

The Trial & Triumph of Faith

SERMON 23

By Rev. Samuel Rutherford

5. THE woman had no apparent evidences of believing; yet did she hang by one single thread of the word of the mercies of the Son of David. The more that the word of promise hath influence in believing, and the less of convincing reason and appearances, the greater faith. Abraham had a promise of a son in whom the nations of the world should be blessed. (Rom. 4.) But, (1.) There was no appearance of this in nature; Abraham and Sarah, at this time, were, between them, two hundred years old, lacking ten, and so, no natural hope of a child. (2.) He had but one promise for his faith; we have twenty, an hundred; yet, "He, against hope, believed in hope." (Rom. 4:18.) It is an elegant figure, having the form of a contradiction, there was no hope, yet he had hope. "Not being weak in the faith:" (verse 19.) Then, "he was strong in the faith," and gave glory to God, as it is, verse 20. (3.) He staggered not through unbelief. Then it is an argument of a weak faith, to dispute according to the principles of natural logic with God: to go on upon God's naked word, without reasoning, is a strong faith, especially when the course of Providence saith the contrary. The word of promise is the mother and seed of faith, (1 Pet. 1:23): the more of the seed, the more of the birth. Wine that is separated from the mother, doth sooner corrupt; that is strongest faith, that hath most, of its seed and mother, that is, of the word of promise in it. Abraham had nothing on earth to sustain his faith in killing his son, but only a naked commandment of God; all other things were contrary to the fact: yet is faith strongest when it standeth on its own basis and legs, and that is, the word of Omnipotency—the word of promise. Other pillars of faith are rotten and sandy foundations; inspirations beside and without the word, are the natural faith's unwritten traditions. Every thing is strongest on its own pillars that God and nature hath appointed for it. The earth hangeth by God and nature's statute in the midst of the air. If the earth were up in the orb or sphere of the moon, it should not be so sure as it is now; and if the sea, fountains, and floods were up in the clouds, they would not be so free from perishing, as they now are. Faith is seated most firmly on a word of Him who is able to perform what he hath said. Wicked men are seeking good in blood, in wars, in the destruction of the church, of the reformation and covenant of God; yet their actions are not seated on a word of promise, but on a threatening that destruction shall come on them as a whirlwind. Therefore is not the wicked man's bread sure, when the child of God hath bread, sleep, peace, immunity from the sword, (insofar as the sword is a curse), and

that by the covenant of promise. This woman had one gospel word, mercy from the Messiah, David's son.

6. That is a strong faith, which can forego much for Christ, and the hope of heaven. Moses was strong in the faith in this, who refused the treasures of Egypt, the honour of a principedom, and to be called "The son of Pharaoh's daughter." (Heb. 11:26.) For he had an eye, an eagle's look, and eye to heaven, to the recompence of reward. Abraham foregoeth country and inheritances for God; "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles." (Heb. 11:9.) (1.) He sojourned. (2.) He played the pilgrim. (3.) He dwelt not in castles and cities, though the land was his by promise, and his grandson, Jacob, disposed of it in his testament, (Gen. 49:10,) "For he looked for a city which hath foundations," (to the strong faith, all cities are bottomless except heaven,) "whose maker and builder is God." Now, this woman's faith is great in this;—she looked for a temporary deliverance from Satan's power to her daughter, under the notion of one of the sure mercies of David, and that by faith, which inheriteth all the promises. Not to see beyond time and death, nor to see the gold at the race's end, fainteth the traveler: a sight of the fair city, is as a draught of wine to the fainting traveler; it addeth legs and strength to him. Heaven is down-ground when faith seeth it; it is, when sight faileth us, toilsome, and up the mount. When Stephen in a near distance heard the music of heaven, his countenance did shine; he did leap to be at it: "I see heaven open, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

