaineth, and maketh the justified person liable to eternal wrath, and so, to sorrow for it, as sin before God; and also to believe that it is taken away, and maketh the person not liable to eternal wrath; which are contradictory. If this, I say, were a good argument, then were we not to eschew evil, and to be averse to the acting of sin, before it be committed; for by the doctrine of Antinomians, all sins, even before they be committed, yea, from eternity, say some, are as fully taken away and pardoned, as after they be committed, and as when we do now believe and repent: For if we were to have a will averse to the acting of sin, before it be committed, it must be upon this ground, that it is sin before God, and not taken away by Christ’s death, else we should not abstain from sin as sin. But this is a false ground to Antinomians, and inconsistent with the object of faith, which is, to believe this truth, that all sins, past, present, and to come, are equally removed, pardoned, yea, and in Christ taken away, as if they never had been. And so, sorrow for sin committed, being an act of the sanctified will displeased with sin, if it be unlawful, the will of the justified person is not to be displeased with it ere it be committed; but by the contrary, if he is not to be displeased with sin committed, but rather to will its commission; not to sorrow for it, because he believeth it is pardoned, and in God’s court it is no sin to him, being in Christ. By the same ground, ere it be committed, in God’s court it is no sin; and so, neither can he be displeased with it ere it be committed, but may also will it, and believe it is pardoned, and he ought to have no act of remorse, nor reluctance of conscience, which is God’s solicitor,

before the committing of it. For how is it not equally an act of the flesh and unbelief, to fear sin to be committed, as not pardoned in Christ, as to fear sin already committed, as not pardoned? [2.] If it be a lie, and an act of unbelief, for any justified person to say, —'Lord, I have sinned; O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee,' as justified David saith, (Psalm 69:5,) in regard all his sins are pardoned, and the man in faith, contrary to the sense of his weak flesh, is to believe that they are all taken away,—upon the same pretended ground of faith, he is to say, 'Lord, I shall never sin: though I am to commit adultery, and to murder innocent Uriah tomorrow, yet thou, O God, neither tomorrow, nor at any time, dost see my foolishness and sins,'—because the sins to come are equally removed and taken away in the free justification of grace, as the sins already past. Mr. Eaton saith,—To hold, that when God hath justified both us and our works, God yet seeth us in the imperfection of our sanctification, is another evident mark of an hypocrite, that was never yet truly humbled for the imperfection of his sanctification. But these imperfections of our sanctification are left in us to our sense and feeling, that they may be healed in our justification. And he bringeth divers reasons to prove, That we are not both righteous in the sight of God, and yet sinners in ourselves. Let me answer, that Antinomians in this, join hands with the Council of Trent [Dec. 5. sess.], who curse us Protestants, because we say, The guilt of original sin is taken away in baptism, but that sin, and that which is essentially sin, dwelleth in us, while we are here, as the sad complaints of justified saints do testify, as Chemnitius observeth. Yea, Andradius saith, as Antinomians do, that we put blasphemy upon Christ's merits and grace, as if he could not in a moment wash us perfectly from all sin. And what arguments Papists in this point use, the same doth Eaton and Antinomians use also. Yea, but justified Job saith, (chap. 9:30,31,) "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? (chap. 40:4). Thus Job, after he was by God's pen declared an upright man, saith of his own ways, in his sufferings. And David, a justified man, saith, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified," (Psalm 143:2): yet Job and David were no hypocrites.

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