7. It is great faith to pray, and persevere, and watch unto praying, as this woman did, when Christ seemeth to forbid to pray; as he both reproached this woman in her praying, as if it had been but the crying of a dog, and said, he was not sent for her. When the promise and Christ seem to look away from you, and to refuse you, yea, to forbid you to believe; then to believe is great faith: actions in nature going on in strength, when contrary actions do countermand them, must be carried with prevailing strength. It is strength of nature that the palm tree groweth under great weights; it is prevalency of nature, that mighty rivers, when they swell over banks, do break over all oppositions. Satan hath a commission to burn and slay; a strong faith quencheth all his fiery darts, (Eph. 6:16). "Let me alone," saith the Lord to Jacob, (Gen. 32:25,26); pray no more. Jacob's strong faith doth meet with this commandment thus, "I will not let thee alone, I must pray on till thou bless me." Strong faith beateth down misapprehensions of promises, or of Christ, and layeth hold on Christ under his mask of wrath, and covered with a cloud. (Lam. 3:9.)

8. Great boldness in the faith, argueth great faith. There be three things in faith, in this notion: (1.) An agony and a wrestling of faith, (Col. 1:29,) which is a heavenly violence in believing: (2.) To be carried with a great measure of persuasion and conviction, with full and hoisted-up sails in believing, (Col. 2:2). There is a rich assurance of faith. Not that only, but in the abstract, there is the riches of assurance. There is all riches of assurance; all riches of the full

assurance of faith. So strong prevailing light, produceth a strong faith: alas! it is but twilight of evidence that we have. (3.) To be bold, and to put on a heavenly stoutness and daring, in venturing with familiarity unto the throne of grace, is a strong faith, (Heb. 10:22; 4:16). We are to come with liberty, and holy boldness to the throne, as children to their father: so the church, with heavenly familiarity, and the daring of grace and faith, prayeth, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." (Cant. 1:2.) John's leaning on Christ's bosom, is not familiarity of love only, but of faith also: "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by faith," (Eph. 3:12). Faith dare go unto the throne; and to the Holy of Holies: (Heb. 10:19). Faith blusheth not.

9. That which leadeth a man, with Paul and Silas, to sing psalms in the stocks, in prison, and in scourges, that is a strong faith. Job is hence known to be strong in the faith, because, being made a most miserable man in regard of heavy afflictions, he could bless God. A strong faith prophesieth glad tidings out of the fire, out at the window of the prison, and rejoiceth in bonds, (Mic. 7:8,9; Isa. 52:1,2; 54:1-4). "To glory in tribulation," is an argument of one justified by faith, (Rom. 5:1-3); and the greater glorification of Christ's chains and cross, is a stronger reason to conclude a strong faith.

10. To wait in patience for God all the day long, is an argument of great faith: "He that believeth shall not make haste; (Isa. 28:16); he shall not be confounded with shame, (so the Seventy translate it, and Paul after them, Rom. 9:33); as those that flee from the enemy out of hastiness, procured by base fear, which is a shame. It proveth believing, and a valorous keeping the field without flying, and so, continued waiting on God, to be of kin to believing; and the longer the thread of hope be, though it were seventy years long, (as Hab. 2:1,2,) or though it were as long as a cable going between the earth and the heaven, "up within the veil," (Heb. 6:19,) the stronger the faith must be. Unbelief not being chained to Christ, leapeth overboard at first, as the wicked king said in the haste of unbelief, "What should I wait any longer on the Lord?" (2 Kings 6:33.) Faith is a grace for winter, to give God leisure to bring summer in his own season. The reasons of our weakness be two: (1.) We see Israel and their dough on their shoulders wearied and tired, lately come out of the brick furnace, wandering without one foot of heritage, forty years in the wilderness, and four hundred years in Egypt; (Acts 7:6;) this looketh like poverty: to believe the other mystery in the other side or page of providence, the glory of dividing the Red sea, and of giving seven mighty nations to his people, and their buildings, lands, vineyards, gardens; is a strong faith. (2.) The furnace is a thing void of reason and art, and so knoweth little that by it the goldsmith maketh an excellent and comely vessel of gold. It is great faith to believe, that God, by crooked instruments, and fire and sword, shall refine a church and erect a glorious building, and these malignant instruments are as ignorant of the art of divine providence, as coals and fuel are of the art and intention of the goldsmith, (Mic. 4:12; Isa. 10:5-7). The axe and saw know nothing of art, nor the sword any thing of justice. Prelates, papists, malignant in the three kingdoms, understand nothing of God's deep counsel upon themselves,

in that God, by a fire of their kindling, is burning themselves, and taking away the tin and brass, and reprobate metal, and refining the Spouse of Christ; they serve a great service, but know not the master of the work.

11. An humble faith, such as was in this woman, is a great faith. The more sins that are pardoned, as it inferreth the more love to Christ, (Luke 7:47,) so the unworthier a soul is in itself to believe pardon in Christ, argueth the greater faith. It must be a greater faith, to believe the pardon of ten thousand talents, than to believe the forgiveness of five hundred pence. Christ esteemeth it the greatest faith in Israel, that the centurion abaseth himself, as one unworthy to come under one roof with him; and that he exalteth Christ in his omnipotency, to believe that he can command all diseases at his nod, (Matt. 8:8-10).

12. A strong desire of a communion with Christ, is an argument of a strong faith. "Surely, I come quickly;" (Rev. 22:20). Faith answereth with a hearty desire, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus," and, 2 Pet. 3:12. Faith desireth an union with Christ, and a marriage union. The reason is, strong faith cometh from strong love; and strong coals of desiring to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, (Phil. 1:23,) burneth in at heaven's door; love-sickness for glory goeth as high, as the lowest step of the throne that the Lamb Christ sitteth on; and it is faith and love together, that desireth Christ to mend his pace, and saith, "Make haste, my beloved, and be as a roe or young hart upon the mountains of spices." (Cant. 8:14). The fervour of love challengeth time, and the slow-moving wheels of years and months, and reckoneth an hour for a day, and a day for a year, "Oh, when wilt thou come to me?" (Psalm 101:2). So, hope deferred is a child-birth pain, and a sickness of the soul, (Prov. 13:12). Faith with love cannot endure a morrow [cannot endure to wait until tomorrow]; faith putteth Christ to posting, and "leaping over mountains, and skipping over hills," (Cant. 2:8;) and addeth wings to him, to flee more quickly. Yet is there a caution here most considerable: Faith both walketh leisurely, and with leaden feet, and moveth swiftly with eagle's wings. Faith, in regard of love, and desire of union with God, is swift, and hath strong motions for a union; yea, a love-sickness to be at the top of the mount, to be satiated with a feast of Christ's enjoyed face; but, in regard of a wise assurance, that God's time is fittest, it maketh no haste. So, to wait on, and to haste, may stand together, (2 Pet. 3:10).

13. Faith effectual by, or with child of love and good works, is a strong faith: "Remembering your work of faith;" (1 Thess. 1:3;) faith effectual. (Philem. 6.) There be bones in a strong faith; yea, sap and life. How many thousands of apples be there virtually in a tree that beareth fruit for thirty or forty years together? So, it is said of Stephen, that he was "full of faith and power," (Acts 6:8;) and Barnabas, "full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith." (Acts 11:24.) What is then a small faith, or a weak faith, is easily known. (1.) A faith void of all doubting, is not a weak faith, nor yet the strong faith. Antinomians err many ways in this point: [1.] 'After the revelation of the Spirit, neither devil nor sin can make the soul to doubt,' say they. Yea, but the spirit of revelation was in Jeremiah, who doubted

when he complained to God of God; (Jer. 15:18). Wilt thou be to me altogether as a liar, and as waters that fail? (Jer. 20:7-9, 14-16.) Job doubted, when he said, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" (Job 13:14.) And Asaph, (Psalm 73:13), Heman, (Psalm 88:13-15), and the Church, (Psalm 77). Yet all these were "sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption." [2.] This is like the foul error of the Arminians, who, with the Socinians, hold, that as there be three degrees of believers, {1.} Some babes; {2.} Some aged; so there is a third sort of truly perfect ones, who do not sin from the root of concupiscence, 'the combat between the flesh and the spirit now ceasing, only they sin through inadvertency or some error, or overclouding of their light,' as Adam and the angels sinned, there being no inward principle of corruption in them. Hence some libertines say, those that are in Christ can no more sin, and not walk with God, than the sun can leave off to give light, or fire to cast heat, or a fountain to send out streams, in regard that the Spirit actuateth them to walk with God by such a necessary impulsions that destroyeth all freedom of will; and if they sin, they are not to be blamed, because the Spirit moveth them not to abstinence from sin, and to holy walking. But Paul, "a chosen vessel," and a strong believer, complaineth of the indwelling of sin, of his carnality, and the flesh lusting against the spirit, and of his captivity under sin, (Rom. 7:14-17,) which must argue his imperfect faith, liable to the distemper of sinful doubtings. It is also a great error to say, That to call in question, whether God be my Father after, or upon the commission of some heinous sins, as murder, incest, etc., doth prove a man to be in the covenant of works. [Rise, Reign, and ruine. Er. 20, p. 4.]

Now there be sundry sorts of doubtings opposed to faith in the renewed, there is, [1.] A natural doubting; and, as all popery is natural and carnal, so this strangeness of affection by which men are unkind to Christ, and never persuaded of God's favour in Jesus Christ, argueth the party to be under the law, and not in Christ. This doubting may, and doth in carnal men consist with presumption, and a moral false persuasion, that natural men have all of them, till their conscience be wakened, that they shall be saved. 'Why? I am not a murderer, a sorcerer, etc. Why? Or, how can God throw me into hell?' So it is made up of real lies and contradictions; yet they have no divine certainty of salvation. For, ask a natural man, Have you a full assurance of salvation, as you say, that you always believe and doubt not? He shall be there at a stand, and answer, Who can have a full assurance? But I hope well, I believe well, night and day. And so doubt Papists also, and they have a lie in their right hand; 'it cannot stand with God's mercy or justice, since I am not this, and this, to throw me into hell,' So is unbelief a lie: "And of whom hast thou been afraid and feared, that thou hast lied and hast not remembered me?" (Isa. 57:11.) [2.] There is an occasional doubting that riseth by starts upon wicked men, out of an evil conscience of sin, but it vanisheth as a cloud; as in Pharaoh's confession, "I and my people have sinned." This argueth a law-spirit, rising and falling asleep again. [3.] There is a final doubting of despair, like the doom passed on the condemned malefactor; as in Cain, (Gen. 4:13,14;) in Saul, (1 Sam. 28:15,16). All these conclude men under the law, and the curse of it. But there is, [4.] A doubting in the believers, which, though a sin, yet (if I

might have leave to borrow the expression) is a godly sin; not because it is not a sin indeed, and so, opposite to grace and godliness, but a gracious sin, in regard of the person and adjuncts, it being a neighbour to saving grace; and no reprobate can be capable of this sin, no more than Pagans, or flagitious and extremely wicked men can be capable of the sin against the Holy Ghost. So beggars are remotest from high and personal treason, because they have never that honour to come near the king's person. So David's bones, not Saul's bones, were broken, humbled bones. (Psalm 51:10.) For a humbled heart is called (Nidcheh) broken, and bruised with a fear of God's wrath for sin; and the converted soul's moisture is turned to the drought of summer; and his bones waxen old with roaring all the day, God withholding the joy of his salvation. (Psalm 32:3,4.) This doubting befalleth never any reprobate under the law or covenant of works; and so, though it be an ill thing, yet it is a good sign, as out-breaking of boils in the body are in themselves diseases, infirmities, distempers, and contrary to perfect health; yet they are often good signs and arguments of strength of life, and much vital heat and healthiness of constitution. That affections of the child of God, under incest, murder, or other heinous sins be stirred, that sorrow be wakened and rise, when our Father is offended, and when our Lord frowneth and standeth behind the wall, and goeth away, is lawful; yea, it speaketh tenderness of love, softness of heart. But that they be so far wakened, as to doubt, and fear that the Lord be changed, that he hath forgotten to be merciful, that is sinful doubting; but doth noways conclude, that the person is under the covenant of works, but the contrary rather, that grace sitteth and bordereth with this doubting; and so, that the person is under grace, not under the law. Even where faith is strong, it is not ever in the same temper. Health most vigorous will vary in its degrees, and decrease at times of distemper, and yet be strong, and have much of life in it. Take the strong and experienced Christian's life in its whole continued frame, and for the most part, he hath the better of all temptations; but, take him in a certain stage, or nick of providence, when he is not himself, and he is below his ordinary strength, even in that wherein he excelleth. If a gracious temper of meekness like Christ, was not the predominant element of grace in Moses, yet it was in a great measure in him, he bearing the name with Him, who best knoweth names, and things, of the meekest man in the earth. Yet in that which was his flower, he proved weaker than himself, and spake unadvisedly with his lips. Our highest graces may meet with an ill hour. Job, by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, is patient; "ye have heard of the patience of Job." And, (chap. 3,) we have heard of the cursing passion of Job, also. Believing is like sailing, which is not always equal; often strength of wind will blow the ship twenty miles backward. (2.) The smallest measure of Faith. The minimum quod sic, is sincere adherence to Christ. Not that negative adherence simply, by which some may say, I dare not for a world quit my part in Christ, or give up with him. Natural spirits may have a natural tenderness, by which they dare not quit Christ, and give up with him; yet there is no saving faith in natural spirits: but there is in the believer some positive adherence under, or with the negative, by which there is a power of love and kindness, making the soul to cleave to Christ. There may be great weakness with this, and great failings, and

yet faith unfeigned. We have need of much charity to those that are weak in faith. A reed, a broken reed may grow; and Christ will not break it. A buried believer is a believer. If Christ have a near relation of blood to a piece of blue clay, and the dead corpse of a believer, seeing in his flesh there is the seed and hope of a resurrection, as the seed and hope of harvest is, in rotting and dying grains of wheat sown in the cold earth, as is clear, (Psalm 16:9; 1 Cor. 15:42,44), much more the relation of mercy remaineth in Christ, toward the wrestling, deserted, and self-dead believer.

Now, this smallest measure of faith may consist, [1.] With much ignorance of God, as it was with the believing disciples, who continued with Christ in his temptations, confessed him, believed and adhered to him, when many went back, and departed from him, (Luke 22:28,29; Matt. 16:16,17; John 6:66-69;) and yet were ignorant of great points of faith, as of his death, (Matt. 16:21,22,) and of his resurrection, (John 20:9). [2.] So there be great faintings and doubtings, when a storm ariseth, and the soul is a-sinking, (Matt. 8:25-27; Matt. 14:30). Yet a little faith is faith. As touching a fainting faith, it is not always a weak faith that fainteth; strong and healthy bodies may have fevers and deliquiums. For the causes of fainting are, {1.} The want of the influence of mercy, and of stirring or exciting grace, causeth fainting. "As we are mercied we faint not;" we degenerate not. (2 Cor. 4:1.) It is in the bosom of Christ, and lieth about the bowels of our merciful High Priest, that keepeth from fainting. If our Intercessor pray not, we faint: "I have prayed that thy faith may not be eclipsed." (Luke 22:32.) The moon is in a certain death, and soon in an eclipse; so is faith under fainting. {2.} Fear of wrath may cause distraction, and hanging of mind, and uncertainty, where there is strong faith; (Psalm 88:14,15, compared with verses 8,9). As apprehensions report of God, so are we affected in believing; yet may it be collected from Matt. 10:19, "In that hour it shall be given you," that Christ holdeth the head of a fainting believer. {3.} The dependence of faith will faint, when Christ withdraweth love, though he inflict no anger. The ingenuity of grace gathereth fear from a cloud, though there be no storm. [3.] A soul dead in himself, and that cannot put out faith in acts, for want of light and comfort, is a weak faith. A tree in winter is a living tree. There may be life, where there is little stirring or motion. [4.] That faith that seemed smallest to the man himself, is sometimes in itself, greatest. {1.} In sad desertions there is most of faith, and least of sense of faith, (Psalm 22:1). {2.} A suffering faith, may be small to the sufferer. Many of the martyrs, in their own sense, were in a dead and unbelieving condition. Yet Christ is more commended for a suffering faith than any, in that he did run, endure the cross, for the glory that was before him. (Heb. 12:1-3.) He saw heaven; and his faith went through hell to be at heaven. There is a high commendation put on the suffering faith of those who were tried with bonds, imprisonment, sawn asunder, mocked, slain with the sword, of whom the world was not worthy. (Heb. 11:37,38.) This is not put upon the active and doing faith, which is put upon the passive faith; nor is so much said of these, who, by faith, pulled down the walls of Jericho; of Gideon, Baruch, Samson, and such as by faith subdued kingdoms. The reason is, suffering is a loss of being and well-being. Those who, by doing, give away their

evil-being for Christ, and crucify their lusts for him, are dear to him; but such as die for Christ, they give away both being and well-being. Moses and Paul, who, in a manner, were content to go to hell, with believing that God's glory in saving the people of God, was to be preferred to their eternal being and well-being, behaved to have great faith. {3.} The faith that is weak, in regard of intention of degrees, may be a great faith, in regard of extension. The children of God, whose life is the walk of faith, (2 Cor. 5:7,) may have but a small measure of faith: Yet it is a constant and well breathed faith, good at the long race, that carrieth a soul through; in, |1.| His natural capacity to believe God will feed him: And, |2.| In his civil relations, as a father, son, servant, magistrate. |3.| In his spiritual condition, in the duties of the first table; in all which capacities we are to walk by faith, yea, to eat, drink, sleep; to laugh, to weep, as concerning the ordering of all these heavenward by faith. All the saints that go to heaven believing and ordering all these conditions by faith, have not always a faith as great as Abraham, as Moses. Weak legs carry some through the earth many thousand miles. A sorry and small vessel, in comparison of others, may sail about the globe of the whole earth. The wings of a sparrow or a dove, can carry these little birds through as much sea and land, as the wings of an eagle doth carry the eagle.

But ere I go from this point, I crave leave to add somewhat, (1.) Of the least and smallest measure of faith: (2.) Of the condition of the child of God under it.

Touching the former, I only say, there is a degree of fire, and a coal so small, that less cannot be, the thing remaining fire, having the nature, essence, and properties of fire. And when any is in a deliquium or swoon, the man hath life, but it is kept in narrow bounds; there is breathing only; some vital heat; some internal motion in the heart, and vital, and animal spirits, but no more to prove life almost, than the man is a dead corpse. Yet somewhat there is to distinguish him from dead clay, for friends will not bury a swooning man wilfully and knowingly. So at the lowest condition of the weakest faith that the believer is in, some fire and coal of love and faith there is, and some smoking, though little fire, and possibly we cannot give it a name. Yet if the just live by faith, there must be some measure of faith; some smoking of love to Christ; some discerning of an ill condition. No man on earth, in a sleep, hath a reflex act to know that he sleepeth; no dead corpse knoweth itself to be dead. Never sleeping man could say, nay, not Adam in his first sleep, when God formed the woman out of a rib of his side, 'Now, I am sleeping.' No man naturally dead, can say, 'Now am I dead, and I lie among the worms and corruption.' Death maketh no report of death. But the believer can say, at his lowest condition, "I sleep, but my heart waketh;" (Cant. 5:1,) and he who saith, "Lord, quicken me," (Psalm 119,) must say, "Lord, I am dead:" yet to say, "Lord, quicken me," and to feel and know deadness, are acts of the life of grace. A saint in this condition, may love Christ through half a dream, and half-sleeping half-waking retain honourable thoughts of Christ, (Job 13:15; and 19:25-27). Some have said, in hell they should love Christ. This truth is in it, that in such a pain and sad condition of suffering as the damned are in, (sin, despair, or God's hating of them excepted,) saints can believe and love Christ, (Psalm 22:1,)

at least, desire to have leave to love Christ; for the evil of sin may, the evil of punishment cannot quench the love of Christ, which is stronger than death—than hell, (Cant. 8:6,7). The soul, at the lowest condition, is like the man who hath engaged his lands for so great a sum, as may be a just price to buy the land; and so, in effect, he hath sold the land, but with a reversion; he keepeth the reversion, and so by law, within such a time, he may redeem his mortgaged inheritance. The weakest of believers, at his lowest ebb, keepeth the reversion of Christ. He may, by some grievous sin, be under such a terrible desertion, as to put the inheritance of heaven to a too great hazard of being lost, and in appearance, and in his own sense, and in the sense of many, all is gone; yet then, to say nothing of the invisible chain of God's unchangeable decree of election, which the strongest arms of devils and hell cannot break, there is fire under the embers,—sap and life in the root of the oak tree. God saith of the bud of this vine tree, though the man neither see nor hear it, "Destroy it not, for there is a blessing in it."

As touching the Second, the question may be, What remaineth for him in this condition, to know his condition, or what can he do? I answer, (1.) When Christ hath left his bed, and is gone, he is to keep warm the seat that Christ was in. I do not say that the Church was at the lowest ebb, yet a desertion there was, and a sad one. (Cant. 5:6.) But in this condition [1.] she openeth her heart to Christ: "I rose up to open to my Beloved." [2.] There be some "Droppings of myrrh from her hands," some sense of Christ. (verse 5.) [3.] "I called him, but he answered me not;" there remaineth a faculty of praying. [4.] A love-sickness. Hence it is evident, in the lowest and ebbest condition of a fainting faith, there is something answerable to this; and this is, to love the smell of Christ that he hath left behind him, when he himself is gone; it is to desire to behold, with love and longing, the print of his feet, the chair of love that he sat in.

Hence, though you feel no work of sanctification, his seat is kept by some spiritual meditations, as to consider, what kind of love it is that Christ hath bestowed on sinners, for that he loved his own before he died for them, his love being the cause why he died for them; and still, after the purchased redemption, he loveth them, and intercedeth for them up at the right hand of God. And this is as much as to say, Christ hath loved you, and repenteth not of his love; love made him die for you, and if it were to do again, he would die over again for you, (Rom. 8:33,34; 1 Tim. 3:16). And suppose we that there were need that Christ should die twice, or four times, or an hundred, or millions of times, and that he had ten thousand millions of lives, and that our sins should have required that he should first die for one believer, and then die again the second time for another, and then the third time for another;—and so that he must, for every several elect person, have died a several death; love, love should have put him upon all these deaths willingly. And, therefore, if the believer had ten loves, as many loves in one as there be elected men and angels, all had been too little for Christ; and when the believer hath been serving and praising up in the highest temple, as many millions of ages of years, (or a track of eternity answerable to that duration

of ages,) as the number of the sand on all the coasts in earth, of all the stars in heaven, of all the flowers, herbs, plants, leaves of trees, that have been, or shall be from the creation of God, to the taking down of the workmanship of heaven and earth; yet shall he be as much in Christ's debt for this infinite love, when that time is ended, as when he first opened his mouth in the first breathing out of praises in the state of glory. (2.) He may turn over in his mind all the promises; and the literal revolution of them in the mind, though it be but a deed or act of the understanding and memory, may cast fire on the affections, in which there resideth a habit of grace: though there be no fire in the bellows, yet blowing with the bellows may waken up, and kindle fire in the hearth where there is little. The habit of grace is often as sparks of fire on the hearth, under the ashes, and may be kindled up, and made a fire. (3.) When faith is weakest, and the soul under a winter and a dead eclipse, it is fit to keep the heart in a passive frame of receiving of him again; as to sorrow for sin, and to put to the door un-repent-ed sins; as when the king goeth abroad, to sweep the chamber for his return. Missing of Christ, longing for his return, inquisition for him, "Watchmen, saw ye him?" love-sickness for him, putteth the soul in a sweet passive capacity to receive him again, (Cant. 3:1-5). (4.) When the Church is in bed sleeping, yet she is charged to open, (Cant. 5:2). To weep at the noise of Christ's knock, when you cannot rise, is somewhat; a prisoner may stir his legs, and cause the iron fetters tinkle, though he cannot get out; there is some strength when we are bidden, "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." (Heb. 12:12.) Motion will make fire. (5.) Especially Christ sleepeth least, when his child is in a high fever; love watcheth then most at the bed-side.

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